

Nebraska Judicial News

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Honored Judges Credit Contributions of Esteemed Colleagues



At the Nebraska Supreme Court's annual Judicial Dinner on October 23 in Omaha, Chief Justice Michael G. Heavican bestowed the Court's highest honors on two Nebraska District Court judges. Judge Paul Koruslund received the Distinguished Judge for Service to the Community Award, and Judge Patrick Rogers accepted the Distinguished Judge for Improvement of the Judicial System Award.



Distinguished Judge for Service to the Community

"... for a judge who has distinguished himself or herself through performance of service to the community on a volunteer or professional level"

Nebraska Chief Justice Mike Heavican (right) presents distinguished judge awards to Judge Pat Rogers (top) and Judge Paul Koruslund (bottom) during the annual Judicial Awards Dinner, October 2008.

Speaking to nearly 100 members of the judiciary and guests gathered for the event, Judge Koruslund graciously acknowledged the contributions of all Nebraska judges when he noted, "If there is a common thread among all the judges that I know and those within the judicial system it is that they strive for excellence and work very hard."



Paul Korslund (right) and wife, Bernadette, with Service to the Community Award.



Judge Korslund (right) sits for interview with reporters from Channel 8 and the Journal Star following the State v. Griswold murder trial.

Korslund, who was recognized for being the first trial court judge in the state to preside over a televised jury trial continued, "When we do bring the cameras in, or radio, or whatever media we have available, I think it's a window into that excellence and the public does recognize it."

Korslund serves the First Judicial District in Southeast Nebraska. His participation in televising the *State v. Griswold* trial from the Gage County Courthouse in Beatrice has helped pave the way for greater openness of judicial proceedings for the citizens of Nebraska. The broadcast trials also hold promise for bringing court cases to life for Nebraska school students.

In celebration of Law Day 2008, Korslund coordinated the efforts of the Gage/Jefferson County Bar Association and Educational Service Unit (ESU) 5 to host area students for an interactive discussion on First Amendments Rights. The luncheon session began with a connection to the National Archives via "learning cart," a web-based distance education system. It was followed by linking to a panel discussion with Nebraska appellate court justices and judges telecast from Nebraska Educational Telecommunications (NET) in Lincoln.

In presenting the award, Chief Justice Heavican thanked Judge Korslund for his creativity and innovation, citing the many hours the judge has spent providing law-related education to school students and members of the community.

Another activity that has been exemplary has been Korslund's work with Judge Vicky Johnson to establish a drug court in the First Judicial District.

Korslund has served the district court in the First Judicial District since 1998. Prior to being named District Court Judge, he sat on the county court bench from 1977 to 1980.

Distinguished Judge for Improvement of the Judicial System

“ . . . given to a judge who has distinguished himself or herself through contributions to the improvement of the judicial system; service as a trial judge; or promotion of judicial efficiency.”

Judge Rogers accepted the Distinguished Judge Award, acknowledging, “I had some difficult times on the bench and, without the people around me, I couldn’t have gotten through it.” He singled out Judge Robert Ensz and thanked him for his wise and frequent counsel.

Interjecting a note of humility into his acceptance speech, Rogers commented, “So any contribution that I’ve made to the judiciary has been repaid a hundred-fold by all of the members (of the court) that I have called through the years.”

Rogers described the seriousness of the job of sitting in judgment of other human beings. Weaving a story, he described the difficulty some have with leaving their work “at the courthouse door” and suggested that most deal with their stress in a quiet and strong manner, even though what they see “oftentimes shakes the very foundation of our being.” Rogers conceded that such experiences have happened to him many times over the years.

Rogers, who presides as district court judge for the Seventh Judicial District, was nominated for his willingness to assist throughout the state’s judicial system anytime or anywhere. He is cited for establishing, in cooperation with Judge Ensz, the Northeast Nebraska Adult Felony Drug Court and helping oversee its operation.

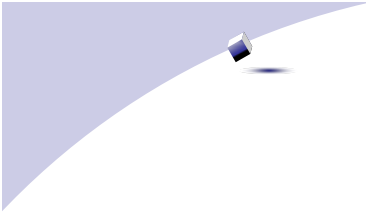
He has been a member of the Court’s Interpreter Advisory Committee since its inception, promoting access to the court system by non-English speaking litigants. In addition to furthering interpretation services for his district, he served as keynote speaker at the most recent certification ceremony for court interpreters at the Supreme Court.



Pat Rogers (center left) with daughter Julie, (left) wife Linda, and son Mike following awards dinner.



Judge Pat Rogers addresses courtroom audience at the 2008 interpreter swearing-in ceremony in Lincoln.



Judge Paul Korslund (left)
Chief Justice Heavican
(center) Pat Rogers (right)
following 2008 Judicial Awards
Dinner.



Rogers, who found himself in the position of hearing multiple murder trials for crimes committed only nine months before assuming the bench, is held in high regard for turning his experience into an educational opportunity for other judges. As a result of this experience, Rogers organized a conference on capital cases in Nebraska. Rogers' educator role has also extended to providing legislative updates and conducting peer teaching on the subject of dealing with self-represented litigants.

Chief Justice Heavican thanked Rogers for his exemplary service on both the county and district court benches, noting that he has consistently demonstrated judicial demeanor and competence. Rogers has served on the district court bench in the Seventh Judicial District since 2001. Prior to that time, he was a county court judge in the Sixth Judicial District from 1995 to 2001.

Rogers closed out the evening of celebration by praising his esteemed colleagues, "I'm convinced that the judiciary in Nebraska is solid, is made up of competent, dedicated individuals who go to work every day and serve our citizens in the best possible way that they can, and I'm proud to be a member of that group..."



Nebraska Supreme Court

State Capitol
P.O. Box 98910
Lincoln, NE 68509
Phone: 402-471-3205
Fax: 402-471-2197
E-mail: janet.bancroft@nebraska.gov
