



**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 over 120,000 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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## Minnesota Supreme Court Convenes at Lakeville North High School

On April 7, 2016, the Minnesota Supreme Court convened at Lakeville North High School in Lakeville as part of a biannual program that seeks to teach students about the court system and build the public's trust and confidence in the Judicial Branch.

The state's highest court heard oral arguments of an actual case, *State of Minnesota, Respondent, vs. David Lee Haywood, Appellant (Case No. A14-1792)*, in front of nearly 600 Lakeville North students. The event was also broadcast on local cable television and streamed live on the Internet.

Following the oral arguments, members of the Court held a question-and-answer session with the students in attendance, shared lunch with student representatives, and spent the afternoon visiting classrooms to talk more about the state's court system.

The previous week, area attorneys, including the coaches of the Lakeville North Mock Trial Team, volunteered in classrooms to help students understand the Supreme Court oral argument process and the case that was before the Court.

"Bringing our court to the school is a great way to educate students about the importance of their judicial system," said Minnesota Supreme Court Chief Justice Lorie S. Gildea. "Our visit to Lakeville North was a success, and we are grateful to Lakeville Area Public Schools for their partnership and support. It was great to meet so many smart, engaged students, and we hope they leave school

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Minnesota Supreme Court Convenes at Lakeville North  
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Minnesota Supreme Court Justices, First Judicial District Chief Judge Terrence Conkel, Lakeville North Principal Marne Berkvam and Lakeville North Students

today with a better understanding of the role our courts play in ensuring their rights and freedoms.”

Since the Supreme Court convened oral arguments in Rochester, Minn., in 1995, school visits have taken center stage in the

Court’s public outreach and education efforts. The April 7 visit to Lakeville North High School was the 43<sup>rd</sup> traveling oral argument event for the Court.

The visit also marked the final time Associate Justice Christopher Dietzen will participate in the traveling oral argument program. Justice Dietzen currently serves as the Supreme Court’s liaison to the program, helping

to plan and oversee each of the school visits. In March, Justice Dietzen announced his intent to resign from the Supreme Court effective August 31, 2016.

The Supreme Court generally issues its

opinions on cases three to five months following oral arguments. All Supreme Court opinions are available upon release at [www.mncourts.gov](http://www.mncourts.gov).

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 2015, there were nearly 1.3 million cases filed in district courts in Minnesota. For more information please visit [www.mncourts.gov](http://www.mncourts.gov).

## Upcoming Addition and Enhancements to the Goodhue County Justice Center

By Christopher Channing, Goodhue County Court Administrator

Plans are in the works for major changes to the Goodhue County Justice Center. These changes include, among other things, finishing a fourth courtroom and adding



permanent point-of-entry security screening. Early in 2015 the Goodhue County Board bonded for the building project and late last year

provided funding to hire an architect to begin initial designs.

The present project scope includes completion of a courtroom that was in the original plans when the building was built

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*Goodhue County Justice Center  
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in 1998. This new courtroom will have many technological additions that have been added to other similar courtrooms across the state. Additionally, this will allow for large arraignment calendars to have enough space to house all those scheduled for court and eliminate the need to have individuals waiting in the halls. Another welcome addition will be an in-custody holding box that will allow for greater security when individuals who are presently detained are to be heard for various court hearings. This will make for a safer environment for the person

scheduled for court as well as others who need to participate in the hearing.

A major focus recently has been on security needs in courthouses across the state. The County Board has been very open in regards to hearing the concerns of all of those involved in the justice system, and taking into consideration the impact lack of security screening has on the citizens who need to use the court system. As a result of these considerations by the Board, inclusion of permanent security screening during office hours is presently included in the scope of the project.

The final part of the project will include the creation of a larger conference room with built-in technology that will allow for the use of ITV and other meeting needs for the justice community in Goodhue County.

The Board is expected to finalize the plans and approve the bid process at an upcoming board meeting. The project is expected to begin early this coming summer. Goodhue County District Court is excited about this project and very appreciative of the County's focus on ensuring that needs of the justice community are being met.

## The Year of eCourtMN Highlighted in 2015 Annual Report

The recently released 2015 Annual Report to the Community highlights the efforts of the Minnesota Judicial Branch to improve and enhance the delivery of justice in Minnesota. The report provides an overview of many initiatives undertaken in 2015 in support of the Judicial Branch's strategic plan, as well as news from each of the state's 10 judicial districts and case filing statistics.

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

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."

"Over the past several years, the Minnesota Judicial Branch has been implementing an ambitious innovation agenda, 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 centerpiece of this innovation agenda is eCourtMN, our transition to electronic case records. In 2015, our eCourtMN transformation reached a major milestone: our court customers can now electronically file and serve court documents in all 87 district courts across the state, and electronically file court documents with both the Minnesota Court of Appeals

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Year of eCourtMN  
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and Minnesota Supreme Court.”

Areas of the eCourtMN Initiative highlighted in the Annual Report include:

- District Court eFiling and eService Expands Statewide
- eFiling in Appellate Courts
- eFiling and Self-Represented Litigants
- eCharging and eCitations Enhance Justice System Efficiency
- Increased Information-Sharing in Minnesota’s Justice System
- Expanding Access to Court Records for the Public
- A More Efficient Courthouse

eCourtMN has transformed Minnesota’s justice system. Court customers can now instantly file and serve documents electronically, from their home or office, and

have on-demand access to court documents and information. Judges and court staff have new electronic tools to manage and process electronic court documents. In the near future, automatic

electronic workflows will speed the work of the courts, and automate “routine” administrative processes. Justice system partners - such as law enforcement, prosecutors, and the public defenders – now have instant online access to court documents and records. Finally, members of the public have free access to public court records and documents via public terminals in courthouses in all 87 counties. In the future, the public can expect to have additional access to court documents through an online portal.

## \$7.7 Million McLeod County Courthouse Jail Expansion and Security Upgrade

By Karen Messner, Court Administrator for McLeod and Sibley Counties

For McLeod County, the second time is a charm. After the initial McLeod County jail expansion and security upgrade project came in significantly over budget in early 2015, the County Board went back to the drawing board. The Board sent the project back to Wold Architects, who reduced the footprint while maintaining the key components and changing some of the building materials. The County Board also

voted to hire a construction management firm, Contegrity, to manage the bidding and construction process. These decisions paid off on February 11, 2016, as the bids came in slightly below the \$7.9 million the Board approved earlier for the project.

Along with the jail expansion, the project includes a new lobby area that will be shared by Court Administration and the Law Enforcement Center. The lobby will

allow space for point-of-entry screening, should the County decide to implement that in the future. A secure hallway, including holding cells, from the jail to one of the courtrooms on the upper level will also be added. New public restrooms and additional elevator service are also included with this project.

Separate from this, the County Board appropriated funding to remodel one of the

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McLeod County Courthouse  
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courtrooms on the upper level. This will allow for some of the electronic technology that the courts have moved toward in recent years. The remodeling will coincide with the jail expansion and security upgrade project.

The construction project is anticipated to begin as soon as April 4, 2016 and will run through July 2017. This project would not have happened without the bequest of former Glencoe Enterprise Publisher,

AnnaMarie Tudhope, who left the bulk of her approximate \$4 million estate to McLeod County for jail construction. The County plans to include some type of memorial to Tudhope.



## Governor, Legislature Explore Safe and Secure Courthouse Initiative

The Minnesota Judicial Branch is currently seeking an appropriation from the Minnesota Legislature to establish a grant program aimed at improving the safety and security of Minnesota’s courthouses. The proposal – named the Safe and Secure Courthouse Initiative – is based on a recommendation from the Courthouse Security Workgroup, a statewide coalition of county and justice system partners convened by Minnesota Supreme Court Chief Justice Lorie S. Gildea in 2014.

“Ensuring the safety of our courthouses is essential to preserving access to our justice

system,” said Chief Justice Gildea.

“Thousands of Minnesotans enter their local courthouse every day to seek justice, protect their rights, access government services, and fulfill their duties as citizens and taxpayers. The Safe and Secure Courthouse Initiative will help ensure the safety of these important public facilities, and we appreciate Governor’s Dayton’s support.”

Under the proposal, Minnesota would use a portion of the state’s current one-time surplus dollars to establish a grant program that would help individual counties enhance the safety and security of their local courthouses

or court facilities. Counties could voluntarily seek funding through the program for a wide array of security needs, such as emergency response training, conducting security assessments, or installing security equipment.

To help oversee the grant application and approval process, the Chief Justice would convene a panel of county and justice system partners, who would utilize nationally-accepted best practices to establish grant criteria and a process for determining grant awards.

The Courthouse Security Workgroup

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## *Safe and Secure Courthouse Initiative (continued from page 5)*

proposed a \$20 million appropriation to fund the grant program. Governor Mark Dayton included the full request in his supplemental budget proposal released in March, while the Minnesota Senate is currently proposing \$5 million for the initiative. The Legislature and Governor have until May 23 to agree on any supplemental spending provisions.

According to Blue Earth County Commissioner Will Purvis, who served on the Courthouse Security Workgroup and chairs the Association of Minnesota Counties' Public Safety Committee, the Safe and Secure Courthouse Initiative will improve the security of Minnesota's courthouses, while also strengthening the partnership between the state and counties.

"Everyone agrees that keeping our courthouses safe and secure is extremely important," said Commissioner Purvis.

"However, many counties struggle to afford needed security improvements relying solely on local property tax revenue, resulting in wide disparities in security infrastructure and staffing from courthouse to courthouse. The Safe and Secure Courthouse Initiative will help all counties – small and large, rural and urban – have a greater ability to implement

needed security improvements, while ensuring that the state and county share the responsibility of securing these county-owned, jointly-used facilities."

Chief Justice Gildea noted that the Safe and Secure Courthouse Initiative is being proposed in the wake of an increase in the number of incidents of courthouse violence being reported across the country. In 2005, the Center for Judicial and Executive Security counted 19 incidents of violent acts in courthouses across the country. In 2011 – the year the community of Grand Marais was devastated by the tragic shooting in the Cook County courthouse – that same organization counted more than 90 such incidents.

"From the tragedy in Grand Marais, to violent attacks on public defenders inside our courtrooms, to bomb threats and white powder scares at our court facilities, we know Minnesota is not immune to courthouse violence," said Chief Justice Gildea. "The Safe and Secure Courthouse Initiative represents a statewide approach to tackling an important statewide issue."

Chief Justice Gildea and Commissioner Purvis said that Courthouse Security

Workgroup members have met extensively with legislative leaders and key committee members to discuss the proposal. The proposal is among the Association of Minnesota Counties' legislative priorities for 2016.

The Courthouse Security Workgroup was convened in 2014 by Minnesota Supreme Court Chief Justice Lorie S. Gildea. The workgroup included representatives from the Minnesota Judicial Branch, the Association of Minnesota Counties, the Minnesota Sheriffs' Association, the Minnesota County Attorneys Association, the Minnesota Board of Public Defense, and the Minnesota Inter-County Association.

The workgroup met throughout 2014 and 2015 to review the state's current courthouse security activities and existing infrastructure, and to identify ways to improve courthouse security throughout the state. In addition to developing the Safe and Secure Courthouse Initiative proposal, the workgroup also oversaw increased courthouse security training, new courthouse security assessments, and the establishment of improved security policies and procedures.

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