



The National Judicial College

BY TERESA MINOR

The National Judicial College (NJC) in Reno is recognized as the premier institute for providing training to the judiciary. Unfortunately, due to the times of financial crisis in our state government, funds for judicial education have not been available, and Alabama's Administrative Office of Courts has been unable to appropriate funds to send new state court trial judges to the NJC since 1988. To address this situation, the Alabama State Bar, under the leadership of 2005-06 **President Robert D. Segall**, accepted a recommendation from the Judicial Liaison Committee (JLC) to create a judicial scholarship program for Alabama judges to attend the NJC.

The implementation of this program is now being carried out by **President Boots Gale** through the JLC. Starting this month, the ASB will begin a one-time fundraising effort to support this program. Letters will be sent from members of the JLC to all state bar members soliciting contributions. To provide some guidance regarding contributions, the bar is suggesting the following ranges for law firms and solo practitioners:

- Large Firm (75+ lawyers)—\$3,000;
- Medium Firm (25-75 lawyers)—\$2,000;
- Small Firm (10-25 lawyers)—\$1,000; and
- Solo practitioners and firms with less than ten lawyers—\$500.

Of course, any contribution to the program will be greatly appreciated.

Once collected, the funds will be managed and distributed by the Alabama Judicial College. To be eligible to receive a one-time scholarship, the applicant judge must be: (1) a current judge in the State of Alabama (circuit civil judge; circuit criminal judge; district judge; domestic relations judge; family court/juvenile judge); (2) who was appointed/elected after January 1, 2001 and has at least three years left on his/her term at the time of the completion of the program; and (3) who has not previously attended the NJC. There will be a maximum of \$2,000 awarded per recipient, and the award must be used to attend the NJC's program on "General Jurisdiction."

The ASB program is modeled after one implemented by the **Birmingham Bar Association** in 2002. **Presiding Judge J. Scott Vowell** of the Tenth Judicial Circuit has been very supportive of the program. According to Judge Vowell, "[a]ll of our eligible judges have attended the ten-day General Jurisdiction court and have given it high marks. . . . In so many ways, hearing how judges in other states address our common issues is very important to judicial education." Similarly, the judges in the circuit who have been able to utilize the scholarship program of the BBA have offered praise for the training offered by the NJC:

"... it is my strong belief that the National Judicial College experience early in a judge's career will lay the proper foundation for excellence on the bench." **Circuit Judge Tom King, Jr.**

"The curriculum covered the spectrum of issues confronting trial judges, in civil, criminal and domestic relation cases. I found particularly helpful courses dealing with the Rules of Evidence, judicial writing, handling jurors and general courtroom management." **Circuit Judge Robert S. Vance, Jr.**

"Sitting on the bench requires a different set of skills and a different perspective from that of a litigator. The course at the National Judicial College enhances the skills required of a trial judge and focuses exclusively on the judicial perspective." **Circuit Judge Caryl P. Privett**

"I left the judicial college with a better understanding of my strengths and weaknesses, and how they affect me as a judge. Every new judge could benefit from this unique judicial educational experience." **District Judge Jack Lowther**

Please join with the ASB's effort to provide this outstanding training to all trial judges in Alabama. Show your support by responding to the letter you receive from the JLC and making a generous contribution to the bar's program by March 1, 2007. ■