

**Opening Remarks by Tara Norgard at the FJAA Conference**  
**September 9, 2016**

My name is Tara Norgard and I am the president of the Minnesota Chapter of the Federal Bar Association. I bring greetings from over 900 members of our organization, which includes judges and lawyers who practice in our federal district court. I am deeply honored to welcome each and every one of you to Minnesota.

When Becky Baertsch asked me to welcome you all in this opening session, I was humbled—and terrified. She told me about the theme of “60 Tips and Tricks” and suggested that I could perhaps offer a tip or two.

You have to understand: lawyers are the last people in the world who should be giving “tips and tricks” to you, the engines of our federal judicial system. It seems almost sacrilegious. It is each of **you** who hold the book of wisdom that every lawyer would love to read. **You** know when things are going to happen—and how. **You** know what works in your courtrooms—and what doesn’t. **You** have insights that practicing attorneys could only dream of.

In short, am keenly aware that I come before you—completely void of any useful advice. What I do have to offer are these two messages: (1) we are grateful for your work and (2) we are honored to share in your mission.

**We Are Grateful for Your Work**

In my day job I am an intellectual property litigator and I appear in these courtrooms on a regular basis. And in that process, I have had the privilege of getting to know the real power behind the Court: the judicial assistants. Both in this district and in your home districts, trust me when I tell you that the lawyers who practice in your courts thank you for everything that you do, day in and day out.

Every single one of us owes a debt of gratitude to every single one of you. You are the engine that makes our federal courts run. Your commitment to your profession and our Courts are integral to the commitment of our entire

federal community to the principle that is engraved in our atrium: Equal Justice Under Law. Not only do each one of you do what you do with unparalleled excellence—you do it with the highest standards of professionalism. Then you tie it all together with genuine collegiality and friendliness.

Although I no longer qualify as a young lawyer, there are some things about being a young lawyer that none of us ever forget. And maybe never change. For example, dialing chambers is not something any of us do lightly. We know how busy you are. We don't want to bother you. And when we call—we do not want to seem this way—but we are more often than not completely clueless and looking for whatever guidance that you may be able to offer: *How much time might the judge have on his or her calendar for this argument? Do you want three copies of the hundreds of pages of documents I just filed on ECF?* The list of questions goes on and on – you could all probably write quite a humorous book about our calls.

But it takes one call to realize why you—the professionals who work both on the front lines and behind the scenes—are second to none. After that first call or meeting with any one of you, lawyers recognize that you are our colleagues, partners and our friends. And that although we all have different roles to play, we join every day to ensure our universal commitment to Equal Justice Under Law.

When we come to your house—this courthouse and those just like it across the country—you welcome lawyers like me into the federal family. And it is a family that we are so very proud to be a part of.

### **We Share in Your Mission**

In preparation for coming here, I have done some research on your organization. I try not to come to Court unprepared—that would be especially true in coming to speak to an audience like this one. As I was reading your Constitution and Mission Statement, I could not help but notice the remarkable similarities between the FJAA and the FBA. Our shared goals include:

- advancing education and professional development about the practice and administration of law in the federal courts
- upholding high professional standards inside and outside of our Courts
- promoting inclusion in the legal community, regardless of gender, race, disability or other identity
- and encouraging collegiality in our professions

And it seems to me we share these principles because in the end, we are all unified in our commitment to Equal Justice Under the Law. To a federal judicial system that is fair and just for everyone who comes to court.

On behalf of the 900 members of the Minnesota federal bar, I thank you for working with us hand in hand to achieve those goals every day. We are honored to be your colleagues and your friends in this work.