

**Speaker Resumes**  
**NAPCO Webinar • Thursday, June 17, 2021; 3 PM (EDT)**  
***Presiding Judge / Court Executive Officer Teambuilding...***  
***Blending Governance & Leadership Principles, Roles, Responsibilities***

**Hon. Michelle D. Earley**

... is the Administrative and Presiding Judge of the Cleveland Municipal Court. She was appointed to the Court on April 20, 2009, and elected the following November. By a unanimous vote of the Judges in December 2017, she became AJ / PJ making her responsible for the business and overall direction of the Court.

“With the assistance of my colleagues, my goal is to continue moving the Court forward with new technology and innovative practices,” said Judge Earley.

Judge Earley attended The Ohio State University and received a Bachelor of Science degree in Business Administration with a concentration in Information Systems. She then chose to move to Cleveland to attend Case Western Reserve University School of Law.

Judge Earley possesses a strong commitment to the law and the community. Her commitment to serving the community began with her career path of county prosecutor. She successfully prosecuted a large number of criminal cases and, shortly thereafter, became responsible for the training and development of trial lawyers. Judge Earley then became the project coordinator for the East Cleveland Gang Free Schools Grant, which was geared toward reducing gangs and their level of influence on the youth in that area. In that capacity she utilized and, in some cases, created programs that provided job training, life skills and anger management classes. The youth were rewarded by playing on a basketball team Judge Earley created called, “The East Cleveland Cavaliers.” The programs and strategies created in this project were later utilized throughout the country as one of the project models to reduce youth involvement in gangs.

At the completion of the grant, Judge Earley was promoted to Grand Jury and Region 3 Supervisor, where her daily responsibilities required that she review cases with a high level of objectivity that preserved the rule of law, while still seeking justice on behalf of the citizens of Cuyahoga County.

Becoming a judge was a continuation of her commitment to the law and her commitment to serve the community. Judge Earley believes that it is truly an honor and at the same time, humbling to be in this position and to serve the public in such capacity. Since joining the Court, Judge Earley has presided over the Dedicated Domestic Violence Docket since 2010. She currently presides over the Domestic Violence High Risk Docket. She was appointed to the Commission on the Rules of Superintendence for Ohio Courts in 2012 and reappointed in 2015. Judge Earley was also selected to serve on the Ohio Supreme Court’s Grand Jury Task Force. She currently serves on the Case Western Reserve University School of Law’s Diversity Committee. Additionally, she has completed coursework to become an Advanced Science and Technology Adjudication Resource Program (ASTAR) Fellow.

“Collectively we are no better than the least among us,” she says, a belief instilled in her at an early age by her mother, whom she calls her best friend. To that end, she is active in the community and thrives on reaching out to disadvantaged or troubled youth through her church, Olivet Institutional Baptist Church, and other community organizations, like her sorority Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc.

**Russell R. Brown, III, Esq.**

... is the Court Administrator of the Cleveland Municipal Court. He has held that position since 2006. He joined the court in 1997 as a magistrate and mediation coordinator. Brown spent the prior seven years in court management positions, including special projects officer, liaison between the court operations and its IT department, and deputy court administrator. Prior to joining the judicial branch, he practiced law with a small firm before serving the city of Cleveland as assistant city prosecutor, followed by assistant director of law serving as counsel to the city's departments of economic development, community development and city planning.

Mr. Brown is a fellow of the National Center for State Court's Institute for Court Management, and a 2006 recipient of the Director's Award of Merit for Applied Research for his project on the subject of expungement of collateral sanctions, stating that greater fairness in the criminal justice system is warranted for past offenses where deserving persons have paid their debt to society. He is on the faculty of the Ohio Judicial College and teaches leadership in the state's NCSC certified court management program. He is also a member of the Executive Session for State Court Leaders in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, meeting at the Harvard Kennedy School between 2008 and 2011. In 2015, he was part of the National Center for State Courts' consultant team that studied and submitted recommendations to the Missouri Supreme Court regarding municipal court reforms following the Ferguson Missouri riots and U.S. Department of Justice civil rights investigation occasioned by the Michael Brown shooting in August 2014.

Mr. Brown is past president of the Ohio Association for Court Administration and a member of the National Association for Court Management. He is licensed to practice law in the state of Ohio and a member of the Ohio State, Cleveland Metropolitan, and Norman S. Minor Bar Associations. He is an Air Force veteran and a member of the Lockheed C-5A Galaxy 1000 Hour Club with travels to numerous countries and regions of the world. He has a BA degree in Business Administration from Kent State University and his JD degree from Case Western Reserve University School of Law.

**Hon. Julio L. Mendez**

... is the Assignment Judge for the Superior Court of New Jersey in Vicinage 1, Atlantic and Cape May Counties. In this capacity he oversees the efficient operation of the Courts for both counties. Judge Mendez was appointed Assignment Judge by Chief Justice Stuart Rabner effective November 1, 2011.

Prior to his current assignment, Judge Mendez served as a Superior Court Judge for Vicinage 15, including the counties of Cumberland, Gloucester, and Salem. He first served two years in the Criminal Division, then seven years in the Family Division. In June of 2005, Judge Mendez was named Presiding Judge of the Family Part for Vicinage 15, serving in that capacity until he was named Assignment Judge.

Judge Mendez has served as chairman for the Children in Court Committee of the Conference of Family Presiding Judges. Additionally, he has served as a member of the New Jersey Supreme Court Family Practice Committee and various other state-wide conferences and committees. He is also a member the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges. Judge Mendez has also served as an instructor at Judicial College. He is a member of the Board of NAPCO - National Association for Presiding Judges and Court Executive Officers.

In his capacity as Assignment Judge, Judge Mendez is a member of the New Jersey Judiciary Judicial Council and a member of the Judiciary's Management and Operations Committee. He previously served as Chair of the Supreme Court Committee on Municipal Court Operations, Fines, and Fees, and served as

Chair of the NJ Municipal Court Regionalization Subcommittee of the Supreme Court Municipal Court Reform Working Group. Judge Mendez is the Chair of the Drug Court Working Group.

In 1981, Judge Mendez received his J.D. from Rutgers School of Law-Camden and in 1978, obtained his B.A. in Political Science from Glassboro State College (now Rowan University).

**Howard H. Berchtold, Jr.**

... is the Trial Court Administrator for the Superior Court of New Jersey in Vicinage 1, Atlantic and Cape May Counties, a judicial district of both limited and general jurisdiction, with 42 judges and 550 plus staff members. As the highest-ranking nonjudicial staff executive, Mr. Berchtold is in charge of all court operations, including financial management, human resources, information systems, case management, probation services, jury utilization, facilities, equipment, records management, community outreach and statistical analysis.

Mr. Berchtold has served on various statewide committees and boards over the years. Among them are the Strategic Planning Committee for State Unification, the Task Force for Municipal Court Improvement, the Municipal Court Administrator Certification Board, the Advisory Group on Self-Representation, Access and Fairness Committee and the Joint Committee on Criminal Justice Reform. Currently, he sits on the Judicial Council's Budget & Planning Committee, the Judiciary's Administrative Council, the Council's Education and Training Committee, the Hiring Review Board, and the Drug Court Advisory Committee.

Mr. Berchtold is a former faculty member of Widener University Law Center, served on the Board of Advisors for the University's Court Administration Certification Program, and currently sits on the Advisory Board for Criminal Justice Graduate Studies at The Richard Stockton University of New Jersey. He is a 1986 Fellow of the Institute for Court Management and is the 2012 recipient of the ICM Fellows Star Award. Serving on the Institute's faculty for over 25 years, he is certified faculty for caseflow management and also is a Facilitator/Faculty member for the Fellows Masters class. He is currently a member of the ICM Advisory Council. Starting in 2019, he has served as faculty for the District of Columbia Courts Management Training Program. An active member of the Mid-Atlantic Association for Court Management since its inception, Mr. Berchtold served as President in 2008. He is also an active member of the National Association for Court Management, often honored to present at their annual conferences. Most recently, Mr. Berchtold has become active with the National Association of Presiding Judges and Court Executive Officers. In 2019, Mr. Berchtold was honored to be inducted into the Warren E. Burger Society.

**Hon. John J. Russo**

... is a senior trial judge with the Court of Common Pleas of Ohio in Cuyahoga County serving the Greater Cleveland metropolitan area, and Chairperson of the NAPCO Board of Directors. He recently completed a four-year term as the Administrative Judge and Presiding Judge (AJ/PJ) of the Court having been elected unanimously by his 34 colleagues in 2014. As the Court's AJ/PJ he was responsible for appointing committees, coordinating the development of Court policies, and overseeing the four common pleas divisions which include the General, Domestic Relations, Juvenile and Probate Divisions. He had specific responsibilities to administer the dockets in the General Division, the highest-level trial level in the state. Cuyahoga County is the most populous of Ohio's eighty-eight counties. It is home to 1.2 million people (2010 census).

Judge Russo began his career on the Court in 2005. His calendar since then has included felony-level criminal cases and civil cases brought before the court. Prior to assuming the bench, he practiced as a civil and criminal litigator for 12 years as a principal in his own firm, *Polito & Russo LLP*.

Judge Russo also serves as an Adjunct Professor at the Cleveland-Marshall College of Law, a member of various education committees for the Ohio Supreme Court, Ohio Judicial College, Ohio Common Pleas Judges Association, the National Business Institute, National Center for State Courts, and as a faculty member at the St. Edward High School. He was president of NAPCO in 2016 and hosted the First Annual Conference for the Association in Cleveland and was elected as Chair of the Board of Directions in August 2019.

Among his other key achievements, Judge Russo has served as Co-Chair of the Ohio Judicial College, Member of the National Center for State Courts' Trends in State Courts Committee, Chair of the Ohio Lawyers' Fund for Client Protection, Member of the Ohio Supreme Court Death Penalty Task Force, Member of the Public Health Committee of the Supreme Court to re-write the Public Health Policy Bench Book, Chair, Cuyahoga County Security Committee, Trustee of the Cleveland Metropolitan Bar Association, Cleveland-Marshall Law Alumni Association and Westshore Bar Association, and Member of the Ohio Judicial Conference Judicial Ethics and Professionalism Committee.

Judge Russo graduated from John Carroll University in 1987 with a B.S.B.A Degree and from the Cleveland-Marshall College of Law at Cleveland State University in 1992 with a Juris Doctorate Degree.

### **Gordon (Gordy) Griller**

... is the Executive Director of the National Association for Presiding Judges and Court Executive Officers (NAPCO), a nonprofit, public benefit corporation composed of state and local trial court leadership judges and court executives. He also works part-time with the National Center for State Courts' Court Consulting Services group, having retired in January 2020 as a Principal Court Management Consultant after 14 years of full-time service with the Center. His consulting engagements are wide-ranging, including caseflow management, operations, reengineering, court facility studies, strategic planning, efficiency analyses, systems and procedures, organizational development, as well as leadership programs for presiding judges, chief administrative officers, and program professionals in general, limited, and specialized courts.

Prior to his work with the Center, Mr. Griller held numerous private and public positions dedicated to trial court improvement and reform, including Vice President of Justice Practices for the State and Local Solutions Group at Affiliated Computer Systems (ACS), a division of the Xerox Corporation; the first Administrator of Trial Courts for the Judicial Branch of Arizona in Maricopa County (Greater Phoenix); Court Administrator for the Superior Court in Maricopa County; the first Judicial District Administrator of the Second Judicial District of Minnesota in Ramsey County (Greater St. Paul); and Court Administrator of the Municipal Court of Hennepin County, Minnesota (Greater Minneapolis) prior to the unification of Minnesota's state and local trial courts.

Additionally, Mr. Griller has served as President of the National Association of Trial Court Administrators where he co-chaired the Special Commission in the 1980s that created the National Association for Court Management (NACM), the largest professional association in the world dedicated to the improvement of trial court administration. He is a recipient of the National Center's *Warren E. Burger Award* for outstanding contributions to court administration, the National Conference of Metropolitan Courts' *Tom C. Clark Award*, NACM's *Award of Merit*, the Institute for Court Management's *Star Award*, and the Justice System Management Institute's *Ernest C. Friesen Award* for vision, leadership, and sustained commitment to excellence in the administration of justice.

Gordy holds a B.A. Degree in Political Science from the University of Minnesota, and a M.A. Degree in Public Administration from the Hubert H. Humphrey School of Public Affairs at the University of Minnesota (Minneapolis).