

Legislative Committee

October 14, 2016 Meeting Minutes

Judge Rowe convened the meeting at 11:20 a.m.

In attendance: Judges Rowe, Fox, Daly, Forgione, Landgrebe, Ahlberg, Wright, Hoyle, Dorval, Caruso, Ganim, Streit-Kefalas, Knierim and Peter Smith and Vincent Russo

Unable to attend: Judges DeGennaro, Greene, Mahon and Wexler

State Budget

The committee discussed the FY 2018-2019 biennial budget that will be approved by the legislature during the 2017 legislative session. Recent articles and comments from the administrator make it clear that it will be another difficult budget year and appropriate state funding for the Probate Courts must be our top priority.

Judge Knierim told the committee that Probate Court Administration has submitted our budget request through the Judicial Branch using strict rules set forth by the Office of Policy and Management (OPM). OPM requires rigid justification for any funding increases and will refuse any request that isn't required by statute. With that in mind, the Probate Courts have requested \$7.1 million in FY 18 and \$7.4 million in FY 19. The largest increases are caused by a change in the rules by the Retirement Commission that will increase our pension contribution significantly and percentage increases in indigent costs that the courts are mandated to pay.

Judges and court staff must continue to be vigilant in reaching out to legislators and showing the many ways that the efforts of the Probate Courts save the state money. Pete Smith will draft a congratulatory letter for legislators who win their elections which will include an invitation to visit the court. Courts should consider holding local delegation meetings after the election in order to meet with legislators and explain what services the Probate Courts offer to their constituents. Additional meetings will also be held at the Capitol once session begins.

Concepts to be Drafted into Bills

During the course of the year, judges, court staff and PCA have offer recommended statutory changes for the upcoming legislative session. Vincent Russo compiled the concepts and circulated them among the committee members for discussion. Judge Fox led the committee through the various topics. The committee reached consensus on

several concepts that will now be drafted into one or two bills for submission to the Judiciary Committee in January or February.

Schedule Next Meeting

The committee will meet again in the first two weeks of December once PCA has drafted the legislative language. The committee will vote on the proposals at the meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 1:20 p.m.