

Trial Court Executives (TCE) Minutes

March 7, 2025

Location: Matheson Courthouse & Webex

9:00 a.m. – 12:55 p.m.

Members:

Russ Pearson, Chair
Travis Erickson, Vice Chair
Krista Airam
Brett Folkman
Debbie Jacobsen
Chris Morgan
Glen Proctor
Mark Paradise
Tiffany Power
Cade Stubbs
Shelly Waite

Presenters:

Lauren Andersen
Brody Arishita
Todd Eaton
Amy Hernandez
Alisha Johnson
Blake Murdoch
Bart Olsen

AOC Staff:

Ron Gordon
Neira Siaperas
Shane Bahr
Meredith Mannebach
Jim Peters
Keri Sargent
Nick Stiles
Hilary Wood

Excused:

Sonia Sweeney
Mark Urry

Presenters (cont.)

Mare Perry
Clayson Quigley
Karl Sweeney
Tilda Willie
Tonia Wilson

1. WELCOME AND CHAIR'S REPORT: (Russ Pearson)

Russ Pearson welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2. STATE COURT ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT: (Ron Gordon)

Ron Gordon gave an update on the Judiciary's budget requests to the legislature. He explained that the state employee compensation bill passed which provides a 2.5% COLA for employees and judges, as well as funding for onetime pay-for-performance bonuses that amounts to approximately \$900,000. There was no funding for pay-for-performance salary increases. Mr. Gordon added that the Office of the Guardian ad Litem will receive the \$1.1 million they requested for attorney compensation, and the Judiciary's #6 priority for onetime and ongoing funding for interpreters in the Jury/Witness/Interpreter fund. The legislature did not provide funding for new judges, IT software, or Core Workforce salary increases.

Mr. Gordon shared that there were some concerning bills filed by the legislature that had the potential to directly undermine the independence and integrity of the Judiciary, specifically HB 512. After Chief Justice Durrant presented a letter of opposition from the Judicial Council, legislative leadership agreed to drop the bill and the Judiciary agreed to take a neutral position on a SB296 related to the Governor's appointment of the chief justice and agreed to remain neutral on some other bills.

Mr. Gordon explained that the next steps are to find opportunities within the Judiciary's own budget to help the Judiciary's Core Workforce. He encouraged the TCEs to request whatever they think is necessary for their districts, but shared that he will strongly advocate for all available onetime and ongoing turnover savings from the Judicial Council to fund some kind of compensation system to help our employees.

Mr. Gordon touched on the results of the System Review, which was to be reviewed more fully later in the meeting. Mr. Gordon noted that IT had received criticism in the System Review and some of the criticism appeared unfair given the large amount of support IT provides statewide to all employees and court levels, with a small staff.

3. IT UPDATE: (Brody Arishita, Todd Eaton, Mare Perry, Jace Kinder)

Brody Arishita, Todd Eaton, Mare Perry and Clayson Quigley gave an IT presentation with the current projects and updates. The full presentation can be found [here](#).

4. HR UPDATES: (Bart Olsen)

Bart Olsen presented an HR Operations Report, discussing recent data on job postings, HRIS transactions, employee ADA requests, and investigations on harassment and abusive conduct from last year compared to the previous years. He also explained that there is a new human capital management system that will launch by January of 2026 that will integrate the separate HR and payroll systems as well as performance management. Mr. Olsen shared that HR's Compensation and Classification project that HR began in January 2024 will be completed by the end of the fiscal year, and that manager training will also be updated to replace recordings of in-person training from 2023, which will also integrate HR policy updates.

Mr. Olsen discussed the upward trend in investigations on harassment and abusive conduct, specifically that as compared to last year's numbers and level of seriousness, this year's investigations have included some troubling reports despite the increase of training implemented. He didn't have an explanation for the increase of the egregious behavior, but added that Jeremy Marsh and Tina Sweet have developed some additional training to help address the area of reports.

Mr. Olsen shared that job salary ranges are going to be changed to reflect actual ranges, but added that it won't impact actual earning potential. There was also a discussion about performance reviews and how to keep the process consistent with years when the legislature provides pay for performance increases.

5. TRIBAL LIAISON COMMITTEE FORMATION: (Tilda Willie, Amy Hernandez)

Tilda Willie explained that the Tribal Liaison Committee was established by UCJA 3-422, effective November 1, 2024, and that the rule calls for a TCE to serve as a member on the committee. She shared that the committee will serve as a core leadership team to the Tribal Liaison and will provide expertise to the Judicial Council in matters impacting both the Judiciary and tribal courts, as well as recommend policies to the Judicial Council. Travis Erickson volunteered and was unanimously supported by the other TCEs to serve as a member on the committee.

6. NEW JUDGE ONBOARDING: (Shane Bahr)

Shane Bahr discussed some feedback from the Board District Court Judges who discussed the need for better onboarding and training for new judges. He added that the TCEs and others have spent a lot of time revamping the process over the past few years, and asked for feedback from the group on what has been working and what could yet be improved. The TCEs shared their experiences with onboarding, highlighting the use of the checklist and the role of Presiding Judges and mentors. Shelly Waite described a successful approach in Fourth District Juvenile involving a local training coordinator providing technology training and observing other judges with mirrored screens for real-time system interaction. Krista Airam suggested that CARE training would be best done at the local level due to district specific nuances. In addition, general concerns were raised by TCEs about judges being sworn in and taking the bench immediately without adequate time for preparation and shadowing. Lauren Andersen offered to create a technology assessment hosted on the LMS to assess the new judges' technological skills in order to tailor their training. Mr. Bahr thanked the group for the wonderful feedback and indicated that he will share the ideas with the Board of District Court Judges.

7. SYSTEM REVIEW REPORT: (Ron Gordon, Neira Siaperas)

Mr. Gordon presented highlights from the System Review Phase II key findings, explaining the areas of feedback are broken down into four areas: communication within the Judiciary, the role and effectiveness of the AOC, organizational culture and leadership at statewide and local levels, and training and professional development opportunities. Mr. Gordon then went through some of the highlights from the survey, the actual recommendations, and insights from the focus groups led by the National Center for State Courts (NCSC). He added that the survey report was presented to the Judicial Council at the February 24, 2025 meeting, and that he and Neira Siaperas plan to share the findings with staff via an upcoming Webinar.

Core Workforce Proposals

Neira Siaperas shared some Core Workforce proposals to improve retention in light of the fact that the legislature will likely not approve funding for their pay increases this year. She discussed a proposed enhancement to the current compensation structure, consisting of a first-year compensation track for new core workforce employees and enhanced bonus and promotion opportunities for all employees beyond their first year. Other options included requesting the extension of time-limited Judicial Assistant (JA) positions in the First, Fourth, and Eighth

Districts through December 31, 2025, and requesting funding from the Judicial Council to match the AOC's contribution, which would fund five permanent JA positions. The five permanent JA positions would be allocated to districts based on need, potentially informed by the clerical weighted caseload study. Districts with high needs mentioned include Sixth, Fourth, and Fifth. Ms. Siaperas shared what the funding would look like, and she reiterated that the new proposals would not replace the current funding from the Council, but would be in addition to that.

There was a discussion about creating a centralized JA position that would handle all statewide audio requests, potentially increasing efficiency and alleviating workload from the other JAs state-wide. Ms. Siaperas invited the TCEs to continue to provide ideas and feedback on these proposals, and reiterated that funding from the legislature for time-limited JAs and senior judges will end June 30, 2025.

8. UCJA RULE 3-301: (Travis Erickson)

Mr. Erickson discussed the idea of forming a small TCE workgroup to discuss the potential need for updates to UCJA Rule 3-301. The group agreed unanimously to the formation of the workgroup. Tiffany Power, Glen Proctor, and Brett Folkman volunteered to participate with Mr. Erickson as part of the workgroup. Mr. Bahr pointed out that the rule covers all court administrators, so while the workgroup would just need to discuss section five as it deals with the TCEs, it may be beneficial to look at the rest of the rule to see if there are any glaring changes that should be addressed. Ms. Airam added that there are other rules that reference the court executives, and recommended that the workgroup take a look at all of them so as to not create inconsistencies across the board.

9. JUDICIAL COUNCIL PRESENTATION UPDATE: (Travis Erickson, Russ Pearson)

Mr. Erickson shared the notes he and Mr. Pearson put together based on the survey responses from the other TCEs in preparation for their Judicial Council presentation next week.

10. COMBINED JTCE/DTCE OLD/NEW BUSINESS: (Russ Pearson)

Ms. Power shared some concerns from her PJ and clerical teams about the difficulties JAs face in working with IT during down courtroom situations. Often JA's do not have the technical knowledge to understand the directions given by IT to resolve the situation. IT suggested to her that IT stipend employees could provide support during down courtroom situations, however, there was direction given by IT in November 2023 that down courtrooms should go through IT, not stipend employees. It was decided to invite the IT Department to discuss the issue with the TCEs at the next meeting.

11. STATUS UPDATE: (Shane Bahr)

Mr. Bahr shared that he has dates set to visit the individual districts and welcomes input on topics to address during these visits.

Meredith Mannebach explained that it's time to make a change to the District Court's Core Admin Team, and thanked Brett Folkman for his time and service over the past two years. Ms. Mannebach shared that she approached Mark Paradise, who is already on the Core Admin Team, if he would be willing to move over to the Admin Team, and asked for feedback from the other TCEs. The group supported Mr. Paradise's move to the Admin Team, and he agreed to continue to attend the Core Admin Team as a non-voting member.

12. DTCE OLD/NEW BUSINESS: (Russ Pearson)

There was none.

13. ADJOURN: (Russ Pearson)

The meeting was adjourned.