

## Court Information Release



UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT  
FOR THE NORTHERN DISTRICT OF ILLINOIS  
EASTERN DIVISION  
219 SOUTH DEARBORN STREET  
CHICAGO, IL 60604

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### **CHIEF JUDGE HOLDERMAN DELIVERS ANNUAL STATE OF THE COURT ADDRESS**

CHICAGO – The state of the court is “Good” according to Chief Judge James F. Holderman in his annual “State of the Court Address,” which he delivered on May 9, 2008 – the 160<sup>th</sup> anniversary of legislation establishing Chicago as an authorized site for a United States District Court in the State of Illinois.

Holderman said there was a brief period this past year that the district court was at full strength: after newly-appointed District Judge Robert Dow joined the court and before former District Judge Mark Filip resigned to take the number two post in the United States Department of Justice.

On the magistrate judge bench, Magistrate Judge Susan Cox joined the court in late August 2007. Magistrate Judge Morton Denlow completed his term as the presiding magistrate judge in January 2008, and Magistrate Judge Sidney Schenkier took over that post. The 8-year terms of Magistrate Judge Geraldine Soat Brown in Chicago and Magistrate Judge P. Michael Mahoney in Rockford were renewed in April 2008.

On the bankruptcy court, Chief Judge Carol Doyle assumed the role of chief judge on July 1, 2007, when former Chief Judge Eugene Wedoff completed his term.

The court’s civil case load remained fairly steady in 2007 at 7,606 new civil case filings, 99.5% of the civil filings in 2006. The court remained in the top ten districts across the country in median time from filing to disposition of civil cases, at 6.2 months. On the criminal side, 933 defendants were charged with felonies in the district during 2007, down 15% from the 1,106 felony defendants charged in 2006.

Electronic filing continues to run smoothly. The court now has over 17,800 registered e-filers, 20% more than at the end of 2006. E-filings of initial complaints commenced November 1, 2007 as did electronic filing fee payments through the pay.gov system. The court receives over 660 e-filings each business day and about 25 new civil complaints are e-filed each day.

In response to a survey of approximately 5,000 lawyers and the docketing departments of 80 law firms in the Northern District of Illinois, the court redesigned its website to make the information most readily desired more readily accessible. The new website design was launched on March 1, 2008. At that time, the court also introduced a mobile version of its website, the first United States District Court in the country to do so.

Judicial security has been beefed-up at judges' homes due to legislation sponsored by Senator Dick Durbin. Also thanks to Senator Dick Durbin, long awaited construction of the new United States Courthouse in Rockford will get underway later this month.

The court continues to provide judges with criminal background checks of jurors upon the presiding judge's request and continues to provide employment protection for jurors when needed. The court this past year also continued a number of programs to enhance access to justice for those who could otherwise not afford it by encouraging *pro bono* representation by lawyers, providing a *Pro Se* Help Desk, which advises *pro se* litigants on court procedures, and continuing the Settlement Assistance Program for *pro se* litigants. The court also has continued to work cooperatively with the media in its coverage of cases and events at the Dirksen U.S. Courthouse.

Several judges of the court participated in a variety of continuing legal education and other education programs in 2007. Some judges also served by designation on other federal courts, both trial and appellate, outside the Northern District of Illinois to assist those courts with their workloads.

In 2007, the court hosted numerous programs for visiting schoolchildren from the Chicago area, as well as for foreign judges and dignitaries from ten foreign countries. Administrative law judges from eleven different governmental agencies held proceedings at the courthouse during 2007. And the court hosted five different congressional hearings for U.S. Senators and Representatives at the Dirksen U.S. Courthouse.

Chief Judge Holderman said, "the judges of the court will steadfastly continue their mission to administer justice by upholding the Constitution and the Rule of Law for all people." He thanked those in attendance for their assistance in that endeavor during the past year and stated he looked forward to the challenges of the year to come.

**STATE OF THE COURT ADDRESS ON MAY 9, 2008**  
**by Chief Judge James F. Holderman**

Good afternoon. Welcome to the 2008 “State of the Court” address. I would specifically like to extend my thanks to the Chicago Chapter of the Federal Bar Association, President Charles Nesbit, and the other officers, directors and members for this invitation. I am grateful to have the opportunity to continue this annual tradition of your providing time for the Chief District Judge to deliver this address.

I especially want to personally thank each of you for being here because today we commemorate the 160<sup>th</sup> birthday of the federal court in Chicago. On May 9, 1848, Congress enacted the legislation authorizing Chicago as a site where federal court could be held. In honor of today’s anniversary, media artist Verna Sadock at NBC has loaned to us for display courtroom sketches she prepared during some of our recent high profile cases which are, of course, part of our court’s history in Chicago.

Next year we will commemorate the 190<sup>th</sup> year of the birth of the federal courts in Illinois because it was March 3, 1819, that the United States District Court of Illinois was created, with one judge and one authorized court site in Springfield, Illinois. Our Court Historical Society is already planning for next year’s birthday celebration. We will have more displays, such as this Abraham

Lincoln signature, which we recently authenticated as genuine and have had preserved. This Abraham Lincoln piece was donated to the court by none other than our dearly departed friend and colleague, Judge Abraham Lincoln Marovitz, after whom the street behind me was named. Next year's celebration should be terrific and, in the finest traditions of Judge Abe, you are all invited.

Bringing us up to date, the "State of the Court" is, in a word, "Good." I know I said the same thing last year and I hope I am able to say it each year I give this address, because the "State of the Court" remains "Good" only due to the efforts and dedication of the people in this room.

To provide a more detailed analysis, I will discuss the "State of the District Court" in three main areas:

1. Recent changes on the court, including judicial personnel, caseload, and procedures including continuing advances in e-filing and court information technology;
2. Changes in Judicial and Courthouse Security during the past year that have taken place or are underway; and
3. Court Initiatives to assist our providing better access to justice in our court and court outreach programs to not only aid the public and public education about court processes in our District, but to build

better relations with other branches of government and with judiciaries elsewhere in the world.

Before I discuss these particular areas, let me pause for a moment. A court like ours is comprised of three fundamental component areas of people:

First, the judges of the court and the people in our respective chambers, who help us judges administer justice in the cases before us;

Second, the Court Clerk, and the Clerk's office's personnel, Department Heads and people in the Court's supporting departments, like our Pretrial Services Department and Probation Department. These folks keep the court's operations running in a way that allows us to carry out our mission; and

The third component is you, the lawyers who are members of our Court's bar, the officers of the Court. I have often said that I believe we have some of the finest lawyers in the country appearing in our Court and as your Chief Judge my belief is even more fervently held. All the judges on our court appreciate the job you do for your clients to further justice in our district.

I also want to say that during my first 22 months as Chief Judge, I have had tremendous support from my colleagues on the bench. I cannot tell you how much

I appreciate their hard work, advice, wisdom, assistance, and friendship. As I speak with other Chief District Judges from around the country, I feel blessed by the collegiality we have on our district court, and the mutual respect we judges on our court share for one another.

### **CLERK'S OFFICE PERSONNEL**

I feel equally blessed to have the excellent people we have working in our Court's Clerk's Office. I would like to recognize some of the supervisory people of our Clerk's Office who have joined us today. Of course, most of you already know Mr. Michael W. Dobbins, the Clerk of Court, who has been here in the Northern District of Illinois for over a decade and has worked in the United States Court system for 32 years. Mike Dobbins, as well as Ken Gardner, the Clerk of our Bankruptcy Court, were each recognized this past year by the Director of the Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts for their leadership excellence. They each will be receiving that award more formally at the Seventh Circuit Judicial Conference here in Chicago later this month.

I also would like to recognize the top managers of our District Court's Clerk's Office: Mr. Ted Newman, Judicial Support Manager; Ms. Nellie Finch, Operations Manager; Ms. Donna Carey, Administrative Services Manager; and Mr. Mark Tortorici, Systems Manager. Also with us is our Court's Chief Probation

Officer, Mr. Richard Tracy. Chief Tracy's probation officers have the responsibility of preparing pre-sentence reports for every criminal defendant our judges sentence and monitoring the post-incarceration conduct of over 2,500 offenders during their supervised release. This past summer, Chief Tracy's office announced the grand opening of a new workforce development initiative called the "Helpful Hanger," which makes business attire available to ex-offenders as they seek employment. It gives them a new lease on life. If you are looking for a place to donate business clothing - men's and women's - think of the "Helpful Hanger" and call our Probation Department or my chambers for further information on how to donate.

Also here is our Chief Pretrial Services Officer, Ms. Ann Marie Carey. Chief Carey's pretrial services officers monitor pretrial defendants out on bond and provide the key informational reports to allow us judges to determine when pretrial bond is appropriate. We appreciate the excellence of her department this past year.

We have had to continue during this past year to press Chief Carey's and Chief Tracy's offices into double duty, as it is their officers that have accepted the responsibility to conduct the criminal background checks on prospective jurors when requested by our judges.

### **CHAMBER'S STAFF**

Additionally, I would like to recognize and introduce to you my chambers staff and provide you the faces to put with the names of the people with whom you may be in contact when working with my chambers. First, our Court Information Officer, Mr. Joel Daly, who needs no introduction to the Chicago legal community. We are honored to have a man of Joel's stature working with our court.

Next, Ms. Alyce Mobley-Morris is my Courtroom Deputy, who not only deals with my public caseload, but also the non-public caseload responsibilities traditionally addressed in our District by the Chief Judge. The non-public cases are virtually a full docket in themselves.

Mr. Larry Collins is my Administrative Assistant, who keeps the programs and facilities at our Chicago Courthouse running smoothly.

Many of my staff members perform double-duty, as does my court reporter, Ms. Colleen Conway, who volunteers her services to other judges who may need a court reporter. Colleen also assists other court reporters in our building by setting-up various seminars to enhance their expertise.

Also, I'd like to recognize my two outstanding law clerks, my Executive Law Clerk, Ms. Amy Rettberg, and my Senior Law Clerk, Ms. Ann Walls. They assist the court in numerous ways and help me in addressing the legal issues of my case load, both in public cases and non-public cases.

Additionally, I would like to introduce my two judicial assistants, Ms. Margaret Winkler and Ms. Gabriela Kennedy. Peggy and Gabriela are the pleasant voices on the phone who assist you when you call my chambers. They joined me in March and have already reorganized our systems in chambers to better serve all the folks we deal with, I appreciate their excellent work very much.

If any of you ever have any questions with which you think my chambers can assist you, you can contact any of these folks and they will be happy to help you.

I now turn to the recent changes on our court.

#### **A. JUDICIAL CHANGES**

I can report there were about three months this past year that our court was at full-strength. It happened between the time our newest judge, Judge Robert Dow, was sworn-in and former Judge Mark Filip resigned his judicial commission to become Deputy Attorney General of the United States, the number two position at the Department of Justice.

Judge Dow is a terrific addition to our bench and has definitely hit the ground running. He is a pleasure to work with and I know he will continue to do a tremendous job.

As for the vacancy created by Judge Filip's departure, I know that Congresswoman Judy Biggert has taken on the responsibility former Congressman Denny Hastert had of heading the Republican Congressional Caucus regarding federal judicial appointments. We on the court could not be more pleased with how quickly, diligently and decisively Congresswoman Biggert has worked with the other members of the Republican Congressional Delegation to screen and submit the names of recommended candidates to the White House. I understand the White House process is underway. We hope President Bush names a nominee in the not too distant future so that perhaps we can have a new judge before the end of this year. It is, however, an election year and that may have an impact.

Senators Dick Durbin and Barack Obama have, in the past, worked very diligently to assist us in keeping our bench as full as possible once a nominee's name is submitted by the White House to the Senate. We hope that will be the case again.

On our magistrate judge bench, if you'll recall last year at this address in May 2007, I announced the selection of Magistrate Judge Susan Cox as our newest magistrate judge-designee. Judge Cox was sworn-in in late August 2007 and has already shown that she fits right in with what I consider the finest magistrate judge bench in the country.

We recently had a change at the helm of our magistrate judge bench. In late January, Presiding Magistrate Judge Mort Denlow's term came to an end and Judge Sid Schenkier took over the responsibility of serving as the Presiding Magistrate Judge. Judge Denlow did an absolutely outstanding job as the Presiding Magistrate Judge, and the transition to Presiding Magistrate Judge Schenkier in January was seamless. There is no question Presiding Magistrate Judge Schenkier is equal to the task. I look forward to working with him.

Last month, in April, two of our magistrate judges' 8-year terms were renewed by the District Judges from our court – Judge Geraldine Soat Brown in Chicago and Judge P. Michael Mahoney in Rockford. Two review committees were established to gather and evaluate feedback on each magistrate judge, in a statutorily mandated process that our court must follow to evaluate whether to renew a magistrate judge's term. Attorney Jim Figliulo headed the committee here in Chicago to review Magistrate Judge Brown. Attorney Frank Perrecone headed the review committee in Rockford to evaluate Magistrate Judge Mahoney. Both review committees unanimously approved renewed terms. We district judges also were unanimous. Judge Brown has been on our court since 2000, and Judge Mahoney since 1976. He started as a part-time magistrate and was appointed full-time in 1992. Judge Mahoney is the longest sitting magistrate judge in our circuit.

Our Bankruptcy Court also observed an elevation. Judge Carol Doyle took over as Chief Judge of our District's Bankruptcy Court in July 2007. Chief Judge Doyle's assuming that role follows a great tradition of excellent Chief Bankruptcy Court Judges. Her immediate predecessor, Judge Eugene Wedoff, is a nationally recognized authority as is his immediate predecessor as chief judge, Judge Susan Sonderby. They continue to be sought after on a national basis to speak on bankruptcy law. We have a great group on that bench.

## **B. CASELOAD**

As for our court's caseload, the total civil filings in 2007 remained steady at 99.5% of the 2006 level or a total of 7,606 cases. If we remove the student loan and mortgage foreclosure cases, which typically require little judicial time to resolve, from the calculation of each of those years, then 2007 demonstrated a slight .9% increase in civil case filings over 2006. There was a slight increase during 2007 also in civil cases disposed of by or during trial of 119, as opposed to 108 in 2006. Less than 2% of all civil cases filed, however, are disposed of by trial.

Our court in 2007 continued to remain in the top ten in efficiency of U.S. District Courts across the country as far as the median time from filing to disposition of civil cases of 6.2 months.

On the criminal side, 2007 saw 933 defendants against whom felony cases were commenced compared to 1,106 defendants in 2006 – an approximate 15% decrease. We judges on the court, along with the Federal Defender and U.S. Attorney's Office, have also been dealing with evaluation of the impact of the retroactivity of crack cocaine in sentencing guidelines, which went into effect on March 5, 2008. Approximately 400 previously sentenced defendants have to be reevaluated for re-sentencing. Judge Ruben Castillo, who is on the U.S. Sentencing Commission, has been overseeing that for our district. We appreciate his leadership and guidance.

## **C. CHANGES IN ELECTRONIC FILING AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY**

### **1. Electronic Filing**

On November 1, 2007, as I had promised in last year's State of the Court address, we began the era of accepting electronic filing of civil complaints. By using the on-line pay.gov system, filing fees are paid electronically. We now receive an average of 25 new electronically-filed civil complaints per day.

There are now over 17,800 registered electronic filers in our district, about 20% more than we had at the end of 2006. A group of about 75 of our e-filers serve as "points of contact" for our Clerk's Office Systems Department and are provided immediate notification by e-mail about things affecting e-filing. If you would like this immediate notification or to be a "POC" for your firm, contact Ted Newman, our Judicial Services manager, or Mark Tortorici, our Systems Department manager. In fact, Ted told me he brought a wad of his business cards - if you think you would like to perhaps become an inside e-filing point of contact for your firm or organization, see Ted.

As we approach in October of this year the three-year anniversary of mandatory e-filing, it seems to be running smoothly. Our court averages over 660 e-filings each business day. That number drops to a handful of filings on the weekends, but rarely a weekend or holiday day goes by without some e-filing. E-

filing appears to be doing okay, but we can always improve. So, if you have suggestions, let us know.

## **2. Information Technology - Website**

I am sure you have noticed that our court's website [www.ilnd.uscourts.gov](http://www.ilnd.uscourts.gov) has a new look. We went "live" with it on Saturday, March 1, 2008. The design you now see is the result of an e-mail survey of approximately 5,000 lawyers. We revised the website to make it more user-friendly. I believe that as the virtual gateway to our court, it is imperative that our court's website be responsive to lawyers' needs, easy-to-use, informative, and up-to-date. The new website design hopefully achieves that.

In addition to the approximately 5,000 registered e-filing lawyers surveyed, additional copies of the survey were sent to the docketing and IT staff of 80 Chicago-area law firms and a modified version of the survey was sent to every member of the court staff. Overall, the responses were very favorable. Ted Newman and his group of volunteers tabulated and organized the survey results. As I said, we designed the new website as a direct result of the survey responses.

For example, in response to the question regarding reasons for visiting the website, 89.8% of those surveyed said it was "to check a judge's motion call or calendar procedure," 68.3% said "to consult the Local Rules or Internal Operating

Procedures,” 66.1% said it was “to find a phone number for Clerk’s Office or chambers staff,” and 62.5% said “to check the Court’s daily calendar.”

In response to these specific needs articulated by those surveyed, the new website lists each of these items prominently on a menu bar located directly underneath the court’s logo, with a special callout box for the Court’s daily calendar. Other items of interest are categorized under “Tools & Information,” “Quick Links,” “Court Information,” and “What’s New?”

A separate callout box links directly to information about CM/ECF, the court’s electronic filing system. Links to the United States Court of Appeals for the Seventh Circuit, the United States Bankruptcy Court for the Northern District of Illinois, and the William J. Campbell Library are easily accessible from our court’s new homepage.

The new website also has a mobile version, enabling lawyers on the go to access vital court information—such as phone numbers, motion calls, and judges’ procedures—through hand-held devices. The Northern District of Illinois is the first district court in the country to offer this type of mobile service to its practitioners. I would like to thank all court personnel who worked on the website conversion and especially note the efforts of Michael Dobbins, Ted Newman,

Nellie Finch, Donna Carey, Mark Tortorici, and the key folks from our Systems Department, Michael Gombosi and Arnold Dizon.

#### **D. JUDICIAL SECURITY**

Over the last year, home security electronic detection systems were installed at the homes of all judges who desired them. This initiative was through appropriation legislation sponsored by Senator Dick Durbin, who has also sponsored and sheperded legislation to support and fund further changes at our court's courthouses. In fact, one change that will begin this fall here in Chicago is a changeover of our courthouse perimeter security. As part of a pilot program, the United States Marshal's Service will take over all security of the Chicago courthouse from the Federal Protection Service.

In addition to my other responsibilities as chief judge, I chair the Court Security Committee and am personally committed to the safety of every person who works in or comes to the courthouses both here and in Rockford.

Speaking of Rockford, later this month we will break ground for construction of a new United States Courthouse in Rockford on the vacant land next to the current courthouse. Again, it was Senator Dick Durbin's leadership that has allowed this project, which has been in the works for some time, to go ahead.

Judge Phil Reinhard in Rockford has been working hard for a number of years on this courthouse project. He has assured me he will continue to do so. Judge Fred Kapala, our new District Judge in Rockford, who celebrates his one year anniversary on the bench today, will also be very involved as we move forward with the new Rockford courthouse. I will keep you apprised of the progress.

#### **E. JURY SERVICE**

The right to a fair and impartial jury is fundamental to our system of justice.

Along those lines we continue to conduct juror criminal background checks in specific cases at the request of the presiding judge. As I mentioned, our Probation and Pretrial Services Departments assist us judges with that.

Additionally, we judges on the court also continue to seek to protect jurors, both trial jurors and grand jurors, from discrimination by their employers. This problem of juror discrimination appears to be on the increase and we will continue to provide the protection to the maximum extent of the law. I have found in certain cases that it is a lack of knowledge on the employer's part about the law. So, to assist in getting the word out to employers, our website now includes a "Message to Employers" and "Job Protection" information.

## **F. COURT INITIATIVES**

In addition to the items I have mentioned to make the practice of law in our court better for you, we judges from time to time over the years have called upon you, our Trial Bar members, for your professional assistance and you have generously given of your professional time *pro bono* to assist us in bettering our court processes and furthering access to justice in our court for those who could not afford counsel. We judges appreciate your *pro bono* efforts and to say “thank you” for the past nine years, in conjunction with the Chicago Chapter of the Federal Bar Association, we have set aside a day each year to acknowledge those members of our bar whose efforts are worthy of special recognition.

### **1. May 13, 2008 Awards Ceremony**

Next Tuesday, May 13, 2008, at 3:30 p.m., we are once again doing so. This year we have not one, but two special guests. Keynoting the event is American Bar Association President William Neukom, with additional introductory comments by the national president of the Federal Bar Association National, James Richardson, Sr. The awards ceremony will be held in the James B. Parsons Memorial Courtroom on the 25<sup>th</sup> floor of the Dirksen U.S. Courthouse. It is open to everyone.

### **2. Access to Justice**

In addition to the tradition of this ceremony, we continue to carry-on, with funding assistance from the Chicago Bar Foundation, our court's *Pro-Se* Help Desk operated by attorneys Margot Klein and Catherine Caporusso. We also have our *Pro Se* Settlement Assistance Program overseen by attorney Laurie Wardell. In fact, we have recently expanded the Settlement Assistance Program to the prison civil rights area with the prisoner assistance program headed by attorney Jim Chapman, who for years has trained and tutored volunteer attorneys on the means to assist those incarcerated enforcing their civil rights.

Attendance at the court-sponsored training sessions of the Settlement Assistance Program and subsequent appointment as settlement counsel provides credit towards becoming a member of the Trial Bar.

We, through these initiatives and others, continue to strengthen and support the valuable public service you provide to promote access to justice in our court.

## **G. MEDIA**

As you know, consistent with our court's tradition, we have had some high profile trials this past year: the Conrad Black trial, the Family Secrets trial, and, currently, the Tony Rezko trial. Our attempts to keep the media informed and to assist the media in covering these and other cases will continue and we are always open to suggestions. The media personnel have, for the most part, cooperated with some of the necessary procedural changes we have implemented and the vast majority are appreciative of our need to balance the public's right to know with other concerns, such as safety, privacy and the right of each party in each case to a fair trial. As an example of our continued efforts, when the Rezko jury returns the verdict, we have made arrangements, as we have done in other recent high profile cases, such as for the Conrad Black and "Family Secrets" trials, to allow for the jurors, who agree, to be available to be interviewed after the verdict. In neither of those cases did the jurors choose to do. That is the balance part and, I stress, it is up to the individual jurors to decide if they want to be interviewed after a verdict is returned. We will honor their wishes.

## **H. OUR COURT'S OUTREACH PROGRAMS**

### **1. Education Programs**

In addition to deciding cases on our own dockets, several judges of our court have continued to volunteer their time on a variety of continuing legal education programs and other education programs. For example, on Wednesday of this week, two dozen of our judges participated in a continuing legal educational seminar on Federal Civil Practice. I encourage our judges to participate in such programs. Not only are these programs good for bench/bar relations, but we judges always learn something that makes us better at our job.

### **2. Assisting Other Courts**

Additionally, several of our judges have volunteered this past year to serve by designation on other federal courts, at both the trial and appellate level. Judges Moran, Bucklo, Kennelly and I served on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit, and Judge Zagel is sitting next month with that court. Judges Conlon, Shadur, and others have served on other Courts of Appeals in addition to maintaining their workloads here. Moreover, Judges Gettleman and Aspen helped out District Courts in the southern border states of Texas and Arizona. In doing so, we judges not only assist those other courts with their case loads, but again we always bring new ideas back to our court on how to do things better.

### **3. Visitors to Our Court**

Also, our court is constantly being visited by people ranging from young school children from the Chicagoland area to foreign judges and dignitaries, who come to learn more about our procedures and legal concepts such as the Rule of Law, Judicial Independence, and our Constitutional Doctrine of Separation of Powers. This past year, judges and other folks from Armenia, France, Italy, Japan, Russia, Serbia, South Korea, Thailand, Tunisia and Vietnam visited our Chicago courthouse and spoke with judges of our court. There is no question that these discussions have developed better relations for our country around the world.

### **4. Government Relations**

This past year our Chicago courthouse hosted five different Congressional Committee hearings for Senators and House members, which enhanced relations within our own governmental branches.

Our court also, this past year, provided facilities for a dozen different federal agency administrative law judges at various times throughout the year to assist them in better serving the public.

I and my fellow judges consider our court's outreach and educational programs to be part of our judicial responsibilities to the people we serve.

## **I. CONCLUSION**

In sum, I hope this gives you each some insight into our court's past year. I have tried to hit the highlights as our court steadfastly continues its mission to administer justice by upholding the Constitution and the Rule of Law for all people.

As the judges of our court know, I consider that my role as chief judge is to provide each judge all the support and assistance that I can, in every way I can, to allow them all to administer justice in the best way they can.

It is an honor and privilege to serve as our court's chief judge. I thank each of you for your assistance in that endeavor this past year, and I look forward to working with you on the challenges of the year to come.

Thank you.

## **J. QUESTIONS**