

**DISTRICT JUDGES ANNUAL CONFERENCE
APRIL 29-30th 2010
THERMOPOLIS, WYOMING**

A meeting of the District Judges Conference was held April 29th and 30th in Thermopolis, Wyoming. The following District Judges were present: Brooks, Waldrip, Park, Price, Deegan, Tyler, Ryckman, Sullins, Skavdahl (April 30th only), Donnell, James, Fenn, Davis and Young. Judges Arnold, Cranfill and Guthrie were unable to attend. Also gracing us with his presence was retired Judge Stebner.

The Treasure's report (bank statement) shows we currently have a balance of [REDACTED]

Appoint to the Board of Judicial Policy and Administration; Judge Donnell will be completing his service on the BJPA so a successor needs to be selected. Judge Campbell was nominated and unanimously selected to serve on the BJPA.

Chief Justice's Report:

Chief Justice Voigt discussed with the District Judges the current activities that are going on in the Judicial branch. Items include continued work on an electronic case management system to be used by all District Court Clerks throughout Wyoming. Work will continue on the system which will likely be in place by 2012. Discussion was also had about the use of video equipment and the intent of the Judicial IT department to provide units for use by District Judges, to the extent use is desired. Chief Justice Voigt also discussed the need to address the Court Commissioner's authority and limitation to "chambers business" when District Judge is absent. Chief Justice Voigt noted it will likely require a constitutional amendment to remove limitation on the powers of Court Commissioners. A discussion was also had regarding civil discovery rules and the cost of litigation as a result of the discovery rules. It is likely that some type of amendment to the rules regarding discovery may occur to eliminate the more expensive and expansive discovery occurring in cases where it is unnecessary or cost prohibitive. Chief Justice Voigt noted an upcoming meeting of the Joint Judiciary Committee in Sheridan on May 17th where one of the topics would be the authority of DFS to make placements, as opposed to District Judge. A uniform rule was discussed for use in determining in forma pauperis status in criminal and divorce cases, which the BJPA will take up. Concerns as to the order of payment for assessments in criminal cases was discussed, in light of the new \$10.00 access to justice assessment. The creation of a judicial ethics advisory committee was discussed, along with the fact that judges can request and receive advice on ethics issues in advance. Judge Price was nominated by Keith Kautz, seconded by Judge James and unanimously voted to serve on the Judicial Ethics Advisory Committee. The continuing issues involving preemptory challenges was discussed and a task force will be put together to address the issue of preemptory challenges in Park County. Supreme Court appeals are down to their lowest level in eight years.

Chief Justice Voigt also noted concerns continue in juvenile cases with the costs associated with GAL and parent's attorneys. The need for District Court's to make reasonable efforts findings and hold permanency hearings in juvenile matters was also discussed.

Presentations:

Judge Donnell handed out the draft rule regarding the use of certified court interpreters. A discussion ensued on how the rule would be implemented and the impact on the Courts.

Mr. Nick Murdock spoke to the group about judicial involvement in the approval of settlements and creation of conservatorships in cases involving minors. Mr. Murdock discussed the different ways these matters are handled by courts in other states. He noted the various tensions and concerns that require careful review and approval of settlements and structuring a conservatorship, especially where minors are involved.

Department of Corrections: Director Bob Lampert and Deputy Director Steve Lindly discussed with the district judges current issues with the Department of Corrections and the opening of the new prison in Torrington. A discussion of re-offense rates and limits, after one year, of the district court to modify or reduce sentences. After opening the Torrington facility they now have all in-mates back in the State and should enable better programming. Concerns and limitations with resources for ISP were discussed. Performance measures for various components of supervision were noted. If you need to contact someone in the Department of Corrections the phone number is (307) 777-7208. Discussion regarding good time credits and the new rules that will go into effect July 1, 2010 also ensued.

Business Meeting:

The Conference reviewed and approved the meeting notes from September 2009 meeting and the December 2009 meeting along with the treasurer report.