



**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 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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## New Judicial Leadership in the First Judicial District

By Jerry Winter, First District Administrator



Honorable Terrence Conkel



Honorable Kathryn Messerich

At the May meeting of the First Judicial District Judges, Judge Terrence Conkel was elected Chief Judge succeeding Judge Edward Lynch. Judge Kathryn Messerich was elected Assistant Chief Judge succeeding Judge Conkel. Judge Conkel and Judge Messerich will assume their new duties effective July 1<sup>st</sup>.

Judge Conkel has served as the Assistant Chief Judge of the district for the past four years. Judge Conkel is chambered in Glencoe at the McLeod County Courthouse. He received his B.A. degree from the University of Minnesota and his law degree from Creighton University.

Judge Conkel was in the private practice of law from 1976 to 1998. He was appointed to the bench on August 28, 1998. Judge Conkel has chaired or served on several district

and state committees and has been a member of the First Judicial District Executive Committee for the past four years.

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Judge Messerich is chambered in Hastings at the Dakota County Judicial Center. She received her B.S.N. degree from North Michigan University, a Master's Degree from the University of Minnesota and her law degree from William Mitchell College of Law. Judge Messerich was in private practice from 1987 until her appointment to the bench on April 19, 2004. She has served on several district and state committees and has been a member of the First Judicial District Executive Committee for the past eight years.

As chief judge, Judge Conkel is responsible for 1) ensuring the effective management and administration of the district, consistent with state and any by-laws, rules, policies, strategic plan, or budget adopted by the Chief Justice of the Minnesota Supreme Court, the Judicial Council or the judges of the district, and 2) ensuring that the duties of all judges are timely and orderly performed. The chief coordinates with the district administrator on matters concerning the support staff and general administration of

the district including the budget, facilities planning, long-range planning, administrative projects, intergovernmental relations and other administrative responsibilities.

Judges Conkel and Messerich look forward to working with all the justice partners of the First Judicial District. They welcome any questions, comments or suggestions you have that may improve the administration of justice in the District.

## eFiling and eService to be Mandatory in Dakota County for Certain Case Types on September 16, 2013

By Brian E. Jones, Assistant District Administrator



Attorneys and government entities will be required to file their civil and

family cases electronically in Dakota County beginning Monday, September 16, 2013. The requirement includes civil and family case types, except probate/mental health and conciliation court cases in the eCourtMN Pilot Courts of Cass, Clay, Cook, Dakota,

Faribault, Kandiyohi, Lake, Morrison, and Washington. eFiling is already mandatory in these case types in Hennepin and Ramsey counties.

Documents filed electronically shall be submitted in searchable PDF format only in all case types, not just civil and family.

Attorneys and government entities must register to use eFiling and eService before they can file electronically. Prior to registering, attorneys and entities must first attend an eFiling and eService training.

Additional information on training will be posted soon on the following website [Dakota County Court Administration](http://Dakota County Court Administration).

eCourtMN is a multi-year effort to move courts from paper files to an electronic case information environment. The eCourtMN initiative plans for the development of eFiling and eService for self-represented litigants at a later time. For more information about the eCourtMN initiative, including the status of eFiling and eService in other counties, please visit [www.mncourts.gov/ecourtmn](http://www.mncourts.gov/ecourtmn).



## Expedited Civil Litigation Track Pilot Project Begins July 1

The Minnesota Supreme Court has adopted court rule amendments authorizing an Expedited Civil Litigation Track Pilot Project, effective July 1,

2013. Some new civil cases filed in the district courts in Dakota County and the city of Duluth, which is in St. Louis County, will be assigned to the pilot track.

The goal of the project is to test whether a process that assures early involvement



by a judge, limited discovery, curtailed continuances, and the setting of a trial date within four to six months can reduce the duration and cost of civil suits.

“We want people a year from now to say that this is a great way to get these cases done quickly,” said Dakota County District Court Judge Jerome Abrams, who was on the Civil Justice Reform Task Force, which recommended the amendments.

The pilot project, which will focus on cases involving contract disputes, consumer credit, personal injury, and some other types of civil cases, could affect as many as 450 cases in Dakota County and 150 in Duluth over a 12-month period.

Judges will determine if cases meet certain criteria in Duluth, and in Dakota County, cases will be assigned randomly.

[Read the Supreme Court order, the special rules, and the amendments \(PDF\)](#)

## CAMPER No More: My MNConservator is Coming

By Cate Boyko, Conservator Account Auditing Program Manager

When a person is no longer able to manage their own financial affairs, an interested party may file a petition with the court to request a conservator be appointed to manage the estate. A guardian is appointed to care for their well-being if petitioned for and deemed necessary. In Minnesota there are approximately 10,500 conservators with assets of \$625 million under court jurisdiction at the present time. This figure does not

include real estate within conservatorships.

In 2008, the Minnesota Judicial Council formed the Access and Service Delivery (ASD) committee to address the significant fiscal challenges forecasted for the future of the Judicial Branch. This workgroup, made up of judicial officers and administrators, determined that all conservators would be required to use the Judicial Branch's

computer software application known as Conservator Account Monitoring Preparation and Electronic Reporting (CAMPER) system to submit their annual accounts. This was the first step in the ASD's effort to improve oversight and monitoring of conservator accounts statewide. CAMPER is an electronic reporting system that was developed in Ramsey County in 2005 for

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*MN Conservator (Cont. from page 3)*

Ramsey County use. With little additional investment, this system was pushed out statewide in 2010.

The next step in increasing oversight was to require audits on a regular basis for every case. The Conservator Account Audit Program (CAAP) was approved and began as a statewide audit program in the summer of 2012. The auditors in this program provide professional level audits and have a variety of qualifications such as accountants, CPAs, CFEs and audit experience.

During the time that CAMPER has been in use, information has been gathered from conservators, court staff and auditors about their experience in using the system.

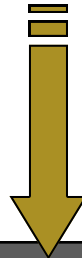
Technology has advanced significantly since the development of CAMPER. With the assistance of a grant from the State Justice Institute, CAMPER is being replaced by a new online reporting system for conservators: MyMNConservator (MMC).

MMC will launch into production in late summer 2013. CAAP has hired a Minnesota company, The Nerderly, to design and develop a new online reporting system.

Taking the experience and feedback that was received from CAMPER users, an improved system will be available by September. MMC is being designed with the varying needs of users in mind—for those with computer knowledge as well as those with a limited

level of comfort with technology. Users will find many features they have requested.

Some of those include:



- **Asset account information will carry forward from one reporting period to the next**
- **Simplified transaction entry**
- **Template for importing data**
- **Help features, including short videos**
- **Simplified reporting of transfers from one account to another**
- **The ability to divide expense items among multiple categories**
- **Accessibility to email correspondence with auditors**
- **Reminder notifications and emails advising of upcoming due dates**
- **The capability for professional conservators to manage multiple accounts and employees**
- **The capability to view and match account balances, not only upon completion of the report, but throughout the entire reporting process**
- **Separate asset section to account for tangible property**
- **New transaction category options including:**

to monitor, review, and audit the accounts that are filed.

The Minnesota Judicial Branch will keep the website updated as more information becomes available regarding the deployment of MyMNConservator at

<http://www.mncourts.gov/conservators>

The developers are diligently working to make the transition from CAMPER to MMC as smooth as possible for conservators. This new system will simplify account entry for conservators and provide better tools for court staff and auditors

Income:	Expenses:
Court ordered repayment Disability Benefits Distribution from Trust Inheritance Long Term Care Insurance Per Capita Income Refund - Tax Refund - Insurance Rental Income VA Benefits	Automobile - Payment Education Entertainment Hobby Medical - Equipment Pet Care Preexisting Debt Transfer to Trust Travel



## Attorneys Sharon Freiling and Karissa Richardson Receive Amicus Curiae Award

The First Judicial District presented its third annual Amicus Curiae Award to attorneys Sharon Freiling and Karissa Richardson on June 13, 2013. The Amicus Curiae Award, meaning Friend of the Court, is an annual recognition of attorneys and others who have provided exceptional service, leadership or other contributions to assist the courts in the First Judicial District discharge their constitutional responsibility for the administration of justice.

Sharon Freiling practices law in South St. Paul and is a part-time public defender in Dakota County. Since 2008, she has been volunteering as the attorney for the participants in the Dakota County Juvenile Drug Court program. This requires her to attend staffing meetings and court sessions each month to ensure that the juveniles and their parents have experienced representation as they progress through the program's phases toward graduation. Additional work is involved in meeting with and counseling juveniles and their parents outside of court, answering their questions and protecting their rights. "Her dedicated



Karissa Richardson, Hon. Edward Lynch, Sharon Freiling

service helps drug court participants recover from substance abuse, resist criminal conduct and restore relationships with family members. The juvenile drug court would not be able to function without her dedicated representation of these participants" said Chief Judge Edward Lynch.

Karissa Richardson, as a staff attorney at Legal Assistance of Dakota County, expanded the volunteer attorney program and began the work that resulted in the formation of the Family Court Self Help Center. She has continued to provide dedicated and extensive service to low income litigants as a volunteer with Legal Assistance of Dakota County generously giving her time and expertise to provide legal representation and advice to these

disadvantaged litigants. She also volunteers at the Dakota County Family Court Self-Help Center and at the Lewis House Family Law Clinic, ensuring that victims of domestic abuse have advice provided by a knowledgeable attorney. Katie Trotzky, Executive Director of Legal Assistance of Dakota County, stated: "Ms. Richardson's dedication to pro bono work represents the highest

ideas of the legal profession; she truly takes to heart the concept of "equal access to justice". She is an asset to our legal community and richly deserves recognition."

"The contributions of Sharon Freiling and Karissa Richardson assist the First Judicial District in providing prompt, quality service to the people of our communities and demonstrates once again how important volunteer attorneys are to the overall administration of justice", said Chief Judge Edward Lynch when presenting the awards.

Past recipients of the Amicus Curiae Awards are: Liz Reppe, Dana McKenzie, Merlyn Meinerts, Mary Freyberg, Scott County Law Librarian and the law firm of Lindquist & Vennum.

## Public Guest Wi-Fi Network Now Available in First District Courthouses

By Brian E. Jones, Assistant District Administrator



The Minnesota Judicial Branch has been working on implementing a public guest Wi-Fi network with a goal of full access in all Judicial Branch courthouses and facilities, including the Minnesota Judicial Center, by the end of June 2013. Wireless internet access is now available in all nine First Judicial District locations.

“Publicly accessible Wi-Fi has become commonplace in recent years,” said Mark

Moore, Chief Information Officer and Director of Information Technology for the Judicial Branch. “We see installation of a guest Wi-Fi network as part of our effort to improve customer service and to assist our justice partners when they are working in court facilities.”

The free service does not require a password. It appears as MJB-Guest when Wi-Fi enabled devices are turned on. Before gaining access to the network, individuals are presented with a “terms and conditions” dialog box, which they must “Accept” before gaining access to the network.

The network is accessible throughout all court facilities in the First Judicial District, including court administration offices, courtrooms, judicial chambers, conference

rooms, and common areas.

Use of Wi-Fi enabled devices in court facilities continues to be governed by local rules and practice.

A public guest Wi-Fi network is a part of the Judicial Branch eCourtMN initiative, which is an effort to move the state courts from a framework of paper files to an electronic information environment. This initiative will result in significant benefits for judges, court employees, attorneys, and most importantly, the hundreds of thousands of people served each year.



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