

Minutes of Meeting
Rules Committee Task Force to
Study Minimum Continuing Legal Education
October 10, 2012

On Wednesday, October 10, 2012, at 2:00 p.m. the Rules Committee Task Force to Study Minimum Continuing Legal Education met in the Attorneys' Conference Room, 231 Capitol Avenue, Hartford, Connecticut from 2:00 p.m. to 3:45 p.m.

Members in attendance were:

Hon. Elliot N. Solomon, Chair
Hon. Barbara N. Bellis
Attorney Victor Allen Bolden
Attorney Michael P. Bowler
Attorney Joel DeFelice
Attorney Timothy Diemand
Attorney Douglas Mahoney
Attorney Lenny Rodriquez
Deputy Chief State's Attorney John J. Russotto
Attorney Robert J. Sickinger
Attorney Deborah Del Prete Sullivan
Attorney James J. Tancredi

Also in attendance were Melissa A. Farley, Executive Director of External Affairs, Carl E. Testo, Director of Legal Services, and Joseph J. Del Ciampo, Counsel, Legal Services.

1. Judge Solomon opened the meeting by welcoming the members of the Task Force. He then recited the charge of the Task Force, which is to determine whether some form of mandatory legal education is appropriate in Connecticut and, if so, the costs associated with implementing such a plan.

2. Attorney Testo then gave a summary of the action taken by the Rules Committee concerning the Connecticut Bar Association's Minimum Continuing Legal Education (MCLE) proposals.

3. The Task Force discussed the process that it will follow and a timetable for completion. It agreed that it would report to the Rules Committee by January, 2013.

4. The members of the Task Force unanimously agreed that Continuing Legal Education is important, but there was disagreement concerning whether it should be mandatory.

The following issues were raised and discussed:

- whether there exists a problem that would be solved by making MCLE mandatory;
- is MCLE needed to increase professionalism and civility among lawyers;
- is there a perception issue in that 46 other states have MCLE and Connecticut does not; and
- to what extent are lawyers already participating in CLE on a voluntary basis?

A discussion then ensued concerning what form MCLE should take in Connecticut, if adopted. Some members believe that MCLE should be targeted only at new attorneys. It was suggested that mandatory training for new attorneys could be sponsored by the Judicial Branch and be free of charge in that courses could be taught by judges, members of the private bar, and attorneys from the offices of the Statewide Bar Counsel and Chief Disciplinary Counsel.

One member of the Task Force stated that in order to meet the mandatory requirements of MCLE in other states attorneys are often faced with having to take courses that are of little use to them in their practices.

A member stated that we have an opportunity to do something unique in this state with regard to MCLE. He suggested that the required courses be targeted at making lawyers better at what they do.

A member from a small firm stated that attorneys in his position cannot afford time out of the office to take CLE courses unless they are offered as webinars. He also suggested that law library budgets should be enhanced.

Judge Solomon stated that he is looking for a middle ground and that an MCLE program will not be successful unless the Task Force thinks outside of the box. He agreed that MCLE should provide programs that are of use to attorneys, that multi-media should be used to present courses, and that finances be a consideration in any plan.

He then divided the Task Force into two groups: those who oppose mandatory MCLE (to be headed by Attorney Bolden) and those who agree with it (to be headed by Attorney Diamond). He asked each group to come up with ideas that will be acceptable to the other side. These groups will exchange ideas and report back at the next meeting.

Attorney Bowler agreed to contact New Jersey to obtain information concerning how they fund their program.

The next meeting will be held on November 1 at 12:30 p.m. in the Attorneys' Conference Room.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Carl E. Testo".

Carl E. Testo
Director of Legal Services

CET:pt