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CURRENT THREATS TO A FAIR AND IMPARTIAL JUDICIARY AT THE NATIONAL CONSTITUTION CENTER

Philadelphia, PA (May 13, 2014) – The National Constitution Center hosts a panel of distinguished judges for a discussion about the challenges of ruling in charged political environments, including **Judge Anna Blackburne-Rigsby** of the Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia, **Justice Barbara J. Pariente** of the Florida Supreme Court, and **Marsha Ternus**, former Chief Justice of the Iowa Supreme Court. The judges will sit down with Constitution Center President and CEO Jeffrey Rosen for the program, which will take place on **Monday, June 9, 2014 at 12 p.m.** Admission is FREE, but reservations are recommended and can be made by calling 215-409-6700 or visiting constitutioncenter.org. This program is presented in partnership with the [Informed Voters Project](#), an educational program sponsored by the [National Association of Women Judges](#).

All three panelists are part of a groundbreaking effort by the National Association of Women Judges (NAWJ) to educate voters about the role they play in ensuring fairness and justice for all who enter the legal system. The “Informed Voters” campaign was developed in response to growing efforts by special interests to weaken the courts. Across the nation, judges are being targeted with threats of political retribution that undermines fairness, equality, and impartiality. Justice Ternus and two of her colleagues were swept off the Iowa court in 2010 with a well-funded, well organized campaign that shifted the retention debate from one about the justices’ character and qualifications to one about same-sex marriage and other hot-button social issues. It served as a wakeup call for Justice Pariente and two of her fellow Florida Justices who were able to fend off a similar political assault when they were on the ballot for retention in 2012.

About the panelists:

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[Judge Anna Blackburne-Rigsby](#) (2013-2014 President of NAWJ) was nominated by President George W. Bush to the District of Columbia Court of Appeals in August 2006. She chairs the District of Columbia Courts' Standing Committee on Fairness and Access, and serves as a commissioner on the District of Columbia's Access to Justice Commission. Prior to her appointment to the Court of Appeals, Judge Blackburne-Rigsby was nominated by President Bill Clinton to serve as an associate judge on the Superior Court of the District of Columbia. She graduated from Duke University with bachelor's degree in Political Science. She earned a law degree from Howard University School of Law in 1987.

[Justice Barbara J. Pariente](#) has been a justice of the Florida Supreme Court since 1997 and served as chief justice from 2004-2006. She graduated from Boston University, then attended George Washington University Law School, where she graduated fifth in her class. In September 1993, Pariente was appointed to the Fourth District Court of Appeal, where she served until her appointment as the 77th Justice of the Florida Supreme Court on December 10, 1997. In her time on the court, Pariente has been involved with several notable cases including 2000's *Bush v. Gore*; 2004's *Jeb Bush v. Michael Schiavo*, which ruled unconstitutional a law passed by the Republican-controlled Florida Legislature authorizing Governor Jeb Bush to intervene in the Terri Schiavo case; and 2006's *Jeb Bush v. Ruth Holmes*, ruling one of Florida's three school voucher programs unconstitutional. Since 2010, she has served as the chief justice's designee to the Florida Children and Youth Cabinet.

[Marsha Ternus](#), former chief justice of the Iowa Supreme Court, currently practices law in Des Moines, Iowa, focusing on appellate case consulting, litigation consulting, and arbitration. She was appointed to the Iowa Supreme Court in 1993 by Governor Terry Branstad and was selected by her peers to serve as chief justice in 2006. As chief justice, she made the improvement of court oversight of child welfare cases and the expansion of access to the courts priorities for the Iowa Judicial Branch. Her term on the court expired on December 31, 2010. Ternus received her bachelor's degree with honors and high distinction, Phi Beta Kappa, from the University of Iowa in 1972. She earned her law degree with honors, Order of the Coif, from Drake University Law School in

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1977. While at Drake, Ternus served as editor-in-chief of the *Drake Law Review*. She holds honorary degrees from Coe College, Simpson College, and Iowa Wesleyan College.

About the National Association of Women Judges (NAWJ)

NAWJ is the nation's leading voice for women jurists dedicated to preserving judicial independence, ensuring equal justice and access to the courts for women, minorities and other historically disfavored groups, providing judicial education on cutting-edge issues, and increasing the numbers and advancement of women judges at all levels to more accurately reflect their full participation in a democratic society. NAWJ members include federal, state, tribal, military and administrative law judges at both the appellate and trial levels from every state in the nation. The National Association of Women Judges "Informed Voters – Fair Judges" project is a non partisan voter education project developed to increase public awareness about the judicial system, to inform voters that politics and special interest attacks have no place in the courts, and to give voters the tools they need to exercise an informed vote in favor of fair and impartial courts. For more information about NAWJ, visit www.nawj.org.

About the National Constitution Center

The [National Constitution Center](http://www.constitutioncenter.org) in Philadelphia is the Museum of We the People, America's Town Hall, and a Headquarters for Civic Education. As the **Museum of We the People**, the National Constitution Center brings the United States Constitution to life for visitors of all ages and inspires active citizenship by celebrating the American constitutional tradition. The museum features interactive exhibits, engaging theatrical performances, and original documents of freedom. As the only institution established by Congress to "disseminate information about the United States Constitution on a non-partisan basis," the National Constitution Center serves as a **Headquarters for Civic Education**—offering cutting-edge learning resources including the premier online Interactive Constitution. As **America's Town Hall**, the National Constitution Center hosts timely constitutional conversations uniting distinguished leaders, scholars, authors, and journalists from across the political spectrum. For more information, call 215-409-6700 or visit constitutioncenter.org.