

Blue Ribbon Commission
Hutchinson Community Meetings, May 4, 2011
Attendance: by-invitation meeting, 13; 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?

a. Regionalize

1. Traffic ticket data entry could be done regionally using technology.

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. Use video conferencing for remote hearings.

b. E-everything:

1. Newer technology that is compatible needs to be used throughout the state.
2. Compatible technology would allow clerks to remotely work in other courts.
3. FullCourt needs to be web based so that courts can access any other court in the state.
4. Technology needs to be supported at the state level. Technicians are not always available locally, and when they are they do not always know the details of the court systems.

c. Anti-technology

1. Current remote access to FullCourt servers in other counties is difficult.

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

a. Consolidate/Share

1. If some courts are closed, the additional workload would be placed on the remaining courts that already have high workloads.
2. Transportation of prisoners is expensive.

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

1. It is important to have DMJs available for emergencies.

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

Access to Justice/Timeliness

1. Closing courts would make it harder for defendants to make their court dates. This is already difficult.
2. How would closing courts be paid for?
3. Jury expenses would be higher if there are fewer courts.
4. Transportation costs for all parties involved in cases would increase if courts were closed. Many people do not have convenient access to transportation.

Process changes

1. Statute table needs to be consistent across the state. There should only be one statute table used by everyone.

One judge per county

1. Do not change the one judge per county rule.
2. Changing the rule would be a burden to citizens seeking access to justice.

Other

1. Where will physical files be located if courts are shut down? How will they be accessed?
2. Administrative Assistants need to be used to their full potential.
3. State statutes should be reviewed and changed where possible in order to increase efficient processing of specific case types.
4. Stafford County would be a good geographical location for a new jail to help reduce prisoner transportation costs.
5. Roving court reporters could assist courts on an as needed basis.
6. Problem solving courts provide intense supervision on program participants. These courts have reduced recidivism and should be expanded across the state.
7. Court security is expensive and should be reviewed as part of any changes.
8. When state funding decreases, the financial burden on counties increases.