



Supreme Court of Appeals State of West Virginia

News

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Justice Benjamin to participate in Shepherd University panel on regional drug problem

For immediate release

SHEPHERDSTOWN, W.Va. – Supreme Court Justice Brent D. Benjamin will participate in a panel discussion on “A Legal Perspective on the Hard Drug Epidemic in the Region” from 3:30 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. on Wednesday, February 17, at the Erma Ora Nursing Building Auditorium Room No. 117 on the Shepherd University Campus in Shepherdstown.

The panel is sponsored by the University’s Pre-Law Society and Department of Political Science. The other panelists will be Emmet G. Sullivan, U.S. District Court Judge for the District of Columbia, and Viki M. Pauler, Associate Judge, Washington County Maryland Circuit Court, Fourth Judicial Circuit. The moderator will be Stephanie Slocum-Schaffer, Chairwoman and Associate Professor of Political Science at Shepherd University.

The event is free and open to the public. For more information, contact Dr. Stephanie Slocum-Schaffer at sslocums@shepherd.edu or (304) 876-5347.

Justice Benjamin spearheaded the statewide development of West Virginia's Drug Court program. A drug court is a specially designed court program. The purpose of drug courts is to achieve a reduction in recidivism and substance abuse and to increase the likelihood of successful rehabilitation through early, continuous, and intense treatment; mandatory periodic drug testing; community supervision; appropriate sanctions and incentives; and other rehabilitation services, all under the supervision of a judicial officer.

Rigorous evaluation and research has demonstrated that where drug courts are implemented consistent with models and procedures based on objective studies, they significantly reduce recidivism and substance abuse among high-risk substance abusing offenders. Drug courts that are properly implemented also increase the likelihood of successful rehabilitation while simultaneously reducing the cost to the public below the historic costs of addressing these problems in the criminal justice system.

Justice Benjamin also has worked with local and county officials, school officials, and civic organizations in the Eastern Panhandle on the regional drug epidemic. He was recognized by the Legislature in 2015 for his leadership in combating West Virginia's drug problems.

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