

NYSDRA Marks 40 Years and Announces Legacy Fund at 2025 Conference

NYSDRA 2025 Legacy Conference honored 40 years of ADR, launched the Cooke Legacy Fund, and celebrated John Kiernan with the Lawrence Cooke Peace Innovator Award

ALBANY, NY, UNITED STATES, October 7, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The New York State Dispute Resolution Association (NYSDRA) celebrated its 40th anniversary with its 2025 Legacy Conference on September 25 - 26, a two-day hybrid event featuring 20+ workshops and keynote addresses that drew over 250 dispute resolution professionals, court partners, and community advocates from across New York State.

The highlight of the event was the presentation of the 2025 Lawrence H. Cooke Peace Innovator Award to John S. Kiernan, Esq., Co-Chair of the NYS Advisory Committee on Alternative Dispute Resolution, during a celebration dinner at the Desmond Hotel in Albany.

Honored guests included members of Chief Judge Cooke's family — his children George L. Cooke II, Edward Cooke, and Lauren Opie; grandson Lawrence Cooke; nephew Vince McCardle, former Corporate Counsel, City of Albany; nephew Dr Christian Mathiesen, former Saratoga Commissioner of Public Safety; and niece MaryEllen Mathiesen-Tyrrell — along with distinguished leaders such as Hon. Joseph E. Lamendola, New York State Supreme Court Justice; Hon. Meagan Galligan, New York State Supreme Court Justice; Hon. William T. Little, Acting Supreme Court Justice; Assistant Attorney Melvin Goldberg of the Consumer Frauds & Protection Bureau; Kris Manzur, Lemon Law Coordinator at the Consumer Frauds & Protection Bureau; Daniel Kos, Statewide ADR Coordinator; and Christy Bass, Director of Human Resources for the New York State Unified Court System.

During the program, NYSDRA Executive Director Theresa Hobbs announced the creation of the Lawrence H. Cooke Dispute Resolution Legacy Fund, a permanent endowment that will ensure



Reflect. Celebrate. Advance.

NYSDRA 40 Year Anniversary logo



The Lawrence H. Cooke
Dispute Resolution Legacy
Fund will carry Judge
Cooke's legacy forward in a
way that changes lives for
generations to come."

*Theresa Hobbs, NYSDRA
Executive Director*

financial barriers never prevent New Yorkers from
accessing mediation, restorative practices, or conflict
resolution services. The fund aims to raise \$1.5 million
over the next three years, with an official campaign launch
on December 1, 2025.

"Reaching our 40th anniversary allowed us to honor our
past while renewing our commitment to innovation and
collaboration," said Hobbs. "The Lawrence H. Cooke
Dispute Resolution Legacy Fund will carry Judge Cooke's
legacy forward in a way that changes lives for generations

to come."

Speaking on behalf of the Cooke family, George L. Cooke II reflected on his father's enduring influence, "My father believed deeply that justice must be both fair and humane, and that resolving conflict peacefully was essential to strengthening our communities. Seeing his legacy carried forward through this award, this fund, and leaders like John Kiernan is a profound reminder that his vision continues to inspire and make a difference in New York today."

The conference and dinner were made possible with the support of sponsors including the Mediation Center of CLUSTER, New York State Department of Health, Association for Conflict Resolution – Greater New York Chapter, Center for Justice Innovation, Sinclair Broadcasting Group, New York Center for Interpersonal Development, New York State Agricultural Mediation Program, JAMS, DAPOM, ADR Notable, Fisher Law Practice, Council Services Plus, Community Mediation Services, New Justice Conflict Resolution Services, New York State Council on Divorce Mediation, Empire Justice Center, Stewart's Shops, The Ray Corollary Initiative, Mediation Matters, Jedi Ark, Fullness of Joy Photography, and Unsiloed.

About NYSDRA

Founded in 1985, the New York State Dispute Resolution Association promotes and strengthens the use of dispute resolution throughout New York State. Through training, advocacy, and collaboration with courts, government agencies, and community organizations, NYSDRA supports a statewide network of 18 Community Dispute Resolution Centers (CDRCs) that provide mediation and restorative practices to thousands of individuals, families, and communities annually. For more information, visit www.nysdra.org.

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