

FEDERAL COURT BENCH/BAR COMMITTEE
Minutes of Meeting - January 23, 2007 at 4:00 p.m.

I. Transition

Brooks Magratten noted that Judge Torres has taken senior status and that Judge Lisi has assumed the role of Chief Judge. He acknowledged both of them. Judge Lisi expressed her interest in hearing from attorneys and welcomes their comments and suggestions.

II. Electronic Filing

David DiMarzio and Paulette Dube reported on e-filing during the past five months. Ms. Dube provided the following data:

there have been 14,731 Court and attorney filings since August 1, 2006
there have been 4,391 attorney filings, which is 30% of the total filings
923 attorneys have registered for e-filing, 198 of which are pro hac vice admissions.

Ms. Dube noted that pretrial memos can now be filed electronically. She also asked that attorneys convert documents directly from their word processing program to a pdf file. Documents that are scanned for e-filing are larger and more difficult to download. The resolution is less clear

Ms. Dube also announced that digital pictures can be attached to e-filings. She asked that pictures also be converted to pdf rather than scanned.

Overall it has been a smooth transition to e-filing. The Court is still in the process of converting documents to pdf and posting them. The Court is handling pro se filings and large documents that can't be transmitted electronically.

There is a bulletin on the CM/ECF website with hints and tips on e-filing.

Pat Sullivan reported that her experience with the Helpline has been positive.

Ms. Dube also reported that the Court has modified its civil cover sheets. Specifically, the Court has expanded the case assignment decks for a better distribution of cases based on the nature of the suit. The new cover sheet should also make it easier to select a case category because there will be more categories to choose from. The cover sheet is now 2 pages and is posted on the Court's website.

III. Spring CLE

George Lieberman announced that there will be 3 CLE seminars from March through May on the following topics:

1. New e-discovery amendments
2. Preliminary injunction procedures
3. E-filing update

IV. Annual Meeting Program

Ray Marcaccio reported that Judge Lagueux and Judge Flanders have agreed to participate in a panel discussion of expert testimony, specifically a comparison of *Daubert* standards in state and federal court.

George Lieberman also mentioned that there will be a presentation on e-discovery at the Annual Meeting. One of the speakers will be an expert in computer technology.

V. High School Outreach

Matt Oliverio spoke about this new program designed to teach high school seniors about jury service. The goal is to have a judge and an attorney meet with students in local high schools and answer their questions. The Committee has already contacted twelve Rhode Island high schools about the program. Attorney volunteers are needed.

VI. Membership

Rebecca McSweeney updated the Committee on her efforts to create a connection to the Committee through the Rhode Island Bar website. Committee meetings will be listed on the current events portion of Rhode Island Bar website. The Rhode Island courts website will also direct people to the federal court website.

All Rhode Island Bar members have been invited to join the committee.

Ms. McSweeney also discussed making more Committee information available on the federal court website so that attorneys can keep up with the Committee even if they cannot attend the meetings, such as posting meeting minutes. Please contact Becky McSweeney with any other suggestions.

VII. University Symposium

The goal of this program is reach out to the community by partnering with the local colleges and universities to plan and produce programs on issues of public interest. The programs would be open to the public and held at a local university or college. Three suggested topics are the jury system, unequal access to justice and the process by which judges are selected. The committee hopes to draw from faculty, judges, attorneys and other experts on the respective topics. Dean Logan of Roger Williams University School of Law and Mark Mandell offered their help. Subcommittee members are needed to plan the first symposium by the end of the year.

VIII. Joint CLE

The Superior Court Bench/Bar Committee has contacted the Committee about organizing a joint CLE program. George Lieberman and Rebecca McSweeney volunteered to assist with this project.

IX. Federal Bench/Bar Committee Forum

Brooks Magratten discussed the role of the Federal Bench/Bar Committee in resolving issues and problems encountered in federal practice. Concerns/issues/complaints can be reported anonymously to Brooks or Beverly Ledbetter, and they will raise them at future Committee meetings for discussion. The goal is to give practitioners and judges an opportunity to report, discuss and resolve issues and concerns in federal practice and promote better relationships between the Bench and Bar.

X. Other Business

Comments on Local Rules

Jim O'Neill and Pat Sullivan request your comments on the Local Rules. The Local Rules Committee will recommend changes to the court in June, so they need feedback from attorneys. Comments can be submitted through the website, by email (local_rules@rid.uscourts.gov), through Pat Sullivan, or by regular mail. Judge Lisi added that she will be sending a letter to attorneys appearing in more than five cases in the Rhode Island District Court in the past year requesting comments on the rules. The deadline for submitting comments is **February 28, 2007**.

Next Committee Meeting – May, 2007