

United States District Court  
District of Rhode Island

## 2024 District Conference

### **Guardrails of Democracy: Ensuring Access to Justice for All**

Crown Plaza Providence-Warwick  
801 Greenwich Avenue, Warwick, Rhode Island



(Cover)

## 2024 District Conference Committee

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(Inside cover)

Individuals with disabilities are welcomed and encouraged to attend the Conference. If you require a reasonable accommodation in order to participate in this event, please contact Rana Smith at 401-752-7210 or [rana\\_smith@rid.uscourts.gov](mailto:rana_smith@rid.uscourts.gov).

**Registration and Continental Breakfast**

8:15 to 8:45 am

Grand Ballroom

**Welcome**

8:45 to 8:55 am

Grand Ballroom

**Plenary**

8:55 to 9:45 am

1.0 CLE (.5 Ethics CLE)

Grand Ballroom

**Presenter:****Justice Anita Earls, N.C. Supreme Court**

Anita Earls is a Senior Associate Justice of the North Carolina Supreme Court. Before taking office on January 1, 2019, she was a civil rights attorney litigating voting rights, police misconduct and other civil rights cases for 30 years. Anita was the founder and Executive Director of the Southern Coalition for Social Justice, a non-profit legal advocacy organization in Durham, North Carolina. Appointed by President Clinton, Anita was a Deputy Assistant Attorney General in the U.S. Department of Justice, Civil Rights Division from 1998 to 2000. She has served on the North Carolina State Board of Elections, the North Carolina Equal Access to Justice Commission and currently Co-Chairs the Governor's Task Force on Racial Equity in Criminal Justice. Anita has taught as an adjunct professor at UNC and University of Maryland Law Schools and in the African and African-American Studies Department at Duke University. A graduate of Yale Law School and Williams College, Anita lives in Durham with her husband Charles Walton. She has two grown sons and two grandchildren.

**Morning Breakout Sessions**

2.0 CLE

Choose one session

10:00 to 11:45 am

**Breakout 1: "Unconscious and Implicit Bias"**

Salon I

During this session, Eric Bailey will provide an overview of unconscious bias and how to recognize and overcome the most common brain science hurdles to achieve inclusion and understanding. Mr. Bailey's unique style blends fact and emotion in a way that appeals to the analytical thinkers, the emotional feelers, and everyone in between. This thought-provoking session will help participants to engage in an honest, open, and compassionate dialogue about biases, diversity, and inclusion."

**Speaker:**

Eric Bailey

## **Breakout 2: “Jury Diversity: Past, Present and Future”**

Salon II

This panel will feature esteemed experts who will provide insight into the importance of jury diversity. The panel will explore historical barriers to jury diversity, impediments to jury service – including the impact of *Batson* and peremptory challenges—and how we can leverage our past experiences to advance jury diversity in the future.

### **Panel:**

Honorable Edward C. Clifton  
Paula Hannaford-Agor  
Professor Shari Seidman Diamond  
Professor Stephen Bright

### **Moderator:**

Brooks R. Magratten

### **Luncheon**

12:00 to 12:45 pm

Grand Ballroom

### **Keynote Presentation and Q & A**

12:45 to 1:45 pm

1.0 CLE

Grand Ballroom

### **Presenter: Judge Carlton Reeves, S.D. Miss.**

United States District Judge Carlton W. Reeves, a native of Yazoo City, Mississippi, assumed office on December 30, 2010. Immediately prior to his nomination by President Barack Obama, Judge Reeves was engaged in the private practice with Pigott Reeves Johnson, P.A., a law firm he co-founded in 2001. The focus of his practice was state and federal litigation. President Joe Biden nominated Judge Reeves to be Chair of the United States Sentencing Commission. He and six others were confirmed on August 4, 2022.

Judge Reeves began his career as a law clerk to Justice Reuben V. Anderson of the Mississippi Supreme Court. He also served as staff attorney to the court, and then was an associate with the Phelps Dunbar law firm (1991-95) before serving as Assistant United States Attorney, Chief of the Civil Division for the Southern District of Mississippi (1995-2001).

A graduate of Jackson State University (1986) and the University of Virginia School of Law (1989), Judge Reeves, is a former President of the Magnolia Bar Association and a member of the American Law Institute.

**Afternoon Breakout Sessions**  
2:00 to 3:45 pm

2.0 CLE  
Grand Ballroom

**“The Importance of Civics Education”**

This panel will focus on the important role civics education can play in ensuring access to justice for all. The panelists will examine why the right to education has not been recognized by the courts as a right protected by the U.S. Constitution and whether an amendment to the Rhode Island Constitution to provide for a constitutional right to adequate and equitable public education generally or a civics education in particular could be beneficial. The panel will discuss *A.C. v. Gina Raimondo, et al.*, which was filed by panelist Nancy Xiong along with her classmates and community members in 2018 through her counsel Professor Michael Rebell and Jennifer Wood. The case was presided over by Judge William E. Smith and raised the question whether a civics education was a fundamental right under the United States Constitution. The panel will also discuss the impact of the litigation on the State of Rhode Island, similar efforts occurring across the country and the role that federal litigation can play in accelerating efforts to resolve an issue within other branches of government.

**Panel:**

Secretary of State Gregg Amore  
Professor Michael Rebell  
Nancy Xiong, Student Plaintiff in *A.C. v. Raimondo*

**Moderator:**

Honorable Judge William E. Smith

**Afternoon Plenary**  
4:00 to 5:00 pm

1.0 CLE  
Grand Ballroom

**“Conversation with the Judges”**

The Judges of this District will engage in conversations and discussions about court-related topics to be raised by the members of the bar in attendance.

**Panel:**

Honorable John J. McConnell, Jr.  
Honorable William E. Smith  
Honorable Mary S. McElroy  
Honorable Lincoln D. Almond  
Honorable Patricia A. Sullivan

**Reception**

5:00 to 6:00 pm

Sponsored by the Federal Bar Association  
Grand Ballroom Foyer

**Panel & Moderator Biographies****Honorable Lincoln D. Almond**

Lincoln D. Almond graduated “with distinction” from the University of Rhode Island in 1985 and with “high honors” from the University of Connecticut School of Law in 1988. He was admitted to the Connecticut Bar in 1988 and the Rhode Island Bar in 1990. Judge Almond clerked for United States District Judge Peter C Dorsey in the District of Connecticut from 1988 to 1990. He worked in private practice from 1990 to 2004 concentrating primarily in litigation/labor and employment law. Judge Almond was appointed Magistrate Judge in the District of Rhode Island on September 10, 2004.

**Paula Hannaford-Agor**

Paula Hannaford-Agor, the Director of the Center for Jury Studies, joined the Research Division of the National Center for State Courts in May 1993. In this capacity, she regularly conducts research and provides technical assistance and education to courts and court personnel on the topics of jury system management and trial procedure; civil litigation; and complex and mass tort litigation.

She has authored or contributed to numerous books and articles on the American jury including Jury Trial Innovations (2d ed. 2006), The Promise and Challenges of Jury System Technology (NCSC 2003) and Managing Notorious Trials (1998). She received her law degree and a Master of Public Policy degree from the College of William & Mary in 1995 and her Bachelor of Arts in Government & Politics from George Mason University in 1991.

**Gregg Amore**

Secretary of State Gregg M. Amore is a proud lifelong resident of East Providence, where he has been a teacher, coach, and community volunteer for over thirty years. Amore was elected in November of 2022 and sworn into office on January 3, 2023 as the thirtieth Rhode Island Secretary of State.

Prior to serving as Secretary of State, Amore taught history, civics, and government courses at East Providence High School for twenty-seven years until becoming the East Providence School District Athletic Administrator in 2017.

Amore was elected as a State Representative in 2012 and served the residents of East Providence for ten years. During his time in office, he served as a Deputy Majority Leader, chairman of the House Committee on Small Business, chairman of the House Finance Subcommittee on Education, and second vice chair of the House Committee on Education. He is widely credited with advancing the House of Representatives’ education agenda, which included key education reform legislation related to curriculum and site based management, as well as championing efforts to significantly increase English Language Learner categorical funding, school

construction initiatives, the retention and recruitment of teachers of color, and making college more affordable for Rhode Islanders.

Amore and his wife, Lee, have two daughters, Tess and Megan. Amore earned a bachelor's degree in history from Providence College in 1988 and a master's degree in public policy from New England College in 2010.

### **Eric Bailey**

Eric M. Bailey is the bestselling author of *The Cure for Stupidity: Using Brain Science to Explain Irrational Behavior* and President of [Bailey Strategic Innovation Group](#), one of the fastest-growing human communication consulting firms in the United States. Eric has a diverse set of experiences that includes helping NFL All-Pro Larry Fitzgerald pet a rhinoceros, doing barrel rolls in an F-16, and chatting with LL Cool J on the campus of Harvard University.

Eric is the creator of the Principles of Human Understanding™, a leadership and communication methodology based in brain science and psychology. Eric's unique style blends fact and emotion and finds ways to appeal to the analytical thinkers, the emotional feelers, and everyone in between. Eric has a unique ability to communicate seemingly complex concepts in practical, easy-to-comprehend ways, aiding in self-awareness and knowledge retention.

Eric has been featured on CNN, Huffington Post, Forbes, the Like a Real Boss Podcast and has helped leaders and teams across the world see common problems from new and different perspectives. Eric works with Google Inc, the US Air Force, Los Angeles County, the City of St. Louis, MO, Phoenix Police Department and many more. Eric also runs a YouTube series of 2-minute executive lessons called The Walking Meeting ([www.thewalkingmeeting.com](http://www.thewalkingmeeting.com)).

Eric has a Master's degree in Leadership and Organizational Development from Saint Louis University and is a lifetime learner of human and organizational behavior. When not working or researching, you can find Eric and his wife Jamie racing on their road bikes, being cheered on by their three children.

### **Stephen Bright**

Mr. Bright teaches courses on race and poverty in death penalty and other criminal cases at the law schools at Yale and Georgetown Universities. He was the long-time director of the Southern Center for Human Rights. He is co-author, with James Kwak, of *The Fear of Too Much Justice: Race, Poverty, and the Persistence of Inequality in the Criminal Courts* (2023).

He has practiced law since 1975 and represented people in capital cases since 1979. He has tried capital cases before juries in Alabama, Georgia and Mississippi, and argued cases in the state and federal appellate courts, including four capital cases before the United States Supreme Court. In two of the Supreme Court cases, the Court found a prosecutor's use of peremptory strikes violated *Batson v. Kentucky*.

He served as director the Southern Center for Human Rights in Atlanta from 1982 to 2005, and as its president and senior counsel from 2006 to 2016. Before joining the Center, he was a public defender in Washington, DC, and a legal services attorney in Appalachia. He has taught at Yale and other law schools since 1993. Subjects of his litigation, teaching and writings include capital punishment, the right to counsel, racial discrimination in the criminal courts, conditions and practices in prisons and jails, and judicial independence.

He received the American Bar Association's Thurgood Marshall Award in 1998. The Daily Report, Georgia's legal newspaper, named him "Newsmaker of the Year" in 2003 for his contribution to bringing about creation of a public defender system in Georgia, and "Lawyer of the Year" in 2017 for his success in challenging racial discrimination in jury selection before the U.S. Supreme Court. His work is the subject of Robert L. Tsai, *Demand the Impossible: One Lawyer's Pursuit of Equal Justice for All* (March 2024). Mr. Bright earned his B.A. and J.D. from the University of Kentucky.

### **Honorable Edward C. Clifton**

Edward C. Clifton retired in June 2015 after serving as an Associate Justice on the Rhode Island Superior Court for over twenty years. Judge Clifton received his Juris Doctor from the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) in 1975. Prior to law school, he completed his undergraduate studies at the University of California, Berkeley.

Upon graduation from UCLA, Judge Clifton was named a Reginald Heber Smith Fellow and as such was assigned to Rhode Island Legal Services, Inc., in Providence. He later joined the Public Defender's Office for the State of Rhode Island as a staff attorney until 1978, when he entered the private practice of law. From 1978 until 1985 Judge Clifton was a partner at Stone, Clifton and Clifton. He left that practice in 1985 when he was appointed City Solicitor for the City of Providence, where he served until 1991. After returning to the private practice of law, Judge Clifton was appointed to the Rhode Island District Court in February 1993. He served on that court until his appointment to the Rhode Island Superior Court in September 1994. Throughout his tenure on the Superior Court, Judge Clifton presided over both civil and criminal trials and various calendar assignments in all counties in Rhode Island.

In 2007 Judge Clifton became a member of the Board of Directors of the National Consortium on Racial and Ethnic Fairness in the Courts. He was elected President/Moderator of the National Consortium and served in that capacity from 2012 -2014, after which he became and remains an emeritus member.

Following his retirement Judge Clifton was a Distinguished Jurist in Residence faculty member at Roger Williams University School of Law from September 2015 until 2018. In 2020, he was appointed a member of the Committee on Racial and Ethnic Fairness (CREF) in the Rhode Island Courts where he served as an active member until 2023. He continues to serve on CREF on various subcommittees. Judge Clifton was awarded an Honorary Doctor of Laws Degree from Roger Williams University School of Law in 2021.

**Shari Seidman Diamond**

Shari Seidman Diamond is the Howard J. Trienens Professor of Law and a Research Professor at the American Bar Foundation. An attorney and social psychologist, she is one of the foremost empirical researchers on jury process and legal decision-making, as well as the use of science by the courts. She has authored or co-authored more than 150 publications, including findings from a unique study of real jury deliberations and research on Argentina's emerging jury systems.

Professor Diamond practiced law at Sidley Austin in Litigation and Intellectual Property. She also taught at the University of Chicago, Harvard, and the University of Illinois at Chicago, served as Editor of the Law & Society Review, and was President of the American Psychology-Law Society. She has lectured to scholarly and judicial audiences around the globe.

Professor Diamond was elected to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences in 2012. She received the 2010 Harry Kalven, Jr. Award from the Law and Society Association for Contributions to Research in Law and Society, and the 1991 American Psychological Association award for Distinguished Contributions to Research in Public Policy. Professor Diamond developed and directed the university-wide JD/PhD program at Northwestern Law. As a member of the ABA's American Jury Project, she helped draft the Principles for Juries and Jury Trials adopted in 2005. She currently serves on the Seventh Circuit Committee on Pattern Criminal Jury Instructions.

**Honorable Anita Earls**

Anita Earls is a Senior Associate Justice of the North Carolina Supreme Court. Before taking office on January 1, 2019, she was a civil rights attorney litigating voting rights, police misconduct and other civil rights cases for 30 years. Judge Earls was the founder and Executive Director of the Southern Coalition for Social Justice, a non-profit legal advocacy organization in Durham, North Carolina. Appointed by President Clinton, Judge Earls was a Deputy Assistant Attorney General in the U.S. Department of Justice, Civil Rights Division from 1998 to 2000. She has served on the North Carolina State Board of Elections, the North Carolina Equal Access to Justice Commission and currently Co-Chairs the Governor's Task Force on Racial Equity in Criminal Justice. Judge Earls has taught as an adjunct professor at UNC and University of Maryland Law Schools and in the African and African-American Studies Department at Duke University. A graduate of Yale Law School and Williams College, Judge Earls lives in Durham with her husband Charles Walton. She has two grown sons and two grandchildren.

**Brooks R. Magratten**

Brooks Magratten is a partner in the Providence, Rhode Island, office of Pierce Atwood, LLP. He has more than 30 years of experience in insurance and commercial litigation. He is the former Chair of the ABA's Commission on the American Jury. He served as the Northeast Regional Director of DRI and former chair of its Life, Health & Disability Insurance Committee. He has defended over 250 ERISA benefit and breach of fiduciary cases in 12 states.

Brooks is a frequent author, instructor and lecturer on ERISA issues and trial skills. He has represented commercial interests in litigation throughout the northeastern U.S. He is a former adjunct professor of, the Roger Williams Law School, teaching federal practice and procedure. He is a former President of the Rhode Island Chapter of the Federal Bar Association and former Chair of the Federal Court Bench / Bar Committee.

Brooks graduated from Hamilton College (B.A.), Dickinson School of Law (J.D.) and Bryant University (M.B.A.). Brooks, his wife Paige and daughter Colby reside in Providence, Rhode Island. They are active supporters of the MS Society.

### **Honorable John J. McConnell, Jr.**

John J. McConnell, Jr. is the Chief Judge of the United State District Court for the District of Rhode Island. President Barack Obama nominated him, and the U.S. Senate confirmed the nomination in May 2011. On top of his administrative duties as Chief Judge, he hears a full docket of both civil and criminal cases. He served for six years as a member of the Committee on Codes of Conduct of the Judicial Conference of the United States.

Before becoming a judge, Chief Judge McConnell was a trial attorney for 25 years. He tried cases in over thirteen states, representing persons injured by asbestos and lead paint. He was also one of the States' negotiators of the \$365 billion settlement between the States and the tobacco companies. He clerked for the late Associate Justice of the R.I. Supreme Court Donald F. Shea.

Chief Judge McConnell is the past chair of the Board of Crossroads RI, the state's largest provider of services to those experiencing homeless. Formerly he served as chair of the Board of Trinity Repertory, was a member of the Board of the Nonviolence Institute, a member of the Board of Trustees of Roger Williams University, and on the board of many other community organizations.

Chief Judge McConnell, born in Providence, R.I., received his A.B. from Brown University in 1980 with a concentration in Urban Studies and his J.D. from Case Western Reserve University School of Law in 1983, where he received the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Award.

### **Honorable Mary S. McElroy**

Mary S. McElroy is a District Judge for the United States District Court for the District of Rhode Island. She was nominated by President Donald J. Trump and confirmed on September 30, 2019. Judge McElroy clerked for the Honorable Donald F. Shea of the Supreme Court of Rhode Island from 1992-1993 and was in private practice until 1994. She served as an assistant public defender for the Rhode Island Public Defender from 1994-2006, as an assistant federal defender with the Federal Defender for the Districts of Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and Rhode Island from 2006-2012, and as the Rhode Island Public Defender from 2012-2019. Judge McElroy was born in Providence, Rhode Island and received her B.A. from Providence College in 1987 and her J.D. from Suffolk University Law School in 1992.

**Michael A. Rebel**

Michael A. Rebel is an experienced litigator, administrator, researcher, and scholar in the field of education law. He is the executive director of the Center for Educational Equity and Professor of Law and Educational Practice at Teachers College, Columbia University. The Center seeks to promote equity and excellence in education and to overcome the gap in educational access and achievement between advantaged and disadvantaged students throughout the United States. Mr. Rebel is also co-convenor of the DemocracyReady NY Coalition, a partnership of civic and education groups throughout the state that promotes improved civic education.

Previously, Mr. Rebel was the co-founder, executive director and counsel for the Campaign for Fiscal Equity. In *CFE v. State of New York*, the Court of Appeals, New York State's highest court, declared that all children are entitled under the state Constitution to the "opportunity for a sound basic education" and it ordered the State of New York to reform its education finance system to meet these constitutional requirements. Mr. Rebel was also lead counsel for plaintiffs in *Cook v. McKee*, a case that sought to establish a right to an education adequate for capable citizenship under the U.S. Constitution. Following the decision of the U.S. Court of Appeals, *A.C. by Waith v. McKee*, 23 F.4th 37 (1<sup>st</sup> Cir, 2022), the plaintiffs and the state education department agreed to a settlement of the case. He is currently working on policy and litigation activities regarding civic preparation in New York, Kentucky and other states.

Mr. Rebel is the author or co-author of six books, and dozens of articles on issues of law and education. Among his most recent works are *FLUNKING DEMOCRACY: SCHOOLS, COURTS AND CIVIC PARTICIPATION* (Univ of Chicago Press, 2018), *COURTS AND KIDS: PURSUING EDUCATIONAL EQUITY THROUGH THE STATE COURTS* (Univ. of Chicago Press, 2009), *State Courts and Education Finance: Looking Back and Looking Forward*, 6 *EDU. L.& POL'Y REV.* 9 (2021) and *The Right to Comprehensive Educational Opportunity*, 47 *HARVARD CIVIL RTS-CIVIL LIB. L. REV.* 49 (2012).

In addition to his research and litigation activities, Mr. Rebel is a frequent lecturer and consultant on education law. In the past, he has also taught at the Yale Law School, Harvard Law School, and Columbia Law School. Mr. Rebel is a graduate of Harvard College and Yale Law School.

**Honorable Carlton W. Reeves**

Carlton W. Reeves is a United States District Court Judge for the Southern District of Mississippi and the first African American chair of the United States Sentencing Commission. Raised in rural Yazoo City, Mississippi, at the tail end of the Jim Crow era, Judge Reeves was among the first class of students to attend integrated public schools. Judge Reeves's interest in the law began as a teenager when he spent his summers watching trials at the Yazoo County Courthouse.

The first in his family to attend a four-year college, Judge Reeves graduated *magna cum laude* from Jackson State University in 1986, before attending the University of Virginia School of Law in 1987. While obtaining his legal education, Judge Reeves presented a case to the school's

judiciary committee, challenging a fraternity's racist sign on behalf of several black freshman female students. The fraternity had posted a sign on the fraternity house banning several racial and religious minorities from their parties. Judge Reeves and a fellow law student prepared a legal challenge to the sign. Although the committee found the sign was protected by the First Amendment, this effort showed Judge Reeves commitment to civil liberties throughout law school. Judge Reeves continued to display this commitment to civil liberties as a summer intern at the American Civil Liberties Union of Mississippi in 1988 during law school. After graduating law school in 1989, Judge Reeves began his legal career as a law clerk to the Honorable Reuben V. Anderson at the Mississippi Supreme Court. After completing his clerkship, he worked as a staff attorney at the Supreme Court for a year before transitioning to private practice as an associate at Phelps Dunbar, L.L.P.

Judge Reeves stayed with Phelps Dunbar, L.L.P. until 1995 when he began working at the United States Attorney's Office in Mississippi as Chief of the Civil Division. As an Assistant United States Attorney, Judge Reeves received numerous honors, including a Certificate of Commendation from the Civil Rights Division of the United States Department of Justice and a Letter of Appreciation from the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

In 2001, Judge Reeves returned to private practice, starting his own firm, Pigott Reeves Johnson & Minor, P.A. In 2007, he was appointed as a Special Master for the Hinds County Chancery Court in Jackson, Mississippi, presiding over paternity, child support, child custody, and visitation cases.

Judge Reeves joined the federal judiciary in 2010 when he was appointed as a United States District Court Judge for the Southern District of Mississippi. Judge Reeves is noted for his opinions critiquing the doctrine of qualified immunity and striking down statutes that infringe on the rights of LGBTQ+ Mississippians. In his opinions, Judge Reeves cuts through the verbiage clouding the true nature of the qualified immunity doctrine writing simply, "[i]n plain English, it means persons wronged by government agents cannot sue those agents unless the Supreme Court previously found substantially the same acts to be unconstitutional." While staunchly adhering to the precedent by which he is bound, Judge Reeves has urged the United States Supreme Court to reconsider the question of qualified immunity.

Judge Reeves gained greater public recognition in 2015 for a speech he delivered during the sentencing hearing for three white men convicted of a hate crime: the beating and killing a 48-year-old black man, Craig Anderson. In his speech, Judge Reeves described the "Old Mississippi," a not-so-distant time during which black lives were valued as lesser than the lives of game and when lynchings were common. He asked "[h]ow could hate, fear or whatever it was transform genteel, God-fearing, God-loving Mississippians into mindless murderers and sadistic torturers?" Judge Reeves recognized the struggle of the New Mississippi to progress beyond its immoral past and expressed his shock that the children of this new Mississippi could perpetuate the hate crime before him. In sentencing the three men, Judge Reeves recognized that in the Old Mississippi, they would have walked free, but affirmed that today "justice is truly blind."

In addition to his role as a United States District Court judge, Judge Reeves is the Commissioner and Chair of the United States Sentencing Commission. Nominated and confirmed in 2022, Judge Reeves works with the bipartisan commission to reduce sentencing disparities, promote transparency, and encourage proportionality in criminal sentencing.

### **Honorable William E. Smith**

Judge William E. Smith was appointed to the U.S. District Court for the District of Rhode Island by President George W. Bush in 2002. He served as Chief Judge from 2013 to 2019 and was the youngest person ever to serve as chief judge in the District of Rhode Island.

Judge Smith is active in federal judicial administration and education, serving on the Judicial Conference Committees on Judicial Resources, Information Technology, and Financial Disclosure; as mentor and chair of the Federal Judicial Center's Committee on District Judge education; and as a mentor for newly appointed and mid-career judges. He serves on numerous community boards and is the past chair of the board of the Roger Williams University School of Law in Bristol, Rhode Island, where he has taught as an Adjunct Professor for fifteen years.

Before his appointment to the bench, Judge Smith was a partner at Edwards & Angell in Providence, Rhode Island, the firm he joined after graduating from law school. His practice focused primarily in the area of labor and employment law and representation of state and municipal agencies, colleges and universities, non-profits, and private employers. His private law practice years were interrupted by his service as Staff Director of the Rhode Island Office of U.S. Senator Lincoln Chafee.

Judge Smith was born in Boise, Idaho; he received B.A. and J.D. (*cum laude*) degrees from Georgetown University. While studying at Georgetown, he worked as an aid in the Senate Foreign Relations Committee (chaired by Senator Frank Church of Idaho), and he then worked on Senator Church's 1980 re-election campaign. In 2014, Judge Smith received the Citizen of the Year Award from the Rhode Island Association for Justice. In 2019, he received an Honorary Doctorate from Bryant University and was awarded the Chief Justice Joseph R. Weisberger Judicial Excellence Award from the Rhode Island Bar Association for "exemplifying and encouraging the highest level of competence, integrity, judicial temperament, ethical conduct and professionalism." In 2023, he received the Neil J. Houston, Jr. Memorial Award for "dedicated service and citizen contribution toward the justice profession and the public interest" from Rhode Island Justice Assistance. In 2024, he received an Honorary Doctorate from Roger Williams University School of Law.

### **Honorable Patricia A. Sullivan**

Patricia A. Sullivan has served as United States Magistrate Judge, U.S. District Court, District of Rhode Island since 2012. Prior to serving in this capacity, she practiced law at the firm formerly known as Edwards & Angell, LLP and Edwards Angell Palmer Dodge, LLP, Providence, Rhode Island from 1978 until 2012. She has served as the Adjunct Faculty at Roger Williams University School of Law and as the Chair, Co-Chair or Member of numerous court, community, and Bar Association Committees. She has been a Member of the Board of Trustees, Roger

Williams University School of Law from 2013 to the present and has served as Treasurer since 2022. She graduated from Wellesley College, B.A. with honors, 1973; and Georgetown University Law Center, J.D., magna cum laude, 1978.

**Nancy Xiong**

Nancy Xiong is a child of Hmong genocide survivors and was born in Providence, Rhode Island. Nancy's parents arrived in the United States with hopes of freedom and opportunities. Yet those opportunities were nonexistent when they knew no one, struggled with the language barrier, and experienced difficulty, adapting to this new land called home. They were not furnished with the necessary tools for survival. As a multilingual learner, Nancy navigated the education system mostly alone. These life-changing experiences instilled trauma in her life and enabled her to develop resiliency as a first-generation college student. Nancy is empowered to create pathways for her and her community to break the cycle of poverty and intergenerational trauma and formulate opportunities for the next generations to thrive, not just survive.