



Supreme Court of Illinois

September 22, 2016

ILLINOIS SUPREME COURT APPOINTS NEW DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS

The Illinois Supreme Court has appointed Christopher Bonjean as Director of the Office of Communications and Public Information, effective October 3, 2016. He will head a newly reorganized communications operation, which has been charged with developing strategies to inform and educate a diverse public about the judicial branch of state government and promote public confidence in the administration of justice.

Chief Justice Rita Garman explained that the impetus to expand and emphasize the public information function came, in part, from the results of a survey conducted in the spring of 2015. Under the leadership of Fourth District Appellate Justice Carol Pope, chairperson of the Court's Strategic Planning Committee, the survey was carried out in every courthouse in the state. Questionnaires were distributed to all users of the court facility including parties, witnesses, jurors, and other visitors.

With regard to the survey results, Justice Garman said, "We were reassured to learn that the general perception of the judicial system is positive. While no serious concerns were discovered, we did learn that there was room for improvement, especially in the area of confidence in the fairness of the court system." As a result, she said, "My colleagues and I recognized the need to strengthen our efforts to reach out to the public we serve. One such initiative is the reorganization of our Office of Communications to create the Office of Communications and Public Information."

The newly organized communications function will implement a comprehensive strategy of information, education, and public interest programming. The redesign of the Court's website and more effective use of social media will be priorities.

The Communications and Public Information Office will work within the Administrative Office of the Illinois Courts. In addition to coordinating the Court's social media communications, the Director will respond to media inquiries, issue press releases regarding the Court's adjudicative and administrative actions, and serve as a resource for trial courts implementing the Court's Policy for Extended Media Coverage. The Office also will coordinate with the Illinois Supreme Court's Boards and Commissions, the developing Illinois Judicial College, and other entities to present educational programs and advance outreach efforts.

The first major step towards implementation of the Court's new communications strategy is the appointment of a Director of Communications. Mr. Bonjean currently serves as the Director of Member Communications and Director of the Chicago Office for the Illinois State Bar Association (ISBA). He has been Director of Member Communications since 2009 and Director of the Chicago Office since 2013. Prior to joining ISBA, he was with the Chicago Sun-Times from 2000-2009.

Mr. Bonjean received his journalism degree after attending undergraduate studies at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and Columbia College in Chicago. He received his Master's Degree in Nonprofit Management from DePaul University.

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On behalf of the Supreme Court, Chief Justice Rita B. Garman said, “My colleagues and I have every confidence that Chris will embrace this opportunity to put his visionary skills and experience to work on behalf of the Court.”

Justice Garman also noted that the prior Director of Communications, Joseph Tybor, who served in that capacity from 1998 until 2015, passed in October 2015 away after a valiant battle with pancreatic cancer. “Joe was very highly regarded by the press and his colleagues. Chris Bonjean will carry on his tradition of accessibility, integrity, and transparency.”

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FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT: Illinois Supreme Court Communications Office, at 312.793.2323.