



**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.

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The First Judicial District has 36 judges and more than 250 staff that handle nearly 135,000 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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## Familiar Faces Assume New Roles in First Judicial District

By Beau Berentson, Director of Communications and Public Affairs, State Court Administration

The recent retirement of 30-year veteran District Administrator Jerry Winter has sparked a series of staffing changes throughout the First Judicial District.

### *Jones appointed First Judicial District Administrator*



Brian Jones

In January, the judges of the First Judicial District announced that long-time Assistant District Administrator **Brian Jones** would follow Winter as the next First Judicial District Administrator. Jones assumed his new position on March 18.

Jones has worked in Minnesota's court system since 1997, and has served as the First District's

assistant administrator since 2001. He has been actively involved in the Minnesota Judicial Branch's eCourtMN initiative – the historic, multi-year effort that is transitioning Minnesota's courts from a paper to an electronic information environment. Jones has been a co-lead on the statewide eCourtMN Communications Workgroup, and has helped oversee the pilot testing of electronic filing and service of court documents in Dakota County. Jones has a J.D. from Hamline University School of Law, as well as an M.B.A. and B.S. from North Dakota State University.

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New Roles (Continued from page 1)

**Renn moves from Dakota County to District Administration**



Carol Renn

Filling Jones' previous position of Assistant District Administrator will be **Carolyn Renn**, whose nearly 30-year career has included service as Court Administrator in both Carver and, most recently, Dakota counties.

During the course of her career, Renn has been a member of numerous local, district and statewide committees such as the Court Operation Advisory Workgroup, Minnesota Association for Court Management Legislative Workgroup, Court Payment Center Pilot Study Governance Team, Sentencing Education Committee, Leading Edge Program Advisory Committee, and,

most recently, is a member of the Minnesota Judicial Council. She has been heavily involved in eCourtMN initiatives and serves as the chair to the project's Pilot User Group. Renn graduated from the Institute of Court Management as a Certified Court Manager and is currently pursuing her certificate as a Certified Court Executive.

**New Court Administrators in Carver, Dakota, Goodhue and Scott counties**



Kristen Trebil

**Kristin Trebil** was selected to become the Carver County Court Administrator effective March 9th. Kristin has her Master's degree in Criminal Justice Administration from St. Cloud State University. Since 2007, Kristin has been employed by the Minnesota

Guardian Ad Litem program. Most recently she has been the GAL Program Manager for the Second Judicial District (Ramsey County).



Heidi Carstensen

**Heidi Carstensen** has been named the new Dakota County Court Administrator. Carstensen has worked in the state's court system for 18 years, most recently as the court administrator in Goodhue County. She graduated from St. Mary's University with a B.S. in Business Administration and has received both the Certified Court Manager and Certified Court Executive certificates from the Institute of Court Management.

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New Roles (continued from page 2)



Christopher Channing

Christopher Channing brings over 17 years of public service experience to his new position as Goodhue County Court Administrator. Channing has been with the Minnesota Judicial Branch since 2005, and has served as the Civil Records Supervisor for the Second Judicial District, where he managed the Civil divisions transition to a paper on demand court record as well as support of the eFile and eServe pilot

implementation, and as the Business Process Analyst for the Fourth Judicial District, where he had a prominent role in implementation of a centralized eAppeals process in the state. Channing earned his B.S. degree in Criminal Justice/Political Science from Charter Oak State College and Master's degree in Public Administration from Hamline University.



Vicky Carlson

Vicky Carlson is the new Court

Administrator in Scott County, transitioning to the position after seven years as Carver County Court Administrator. Carlson is past president of the Minnesota Association for Court Management, and was elected to the National Association for Court Management Board in 2011. She attended Metro State University and holds a Bachelor's Degree in Public Administration.

"While this is a time of significant change for the First Judicial District, we are fortunate to have such strong, experienced leaders willing to take on new roles and new challenges," said First Judicial District Chief Judge Terrence E. Conkel. "This is an exciting time for our state court system, as we continue to improve our service to the public through technological innovation. Our new district and county leaders have the experience and vision to guide us through this change, and are committed to the important work of the Judicial Branch."

## Efforts to Improve and Enhance Service Delivery of Justice Highlighted in 2014 Annual Report

By Brian Jones, First District Administrator



The recently released 2014 Annual Report to the Community highlights the

efforts of the Minnesota Judicial Branch to improve and enhance the delivery of justice in Minnesota.

"By constitutional imperative and statute, Minnesota's courts must provide an open

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*Annual Report (Continued from page 3)*

door for justice,” said Chief Justice Lorie S. Gildea. “The state’s Constitution promises every Minnesotan the right ‘to obtain justice freely...promptly and without delay’, and this promise guides the work of the Minnesota Judicial Branch.”

“Today, we are implementing an ambitious agenda that is utilizing new technologies and reengineered business practices to make Minnesota’s court system more accessible, more efficient, and better able to serve the needs of Minnesotans,” noted Gildea.

“The Judicial Branch initiated this innovation agenda in recognition of the need to make the most efficient use of the funding provided for judicial services and to maintain the quality of services provided to the public.”

“We are proud of the accomplishments of our employees and judges, and remain committed to our

mission to provide equal access for the timely resolution of cases and controversies,” said Gildea.

The 2014 Annual Report to the Community can be found on the Branch website at [www.mncourts.gov/publications](http://www.mncourts.gov/publications).

The Minnesota Judicial Branch is made up of 10 judicial districts with 289 district court judgeships, 19 Court of Appeals judges, and seven Supreme Court

justices. The Judicial Branch is governed by the Judicial Council, which is chaired by Lorie S. Gildea, Chief Justice of the Minnesota Supreme Court. The Minnesota Judicial Branch is mandated by the Minnesota Constitution to resolve disputes promptly and without delay. In 2014, there were more than 1.3 million cases filed in district courts in Minnesota. For more information please visit [www.mncourts.gov](http://www.mncourts.gov)

## Highlights of the report include:

- progress on the CourtMN Initiative, a movement toward electronic court records
- improved security in Minnesota courthouses
- expanded services for self represented litigants
- new drug court programs across the state
- new funding supports justice system technology improvements
- technology project aims to increase safety of domestic violence victims
- safeguarding assests of vulnerable individuals
- new procedures in civil cases promotes efficiency
- increased data sharing improves accuracy of firearm background checks
- outreach in the community



# Courtroom Technology Upgrades in Scott County

By Vicky Carlson, Scott County Court Administrator

Scott County and the Minnesota Judicial Branch recently collaborated to install technology into one of its courtrooms. In this effort, Scott

County joins other counties in trying to bring their courtroom technology into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

Scott County courts continually search for

ways to make

the courts more user friendly. Attorneys are relying on technology more often and have a certain expectation regarding its use.

“Litigating cases in courtrooms without technology hinders attorneys, litigants, and jurors in the presentation and understanding of the evidence,” said First Judicial District Judge Christian Wilton. That will no longer be the case in one of the courtrooms in Scott County. Attorneys will now be able to present

all of their exhibits from their laptop, and those exhibits are seen by the courtroom participants and jurors on monitors placed

throughout the courtroom.

Monitors are located in the jury box, attorney, judge, and courtroom clerk stations.

The courtroom also has been equipped with upgraded sound, a document camera for

displaying physical exhibits like photos or maps, and capability for the witness to make annotations on exhibits. All of the technology is controlled by a Crestron (small monitor) operated by the judge or clerk.

The upgraded audio not only helps the judge, jurors, and court participants hear what is being said, it also helps the court reporter who is listening to the courtroom interaction and taking short hand of the court record.

The noise in the courtroom has increased over the years with all of the court participants that are present in a growing county, along with the noise from scanners and printers in the courtroom which are necessary for the court administration office to be able to update MNCIS (the court case management system). This noise has made it more difficult for the court reporter to capture everything that is being said. The new technology will assist the court reporters ability to properly capture the record.

The courts’ goal is to serve the litigants, attorneys, and the public in a manner they have become accustomed to. Scott County will now have equipment available for attorneys or litigants to use in presenting their case at trial.

“Simplistic as it may sound, the most fundamental way for all parties to receive a full and fair hearing, is for all parties to be heard – by the judge, jurors, parties, and court reporter. Numerous jurors have commented on the quality of the sound and the ability to present visual evidence made possible through these technological upgrades. On behalf of the judges, we



First District Judge Christian Wilton, Scott County Commissioner Barbara Marschall and Scott County Attorney Ron Hocevar

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*Technology Upgrades (Continued from page 5)*

appreciate the foresight of the Scott County Board of Commissioners in acting on this very important issue” said Judge Wilton.

“This project was a great collaboration between Scott County and the Minnesota

Judicial Branch,” said Scott County Commissioner Barbara Marschall. “Technology plays an important role in moving Scott County in the future.”

Scott County District Court processes over 23,000 cases annually and has six chambered judges. The county seat is located in Shakopee.

## Technology Project Aims to Increase Safety of Domestic Violence Victims



The Minnesota Judicial Branch has begun pilot testing a new system designed to improve the safety of domestic violence victims and law enforcement.

The project seeks to improve how the court system manages and shares data related to Orders for Protection (OFPs), which are civil orders issued by judicial officers to help keep domestic violence victims safe from their abusers. Currently, OFP data is stored in an aging database that is not integrated with the court’s broader information system. This lack

of integration means that OFP data is only transferred to law enforcement (via the Bureau of Criminal Apprehension) twice a day on weekdays, resulting in law enforcement waiting hours – or even entire weekends – to get new or updated information. This not only delays the enforcement of OFPs, but jeopardizes the safety of victims and of law enforcement officers who rely on the information contained in OFPs.

With the new OFP database currently being tested, the Judicial Branch aims to establish a more modern and efficient system for tracking and sharing OFP data between the courts and law enforcement. The new system has many benefits for domestic abuse victims and law enforcement:

- *OFP data entered by court staff will be shared instantly with law enforcement and justice partners, allowing for quicker enforcement of protection orders.*
- *The system will increase the amount of information relayed to law enforcement, erasing possible confusion and ensuring that law enforcement is aware of potential issues or dangers that may be present when enforcing the order.*
- *Law enforcement will be able to submit service information electronically, which will automatically be fed into the court case management system.*
- *Domestic abuse victims will be able to receive a simple e-mail notification when the OFP is served.*

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*Technology (Continued from page 6)*

The new system also allows court staff to fully enter and process OFP information in the Judicial Branch case management system, eliminating the need for dual data entry that exists today.

Development of the new system occurred

throughout 2014, and testing of the new system began in January 2015. In February 2015, Ramsey County became the first county to pilot the new functionality. The results of the pilot will determine a statewide rollout strategy that will likely begin in the second quarter of calendar year 2015.

Project partners include the Minnesota Bureau of Criminal Apprehension, the Minnesota Chiefs of Police Association, the Minnesota Sheriffs' Association, the Minnesota Coalition for Battered Women, and the Minnesota Indian Affairs Council.

## Minnesota Supreme Court Promulgates Amendments to the Minnesota Rules of Court

On April 22, 2015, the Minnesota Supreme Court today promulgated amendments to the Minnesota Rules of Court, which govern court proceedings and access to court records in the state. The new rules are effective July 1, 2015.

The announcement is the culmination of extensive work to update the Minnesota Rules of Court to accommodate electronic filing and service in the district courts. This past fall, seven advisory committees – consisting of judges, court staff, public and private attorneys, justice system and social service professionals, and media

representatives – reviewed the Minnesota Rules of Court and recommended amendments related to electronic filing and service, and access to electronic court records. The Supreme Court accepted written comments on the proposed amendments for two months, and held a public hearing on issues related to access to Judicial Branch records.

Electronic filing and service will soon be standard in district courts across Minnesota, as part of the Minnesota Judicial Branch's [eCourtMN initiative](#), a historic, multi-year effort that is

transitioning Minnesota's courts from a paper to an electronic information environment.

"The Minnesota Judicial Branch is nearing the final phase of a major transformation that will make our courts more accessible, more efficient, and better able to meet the needs of Minnesotans," said Minnesota Supreme Court Chief Justice Lorie S. Gildea. "Ensuring that our court rules were modernized and updated to reflect this transformation was a critically important step to helping us reach those goals. The

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*Amendments (Continued from page 7)*

Supreme Court is extremely grateful to the broad group of experts and stakeholders who helped craft these amendments, as well as the many Minnesotans who provided input during our extensive public comment process.”

A complete list of the new amendments to the Minnesota Rules of Court can be found here: [www.mncourts.gov/?page=5112](http://www.mncourts.gov/?page=5112).

Amendments were promulgated to each of the following court rules: Rules of Civil Procedure; General Rules of Practice; Rules of Criminal Procedure; Rules of Juvenile Delinquency Procedure; Rules of Juvenile Protection Procedure, Adoption Procedure and Guardian ad Litem Procedure; Rules of Procedure Governing Proceedings Under the Minnesota Commitment and Treatment Act; and Rules of Public Access to Records of the Judicial

Branch.

The State Court Administrator’s Office plans to provide free continuing legal education programs throughout the state for attorneys and government business partners in the month of June or sooner. Links to the training programs will be posted on the main state court website ([www.mncourts.gov](http://www.mncourts.gov)). Online materials including training for self-represented parties will also be posted on the website.



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