

Wyoming District Judges Conference

Business Meeting

September 6, 2023

The Fall 2023 meeting of the District Judges Conference was held in Laramie in conjunction with the Wyoming State Bar and Judicial Conference meeting at the Hilton Garden Inn. Present in person at the meeting in Casper were Judges Tom Campbell, Catherine Wilking, Rick Lavery, Dan Forgey, Catherine Rogers, Joe Bluemel, Dawnessa Snyder, Scott Peasley, Bobbi Overfield, Peter Froelicher, Jason Conder, Suzannah Robinson, Stuart Healy, James "Mike" Causey, Melissa Owens, Matt Castano, Darci Phillips, Josh Eames, Misha Westby, Ben Kirven, Ed Buchanan, James Kaste, and Kate McKay.

Present by TEAMS video was Judge Bill Simpson.

Absent was Judge Kerri Johnson.

Only current members of the Conference were present for discussions and all business.

Chairman Forgey called the meeting to order at 1:30 p.m.

Minutes of the April 28, 2023 business meeting were presented and reviewed. It was moved by Joe Bluemel and seconded by Dawnessa Snyder to accept the minutes as presented. The Conference approved the minutes.

The District Judges Conference Treasurer's Report dated April 20, 2023 was presented and reviewed. It was moved and the motion to accept that report was seconded. The Conference accepted the report.

Old Business and Reports

Committee Reports –

Court Reporter Committee: Judge Snyder reported that the page rate increase became effective on September 1, 2023. The new page rate is \$3.85 per page and \$1.25 per page for each copy. The Order Amending Rule 908 of the Uniform Rules for District Courts was entered July 26, 2023. There are two openings for official reporters and there was a discussion about recruiting new official reporters and how the conference can work together through the committee. No action was recommended, and none was taken.

Human Relations (HR) Committee: Judges Dan Forgey and Peter Froelicher reported that the committee is continuing its work on classifications of positions (still related to employee compensation) and employment policies. The committee is also developing a handbook. No action was recommended, and none was taken.

Wyoming Judicial Council/JBI Update: Judge Wilking gave an update on the JBI process and the Wyoming Judicial Council (WJC). Although JBI will cease to exist at the end of the year, she explained that the success of the strategic plan developed through JBI and adopted by the Judicial Council is dependent on whether the Administrative Office of the

Courts (AOC) is adequately staffed, and the District Court Judges actively participate in all the committees for which they are appointed. She spoke about how the District Court Judges Conference agreed to participate in and accept the governance structure of the WJC because the structural change would result in some of the administrative duties that each District Court judge's office currently performs are taken over and properly administered by the AOC. She expressed the following concerns:

1. Since there were only two additional positions funded last legislative session, one in administration and one in policy, she commented that the strategic plan might move forward without sufficient staffing. That issue deserves the conference's attention.
2. Since the JBI process utilized the National Center for State Courts to facilitate the process there may be a likelihood to seek implementation of programs developed and sponsored by the National Center for State Courts.
3. The WJC and Executive Committee is in its infancy. All judges in the conference are on committees and for the conference to be adequately represented in this structure, all district court judges must commit to whatever time is necessary to be prepared and actively participate in these committee assignments if we are going to be effective representatives for the conference and the interests of its members.

At the conclusion of her report, Judge Wilking resigned from her position on the WJC and as the District Court Judges Conference representative on the Executive Committee.

The Conference recognized the extensive work and advocacy of Judge Wilking as the Conference's representative on the Executive Committee and the WJC and thanked her for her selfless service and the time she devoted to this process on behalf of the Conference.

Legislative Liaison and Legislative Relations Committees: Judge Rogers reported on both committees. She reminded the members that the Legislative Liaison Committee is solely a committee of the conference, and its purpose is to support our conference. The Legislative Relations Committee is a committee of the WJC comprised of judges from all three courts. Those serving on the Legislative Relations Committee for the District Court Judges' Conference are Judges Peasley, Chair; Condor; Buchanan; Darci Phillips. That Committee's purpose is to address policy issues of the entire judicial branch with the legislature. It was affirmed that the conference will continue staffing and operating its own Legislative Liaison Committee. No action was recommended, and none was taken.

Docket Review Committee: Judge Forgey reported that he and judges Lavery and Rogers have served on this committee since the inception of the rule. The committee received reports from all judges in the conference and reported that the committee was satisfied with the accuracy of the reports and there were no issues to report. With the new officers for the conference, the committee will now be comprised of judges Forgey, Rogers, and Bluemel. Conference members were reminded that the third reporting period is scheduled to end 12/31/23 and that Judge Snyder would be sending the materials that all judges are required to complete and send in. No action was recommended, and none was taken.

Records Retention –

Judge Bluemel reported that he had organized the conference records and passed them on to Judge Snyder in the records container with a records retention schedule that provides for the following:

- The check register in both the checkbook and historic binder are to be kept and used for all deposits and checks.
- Bank statements are now received electronically. They are printed out and paper copies are kept for two (2) years with each full year of bank statements scanned to the USB Drive.
- All banking resolutions are permanently retained and scanned to the USB Drive.
- All treasurer reports are permanently retained and scanned to the USB Drive.
- Receipts of all purchases are kept for two (2) years.
- Annual Judge Rosters, Judge Vote Tallies for electronic votes, and meeting minutes are permanently retained.
- Meeting Agendas are retained for two (2) years.
- The USB Drive contains an Excel Spreadsheet (Working Dues Tracker) showing all dues paid.
- The USB Drive contains the “Cases Under Advisement” materials for the secretary to send. That includes a cover letter, list of all judge’s address, and the form for all judges to complete.
 - All items on the USB Drive are also copied to a folder in the secretary’s One Drive and that is shared with the incoming secretary.

Judge Forgey reported that the paper reports of all the judges that were sent to the Docket Review Committee have been forwarded to the incoming conference chair, Judge Rogers. It was discussed and recommended that the Executive Committee consider and recommend to the conference how long what reports will be retained before they are shredded. The discussion focused on retaining all reports for 5 years.

The conference members were reminded that one of the purposes of the conference is to support members of the District Court Bench. To provide that support, if there is something that is not working for an individual judge or a judge has concerns about something, that judge is encouraged to contact an officer of the conference (Judges Rogers, Bluemel, and Snyder) or a representative on the Wyoming Judicial Council (Judges Rogers, Bluemel, and Snyder) for assistance and support. If a conference member has an issue that may benefit from the support of a committee, they are encouraged to contact and work directly with that committee. For example, if there is an issue involving court reporters, feel free to contact the court reporter committee chair or other members for assistance.

New Business

Elections-

Wyoming Judicial Council: Judge Rogers moved that Judge Snyder be elected to the three (3) year vacant position on the WJC. Judge Wilking seconded the motion. Judge Snyder moved that Judge Forgey be elected to the three (3) year vacant position on the WJC. The

motion failed due to lack of a second. A vote was taken, Judge Snyder was elected to the three (3) year vacancy on the WJC representing the District Court Judges Conference.

Officers: Judge Campbell moved that the officers for the upcoming year be Judge Rogers (Chair), Judge Bluemel (Vice-Chair), and Judge Snyder (Secretary-Treasurer). Judge Lavery seconded the motion. There were no other motions. A vote was taken, the motion passed.

Judges Forgey and Rogers led a discussion on conference committee appointments, assignments/appointments to WJC committees, State Bar committees, and other Supreme Court appointments/assignments. Judge Snyder asked to be off the Legislative and Court Reporter Committees. Judge Rogers will be making committee assignments/appointments.

There was a discussion on the ending rule change on video. Members were encouraged to make comments.

The Conference Chair Report was presented. Judge Bluemel moved to approve the report as presented. Judge Snyder seconded the motion. The motion passed.

A new banking resolution reflecting the new officers was presented. Judge Bluemel moved to approve the banking resolution as presented. Judge Peasley seconded the motion. The motion passed.

Status of New Judge in the 6th Judicial District: It was reported that construction is ongoing for the new District Courtroom in Gillette, and it should be completed by mid-December. The members of the 6th Judicial District hope to get approval and funding of the new District Court Judge before the legislature in February and a new judge in place by July 1, 2024.

Good of the Order

Members present then addressed the Good of the Order.

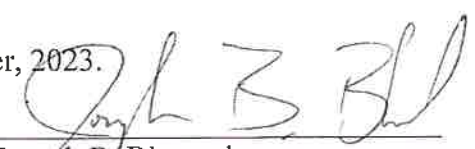
Future meeting dates were announced: The Winter meeting will be held in Casper, December 7 and 8. The Spring meeting will be held in Jackson April 25th starting at 8 a.m. and continuing through the 26th. The Fall meeting will be held in Cheyenne September 10th and 11th in conjunction with the Wyoming State Bar convention and annual meeting.

Thanks were extended to Judge Forgey for his service as chair of the conference. Judge Rogers expressed her gratitude to Judge Forgey for his leadership, communications, and mentorship for the last year.

Adjournment

Judge Rogers moved to adjourn. Judge Wilking seconded the motion. The motion carried and the meeting was then adjourned.

Submitted this 5th day of December, 2023.


Joseph B. Bluemel