



USCRA'S 2026 ANNUAL CONVENTION

Friday, October 9, 2026

5:30 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.

Saturday, October 10, 2026

9:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.

President's Reception

5:00 p.m. – 6:30 p.m.

Sunday, October 11, 2026

9:00 a.m. – 12:15 p.m.

Friday, October 9, 2026

9:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m. – Board Meeting

5:30 p.m. – 7:00 p.m. – The Guide Trivia - .15 CEUs*

Kendra Steppler and Amanda Longmore will kick off the convention with an educational and entertaining competition surrounding all things federal officials should know about The Guide.

Kendra Steppler earned her Bachelor's Degree in Accounting from Montana State University in 2011 and graduated from Sumner College's Court Reporting program in Portland, Oregon, in 2015. She began her career as an official court reporter with the First Judicial District Court in Helena, Montana, where she served for six years before joining the United States District Court for the District of Oregon in 2021. In 2024, she transitioned to her current remote position with the United States District Court for the Northern District of California.

Kendra holds the Registered Professional Reporter (RPR) and Certified Realtime Reporter (CRR) certifications. She previously served as Vice President of the Montana Court Reporters Association, President of the Oregon Court Reporters Association, and Chair of the National Court Reporters Association's New Professionals Advisory Committee. She has also served the United States Court Reporters Association as Ninth Circuit North Representative (2023–2024), Secretary (2024–2025), and currently serves as Treasurer.

Amanda Longmore has been a court reporter since 2012, beginning as a freelance reporter before moving into officialships in 2014. After working in Pennsylvania for both Lancaster and Dauphin County Court of Common Pleas, in 2022 she began working as a Federal Official Court Reporter for the U.S. District Court for the District of Maryland stationed in Baltimore, Maryland.

Amanda has earned her RPR, CRR, and FCRR certifications, serves as USCRA's Fourth Circuit Representative since 2023, current Secretary of USCRA for the 2025-2026 term, and is a member of the Testing Committee.

7:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m. – FCRR Prep Session – No CEUs available

Saturday, October 10, 2026

7:15 a.m. – 9:00 a.m. – FCRR Examination

9:00 a.m. – 10:30 a.m. – Jason Schechterle - .15 CEUs*

Retired Phoenix Police Officer, Jason Schechterle.

Growing up, Jason had one dream - to serve as a Phoenix Police Officer. Inspired by the tragic loss of a local law enforcement hero, Jason worked persistently towards his dream. After serving four years in the Air Force, at the age of 26, Jason achieved his goal to work on the streets of Phoenix as a rookie police officer. Then, only 14 months into what was supposed to be a life-long career, Jason's life took an unexpected, dramatic and, at the time, tragic turn. On the night of March 26th, 2001, a taxi cab crashed into the rear of Jason's patrol car. Upon impact, Jason's car burst into flames, trapping him inside with temperatures reaching over 700 degrees.

Through a series of miraculous and fateful circumstances, Jason survived the crash and ensuing physical and emotional catastrophe. He suffered severe burns to over 40 percent of his body which drastically altered his appearance. He has undergone more than 55 surgeries just to have the ability to accomplish simple daily tasks we often take for granted.

Jason's journey chronicles his fight for life, his triumph over tragedy and the inspiration that enables him to continue to overcome unimaginable adversity. His personal narrative exemplifies that the power of the human spirit can never be underestimated or extinguished.

His story is one of life, rebirth and transformation. Jason represents the human experience at its very best - an ascent from despair to describing himself as the luckiest person alive!

10:30 a.m. – 10:45 a.m. – Break – 15 minutes

10:45 a.m. – 11:45 p.m. – Mylene Green - .1 CEU*

Mylene M. Green is a state-certified court interpreter in California and a federally certified language professional, primarily serving as a staff interpreter, most recently with the Southern District of California, San Diego.

Her presentation will be on how to work with interpreters. She will explain the basics of the profession (being bilingual is not enough!), their role in the courtroom, a little bit about our code of ethics (this will help people understand why we have to do things a certain way - do's and don'ts). Included in the presentation will be an interactive "shadowing" activity, and that will end with an

emphasis of why and how court reporters and court interpreters can be the best allies in the courtroom!

11:45 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. – Annual Meeting of the Members

12:00 p.m. – 1:15 p.m. – Lunch

1:15 p.m. – 2:45 p.m. - Paul Van de Graaf - .15 CEUs

After graduating from Columbia Law School and clerking for Second Circuit Court of Appeals judge, Paul worked as an associate at a small litigation firm in Washington DC. There he helped work on Supreme Court cases and interesting civil litigation, but he had already set his sights on working as Assistant United States Attorney. He got his chance at the Philadelphia United States Attorney's Office in the spring of 1987. While there, he handled a variety of cases from violent crime to fraud. He fell in love with trial work. In late 1991, he moved to the United States Attorney's Office in Vermont, where he stayed until he retired last summer. Originally hired to handle several complex bank fraud matters, he ended up investigating and prosecuting all kinds of federal crimes. Over his 34 years in Vermont, he served as Civil Chief, Criminal Chief, First Assistant, Acting United States Attorney, and Senior Litigation Counsel. Over the years, he treasured his opportunities to teach trial practice to new federal prosecutors. He ended his career with two major cases, one involving a half-billion dollar fraud at Jay Peak sky area and the other involving a strange and twisted murder, which he'll be talking about today.

Paul's presentation today is titled The Story of a Murder for Hire. In the spring of 2025, he and his co-counsel, Zach Stendig, spent five weeks in trial trying to convict Serhat Gumrukcu of hiring a hitman to kill Gregory Davis, a long-distance business associate from Vermont. His talk focuses on storytelling in the courtroom, or how jurors make sense of messy and complicated evidence.

2:45 p.m. – 3:00 p.m. – Break – 15 minutes

3:00 p.m. – 4:30 p.m. – Kara Hartzler - .15 CEUs*

Federal Immigration Cases: Habeas and More: In the last year, the number of immigration-related habeas corpus petitions has exploded. This presentation explains the background and reasons for this increase and provides other context helpful in understanding the intersection between immigration and federal court.

Kara Hartzler is a senior appellate attorney at the Federal Defenders of San Diego, Inc. Prior to joining the Federal Defenders, she served as the Legal Director and Criminal Immigration Consultant at the Florence Immigrant and Refugee Rights

Project in Arizona. She has written numerous books and articles on the intersection between criminal and immigration law; served as an adjunct immigration professor; litigated hundreds of immigration and criminal appeals before the Ninth Circuit; and testified in front of the U.S. House of Representatives Subcommittee on Immigration on the detention and deportation of citizens and other due process violations in the immigration system.

5:00 p.m. - 6:30 p.m. – President’s Reception

Sunday, October 11, 2026

9:00 a.m. – 12:15 p.m. - Cindi Lynch – Case Catalyst Training - .30 CEUs*

Cindi Lynch, Stenograph's Training Program Manager, has trained thousands of reporting industry professionals and students on a variety of CAT and other Stenograph software applications since 1989. Cindi created and is the administrator and principal expert at the [*Ascend Training by Stenograph*](#) online training community, manages Stenograph's Certified Independent Training Agent Program, and is the author of the Self-Study Guides and Exceptional Extras files and documents included with Case CATalyst.

The most accurate translation results aren't just due to clean writing; they're also achieved by knowing how to use the features and options available to you in CATalyst. Similarly, it's the little things you forget that you can do that can make the most significant difference in terms of how many more pages you can produce per hour! In this class, you'll learn about (or renew your acquaintance with) features, options, and shortcuts to improve your translation results and significantly reduce your editing time.

9:00 a.m. – 12:15 p.m. – Julie Samford - Eclipse Training - .30 CEUs*

Julie Samford is a former court reporter, licensed in Texas and Louisiana. She has worked in the reporting industry for 30 years. Julie has been providing software and technology training for Advantage Software for over 20 years and is a certified advanced group trainer for Eclipse.

9:00 a.m. – 12:15 p.m. – Michael Jon Byers – .30 CEUs*

Michael Jon Byers is President & Founder of LoneStar Wealth Management and LoneStar Registered Investment Advisors, LLC. Michael is co-author of the book, "Planning a Secure Retirement" and hosted a radio talk-show for seven years called "The Money Talk Show" providing financial planning tips and instructions. He has additionally aired on Fox News on numerous occasions as a financial analyst. Coupled with over 22 years of experience, Michael excels at translating complex financial matters into understood dialect for readers & audiences around the country. It is Michael's mission to educate & equip everyone for the financial

life of their dreams, while avoiding the volatility of the greater economy. As the proud son of an Army Veteran, Michael grew up in Korea, Okinawa Japan, Germany & the United States. While growing his financial practice, he is also an involved parent alongside his wife Sarah, raising seven wonderful children: Kimberlee, Ethan, Caden, Bri, Sky, Seth, & baby Jon.

*Pending NCRA CEU approval