

Program and Management Assistance

Providing Effective Solutions

Offering new management strategies, as well as enhancing ongoing programs, is a major contribution of the Administrative Office in its quest to provide effective solutions for the Judiciary's changing administrative needs. Standing advisory groups and cross-cutting advisory councils of court representatives provide advice on programs and policies to Administrative Office managers and staff. In addition, the agency organizes ad hoc working groups to identify requirements for new systems, review policies, develop plans, or complete other tasks.

Management achievements in 2000 included the following.

Updated Funding Formulas. The Judicial Conference approved new staffing formulas in September 2000. The new formulas, based on work measurement studies completed by Administrative Office staff, reflect the work requirements and the impact of automation and changes in work processes. They are being used for staffing allocations for fiscal year 2001, which will be fully funded, and for budget preparation for fiscal year 2002.

Updated formulas for non-salary funding, developed by Administrative Office staff with the advice of a working group of 16

court representatives, were incorporated into the fiscal year 2001 financial plan. They were used to determine individual allotments to the courts for fiscal year 2001 and are being incorporated into the fiscal year 2002 budget submission to Congress.

Southwest Border Courts. The district courts located along the Southwestern border—California-Southern, Arizona, New Mexico, Texas-Southern, and Texas-Western—currently handle 26 percent of all criminal federal filings in the United States. In response to the workload crisis in these courts caused by this overwhelming workload associated with illegal immigration and drug smuggling, Administrative Office staff have responded by working with Congress to garner support for supplying these courts with additional resources, including new judgeships in these districts. In addition, the courts have been provided with increased staff, including interpreters, court reporters, and probation and pretrial services officers.

Long-Range Planning. The Administrative Office supported two long-range planning meetings of Judicial Conference committee chairs in 2000, as well as long-range planning and budgeting activities by individual committees. Planning meetings in March and September were led by Judge Ralph G. Thompson (Oklahoma-Western), the Executive Committee's planning coordinator. The various Judicial Conference committees examined trends, events, and policies that will affect their programs; they identified over 40 strategic issues of concern; and they considered possible courses of ac-

Border Courts

The district courts located along the Southwestern border—California-Southern, Arizona, New Mexico, Texas-Southern, and Texas-Western—currently handle 26 percent of all criminal federal filings in the United States. In response to the workload crisis in these courts caused by this overwhelming workload associated with illegal immigration and drug smuggling, Administrative Office staff have responded by working with Congress to garner support for supplying these courts with additional resources, including new judgeships in these districts.



tion to address them. As a group, the committee chairs focused on broad trends and issues that cut across committee lines affecting the work, resources, and operation of the courts.

International Judicial Relations. The Administrative Office conducted briefings for 57 foreign delegations, including 263 judges and court administrators from 60 countries. Highlights included

- A program for judges from the Russian Council of Judges and Judicial Department on court administration, with particular emphasis on the role of clerks of court.
- A program for judges from the Russian Arbitrage (commercial) courts on commercial litigation and the bankruptcy courts, with emphasis on the use of automation to promote case management.
- A program for judges and court officials from Tanzania on judicial ethics and corruption.
- A program in Washington and Chicago for Russian officials involved in court administration on judicial and court administration from national, regional, and local perspectives.
- A program for judges from China on federal judicial administration and the use of automation and technology in the federal courts.

A publication about the federal courts has been published for an international audience- *The Federal Court System in the United States: An Introduction for Judges and Judicial Administrators in Other Countries*.

Administrative Office staff also participated in a program on court administration and court management for judges and court administrators from Armenia, Georgia, and Tajikistan; visited the Director of the Office of the Hungarian National Council of Justice and his staff to discuss the Hungarian judiciary's new management structure and exchange views on court administration and

management; and assisted the newly established bankruptcy court in Thailand in establishing case management procedures and support mechanisms.

Amendments to the Federal Rules of Practice and Procedure. In 2000, the Judicial Conference approved 14 amendments to the federal rules of practice and procedure and the abrogation of the copyright rules. It submitted the recommendations to the Supreme Court for its approval.

Administrative Office staff continued to monitor pending legislation affecting the rules. It kept the rules committees advised of developments in about 30 bills in the past year. The staff prepared correspondence to congressional Judiciary committee chairs raising concerns and conveying Judicial Conference positions on rules-related issues.

Intercircuit Assignments. In support of the Committee on Intercircuit Assignments, Administrative Office staff assist with the processing of assignments for Article III judges to serve outside their home circuits, or in the case of judges of the Court of International Trade, to serve on any other Article III court. During 2000, a total of 153 intercircuit assignments, undertaken by 89 Article III judges, were processed by the committee and approved by the Chief Justice. Of the 153 assignments approved, 82 were for the courts of appeals, 70 for the district courts, and one for the Court of Appeals for the Armed Forces. Administrative Office staff also assisted in maintaining rosters of both active and senior judges who are willing to take intercircuit assignments, and in identifying and obtaining judges who can help courts in need.

Enhanced Integrity for Probation and Pretrial Services Officers. As part of a new initiative to ensure the quality and success of the probation and pretrial services system, the Administrative Office is implementing two new Judicial Conference policies:



Administrative Office staff prepared correspondence to congressional Judiciary committee chairs raising concerns and conveying Judicial Conference positions on rules-related issues.

- Pre-employment background investigations for officer assistants and updated investigations every five years for both officers and officer assistants.
- Pre-employment and random drug testing for officers and officer assistants. (The Administrative Office implemented pre-employment and random drug testing for agency staff responsible for federal corrections and supervision programs.)

The Administrative Office also has created a working group to help develop a comprehensive national officer safety program that will include national safety training standards and a curriculum for an officer defensive tactics program.

Court Interpreting. The Administrative Office issued an annual report on court reporting. It showed that in fiscal year 2000 there was a significant increase in the number of events requiring the use of interpreters in federal courts. District courts reported that

they used interpreters in 190,127 events, an increase of 15 percent from 1999. The number of languages required rose from 103 in 1999 to 106 in 2000. Spanish remains the most used language for interpreters in the courts, accounting for 94.2 percent of all reported events (179,271 events), followed by Mandarin (2,092 events). Other frequently used languages were Vietnamese (931 events), Cantonese (847 events), Russian (755 events), Korean (585 events), and Arabic (538 events).

On January 3, 2000, the interpreter fees were raised from \$250 per day to \$305 per day for federally certified or professionally qualified interpreters, and from \$120 per day to \$145 per day for language skilled interpreters.

In fiscal year 2000, 75 new Spanish interpreters received certification. There now are 812 federally certified Spanish interpreters, 13 Haitian Creole, and nine Navajo federally certified interpreters. The National

Court Interpreting

Telephone interpreting provides remote interpreting in situations where on-site interpreters are not available or cost-effective. While precise costs of telephone interpreting are difficult to calculate, the use of telephone interpreting costs around \$40 per hearing. This represents considerable cost savings to the Judiciary and also ensures that only Administrative Office certified and professionally qualified interpreters are used.



Court Interpreter Database, maintained by the Administrative Office, helps courts locate interpreters in a multitude of languages through J-Net.

The Judiciary's Telephone Interpreting Program provides remote interpretation in situations where on-site court interpreters are not available or cost-effective. Telephone interpreting is used for short proceedings such as pretrial hearings, initial appearances, arraignments, motion hearings, and probation and pretrial services interviews.

In fiscal year 2000, telephone interpreting was used in 1,234 hearings and in 244 out-of-court events in a dozen districts nationwide, as compared to 1,000 court hearings and 250 out-of-court events in fiscal year 1999.

While precise costs of telephone interpreting are difficult to calculate, the use of telephone interpreting costs around \$40 per hearing. This represents considerable cost savings to the Judiciary and also ensures that only Administrative Office certified and professionally qualified interpreters are used.

Court Reviews and Internal Controls. In fiscal year 2000, the Administrative Office expanded its audit program, completed 108 financial audits, conducted 63 on-site reviews, and visited 198 courts and related offices to provide specific technical assistance.

The Judiciary continued its emphasis on reviewing and strengthening internal controls. Agency staff developed a website to help courts design and manage their internal control programs.

Administrative Office staff also developed a set of questions, surveys, and checklists to help courts assess the effectiveness of their information technology programs. The self-assessment tools are available on J-Net.

Digital Audio Recording Technology. Administrative Office staff developed guidelines for implementing this technology as a means of taking the official

record of court proceedings. The guidelines include technical and functional system requirements and a self-assessment tool for courts to use in deciding whether to purchase such systems.

Bankruptcy Noticing Center. The center electronically retrieves data from participating courts' case management systems and prints, addresses, batches, and mails paper notices to attorneys, creditors, and others at a fraction of the time and cost required to produce manually the notices.

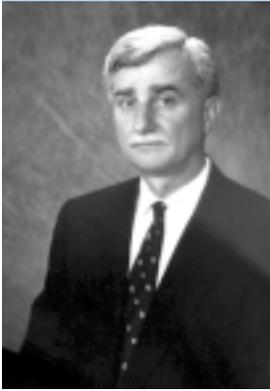
In fiscal year 2000, lower pricing generated cost avoidances totaling more than \$1.2 million. In addition, options for court and BNC notice file exchange were expanded to include Internet-based transactions that provide better file transmissions in a fraction of the time required by dial-up connection. It also provides better support for documents formatted for the Case Management/Electronic Case Files system.

Bankruptcy Administrator Program. The Administrative Office provides program direction and oversight to the bankruptcy administrators in the six judicial districts of Alabama and North Carolina, where this program is established by statute. To fulfill that role in 2000, agency staff conducted regular telephone conferences with the bankruptcy administrators and made on-site visits to address ways to enhance NewBATS, the electronic case administration program used by the bankruptcy administrator offices. In addition, the Administrative Office participated with the bankruptcy administrators in a training program for trustees, court staff, and the bar, and conducted a training session for trustees in conjunction with a national seminar for chapter 13 trustees.

Prisoner Civil Rights Videoconferencing. The use of videoconferencing in prisoner civil pretrial proceedings enables courts to reduce costs associated with having inmates transported



In fiscal year 2000, the Administrative Office expanded its audit program, completed 108 financial audits, conducted 63 on-site reviews, and visited 198 courts and related offices to provide specific technical assistance.



Jesse D. Cannon, Jr.



Barry K. Lander



F. Dan Wieser



Brenda K. Argoe

Director's Awards

Each year, Director Mecham invites nominations for and honors court employees with two awards. The Director's Award for Administrative Excellence honors federal court employees for outstanding achievements in improving the administration of the federal Judiciary. The Director's Award for Outstanding Leadership recognizes employees who have made long-term contributions to increase managerial effectiveness and who have developed improvements in the administration of the federal Judiciary.

Recipients of the 2000 Director's Award for Administrative Excellence:

- Jesse D. Cannon, Jr., Assistant Circuit Executive, U.S. Court of Appeals, Fifth Circuit.
- Barry K. Lander, Clerk of Court, U.S. Bankruptcy Court, California-Southern.
- F. Dan Wieser, U.S. Probation Officer, Florida-Middle.

Recipient of the 2000 Director's Award for Outstanding Leadership:

- Brenda K. Argoe, Clerk of Court, U.S. Bankruptcy Court, South Carolina

from correctional facilities or having judges and court employees travel to correctional facilities. It helps eliminate potential security risks to judges, court staff, and the pub-

lic. And, in several district courts with a large number of prisoner cases, videoconferencing has enhanced their ability to move cases more efficiently.

Strategic Studies

Considering New Approaches for the Future

Assessing strategic program issues and identifying future requirements and opportunities for improvement are important to program management. In conjunction with Judicial Conference committees, Administrative Office staff directed studies by independent consultants or undertook studies of several major program areas in 2000.

Space and Facilities. In May 2000, the Judiciary received a final report from Ernst & Young following a year-long independent assessment of the Judiciary's space and facilities program. The contractors recognized that the Judiciary already has taken

steps to achieve savings and made suggestions and recommendations for further efficiencies in the use of the Judiciary's space and facilities.

Judicial Security. An independent assessment of the Judiciary's security program was begun in February 2000 to review the effectiveness and efficiency of current security standards, policies, and procedures. A final report with recommendations for physical security of courthouses, the feasibility of replacing contract court security officers with a federal security force, and records checks for court employees is due in early 2001.