

Federal Bench Bar Committee Meeting

Thursday, April 29, 2010 at 4:00 p.m.

Jury Assembly Room

Meeting Minutes

I. Welcome

Pat Rocha and Pat Sullivan welcomed members to the final meeting of the year, and particularly several newly admitted attorneys who were attending the Bench Bar Committee for the first time. Chief Judge Lisi thanked the Committee for its work, and for a year of significant accomplishments.

II. Report on USDCRI Membership Renewal Initiative

David DiMarzio reported that the registration process for on-time Bar membership renewal has now been completed, and 2,556 attorneys completed the renewal process. There are a handful of Bar members who have not yet registered, missing the filing deadline. The Court will be in contact with them to determine whether the failure to register was an oversight.

As a result of this registration process, the Court now has an accurate list, including accurate contact information, for attorneys practicing in the Federal Court.

David DiMarzio anticipates that the next renewal cycle can be done entirely electronically.

III. Annual Meeting Program

George Lieberman reported that plans are well under way for the Federal Bar presentation at the 2010 Annual Meeting of the Rhode Island Bar Association. The topic for the planned panel will be Federal Court Practice: What's So Different About It? The Moderator will be Chief Judge Mary Lisi, and speakers will be Judge Smith and Judge Lagueux. Participating on the panel will be Melissa Darigan, Lynette Labinger, Anthony Muri and Benjamin White.

IV. Strategic Plan to Standardize Notices and Orders

Chief Judge Lisi reported that the Rule 16 Conference Notice is now standardized and the Pretrial Orders are almost identical. Going forward, the Court will attempt to maintain standardization so that there is greater predictability and efficiency in connection with these basic documents.

V. Local Rules

In the absence of the Chairs, Pat Sullivan reported on the Local Rules Committee. The substantive public comment period is now closed, and the Local Rules Committee is studying the comments received and developing proposals for amendments to the Local Rules. In addition, the rules pertaining to the administration of the ECF system will be folded into the Local Rules. It is anticipated that the Local Rules Committee will timely complete its report setting out its recommendations for amendments to the Court. Following this cycle, during which a substantive review of the Local Rules was performed, it is anticipated that the next cycle will focus on avoiding change so the practitioners can become accustomed to the amendments.

VI. Jury Instruction Project

Tony Traini reported that the project is proceeding well. It is still focused on the criminal instructions. The subcommittee is now working on the electronic platform to take the project live. Roger Williams Law School is assisting with this effort. It is hoped that the project will be completed in time to be rolled out at the 2011 District Conference.

VII. University Symposia

Pat Sullivan reported that the last seminar in the series, sponsored by Brown University, is now scheduled to take place in September 2010. The proposed topic is “Judicial Privilege and Free Speech: Zealous Representation or Political Theater.” After this program is completed, the University Symposia Subcommittee has proposals from URI and from Roger Williams Law School to continue the series. The Subcommittee is also performing an analysis of its significant accomplishments including how to increase interest in and attendance at the programs.

VIII. Planning for 2011 District Conference

Pat Rocha and David DiMarzio reported that the 2011 District Conference is tentatively scheduled to take place in the Fall of 2011. Because the Conference is still more than a year away, the Court has not yet assembled a planning committee. There was a further request for attorneys interested in participating in the planning to volunteer by contacting David DiMarzio. There was also a request for younger attorneys to become involved.

IX. Courthouse Technology Upgrade Project

David DiMarzio reported that the Upgrade Project is continuing and that the Court is working on improving the flexibility of technology available to attorneys. For example, it is now possible to set up a laptop on a smartcart moved to the jury box for the purpose of openings and closings. David DiMarzio urged practitioners to alert the Court to suggestions for improving the flexibility of the available technology.

X. Courthouse Renovation Project

David DiMarzio and Judge Lisi reported that the work on the roof of the Court is now begun and may be disruptive. To the extent that the disruption makes it impossible to conduct a hearing or trial, plans are being made to move such proceedings to the Pastore Building as needed. Practitioners were urged to arrive slightly early for proceedings so that a last minute change of venue does not disrupt the Court’s schedule.

XI. Other Business

Pat Sullivan reported that the Federal Bench Bar Committee participated in the Rhode Island Bar Association Committee Networking Event on February 25, 2010. Pat Sullivan, Matt Oliverio and George Lieberman represented the Committee. The program was extremely successful in that a large group of newly admitted attorneys attended. Many of the young attorneys expressed interest in Federal practice and participation in the Federal Bench Bar Committee.