

# Community Relations Committee

## Judicial Conference of Indiana

Meeting Minutes for Friday, February 6, 2026

The Community Relations Committee met on February 6, 2026, by video conference. The meeting was chaired by Judge Sean Persin.

### 1. **Members present.**

Kelly Benjamin, Lisa Berdine, Rebecca Buitendorp, Murielle Bright, Luke Britt, Stefanie Crawford, Aleksandra Dimitrijevic, Chadwick Hill, Michael Morrissey, Jason Mount, Patrick Ryan, Emily Salzmann, Gary Schutte, Stephanie Steele, and Sean Persin (chair).

### **Members not in attendance.**

Polly Beeson, Judi Calhoun (indicated unable to attend), Cheryl Rivera (indicated unable to attend), and Austin Shadle.

### 2. **Staff present.**

Adam Clay and Sarah Kidwell provided staff assistance.

### 3. **Approval of minutes.**

The committee approved the November 7, 2025, minutes.

### 4. **Commission on Indiana's Legal Future.**

The committee heard from Court of Appeals Judge Nancy Vaidik about the work of the [Commission on Indiana's Legal Future](#) with their [final report](#) and specifically recommendation F from a [Supreme Court order](#). Judge Vaidik indicated that Indiana has an attorney shortage across the state and that the Legal Future's committee worked hard for over a year to develop recommendations that have all interested parties working together. Judge Vaidik was pleased with the Judges Speakers Bureau and suggested that instead of waiting for requests to speak, judges should request to be allowed into classrooms. She indicated that the Court of Appeals has been excited by student's reactions to stories told of career paths to the bench during traveling oral arguments. Chair Persin agreed with the idea that students need to hear about the path that judges and lawyers take perhaps on a digital platform. Emphasis can be on how judges come from all different backgrounds. Videos could be about things of interest to juveniles, i.e. rights of juveniles in courts, criminal constitutional rights, and how to become a lawyer or judge. Judge Dimitrijevic suggests that schools might be more receptive to information that comes from the state versus individual judges. Chair Persin concludes by indicating that we all want to increase the participation level of judges speaking to students and need to respect the time away from the bench for the judicial officers. Staff will include on the next agenda.

### 5. **Judges Speakers Bureau.**

OCEO is working on an update to the current list and will include details in a weekly

message about being added to the list. Perhaps judges should change email and phone number to work instead of personal.

6. **Constitution Day.**

OCEO will include information about encouraging judges to find a school in an April weekly message to get plans started before schools are out for the summer.

7. **IJA Excellence in Public Information and Education awards.**

Chair Persin indicates that members should be on the lookout throughout the year so that we have some good nominations to be included when it comes time.

8. **Next meeting dates.**

The meetings for 2026 will be on the following Fridays at 1:00 p.m. (Eastern) via Zoom.

- May 1
- August 7
- November 6

Respectfully submitted,

Adam Clay and Sarah Kidwell  
Office of Communication, Education & Outreach