

**RHODE ISLAND BAR ASSOCIATION**

**Federal Bench/Bar Committee Meeting**

**Thursday, May 22, 2014 at 4:00 p.m.**

**Jury Assembly Room**

**Meeting Minutes**

**I. Welcome**

Michael Levin welcomed members to the May meeting, and explained that he would be chairing the meeting in place of Pat Rocha.

**II. Local Rules**

Steve Richard, Co-Chair of the Local Rules Review Committee (LRRC), updated the Bench-Bar Committee on the status of the LRRC's work for the 2013-14 local rules review cycle. Mr. Richard reported that the LRRC is in the process of completing its annual report to the Court, and intends to submit it by June 30<sup>th</sup>.

**III. Jury Instruction Project**

Mike Levin and Tony Traini updated the Committee on the status of the Jury Instruction Project. They reported that both the criminal and civil databases are up to date, and that the database now features links to pattern jury instructions from other circuits. David DiMarzio added that he intends to communicate with other First Circuit district courts to see if they have any interest in joining the project.

**IV. University Symposium**

Howard Merten discussed the future of the University Symposium with the Committee. Mr. Merten reported that he recently discussed the program with individuals who had attended past programs to gauge interest in future programs. The general feeling among the respondents was that the programs were high quality, but that low turnout ultimately limited the reach of the program. Based on Mr. Merten's report, the Committee agreed to discontinue the University Symposium program, and potentially revisit it at a future date.

**V. 2014 FBA Annual Meeting**

Chief Judge Smith provided the Committee with an update on 2014 Federal Bar Association Annual Meeting program to be held in Providence on September 4-6, 2014. Judge Smith mentioned that fundraising for the meeting was going well, and he outlined the program

for the meeting. He also added that a special WaterFire event had been planned for conference attendees.

## **VI. Social Media and the Courts**

Judge Smith explained some of the Court's recent efforts to use social media. He mentioned that the Court has created a District of Rhode Island Twitter account, and that the Court, in conjunction with the Social Media Subcommittee of the Bench-Bar Committee, would be exploring other ways to broaden the Court's connection with the community through social media.

Matt Parker reported on the recent discussions of the Social Media Subcommittee of the Bench-Bar Committee. Mr. Parker explained that the subcommittee recently met to discuss the various ways that the Court could leverage social media. He noted that the subcommittee remains attentive to the difference between using social media for informational and/or educational purposes and for opinion-based items as it discusses recommendations to the Court.

## **VII. Litigation Academy**

Judge Smith provided an update on the Court's new litigation academy program. He explained that the intent of the program is to give young lawyers a chance to gain litigation experience in an era of fewer trials. A planning committee is currently exploring a variety of approaches to achieve this end, but he mentioned that the first program would be a deposition skills program in the fall.

## **VIII. Pro Bono Subcommittee**

Magistrate Judge Sullivan shared with the Committee the recent work of the Pro Bono Subcommittee. She explained that the Subcommittee completed a draft plan to govern a small number of civil pro bono appointments each year. (A copy of the draft plan was circulated to the members of the Committee in advance of today's meeting.) The plan, she noted, would allow Judges to identify *pro se* cases in need of representation (the Court envisioned making 2-4 appointment each year), and the plan includes a provision for reimbursement of attorney expenses up to \$2,500.

Michael Levin moved that the Committee forward the draft plan to the Judges for review.

## **IX. Operations Update**

Frank Perry provided an operations update to the Committee. Mr. Perry explained that beginning in May the Court began accepting civil complaints and notices of removal electronically on a voluntary basis. He also noted that the bar registration renewal period was ongoing, and could be completed through CM/ECF.