

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

Total attendance: by-invitation, 16; public, 0.

**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) Probably don't need 31 judicial districts.
- 2) Last year, Wallace County had a total of 119 actions.
- 3) One person supports trying to find efficiencies, but is opposed to consolidation.
- 4) Communities lose their identity when courthouses close.
- 5) Having a courthouse within 70 miles would be fine if they close some courthouses.

**b. Keep at local level**

- 1) It is difficult to stay consistent in policies when districts become large.
- 2) Travel time is another concern when the districts become large.
- 3) Some litigants do not have access to cars or money for transportation.

**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) Would like to see more use of videoconferencing.
- 2) Department of Corrections should use videoconferencing technology instead of transporting prisoners to hearings.
- 3) The state hospitals should use the same videoconferencing program.
- 4) In the Salina District Court, they have been videoconferencing for 10 years.
- 5) In the Salina District Court, there is an opportunity for private counsel through videoconferencing.
- 6) Cost savings to the sheriff's department has been tremendous through the use of videoconferencing.
- 7) The patient's stay at the mental hospital tends to be shorter and the outcomes better because there is no interruption of treatment to travel to hearings.
- 8) The video recordings of some sheriff and police departments cannot be played on other machines.
- 9) One thing to remember with videoconferencing is that we need to be able to accommodate people who may request being in the courtroom.

- 10) Reno County has recording equipment that has a separate track for each audio.
- 11) One court records proceedings electronically and “read-backs” are efficient as they play back from the recorder.
- 12) Bonds can be set by phone on occasion.

**b.**      **E-everything:**

- 1) E-filing would save attorneys a lot of money.
- 2) E-filing could reduce paperwork storage units.
- 3) The work of the courts could be distributed electronically throughout the state.
- 4) There are electronic ways to deal with emergencies when judges are out of the county.
- 5) It would be nice if we had the ability to have electronic search warrants.
- 6) Some judges have search warrants faxed to their home at night.
- 7) E-filing will help with inconsistent hours of operation at courthouses.
- 8) One person would like to see a computer at every bench.
- 9) Continuing education about computers might be an option.

**c.**      **Anti-technology**

- 1) Where will the funding for technology come from?
- 2) The state did not fund the attorney’s companion version to FullCourt.
- 3) It could be dangerous to set domestic violence bonds by phone.
- 4) Some older attorneys do not know how to use computers.

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

**a.**      **Consolidate/Share**

- 1) Court reporters are doing nothing between trials.
- 2) There should be a pool of transcriptionists for the whole state to use to transcribe all recordings.
- 3) If we made the districts larger, there would be one court administrator instead of two or three.
- 4) If consolidation is recommended, let it be a local decision and not mandated.
- 5) It is important for the court administrator not to forget the needs of the smaller counties in the district.

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

- 1) Law trained district magistrate judges could have their jurisdiction expanded.
- 2) One judge is not opposed to taking on additional territory.
- 3) Districts should not mix elected judges with appointed judges.
- 4) Every county should have a judge regardless of workload because that is what was promised when they unified the courts.

- 5) District magistrate judges are underused.
- 6) District magistrate judges often travel to larger counties which result in travel costs.

**c.**      **Other**

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

**a.**      **Access to Justice/Timeliness**

- 1) Please make sure that children aren't being negatively affected so the state can save bucks.
- 2) There are some computer programs that help pro se litigants fill out court forms by asking them questions in plain language.
- 3) There should be computer terminals in the courthouse for the public to use.

**b.**      **Process changes**

- 1) It would be great if the court could call a central location, and an interpreter would then be connected to the court electronically.
- 2) Use interpreters from Kansas State University.
- 3) There should be a uniform rule on the use of court reporters.
- 4) One court had pre-trials by phone for civil cases.
- 5) They should limit what one can appeal from municipal court.
- 6) Simple theft cases are tried in municipal court.
- 7) Get rid of trying everything twice.
- 8) Instead of having one judge hear the preliminary and another judge the trial, it works best when one judge hears it all.
- 9) One person wishes some cases were automatic bench trials.
- 10) It would be nice if we had a statewide system where everything is consistent.
- 11) One person was concerned with the inconsistencies from county to county in courthouse hours of operation.
- 12) The Court of Appeals should allow people from western Kansas to go straight to Topeka or Wichita instead of Johnson County.
- 13) The Court of Appeals should schedule cases from western Kansas in the afternoon instead of at 9:00 AM, so we would not have to spend the night at a motel.
- 14) The Supreme Court should schedule more in advance.

**c.**      **Money/Vacancies**

- 1) The amount Saline County spends on interpreters has skyrocketed from \$1500 a year in 2005 to \$9000 in 2010.
- 2) The counties are full of unfunded mandates.
- 3) We need to make sure that one time savings due not result in long term costs.

**d.**      **Legislature**

**e.**      **One judge per county**

1) The one judge per judge law is a legislative issue.

**f.**     **BRC**

- 1) The BRC should look at Sedgwick County as they have no district magistrate judges.
- 2) Let counties make recommendations.

**g.**     **Furloughs/staffing**

- 1) There is a huge difference in staffing between small and large counties.

**h.**     **Other**

- 1) There has been some animosity between big and small counties.