MISSION

The mission of the National Conference of the Administrative Law Judiciary is to enhance and strengthen the independence, professionalism and reputation of the state and federal administrative judiciary, and to promote access to justice through fairness, quality, and efficiency in that system, while supporting and advocating its improvement, and broadening membership, diverse collaboration and inclusive participation in the Conference by all eligible administrative adjudicators.

GOALS

GOAL I: To be an effective voice for, and to strengthen the independence of, the administrative law judiciary.

GOAL II: To improve the effectiveness and accessibility of administrative justice by supporting the highest standards of professionalism, best practices, competence, and ethical conduct by administrative adjudicators.

GOAL III: To develop and implement benefits for our members for their NCALJ membership which significantly exceed the cost of their annual membership.

GOAL IV: To encourage a diverse administrative judiciary, as well as inclusive membership of, and greater participation in the Conference by, all eligible state and federal administrative adjudicators.

GOAL V: To collaborate with other state and national organizations of administrative adjudicators to promote communication, collaboration and education.

ACTION STEPS¹

GOAL I: To strengthen the independence of the administrative law judiciary.

1. Strengthen standing ABA policy protecting the judicial decisional independence of the federal administrative law judiciary and the importance of the APA’s neutral and independent administrative law judiciary through House of Delegates resolutions and ABA policy to extend the protections of the APA to all federal adjudicators and to seek similar protections for all state adjudicators. Medium range: Federal Administrative Adjudication Committee and NCALJ Delegate to the House of Delegates. Proposed resolutions being considered by Federal Administrative Adjudication Committee to accomplish this.
2. Establish permanent liaison relationships between NCALJ, NAALJ, FALJC, the Administrative Conference of the United States (ACUS), and the ABA Standing Committee on Judicial Independence to coordinate mutual efforts toward this goal. **Short range.** Our Liaison to the Administrative Conference of the United States and our NCALJ Delegate to the House of Delegates. Our current liaisons have been tasked to request permanent liaison relationship with these entities, except the Standing Committee on Judicial Independence currently has no liaison.

3. Establish permanent liaison relationships between NCALJ and the Central Panel Directors Conference to coordinate mutual efforts toward this goal at the state level and to coordinate efforts on legislative remedies, including working with the Conference to determine the extent to which each of the central panel jurisdictions already have final decision authority. **Short range.** State, Local and Central Panel Administrative Committee. Our current liaison has been tasked to request this permanent liaison relationship.

4. Pursue and support legislative action to:
   a. mandate that appropriate or defined federal administrative hearings conform with the Administrative Procedure Act (APA). **Current proposed resolution under consideration and development.**
   b. urge amendment to the APA to create the presumption that its provisions apply to all such hearings in the absence of statutory language to the contrary. **Current proposed resolution under consideration and development.**
   c. require that future statutes providing for administrative hearings must be subject to formal APA hearings in the absence of congressional determinations to the contrary. **Current proposed resolution under consideration and development.**
   d. require all federal administrative adjudicators to be Administrative Law Judges and reclassify serving federal administrative adjudicators who are not. **Medium range.** Chair, Chair Elect, NCALJ Delegate to the House of Delegates and ABA Office of Legislative Affairs, Federal Administrative Law Judiciary Committee. **Current proposed resolution under consideration and development.**

5. Explore and develop a House resolution for the establishment of a federal central panel or conference system of administrative adjudicators that serve the needs of federal agencies, while protecting the due process rights of individuals, in accordance with the standards set forth in the Administrative Practices Act. **Long range.** Federal Administrative Adjudication Committee; Liaison to the Administrative Conference of the United States; and Liaison to the Law and Regulatory Practice Section. **Current proposed resolution under consideration and development.**

**GOAL II: To support the highest standards of professionalism, competence, and ethical conduct by administrative adjudicators**

1. Professionalism: Develop and promote best professional practices for engaged neutrality of administrative adjudicators and the administrative process. **Long range.** Federal Administrative Adjudication Committee, State, Local and Central Panel Administrative Adjudication Committee, Education and Programs Committee, and our representative to the National Judicial College.
2. Competence: Work with the National Judicial College to create and disseminate web-based bench books/best practice resources and educational programs/webinars for improved administrative adjudication. **Long range.** *Education and Programs Committee; liaison to the National Judicial College; and Liaison to the Law and Regulatory Practice Section.*

3. Competence: Continue to work with the National Judicial College to continue $500 scholarships for NCALJ members to facilitate attendance by administrative adjudicators. **Ongoing.** *NCALJ member of the Judicial College Board of Trustees.*

4. Competence: Continue participation in offering two-week Fair Hearings course and promote attendance in that course by identifying agencies that now provide financial incentives for ALJs to attend the fair hearings course and by actively encouraging all agencies to participate in that incentive plan. **Ongoing.** *NCALJ member of the Judicial College Board of Trustees.*

5. Explore the development of a version of the new ABA Model Code of Ethics for State Administrative Judges for federal administrative adjudicators. **Medium range.** *NCALJ Delegate to the House and the Federal Administrative Adjudication Committee.*

6. Review and propose amendments to the ABA Model Code of Judicial Conduct and the ABA Model Rules of Disciplinary Enforcement which expressly address and encompass the administrative law judiciary and are compatible with high standards of administrative adjudication. **Short range.** *NCALJ Delegate to the House. Current proposed resolution under consideration and development.*

7. Ethical Conduct: Promote the adoption of the amended Model Code and Model Rules (see item #6 immediately above) by the various federal jurisdictions. **Long range.** *Chair, Chair Elect, NCALJ Delegate to the House and ABA Office of Legislative Affairs. See action step #6, immediately above.*

8. Work with the Lawyers Conference of the Judicial Division, as well as state and local bar associations and other groups/associations that represent persons in hearings before the administrative law judiciary to adopt proposed best practices and minimum standards for administrative adjudication. **This could be done either generally for all administrative adjudication, or separately for the various specialized administrative hearing tribunals. Long range.** *State, Local and Central Panel Administrative Adjudication Committee; Liaisons to the Law and Regulatory Practice Section and Central Panel Survey Projects, and Federal Administrative Adjudication Committee.*

**GOAL III: To develop and implement benefits for our members for their NCALJ membership which significantly exceed the cost of their annual membership.**

1. Develop educational programming and videos of the seminars, webinars and panels we produce which can be archived and posted on our web page for viewing by our members either free or at significantly reduced cost. **[Education and Programs Committee.] In process: will continue.**

2. Work with the National Judicial College to co-develop and promote programs for state and federal administrative adjudicators which will be thereafter archived on our website
for free or reduced cost viewing by our members. *Education and Programs Committee; our representative to the NJC.*

3. Develop a retention plan to complement our membership efforts, including a member survey of what they want and like, how we can add value to their membership, what we can do better, and to request referrals for recruiting to membership. *Medium Range. Membership/Diversity and Recruiting Committee.*

**GOAL IV: To encourage diverse membership and greater participation in the Conference by all eligible persons.**

1. Obtain committee preferences and areas of interest from new members when they join and ensure committee chairs promptly welcome and begin to use them. Develop a new member welcome letter from the Chair to also encourage members to select from a list of our committees. Use committee chairs and membership committee to make direct contact with new members to orient and engage them with NCALJ participation opportunities. *Annual. Committee chairs; Membership and Communications Committees. This action has been taken; ongoing. Key to do with new AALJ and NAIJ members.*

2. Sponsor or promote joint programs with, and actively reach out to other administrative judiciary organizations, especially FALJC, NAALJ and AdLaw. *Medium range. Education and Programs Committee; Chair and Chair Elect.*

3. Provide a semiannual summary of action taken by the NCALJ Executive Committee at its meetings and at the annual and midyear meetings and distribute to all NCALJ members within one month of the conclusion of the annual and midyear meetings. *Short range. Chair, Chair-elect and Communications Committee.*

4. Pursue additional diversity of membership to strengthen and build NCALJ by representing more agencies, courts and geographic areas of the country. *Medium range. Membership/Diversity and Recruiting Committee.*

**GOAL V: To work together with other state and national organizations of administrative adjudicators to promote communication, collaboration and education.**

1. Identify and contact other such administrative organizations, including minority groups, and begin to establish a system/format to act with those organizations to identify and advance common goals. *Short range. Membership/Diversity/Recruiting and Communications Committees.*

2. Establish a working group from NCALJ, NAALJ, FALJC and the Central Panel Directors’ Conference charged with creating a comprehensive database of administrative adjudication positions in the United States. *Medium range. Vice Chair; State, Local and Central Panel and Federal Administrative Adjudication Committees; and Center for Professional Responsibility. Has this already been achieved for both state and federal administrative adjudicators?*

3. Identify and target state and federal administrative judiciary groups, including minority judges, for NCALJ membership under the ABA Reduced Judicial Dues Program.
Medium range. Membership/Diversity/Recruiting Committee and Communications Committee. Pending now with AALJ and NAIJ and minority outreach.

4. Under Action Step 3, also develop specific recruiting packages for each group and work with the group leaders to implement the recruiting plan for each group. Medium range. Membership/Diversity/Recruiting Committee and Communications Committee.

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1 This Strategic Plan contains short range, medium range, and long range action steps which by their nature, are part of a dynamic, continuous, sustained process and which will be adopted and changed from time to time by the Executive Committee of the NCALJ to reflect attainment or completion of some action steps, adoption of new action steps to respond to emergent needs or issues, and the evolution of some previously adopted action steps to become obsolete or moot, or no longer necessary to accomplish because of changed circumstances since they were adopted. As such, the Executive Committee should review all of the current action steps during each meeting to ascertain completion, current status, modification or replacement.

As used here, **short range** action steps are defined as steps which can be completed within the six-month interval between Executive Committee meetings, the Annual, and Mid-year ABA meetings.

Medium range action steps are expected to take up to one year to complete, where action can be taken during the intervening year with the goal of completion by the second Executive Committee meeting after its adoption as part of this Strategic Plan.

Long range action steps are expected to take more than one year to complete after adoption. It is important to assure that such action steps are specific, measurable and attainable so that they are not added as further aspirational goals which are never expected to be completed, or which become so long range that progress cannot clearly be measured. Should that occur, one or more shorter range action steps should be adopted instead, which can be achieved as interim steps toward the larger action plan or goal.

It should be noted that use of these action steps may require modification of the committee structure of NCALJ to ensure it remains fully aligned and effective to accomplish and focus fully upon these changing items and to successfully bring them to timely completion.

Finally, it is recommended that committees responsible for its accomplishment be listed adjacent to each action step, and that they should submit written reports before each committee meeting on the status of the action steps for which they are responsible. A suggested format is appended to this Strategic Plan. Such advance submission will allow the Executive Committee to be informed and prepared so that the meeting can be spent more productively in discussion of future plans and topics without spending time to listen to routine status reports which can be adequately covered within the advance written reports, instead.