

Federal Bench Bar Committee Meeting

Thursday, January 21, 2010 at 4:00 p.m.

Jury Assembly Room

Meeting Minutes

I. Welcome

Pat Rocha and Pat Sullivan welcomed the members to the meeting, and expressed appreciation for the impressive attendance.

II. Report on USDCRI Membership Renewal Initiative

David DiMarzio reported that the Bar membership renewal process had been initiated. For 2010, renewal can be done either by regular mail or by email. David reported that the Court expects that registration renewal will be entirely electronic when it next arises in four (4) years.

For Federal Bar members who submit their renewal information timely, there will be no fee this year. A late fee will be imposed only on practitioners who miss the filing deadline. The Court intends to confirm receipt of the registration form and to send reminders to those who fail to file. Ultimately, practitioners who have failed to renew their registration will be unable to access the ECF system.

III. Report on Filing Statistics for the Court

Judge Lisi and David DiMarzio reported on the increase in both civil and criminal filings. It was observed that the increase in civil filings is a net increase even after the MDL cases are eliminated. There were several requests for additional statistical analysis, which David DiMarzio committed to provide.

IV. Annual Meeting Program

In George Lieberman's absence, Pat Sullivan reported that the planning for the Committee's presentation at the Rhode Island Bar Association Annual Meeting is well underway. The program will focus on some of the ways in which Federal court practice differs from State court practice, to assist practitioners in transitioning to Federal court.

V. Strategic Plan to Standardize Notices and Orders

Judge Lisi and David DiMarzio reported on the plan to standardize notices and orders. In particular, the judges are working towards relatively uniform pretrial orders. It is expected that some of these will be ready for rollout shortly.

VI. Local Rules

Jim Murphy reported that the Local Rules amendments to bring the rules into conformity with the recent amendments to the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure became effective December 1, 2009. The Committee plans to solicit comments on the Local Rules shortly with comments due to the Committee by March 1, 2010. The Committee expects to timely submit its report to the Court in June.

VII. Jury Instruction Project

Mike Levin reported that this project is proceeding well, with particular focus on criminal instructions. Currently, five (5) years worth of instructions are being worked on to create a repository linked through an index. Phase I of the project is nearly done. In addition, they are studying the possibility of developing a mechanism to update or solicit comments. Mike described this as something like a “blog” for practitioners to exchange ideas.

VIII. University Symposia

Brooks Magratten reported that the Providence College Symposium on immigration law was extremely well done, although attendance was disappointing. The University Symposia Committee is now working with Brown University for a program that is expected to be scheduled for late Spring.

IX. Planning for 2011 District Conference

Pat Rocha and Pat Sullivan reported that the next District Conference will be held in 2011, because the Circuit Conference is scheduled for the Spring of 2010. Committee members were asked to express interest in working on the planning committee which is in the process of being formed.

X. Courthouse Technology Upgrade Project

David DiMarzio reported that the Upgrade Project for Courtrooms 1 and 2 is done and that testing of the upgrade will take place over the next few weeks. In February, work will begin on Courtroom 3, followed by the Jury Assembly Room and Courtroom 4.

Other Business

The Bench/Bar Committee will be participating in the Rhode Island Bar Association Committee Networking Event scheduled for February 25, 2010. Pat Sullivan, Matt Oliverio and George Lieberman will represent the Committee during this program intended to introduce young attorneys to the activities of each Committee.