



Supreme Court of Appeals State of West Virginia

News

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Chief Justice Margaret Workman leads court trafficking team at national summit

For immediate release

CHARLESTON, W.Va. – Supreme Court Chief Justice Margaret Workman, Thirteenth Judicial Circuit (Kanawha County) Judge Joanna Tabit, Administrative Director Steve Canterbury, and Supreme Court Director of Children’s Services Nikki Tennis attended the National Summit on Human Trafficking and the State Courts October 7-9 in New York City.

Participants explored the serious and challenging issue of human trafficking from a judicial perspective and learned about different court models for addressing human trafficking, which is a form of modern-day slavery in which a trafficker uses force, fraud, or coercion to control another person for the purpose of engaging in commercial sex acts or soliciting labor or services against the person’s will. State teams networked with other court leaders and developed concrete steps to advance their states’ responses to human trafficking. For more information about the summit, visit <http://www.nycourts.gov/ip/human-trafficking/>.

“West Virginia must work to protect our greatest resources—our children and adults—from the subjugation of human trafficking,” said Chief Justice Workman.

Judicial leaders from across the country attended the summit, which was hosted by Jonathan Lippman, Chief Judge of New York State and Chief Judge of the Court of Appeals, and was sponsored by and planned in partnership with the State Justice Institute, the Conference of Chief Justices, the Conference of State Court Administrators, the National Center for State Courts, and the New York State Bar Association. Those groups paid for the West Virginia representatives’ trips.

The summit was the latest activity by the Supreme Court of Appeals of West Virginia to raise awareness and improve outcomes for victims of human trafficking. The West Virginia Court Improvement Program has been collaborating with the West Virginia State Police, leaders in the executive and legislative branches, and advocates to strengthen West Virginia human trafficking law.

In June, Twenty-Eighth Judicial Circuit (Nicholas County) Judge Gary L. Johnson, Lieutenant D.B. Swiger of the W.Va. State Police, and Deputy Commissioner Sue Hage of the W.Va. Bureau for Children and Families joined other state and national leaders at the White House for a Convening on Trafficking and Child Welfare.

“It will take statewide collaboration to create a safety net for children at risk of being trafficked,” Judge Johnson said in June. “I look forward to working with Lieutenant Swiger and other state leaders in this essential endeavor.”

Everyone can help trafficking victims by being vigilant and reporting suspected trafficking to the National Human Trafficking Resource Center (<http://www.traffickingresourcecenter.org/>) at 1-888-373-7888.

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