

QUARTERLY

NEWSLETTER

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

2026 Annual Conference Welcome Letter.....Page 2

Communication & Resources.....Page 2

NAPCO Membership Survey.....Page 3

Committee Corner.....Page 4

Leadership Character in the Courts.....Page 4

Spotlight Productive Pair.....Page 4

Association Updates.....Page 4

Share our Newsletter.....Page 4

ANNUAL LEADERSHIP & CONFERENCE



The 2026 NAPCO Conference will be August 16-19, 2026 in Wilmington, DE! The theme for the 2026 conference is the "**250th Years of Judicial Independence and Adapting Justice to a New Century**" this is to coincide with the 250th anniversary of America. A letter from our host state of Delaware be found on page 2.

Welcome to Delaware

A LETTER FROM THE 2026 NAPCO PRESIDENT AND VICE PRESIDENT



Welcome to the 2026 NAPCO Annual Leadership Conference in Wilmington, Delaware

Dear Colleagues and Esteemed Guests,

I write on behalf of the National Association for Presiding Judges and Court Executive Officers (NAPCO) to invite you to attend our Annual Leadership Conference. The Conference takes place from August 16-19, 2026, and will be held in the vibrant city of Wilmington, Delaware. Lisa Robinson, Court Administrator of the Superior Court, and I are hosting the Conference.

The theme for the 2026 Conference will relate to America's 250th anniversary (semi-quincentennial), specifically "250th Years of Judicial Independence and Adapting Justice to a New Century."

Topics will include the effective responsible use of AI, effective administration of justice, AI technology, problem solving, and the Delaware Business Courts (the Delaware Court of Chancery and the Complex Commercial Division of the Delaware Superior Court). The conference agenda is designed to offer insightful educational opportunities and foster collaboration among court leaders. While the nationwide commemoration of America's 250th anniversary is an ongoing national initiative leading up to a major celebration in 2026, our discussions during the week will lay the groundwork for how the judiciary upholds the principles of justice that have guided our nation for nearly 250 years.

We encourage you to engage actively in the sessions, network with your peers, and enjoy the sights of Wilmington and the greater area.

Thank you for your dedication to the fair and effective administration of justice. We look forward to seeing you at the conference.

Warm regards,

Eric M. Davis, President Judge
Lisa Robinson, Court Administrator

COMMUNICATION AND RESOURCES CORNER

Recent Webinars

- The Life and Legacy of Ernie Friesen - **Leave a comment!**
- The Importance of Character in Leading
- Humor: An Important Leadership Tool

Podcasts

- ABA releases final report of its Task Force for American Democracy
- ABA 2025 Survey of Civic Literacy

White Papers and Guides

- How Courts Can Help Solve the Access to Justice Problem
- Cybersecurity Basics for Courts



IMPORTANT UPDATES

NAPCO MEMBERSHIP SURVEY

Over the summer, the Board launched a survey to complement and inform the update to the NAPCO strategic plan. Close to 50 people responded. Judges, court administrators and even some consultants answered the call.

What jumps out is that by and large the annual conferences are a hit. Over 93% of respondents rated NAPCO conferences as either excellent or good. Concerns were cost (too expensive, 50%) and specific suggestions regarding planning (i.e., "keep the conference in cooler locations") or conference topics ("address smaller courts").

Questions about NAPCO4Leaders.org revealed that membership are lukewarm about the website. Two-thirds said they used the website either occasionally or never. Nearly 12% responded they were not aware of the website. Content, organization and visibility were listed as possible improvements.

The results demonstrated an energy among members, with responses such as "I want to get more involved, thanks!" Half of respondents answered they would be interested in participating on a committee, although several people were surprised that NAPCO has committees. Fortunately, one of the goals for NAPCO in the new strategic plan is to reinvigorate the committees over the next three years.

There was in fact support for all three strategic goals: improving governance, committees, and membership. As one person opined, "Being inclusive should be paramount. The board should explore on-boarding for new members and board members."Interest in core topics like productive pairs and trial court leadership skills remains strong.

In summary, members believe that the organization is fulfilling its mission to support presiding judges and court executives, primarily through the annual conference. There's also strong interest in expanding NAPCO's appeal and outreach. To quote one more respondent: "NAPCO offers great information and education and helps bridge the gap between a Presiding Judge and Court Administrator.That relationship is so important and is built on trust. NAPCO helps this partnership flourish."

Committee Corner

If you are interested in being a committee member, please click here!

STANDING COMMITTEES

Finance

Marketing & Membership

Program & Education

Strategic Planning

Website



NAPCO committees serve as the vehicles for conducting the work and activities of NAPCO.

The committees provide ways to learn about NAPCO, meet other Bench Officers and Court professionals, learn about the court management profession at an executive level, and share expertise.

Consider this invitation to be a fully involved NAPCO member. This is a wonderful time to engage with NAPCO. There are a number of steps you can take to become involved, starting with thinking about what you might offer to NAPCO. A variety of committees, work groups, and projects await your involvement. Fill out this form if you are interested!

Leadership Character in the Courts

Personality reflects how we respond on a typical day; character is revealed on our hardest days. While fairness, integrity, and generosity are easy to demonstrate when circumstances are favorable, true leadership is tested when pressure is high and outcomes are uncertain (Adam Grant, Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania).

In the courts, presiding judges and court administrators exercise leadership daily under public scrutiny, limited resources, and competing demands. Their decisions do more than manage operations—they shape public trust in the justice system. For this reason, leadership character is not optional; it is foundational and essential.



Character is the core that guides how leaders perceive challenges, treat others, and make decisions when rules or precedent alone do not provide clear answers. Technical competence and legal expertise are essential, but they are insufficient without the character to apply them fairly, transparently, and responsibly.

Modern judicial leadership is no longer defined solely by position or authority. It is increasingly relational and ethical. Presiding judges shape court culture through how they exercise discretion, manage conflict, and model impartiality. Court administrators align people, processes, and resources with the court's mission, often navigating difficult tradeoffs that test values as much as skills.

Character matters most during moments of strain—when caseloads surge, unpopular decisions must be made, or fairness must be upheld despite external pressure. Ultimately, leadership character in the courts is measured by the consistency between values and actions, especially on the hardest days, when public confidence depends on it most.

SPOTLIGHT
PRODUCTIVE PAIR

"We believe a productive pair relationship between the Presiding Judge and the Court Executive Officer is built on trust, clear roles and responsibilities, and a shared accountability for the effective administration of the court. It balances judicial leadership with executive management, allowing each to operate within their distinct authority while collaborating closely on vision, strategy, policy, and operations.



Open communication, mutual respect, and alignment around the court's mission ensure timely decision-making, consistent messaging, and a unified approach to serving the public, staff, and justice partners."

Hon. Pamela Gates & Ray BIllotte



Association Updates:

The National Association for Court Management (NACM) is pleased to continue our dual-membership partnership with NAPCO, offering eligible members a discounted rate on both NACM and NAPCO memberships. NACM's 2026 conference theme is America 250: Preserving the Rule of Law and Judicial Independence

- Midyear Conference - March 15–17 in Albuquerque, NM
- Annual Conference - July 12–16 in Jacksonville, FL

SHARE OUR NEWSLETTER!

Thank you to all out dedicated NAPCO members. We invite you to share this newsletter with anyone who may be interested in attending the NAPCO conference or becoming a NAPCO member. If you know someone who would like to join NAPCO, please email Lauren Roth at lroth@ncsc.org.