



Supreme Court of Illinois

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October 19, 2012

ACCESS TO JUSTICE COMMISSION TO HOLD FIRST EVER CONFERENCE

Illinois Supreme Court Chief Justice Thomas L. Kilbride will welcome a stellar group of attendees to the first ever Supreme Court Access to Justice Commission conference on Wednesday, October 24. The conference is scheduled to start at 1:30 p.m. and will be held in Room C-500 in the Bilandic Building, located at 160 N. LaSalle Street, Chicago.

The purpose of Wednesday afternoon's conference is to explore some of the fundamental issues relating to access to justice, and to begin developing an agenda to increase and enhance access to justice in Illinois. More than 125 persons from different arenas of the legal profession have replied to the invitation.

"The response has been remarkable," said Chief Justice Kilbride. "This conference will bring together people from across the state and from various avenues of the legal profession, united under the common goal of discovering how we can begin to take significant steps toward improving access to the justice system, particularly for the poor and the vulnerable residents of Illinois."

Chief Justice Kilbride has a special interest in the subject. Before his election to the Supreme Court, he had been a practitioner at Prairie State Legal Services as a legal aid attorney for the poor, then for a mid-sized law firm and as a solo practitioner in a storefront office for nearly two decades. Throughout all of those years, he was continuously involved in volunteer service in the Rock Island area.

Jeffrey D. Colman, a partner at the Chicago firm of Jenner & Block and chair of the Commission, says that this conference is just a first step toward coordinating efforts with other legal groups in improving access to justice in Illinois courts.

According to Mr. Colman, "Lawyers and judges in Illinois have worked for decades to make our system of justice a truly outstanding one, but there are many ways we can make it better -- and more open and responsive to the needs of people who cannot afford legal representation. The Commission is hard at work studying various issues and proposing positive steps to further provide for equal access to justice."

MORE

Access to Justice Commission to Hold Conference Add One

A copy of the conference schedule is attached.

Mississippi Supreme Court Presiding Justice Jess Dickinson will keynote the conference. Justice Dickinson was awarded the Chief Justice Award during his first year on the Court in 2004 and again in 2010 for his work in advancing the administration of justice. Justice Dickinson is a charter member of the Mississippi Access to Justice Commission.

Conference attendees will hear a "State of the State" presentation from Dina Merrell, associate director of the Chicago Bar Foundation; Joe Dailing, executive director of the Illinois Coalition for Equal Justice; and Mark Marquardt, deputy director of the Lawyers Trust Fund of Illinois.

A panel of Illinois judges will discuss some of the challenges they face in working with unrepresented litigants and with individuals whose principal language is not English; another panel, comprised of outside experts, will give reactions and assist in proposing ideas on how to address those challenges.

Recently, the Legal Services Corporation (LSC) released a 44-page report calling for better collaboration between attorneys and entities that provide pro bono legal services. The LSC is the largest funder of civil legal services in the country and has allocated federal dollars to 134 legal groups nationwide, including three in Illinois. Chief Justice Kilbride said the Commission will review their report and find ways to implement some of its ideas.

The Supreme Court announced the formation of the Commission in June to remove barriers and increase the ease of interacting with courts by those persons who can't afford lawyers to represent their interests and needs.

The Commission is comprised of 11 persons, seven of whom are appointed by the Supreme Court. The Illinois Bar Foundation, the Chicago Bar Foundation, the Lawyers Trust Fund of Illinois and the Illinois Equal Justice Foundation appoint one member each.

The Commission is charged with promoting, facilitating and enhancing equal access to justice with an emphasis on access to the Illinois civil courts and administrative agencies for all people, particularly the poor and vulnerable.

Similar commissions have been established in 26 other states as well as Washington, D.C. Its creation in Illinois has been endorsed by the Illinois State Bar Association, the Chicago Bar Association and the Illinois Judges Association.

Commission members also serve as volunteers.

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**(FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT: Joseph Tybor, director of communications to
the Illinois Supreme Court, at 312.793.2323)**

Illinois Supreme Court Commission on Access to Justice 1st Annual Access to Justice Conference

Access to Justice in Illinois: Past, Present and Future

1:30 p.m. Welcome

Chief Justice Thomas L. Kilbride – Welcome from the Court, background on creation of the Commission and its importance

Jeff Colman, ATJ Commission Chair – A brief overview of the Commission's early focus and the conference to come

1:40 p.m. Keynote Speaker

Presiding Justice Jess Dickinson, Mississippi Supreme Court

2:00 p.m. “State of the State” of Access to Justice for Low-Income and Disadvantaged Illinoisans

Mark Marquardt, Lawyers Trust Fund of Illinois

Dina Merrell, The Chicago Bar Foundation

Joe Dailing, Illinois Coalition for Equal Justice

2:30 p.m. Standardized Forms: Overview of Importance, Associated Technology and Solutions

Judge Mary K. Rochford, Illinois Appellate Court, First District, ATJ Commissioner – Challenges that many different versions of court forms presents for unrepresented litigants and the impact on access to justice

Ronald W. Staudt, Chicago-Kent College of Law and **Stacie Colston Patterson**, Illinois Legal Aid Online – How interactive court forms transform the process for people without lawyers and why standardized forms are so important

Terri Borrud, Forms and Records Officer, Wisconsin Supreme Court – Wisconsin rules and process for standardized forms and how they have vastly improved the system there

3:00 p.m. Break

**Illinois Supreme Court Commission on Access to Justice
1st Annual Access to Justice Conference**

**3:15 p.m. Panel: Challenges in Working with Unrepresented Litigants
and Language Access Issues**

Moderated by **Tim Kelly**, ATJ Commissioner

Judge Jennifer Bauknecht, Circuit Court of Livingston County

Judge Grace Dickler, Circuit Court of Cook County

Judge Laura Liu, Circuit Court of Cook County

Judge Leonard Murray, Circuit Court of Cook County, ATJ
Commissioner

Judge Mike Sullivan, Circuit Court of McHenry County, ATJ
Commissioner

4:00 p.m. Responses to Panel

Moderated by **Mike Pope**, ATJ Commissioner

Judge Mark Juhas, Los Angeles Superior Court, to discuss the National
Judicial College curriculum for educating judges on working with
unrepresented litigants and proactive steps courts can take to improve
access to justice

Susan Ledray, Pro Se Services Manager, Hennepin County District
Court (Minneapolis), on developing a comprehensive language access plan
for the courts and consideration of the impact of judicial processes on
unrepresented litigants

4:30 p.m. Comments from the Justices/Questions/Reactions

Moderated by **Jennifer Nijman**, ATJ Commissioner

4:55 p.m. Concluding Remarks: Looking Forward – Jennifer Nijman