

P SPECIAL EDITION



Honoring veterans in the Pennsylvania judiciary



Making the case for Veterans Treatment Courts

Widener University Commonwealth Law School held the 3rd Annual Veterans Court Symposium, "Making the Case for Veterans Treatment Courts" in September.

During the morning sessions, panels of judges, county commissioners and veteran justice outreach (VJO) specialists from the federal Veterans Affairs (VA) spoke about their personal experience with the significant positive impacts of veterans courts on the lives of individual veterans and communities as a whole.

In her opening keynote remarks, Pennsylvania Supreme Court Justice **Debra Todd** explained that Veterans Treatment Court (VTC) participants often look to the judge as their commanding officer, leading to a sentiment later repeated throughout the program – "Judges are the glue that hold our Veterans Courts together."

York County Common Pleas Judge **Craig Trebilcock**, an army veteran, moderated the judges' panel, where he offered some words of advice to judges interested in setting up a VTC in their county.

He said there are three main problems that cause participants to fail the program – housing, financial and transportation. He explained some of the ways that his county has helped their VTC participants try to overcome these barriers.

"We stole the idea from Lancaster to set up a veteran housing unit and it actually helps address two of those problems," said Judge Trebilcock. "Providing participants with stable housing makes transportation easier because participants can now carpool to court appointments."

York County has also tried to help address the transportation problem by loaning bikes from the sheriff's department that participants can ride to the bus stop – and partnering with Rabbit Transit, who are sometimes oncall to pick up participants and take them to court appointments.

President Judge **Nancy Butts** also discussed the ways Lycoming County has tried to address some challenges

(I to r): Problem-Solving Courts Administrator **Angela Sobol Lowry**, Judicial Programs Administrator **Andy Simpson**, Supreme Court Justice **Debra Todd**, York County Common Pleas Judge **Craig Trebilcock**, Lycoming County President Judge **Nancy Butts**, Philadelphia Municipal Court President Judge **Patrick Dugan**, Widener Law School Dean Christian Johnson

that VTC participants struggle with – especially issues with transportation.

"Being in a very rural county, transportation becomes one of the biggest struggles for our participants – many of them either don't have access to public transportation or have driver's license suspensions stemming from previous DUIs. We really try to pair mentors who have licenses with those participants who don't so they can drive them to and from court," Judge Butts said.

Judge Trebilcock went on to address the third problem, saying that York County has even begun providing financial counselors and setting up cooking classes for those VTC participants struggling with financial problems.

"We found that some of these guys, because they never learned to cook, were blowing all their money on fast food, so the goal is to try to show them how to make their money go further," he said.

For people who say these aren't costeffective solutions, I would argue that they are because the alternative is jail, which costs roughly \$100 taxpayer dollars per day per inmate."

Karen Baer, a VJO specialist from the Wilkes-Barre VA, explained that if a county doesn't have adequate funding or staffing to have a full-blown VTC, creating a veterans track within their existing treatment courts could potentially be another option.

"These veterans track programs have to follow the same standards and protocols as other Veterans Courts and counties are now able to utilize VA resources and funding," she explained. Dauphin County Commissioner, Jeff Haste, emphasized that point saying they initially anticipated there would be funding issues, but their county has actually seen a cost-savings due to the funding through the VA.

"All of these Veterans Court programs will resemble the judge who presides over them. When it comes to trying to solve these problems, it's really up to the judge's creativity – no program is identical by any means," Judge Butts said.

When discussing how VTC program specifics can widely differ based on the county and judge, Philadelphia Municipal Court President Judge **Patrick Dugan**, a U.S. Army veteran, explained that the judge presiding over a VTC doesn't necessarily have to be a veteran themselves; they just need to be someone with empathy.

Dugan encouraged judges who don't have that service experience to surround themselves with people who do because in order to make VTC a success, you have to tap into the participants' military culture and service. AOPC



Veterans Treatment Court awareness and mentor recruitment

Supreme Court of Pennsylvania Justice **Debra Todd** delivered a powerful message in two new videos highlighting <u>Veterans Treatment Court (VTC</u>) as well as stressing the importance and critical need for <u>volunteer</u> <u>veteran mentors</u>.

The videos were produced by AOPC/Communications with the cooperation of several county courts, participants, graduates, mentors, probation, judicial staff and treatment court coordinators.

"The Supreme Court of Pennsylvania is committed to doing everything we can to support the men and women who have served our country as they transition back to civilian life," said Justice Todd.

This rehabilitative court helps veterans by combining treatment and personal accountability, with the goal of breaking the cycle of addiction and criminal behavior.

"Veterans Courts truly help our veterans find their way back home," added Justice Todd. The videos provide the opportunity to hear directly from participants and graduates how VTC has given them their life back. One of the common themes participants cite along their journey is the critical role a veteran mentor plays in their success.

Mentors are veterans who share common experiences with the Veterans Court participants, and who volunteer their time to support VTC participants navigating the court, treatment and Veterans Affairs systems.

According to Justice Todd, "Veterans deeply value their military experience and share a bond with their fellow vets. The mentor component builds upon this camaraderie; it is unique, and it is one of the key ingredients to the success of our Veterans Courts."

Watch the videos now or learn more about volunteering as a mentor at <u>veterans.pacourts.us</u>. AOPC

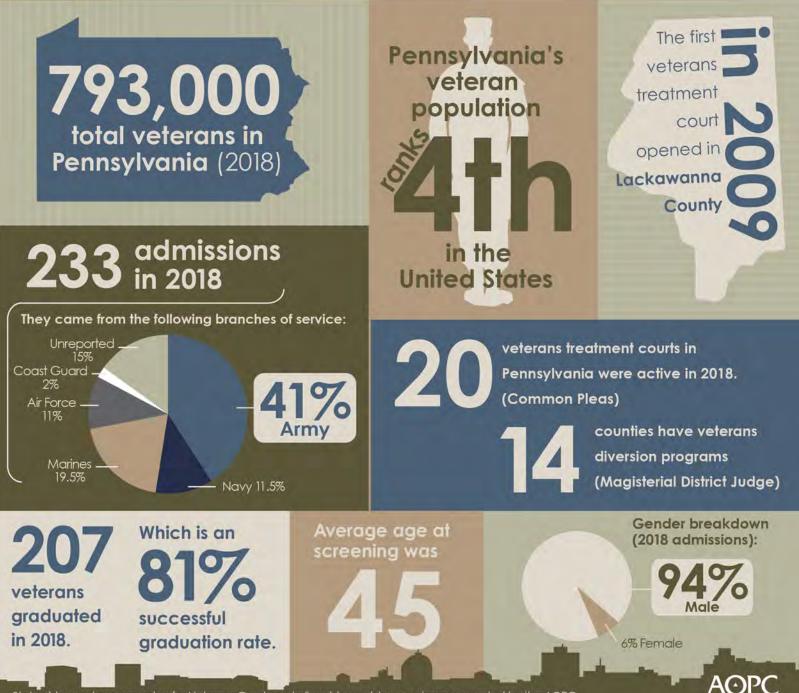
Pennsylvania's Veterans Treatment Courts Make a Difference for Veterans



What are Veterans Treatment Courts?

Veterans Courts assist veterans who are charged with crimes and are struggling with addiction, mental illness or co-occurring disorders. Veterans Court participants:

- 1) Appear before the judge on a regular basis
- 2) Gain support and guidance from veteran mentors
- 3) Receive supervision by specialized probation officers
- 4) Get treatment and support to address underlying problems often caused by post-traumatic stress disorder
- 5) Work closely with the VA Veterans Justice Outreach coordinators



Statewide court programming for Veterans Courts and all problem-solving courts are supported by the AOPC.

Veterans Treatment Court participant pays it forward as a mentor

When Ally Murr was honorably discharged from the U.S. Army in 2010, she found herself unable to cope with her severe post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), turning to drugs and alcohol to try to numb the pain.

Racking up a lengthy list of charges, she found herself in and out of jail. After receiving her worst charges, she landed before Huntingdon County President Judge **George Zanic**.

"That's when Judge Zanic heard that I was a veteran - no one had ever bothered to ask that before. He had sympathy for me."

"As a veteran, it's hard to explain the bond, no matter what branch you were in, there is this deep bond you have with each other. I don't know how to put it into words."

Ally was transferred from Huntingdon to Dauphin County where she was enrolled in their Veterans Treatment Court (VTC) program.

Last month, Judge **William Tully** and her former probation officer, Brian Wagner, watched with pride as Ally recounted her journey during an interview in the very same courtroom she used to sit in as a participant as compared to now as a mentor to other participants.

"Being a mentor is more rewarding than anything money could buy...to see another veteran in a dark place and be able to help them grow mentally, emotionally and spiritually is incredible," she said.



Ally Murr, program paritcipant and Veteran Treatment Court mentor

I have a mentee and she is actually a mom too, and I've been able to use what I've been through to give her hope and strength."

When talking about the profound, life-changing impact that her probation officer and Judge Tully had on her life, she was asked why that program worked when nothing else did.

"That was also the first time in my life an authority figure looked at me and had hope, and that means the world to people like me who were struggling so much," Ally said.

When asked what advice she would give to other veterans struggling with addiction, she said, "In training, we are taught we have to control the situation... and you can apply that to your recovery by taking control of your own life, no matter how bad the situation you've gotten yourself in."

Not only has Ally turned her life around, but she's now made it her life purpose to help other veterans and addicts who are struggling like she was.

Celebrating three years in recovery, Ally also works for a nonprofit, Just For Today (JFT) as a veteran services coordinator and is currently working towards getting her bachelor's degree in social work - which she hopes to use to become a therapist for other veterans struggling with PTSD and addiction. AOPC

PENNSYLVANIA VETERANS TREATMENT COURTS

Veterans Treatment Courts (VTC) are rigorous **12-24 month programs** that assist justice-involved veterans struggling with addiction, mental health issues such as post-traumatic stress disorder or co-occurring disorders as a result of their service to this country.

VTC PARTICIPANTS -

- · Appear before their judge on a regular basis
- · Receive support and guidance from veteran mentors
- · Are intensely supervised by specialized probation officers
- · Receive treatment from Veterans Affairs or local treatment providers

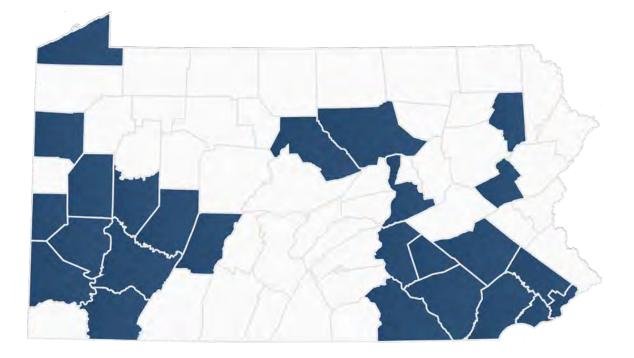
Veteran mentors are volunteer veterans who act as role models for the veterans in the program by coaching and guiding them throughout the process. The shared experiences of another veteran is critical in helping the participant connect to and maintain treatment, regain control of his/ her life and successfully complete the program.

"As Americans, we owe a debt of gratitude to our military veterans. Veterans Courts help veterans by combining treatment and personal accountability, with the goal of breaking the cycle of addiction and criminal behavior."

Pennsylvania Supreme Court Justice Debra Todd

WHY DO WE NEED VETERANS TREATMENT COURTS?

- With nearly 800,000 veterans, Pennsylvania has the fourth-largest population of veterans in the country.
- "They are our best citizens, they raised their right hand and swore to protect and defend our country.
 It is our duty to help make them become our best citizens once again."
 - Philadelphia Municipal Court President Judge Patrick Dugan, Army veteran



Pennsylvania currently has 25 VTCs throughout the state.

BENEFITS FOR THE VETERANS:

- · Becoming clean and sober
- · Reducing their chances of reoffending
- Receiving treatment for PTSD, addiction and/or other issues
- Gaining employment and skills
- Improving relationships with families and friends
- Becoming a positive contributor in the community
- Possibly having charges dismissed or expunged

BENEFITS FOR THE COMMUNITY:

- Saving costs on law enforcement and jail services
- Maintaining a safe community
- Preserving the family unit
- · Keeping children and spouses safe
- Reducing homelessness

Learn more or volunteer to be a mentor at veterans.pacourts.us





The Supreme Court of Pennsylvania recognizes the contributions of jurists who have served in the United States military and who continue to serve in the Pennsylvania Judiciary.



Judge Craig Trebilcock

York County

- Served as a JAG officer from 1988–2018
- Retired in 2018 after 30 years of service
- Stationed in West Germany
- Deployments to the Balkans in 1997, Iraq in 2003, Congo 2012–2013 and deployment from the bench 2015–2016 to Afghanistan

"Military service has made me a better judge, as it taught me to not take for granted the rule of law that characterizes our system of justice. A system like ours where legal outcomes are based purely on law and facts, rather than favoritism, discrimination, bias and bribery is a rarity in the world."

Judge Richard Thomas

York County

- Retired as Lieutenant
- Stationed on the USS John Marshall (SSN-611) submarine in the early 1980s

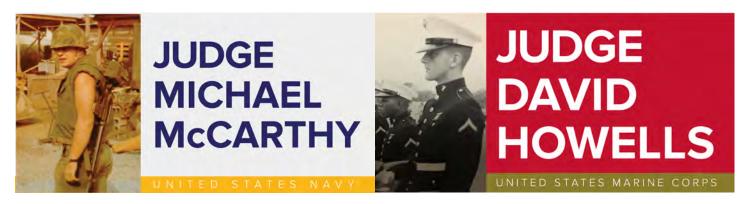
JUDGE

RICHARD

THOMAS

- Served as a nuclear trained submarine officer during the Cold War
- Mission was to observe and monitor Soviet submarines and ships in the Atlantic Ocean and the Mediterranean Sea while remaining undetected

"Being in the military shapes you for a lifetime; it certainly did for me. You learn discipline, but more importantly, you learn to take responsibility for your actions."



Judge Michael McCarthy

Allegheny County

- Served as a Combat Engineer with the Navy Seabees
- Received the Navy Combat Badge and a Bronze Star
- Deployed to Vietnam from 1970–1971

Judge David Howells Lehigh County

- Served from 1977–1983
- Presidential Security Marine for President Carter stationed at Camp David



Judge Wade Kagarise

Blair County

- Served as an Army Reserve Infantryman from 1990–1996
- Completed basic training and infantry school at Fort Benning, Georgia

"My military service was the initiation of a lifelong commitment to public service. I urge young adults to consider military service as a way to give back to our country or alternatively to find other ways to serve their communities."

Judge Leonard G. Brown, III

Lancaster County

- Retired in 2019 after 28 years of service
- Served during his early years as an airborne combat engineer
- Transitioned to the Army Reserve Judge Advocate General's Corp (JAG)
- Ended career working with the U.S. Africa Command in Stuttgart Germany



President Judge Edward Reibman

Lehigh County

• Served in the U.S. Army Reserves from 1969–1975



Judge Christopher Kalacinski Potter County

- Served as a U.S. Army Military Police Officer and Investigator from 2008–2016
- Stationed at Schofield, Hawaii 2008–2013
- Deployed to Afghanistan from 2012–2013

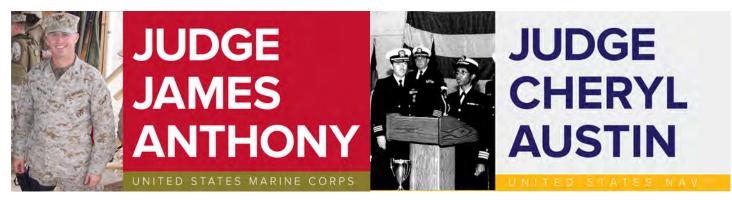


Snyder and Union Counties

Served in the Military Police Corp from 1975–1978

- Commissioned a Lieutenant, U.S. Army, Infantry 1981
- Served in the National Guard and Reserves as an Infantry, Armor and JAG officer until 1995 and resigned as a Major

- Senior Judge Allan Tereshko Philadelphia County
- Served from 1963-1967



Judge James Anthony

Lehigh County

- Commissioned a Second Lieutenant in the U.S. Marine Corps Reserve in 1981
- Retired at the rank of Colonel in 2009
- Served in both active duty and reserve capacities, including service in Okinawa from 1984–1985 (one year), and Iraq from 2004–2005 (seven months) and 2006–2007 (two months)



Judge Miles Bixler

Served from 1976–1981

• Rank: Hull Technician 1st Class

• Made four deployments aboard the aircraft carrier

USS Saratoga to the Mediterranean Sea

Lancaster County

JUDGE MILES BIXLER

Judge Cheryl Austin

Montgomery County

- Retired as a Captain
- Served for 24 years—seven active duty and 17 in Reserves
- Entered the Navy Reserve Officer Training Corps in its first class of women while she was an undergraduate student at Northwestern University



Judge Michael Toomey

Northumberland County

- Retired from active Army and Army Reserve duty in 2004
- Military Police Corps
- Rank: Master Sergeant
- Deployed to Iraq for 12 months
- Served in Operation Desert Storm in 1991 and in Operation Iraqi Freedom from 2003–2004



Judge Daniel Wallace

Mercer County

- Graduated from West Point in 1988
- Served from 1988–1992
- Deployed for combat during Operation Desert Storm

Judge Tim Kreiger Westmoreland Countv

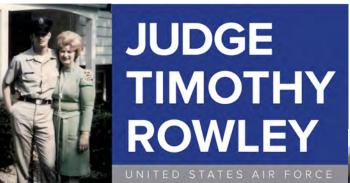
- Served from 1985-1989
- USS Pensacola (LSD-38)
- Rank: Lieutenant



Senior Judge Gene Cohen

Philadelphia County

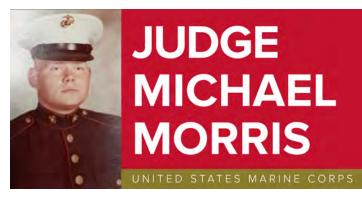
- Served in the Military Police Corps from 1964–1968
- Rank: Captain



Judge Timothy Rowley

Berks County

 Served in the U.S. Air Force Military Police Corps from 1974–1980



Judge Michael Morris

Clearfield County

- Served from 1973-1977
- Stationed for two years on the aircraft carrier Saratoga including deployments to the Mediterranean, Northern Africa and the Middle East
- Stationed two years at Camp Lejeune

Judge James Lillis

Berks County

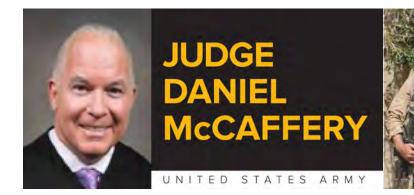
- Retired from PA Air National Guard as Brigadier General after serving in the Guard and U.S. Air Force from 1974–2004
- Served five years active duty as Minuteman Missile Crew Commander
- Deployed as a NATO Commander for Operations Allied Force during the Kosovo conflict and for Operation Decisive Endeavor, Bosnia-Herzegovina
- Served as Vice Commander, 193d Special Operations Wing, Middletown, during Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Force



Judge Mark Martin Cumberland County

- Retired as a Colonel after 30 years of service
- Served in active and reserve duty from 1985–2015
- Served as infantry officer during nine years active duty
- Military Police and civil affairs assignments during 21 years reserve time
- Stationed three and one half years in West Germany during the end of the Cold War and was there when the wall came down
- Served in the Global War on Terrorism, deploying twice to Iraq and twice to Afghanistan

"My military service and years abroad has significantly shaped and refined my world view, as I have had the opportunity to learn about and interact with people from dozens of cultures throughout the world, from regions such as Central America and Europe, to the Middle East. I believe that my experiences with people from so many diverse groups have helped me to better relate to those from other countries who have business in my court, and hopefully put them at ease while in my court."



Judge Daniel McCaffery

Philadelphia County

- Served on active duty from 1983–1986
- Joined the Army at 18 years old and proudly served with the 1st Cavalry Division
- Selected to attend West Point Prep
- Served in the Army Reserves in the 304th Military Intelligence Unit from 1987–1989

Judge Michael Thatcher

Allegheny County

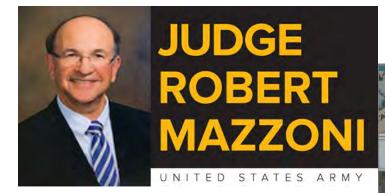
- Graduated from the Naval Academy in 2006
- Served as a U.S. Marine Corps Infantry Officer for 13 years

JUDGE

MICHAEL

THATCHER

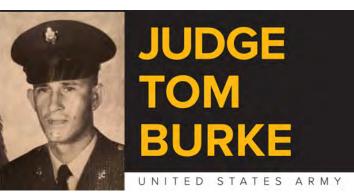
- Deployed to Afghanistan in 2008 and 2010 in Helmand Province with 1st Battalion 6th Marine Regiment
- Served as Company Commander for Kilo Company 3rd Battalion 25th Marine Regiment, a reserve unit based in Pittsburgh
- Currently the Battalion Executive Officer for $3^{\rm rd}$ Battalion $25^{\rm th}$ Marine Regiment



Senior Judge Mazzoni

Lackawanna County

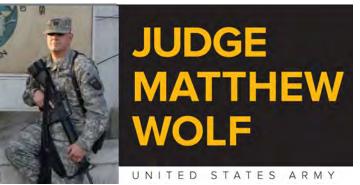
- Served in the U.S. Army National Guard from 1970–1976
- Rank: E4



Judge Tom Burke

Luzerne County

- Served from 1969-1971
- Deployed to Vietnam 1970–1971
- Rank: Specialist 5
- Unit: Medical Command
- Received the Bronze Star Medal for meritorious service



Judge Matthew Wolf

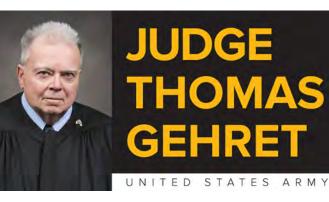
Philadelphia Municipal Court

- Currently serves as a Major in the U.S. Army Reserve, JAG Corps
- Joined the Army Reserves at age 35 in 2003
- Deployed to Iraq in 2006 and Afghanistan in 2008
- In Afghanistan, he served as the Rule of Law adviser to the sole lawyer overseeing the Afghan National Police

"The Army has enriched my life. The first big thing the Army teaches you is about doing things for more than just yourself. You think of others. There's no place for ego. Leadership comes from that. You have the back of your fellow soldiers and they have yours. As a judge, you continue to work as a team with the staff, the parties, attorneys and witnesses to achieve justice. It is a wonderful thing if it works right and just like the Army, justice is not about me being the judge, it is about being a member of a team. A judge is like a high-ranking officer and that judge has to guide people through a challenge. It is about ensuring a fair process and a fair result."

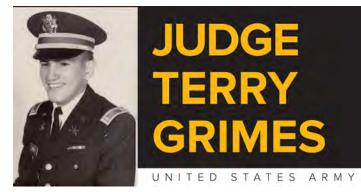






Judge Daniel Davis Mercer County

• Served in the Navy Reserves for 24 years



- Senior Judge Terry Grimes Greene County
- Rank: Major
- Artillery Branch
- Active duty 1966–1969, Reserves 1969–1975+

"It was my experience in the military that inspired me to pursue a legal career. It provided me with leadership skills and the necessity to be able to assess a situation and make instantaneous decisions. This training has served me well as a jurist."



Senior Judge Louis Farina

Lancaster County

- Served from 1969-1973
- JAG Captain

Judge Thomas Gehret

Philadelphia Municipal Court

- Served as Corporal in the U.S. Army
- Stationed in Vietnam 1971–1972, serving in Qui Nhon, Phu Bai, Cam Ranh Bay and Long Binh

"While I opposed the war, I felt it was my duty to serve. Military services instills discipline and a sense of accomplishment which can benefit you in any future career."



President Judge Patrick Dugan

Philadelphia Municipal Court

- Joined the Army in 1981
- Reenlisted in 2003 after a 14-year break in response to 9/11 attacks
- Served in Iraq, Afghanistan, Panama and South Korea

"I felt that it was my duty to go back and assist in our war on terrorism. My military service is who I am. The military instilled in me the confidence to do anything, to do what is conceived as impossible. My military background has assisted me greatly every day on the bench; the leadership taught in the Airborne Infantry is guiding me in leading Philadelphia Municipal Court as President Judge. I have been able to continue to assist my fellow service-members as I lead a dedicated team in Veterans Courts. I am blessed to be in the position I am today – and the road I traveled is who I am."



Senior Judge Michael Dunlavey

Erie County

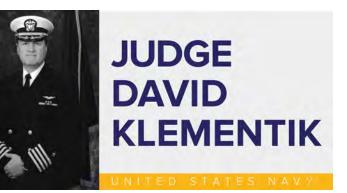
- Entered active duty in the Army serving in Germany and Vietnam and joined the Army Reserve during law school
- Commanded soldiers at multiple levels and was selected as Deputy Commanding General (DCG) of the Army's Intelligence and Security Command and the Army's Assistant Deputy Chief of Staff (CoS) for Intelligence
- Promoted to Major General and chosen by NSA Director, Mike Hayden, to be his assistant at NSA headquarters
- Recalled to active duty after 9/11 and was chosen by Secretary of Defense, Donald Rumsfeld, in 2002 to create and establish an interrogation system and center at Guantanamo Bay
- Concluded his distinguished military career in April of 2004, following a tour at the CIA as the Associate Director for Homeland Security



Judge Jeff Conrad Lancaster County

- Served from 1985–1990
- Rank: First Lieutenant

"Serving my country as a United States Marine Corps Officer was a dream come true. As a child, I met an uncle of mine who was a Marine and his walk, talk and bearing was different; he moved with confidence and took life in stride. The training I received as a Marine helped me to realize that the human body is made to do so much more than we think and that groups of hard-charging Americans infused with esprit de corps, and God's blessing, can conquer any enemy. Civilian world translation: there is no problem too big to handle."



Senior Judge David Klementik Somerset County

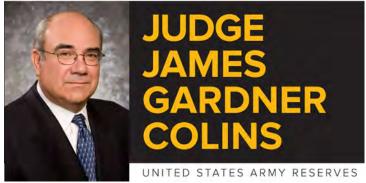
- Served as a Captain
- Served six years active duty, 20 years reserve
- Flew the A-6 Intruder aboard the USS Forrestal for two deployment cruises with over 200 carrier landings



Judge Rich Knecht

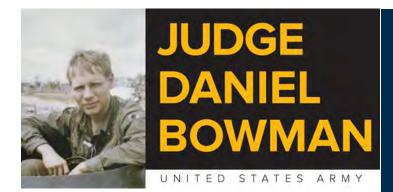
Columbia County

- Served in the Military Police Corp from 1974–1977
- Stationed at Fort Ord California with the 7th Military Police Company, attached to the 7th Infantry Division
- Received advanced training in the guarding of high ranking personnel and providing security for major troop movements
- Participated in two of the first joint military exercises conducted in the Mojave Desert



Senior Judge James Gardner Colins Superior Court

- Served in the U.S. Army Reserves for eight years
- Honorably discharged with the rank of Captain in 1983
- Assigned to various civil affairs units during his service



Judge Daniel Bowman

Adams County

- Joined the Army at 17 years old in 1969
- Served in Vietnam as a Sgt. E-5 with 9th Inf., 25th Inf. and E Troop 17 Cav. 173 Airborne Brigade
- He was motivated to serve by the service of his father, seven uncles and two aunts who served in World War II
- He believes that his Catholic education and the words of President John F. Kennedy inspired him to serve: "And so, my fellow Americans-ask not what your country can do for you-ask what you can do for your country. My fellow citizens of the world-ask not what America will do for you but what together we can do for the freedom of man."

"I have learned to never discount anyone. Everyone has strong and weak points. Work with whomever you have to deal with, form a relationship in a joint effort towards the goal you seek. Be fair, be civil but don't be afraid to use any tools that you need to make good and fair decisions."



We salute and pay tribute to your service.

AOPC/Communications thanks the judges featured in this issue for responding to requests for information about their military service. We also wish to say a special thank you to employees within the court system who have served or continue to serve, in the United States military:

John M. Skocik, Army, 1988–1994 Mark Whitworth, Air Force, 1981–1985 Barbara A. Sleva, Army, 1981–2003 Rich Ammons, Army, 2003–2004 Steven L. Yeager, Marine Corps, 1982–1986 Daryl Wilson Walker, Army, 1980–2012 Steve Sondheimer, Navy, 1980–1987 Mike Sponsler, Air Force, 1977–1981 Jake Presley, Army, 2000–2013 Mark Franklin, Marine Corps, 1984–1987 Jennifer A. Horn, Navy, 1995–1997 Brian Darbrow, Air Force, 1992–1999 Jennifer J. Love, Air Force, 1999–2001 Richard Long, Army Reserve, 1989–2019 Leo Zuvich, Marine Corp Reserve, 1984–1990 Sharon Rogers, Army, 1984–1992 B. Jon Sherman, Marines John Witherow, Army National Guard, 1984–1991 Suzanne M. Creavey, Army, 1981–1983 Jeffrey M. Wasileski, Navy, 1985–2011 Bruce J. Ferguson, Air Force, 1981–1985 Daniel A. Durst, Army National Guard, 1989–1993

