

News from the Judicial Operations Division: Fact Sheet

Last update: December 2016

The Judicial Operations division focuses on the daily operations of the court. The division provides support and guidance in the areas of trial court operations including alternative dispute resolution, caseload management, court reporters, court interpreters and general office support. Other key areas of the division include the jury commission, law library and children's waiting center.

- ◆ In November, Chief Judge Ortiz announced the appointment of Stacey L. Seneczko as Associate Judge of the Nineteenth Judicial Circuit. Judge Seneczko took her oath of office on November 28 and is assigned to the Misdemeanor and Traffic Division, serving in the Park City Branch Court. Judge Seneczko filled the position held by Judge Sarah Lessman.
- ◆ On November 11, the Nineteenth Judicial Circuit, together with the County of Lake, held its Fifth Annual Veteran's History Project at the Lake County Courthouse. Thirty-five servicemen and women from World War II, the Korean War, and the Vietnam War were honored and interviewed about their wartime experiences. Transcripts of their oral histories will be archived in the American Folklife Center at the Library of Congress.
- ◆ Associate Judge Sarah Lessman formally resigned her position as Associate Judge of the Nineteenth Judicial Circuit effective September 30. Appointed in 2001, Judge Lessman served in the Misdemeanor/Traffic Division and the Family Division, and for the past ten years she served as a Juvenile Court Judge.
- ◆ The Eleventh Annual Spanish Interpreters Meeting was held on September 30 from 9:00 a.m. until noon. Nine full-time, part-time and contract interpreters attended the meeting. Their agenda and presenters included the following:
 - *"Introduction of Participants"* by Jenny Illing.
 - *"Analysis of the Challenges in Court Interpretation"* by Marianna Zeidler;
 - *"IC-1 Interpreter Console Operation and Friendly Reminders"* by Jenny Illing;
 - *"Certification Exam: Suggested Tips"* by Orlando Penate;
 - *"DUI (Sobriety Tests)"* by Betty Atkinson; and
 - *"Attitude"* Book: Found in Translation (by Natally Kelly and Jose Zetzsche) by Jenny Illing.
- ◆ The annual Nineteenth Circuit's Business Operation & Critical Issues Meeting was held the afternoon of September 29 at the main courthouse and continued the next full day on September 30 at the University of Saint Mary of the Lake (USML) in Mundelein. Topic presentations on September 29 included:
 - *"Judicial Ethics"* presented by the Honorable Judge Raymond McKoski (Ret.);
 - *"Court Tower and Depke Expansion and Renovation Update"* by Matt Guarnery and Kurt Schultz; and
 - *"Court Security"* by Sheriff Deputy Brad Meister.

On September 30, presentations included:

- *"Restorative Justice"* presented by Cook County Circuit Court Judge Colleen Sheehan and Father David Kelly, Director of the Precious Blood of Ministry of Reconciliation (PBMR);
- *"Business and Operations Update"* by Chief Judge Jorge Ortiz;
- *"Constitutional Law; Current Trends of Supreme Court; 8-Member Court, etc."* by Tonja Jacobi, PhD, Professor of Law, Northwestern/Pritzker School of Law; and
- *"Bond Court Issues"* by Judge George Strickland and Judge Christen Bishop.

- ◆ The Nineteenth Judicial Circuit Court has updated its local court rules, effective October 24, 2016, and they are available at <http://19thcircuitcourt.state.il.us/1254/Local-Court-Rules>.
- ◆ Senior Law Day was held at the Park City Branch Court on October 14th. Purpose of event was to inform and raise awareness about issues concerning senior citizens and what seniors need to know about court. Judges Ortiz, Schippers, Rossetti, Levitt, Winter, Bishop and Vorderstrasse welcomed the guests and answered questions about various court matters. Additional guest speakers included State's Attorney Michael Nerheim, County Clerk Carla Wyckoff, Bill Biang, Deputy Roman Buchmeyer, and Suzanne Willett.
- ◆ Several members of the Judicial Operations team updated the Small Claims Booklet, which is available on the Nineteenth Circuit Court's Publications and Handouts page: <http://19thcircuitcourt.state.il.us/1298/Publications-Handouts>.
- ◆ The Law Library created a handout about the legislative history research materials available in the collection. This handout is available on the Law Library's Helpful Resources Page: <http://19thcircuitcourt.state.il.us/1441/Helpful-Resources>.
- ◆ The Hispanic Illinois State Law Enforcement Association (HISLEA) recognized Judge Ortiz for his leadership at its 30th Anniversary Awards and Scholarship Banquet held on September 17 in Rosemont.
- ◆ On August 8th, a Chinese delegation of 25 government officials visited a number of county departments. In addition, they attended a presentation offered by the judiciary about the court divisions of the Nineteenth Judicial Circuit. The delegation was presented with copies of our jury orientation video and the publication entitled "Understanding Your Court System."
- ◆ Construction of the new criminal court tower continues to move forward. The picture below shows the progress as of the end of July 2016.

Washington Street, which had been closed for the past year, reopened in late May. In the center of the picture is the elevator shaft being constructed that will eventually rise to the top of the tower.

As of July, the target date for construction of the shell of the eight story building is by the end of 2016. The building will then be enclosed and interior work will be completed with a target occupancy date of Spring, 2018.



- ◆ On June 20th, Chief Judge Jorge Ortiz was re-elected a second term to serve as Chief Judge of the Nineteenth Judicial Circuit. The election of a chief judge shall occur on or before the 30th day of June in the year preceding the year that the circuit judge begins his/her term. On January 1, 2017, he will have completed his first year as chief judge and, as of January 2, 2017, Judge Ortiz will begin his second term.
- ◆ In June, several Lake County judges were elected as officers of the Illinois Judges Association (IJA) and Foundation (IJF). Circuit Judge Margaret Mullen was installed as Third Vice President of IJA; Circuit Judge Christen Bishop was elected to IJA's Board of Directors for a three-year term; Circuit Judge Charles Smith to IJF for a three-year term; Associate Judge Elizabeth Rochford is currently serving her second year of a three-year term on IJA's Board. She recently concluded a term as President of the IJF and will serve as ex-officio for the next year. And, she has been re-elected to a second three-year term to serve on the Board of the Illinois State Bar Association (ISBA). Chief Judge Ortiz currently serves on both the IJA and the IJF Boards of Directors. Circuit Judge Diane Winter was appointed to the 2016 Child Support Advisory Committee for the State of Illinois.

- ◆ On May 20, 2016, Judge Donna-Jo Vorderstrasse, the Presiding Judge of Probate and the Lake County Bar Association's Trusts and Estates Committee facilitated training specific to individuals interested in being appointed Guardian Ad Litem (GAL) for probate matters. This training has been presented annually since May 2012 and for the first time, CLE credits were granted. Judge Vorderstrasse, understanding the importance of GAL's representing individuals in probate matters, collaborated with the LCBA and the Illinois Accredited MCLE Board on approving the credits for 2016 and all subsequent trainings.
- ◆ In May, Chief Judge Ortiz announced the appointment of Paul B. Novak as Associate Judge of the Nineteenth Judicial Circuit. Judge Novak took his oath of office on May 31 and is assigned to the Misdemeanor and Traffic Division, serving in the Mundelein Branch Court. Judge Novak filled the position previously held by Judge Christen L. Bishop who was appointed Circuit Judge by the Illinois Supreme Court in February.
- ◆ Janelle K. Christensen was sworn in as Associate Judge on May 9th. She is a former Lake County assistant state's attorney. She filled the vacancy created by the appointment of Christopher Stride as Circuit Judge.
- ◆ In May, the bridge over Washington Street connecting the Main Courthouse complex to the Babcox Center was closed. The closing was as result of the new courthouse tower that is being constructed. The eight story tower's anticipated opening will be in the Spring of 2018. Until it opens, the public will need to exit one building and pass through the magnetometers to enter the other building.

An underground tunnel, which separates necessary court personnel from in-custody individuals to travel between the Main Courthouse and Babcox Center, also opened in May. The tunnel allows safe passage between the two buildings and will be used until the tower is completed.

- ◆ The Court launched its new website on April 29. Six individuals from the Judicial Operations team were trained on how to add and edit materials in the Judicial Operations area. Judicial Information Systems provides support services to the Judicial Operations and other units of the court who also received training and currently still manages portions of the website.
- ◆ In April, the Nineteenth Judicial Circuit Court commemorated National Library Week with a press conference hosted by Chief Judge Jorge Ortiz and County Board Chairman Aaron Lawlor.



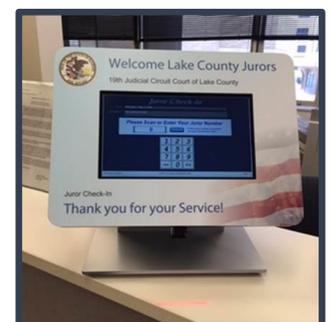
Pictured are law library staff members Joanne Vandestreek, Liz Nunez, and Christine Hernandez with Chief Judge Ortiz.

- ◆ In April, the Law Library distributed customer service surveys to its patrons. One hundred, seventeen surveys were collected.
- ◆ In April, Chief Judge Ortiz announced the appointment of Janelle K. Christensen as Associate Judge of the Nineteenth Judicial Circuit. Judge Christensen filled the position vacated by Judge Christopher R. Stride who was appointed Circuit Judge by the Illinois Supreme Court in January. Judge Christensen took her oath of office on May 9, 2016 and is currently assigned to the Misdemeanor and Traffic Division, serving in Park City Branch Court.

- ◆ In February and March, the Library updated several of its handouts for pro se litigants, including the Fax Services Guide, the Law Library Guide, and the Center for Self-Representation Brochure. The updated resources can be found at <http://19thcircuitcourt.state.il.us/1441/Helpful-Resources>.
- ◆ A reception was held in honor of National Court Reporters Association week on February 24th. The Nineteenth Circuit has twenty authorized official court reporter positions.
- ◆ Charles W. Smith, Attorney at Law, was appointed Circuit Judge of the Nineteenth Judicial Circuit, First Subcircuit by the Illinois Supreme Court effective February 22, 2016. Judge Smith filled the position previously held by Circuit Judge George Bridges, who retired from the bench on January 25, 2016. Judge Smith's current assignment is in the Family Division.
- ◆ The annual high school mock trial tournament took place at the courthouse on Saturday, February 20th. Sixteen schools from Lake, Cook, DuPage and Kane Counties participated in this year's twelfth invitational.
- ◆ Chief Judge Jorge Ortiz extended an invitation to the County Board to attend a presentation by the judiciary on February 9th in Courtroom 201 regarding court topics and projects.
- ◆ Effective February 1, 2016, Associate Judge Christen L. Bishop, was appointed Circuit Judge of the Nineteenth Judicial Circuit, at Large. Judge Bishop filled the position previously held by Circuit Judge Christopher C. Starck who retired on January 29, 2016. Judge Bishop is assigned to the Felony Division.
- ◆ In February, Judicial Operations staff received updated training and information related to emergency situations. The training was conducted by the Lake County Sheriff's Office and mostly focused on what to do in the event of an active shooter enters the building. Evacuation procedures were also reviewed with the staff at that time.
- ◆ Associate Judge Christopher R. Stride was appointed Circuit Judge, at Large, by the Illinois Supreme Court effective January 26, 2016. Judge Stride filled the position previously held by Circuit Judge John T. Phillips who retired from judicial office on January 25, 2016. Judge Stride currently presides over Specialty Courts that include Mental Health, Drug, and Veteran's Treatment and Assistance Courts.
- ◆ In January, the Mediation Foreclosure Program was revised. Originally established in December 2013, the program has helped borrowers and lenders in over 300 foreclosure cases in Lake County. Originally, homeowners were required to attend in-person informational sessions in order to enroll in the program.

However, the Court's partner in the program, Resolution Systems Institute, found that similar foreclosure mediation programs that only required homeowners to make a phone call to enroll had higher rates of program participation. As a result of this information, the Local Court Rules governing the program were revised and approved by the Nineteenth Judicial Circuit and subsequently by the Administrative Office of the Illinois Courts.

- ◆ Circuit Judge Christopher C. Starck also made the announcement that he would be retiring from the bench in January. Judge Christopher C. Starck's last day at the courthouse would be January 29, 2016, just shy of celebrating his 27th year on the bench.
- ◆ On January 8, 2016, Chief Judge Jorge Ortiz announced that two circuit judges of the Nineteenth Judicial Circuit would be retiring from the bench effective January 25, 2016. The Judges are Circuit Judge John T. Phillips and Circuit Judge George Bridges. Judge Phillips and Judge Bridges both served the Nineteenth Judicial Circuit and the Lake County community for over 20 years.
- ◆ In January, the Judicial Operations Division, in collaboration with the Nineteenth Judicial Circuit Court's Outreach Committee and the Courts' Judicial Information Services and Technology Division, launched a Twitter page for the Nineteenth Judicial Circuit. Visit our Twitter page at <https://twitter.com/19thCircuitIL>.



- ◆ Kiosks are now available for jurors to use when reporting for duty. Jurors will use the barcode included with the summons to check-in. This automated service allows for a more expedited check-in process. Orientation follows shortly after.
- ◆ 2016 has seen growth in the Early Disposition Court in the Felony Division. The purpose of the EDC is to bring criminal cases to resolution with the fewest possible court appearances. In doing so, the parties and the Court are often able to more quickly resolve certain types of cases, saving the county and the parties' scarce resources in the process. A Felony Division Judge hears EDC cases typically on Fridays.
- ◆ Also in 2016, The State's Attorney's Office began the Alternative Prosecution Program which is part of the Felony Division. This program provides an opportunity for non-violent, first-time offenders to make restitution, obtain treatment, perform community service, and complete other terms and conditions of probation and avoid having a conviction on their record.
- ◆ When Circuit Judge Jorge L. Ortiz took on the leadership role of Lake County's Chief Judge on January 4th, he became the first Hispanic Chief Judge in Illinois history.