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**WESTERN DISTRICT OF NEW YORK**

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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**WESTERN DISTRICT OF NEW YORK**  
**CONCLUDES 125<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY COMMEMORATION**

BUFFALO and ROCHESTER, N.Y. – The United States District Court for the Western District of New York, under the leadership of Chief Judge Elizabeth A. Wolford and Clerk of Court Mary C. Loewenguth, has concluded the year-long commemoration of its 125<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. Established on May 12, 1900, the district celebrated its quasquicentennial throughout 2025. The district's Anniversary Committee, comprised of attorneys and court staff and co-chaired by Magistrate Judges Jeremiah J. McCarthy and Marian W. Payson (ret.), held a variety of events to honor the district's rich legacy and ongoing commitment to equal justice, public service, and civic education.

In January and February, the district began its 125<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Civic Outreach Program. More than 100 attorneys volunteered in 18 public and charter high schools across the district to teach a curriculum centered around the Supreme Court's decision in *West Virginia State Board of Education v. Barnette*, a First Amendment opinion authored by Associate Justice Robert H. Jackson. More than 1,000 students participated. The initiative culminated in a student essay and moot court competition presided over by three federal judges and held at the Robert H. Jackson United States Courthouse.

During this time, the district also began collecting and posting video tributes and remembrances from attorneys, law clerks, and court staff. These vignettes include personal reflections about experiences in the Western District of New York, candid observations, summaries of notable cases, trial tales, and humorous stories. This collection memorializes the lessons of professionalism, mentorship, and collegiality that have defined the Western District of New York.

In April, the district began premiering a series of videos it produced featuring panel discussions about past judges who shaped its recent history. Moderated by prominent local journalists, the four videos feature reflections on the judges' judicial philosophies, courtroom demeanors, and lasting influences, as recalled by judges and attorneys who appeared before and worked with these respected jurists. Well attended premieres of the videos were held in April, July, September, and December at the Strong Museum of Play, the Kenneth B. Keating Federal Courthouse, and the Robert H. Jackson United States Courthouse. The district also recognized and celebrated 50-year members of the bar at two of the events.

The highlight of the commemoration came in May, when the district welcomed Chief Justice John G. Roberts, Jr., of the United States Supreme Court. Chief Justice Roberts headlined a Fireside Chat and Anniversary Dinner. More than 600 people attended the sold-out, nationally televised event, during which Chief Justice Roberts offered a rare glimpse into the workings of the Supreme Court and regaled the audience with personal stories and reflections.

The district returned to civic education and outreach in September and October. In September, it hosted the James Otis Lecture Series, an annual high-school student program aimed at examining landmark Supreme Court cases. Students this year met and heard from Phoebe Ferguson and Keith Plessy, two descendants of the parties in *Plessy v. Ferguson*. In October, the district sponsored a Continuing Legal Education program and welcomed a panel of the United States Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit, which held a special argument session at the Keating Federal Courthouse in Rochester.

The district concluded its quasquicentennial celebration in December, with holiday events in both Buffalo and Rochester, where the judges of the Western District of New York presented their annual attorney awards to those individuals whose skill, professionalism, integrity, and commitment to service and justice represent the ideals that have defined the Western District of New York for more than 125 years. Awards for pro bono work were presented to Bernadette Gargano, Sean M. O'Brien, Anna Marie Richmond, Stephen G. Schwarz, and Gregory Zini. Awards for criminal defense work were presented to Paul G. Dell, Justin D. Ginter, and Jessica Lauren Naclerio. Awards for special service to the district were presented to Leann Aboudiab, Stephanie Belasik, Cheryl Meyers Butch, Susan Kohlbacher, Tiffany Lee, Mary C. Loewenguth, Anne M. Noble, and Hon. Marian W. Payson.

For more information, please visit [the 125th Anniversary](#) website, which includes the videos mentioned above, as well as written testimonials, old photographs, and historical documents.

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