



**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. Kathryn D. Messerich
Chief Judge
(651) 438-4352

Brian E. Jones
Judicial District
Administrator
(651) 438-8230

[First Judicial District Public Website](#)

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

VOLUME II—ISSUE I

WINTER 2020

Governor Walz Appoints Patrick Biren, David Lutz to Fill First Judicial District Vacancies

On January 30, 2020, Governor Tim Walz announced the appointment of Patrick Biren and David Lutz as District Court Judges in Minnesota’s First Judicial District.

Mr. Biren’s appointment fills a vacancy that occurred upon the retirement of the Honorable Lawrence F. Clark and will be chambered at Red Wing in Goodhue County.

“I am honored to appoint Patrick Biren as a District Court Judge in the First Judicial District,” said Governor Walz. “Patrick demonstrates both a mastery of the law in his practice and a commitment to his community that speaks highly of his willingness to go the extra mile for his clients and his neighbors. He will serve the people of Goodhue County well.”



Mr. Lutz’s appointment fills a vacancy that occurred upon the retirement of the Honorable Karen A. Asphaug and will be chambered at Hastings in Dakota County.

“It is my honor to appoint David Lutz as a District

Inside

1—2 **Governor Walz Appoints Patrick Biren, David Lutz to Fill First Judicial District Vacancies**

3—4 **Judicial Council Sets 2020 Legislative Agenda – MJB to Seek Funding for Courthouse, Cyber Security**

4 **New Court Interpreter Resource Management System Launched**

5 **Guide & File for Starting a Divorce Now Available**

6—7 **Four Minnesota Judicial Branch Employees Earn Awards for Workplace Excellence**

7 **The Minnesota Judicial Branch has unveiled a New Interactive Video for Potential Job Applicants**

(Continued on page 2)

Governor Walz Appoints New Judges
(Continued from page 1)

Court Judge in the First Judicial District,” said Governor Walz. “David brings a wealth of legal experience to the bench, and his work to provide college scholarships for graduating

seniors and legal assistance for those who can’t afford shows his clear commitment to the people of Dakota County. I look forward to his tenure on the bench.”

For more information about the judicial selection process, please visit: <https://mn.gov/governor/administration/judicialappointments/>

About Patrick Biren



Patrick Biren

Mr. Biren is the Managing Attorney and a Senior Partner at the law firm of Stich Angell. In his current role, Mr. Biren represents individuals and corporate entities in civil litigation where he participates in court hearings, trials and arbitrations. Previously, Mr. Biren worked as a partner at Brownson and Linnihan, PLLP, and as a law clerk for the Honorable Michael T. DeCourcy of the Ramsey County District Court. He contributes to his community by serving as a conciliation court referee in Dakota County, a volunteer attorney for Mid-Minnesota Legal Aid, a mock trial judge, and an appointed member of the Scott County Extension Committee. He also provides pro-bono legal services for non-profits.

Mr. Biren received his B.A. from St. John’s University and his J.D. from William Mitchell College of Law.

About David Lutz



David Lutz

Mr. Lutz is currently a partner at Bowman and Brooke LLP. Within this role, Mr. Lutz works in various areas, including complex civil litigation. He has defended companies in product liability litigation, mass tort cases, warranty litigation, environmental litigation, commercial litigation, and more. He also chairs Bowman and Brooke’s Asbestos Practice Group. Mr. Lutz’s community involvement includes service as Vice Chair and Chair of the Community Grants Committee of the Eagan Foundation, which administers college scholarships to graduating high school seniors in Eagan, Minnesota. He is also a volunteer attorney for Dakota County Legal Assistance.

Mr. Lutz received his B.A. *summa cum laude* from the University of Minnesota and his J.D. from the University of Michigan.



Judicial Council Sets 2020 Legislative Agenda – MJB to Seek Funding for Courthouse, Cyber Security

During the upcoming 2020 Legislative Session, the Minnesota Judicial Branch will seek funding to enhance the security of the state’s county courthouses, as well as the cyber security of the Judicial Branch’s IT infrastructure. The Judicial Council also approved five policy proposals that will be submitted for legislative consideration in 2020. The Minnesota Judicial Council set the legislative agenda during its December meeting.

The Judicial Council’s decisions were based on the recommendations of the Legislative Advisory Workgroup, which met this fall to consider legislative proposals submitted by judges and court staff from across the state.

Courthouse Security



The Minnesota Judicial Branch will seek a \$3 million one-time appropriation to fund a competitive grant program for courthouse safety and security improvements. If funded, counties would be able to apply for a one-time matching grant to fund courthouse security assessments, equipment, technology, or training needs.

This proposal is modeled after the Safe and Secure Courthouse Initiative, which provided a total of \$1 million in grants to

54 counties in 2017. At the time, the [advisory panel](#) administering the grant program received more than \$3.5 million in grant applications for the \$1 million fund.

Cyber Security

During the 2019 Legislative Session, the Judicial Branch sought a \$5 million biennial appropriation to enhance its cyber security program in order to mitigate the risk of data breaches, data corruption, system outages, document/ data loss, and cyber attacks. The Legislature ultimately approved a \$1.5 million cyber security appropriation for the Judicial Branch.

In 2020, the Judicial Branch will seek \$3.5 million to address cyber security needs facing the state’s court system.

Policy Proposals

In 2020, the Judicial Branch will seek changes to state statute that would:

- Remove the statutory requirement for a civil commitment treatment facility to endorse receipt of an original warrant or acknowledge receipt of the commitment order and file the endorsed receipt or acknowledgement with the court of commitment.
- Clarify what the court should consider in determining whether a name change applicant has a criminal history and clarify who is responsible for seeking and paying for a criminal history record check.

(Continued on page 4)



*Judicial Council Sets 2020 Legislative Agenda
(Continued from page 3)*

- Change “may” to “shall” in rent escrow statute. The current statute provides that the court administrator “may” charge a filing fee in the amount set for complaints and counterclaims in conciliation court, subject to the filing of an inability to pay affidavit. Court administrators have found the use of “may” instead of “shall” to be confusing.
- Update statutes regarding court reporters to reflect both current practices of the Minnesota Judicial Branch and recommendations from the Court Record Workgroup.
- Clarify that even though a court session occurs during the regular 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. day, an employer has a duty to release an employee serving jury duty from his or her regular work schedule for that day regardless of when during the day the employee would have worked. Judicial Branch representatives are working with the business community on this policy proposal.

New Court Interpreter Resource Management System Launched

The Minnesota Judicial Branch has launched a new scheduling and management system for court interpreters, the [Interpreter Resource Management Application](#) (IRMA). IRMA will ensure efficient resource management by providing real-time information on requests and assignments in one portal through its integration with the Minnesota Judicial Branch case management system, MNCIS.

Interpreter schedulers using IRMA are able to assess locations, expected driving time, costs of providing the interpreter on-site, and other information to determine how best to fulfill the interpreter need either with an in-person

court interpreter or if a qualified interpreter can appear using remote interpreting technology. IRMA streamlines all aspects and management of the court interpreter program for court staff and court interpreters. The system will electronically manage interpreter profile information, the court interpreter roster, scheduling, invoicing and payments, data collection, and reports.

“The new Interpreter Resource Management Application is a significant technological achievement for the Minnesota Judicial Branch. This system will provide enhanced communication, organization, and invoicing for court interpreters and court administrative

staff,” said Chief Justice Lorie S. Gildea. “Feedback from court interpreters who frequently work with our courts was instrumental in the development and deployment of this new web-based system. I thank our justice partners for their support in bringing this project to fruition.”

During the first week of use, almost 200 interpreters had used the system. In 2018 there were more than 28,000 hearings or trials in Minnesota district courts that required the use of a court-appointed interpreter. IRMA was developed internally by the State Court Administrator’s Office Information Technology Department.



Guide & File for Starting a Divorce Now Available

New Guide & File makes creating divorce forms easier to complete by asking questions and populating court forms for self-represented litigants

The Minnesota Judicial Branch has launched a new [Guide & File](#) interview for beginning a divorce. Guide & File can be used by people who are seeking a Divorce with Children, Divorce without Children, or a Joint Petition with or without Children when parties are in agreement.

Guide & File is available through the Minnesota Judicial Branch website and takes the guess-work out of completing court forms. Unlike traditional court forms, where users fill in fields with their information, Guide & File is an interview tool that asks simple questions and uses the answers to complete the appropriate court forms. The resulting forms can be printed or may be electronically -filed with the court. Guide & File can be used on mobile and desktop devices.

“Guide & File interviews have proved an

effective way to support Minnesotans who are representing themselves in court,” said State Court Administrator [Jeff Shorba](#). Expanding Guide & File into the area of divorce is especially important because divorce forms are some of the most-used

forms on the Judicial Branch website. When people use and complete the correct forms, their cases can move more efficiently, which can contribute to a more timely resolution.”

Guide & File first launched in June 2018. To date, Guide & File has been used to create more than 28,000 documents and to eFile almost 4,000 cases directly through Guide & File in 84 different courts across all 10 judicial districts in MN.



In addition to starting a divorce, Guide & File interviews can be used to create multiple forms, including: starting a conciliation court case, starting an eviction case, filing an affidavit of service in a conciliation court or

eviction case, and requesting a Harassment Restraining Order (HRO) and/or Order for Protection (OFP). Additional divorce interviews, including forms to finish a divorce, will be rolled out in 2020. Expansion of Guide & File interviews is one strategy for achieving Strategic Goal 1: Access to Justice, in the Minnesota Judicial Branch [Strategic Plan](#). Learn more by visiting the [Guide & File Help Topic](#).



Four Minnesota Judicial Branch Employees Earn Awards for Workplace Excellence

Four distinguished Minnesota Judicial Branch employees from across Minnesota were honored for their professional talents at the recent [Minnesota Association for Court Management](#) (MACM) conference. Monica Tschumper of Wright County District Court, Angie Hutchins of the Third Judicial District, Gena Jones of Washington County District Court, and Sharon Schubert of Kanabec County District Court were all recognized for their contributions to the teams and workplaces they serve.

The 2019 Distinguished Service Award winner was Monica Tschumper, who works as the Wright County Court Administrator in the Tenth Judicial District. The Distinguished Service award is given to individuals who have a record of outstanding service to the community and courts, and demonstrates leadership by improving the administration of justice and delivery of public service through the application of modern management techniques.

Tschumper is a current Fellow of the Institute for Court Management and shares her knowledge and experience with others in the court system to lead a successful court. She demonstrates leadership by improving the administrative of justice, and has hosted law

day events in Wright County to educate the community and stakeholders about the courts. Tschumper has worked for the Minnesota Judicial Branch for 25 years. She has worked in several different positions in Mille Lacs, Isanti, and Wright counties.

Angie Hutchins was honored as the Champion of Change. She is the Deputy District Administrator in the Third Judicial District. A Champion of Change recipient fosters collaboration to promote innovation by embracing opportunities to utilize technology and other resources to increase efficiencies and productivity in the work place.

Hutchins is talented at fostering collaboration among court staff, as well as supervisory and leadership personnel, in order to promote innovation. She consistently embraces opportunities to maximize the use of technology. In the past year, Hutchins volunteered to take on the project managerial duties and responsibilities, and the development and implementation of the Third Judicial District's case processing vision. Hutchins has worked for the Minnesota Judicial Branch for nearly 20 years. She has worked for the Fifth Judicial District, the State Court Administrator's Office, and the Third

Judicial District.

Gena Jones was awarded the Coach/Mentor of the Year honor. She works as a Court Administrative Manager for Washington County in the Tenth Judicial District. The Coach/Mentor of the Year award recognizes a person who fosters trust while encouraging others to achieve their goals without thought of reciprocation. Recipients are recognized for their willingness to share their skills and knowledge with others and provide excellent coaching in the ongoing development and enrichment of others.

Jones was described by her nominators as an experienced and trusted advisor who is personable, approachable, and knowledgeable. Jones has participated as a mentor in the Merging Minds Mentorship program for several years. She has also served on several statewide committees, ranging from eFiling and eService (eFS), the Minnesota Court Information System (MNCIS), and eAppeals – all of which have been instrumental in shaping the way the Minnesota courts' work is performed through the use of technology. Jones has worked for the Minnesota Judicial Branch for 28 years. She has worked for the First Judicial District, the Fourth Judicial District, Dakota County

(Continued on page 7)



Four MJB Employees Earn Awards for Workplace Excellence
(Continued from page 6)

District Court, and Washington County.

The 2019 Lifetime Achievement Award was presented to Sharon Schubert, the Kanabec County Court Administrator in the Tenth Judicial District. The Lifetime Achievement award honors recipients' many contributions to the court management profession and their years of service to the Minnesota Judicial Branch.

Schubert was praised for her diplomacy, advocacy, and professionalism when faced with challenges. She is a member of the Civil

Process Advisory Workgroup, a member of many district committees, and has served as the co-chair of the Tenth District's Administrators Group for the last four years. Her tenure with the Minnesota Judicial Branch has included two tragic and formative events: a courthouse shooting and a gas-explosion in a courthouse. Both events left a substantial imprint on Schubert, the teams she lead, and her leadership style. Schubert has worked for the Minnesota Judicial Branch for 37 years. She has worked in Stearns, Wright, and Kanabec counties.

About the Minnesota Association for Court Management



The Minnesota Association for

Court Management has more than 350 members who are court leaders throughout Minnesota. MACM is committed to the enrichment of its members through professional growth and development opportunities, promoting advancements and innovation in court administration, and partnering with other professionals working to improve the justice system in Minnesota.

The Minnesota Judicial Branch has unveiled a New Interactive Video for Potential Job Applicants



The Minnesota Judicial Branch has unveiled a new interactive video designed to provide potential job applicants with more information about [Working for the Minnesota Judicial](#)

[Branch](#). The interactive video begins with a welcome and an overview of the Branch mission from State Court Administrator Jeff Shorba. The video concludes with a menu of links that provide information about different careers, the benefits for employees, and how to apply to work at the Branch.

“We hope that the career opportunities video provides meaningful information to those who are seeking a career at the

Minnesota Judicial Branch,” said State Court Administrator Jeff Shorba. “The Branch offers a wide array of employment opportunities for those who are interested in serving the people of Minnesota.”

The video features several Judicial Branch employees describing their roles and responsibilities, and the rewarding nature of their work. The video can be viewed on the [Careers](#) page.

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

