



On the bench of the Nevada Court of Appeals, judges (left to right), Judge Abbi Silver, Chief Judge Michael Gibbons and Judge Jerome Tao.

THE COURT OF APPEALS AND THE NATIONAL JUDICIAL COLLEGE PARTNER FOR HISTORIC ORAL ARGUMENTS

BY RACHELLE M. RESNICK, ESQ.

The new Nevada Court of Appeals achieved a historic moment on October 21 – its first “on-the-road” oral arguments. By conducting oral arguments in different regions of the state (a tradition started by the Nevada Supreme Court), attorneys, students and interested citizens lacking easy access to the courthouses in Carson City and Las Vegas have an opportunity to gain first-hand experience with the appellate court.

Approximately 60 students, local attorneys and judges observed the arguments that took place at the National Judicial College (NJC) on the University of Nevada, Reno campus. The NJC works with the judiciary in Nevada and



“It was an honor to be able to argue on such a special day for the court. The facilities and the atmosphere at The National Judicial College made it an especially exciting opportunity, and I’m glad to have been a part of it.”

– Mark W. Dunagan, Esq., representing the City of Reno in *City of Reno v. Bedian*.

around the world to improve productivity, to present the most current procedural and substantive developments in the law and to inspire judges to achieve excellence. More than 4,000 judges attend NJC courses annually. Recognizing the NJC’s value, Nevada law requires that every new judge attend the college. While not new to the bench, Chief Judge Michael Gibbons, Judge Jerome Tao and Judge Abbi Silver completed two courses each at the NJC shortly after beginning their terms as appellate court judges, in order to sharpen their overall judicial and writing skills.

Attending these courses inspired Gibbons, Tao and Silver to select the NJC for the court’s first road arguments, because students at both the university and the NJC would have easy access to the hearings. The NJC also benefited by hosting this historic event.

“We are honored to host the first on-the-road oral arguments of the Court of Appeals,” said NJC President Chad Schmucker. “Hosting this important event, which is, in turn, led by recently NJC-educated judges, showcases the breadth of our programs and their intrinsic value in advancing the state’s judicial discourse.”

The court heard two cases. In the first case, *City of Reno v. Bedian*, the city of Reno appealed the district court’s order in a personal injury case that granted judgment in favor of the plaintiff after a jury verdict in favor of the defendant. In the second case, *Goodwin v. Jones*, the plaintiff appealed the denial of unemployment benefits based upon alleged misconduct after she was terminated for failing to obtain a counseling license.

These cases were selected in

part because they originated in Reno, the facts and legal issues were unusual, and they would appeal to both attorneys and non-attorneys.

After arguments concluded, Gibbons, Tao and Silver answered questions from students and attorneys. One student who is considering applying to law school, asked: “What is the difference between a good lawyer and a great lawyer?” All three judges agreed that the attorney’s level of preparation makes the key difference and gave examples of how a prepared attorney assists the court and is more successful.

The day concluded with a reception, hosted by the law firm of McDonald Carano Wilson, LLP, and facilitated by the NJC, giving attendees an opportunity to learn more about the NJC and the Court of Appeals in an informal setting.

Gibbons summed up the experience: “It was an exciting and productive day for our court. The NJC model courtroom was a perfect venue and the attorneys made outstanding presentations. The court is working diligently to achieve speedy, accurate and fair decisions, and the oral arguments contributed to this process.” **NL**



RACHELLE M. RESNICK began her career in Las Vegas in private practice. She then became the law clerk for Hon. Terrance P. Marren and Hon. Gloria S. Sanchez in the Family Division of the Eighth Judicial Court. In 1999, Resnick was appointed founding manager of the Clark County Family Law Self-Help Center. From 2007-2012, she served as the Clerk of the Court for the Arizona Supreme Court, where she implemented the court’s e-filing system. After working as a consultant and executive in the nonprofit sector in Arizona, she returned to Nevada and is currently Judicial Chambers Administrator for Chief Judge Michael Gibbons in the Nevada Court of Appeals.