

Speaker Resumes

NAPCO Webinar • Thursday, May 1, 2025; 3:00 PM (EDT)

Adaptive Leadership in the World of Trial Courts

Mary C. McQueen

... recently retired as President of the National Center for State Courts (NCSC) after having led the organization since August 2004. The National Center, a nonprofit founded in 1971, operates as a think-tank, consultancy, research and educational organization focused on the improvement of state and local courts in America and courts, in general, throughout the world. As president, she also coordinated major national initiatives for the Conference of Chief Justices.

Prior to her 21-year tenure in leading the National Center, McQueen served as Washington's state court administrator from 1987 to 2004 and as director of Judicial Services for the Washington State Office of the Administrator for the Courts from 1979 to 1987. In 1995, she was elected president of the Conference of State Court Administrators, and she was chair of the Lawyer's Committee of the American Bar Association's Judicial Division. She has won numerous awards, including the American Judicature Society's Herbert Harley Award, the NCSC Innovation in Jury Management Award, and the John Marshall Award, presented by the ABA's Judicial Division in recognition of her contributions to the improvement of the administration of justice, judicial independence, justice reform and public awareness.

McQueen also received the ABA Judicial Division's Lawyers Conference 2016 Robert B. Yegge Award for Outstanding Contribution in the Field of Judicial Administration. She has served on numerous ABA committees and task forces and serves as secretary general of the International Organization on Judicial Training, consisting of 80 nations. NAPCO recognized her outstanding service to the nation's state court systems with a special resolution by the Board of Directors at the Association's Annual Leadership Academy and Conference in Denver, CO in August 2024. She is a member of the Washington and U.S. Supreme Court bars.

Her academic achievements include a Bachelor of Arts degree from the University of Georgia and a Juris Doctorate degree from Seattle University Law School.

James "Dan" Wallis

... serves as the trial court administrator for the Twenty Second Judicial Circuit of McHenry County, Illinois. He was appointed to that position in December, 2008. As court administrator, Wallis is responsible for all aspects of the court's operations, including

strategic planning, caseload management, court performance, budget, personnel, technology, jury management, and the office of special projects which encompasses drug court, mental health court and DUI court programs, probation and court services , and a variety of access to justice programs.

Prior to his current position, Walls served the Morrow County Courts in Ohio for nearly 10 years as an adult intensive probation officer, coordinator for the Morrow County substance abuse court, director of court support services, and eventually as court administrator.

He has an undergraduate degree in business management, a master's degree in justice management and is a certified court executive through the National Center for State Courts. As such, he is a Fellow of the Institute for Court Management. Wallis has expertise in operational assessments, access for self-represented litigants, court performance measurement, caseload management, court governance structure, specialty courts programs, community supervision, jury management and enterprise system implementation.

Hon. Toria J. Finch

... is a trial judge on the Harris County Criminal Court at Law (Greater Houston, TX). She was elected to the bench in November 2018. She is a first generation attorney from Nashville, TN. Judge Finch has held numerous leadership positions at the court, including Presiding Judge.

Prior to her judgeship, she served in private practice as the founder of the Finch Law Firm in Houston, and as a public lawyer, including as an assistant district attorney in Harris County, eventually rising to the level of felony prosecutor, juvenile detention chief, and misdemeanor court chief. Additionally, she has worked as an assistant juvenile public defender at the Travis County juvenile public defender's office in Austin, TX.

Judge Finch serves as an adjunct professor at the Thurgood Marshall School of Law at Texas Southern University in Houston; and adjunct professor in the paralegal studies program at Alvin Community College in Alvin, TX. She is also a former adjunct professor in the Juvenile Law Clinic at the University of Texas Law School in Austin. Currently, Judge Finch is the chairperson of the Advisory Committee for the Paralegal Studies Program at Alvin Community College.

Judge Finch earned a Bachelor's Degree in business marketing from Alabama A & M University and a Juris Doctorate from the Thurgood Marshall School of Law at Texas Southern University.

John Meeks

... is the Vice President for Professional Education and Director of the Institute for Court Management (ICM) at the National Center for State Courts. In these roles, he speaks at national and international conferences about leadership and management in courts, adult education, faculty development, and curriculum development.

Before he joined NCSC in 2006, he was director of the Supreme Court of Ohio Judicial College from 1996–2006 and a senior attorney at the Supreme Court of Florida Office of the State Courts Administrator from 1989–1996. As a member of the Florida Bar, he practiced law in Pensacola from 1985–1989.

Meeks earned a bachelor's degree from the University of the South, a law degree from the Stetson University College of Law, and a certificate of Art and Practice in Leadership Development from Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government.