



**MINNESOTA  
JUDICIAL  
BRANCH**

**First Judicial District**

**Mission:** To provide justice through a system that assures equal access for the fair and timely resolution of cases and controversies.

Hon. Terrence Conkel  
Chief Judge  
(651) 438-4352

Gerald J. Winter  
Judicial District  
Administrator  
(651) 438-4330

[jerry.winter@courts.state.mn.us](mailto:jerry.winter@courts.state.mn.us)

<http://www.mncourts.gov/district/1/>

The First Judicial District has 36 judges and more than 250 staff that handle nearly 150,000 cases annually in the counties of Carver, Dakota, Goodhue, Le Sueur, McLeod, Scott and Sibley.

# The First Edition

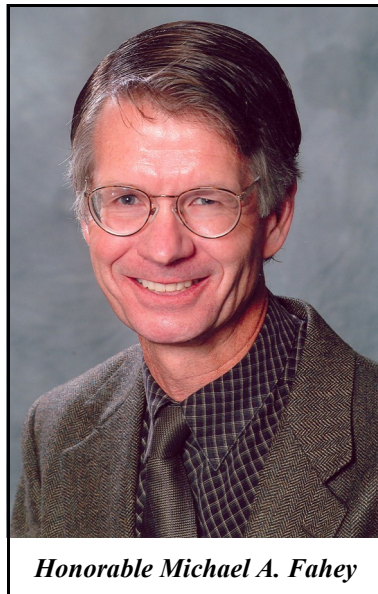
A Newsletter about the First Judicial District of the State of Minnesota

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## CASE Presentations are Successful Outreach Events

By Judge Michael Fahey, First District Judge



*Honorable Michael A. Fahey*

As part of the Judicial Branch's commitment to improving the public's trust and confidence in and understanding of the Judiciary, the Branch undertakes each year a number of initiatives aimed at reaching out to the citizens of the State of Minnesota. Supreme Court justices, judges of the Court of Appeals, and District Court judges participate in community outreach in a wide variety of ways, including visiting classrooms and speaking to students, addressing civic and community groups, writing informative newspaper columns, and welcoming visitors into their courtrooms. Court staff is also committed to helping citizens in their communities better

understand the work and mission of the Branch. In 2012, judges and court staff spoke at more than 200 events at schools, and in front of civic and community groups, reaching over 10,000 Minnesotans. Specifically, the First Judicial District logged more than 35 outreach events during that time period.

In February 2006, when I was Carver County Attorney, I attended a training program hosted by the Denver District Attorney's Office in Denver, Colorado for the CASE Partnership – Communities Against Senior Exploitation. This is a unique and successful elder fraud prevention program. When I returned from the training program, I started doing CASE presentations throughout Carver County. In May

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*CASE Presentations (Continued from page 1)*

2006, I was contacted by Kelley Archer who worked in the information security field and offered to speak about identity theft as part of the CASE presentations. We have worked together ever since then for the presentations. I have continued doing the presentations since becoming a district court judge in May 2007 and have done them in most of the counties in the First Judicial District.

The purpose of the presentation is to be proactive in alerting senior citizens of the different methods of financial exploitation in our communities and how to avoid becoming

victims. The presentation includes information on identity theft, telemarketing fraud, care giver fraud and other methods of exploitation and a fraud prevention checklist.

In the MetLife Study of Elder Financial Abuse published in June 2011, it was reported that the annual financial loss by victims of elder financial abuse was estimated to be at least \$2.9 billion in that year, a 12% increase from the \$2.6 billion estimated in 2008. The goals of financial abuse perpetrators were achieved through deceit, threats, and emotional manipulation of the elder.

The MetLife Study noted that elder financial abuse appears to fall into three types of crimes: occasion, desperation, and predation. Crimes of occasion or opportunity are incidents of financial abuse or exploitation that occur because the victim is merely in the way of what the perpetrator wants. Crimes of desperation are typically those in which family members or friends become so desperate for money they will do whatever it takes to get it. Finally, crimes of predation or occupation occur when trust is engendered for the specific intention of the financial abuser later.

## First District Gets High Marks on Access and Fairness

By Jerry Winter, First Judicial District Administrator

It is the goal of the Minnesota Judicial Branch to be open, affordable and understandable to the citizens and justice partners it services. The Branch is also charged with providing due process and equal protection of the law to all that come before it. From time to time we ask court users how we are doing. In 2008 and again in 2013, the Branch asked litigants, attorneys, justice partners, court observers, jurors, media and the general public for their feedback. "You Be The

Judge" surveys were provided to individuals in all locations in the state where court was held. The results of these surveys provide information that is used to develop our strategic plan and to measure operational improvement. Court access measures included ease of finding the courthouse, use and understandability of court forms, courthouse safety, removal of physical and language barriers, time spent conducting business, staff attention to

needs, treatment (courtesy and respect), court business hours and ease of court website usage. Fairness was measured by the perception of the case being handled fairly, the judge listening to the litigant's side of the case, information available to the judge to decide the case, equal treatment of all parties and the litigant's knowledge of what he or she had to do next in the case.

The results for the First Judicial District in  
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*High Marks (Continued from page 2)*

both the 2008 and 2013 surveys were as follows. The percentage of respondents answering that they agree/strongly agree with each statement is listed below.

The Composite Fairness Score of all responses was the best of the ten judicial districts in the state while the Composite Access Score was the second best.

Although generally very good, it appears that we could improve the amount of time we require litigants to be in the courthouse to have their cases heard. The usefulness of the website has improved but still remains low on the satisfaction level with respect to access. Efforts are being made to make web access to court information more user

friendly. The perception of fairness was universally very good. Litigants feel that have been treated fairly leaving the courthouse feeling that they have been treated equally and fairly by the judges and the staff. Once again, the courts of the First District have taken a leadership position in the Minnesota Judicial Branch.

<b>ACCESS (First Judicial District)</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>2013</b>
Finding the courthouse was easy	90% *	91% *
The forms I needed were clear and easy to understand	83%	83%
I felt safe in the courthouse	91%	90%
The court makes reasonable efforts to remove physical and language barriers to service	85%	85%
I was able to get my business done in a reasonable amount of time	68%	69%
Court staff paid attention to my needs	85%	82%
I was treated with courtesy and respect	91%	89%
I easily found the courtroom or office I needed	90%	91%
The court's hours of operation made it easy for me to do my business	76%	84%
I found the court's website useful	56%	71%
<b>Composite Access Score</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>85</b>
<b>FAIRNESS (First Judicial District)</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>2013</b>
The way my case was handled by the court was fair	85%	85%
The judge listened to my side of the story before he or she made a decision	83%	86%
The judge had the information necessary to make good decisions about my case	86%	87%
I was treated the same as everyone else	88%	90%
As I leave the court, I know what to do next about my case	89%	93%
<b>Composite Fairness Score</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>87</b>
<i>* Percentage of Respondents Agree/Strongly Agree with the Statement</i>		



## Governor Dayton Appoints Colleen Goggins King to Fill First Judicial District Vacancy



*Colleen Goggins King*

On October 11, 2013, Governor Mark Dayton announced the appointment of Ms. Colleen Goggins King as District Court Judge in Minnesota’s First Judicial District. Ms. King

will be replacing the Honorable Michael V. Sovis, who retired earlier this year. The judgeship will be chambered in Dakota County.

“Throughout her career, Ms. Colleen Goggins has demonstrated a strong commitment to justice, and to the well being of her community,” said Governor Dayton. “I am pleased to appoint Ms. Goggins to serve as District Court Judge, and I am confident she will serve the people of the First District with distinction.”

Ms. King works as a partner with Wornson, Goggins, Zard, Neisen, Morris & King, P.C., where she maintains a general practice that includes family law, criminal defense, estate planning, probate, conservator/guardianship matters and civil litigation. Previously, she

served as a part-time public defender for Scott, Dakota and McLeod Counties and was an attorney with McDonough, Wagner & Ho, L.L.P. Ms. King earned her B.A. from the College of St. Benedict and her J.D. from the Hamline University School of Law.

Additionally, Ms. King is a founding board member of the New Prague Area Education Foundation, a member of the Rotary Club of New Prague and a volunteer teacher for St. Wenceslaus Church’s Children’s Liturgy.

Ms. King resides with her family in New Prague.

More information on the Commission on Judicial Selection, as well as vacancies it is currently considering, can be found at <http://mn.gov/governor/appointments/judicial-appointments/>

## “On Deck” Calendar Displays Expedite Case Processing

By Vicky Carlson, Carver County Court Administrator

Many people who receive minor traffic offenses prefer to appear in court rather than pay a fine. These cases make up the calendar of the traffic or arraignment

court. The list of people waiting to appear can often be quite long, but in Carver County District Court people waiting can find out in advance when their case is

going to be called. An “on deck” display inside the courtroom is used for calling and  
*(Continued on page 5)*





## *“On Deck” Display (Continued from page 4)*

managing high volume calendars such as arraignments and conciliation court. This technology was a collaborative project between the First Judicial District and Carver County. It was designed to notify parties when their case is next (on deck) or where it falls in a list of cases scheduled to be heard. The “on deck” system is mainly used for the traffic calendars, where there could be anywhere from 20-70 individuals waiting to appear.

There is a large monitor in the front of the courtroom and two in the rear facing the conference rooms, so prosecutors and attorneys working with clients in the conference rooms can see the monitors and prepare for cases to be called.

Likewise, courtroom overflow or individuals with small children can sit in the conference rooms and know when to enter the courtroom before their case is called. The displays give individuals who may need to step out of the courtroom an idea of how much time they have before their case is called.

“In this technology age, people want more information. On deck displays help individuals prepare so they are not surprised when their case is called,” said Carver Court Administrator Vicky

Carlson. “The displays also help the judge identify the next case to be called and reduce time between cases. This helps to get all of the parties on their way sooner.”

The “on deck” process has proven to be an efficient way to better serve the citizens that come to the court in Carver County.



*Judge Michael Wentzell's Courtroom*



## A Conversation with Goodhue County Court Administrator Yvonne Black



*Yvonne Black*

### **Why did you want to become a Court Administrator?**

Working for the Courts has always been tremendously interesting. I was hired in 1977 as a Senior Court Clerk, and spent the next 26 years working in various divisions of Court Administration. I loved my job, was familiar with most areas of District Court, and wanted to continue to challenge myself, so I was very interested in this position when the former Goodhue County Court Administrator Larry Peterson retired in 2003.

### **What skills and personality traits would you identify as helpful in order to be successful in your position?**

First, I think it is important to have good communication skills. A Court Administrator should provide customers with access to information, use communication methods appropriate to the situation, share timely updates and information with relevant parties, and be able to create a collaborative environment where people feel comfortable to openly share their ideas and opinions.

Second, I believe a Court Administrator should be adaptable, flexible and have a positive attitude. It is essential to be able to respond to shifting circumstances positively, relate to people and adapt appropriately to changing priorities, as well as to be able to cope well with daily challenges. A positive attitude goes a long way to help build effective relationships with co-workers, justice partners and our customers.

Third, it is important to possess good problem-solving skills and have the ability

to manage conflict. Problems arise often, and a key ingredient in solving them is to know whom to involve and when, and to display good judgment in any situation. Additionally, disagreements are commonplace in any work environment, and a Court Administrator plays an integral role in resolving issues and preserving relationships.

Lastly, a Court Administrator needs to be able to manage change. The Judicial Branch has surely had its share of change in recent years. It is very helpful to learn about change, talk about it, prepare people for what is to come, understand possible reactions, and help manage and deal with the many challenges that surface. Keeping up-to-date on legal changes, new processes and procedures, and new work expectations are all necessary in order to stay compliant and move forward with the goals of the court system.

### **What is your personal mission statement?**

Remain passionate about the work I do and try to give maximum attention and effort into every aspect of my role.

*(Continued on page 7)*



*Yvonne Black (Continued from page 6)*

**What keeps you interested in the position?**

For the most part, I would have to say that the ever-changing environment of the work landscape has kept me very interested in my position. For the first fifteen years that I worked for the Courts, the work duties remained relatively the same. That all changed with the implementation of computerization in 1992. Since then, technology improvements have grown exponentially and created continuous changes in every aspect of the courts. Email, our case management system (MNCIS), eCharging, eCitations, Web sites, Auto Assessment of Fines, In-Court updating, Document Imaging, and eCourtMN are just a few of the changes that have made the Judicial Branch an interesting, progressive and exciting place to work. The years have flown by for me and I have never been bored.

**What is the most pressing issue facing the State Court Administration?**

The most pressing issue right now is keeping the Judicial Branch running as efficiently as possible while implementing the eCourtMN Initiative. eCourtMN is a statewide initiative being implemented to streamline the court operating environment

using new technologies and processes to eliminate paper based case records. It is the most aggressive technology project the Courts have ever faced. It will impact all of our processes, judges, employees, and justice partners. As a result, it is imperative that the Judicial Branch makes the very best choices it can for technology, equipment, and training.

**What has been your greatest success as Court Administrator?**

I think my success is visible through my staff's success. We have all worked hard to carry out the Judicial Branch policies, procedures, and processes, and to implement technology projects. I feel we have been very successful as a team, and I am very proud to be able to say that the public, our justice partners, and Judicial Branch have been served well by each of my staff members, and their continual commitment to quality service.

**What is most rewarding about being a Court Administrator?**

One of the most rewarding aspects of the role for me was to be a part of and witness to the integration of all 87 counties within the State of Minnesota into one large organization, as the Courts became state

funded. I feel the last 10 years has been a historical time for the Judicial Branch in all that we accomplished. I am glad I had the opportunity to be a part of that history.

Additionally, it has been very rewarding to work with such great people every day. I think Judicial Branch employees, as well as our justice partners, are professional and very caring people. It is a joy to see everyone working together in solving problems, which allows the Courts to better serve our customers.

**What do you do in your spare time?**

I enjoy the following activities: spending time with my husband, 3 children and 4 grandchildren; taking walks with the dog; golfing; traveling; making plans for travel; more golfing; spending time with family and friends; biking; dancing; going to the movie theater; painting pictures; reading; going out for dinner; Yoga; listening to music; shopping; and did I mention golfing?



## A New Video Available for Deaf and Hard of Hearing



The Judicial Branch has created, "Going to Court: Tips for

Minnesotans who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing," a 20-minute video providing essential information to help ensure that people who are deaf or hard of hearing have

equal access to participate in cases in Minnesota state courts. The video is presented in American Sign Language and is captioned.

Courts of law can be confusing and intimidating for people unfamiliar with legal rules and practices. They can be especially so for people with particular communication

needs. The new video will help those who are deaf or hard of hearing prepare for a court appearance, including what to expect and how to request communication assistance.

The video [Going to Court in Minnesota](#) may be viewed on the Judicial Branch Website - <http://mncourts.gov>

## "Going to Court in Minnesota" Video Available in English, Hmong, Somali and Spanish

"Going to Court in Minnesota," a half-hour video designed to help immigrants, refugees, and others better understand the Minnesota court system and be prepared to go to court, is now available. It is provided in four languages: English, Hmong, Somali, and Spanish. The program features judges, court employees, and community advocates explaining various aspects of the judicial process and cultural differences.

The video, which was produced by the Minnesota Judicial Branch in conjunction with

Emergency, Community, Health & Outreach (ECHO), will be broadcast multiple times on Twin Cities Public Television's (TPT-TV) Minnesota and Life Channels beginning Monday, July 22, 2013. It will also be available for viewing via the Judicial Branch Website ([www.mncourts.gov](http://www.mncourts.gov)) at [Going to Court in Minnesota](#) and also through ECHO ([www.echominnesota.org](http://www.echominnesota.org)). Copies of the video on DVD have been distributed to organizations that work with immigrants and refugees, and are also

available at no cost through the Minnesota Judicial Branch Court Information Office and ECHO.

A curriculum, designed for use with the video by teachers in English Language Learner classes and produced in conjunction with the Minnesota Literacy Council, will be available soon on the Websites of the Minnesota Judicial Branch and ECHO.



### The First Edition Editorial Team:

Editor: Brian E. Jones

Formatting Editor: Rita Miest, *RM graphic design*

Comments and story ideas may be submitted to:

[brian.jones@courts.state.mn.us](mailto:brian.jones@courts.state.mn.us)

