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THE PREMIER
APPELLATE
CONFERENCE OF
THE YEAR!

The 20th Annual
APPELLATE
PRACTICE
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Join us for a day full of key updates, review of necessary
appellate advocacy skills and strategies, and 6 breakouts topics
to keep you apprised of all things appellate!

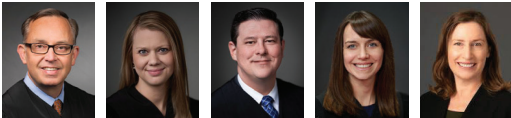
SPECIAL JUDICIAL APPEARANCES:
Minnesota Supreme Court

- Chief Justice Natalie E. Hudson
- Justice Theodora Gaïtas



Minnesota Court of Appeals

- Judge Matthew E. Johnson
- Judge Elise L. Larson
- Judge Jon Schmidt
- Judge Elizabeth G. Bentley
- Judge Rachel F. Bond



Friday, February 27, 2026 – Attend In Person

Minnesota CLE Conference Center
600 Nicollet Mall, Suite 370, Minneapolis

Can't Attend In Person? View the Online Replay on
Friday, March 20, 2026

Keynote Presentation:
*Reflections on Two
Decades of Supreme
Court and Appellate
Advocacy* featuring
Nicole A. Saharsky!



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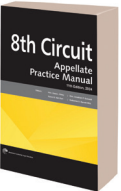
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Friday, February 27, 2026 –
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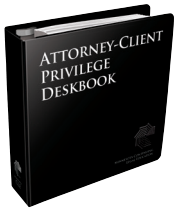
SAVE
47%

Attendees of the 2026 Appellate Practice Institute can **save 47%** on these terrific
resources! Purchases must be made online February 27 during the Institute. Orders will
be shipped after the Institute.



**Eighth Circuit Appellate
Practice Manual, 11th Ed.**

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**Attorney-Client Privilege
Deskbook, 1st Ed.**

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8:30 – 9:00 a.m.
CHECK-IN & CONTINENTAL BREAKFAST

9:00 – 9:15 a.m.
Welcome and Introduction
– *Devin T. Driscoll, Institute Chair*
– *Kyle R. Kroll, Section Chair*

9:15 – 9:45 a.m.
A Message from the Chiefs of the Minnesota Supreme Court and the Minnesota Court of Appeals
– *Chief Justice Natalie E. Hudson*
– *Judge Rachel F. Bond*

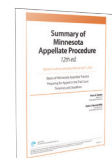


9:45 – 9:50 a.m.
BREAK

9:50 – 10:50 a.m.
KEYNOTE PRESENTATION
Reflections on Two Decades of Supreme Court and Appellate Advocacy
Drawing on more than two decades of experience arguing before the U.S. Supreme Court and appellate courts across the country, Nicole Saharsky will share a reflective look at the evolution of high-stakes appellate advocacy. Nicole will share insights from landmark cases, discuss how appellate strategy, briefing, and oral advocacy have changed over time, and highlight lessons learned from working with courts at the highest levels. Attendees will gain practical perspective on what effective appellate advocacy looks like today and what it takes to succeed over the course of a long and impactful appellate career.
– *Nicole A. Saharsky*

10:50 – 11:00 a.m.
BREAK

FREE FOR ALL ATTENDEES!



The UPDATED 12th Edition of the Summary Guide™ to Minnesota Appellate Procedure

All attendees will receive a complimentary electronic copy of this terrific resource prepared by Erica A. Holzer & Katie Barrett Wiik. Additional hard copies may be purchased online for the special price of only \$16 each (regularly \$35), plus tax and handling. Orders will be shipped after the Institute.

11:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.
MORNING BREAKOUTS

101 **BASICS**
The Nuts and Bolts of an Appeal – Tips for a Successful Appeal
This session will provide an overview of how to do an appeal, and will cover everything from important dates and deadlines, to the technical rules, to how to present and craft effective appellate arguments. Learn tips and strategies on best practices for drafting your appellate briefs and what common pitfalls to avoid to ensure your appeal succeeds.
– *Judge Jon Schmidt*
– *Lauren E. Pockl*

102 **INTERMEDIATE/ADVANCED**
Amici Advocacy: Best Practice Tips
Learn from an experienced judicial and practitioner panel on how to participate as an amicus party, how to recruit amici, what the rules require, and how to be effective and helpful to the courts in that role.
– *Justice Theodora Gaïtas*
– *Louise A. Behrendt*
– *Timothy J. Droske*
– *Kelsey R. Kelley, moderator*

103 **OF SPECIAL INTEREST**
Enhance Your Appellate Family Law Practice: Effective Brief Writing Through Storytelling
Presenters will share practical brief-writing strategies with a focus on clarity, persuasion, and making your arguments stand out to the court. The discussion will be tailored to family law appeals, such as marital dissolutions, Termination of Parental Rights (TPR) and Child in Need of Protection or Services (CHIPS) cases, but the brief-writing tips may be broadly applicable in other areas of law as well.
– *Brooke M. Beskau Warg*
– *m boulette*
– *Michelle K. Kuhl*

12:00 – 12:50 p.m.
LUNCH BREAK (*provided by Minnesota CLE*)
JOIN US FOR A FUN ACTIVITY!

12:50 – 1:50 p.m.
Achieving Stellar Performance on Appeal
What is the difference between good appellate advocacy and great appellate advocacy? Join our distinguished panel from the Minnesota Court of Appeals to find out. The panel will focus on strategies used by highly effective advocates and showcase excellence in issue selection, persuasive brief writing, confident and focused oral advocacy, and the strategic use of appellate rules. Attendees will gain insight into how top practitioners earn credibility with appellate courts through clarity, preparation, and sound strategic judgment—and how these strengths can be applied to elevate their own appellate practice.
– *Judge Matthew E. Johnson*
– *Judge Elise L. Larson*
– *Elizabeth S. Keating*
– *Scott M. Flaherty, moderator*

1:50 – 2:00 p.m.
BREAK

2:00 – 2:30 p.m.
Minnesota Appeals by the Numbers
This session will review and highlight statistics from Minnesota appellate courts regarding appeals, practitioners, and cases.
– *Rachel L. Dougherty*
– *Megan M. Helstrom*

2:30 – 3:30 p.m.
Emerging from the Shadows – Shedding Light on the Shadow Docket
There has been an increasing use of shadow dockets by the appellate courts and the U.S. Supreme Court. This session will explore how shadow docket decisions arise, the legal standards that govern them, and their growing influence on substantive law and judicial transparency. Attendees will gain insight into the procedural, constitutional, and practical implications of shadow docket rulings along with what they mean for litigants, practitioners, and the future of appellate decision-making.
– *Liz Kramer*
– *Nicole A. Saharsky*
– *Amy J. Wildermuth*

3:30 – 3:40 p.m.
BREAK

3:40 – 4:40 p.m.
AFTERNOON BREAKOUTS

201 **BASICS**
Appellate Clinics: How Law School Clinics Strengthen Students, Serve Clients, and Enrich the Legal Community
Past or present instructors from each of Minnesota’s three law schools will share insights from their appellate clinical programs and the unique role these clinics play in legal education and access to justice. Learn how students develop essential advocacy and practical skills through real appellate work, how clinics provide critical representation for clients, and how these programs contribute to a strong legal community.
– *Judge Elizabeth G. Bentley*
– *Leah C. Graf*
– *Gregory C. Sisk*
– *Matt Rubenstein, moderator*

202 **INTERMEDIATE/ADVANCED**
Elimination of Bias: The State and Impact of Diversity on the Appellate Bench
1.0 elimination of bias credit applied for
This session will examine the impact of diversity within the appellate courts and among appellate practitioners. Presenters will examine shifting demographics, explore how diversity influences problem-solving and case outcomes, and discuss how increased representation on the bench helps identify and reduce biases in the legal profession. Also, learn about efforts to increase diversity on the appellate bench, including national statistics, and why diversity matters and how it strengthens the administration of justice.
– *Mary L. Fee*
– *Leanne Fuith*
– *Megan Odom*

203 **OF SPECIAL INTEREST**
Roundtable Discussion: Hot Topics in Criminal Law
Seasoned advocates and jurists discuss issues in criminal law that have garnered significant attention from our appellate courts in recent years.
– *Judge Rachel F. Bond*
– *John Donovan*
– *Alexandra Meyer*
– *Sarah J. Vokes, moderator*

4:40 – 4:45 p.m.
BREAK

4:45 – 5:15 p.m.
Fireside Chat with Justice Theodora Gaïtas
– *Justice Theodora Gaïtas*
– *Devin T. Driscoll, moderator*



5:15 – 5:45 p.m.
Annual Institute Reception
Join your friends and colleagues for tasty refreshments, plus in-person conversation and networking!

COURSE INFORMATION

LIVE IN PERSON
Friday, February 27, 2026
Minnesota CLE Conference Center
600 Nicollet Mall, Suite 370
Third Floor City Center, Minneapolis

ONLINE REPLAY
Friday, March 20, 2026
View online at www.minncle.org
The online replay will include all plenary and breakout sessions. A moderator will be available to answer questions by e-mail. You will receive all the in-person content with the convenience and accessibility of participating online. All materials will be provided electronically.

HOW TO REGISTER
Register online at www.minncle.org. Email customerservice@minncle.org or call **800-759-8840** for assistance.

COURSE MATERIALS
In-person attendees will receive hard copies of any course materials submitted. All attendees will have access to course materials via their Minnesota CLE online accounts.

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Minnesota CLE will apply to the Minnesota State Board of Continuing Legal Education for **6.5 CLE credits, including 1.0 elimination of bias credit for session #202**. The maximum total credits attendees may claim for this course is 6.5. Minnesota CLE will also apply to the MSBA for **6.5 certified civil trial specialist credits**.

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Minnesota CLE maintains a scholarship program for those with a financial need. Contact customerservice@minncle.org for further details or to obtain an application.

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