

**UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
DISTRICT OF RHODE ISLAND
One Exchange Terrace
Providence, Rhode Island 02903**

2022 State of the U.S. District Court for the District of Rhode Island

“Keep pushing, keep going, set the record straight.”

These were the words the late Congressman John R. Lewis shared with Fred Gray in a private meeting when the two civil rights icons met for what would be the last time on July 8, 2020. These are the same words Fred Gray left us with to consider at the 2022 District Conference, *Racial and Social Justice in the Federal Courts*. In a world sometimes filled with disingenuous rhetoric, these words cast hope, inspire faith, and provide a sense of temperament that I believe we all desperately long for. 2022 was a year marked by firsts, challenges, change, celebration and remembrance and a year in which all officers of the court and litigators alike, kept pushing so that the wheels of justice kept going.

District Conference

The 2022 District Conference, *Racial and Social Justice in the Federal Courts*, was truly an amazing event. I could not be prouder of the Planning Committee and those responsible for organizing and facilitating such a momentous event. From the depth of our knowledgeable and dynamic speakers to the thoughtful and engaging questions from our participants, the Conference proved to be the highlight of 2022, and arguably one of the best conferences the district has hosted to date.

Mr. Gray captivated over 200 attendees during his keynote address with his rich history and brilliant, spirited advocacy. He challenged all of us to be better and do better, and to think about how the legal profession can be a vehicle for positive change. In addition to the teachings of Mr. Gray, the Conference covered topics such as Critical Race Theory, Diversity in the Workplace, and Qualified Immunity. For those of you that were unable to attend, I strongly encourage you to watch the recordings of each session on our [YouTube page](#). It is an event you do not want to miss.

In addition, we remembered and honored our friend, Olin W. Thompson, III, a legal advocate and champion for justice who passed earlier this summer. An award was established in his name and the District Court Conference Committee presented the inaugural Justice Award to Bob Mann. More information can be found [here](#).

Courthouse & Case Statistics

On March 7, 2022, the Courthouse resumed its normal in-person operating hours followed by the John O. Pastore building on April 4, 2022. Although the national emergency declaration remains in effect allowing the Court to conduct certain criminal matters by video with the defendant's

consent, more and more hearings are being conducted in person since the start of the pandemic. Since the beginning of this year, we have conducted 565 Zoom hearings compared to 637 in 2020. The Court will continue to conduct video conferencing in civil and criminal cases and each judge will decide what matters will be held in-person and what matters will be held remotely. We continue to weigh the benefits and challenges of this approach and thank the bar for their input and cooperation.

In September 2022, we welcomed the Honorable Lara E. Montecalvo to the Courthouse. Judge Montecalvo was nominated by President Biden on May 19, 2022, to a seat vacated by the Honorable O. Rogeriee Thompson. She was confirmed by the Senate on September 14, 2022 and received her commission on September 20, 2022.

By way of statistics, civil case filings are down by 14.42%, from 513 filings in 2021 to 439 filings in 2022. There are currently 634 civil cases pending, a decrease of 13.98% from the total pending cases at the end of 2021.

Criminal case filings have decreased by 17.56%, from 140 new filings in 2021 to 112 filings in 2022. Currently, there are 241 defendants pending trial or sentencing, down from 260 at this point in 2021. (A decrease of 7.31%).

This year pursuant to LR 203(c), members of the bar were required to renew their bar membership. At the conclusion of the renewal period, over 2100 attorneys renewed and are active members of the federal bar. We also held 7 naturalizations this year swearing in a total of 293 new American citizens.

Civics & Education

The Court continued to run its successful Litigation Academy and conducted 2 programs on oral advocacy in 2022. Special thanks to Professor Niki Kuckes and Attorney Brooks Magratten for chairing and leading the Academy since its inception in 2014 and thank you to those members of the bar who give their time to serve as faculty for the Academy. This program could not be successful without your counsel and wisdom. The Court is grateful.

For the first time this year, we brought the Discovering Justice Program to Providence! The Discovering Justice Mock Trial Program transforms middle & high school students into trial lawyers. With the support of legal mentors, they learn about their first amendment rights, tackle legal issues, engage in legal writing and analysis, grapple with real constitutional issues, develop persuasive legal arguments, as well as practice questioning and examining witnesses. Students ultimately get their day in court and try a case before a federal judge. This year we welcomed 7 students from Nathan Bishop Middle School. The students were mentored by representatives of our U.S. Attorney's Office and presented their arguments to First Circuit Senior Judge O. Rogeriee Thompson. More information about the Program can be found [here](#).

Court Advisory Council

At the District Conference, I mentioned that the Court has decided to redesign its committee structure into a single Council that will facilitate litigator input into court administration and serve as a vehicle for the Court to hear from the bar.

The Court intends to establish an Advisory Council that will be comprised of about 20-25 litigators for the purposes of helping the Court to administer justice effectively and efficiently. The responsibilities previously held by the Local Rules Committee, the District Conference, the Bench/Bar Committee, and the Board of Bar Admissions and Education will fall under the purview of the Advisory Council with subcommittees of the Council working on specific areas. We received an overwhelming response to serve, and we are currently reviewing the applications to ensure a diverse, representative group of federal court litigators. Thank you for your interest and passion to serve. Stay tuned. More to come!

Probation

The Probation Office re-opened its doors in April 2022, after 2 years of full field and remote work. While the transition from near full time telework/field work to near full time office/field work has been challenging, their work to serve the Court, protect the community and positively impact their client's lives continued without missing a beat.

Specifically in 2022, our Probation Officers, on a monthly average, supervised 470 pretrial and post-conviction folks (140 pretrial and 330 post-conviction), as well as completing approximately 120 pretrial/bail investigations and 110 presentence investigations for the Court. Further, their pretrial release rate was 56% (compared to 35% nationally); their revocation rate was 15.5% (compared to 33% nationally); and their employment rate is 79% (compared with 74% nationally).

Conclusion

In all, it was a very busy and productive year. On behalf of all the judges and administrators of the District Court, I would like to thank you for your active role in ensuring fair and equal access to justice for all in Rhode Island. Despite the challenges we face throughout the year, I know our resolve is strong and I know our legal community here in Rhode Island will *"keep pushing, keep going, set the record straight!"* Happy holidays and have a safe and healthy New Year!

December 28, 2022

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