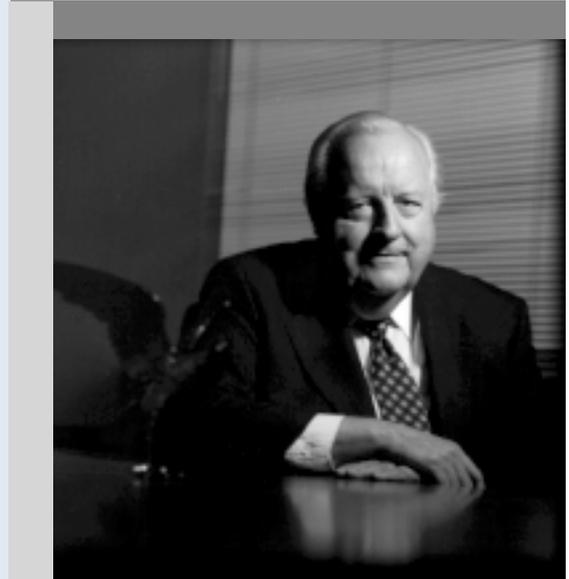


# DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

The uncertainty that plagued the other two branches of government and the public much of the year impacted Judiciary operations as well. The prolonged battle over control of the political branches meant that the Judiciary's needs—from new judgeships to funding—were at times relegated to the back burner.



Focus, persistence, and resourcefulness enabled the Judiciary to weather this storm. As key decisions were being made, the Administrative Office made certain the Judiciary's voice was heard. In the end, a budget was enacted that will provide additional resources for the courts and fully fund improved staffing levels. Funding will be available to build sorely needed new courthouses. Judges will re-

ceive the cost-of-living increase they have been promised, but far too often denied. Ten new district court judgeships will be created. Resources will be directed to the Southwest border courts to help address their caseload explosion.

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Throughout my tenure as Administrative Office Director I have been involved daily in promoting the Judicial Conference's legislative agenda. I regularly meet in person, talk by phone, and communicate by letter with members of Congress and their staff. While I believe this is the right focus for my energies, this year a bit more effort was required by many to achieve the successes we did.

While the Judiciary depends on the legislative and executive branches for re-

sources, there is much we can accomplish on our own. In 2000, the achievements were numerous and significant.

The Case Management/Electronic Case Files system being developed to replace current federal court docketing and case management systems is an exciting undertaking that will revolutionize the way the courts conduct their business. While this project made great progress this year, we also are mindful that rapidly advancing technol-

ogy and personal privacy rights must be compatible. The Administrative Office is working closely with the relevant Judicial Conference committees to carefully study and address this issue.

Reacting to requests from judges, the Administrative Office built the Federal Law Clerk Information System, a national database to match interested judges with potential law clerks. The Electronic Public Access program expanded this year to provide access to information from more than 100 courts through the Internet. The Administrative Office has turned to the Judiciary's intranet, the J-Net, to place important information in the hands of those in the courts who most need it, achieving savings by eliminating certain paper documents and mailings. An increasing number of courtrooms are using video evidence presentation systems, videoconferencing, and electronic means of taking the record. The Administrative Office developed and distributed a courtroom technology guide to courts to support this effort.

In its second year of operation, the Federal Judicial Television Network reached 280 court viewing sites, providing thousands of court employees with easy access to training and other information. Since the network's inception, the Administrative Office has broadcast more than 110 different courses. The network also has been used successfully for educational and community outreach programs, which bring high-school students into courthouses throughout the country to learn more about the Judiciary.

The Administrative Office continues to provide administrative support, program management, and policy development assistance to federal courts nationwide. Support of the Judicial Conference and its committees remains an essential function of the Administrative Office. Each committee has Administrative Office staff experts who work closely with it in conducting research and drafting agenda items. The Administrative Office also has responsibility for carrying out

Conference actions and for constantly exploring ways for Judiciary programs to run more effectively and efficiently. As a result, the agency is involved with studies of law books and libraries, court security, probation and pretrial services, information technology, and Judiciary employee training.

Recognizing that the men and women who work in the courts are responsible for the Third Branch's outstanding reputation, we continue to explore appropriate ways to recognize this excellence. This year the Administrative Office began work on a commuter benefits program, which in 2001 will allow judges and judicial employees to pay a fixed amount of public transportation and parking costs per month on a pretax basis. We have provided the funds to place automated external defibrillators in 400 court locations. These small semi-automatic voice-prompted devices deliver an electric shock to a person experiencing cardiac arrest. The Judiciary is a government leader in making this life-saving device available.

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A year ago we were awaiting the Y2K crisis, which, thanks to the hard work of many, never materialized. While no similar "crisis" looms on the horizon, 2001 is certain to bring many unexpected challenges to the judicial branch. Fortunately, some issues recur, and others have been highlighted by the Judicial Conference and Administrative Office long-range planning processes. Strategies are being developed and employees mobilized to tackle the pressing needs of the coming year.

The Administrative Office will continue to present the Judicial Conference's

legislative agenda to Congress. We will continue to publicize the growing pay disparity between federal judges and attorneys in the private sector. We will press for passage of the Federal Courts Budget Protection Act, which was considered but not enacted by the 106<sup>th</sup> Congress. This legislation will assure that the Judiciary's annual budget request is submitted directly to Congress by the President, unchanged, as required by law. The ten judgeships created this year by an appropriations bill are not enough. An omnibus judgeship bill is needed, and long overdue. No new bankruptcy judgeships have been created since 1992, even though filings have jumped several hundred thousand since then. New courthouses are needed, and they must be built so as to provide each active judge with a courtroom. With more than a quarter of the federal criminal filings occurring in the Southwest border courts, we will continue to push for increased resources to meet the ex-

traordinary needs of these five district courts. This list will grow by the day, and so will the energy and commitment of the Administrative Office.

This year marked my fifteenth as Director of the Administrative Office. When I arrived, memos were laboriously prepared on typewriters, copied on mimeograph machines, and sent to court officials. Today, they are broadcast electronically. The budget of the Judicial Branch was just over a quarter of what it is today, as was the number of drug-related cases handled by the district courts. The changes in the volume of court business and the way it is carried out are vast. However, the mission and responsibilities of the courts and the Administrative Office have remained steady. In fact, it has become an annual rite in the Administrative Office to re-pledge our commitment to providing the best service possible to the courts and public. Expect more of the same in 2001!

