

Federal Judges Association
Executive Committee Meeting Minutes
Zoom Video Conference
November 14, 2020

Participating: Judges Cynthia Rufe (President), Richard Clifton (President-elect), Karen Schreier (Secretary), Michelle Childs (Treasurer), Marilyn Huff (Immediate Past President) and Executive Committee members Leo Gordon, Malachy Mannion, Leigh May, Larry Piersol, Dan Polster, Patti Saris, Patty Shwartz, and Charles Simpson.

Also participating: Megan Cruz (MSP), Grace Jan (MSP), Dave Carter.

Excused: Nannette Brown.

Judge Rufe called the meeting to order at 12:04 PM, EDT.

Secretary's Report

The minutes of the last executive committee meeting were distributed electronically. Judge Schreier moved their approval with the minor change that had been suggested by Judge Gordon. Judge Mannion seconded the motion. The minutes were approved.

Treasurer's Report

Judge Childs reported that a blind trust, called the ESMADA TRUST, has been established by the law firm of Judge Esther Salas's husband, Mark Anderl, to cover his medical and rehabilitation expenses. The Trust is managed by Wells Fargo. Scholarship funds have also been established at Rutgers New York Law School and Catholic University in memory of her son, Daniel Anderl.

Judge Polster moved and Judge Gordon seconded the motion to donate \$25,000 to the ESMADA TRUST. Mr. Anderl will have on-going medical costs and long-term care and rehabilitation needs that are not covered by insurance and currently exceed \$7000 per month. A donation of \$25,000 is @ \$25 per member. Concerns were discussed about the fiduciary duty the Board has to its members and the role of FJA. After a thorough discussion, the Executive Committee voted in favor of

recommending to the full board that FJA donate \$25,000 to the ESMADA TRUST, with three members voting no.

Judge Piersol raised the question of whether FJA could purchase an insurance policy covering all members and their family members who were injured in retaliation for the official duties of a judge member of FJA.

Judge Childs reported that the state of our treasury is good. The current treasury balance is close to \$1 million. We have paid approximately \$19,000 to Knucklepuck and Higher Logic for website development. And we have set aside \$25,000 per year towards future Quadrennial expenses. Several board members raised the question of whether some of our balance could be used to further subsidize members' expenses for the Quadrennial.

Committee reports for the full board meeting on Sunday:

Membership

Judge May will ask the board members to go through the membership list and identify judges who are not currently members of FJA. After the non-members have been identified, she will ask the board to encourage them to join. Judge May will also ask the board to provide her with email addresses for the retired members.

Judicial Independence and Integrity

Judges Saris and Childs will lead a discussion during the full board meeting regarding the direction their committee should take to promote independence of the judiciary and whether the FJA should get involved when judges are being attacked in the press or social media by calling on the Champions of Justice to speak out. To guide this discussion, the committee has developed four questions that will be submitted in a poll format to the full board. After the poll, the committee will lead general discussion. Thirty minutes have been set aside for this discussion.

Legislation

Judge Simpson informed the Executive Committee that Senator Grassley will be the next chair of Senate Judiciary. He has been a strong proponent of having an inspector general for the judicial branch. This may become a bigger issue for us to monitor next year. Judge Clifton noted that we need to identify the resources within our membership and our members' relationships with Congress, so we can be

prepared to talk effectively with the members of Congress on all issues that impact judges, including the inspector general issue. As noted, the committee's primary objectives this year as we support the passage of a Judicial Security bill is to apply this information to other possible legislation that affects the safety, welfare and independence of the judiciary.

Senior Judges

Judge Piersol will report on gathering reports from each Circuit on the Senior Judge staffing criteria.

Pay and Benefits

Judges Gordon and Polster will report on the 7 fliers that their committee developed and discuss the 5-page elevator speech that can be used to explain to Congress our need for a pay increase. They noted that we need to coordinate any effort regarding pay with the Chief Justice and the AO. Judge Rufe thanked the committee for pulling the historical and current pay information together into a concise summary

Communications

Judge Mannion reported that Knucklepuck and Higher Logic have been working with the Communications Committee to develop the new FJA website. They will make a presentation to the full board tomorrow and show one page on the website-- FJA Sidebar.

Quadrennial

Judge Shwartz reported that the committee has been meeting and is in the early planning stages. A full report will be given tomorrow by co-chair Judge Lasnik.

COVID-19

Judge Saris noted that COVID-19 is a crisis for many of our judges, their families, and the court employees. We should discuss with the AO how the court family can get access to the vaccine when it is approved for distribution and obtain access to testing now. Judge Rufe said she will raise this issue with the AO, including the issue of rapid test access for jurors and court personnel.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:45 p.m., EDT.

Respectfully submitted,
Karen Schreier
Secretary