

## External Affairs Advisory Board

### Minutes of March 16, 2009

In attendance: Judge Susan Handy (chair), Judge Dennis Eveleigh, Judge Douglas Lavine and Judge Jane Scholl.

(Staffing – Attorney Melissa Farley, Attorney Stephen Ment, Rhonda Stearley-Hebert and Jim Senich)

- I. Judge Susan Handy called the meeting to order.
- II. The minutes from the January 9, 2009, meeting were approved unanimously.
- III. Judge Susan Handy brought up several suggestions and observations regarding the *Seniors and the Law* program.

Judge Handy has found that senior citizens seem to be more interested in visiting and observing live court cases. Seniors are not necessarily interested in receiving a lecture regarding the structure of the courts. Judge Handy asked if it would be our intent to discontinue the offering of the *Seniors and the Law* program by the Judicial Branch and instead continue a similar program that could be offered by the Probate Court? Or would a goal of the Judicial Branch involve going out to speak to senior citizens and make overtures to invite them to come to the courthouses?

Judge Douglas Lavine suggested that the Judicial Branch could utilize some of the previous programs as a guideline to invite people to come to the courthouses. The publications or documents could be used for invitations to all types of participants inviting them to courthouses.

Judge Handy suggested that the Judicial Branch could send out letters to all senior citizen organizations with several options. The Branch could invite senior citizens to visit a court or courthouses in their area. The Branch could also let them know that there are judges available to speak to them at the senior citizen centers.

Committee members agreed that we should be making the overtures regarding visitations to the courts and/or judges speaking and concluded that the Branch needs to do a better job of advertising what is available. Ideas included creating posters, publications and brochures with more information about the programs. These documents could be mailed to a targeted list of groups and organizations.

### *Community Organizations/Speaker's Bureau*

Judge Handy summarized survey responses from community organizations regarding the Speakers Bureau. Those who responded to the Speakers Bureau survey responded favorably. External Affairs received 75% of the responses from schools. From the Speakers Bureau responses, it was evident that the public is more interested in current statistical information and learning about what the courts do, as opposed to a formal legal topic.

Judge Handy thinks that the Branch needs to advertise its events better, so people know that judges are available to go out to the community for speaking events. Several ideas of how to do that were offered. It also would be helpful to expand the speaker base to include Family Support Magistrates and Judicial Branch employees.

In terms of knowing where and when judges speak, committee members said the Branch needs a better system for tracking Speakers Bureau events. It would be helpful to send out an e-mail several times a year asking if judges have spoken to community groups and whether they have contact information, location and the audience count regarding these engagements. To ensure that materials are useful to speakers, it also would be helpful to gather any of the questions participants asked judges.

In the area of educating students, Judge Handy thought that the focus group meeting with the teachers was amazing. Ideally, she said, getting a contact person for every school and a judge liaison in every judicial district would be beneficial. With many budget constraints in school districts, field trips are being cancelled. Judge Handy liked the idea of making materials available to teachers about the court system. The Judicial Branch could provide schools with a DVD about the courts.

Judge Lavine suggested that the Branch could reach out to college deans to find out which classes might be interested in having judges speak.

- IV. The meeting adjourned at about 3:30 p.m. The next meeting will be setup via e-mail.