

Minutes of Meeting of Media Representatives On Survey Subcommittee

July 9, 2007

The meeting was called to order at 3:10 p.m. In attendance were Scott Brede, Survey Subcommittee co-chair, and Subcommittee member Paul Giguere. No members of the public were present.

Scott Brede passed out copies of materials provided by Joseph D'Alesio, who had polled other states' courts to see if they had ever conducted a survey of members of the media regarding their access to court records and court proceedings. After reviewing the materials, it was agreed that there were no model questionnaire provided by the other states to aid the Survey Subcommittee in coming up with its own questionnaire.

Scott Brede reiterated that the survey should be of judges and members of the news media, and possibly court reporters, but that a survey of the public regarding court access is outside of the committee's current mission. Scott Brede also noted that the Events Subcommittee may be looking at establishing educational seminars based on the survey's results so the survey should, to some extent, look to gauge reporters' knowledge of the court system.

At that point, Scott Brede distributed an initial, proposed list of the survey questions that he had drafted. Those questions are as followed:

- 1.) Are you generally able to get access to court files on a timely basis in the courthouse/s you cover?
- 2.) When that hasn't been the case, is there a reoccurring problem that you are experiencing?
- 3.) For files that are partially sealed, are you able to get access to the non-sealed portion of the file?
- 4.) Are court clerks generally helpful in answering questions you have about access to court information?
- 5.) If not, do you have suggestions on how they can be more helpful?
- 6.) Do you use the Judicial Branch's web site to help you in covering court cases? If so, how?
- 7.) What information is not now provided on the web site that would be most helpful to you?
- 8.) Are there times when it is difficult to ascertain the parties' attorneys?
- 9.) Have you experienced any difficulties in covering trials that are open to the public? Explain?
- 10.) Are court calendars adequate in providing notice to upcoming trials/hearings?

11.) Are judges universally cooperative to allowing media access to open court proceedings? If not, explain briefly.

12.) Have you had any other specific problems with court personnel or judges regarding access to court proceedings and/or records?

13.) If an education program on court coverage were to be provided, what specific areas would you like to see covered for editors and reporters? For judges and court personnel?

After reviewing the handout, Paul Giguere suggested that the survey ask participants some basic demographic information, such as how long have they covered courts, what percentage of their job is covering courts, and whether they cover civil court proceedings, criminal court proceedings or both.

Paul Giguere also suggested that the survey seek to ascertain if they are familiar with the newly adopted Practice Book rules regarding media, and specifically television, coverage of court proceedings.

Scott Brede noted that the list of questions he proposed are more geared toward print journalists and the group should come up with questions geared toward the electronic media as well, such as are whether they are familiar with the process by which television media can request coverage of trials.

Scott Brede and Paul Giguere also discussed the importance of keeping the questionnaire relatively short in hopes of a better response rate.

Paul Giguere suggested that Scott Brede circulate, by email, the list of questions that he had developed to the other media representatives on the Survey Subcommittee and seek their input and/or suggestions for additional questions. This, he suggested, should be done before the full Subcommittee meets again on June 17. Scott Brede agreed, contingent on his checking with Judicial Branch officials to determine whether doing so would violate Freedom of Information laws.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:50 p.m.