

**Blue Ribbon Commission**  
**Feedback from Junction City Community Meetings**  
(Based on the 4 questions asked by the BRC)  
Updated June 14, 2011

Total attendance: by-invitation, 26; public, 14.

**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) Care and Treatment hearings for the mentally ill in state hospitals might be regionalized to avoid travel to local courts.
- 2) Judges can travel to neighboring courthouses with technology.
- 3) The processing of traffic cases could be consolidated statewide.
- 4) It is a fallacy to think we could save a bunch of money by forming mega-districts.

**b.      Keep at local level**

- 1) Would like to be able to file cases within the district.
- 2) Efficiency should not come at the expense of the defendant.

**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) Videoconference Care and Treatment hearings from the state hospitals to the local courts.
- 2) Videoconferencing can be hooked up to two rooms so that clients have an opportunity to privately converse with their attorney.
- 3) The argument that videoconferencing is inadequate because judges do not have the opportunity to pick up on subtle expressions is without merit because judges do not do that well with picking up on subtle expressions in face to face hearings.
- 4) State should pay for the new technology in the district courts.
- 5) We can expand the use of technology.
- 6) I think technology could be used in traffic law, but the more definite criminal cases need face to face interaction.
- 7) Skype works great.
- 8) Both state hospitals should use the same videoconferencing program.
- 9) To watch a sheriff or police department's video you have to have their software program.
- 10) Standards need to be established so technology is compatible.
- 11) Initial appearances can be handled through technology.

**b.      E-everything:**

- 1) Give all interested agencies and entities read-only access to FullCourt.
- 2) There is a cost associated with providing user licenses to FullCourt to all who would want it.
- 3) One benefit to statewide access to FullCourt is those who write presentence investigation reports would have ready access to journal entries.
- 4) E-filing would help a great deal.
- 5) E-filing is a great thing.
- 6) It would be great to access the case file and documents electronically on the bench.
- 7) Courts should be equipped to take payment by credit card when the defendants can pay.

**c.**      **Anti-technology**

- 1) Technology is not optimal for reading facial expressions.
- 2) Difficult for older people to shift to new technology.
- 3) Concern expressed over holding trials by videoconference.
- 4) You have to have the knowledge to use the technology.
- 5) I do not feel like I can effectively communicate through a machine.
- 6) One loses a sense of access to justice when one has to communicate through a machine.
- 7) We currently have a videoconference system, and I hate it.
- 8) There is no time to talk to client.
- 9) You cannot tell by looking at a monitor if the person is pregnant or lost a foot.
- 10) I am concerned about our courts becoming impersonal and detached.
- 11) I feel technology has passed me by.

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

**a.**      **Consolidate/Share**

- 1) The 15 Court Trustees offices could be consolidated more.
- 2) The Court Trustees office would like to get into assisting the court in handling the paperwork for uncontested child custody and failure to pay child support.
- 3) A clerk could help with the work of another county, but someone would have to scan the documents into FullCourt.
- 4) There is not uniformity in procedures across courts.
- 5) Hope the National Center for State Courts does not recommend consolidation.
- 6) Could reallocate some bodies across the judicial districts on a temporary basis.
- 7) Five counties have two courthouses.
- 8) If the courts are consolidated, new buildings will have to be built resulting in no savings.

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

- 1) Judges should not be inundated with so many cases so that they cannot take the time to make a good decision.

- 2) Judges should be available whenever the need arises and not based on caseload.
- 3) District Magistrate Judges should not be judged on their caseloads.
- 4) District Magistrate Judges carry so much of the workload.

**c. Other**

- 1) We don't have unlimited resources to hold all hearings face to face.
- 2) Have a truancy court held at the high school; it does not cost anything to set up.
- 3) There has to be greater cooperation between the state and counties

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

**a. Access to Justice/Timeliness**

- 1) There are access to justice issues when filing fees are raised.
- 2) It could be a supervision tool if CSOs could impose punishments in a more time sensitive manner.
- 3) We need access to a judge to have access to justice.
- 4) Unless people can file in a local county they do not have access to justice.
- 5) Access to justice is when I can go to my county courthouse and have a judge there.
- 6) Access to justice is to have access to a judge 5 days a week.
- 7) It should be equal access for all.
- 8) People deserve more time if it involves their money or liberty.

**b. Process changes**

- 1) One thing that would save money and time would be if line officers (Intensive Supervision Officers, Court Services Officers, etc) had statutory rule authority to apply sanctions greater than they can now.
- 2) Probationers could receive a 48-hour sanction for failed Urine Analysis, and an extra 48 hours if they challenge it and lose.
- 3) Offer immediate sanctions in drug court.
- 4) In other states they have a general sanction court that is not just for drugs.
- 5) There was a pilot program in Johnson County to have an LSI-R (Level of Service Inventory – Revised) for defendants at all hearings.
- 6) In civil cases, we do motions that are pointless.
- 7) It seems like there is a lot of wasted time while serving jury duty.
- 8) We need to accommodate jurors.

**c. Money/Vacancies**

- 1) Court Trustees office has collected substantial amounts of money which is good for the state.
- 2) Our filing fees are not exorbitant, but they could be raised.
- 3) Doubt the state can take over all of the expense to run the courts.
- 4) Have to become more effective or efficient with status quo funding.

- 5) Counties would save money if we no longer had them pay to transport prisoners or the mentally ill.
- 6) Quit raising filing fees on poor people.
- 7) The funding should be supplied as needed.
- 8) Raise taxes if needed.
- 9) A lot of cost is passed on from the state to the county.
- 10) Concerned with cost of transportation for Court Service Officers.
- 11) Perhaps we could charge a fee to discourage frivolous motions.
- 12) The filing fees we have now are split among a number of different services.
- 13) It is not right that head trauma fund gets a portion of every docket fee.
- 14) Public hospitals do not have to pay a filing fee for their collection cases.
- 15) I hope we are not told we have to do something, and then told the counties have to find a way to fund it.
- 16) Our commissioners do not complain too much about expenses because it is a benefit for them to have the courts.
- 17) Unfunded mandates increase the tax burden.
- 18) If the state needs to spend more money, then they need to spend more money.
- 19) Pay per motion.
- 20) Filing fee per document.
- 21) If we funded our courts on a per capita basis, numerous courts would be shut down.
- 22) I cannot survive on jury pay of \$10 a day.

**d.**     **Legislature**

- 1) The recommendations in the post audit report are asinine.
- 2) The legislature has a duty to fund the courts.
- 3) I wish the legislature would trust our judges.

**e.**     **One judge per county**

**f.**     **BRC**

- 1) You may have a better turn out by the public to town hall meetings if you let the public know how they might be able to contribute to these meetings.
- 2) Take a bold proposal back to the Supreme Court - equal access to justice.

**g.**     **Furloughs/staffing**

- 1) Have been hindered by not being able to hire clerks to work temporary hours.
- 2) Would not object to higher fees if it means keeping clerks and judges in the courts.
- 3) We barely have enough Court Service Officers.
- 4) There have been historical inequities in the placement of personnel.
- 5) Looking at placing our people logically and intelligently is a good start in addressing those inequities.

**h.**     **Other**

- 1) Hope that the court trustee office will not be forgotten as the BRC looks at changes to the court system.
- 2) It is a waste of time and money when probation officers are subpoenaed to a distant court and then travel there only to find the trial was cancelled.
- 3) Effectiveness and efficiency are two separate things.
- 4) Educate the people about the courts.
- 5) Money is wasted when people are called in for jury duty, and then attorneys make a deal.
- 6) The court system is essential and should not be threatened.
- 7) The general public gets frustrated that sentences are too lenient.
- 8) Do not change anything about the courts.
- 9) When we are dealing with someone's life, we need to bend over backwards.
- 10) I think our people do a great job.