



**Judicial Branch of Arizona
in Maricopa County**

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Judicial Branch Celebrates Law Day at the State Capitol
Powerful presentations given to judicial officers, lawyers and the public.

PHOENIX (May 9, 2022) – The Constitution is a flexible, living document that continues to keep America moving forward and preserve the rule of law.

Presiding Judge Joseph Welty and Arizona Supreme Court Associate Justice Katherine King, the two keynote speakers at the 2022 Law Day celebration, held May 2, delivered powerful presentations at the Arizona State Capitol Museum on how the courts and the Constitution have adapted to crisis and times of change.

Judge Welty revealed the rationale and thinking behind every action the Court took in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

“When we dealt with the global pandemic, we had to first look at what is our guiding principle – why we do what we do every day? If we were a department store, who was profit-driven, we could just shut down a for a while, but we couldn’t do that,” Judge Welty said. “Our Chief Justice said ‘Arizona Courts will not close’ and I agreed. We have constitutional responsibilities. So, we had to balance public safety with constitutional rights.”

In his speech, Judge Welty highlighted three major constitutional issues the court faced because of the health crisis: due process rights to a speedy trial, the confrontation clause and open court proceedings. Each issue presented a major challenge because the Court was restricting its operations, in-person hearings and the number of people walking into the courthouse.

“As a Court, we had to balance our health and safety risks with our operational options,” Judge Welty said. “Justice Robert Jackson famously said the Constitution is not a suicide pact. This quote tells us there was an area in which the Court can operate. The Constitution can be read and tempered with practical wisdom in times of crisis because it recognizes that we have to move cases forward.”

During the pandemic, the Court took substantial steps to adequately present court services via video platforms and took the necessary safety precautions with in-person hearings. As a result, Maricopa County Superior Court operated largely without complaint.

Arizona Supreme Court Justice King followed Judge Welty's remarks with a presentation about amending state and federal constitutions and how they evolved over the years.

"Arizona's constitution is about 35,000 words – about six times the length of the U.S. Constitution," said Justice King. "It has been amended nearly 150 times and this has allowed Arizona citizens to address topics that are unique to this state."

The United States Constitution is only about 7,500 words, and it has only been formally amended 27 times. However, Justice King mentioned most state constitutions differ dramatically from the federal structure.

"People often talk about the Constitution. Well, in the United States of America there are 51 Constitutions. There's the U.S. Constitution and there are also 50 state constitutions," Justice King said. "These are enduring documents that set forth fundamental principles."

Each year, the American Bar Association selects a theme based on a particular aspect of the law that impacts the lives of Americans. The Law Day program continues to grow nationally and has spread to many countries around the world.

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The Judicial Branch of Arizona in Maricopa County is comprised of Superior Court, Adult Probation and Juvenile Probation, which includes juvenile detention. The Judicial Branch in Maricopa County is the fourth largest trial court system in the nation and, along with its 3,000 employees, is dedicated to providing a safe, fair and impartial forum for resolving disputes, enhancing access to services, and providing innovative, evidence-based practices that improve the safety of the community and ensure the public's trust and confidence in the Judicial Branch. For more information, visit www.superiorcourt.maricopa.gov.