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FROM THE CHAIR OF THE EDITORIAL ADVISORY BOARD

THE BOLCH JUDICIAL INSTITUTE (WHICH PUBLISHES JUDICATURE) RECENTLY PRESENTED “DEFENDING THE JUDICIARY,” a conference that brought lawyers and judges together to discuss ways to counter the increasingly common attacks targeting the judiciary, which threaten the rule of law and the basic functioning of the court system. We as judges can counter these attacks on judges and bolster public trust in the courts through civics education and a renewed commitment to civility in the justice system.

In the last edition of *Judicature* (Vol. 108 No. 1), a report from the Annenberg Public Policy Center reviewed nearly 20 years of survey data about public perceptions of the courts. The report offered four key findings: 1) Trust in the courts has waned in recent years; 2) public trust in the U.S. Supreme Court has declined faster than trust in the federal judiciary as a whole; 3) the judicial branch still maintains greater support from the public than the other branches of government (but this advantage has declined recently); and 4) a majority of Americans believe the courts favor the wealthy and judges fail to set aside personal political beliefs when making their rulings.

These findings are disheartening. However, the report also suggested that civics education can nurture understanding of, and support for, the democratic norms that serve as guardrails for our government. Civics education also exposes the public to the authority and procedures of the judiciary that are critical in our checks and balances system. More knowledge about how government operates and why it operates that way may also result in increased support for the courts.

But to truly change the current climate, we must go beyond civics education to emphasize civility. The civics program that I developed with Judge Beth Bloom, Civil Discourse and Difficult Decisions (CD3), is now a national program of the Federal Bar Association and U.S. Courts (uscourts.gov/educational-resources/educational-activities/civil-discourse-and-difficult-decisions). CD3 brings judges, lawyers, and students together in the courtroom to participate in a case simulation and to engage one another in discussions about civility in personal and professional settings. The program has been administered to high school, college, and law students, providing a concrete opportunity for participants to discuss and model civility for the next generation and to encourage respectful dialogue as we educate students about the legal profession.

A lack of trust in the judiciary as part and parcel of declining faith in our institutions isn't an intractable circumstance. *We are* the institution. We — lawyers, judges, and officers of the court — are the representatives and the character of our judicial branch. What we say, and how we say it, influences the people who entrust matters to the courts and rely on the institution for relief and resolution.

We must act like the leaders we are in our communities. We set the tone for others in our courtrooms. Many of the articles in this edition of *Judicature* showcase a variety of ways in which we as a profession can work together to improve our courts, strengthen the legal system, and improve public trust in our courts. I hope the articles will inspire both discussion and action.

Judge Robin L. Rosenberg, U.S. District Court, Southern District of Florida

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