

**Access to Justice Commission
Minutes
February 8, 2012**

The Access to Justice Commission held a phone conference meeting on February 8, 2012. Those participating in the meeting were Chief Justice Marilyn Kite, Justice Jim Burke, Judge Wes Roberts, Rennie Polidora, Stuart Day, Amanda Roberts, Professor John Burman, Denise Burke, Pat Day, Larry Wolfe, Ronda Munger, Joann Odendahl, Eric Jones, Dona Playton, Walter Eggers, Gen Tuma, and Rick Lavery.

Opening Remarks

Justice Burke opened the meeting by informing the members that the Supreme Court entered an Order on January 17, 2012 that outlines nine objectives for the Access to Justice Commission to work on over the course of 2012. He explained that the purpose of the meeting is to get the Commission moving forward with its priorities, and to decide on the best way to accomplish them. Justice Burke advised the Commission that Professor John Burman volunteered to become an ex-officio member of the AJC. Ronda Munger moved and Denise Burke seconded a motion to appoint Professor John Burman as an ex-officio member of the Access to Justice Commission. Motion carried unanimously. Justice Burke suggested that the Commission appoint Larry Wolfe as a member of the AJC since he has been such an integral part of its development. Sleeter Dover moved and Dona Playton seconded a motion to appoint Larry Wolfe as a member of the Access to Justice Commission. Motion carried unanimously. Ronda Munger will draft a letter notifying the Court that the Commission has added Professor John Burman and Larry Wolfe as members of the Access to Justice Commission, and an Order will be prepared that sets out their terms.

Order Establishing 2012 Priorities for the Wyoming Access to Justice Commission

Discussion was held about the nine priorities that are contained in the Order, with input contributed by those individuals involved in the nine areas. The priority items are as follows:

1. Provide all necessary support to the Wyoming Center for Legal Aid;
2. Study and make recommendations concerning Wyoming's Rules of Procedure Governing Unauthorized Practice of Law;
3. Actively support the work of the Rule 1 Committee;
4. Support the work of the Domestic Relations Committee;
5. Review, analyze, and make recommendations to improve timelines for specific types of cases;

6. Examine ways to increase pro bono contributions across the state and to involve Wyoming lawyers in Access to Justice issues;
7. Assist the Wyoming Center for Legal Aid in implementing a single point of entry for civil legal aid cases;
8. Expand outreach to stakeholders in the provision of legal services, including the University of Wyoming College of Law; and
9. Address other Access to Justice issues that may arise.

It was agreed that the Commission will continue to work on these nine priority items by facilitating, coordinating and moving forward the existing efforts and projects.

Justice Burke informed the Commission members that in the last year there was a 12% cut in national legal services funding, which ultimately resulted in a budget cut to the State of Wyoming's legal services program. A subcommittee will be formed to develop the best way to present information to Wyoming's congressional representatives to ensure they understand the essential role that this funding plays in providing legal services to the citizens of this state.

Wyoming Center for Legal Aid Update

Rennie Polidora reported that the Center is hoping to hire two additional full-time people. The Center is working on development of the website and has signed a contract with a professional firm that will automate the pro se forms. Rennie has recruited attorneys who will help with the testing of that system. She advised the members that the Center has given out grants to four organizations, and that there are an estimated 30 direct-representation cases that have been opened by these grantees. The Center will create the guidelines for the next grant cycle in the near future.

Pat Day advised they are hopeful that by this summer they will have located a state-owned facility in which to house an office. Pat provided an update on the Center's short-term and long-term models. Both models will utilize community organizations across the State that already serve the income eligible, and both will involve varying degrees of partnership with and assistance from the private bar and the State Bar and its pro bono coordinators. The Access to Justice Commission will eventually play a pivotal role by helping the Center identify what it can do in various communities, and by helping to garner the support of other stakeholders in the Center.

Unauthorized Practice of Law

Walter Eggers spoke to some of the concerns in the development of a Court Facilitator Program, i.e. could advice that a court facilitator provides be considered as giving legal advice. The clerks are concerned about the unauthorized practice of law issue, as well as possible conflict of interest issues in dealing with multiple parties in a case. Walter advised that these are matters that a subcommittee has been working on over the past year. They are currently drafting a Court Facilitator pilot program description, plus possible revisions to the Uniform Rules for District Courts and the Rules of Procedures Governing the

Unauthorized Practice of Law. He explained that the committee is reaching out to a variety of different groups that have an interest in this project, including the Unauthorized Practice of Law Task Force that Bar President Eric Jones established at the Bar's last Commissioners' and Directors' meeting. It is felt that the AJC should address these issues since the current restrictions on clerks act as a barrier to citizens' access to justice.

Local Access to Justice Subcommittee

Rick Lavery stated that the Local Access to Justice Subcommittee has had some limited success, but questioned whether this group has outlived its usefulness now that Legal Aid of Wyoming and the Wyoming Center for Legal Aid are in a position to reach out across the State. Discussion was held. It was determined that this subcommittee is an important backbone for the work that is taking place, and that the Commission can possibly help the group define their priorities by determining what they should focus on in certain counties. Justice Burke commented that this subcommittee may actually expand its role in the future by developing a plan for community involvement.

Justice Burke closed the meeting by stating that working groups will be set up with regard to the priorities that were discussed, and that each member will be asked for their input as to which project they feel their talents would best be utilized.

Meeting adjourned.