

Blue Ribbon Commission
Hays Community Meetings, May 9, 2011
Attendance: by-invitation meeting, 46; public meeting, 4.
Feedback: based on the 4 questions asked at the meetings

1. Are there things the courts do locally that could be performed regionally or at one central statewide location to improve their efficiency?

2. How could the courts use technology to make their operations more cost-effective or improve access to the courts?

a. A/V Technology

1. TVCC needs to be expanded and used effectively.
2. Videoconferencing for care and treatment works well.

b. E-everything:

1. Electronic filing and video conferencing can help. This can result in sharing of resources between courthouses.
2. Have a centralized statewide case management system instead of individual servers in each courthouse. This would allow system and data access across county and district boundaries.

c. Anti-technology

1. Technology is expensive and the cost must be considered.
2. Video conferencing does not work as well as meeting face to face.

3. How can the courts become more flexible in the use of people and facilities as workloads and funding fluctuate?

a. Consolidate/Share

1. Increased travel will create a problem for access to courts.
2. The Governor declared western Kansas counties as economic development sites. Any consolidation or centralization needs to take this into account and help create jobs in these western counties.
3. Security at courthouses is expensive.
4. Changes resulting in increased local expenses need to be reviewed.
5. Additional travel will not be efficient for judges or attorneys.
6. There is a sense of community when a judge lives in a local community.
7. Access to justice is important when making these types of changes.
8. Venue issues with various case types is a problem with consolidation.

b. District Magistrate Judges (DMJs) & District Court Judges(DJs)

1. Expand power of magistrates, (they are not currently courts of record).
2. Appeals from magistrates to district judges are a problem. Things should not be tried twice.
3. Dollar for dollar, DMJ's are the best value for the money.
4. Changing some of the DJ's to DMJ's in the urban courts would save money.

4. What other ideas, issues, or concerns do you want the BRC to consider?

a. Access to Justice/Timeliness

1. Access to Justice needs to be considered when making changes.
2. Aging populations are a concern for access to justice.

b. Process changes

c. Money/Vacancies

d. Legislature

e. One judge per county

1. It is critically important for a community to have a judge that lives in the community. A judge that resides in a community is more important to the community than one that travels in for court proceedings.

f. BRC

g. Furloughs

1. If furloughs are longer, good employees will leave.
2. Furloughs created a great deal of uncertainty. (ex: not knowing the length or dates).
3. The backlog of work remained after the furloughs were over.

h. Other

1. Manpower at prosecution level needs to be reviewed.
2. Look at a true district attorney system. District attorneys can handle serious cases and county attorneys can be used for less serious matters.
3. There is nothing wrong with the current system. Nothing needs to be fixed.
4. Changes in sentencing guidelines creates major changes in local jails. The state pushes changes down and local cities push changes up. All these changes are expensive.
5. Communication between state agencies and other entities needs to be efficient and effective.
6. Changes to court structure will cause changes to other groups like CASA.

7. Look at actions of attorneys and parties. There needs to be more accountability and fines for frivolous lawsuits. The system is bogged down by cases that shouldn't be there.