



# A MESSAGE FROM CHIEF JUSTICE THOMAS L. KILBRIDE

The 2010 Annual Report tells the story of the Illinois Courts' achievements and our enduring commitment to the law, to justice, and to serving Illinois' 12.9 million residents. I am honored to report on the initiatives of the Illinois judicial branch on behalf of my fellow Justices, our Administrative Director, Cynthia Y. Cobbs, and the more than 950 Illinois judges who strive daily to ensure justice is served. I am exceedingly proud of our court system, and I invite you to review our many accomplishments and activities.

The work and projects described here embody the core values of the Illinois judicial branch of government - preserving the rule of law, protecting the rights and liberties guaranteed by the United States and the Illinois constitutions, ensuring prompt and efficient access to justice, and treating all who are served by the courts with dignity. As the new Chief Justice, I recognize that I stand on the shoulders of the many who ably preceded me as the chief steward of the "third branch." I wish to thank my predecessor, Chief Justice Thomas Fitzgerald, who retired from the Court in October 2010, for the many lessons I learned through his integrity and leadership. I regret that he was not able to complete his term as Chief, and I thank him for his guidance and friendship.

When Justice Fitzgerald retired, the Court welcomed its newest Justice from the First Judicial District, Mary Jane Theis. Justice Theis joins Justices Rita B. Garman and Anne M. Burke to mark the first time in history that three women serve simultaneously on the Illinois Supreme Court.

In 2010, economic recovery remained elusive, requiring comprehensive cost saving strategies. Prudent stewardship of our limited fiscal resources, in both the reviewing and trial courts, ensured that justice was neither delayed nor disrupted. The Illinois courts continued to administer fair and impartial justice in a fiscally responsible manner.

## Probation

The level of appropriations provided to the Supreme Court in 2010 for the administration of Illinois' probation system continued to be a concern. Under the direction of the Supreme Court and the leadership of the Administrative Office, Illinois probation maintains its systemic commitment to Evidence-Based Practices (EBP), promoting community safety through managing and reducing offender risk, requiring offender accountability, and equipping probationers with competencies

encouraging pro-social conduct. As in fiscal year 2009, the Supreme Court's 2010 appropriation for probation services was substantially less than the amount included in the Court's budget request. With a limited level of funding and probation's diminished capacity to be a viable alternative to incarceration, Governor Quinn again responded to the Court's plea by granting an additional \$20 million to the Court's revenues. The Court is grateful to the Governor for his favorable response.

## Judicial Accountability

Accompanying the Administrative Summary of the 2010 Annual Report is the Statistical Report providing information about the number and types of cases filed and disposed of in 2010. Case numbers, though, do not tell the entire story because each case affects real people by addressing the resolution of rights, the determination of custody, the disposition of property, or in some cases, the restraint or loss of liberty. Therefore, this Report seeks to summarize a sampling of the Illinois judiciary's many initiatives, demonstrating accountability for our work and transparency in our processes.

A few years back, our Supreme Court adopted a Statement of Expectations for Illinois Judges. The words in the statement continue to express the strong values of our judiciary. *"Critical to an independent judiciary is the public's trust and confidence in the men and women who don the robes, interpret our laws and who seek to fairly administer justice."* Consistent with this principle, the Supreme Court expanded its judge mentor program designed to aid judges in the performance of their judicial duties. The Peer Judge Mentor Program, modeled after the successful

New Judge Mentor Program that the Court and Administrative Office have conducted since 1998, trains and assigns judicial mentors to Illinois judges who seek to enhance their skills or performance. In 2010, 47 current or retired Illinois judges completed the inaugural Peer Judge Mentor Training-for-Trainers. This group provides a confidential relationship between paired judges for a period of at least six months, allowing new skills to be developed, modeled, and practiced to make a good judge even better.

## Judicial Education

In 2010, the Supreme Court hosted the biennial Education Conference in Chicago. The Education Conference is the centerpiece of the Court's Comprehensive Education Plan for Illinois Judges, offering a comprehensive array of workshops to all Illinois judges. The 2010 Conference programs addressed substantive law as well as the practical aspects of judging and permitted Illinois judges to fulfill their mandated 30 hours of continuing judicial education.

Consistent with its rulemaking authority, the Supreme Court frequently reviews and amends its rules of practice to ensure that the ends of justice are fairly and efficiently met. One of the more significant rule amendments in 2010 was the modification of Supreme Court Rule 304 (Appeals from Final Judgements That Do Not Dispose of an Entire Proceeding). The amendments were intended to provide a swifter means for achieving permanency and stability in child custody issues in divorce and parentage cases. As then-Chief Justice Fitzgerald offered, "A child's life doesn't stop and wait for us," noting that "these





issues are some of the most important that come before our judicial system.”

## Mental Health Courts

To optimize the use of court and community resources in cases involving mental health issues, the Court created the Special Supreme Court Advisory Committee on Justice and Mental Health. The establishment of the 22-member panel mirrors numerous state and national initiatives designed to enhance the identification and treatment of mental health issues that result in criminal conduct.

In Illinois, our dozen mental health courts directly address the purpose and mission of the Special Committee. Similar to drug courts, mental health courts employ a problem-solving approach, using the power of the court with other justice system partners (prosecutors, defense counsel, treatment providers, probation officers, law enforcement, mental health experts, community leaders, and others) to plan and closely monitor defendants’ progress toward stability and recovery.

## Code of Evidence

After nearly two years of work led by Chief Justice Fitzgerald, the Illinois’ rules of evidence were codified. Following a comprehensive review of state and federal rules of evidence, the drafting of proposed rules for codification, and a series of public hearings, all conducted by the Special Supreme Court Committee on Illinois Evidence, the Court adopted the first Illinois Code of Evidence, effective on January 1, 2011. The Special Committee then conducted a series of regional training sessions throughout the state to introduce Illinois judges to the new Code.

## Commission on Professionalism

Finally, a key program of the Illinois Supreme Court is the continued sponsorship of annual professional meetings organized by the Commission on Professionalism for incoming students at Illinois law schools. Programs were conducted in six Illinois law schools to help first-year law students gain exposure during their law school orientation to professionalism issues frequently faced by attorneys. This program includes presentations by judges and roundtable discussion groups addressing a range of ethical issues within specific scenarios, facilitated by attending attorneys and local judges. The students also take a “pledge of professionalism” as part of this popular program emphasizing professionalism at the earliest stages of their legal careers. In 2010, 3,097 new attorneys were admitted to practice.

## Conclusion

In sum, this report provides only a brief synopsis of some activities of our highly conscientious and dedicated judiciary. I invite your further review of the work and accomplishments of the Illinois judicial branch as presented in the 2010 Annual Report. In closing, I extend my sincere appreciation to all those who have assisted with our courts’ many projects and initiatives. It is my sincere privilege to serve as your Chief Justice.

Thomas L. Kilbride  
Chief Justice  
Illinois Supreme Court