

## **Hughes Hubbard Senior Ethics Counsel James B. Kobak, Jr. Elected as Chair of National Center for Access to Justice**

**New York, New York, August 9, 2021** – Hughes Hubbard & Reed LLP, the National Center for Access to Justice (NCAJ) and the New York County Lawyers Association (NYCLA) announced that James B. Kobak, Jr., Senior Ethics Counsel, has been elected as chair of the NCAJ. The NCAJ is a nonprofit organization based at Fordham Law School whose mission is to rely on data to expand access to justice in the civil and criminal justice systems. Jim is a former president of the NYCLA and chair of its Justice Center which are, like NCAJ, dedicated to improving access for all members of society.

"I am proud and eager to support the important empirical and advocacy work of the NCAJ because of its critical role of ensuring access to justice in all its forms in our democracy," said Kobak. "I look forward to working with the talented and dedicated staff and board to advance that goal for all in our society."

Jim was a partner at HHR for 35 years before becoming the firm's first general counsel. Jim has litigated at every level, including at the U.S. Supreme Court. He has lectured and written widely, and taught at leading law schools.

"I came to understand and appreciate the work of NCAJ through David Udell's insightful participation in the work of the Justice Center and look forward to extending that relationship," said Kobak.

The NCAJ's flagship project is the Justice Index, the online resource that was created to improve the justice system by ranking the 50 states, Puerto Rico, and Washington, D.C. on best policies for access to justice. With 120 indicators and 5000 data points, the Justice Index reveals how justice systems fare in five key areas of policy: i) attorney access, ii) language assistance, iii) disability assistance, iv) self-help access, and v) relief from excessive fines and fees. Online since 2014, the Justice Index in 2021 is supporting justice system change, increasing awareness and understanding of courts, and facilitating cutting edge research on access to justice.

"We are thrilled that Jim Kobak has agreed to join NCAJ as our new board chair. Jim has our respect and the admiration of the extended legal community in New York not only for his accomplishments as a lawyer's lawyer and as a builder of institutions, but also as a leader through the years on important access to justice initiatives through his extensive work as the Chair of NYCLA's Justice Center where I have been fortunate to work closely with him," said Udell.

In 2021, NCAJ is pursuing the following specific projects: i) The Justice Index Findings, updated in May, and being rolled out across the country, are providing fuel for justice system change in all the states; ii) New Criminal Justice Fines and Fees Findings, now included in the Justice Index, support change-makers who are

putting principled and pragmatic guidelines into place to reverse the trend of extracting excessive fines and fees from vulnerable communities; iii) The Legal Empowerment Report, published in May, raises up the voices of social workers, librarians and others who seek to help people but whose work is often stymied by the broad rules that prohibit the unauthorized practice of law.

"NYCLA is proud that its former President and former Chair of our Justice Center has become the Board Chair of NCAJ. Jim has not only had a long and distinguished legal career but also has served the public tirelessly, advancing the public interest by spearheading countless initiatives advancing a variety of public policy causes and bolstering our Justice Center's capabilities. We hope that NYCLA and NCAJ can collaborate on many projects going forward that build upon the common interest that these organizations share," said Vincent T. Chang, NYCLA President.

### **About Hughes Hubbard**

Hughes Hubbard & Reed LLP is a New York City-based international law firm with a relentless focus on providing quality service to our clients and delivering successful results in the most complex matters. With a powerful combination of scale and agility, we offer clients innovative and effective solutions, while remaining flexible to adapt to their needs and market developments. Known for a collaborative culture, as well as our diversity and pro bono achievements, Hughes Hubbard has a distinguished history dating back more than a century. For more information, visit [hugheshubbard.com](http://hugheshubbard.com).

### **About National Center for Access to Justice**

NCAJ is working to bring rigorous, principled research and analysis to the task of advancing progress toward a fairer justice system, and in so doing, to achieve a better society. NCAJ has a special relationship with Fordham Law School in New York City where its executive director, David Udell, co-chairs the law school's Access to Justice Initiative with the Dean, Matthew Diller, and with former New York Chief Judge, of counsel to Latham & Watkins, Jonathan Lippman. In addition to its specific initiatives, NCAJ partners with faculty and students on courses, research projects, the Access to Justice Seminar, and the hosting of public events that advance the access to justice movement.

### **About New York County Lawyers Association**

The New York County Lawyers Association ([www.nycla.org](http://www.nycla.org)) was founded in 1908 as one of the first major bar associations in the country that admitted members without regard to race, ethnicity, religion or gender. Since its inception, it has pioneered some of the most far-reaching and tangible reforms in American jurisprudence. For more information on NYCLA please visit [nycla.org](http://nycla.org).

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