

The Jeffrey D. Colman Access to Justice Award

Nominations Due November 2, 2026

Submit via: <https://forms.gle/BH9BtAB9PrQnYakVA>

The Jeffrey D. Colman Access to Justice Award will be given to a lawyer, paralegal, or court employee (i.e., anyone working at a courthouse) who has made a significant or meaningful contribution to improving access to our court system for litigants who are self-represented, have limited English proficiency, have disabilities, or face barriers to accessing the court system. For any nominee, the contribution needs to have a close connection to work within the courthouse or a court-based project.

This award honors Jeff Colman's years of service improving access to justice in Illinois – as the first Chair of the [Illinois Supreme Court Commission on Access to Justice](https://www.atjil.org) (Commission) and then as a Commissioner – and his dedication to the principles of fairness and justice for all. As the first Chair of the Commission, Jeff was instrumental in developing the Commission's first strategic plan and the foundational programs and objectives still integral in the Commission's work today.

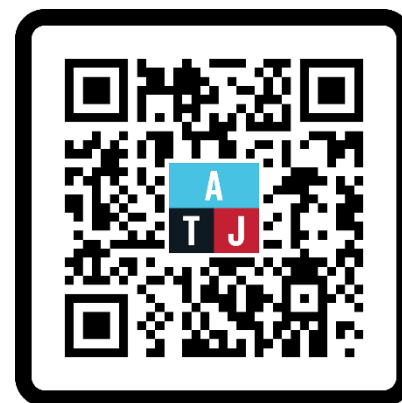
During his career, Jeff received numerous awards for his extensive *pro bono* and public service activities. In 2012, he received the Justice John Paul Stevens Award, presented by The Chicago Bar Association and The Chicago Bar Foundation to lawyers who exemplify Justice Stevens's commitment to integrity and public service; in 2011, he was named a "legend" of the bar by the American Constitution Society; in 2009, the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Illinois and the Chicago Chapter of the Federal Bar Association presented him with an Award for Excellence in *Pro Bono* Service; and in 2008, the John Howard Association of Illinois, a prison reform group, recognized his work defending Guantánamo Bay prisoners with its Leadership Award. He also has served as a board member for a host of not-for-profit organizations devoted to providing legal assistance to people who are underserved and marginalized in our community.

To nominate a lawyer, paralegal, or anyone working at a courthouse for this award, submit the following information via this electronic form at <https://forms.gle/BH9BtAB9PrQnYakVA> or the QR code by **November 2, 2026**. All questions should be directed to Sarah Song at ssong@illinoiscourts.gov.

The electronic nomination form includes the following questions (to aid in your preparation of the nomination):

1. General information

- a. Nominator Name, Place of Employment, Phone, Email
- b. Nominee Name, Place of Employment, Address, Phone, Email



2. Narrative *(500-word maximum)*

Please explain why you are nominating this lawyer, paralegal, or court employee (i.e., anyone working at a courthouse). This narrative should include specific examples of how the nominee has made tangible and measurable efforts to improve the experience of litigants who are self-represented, have limited English proficiency, have disabilities, or face barriers to accessing the court system.

Standout nominees will have been involved in court-based efforts to: increase litigants' understanding of court processes and procedures; connect litigants with necessary resources regarding substantive areas of the law; provide technology or language support; or secure access to legal assistance or representation. The nominee's work will have improved litigants' ability to meaningfully participate in their court cases. While there are no constraints as to how the nominee will have achieved this, it will likely be through a local or statewide program or change at the systemic level.

3. Other Supporting Materials *(optional)*

- a. Link to LinkedIn Profile
- b. Link to articles featuring the nominee or their work
- c. Nominee short biography *(200-word maximum)*
- d. Other relevant information

4. Letters of Recommendation *(optional, maximum 3) (please submit via email to Sarah Song at ssong@illinoiscourts.gov)*

[Current Commissioners](#) of the Commission on Access to Justice and members of the [AOIC Access to Justice Division](#) are not eligible to receive this award.

Former award recipients include Judge Michael Fiello and Judge Catherine Schneider (2020); Halle Cox (2021); Melissa Picciola (2022); Nicole Ticknor (2023); Tiffany Schicker (2024); Brenda Sprague (2025).