



District of Columbia Courts
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Standing Committee on Fairness and Access to the District of Columbia Courts
May 25, 2016

2015-2016 Report to the 28th Annual Meeting of the
National Consortium on Racial and Ethnic Fairness in the Courts
Williamsburg, Virginia

**Standing Committee on
 Fairness & Access**

Hon. Anna Blackburne-Rigsby, Chair
 Associate Judge, DC Court of Appeals
 Cheryl R. Bailey, Deputy Executive
 Officer
 Hon. Diane M. Brenneman
 Magistrate Judge, Superior Court
 Hon. Patricia A. Broderick
 Associate Judge, Superior Court
 Hon. Todd Edelman
 Associate Judge, Superior Court
 H. Clifton Grandy
 Senior Court Manager
 Hon. Alfred S. Irving, Jr.
 Associate Judge, Superior Court
 Hon. Neal Kravitz
 Associate Judge, Superior Court
 Hon. Hiram E. Puig-Lugo
 Associate Judge, Superior Court
 Hon. Maribeth Raffinan
 Associate Judge, Superior Court
 Anne B. Wicks, Executive Officer

The Standing Committee on Fairness and Access to the District of Columbia Courts (*Standing Committee*) exists to enhance equal justice for all in the courts. This report highlights some of the *Standing Committee's* activities since the annual report to the National Consortium on Racial & Ethnic Fairness (*National Consortium*) in Buffalo, NY in June 2015.

The Heart Mountain Foundation

The *Standing Committee* and other court committees collaborated with Heart Mountain Foundation, Shirley Ann Higuchi, Esq. Aura Newland, and others to present training for judicial officers, court managers, and supervisors to the front-line level. This training, conducted in late 2015, included the history of Japanese immigration to the U.S. and life in the Japanese-American communities in the West, especially California, the legal basis for detention of Japanese immigrants and Americans of Japanese national origin during WWII, life in the detention camps - particularly Heart Mountain, and the tension between the members of the community who registered for the draft and enlisted and those who resisted and were prosecuted. Ms. Higuchi is a member of the *National Consortium's* Advisory Board and Ms. Newland was a presenter at the

2013 annual meeting in Washington, DC. The Heart Mountain Foundation was the host for the highly acclaimed annual meeting in 2014.

Judicial Demographics

At the request of the D. C. Judicial Nominations Commission, Standing Committee staff prepared a report on the race, gender, and Hispanic ethnicity of the judges of the court of last resort and the

trial court since 1971, when the current court system was organized and the Commission was established.

Language Access

The *Standing Committee* continued to review the Language Access Plan and implementation efforts by the Office of Court Interpreting Services and others. The Language Access Advisory Committee was formed with input from and overlapping membership with the *Standing Committee*. The Advisory Committee will provide language access advice to the *Standing Committee* and the Language Access Coordinator.

The Elderly and Senior Citizens of Color

The *Standing Committee* engaged in outreach with representatives of the District's senior population, including legal service providers, the District Office on Aging, and the related Commission on Aging, to identify the legal and access to justice issues confronting the elderly and senior citizens of color. The *Standing Committee* facilitated the acceptance of bench cards to assist judges with recognizing the social and other issues this population experiences and the resources that are available to assist seniors. The annual 2½ day spring training conference for all trial court judges and the senior court managers was on the elderly. The *Standing Committee* is planning an outreach forum about court services for senior citizens.

D.C. Courts Strategic Plan Incorporates Access to Justice as a Key Priority

Under the D.C. Courts' 2013 – 2017 *Strategic Plan* the courts ensure access to services for all by training court personnel to accommodate the unique needs of special populations, promoting access to legal services for litigants without attorneys, helping the public better understand court processes by using plain language, and ensuring language access. The *Standing Committee* will provide input to the Strategic Planning Leadership Council as it commences preparation of the strategic plan for 2018 – 2022.

Justice Index Survey

Standing Committee staff prepared the court's responses to the "Justice Index Survey" of the National Center for Access to Justice (NCAJ). This is a survey of what the NCAJ considers as the best practices for increasing access to justice in the areas of self-represented litigants, language access, disability access, and appointed counsel/legal representation. Preliminary analysis of the survey results nationwide seem to indicate that the DC Court's survey responses scored well.