



Colorado Judicial Institute
P.O. Box 118
Broomfield, CO 80038-0118
(303) 766-7501
(303) 303-975-5290 fax
www.coloradojudicialinstitute.org

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Contact: Dana Nelson
Phone: 303-489-3432
E-mail: Dana@ColoradoJudicialInstitute.org

National speaker recognizes work of unique Colorado Judicial Institute

Denver, CO – The Colorado Judicial Institute hosted 585 judges, lawyers and community members at the 6th Annual Judicial Excellence for Colorado Dinner on Tuesday, November 18th. Keynote speaker, Bert Brandenburg, Executive Director of Justice at Stake, based in Washington DC, congratulated CJI for “being a unique organization conducting important work” that guarantees that Colorado has the best possible judicial system.

In remarks entitled, “*The Growing Challenge of Political Pressure on the Courts*”, Brandenburg outlined some troublesome trends across the country, including “record breaking expenditures by third parties aimed at influencing judicial races, unjustified personal attacks on judges who make controversial decisions, numerous challenges to long established merit selection systems, and the challenge to public confidence in courts due to recusal scandals and outrageous campaign ad attacks”. Justice at Stake is a non-partisan organization working to keep our courts fair and impartial. Justice at Stake partners educate the public and work for reforms to keep politics and special interests out of the courtroom—so judges can do their jobs protecting our Constitution, our rights, and the rule of law. Acknowledging the enthusiastic audience, Brandenburg stated that while he was accustomed to speaking before judges, he was not “used to being in a room where the crowd whooped for judges”. He encouraged CJI and the individuals in attendance to continue to improve the current Colorado judicial selection system that has worked so

well for over four decades, as well as continue to work to educate the public on the importance of judicial independence to ensure a secure democracy.

Among those attending the CJI event were Colorado Supreme Court Justice Michael Bender, 9th Circuit US Court of Appeals Judge Carlos Lucero, US Bankruptcy Court Judge Bruce Campbell, Colorado Court of Appeals Judges Steven Bernard, Russell Carparelli, Richard Gabriel, and Diana Terry, Colorado State Attorney General John Suthers, and numerous other judges, magistrates, court staff and community and business leaders.



CJI Vice Chair Sheila Gutterman, Keynote Speaker Bert Brandenburg, CJI Vice Chair Elinor Greenberg.



CJI Award Honoree Judge M. Jon Kolomitz and 9th Circuit Court of Appeals Judge Carlos Lucero.

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The CJI Judicial Excellence Awards were presented by board members Constance Talmage and Ralph



Award Honoree Magistrate Jane Westbrook and Judge Robert H. Russell, II.

Torres to Judge M. Jon Kolomitz of the 16th Judicial District, Judge Robert H. Russell, II of the 18th Judicial District, Judge Alfred C. Harrell of the Denver County Court, and Magistrate Jane Westbrook of the 21st Judicial District, Mesa County. These Excellence Award winners have been nominated by their peers and have exhibited unique dedication to the effective and efficient administration of justice and a deep devotion to both their profession and their communities. They have generated the respect of their colleagues and the citizens who appear before them.



Attorney General John Suthers and Award Honoree Judge Alfred C. Harrell.

CJI Board Chair, Robert N. Miller of Perkins Coie LLP, and CJI Vice Chair, Sheila Gutterman of Gutterman Griffiths PC, outlined the accomplishments of CJI during the past year. CJI recently announced a new partnership with the National Judicial College in Reno, Nevada that will provide at least \$125,000 in scholarship funds for Colorado judges over the next three years. The *Our Courts* public education program, a joint activity of the Colorado Bar Association and CJI in partnership with eleven other statewide organizations, has made presentations about the state and federal courts to over 4,400 Colorado citizens in 140 groups in one year and is expanding throughout the state. The CJI Public Policy

Committee worked with Sen. Brandon Shaffer, Rep. Terrance Carroll and others to secure the reauthorization of the Colorado Judicial Performance Evaluation program. The new statute includes interim evaluations for judges and an independent evaluation office. The CJI Family Law Committee is working on the second of three reports about the experiences of children, respondent parents, and foster parents in Colorado family courts. The first report, *Youth Voices*, is available on the CJI website. CJI Chair Miller stated that “the past year has been one of the most productive in CJI’s 29-year history.” Funds raised at the Judicial Excellence for Colorado Dinner benefit the Judicial Education Fund and CJI programs.



CJI Board Chair Robert N. Miller and CJI Board Member Gary Lozow.

For more information, visit www.ColoradoJudicialInstitute.org or call 303-766-7501.

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Event Details

- Title:** 6th Annual Judicial Excellence for Colorado Dinner
- Date:** Tuesday, November 18th, 2008
- Time:** 6:00 – 7:00 pm Cocktail Hour
7:00 – 9:00 pm Keynote Speech, Awards Presentation
- Location:** Denver Marriott City Center Hotel
- Host:** Colorado Judicial Institute
- Benefits:** Judicial Education Fund at the Denver Foundation
The programs and activities of the Colorado Judicial Institute
- Awards:** 2008 Judicial Excellence Awards
Judge M. Jon Kolomitz of the 16th Judicial District (Bent, Crowley, and Otero Counties)
Judge Robert H. Russell, II of the 18th Judicial District (Arapahoe, Douglas, Elbert, and Lincoln Counties)
Judge Alfred C. Harrell of the Denver County Court
Magistrate Jane E. Westbrook of the 21st Judicial District (Mesa County)
- Notables:** Judge Carlos Lucero - 9th Circuit US Court of Appeals
Judge Bruce Campbell - US Bankruptcy Court
Judge Marcia Krieger – US District Judge, District of Colorado
Justice Michael Bender – Colorado Supreme Court
Justice Luis Rovira – Colorado Supreme Court, Retired
Judge Steven Bernard - Colorado Court of Appeals
Judge Russell Carparelli – Colorado Court of Appeals
Judge Richard Gabriel – Colorado Court of Appeals
Judge Diana Terry – Colorado Court of Appeals
Judge Robert Kapelke – Colorado Court of Appeals, Retired
Attorney General John Suthers
Mark Fogg – Kennedy Childs & Fogg, P.C., President Denver Bar Association
Chuck Turner – Executive Director, Colorado Bar Association
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Special Sponsors - Davis Graham & Stubbs LLP – For program layout services, IKON Office Solutions, Inc. – For printing the dinner program, BookCliff Vineyards and Plum Creek Winery – For providing the wines for the dinner, Mountain States Employers Council, Inc. – For providing meeting space.

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