MINUTES OF THE MEETING
OF THE
ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY

Eighty-Second Session
February 17, 2023

The Committee on Judiciary was called to order by Chair Brittney Miller at 8 a.m. on Friday, February 17, 2023, in Room 3138 of the Legislative Building, 401 South Carson Street, Carson City, Nevada. The meeting was videoconferenced to Room 4406 of the Grant Sawyer State Office Building, 555 East Washington Avenue, Las Vegas, Nevada. Copies of the minutes, including the Agenda (Exhibit A), the Attendance Roster (Exhibit B), and other substantive exhibits, are available and on file in the Research Library of the Legislative Counsel Bureau and on the Nevada Legislature's website at www.leg.state.nv.us/App/NELIS/REL/82nd2023.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

Assemblywoman Brittney Miller, Chair
Assemblywoman Elaine Marzola, Vice Chair
Assemblywoman Shannon Bilbray-Axelrod
Assemblywoman Lesley E. Cohen
Assemblywoman Venicia Considine
Assemblywoman Danielle Gallant
Assemblyman Ken Gray
Assemblywoman Alexis Hansen
Assemblywoman Melissa Hardy
Assemblywoman Selena La Rue Hatch
Assemblywoman Erica Mosca
Assemblywoman Sabra Newby
Assemblyman David Orentlicher
Assemblywoman Shondra Summers-Armstrong

COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT:

Assemblyman Toby Yurek (excused)

GUEST LEGISLATORS PRESENT:

None

STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT:

Diane C. Thornton, Committee Policy Analyst
Aaron Klatt, Committee Secretary
Ashley Torres, Committee Assistant

OTHERS PRESENT:

John R. McCormick, Assistant Court Administrator, Administrative Office of the Courts
Katherine Stocks, Director and State Court Administrator, Administrative Office of the Courts
Lynne K. Simons, Chief Judge, Second Judicial District Court
Alicia Lerud, Court Administrator and Clerk of the Court, Second Judicial District Court
Jerry A. Wiese II, Chief Judge, Eighth Judicial District Court
Steven Grierson, Court Executive Officer and Clerk of the Court, Eighth Judicial District Court

Chair Miller:
[Roll was called. Committee rules and protocol explained.] Good morning and welcome to Assembly Judiciary. We would like to welcome everyone here in Carson City as well as those in Las Vegas and anyone watching online. Today we have three presentations. We will start with our first presentation from the Nevada Supreme Court. We have Assistant Court Administrator from the Administrative Office of the Courts John McCormick and Director of the Administrative Office of the Courts Katherine Stocks.

John R. McCormick, Assistant Court Administrator, Administrative Office of the Courts:
Today we will briefly be going over the Nevada Judiciary and the Nevada Supreme Court. You will see here [page 2, Exhibit C], is a map of our 11 judicial districts. As recently as 2007 we only had 9 judicial districts, but the tenth and the eleventh have been created in recent years to better provide access to justice for the citizens of those counties. This [page 3] is a graphic that the Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) has produced that shows how case flow exists and the various avenues of appeal with the addition of the Appellate Court, which is the most recently created court on here. This graphic is also available in our annual report. The Judicial Branch is the third branch of government being separate yet coequal with the other two branches, the Executive and the Legislature, whose authority is found in the *Nevada Constitution*, Article 3, Section 1.

The purpose of the Judiciary [page 4] is to resolve legal disputes fairly, timely, and impartially. We have multiple layers of courts. The appellate courts: the Supreme Court of Nevada, and the Court of Appeals. Then the trial courts: general jurisdiction trial courts being the district courts, then what we call the limited jurisdiction courts being the justice and municipal courts.

On the Supreme Court, [page 5, Exhibit C] we have seven justices and they have staggered six-year terms, in terms of the election cycle. Thus, you have vacancies of two, two, and three on cycle every two years in the general election. It is Nevada's final appellate court. They hear all appeals from the district courts and then use a "push-down" model to direct cases to the Court of Appeals. In Nevada Rules of Appellate Procedure Rule 17, it sets forth conditions for screening cases to go to the Court of Appeals versus the Supreme Court. For example, all death penalty cases stay at the Supreme Court. Cases that are not of first impression, where there is settled law on it, tend to go to the Court of Appeals. The Nevada Supreme Court serves as the court of error correction, meaning that it reviews the actions of the district court below. It is also the Nevada court of last resort, meaning unless it is a federal constitutional issue, the Nevada Supreme Court is where the buck stops in terms of dealing with Nevada law in the court system.

The Court of Appeals [page 6] was created by constitutional amendment through a vote of the people in 2014 and began in 2015. It is made up of three judges serving six-year terms who are all on the same election cycle. The review of the cases is handled through a "push-down" model, which has allowed us to keep one clerk's office and divide our central legal staff into two divisions; one that assists the Supreme Court and one that assists the Court of Appeals. In that way, we were able to minimize the startup work that we had to do to get the Court of Appeals up and going. A petitioner or an appellant may ask the Court of Appeals case to be reviewed by the Supreme Court either en banc or in panels. With our seven justices of the Supreme Court, they sit either en banc, all seven of them, or in panels of three, which allows an increase of case processing by hearing more cases.

We do have 11 district courts [page 7]. You will be hearing directly from our two largest district courts, the Eighth Judicial District Court and the Second Judicial District Court, a little bit later. District courts derive their authority from the *Nevada Constitution*, Article 6, Section 1, and additionally in the *Nevada Revised Statutes* (NRS) 3.010, where you will find the provisions related to district courts. We have 90 district judges across the state for the 17 districts. They serve six-year terms and are all on the same election cycle after action that was taken in 2007 by this body. Before, when additional judgeships were added, they were on a different cycle, and it got messy in terms of knowing who was up, when it was up, pay equalization, and other matters. If there is a vacancy midterm on the district court, the Commission on Judicial Selection vets applicants and sends three names for the vacancy to the Governor, and then the Governor picks from those three names to fill the vacancy in the court.

The district courts are what we call general jurisdiction courts, meaning they hear everything at that trial court level such as felonies and gross misdemeanors. They have exclusive juvenile jurisdiction pursuant to Title 5 of NRS and they hear civil disputes that are over $15,000. The district courts also handle family law matters. In the Second and Eighth District Courts, we have separate family benches that are dedicated to those family cases. In the other nine rural districts, the district judge does everything. They handle family, criminal, and civil. Appeals from the district courts go to the Supreme Court. It is important to note here that the Nevada Supreme Court is different than, say, the United States

Supreme Court. The United States Supreme Court can grant certiorari, meaning they can essentially pick and choose the cases they hear. Under our *Nevada Constitution*, all appeals go to the Supreme Court and then we implement that "push-down" model. But all appeals are heard, so there is no court discretion on hearing this case versus that case.

Justice courts [page 8, Exhibit C] are our limited jurisdiction courts at the county level. We have 40 of them and they derive their authority from the *Nevada Constitution*, Article 6, Section 1, and NRS 4.020. Currently we have 68 justices of the peace on six-year terms. Vacancies, midterm, are filled by the county commission. The justice of the peace terms are on multiple cycles, so it would depend on which township you are in when that election would occur. The most recently added justice of the peace was a new seat at Sparks Justice Court. They reached the population threshold provided in Chapter 4 of the NRS to allow for another justice of the peace. With that recent addition, there are now four justices of the peace there in Sparks. Limited jurisdiction courts have misdemeanor jurisdiction over criminal matters and now, as of January 1, civil traffic matters. They conduct preliminary hearings for gross misdemeanors and felonies, meaning they determine if there is a preponderance of evidence that a crime was committed and that the defendant may have committed the crime. Then they bind those over to district court for further proceedings.

Civil disputes under $15,000 and small claims are heard in the justice court. There is a difference between regular civil and small claims. Small claims are a process that is more oriented to pro se and pro per litigants and has lessened rules of evidence to try to resolve those matters. Justice courts also handle protection orders and landlord tenant cases, such as eviction. A note on protection order cases: justice courts handle protection orders for stalking, harassment, sexual assault, harassment in the workplace, and protection of minors. In the non-family court jurisdictions, they handle domestic violence protection orders. In the Second and the Eighth, the district court family bench handles protection orders. That is a slight variation and actually matches how the high-risk or red flag, for lack of a better term, laws are handled. The justice courts handle those in the rural counties and the family bench handles them in Clark County and Washoe County. Appeals from justice court decisions go up to the district court.

We also have municipal courts [page 9]. We have 17 of these courts. Just a note on municipal courts: the *Nevada Constitution* is permissive as to their existence, and provided by the Legislature or by city charter, they may be created. The other two courts in terms of district and justice are required. There are 31 judges at the municipal court level. Ten do double duty as the justice of the peace and municipal court judge in communities like Mesquite, Carlin, and Fernley, for example. Municipal court judges serve six-year terms. There are a few nonelected municipal court judges who are appointed by city councils and mayors in some of our smaller communities such as Ely, Fernley, Yerington, and Fallon. Again, nonelection vacancies are filled by the city commission. They have limited jurisdiction, handling misdemeanor criminal cases and traffic cases including both the civil and criminal traffic cases. Appeals from the municipal court go to district court. One of the biggest differences with municipal court is they have very limited civil jurisdiction versus, say, the justice court. Municipal courts' civil jurisdiction tends to deal with city matters such

as review of city executive appeals, office decisions, barking dog cases, and utility collections. The civil jurisdiction at the municipal court level is much smaller than at the justice court level.

Katherine Stocks, Director and State Court Administrator, Administrative Office of the Courts:
You will see that this slide [page 10, Exhibit C] is about the Administrative Office of the Courts. Our function is to be a support mechanism for not only the Supreme Court, but the trial courts of Nevada that might be resource-low. We strive to be an influential and respected voice for the Nevada Judiciary. As part of that, we provide accurate, timely, and relevant support to the users and stakeholders of our courts. That really is our focus.

Just so you know, I do appreciate being here in person for the first time. I got here two years ago yesterday, and my first experience with the Legislature was all virtual. I really do appreciate being here and I look forward to meeting the individuals that I saw on the screen.

One of the biggest things we are really trying to focus on is the strategic plan that we started after the end of session in 2021. We received a grant to do that process and that grant included interviews with all the trial court's leadership, judges, and employees, and surveys across the state which also included the State Bar of Nevada and nonprofits. Three major themes came out of that strategic plan [page 11]. What we are doing in this session is all related back to that strategic plan and the three umbrella goals that were identified by the users of our courts. The biggest initiatives that we are trying to do at the AOC are related to simplifying access to the courts. How do we make it so that every Nevadan has an ability to get into the courts and is provided the tools to be able to navigate the courts without necessarily requiring an attorney? We want our Nevada attorneys to be at their highest and best use. We want those attorneys resolving the heavy disputes. If it is a simple administrative manner that needs to go through the courts, we want it to be easier for individuals to be doing that. We want our judges and attorneys really focusing on the issues and disputes. Our focus is to identify ways that we can make it easier.

The Eighth District will be speaking soon. They already have online, guided interviews. But, we do not have those necessarily for the whole state. We requested significant federal funding through the Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds (SLFRF), and those projects are part of what we are doing going forward. Since this is an overview session, we will not go into the weeds on that, but we are happy to talk in small groups or individually about what we are doing related to opening the doors of the courts, and embodying that view as an influential and respected voice for the Judiciary of what it means to provide service to everyone that accesses our courts whether that be through the facilities, online, or bringing the court to the individual instead of requiring them to come to the court.

Assemblywoman Mosca:
Thank you for this informative presentation. You have stated that all our cases are heard in appeals. Do we have an average amount annually, and then how long does it take for those typically to go through?

John McCormick:
Appeals obviously depend on the complexity of the case and how quickly they are reserved. I do not remember the caseload off the top of my head. I will have to look that up in our annual report. However, anything that is appealed does go to either the Supreme Court or the Court of Appeals for resolution. Our backlog is around 1,300 cases which means there are 1,300 cases in the process for resolution. That has been brought down significantly with the creation of the appellate court. I will get you a copy of the annual report that has that specific data.

Assemblywoman Bilbray-Axelrod:
You had mentioned that the death penalty cases go to the Supreme Court. Could you give us an overview of how that process happens and that process's length of time? You may discuss the financial burden, but you do not have to because this is a policy committee.

Katherine Stocks:
When our state has death penalty cases, they do go directly to the Supreme Court. The Court of Appeals would not handle a death penalty case. Statistically, we would need to reach out to our public defender's office and to the Office of the Attorney General to get information from them about their financial expenses related to that. As far as the Supreme Court goes, we can see if we have that information on the financial impact related to total salary. We do not have a team within the court itself, but we do have a criminal department for central staff. If you would like information on the number of hours estimated from our central staff attorneys related to that, we are happy to get that for you.

As far as the process goes, a lot of times when we show that there are pending cases, it is related to getting the briefings. The amount of time and energy it takes for attorneys to be able to properly brief a death penalty case is significant. That is where, while it might look like a backlog, it is the administrative work going on in the background that impacts how long it would take, the availability of information from the case, and the record. It is my understanding that we have a good relationship with our trial courts for getting the official records up to the Court of Appeals. It can also be the amount of time required for attorneys to be able to turn those briefs over and define their position on those appeals. I will be happy to follow up with significant answers, but I apologize I cannot quote it off the top of my head.

Assemblywoman La Rue Hatch:
Thank you for the excellent presentation in this overview of our Judiciary. We are a policy committee, but I just wondered, of all the various courts and districts that you just listed, which of them are funded by the state and which ones are funded locally?

John McCormick:
The Nevada Supreme Court and the Court of Appeals are entirely funded by the state through appropriations and authorizations made by this body. The district courts are where it starts getting a little different. The 90 district judges are funded by the state in terms of their salaries. Everything else at the district court level is provided by the county. For example, in

the Eighth Judicial District, Chief Judge Wiese, who you will hear from shortly, his salary is paid by the state, but his staff, his office, his marshals, et cetera, are paid for by Clark County. That is how that funding mechanism works. When we get down to the justice courts, those are entirely paid for by the county; the judges' salary, building, everything is county. Then at the city level with municipal courts, those are all paid for by the city. That is how the funding scheme breaks down.

Assemblywoman Gallant:
With your strategic study, I was very excited to see that you want to try to make the process for the lower courts more streamlined and easier for everyday people to be able to use. I am in property management and do a lot of my own business in the courts, and forms are really difficult, particularly in Clark County because you have the differences between Henderson, Las Vegas, and North Las Vegas. It is impossible to find certain forms for Las Vegas or North Las Vegas, but I could find them for Henderson. I am wondering if there is any plan to have a one-stop shop for all three locations and enable access to those forms more easily.

Also, is there a plan to have a pathway on Tyler Technologies and Odyssey so that you have the correct code when you file it so it does not keep getting rejected? One more thing with Tyler Technologies: as a business professional I have an account, but is there going to be any access for tenants to be able to have a free account because most of the time their fees are waived in that case?

Katherine Stocks:
That is actually one of the larger projects that we used SLFRF funding for. We have partnered with the Legal Aid Center of Southern Nevada to create a statewide self-help portal. Part of our challenge that we have seen, especially related to forms, is not just whether someone can fill out a form, it is whether the information being requested is understandable. This is not just making the form available; this is making guided interviews in common language by taking out the legalese, and not putting chattel in when you are trying to define something. That is part of what we are working on, and the initial requirements have been done. We are starting with protection from abuse forms, and we intend to roll that out soon.

I cannot speak to the Las Vegas piece and the Tyler Technologies piece as a decentralized state. We at the AOC are able to provide support to trial courts. We cannot mandate what a trial court would do. However, this is a good discussion. I did not hear it on the district court piece; that sounds like a justice court piece. We are happy to follow up to see about that, but when you do ask that question about will it eventually be available, the answer is yes. Part of that vision for the statewide self-help portal is that it would then, after asking your questions through the guided interview like TurboTax does, create your pleading for you. That way, the individual has a pleading that is ready to go that does not get rejected by a clerk because they did not understand a certain line or section. It also protects court staff from being asked to provide information that might verge on that legal advice line. These are really good discussions to have about what that portal looks like going forward. As far as Tyler Technologies, we will have to find out and get back to you.

Assemblywoman Hardy:
Thank you for giving us this presentation. If you do not deal with law and courts, it can sometimes be quite confusing. In that vein, if you could highlight some of the things that you mentioned that you are doing to simplify and improve access for the layperson. Sometimes I go on and try to see how easy it is to look up a case or how easy it is to do this specific task if I needed to do it. Can you share with us some of the things you can access online or by going into the Civil Law Self-Help Center, just some highlights of what you are trying to do to make this more accessible and easier for the layperson.

Katherine Stocks:
In addition to the statewide self-help portal, we are currently working with the Civil Law Self-Help Center, specifically the Family Law Self-Help Center, with the goal to get that off the ground so that we have the ability for anyone in Nevada to access support. Right now, it is very confusing. If you go to the Supreme Court's website, you then have the option for three different types of forms whether you are in Clark County, Washoe County, or the rest of the state. That is hard for a litigant when we do not have a system of substantively similar forms, necessarily, for someone to fill out. That for us is step one.

The other things we are doing to make it easier are related to the administration of the courts themselves. The courts that do not have an information technology (IT) department, they might not necessarily be able to help an individual get their court filing. We have courts that are still using manual processes. We have 15 different case management systems across the state. We did get the federal funds to not only do a statewide e-file option that is at no cost to the user, but also updated the case management systems, which are cloud-based systems. Part of what we have done is partnered with the Office of Science, Innovation and Technology in the Governor's Office to include our courts into redundant broadband for our rural communities. Any court that does not have redundant broadband would be able to get that installed so that they can support the applications that we are trying to roll out. In the example of the self-help portal, even if it is not integrated into their case management system, it gives the litigant the option to choose whether to print that out and go file it in person if they are more comfortable with that, or to be able to electronically submit it to the court, even if the e-file is not rolled out yet. Much of this is about giving people options, instead of a draconian rule that says, you must file X by Y.

Part of it also is coming up with ways in the systems that we are creating to do things like text notifications. We already do this in some courts, but reminding individuals that want to be reminded should be a mechanism present. If my dentist or my hair stylist can remind me that I have an appointment, the courts should be able to remind you that you have an appointment as well. Again, we do have courts already doing that. It is just making it so that we have those options available to the individual in as many places as possible in the state. I am really excited for what the self-help portal is going to start.

Also, relating to civil traffic, we did receive federal funds to get a civil traffic portal rolled out. From the time of being notified we were going to get the SLFRF funds, we had five months to create a system. We do have a minimum viable product and it does work for the

courts. It has an online dispute resolution option in it which is the next step. How do we get people to be able to talk to the court in the method and manner that they prefer, like the idea of being able to do asynchronous chat where you can request, "Can I negotiate my ticket at nine o'clock at night because that is when I am home from work?" That is where we are headed and those are the types of options we are looking for.

Chair Miller:
That is the end of our questions from members. Thank you for your presentation. Our next presentation is from the Second Judicial Court of Nevada. We have the Honorable Lynne Simons and Court Administrator and Clerk of the Court, Alicia Lerud. Good morning, and please proceed when you are ready.

Lynne K. Simons, Chief Judge, Second Judicial District Court:
I am so honored to have the opportunity to speak to you today. I am Chief Judge Lynne Simons of the Second Judicial District Court in Washoe County. With me today is Alicia Lerud, who is the Court Administrator and the Clerk of the Court for the Second Judicial District Court. We want to be prepared to answer any questions and supplement any of the information we discuss. Between the two of us, hopefully we can.

The Second Judicial District Court's jurisdiction [page 2, Exhibit D] is Washoe County and our population of the people we serve is 486,492 people. I bring that up because our court is here for the people, and our court would not be here but for the staff, the judicial officers, and all the support departments. District courts are considered courts of general jurisdiction. We handle a myriad of case types. We have a separate family division and then the general jurisdiction handles pretty much everything else. We do not do traffic matters. That is the easiest way to explain what we do. We do appeals from the justice court, and we also handle matters of original jurisdiction such as civil litigation on matters in excess of $15,000. We handle gross misdemeanors and felonies, and we also handle guardianships, trust cases, and probate cases; pretty much anything other than small claims, landlord or tenant issues, except if it is more than $15,000.

We have 16 elected district court judges; 9 in general jurisdiction, which is where I am, and 7 in family division [page 3]. We also have masters that provide great assistance to the judges. We have six appointed judicial masters including a discovery commissioner, who handles discovery in civil matters, a probate commissioner, who handles probate and trust cases, and then 4 family division court masters. We have 172 full-time employees and a $33 million budget; $25.6 million comes from the general fund and $7.2 million in grant funding, which we actively seek for all our different divisions. In calendar year 2022, we had over 500,000 filings in the Second Judicial District Court. We continue to seek out funding. We were able to acquire some funding, of course, during COVID-19. That was unique, but we also have individual managers, particularly in specialty courts, who seek out available funding to continue to assist an ever-changing and evolving workload.

I think often the perception of what a judicial officer does every day is put our robe on and go out on the bench and handle hearings and trials, which is what we do—in fact, I am in the

middle of a trial right now—but there is a whole lot that happens behind the scenes [page 4, Exhibit D]. The Second Judicial District Court is primarily written as far as issuing orders. We do not have a requirement of hearings on all matters, so there is a large amount of preparation that happens before hearings and then in our written orders. In addition, it is the business of the court. Traditionally the Second Judicial District Court has had robust case and committee assignments. Not only do we have some courts that are parsed out—for instance, the business court. Those cases are extremely complex, and they require a lot of judicial energy and intellect. We also parse out juvenile delinquency, dependency, and probate and trust matters. For instance, we have three judges that serve as probate and trust judges as well as the business court.

We have committees. On this slide, it shows the various courts that we have, but on the right side it really goes into some of our committees. You probably will have the opportunity to meet with Judge Drakulich, who is our Legislative Committee liaison and chair. We also have active Bench/Bar committees in various areas. It is our method for seeking input from the various attorneys that appear in front of us. We participate on state-level committees as well as county. We have all the way from a Filing Office Steering Committee, to an IT Committee, to a Rules Committee, Statistics, Law Library, et cetera. We also have one of the judges that I appointed to be in charge of forms, to do those dry runs of how people try to fill them out because as a practitioner, they were difficult. In our self-help and law library we have 137 form packets that someone can come in and fill out in person. They are also available online. I agree there is a fine line of providing legal advice as opposed to providing forms. We also have portals for Zoom and access to e-filing as well, so someone can come in and do that if they do not have the resources otherwise.

In addition to the business of court we have an upcoming celebration which I appointed Judge Breslow to handle. It is the sesquicentennial celebration, marking the 150th anniversary of our court on Court Street [page 5]. We usually have elected officials from all over the state at our Flag Day and we are combining it with the celebration regarding the courthouse. Judge Breslow has done a wonderful job. He has talked Washoe County staff into putting a new flag on the courthouse every day, and we will be giving those out to various individuals at our Flag Day celebration including some children and middle schoolers. On some days we feel like our 150-year-old courthouse is falling down around our ears. It is a big challenge to run technology in an older courthouse and we were able to utilize some unexpected funds from COVID-19 to enhance all of our technology in our courtrooms. It has required courtrooms to be down for numerous weeks.

I would like to turn to our case trends [page 6]. We are back to all pre-pandemic filings. However, some civil cases are incredibly difficult in complexity. Our family levels just expand and expand because the need is so great. It looks like we will have a dramatic increase in felony and gross misdemeanor criminal matters. Our criminal trials are more complex than pre-pandemic also. With the pandemic, a lot more of the cases, with legislation that has been enacted, have been negotiated—for instance, drug cases and some of the lower categories. What remains for us are categories A and B. They take more time and

they are more difficult. We also had an increase in domestic violence temporary protective orders during and after the pandemic.

One of the mantras that we have in the Second Judicial District Court is about learning and evolving from everything that has happened [page 7, Exhibit D]. The pandemic was very challenging, and our mantra is, "Keep the positive things from the pandemic and leave the rest." What does that mean? The discussion of virtual access to justice: I run the young offender specialty court as one of my dockets and these are young adults who are 18 to 27 years old. We have kept them virtual because that is their life. They are on their phones constantly and it is the best way to communicate with them. We have kept guardianships virtual because it protects those elder people that really should not be transported to the court, and we have arranged for them to have an iPad in whatever facility they are in. Judges want people in person, and we want to have that decorum, but the realization is that Zoom can provide a tremendous access to justice, particularly in settlement conferences. I have had settlement conferences with nine different parties across the United States and New Zealand. They could not come and participate but for our Zoom access. Additionally, it really has helped with our lawyers in the library. This goes back to that help for self-represented litigants where we have a tremendous program where lawyers volunteer and people can come in and get advice. We have continued this program and it is far more successful by being virtual, and I must thank the people that participate.

With the directive of the Legislature with regard to release and supervision, we have a robust pretrial release and supervision program over defendants [page 8]. We also must balance that with the overcrowding at the jail. I like to say that we are flexible, not pivoting, but even during the pandemic we have continued with effective, efficient supervision of released individuals to ensure community safety but also to ensure their appearances.

Our challenge right now of course is in mental competency [page 9]. I am sure that this body has heard about the challenges we face, not only with the increase in persons but the overburdened process. I have appointed Judge Walker to handle all mental competency issues right now to acquire, engage, and centralize resources for more efficient and effective processing in mental competency cases.

The Second Judicial District Court specialty programs are evolving, and the need is so great [page 10]. There are just simply some people that will keep cycling through the justice system when they really need help, and they really needed intervention. Therefore, we have created different courts and tracks funded through the state but also grants. You can see that for every $1 spent on specialty courts, we avoid three times that in various other costs. You create relationships with these people, and their successes are dramatic as they relate to the judge, because they do not want to disappoint the judge. Then if they are in a deferred program, they do not have the felony on their record, but they have received treatment effectively through our providers. I want to thank you so much for having this opportunity to give you an example of how our courts are changing, and I welcome any questions you might have.

Assemblywoman Cohen:
Thank you for the presentation. Being a southern Nevadan, I always forget how large Washoe County is and that it goes all the way up to the Oregon border. With Reno at the south end, what are you doing for accessibility, or is there anything you can do for accessibility, for your Washoe County residents that live at the north end of the county?

Judge Simons:
For us, it is really that Zoom option. You find in the justice and the municipal courts is where you are really going to find them in person, but for us it is a Zoom option or in person. In some areas it is by default virtual but what we have done is developed a form where you can request a virtual hearing. Trials, however, are in person and they need to come to the courthouse for trials.

Assemblywoman Cohen:
Are your judges more cognizant of people coming from far distances? For example, if a judge is going to set a trial for someone who lives in Gerlach, will the judge set it as an afternoon trial so that person does not have to be on the road to get to the courthouse by 8 a.m.?

Judge Simons:
It depends on the department, but they are certainly flexible. Usually, civil matters are set through our judicial assistance and they can make that request, but you will find most of those types of matters would be in the afternoon or on a certain day. In my department, we accommodated all the time. On days where it is dealing with criminal matters, those involve so many moving parts between transport and participants attending other courts who must see defendants, that those are usually in the morning.

Assemblywoman La Rue Hatch:
Thank you so much for presenting today. We have heard for the last week and a half how many agencies are having challenges with staffing, recruitment, and retention. They have said it was due to salary, workloads, morale, and other circumstances. Is that an issue that you are facing? What are you doing to recruit and retain? Also, if you could provide us a breakdown of your demographics within the court.

Judge Simons:
Yes, it is more difficult to hire. Many request a hybrid or flexible schedule, and that is a discussion amongst the Judiciary because some particular positions cannot be hybrid but other positions can. I will give you an example: in individual chambers, we are having some difficulty hiring law clerks, which traditionally is a problem we never had. What we have been actively doing is contacting different schools and their career development departments. That is one job where they miss out on seeing court proceedings, but they can do research from a distance. We have also considered a policy regarding providing moving expenses, but you identified the issue right on the head.

Alicia Lerud, Court Administrator and Clerk of the Court, Second Judicial District Court:
As of one month ago we have 172 full-time employees and our total employees including intermittent staff is 184. Out of that we had 9 vacancies. With the exception of law clerks, staff that works 24/7 at the jail, processing those pretrial assessments and technology jobs, we are still seeing effective recruitment processes. We are currently looking at our salaries. We have some other local agencies within Washoe County that are doing salary assessments and compensation studies. We are looking at that to make sure we do remain competitive and that we do not end up losing staff because of that.

I understand this Committee has a much broader scope than just the courts. I do believe that if you look within the criminal justice system as a whole, you will find that there are recruitment and retention issues with respect to attorneys. Criminal defense in particular in Washoe County is a challenge currently. We have a dearth of defense attorneys representing criminal defendants and that grinds us to a halt at a court level. We can be fully staffed, but it does not do us any good if we do not have defense counsel. I hope that answered your question.

Assemblywoman Gallant:
I have pulled up your website and it is miles better than what I see in Clark County. Lots of wide space and very organized. I do have a question though, because I am seeing the standard free account. It seems like the person only has access if they are an active party or the attorney on record for a particular case. If a civilian wanted to file their first case, it does not appear like this would be an avenue that they could take. They would have to come in, it seems. I could be wrong, but if you could provide some clarification on that.

Alicia Lerud:
If somebody is coming in to file their first case, then we will immediately get them set up with one of those free eFlex accounts. Those eFlex accounts enable any individual to access any case in which they are a participant. We also do have a paid option that is called a "global view" account, and that is for individuals who may have a professional interest in being able to go through all the court files and it can give you access to any public court filing. We also have free access to anything that is public through our law library and then we have terminals set up throughout the courthouse for individuals who are physically at the court.

Chair Miller:
Thank you for your presentation. We do not have any additional questions from members. We will now move on to our last presentation of the day which is a presentation from the Eighth Judicial Court of Nevada. We have the Honorable Jerry Wiese and the Court Executive Officer and Clerk of the Court Steven Grierson.

Jerry A. Wiese II, Chief Judge, Eighth Judicial District Court:
I am honored to serve as the Chief Judge of the Eighth Judicial District Court in Clark County. I am here with our Court Executive Officer Steve Grierson. I want to begin

by thanking all of you for giving us this opportunity to provide an overview of the court and a chance to brag about my colleagues. The introduction slide here [page 3, Exhibit E] shows the historical growth of our court over the years and the way the Legislature has helped us meet the growing needs of Clark County with judicial resources. Most recently in 2019, the Legislature approved 6 new family departments, so we now have 26 judicial departments in Family Division and 32 in the Civil Criminal Division.

Currently we have 58 total district court judges, 13 hearing masters who serve as quasi-judicial officers, and 653 full- and part-time employees [page 4]. We had 74,060 new filings or new cases initiated in 2022. We are the busiest district court in the state. The high volume of those cases and constant fiscal pressures require us to be efficient and innovative in trying to manage those cases to serve the community of Clark County.

Our jurisdiction [page 5] comes from the *Nevada Constitution*, Article 6, Section 6, and NRS Chapter 3. We cover civil claims for more than $15,000, felonies, and gross misdemeanors. We have family and juvenile cases and appeals from justice and municipal courts.

Regarding our 32 departments in the Civil/Criminal Division [page 6], we break that up and people have different specialty assignments. We have five judges that handle our business court which entails very complex litigation, sometimes involving 30 to 40 attorneys and parties. Sometimes those end up being 6- or 8-month-long trials. We have four judges doing our Homicide Division, where they have a regular criminal calendar as well, but they also are the four judges that handle all of our homicide cases. Over the past several years they have been able to keep that in check. We have a growing number of homicides in southern Nevada, but they have been able to eliminate any backlog that we have had in those homicide cases. We also have recently initiated a medical malpractice court because of the number of medical malpractice cases that we have in southern Nevada. We have ten judges that are doing medical malpractice in addition to other general civil cases.

In our Family Division [page 7], we have 26 departments, consisting of 6 departments dedicated to juvenile dependency, 2 departments that do juvenile delinquency, 2 that are dedicated to guardianship cases, and the remaining 16 do civil domestic cases which basically involve divorce and child custody.

Moving to our court facilities [page 8], we have several different buildings that we are responsible for. The Regional Justice Center (RJC) is home to most of our civil/criminal departments and seven of our family departments. A portion of our Civil Division is located at the Phoenix Building, which is a small building across the street from the court. We have our family court where we have juvenile departments there. We also have a Child Support Division that is housed in the Greystone Complex on East Flamingo, and we are responsible for security and taking care of all of those buildings. I do not know that this is interesting to you or not, but for the RJC—our main building—we had over 553,000 people visiting in 2022. In the family court we had over 143,000 visitors. We have got a lot of people that come in and out of our court buildings.

As far as funding is concerned [page 9, Exhibit E], our funding is dictated by NRS 3.100. We are funded primarily through general fund dollars from Clark County. As we go to the next slide [page 10] talking about our fiscal year 2023 budget, you will see that most of our money comes from the Clark County general fund. We have a total budget of $125 million-plus. We have a lot of people to take care of and a lot of business that we conduct.

We will go on to our next slide [page 11] about funding, and we put this in here to show that we have been staying under budget. We do the best we can with the funds that are provided to us by the state and county to try to make good choices with the money that we have and so far, we have been able to stay under budget. That is our goal.

Our total pending case numbers are important to share with you [page 12]. We have 5,443 pending criminal cases, over 30,000 civil cases, and over 32,000 family court cases. We have made a concerted effort over the last few years to close completed cases and get rid of the backlog. We all know there was a backlog that was created by COVID-19, but I think we have done great things to get rid of that. With our backlogs essentially gone now, anybody who wants to try their case in Vegas is welcome and we are ready and willing to do that.

Moving to our case flow management, this slide [page 13] shows the number of criminal cases filed in 2022 at 8,320 new cases filed and 13,421 closed. There were 93 criminal jury trials and 6 criminal bench trials last year. To give you a perspective, the last time we presented to the Legislature we had 28 criminal jury trials and 1 bench trial. That was during COVID-19 obviously, and we were struggling to find ways to serve the community then, but the numbers are much larger now.

We put some of these slides in here just to show trends. The next one [page 14] is our total criminal cases filed per year. As you can see that has stayed fairly static over the years and we essentially have the same number of cases that are being filed for the last six to eight years. As far as our end-of-year pending criminal cases [page 15], you can see over the years that has actually gone down and we attribute that primarily to the creation of our homicide team. Further credit goes to the criminal settlement conferences that are happening now, and we are doing our best to get rid of that backlog that has existed, providing people more access to justice in a timelier fashion.

This next slide [page 16] talks about civil case filings and civil trials. In our civil cases, you can see that we have made great improvements. Last year we had 121 jury trials and 262 bench trials. Then we have our short trial program that is used in cases valued under $50,000. They use a smaller jury, they have to be done in one day, and they handled 73 trials last year. We try our best to make our courtrooms available on Fridays to allow the short trial judges to come in and try these one-day trials. It takes care of lots of business and gets many cases off our dockets. To give you perspective, when we presented last legislative session, there were 27 civil jury trials, 97 bench trials, and 19 short trials, so substantially more work is going on right now.

If we go to the next slide [page 17, Exhibit E], this shows our specialized judges that we have hearing probate, complex business, construction defect, and medical malpractice cases. You will see our number of construction defect cases has dwindled over the years. Medical malpractice has stayed pretty consistent, but previously we did not have a special medical malpractice court. We have created that recently to make sure that we stay on top of those cases. With business court you can see the numbers are at 215 filings and 322 closures. Our goal is to always close more than we have filed because that is the way that we can catch up and stay on top of cases. If we allow more filings to happen than closures, then we are never going to catch up.

Our next slide [page 18] talks about civil filing trends over the year for informational purposes in case you are interested. Civil case filings seem to be going down the last couple of years. I do not know why that is, but it seems like that is what is happening. Our next slide [page 19] shows the pending civil cases and you will see there has been a substantial decrease and that is because of the work of our district court in getting rid of that backlog that we had from COVID-19. We are really proud of that number and how that has gone down so much.

Our next slide [page 20] talks about different types of cases in the Civil Division with the number of cases pending. This is for informational purposes as well, if you are interested. Our next slide [page 21] talks about family filing statistics. Family courts are also very active. There are a number of different case types. The family domestic-type cases are our largest group and generally those cases deal with divorce and child custody. There were 19,947 cases filed last year and we disposed of 26,134. Again, we are disposing of substantially more than what is being filed. We also have the child support, temporary protective orders, and civil commitments cases. We have a lot of business going on there.

Our next slide [page 22] talks about the family court filing statistics in 2022, including juvenile dependency, which are the abuse and neglect cases and juvenile delinquency cases. Our closure rate in the past has been about 110 to 120 percent, but our closure rate for the last couple of years has been more like 200 percent because we are trying to get caught up on what happened with COVID-19. You will see huge closure rates as opposed to new filing rates and I think that is evidence of all the judges in Clark County working really hard. We are ready to try cases when parties and attorneys are ready. I did want to also focus on the fact that we have settlement conferences in family, civil, and criminal. In just about every case type, we do settlement conferences. We have different settlement conference programs with our judges and with the senior judges, who are the retired judges through the Supreme Court. We also have overflow programs in our Civil and Criminal Divisions so that if a judge is scheduled to do two trials at a time, they can send one of those cases to overflow. We try to make it so anybody that wants to do a trial, we can get their trial done.

Next slide [page 23] talks about various trends in the Family Division. You will see that those numbers have remained high over many years and that is not changing. Our next slide [page 24] again talks about various trends in the Family Division. End-of-year pending family domestic cases over the last couple years have gone down. Our goal is to keep those

pending cases going down. Next slide [page 25, Exhibit E] talks about family filing statistics. These are different kinds of cases that are pending in family court. That is for informational purposes and if you have questions about that, we can address it.

Our next slide [page 26] talks about specialty courts and we have a lot of them. We have 15 specialty court programs. We have five judges and four hearing masters that preside over these various courts. During fiscal year 2023, we were fortunate to expand and gain a new EMPOWER program that addresses adolescent domestic violence. You will see that some of these courts are handled by judges, some of them by hearing masters. There is always a judge that presides over the hearing master, but a lot of these are handled by hearing masters as well. Continuing on the topic of specialty courts, there is a slide [page 27] with 2021 statistics and a slide [page 28] with 2022 statistics. We put those in there so you can compare and contrast how things have improved and changed over the last couple of years.

Then we get to our specialty court recidivism slide [page 29]. I wanted to spend just a minute on this because I am really impressed and really proud of the people that we work with because of the information displayed in this slide. These stats on recidivism look at three years postdischarge, so the data is from 2018 participants and program data. Within the Supreme Court and nationwide, I think they are also looking at recidivism rates for three years. We look at somebody that graduated or did not graduate in the 2018 year and did they commit a new crime in the last three years. If you look just at the adult drug court numbers, we have 92.1 percent of those people who graduated from adult drug court who did not commit another crime and were not convicted in the next three years. That is a big number. That means we are 90 percent effective in our specialty courts. If you look at the unsuccessful rate, you will see a number that is 80.9 percent. Even those people who are unsuccessful and do not graduate from the specialty court program learn enough in there that they are not committing crimes over the next three years.

You may wonder, if it is only a 10 percent difference, why are we spending all the money on these specialty courts? I had that question as well. We went back and looked at the average time and treatment, even for those people who are not successful, it is nine months-plus. What that tells us is the more time we are able to keep people in treatment, the more successful they are and the better chance we have in keeping people from committing crimes in the future. We are really happy with our specialty courts and what we are able to accomplish there.

The next slide [page 30] talks about gender and demographic statistics. That is for informational purposes in case you are interested in that. Our next slide [page 31], talks about funding for specialty courts. We need a lot of money for our specialty courts. We have a lot of participants. We have money from AOC, but we do go out and get a lot of money from grants because we know that this is important. We do what we can to provide the services we can for our people. The next slide [page 32] talks about Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA), and Mr. Grierson was instrumental in developing and growing this program. Therefore, I will pass it to him to talk about CASA.

Steven Grierson, Court Executive Officer and Clerk of the Court, Eighth Judicial District Court:

The CASA program is a program that was statutorily created for our Family Division to create a system wherein volunteers are trained to be appointed by our Family Division dependency judges to express the best interest of the child that has been petitioned into our abuse and neglect system. In Clark County, there are over 3,200 of these children working their way through the system. Our CASA program is something that is vitally important because it is an objective, neutral volunteer who creates a relationship with that child and expresses the best interest regardless of the judge or the system. It is a special thing to watch, and the only way that these programs are successful is for them to be funded and supported. This is a great example of our Clark County management team and the Clark County commissioners agreeing that this is really an important part of their overall strategy to help children. They have invested significant amounts of money to try to get the word out that these volunteers are important in our community. We really energized in partnership with our Clark County commissioners and county management team to invest in CASA and these are some of the results shown here.

We applied to be a 2022 Best of Las Vegas organization and we are happy that lots of votes came in allowing us to be the Bronze Award winner for the Best Place to Volunteer. Media campaigns to promote CASA's mission should be appearing more frequently on television and radio. The process of volunteering is very difficult. The volunteers spend much of their own time with these children, and volunteering to be a part of this type of case is quite a commitment. I have always said that I think it is the most honorable volunteer opportunity.

In 2020 and 2021 we had 460 inquiries to become a volunteer. Then we started to invest money in advertising, and we doubled the size of our inquiries just to become a volunteer. You have to inquire because people are looking to see if this is a volunteer opportunity that is right for them. I have always said that if your heart is ready and the time is right, then the CASA volunteering is perfect. But those two elements have to be there, and then that volunteer opportunity just starts to take off. It is a long-term commitment as well, because we ask for two years of volunteering so that they can stabilize with that child and they in turn can depend on their CASA volunteer.

Currently, we are on track to get 1,000 inquiries this year and we are really excited about that. We are also really excited because we are located on the family court campus and there is an old Fortye Hall building down there which was recently renamed. One of our favorite CASAs for many years was Tyrone Thompson, and there was a groundswell over the last year to try to get that building to represent our appreciation and respect for Tyrone and all the things that he did for the program [page 33, Exhibit E]. Well, to highlight a feel-good piece, your Clark County commissioners approved the renaming of that building in his name. It was really special. We have really large plans and really big dreams for it. If anybody is interested in becoming part of that dream, feel free to contact us at the court.

The last slide [page 34] is we had the national CASA volunteer of the year out of our Clark County CASA volunteer program. There are 96,000 CASA volunteers across America

and this woman, who has been a CASA volunteer for 41 years, was selected. We all flew up to Seattle and she was able to receive this award. This is just the photo of her getting a proclamation from the Clark County commissioners recognizing her as the national CASA volunteer of the year. It was very special.

Judge Wiese:
This next slide [page 35] talks about our judicial workload, and I know that some of the prior presentations discussed this. I know that as legislators, you wonder what we judges do. Obviously, we do trials, and we do hearings when there are motions. We conducted 180,411 hearings in 2022. The orders and warrants, these are things that we do when we are not on the bench: the study, research, and review that we have to prepare for when we are doing a hearing or a trial. Our IT department came up with a program recently, called Orders in the Court, that allows us to track the orders that are signed. It also provides us a much easier way to have timely orders signed and processed.

I want to go to the next slide [page 36] which talks about our orders and warrants. The number of orders that we signed throughout 2022 was 231,353 and there were over 9,000 warrants that were signed on behalf of the police department. We are very proud of the work that we have done. This is not a nine-to-five job. I found it interesting, we ran a report the other day just to see how many of these orders and warrants were being done during the workdays versus being done after hours and on weekends. Turns out, we had 75,000-plus warrants and orders that were signed either after hours or on the weekends. This shows our judges are working hard seven days a week and we are very proud of them. We are very proud of the work that we are able to do and the service that we are able to provide for the community. We thank you for your time.

Chair Miller:
Thank you so much for your presentation. With that, we will open it up for questions beginning with Assemblywoman Summers-Armstrong.

Assemblywoman Summers-Armstrong:
Thank you for the quick but very informative presentation. I want to ask you two quick questions. The first was you were talking about the criminal settlement conferences. Do you have data or information that you can share with us on the types of cases that are being settled with the criminal settlement conferences? The second is a similar question regarding family protective orders. I am looking at this slide [page 21, Exhibit E] and they are pretty much on par; there is just a difference of 10,361 that were filed and 10,622 that were disposed. When we talk about protective orders and the instances when we are taking children away from their families, how much of this is related to homelessness? I would appreciate if you could give us some insight on that.

Judge Wiese:
I can at least comment on the first one as far as the criminal settlement conferences. I believe we are handling just about every type of criminal case that is filed. I do not know that we settle a lot of murder trials or murder cases, but I know that there have been some that have

gone to settlement conferences. I think we do those all the way down to the gross misdemeanors. Anything that somebody is going to go to a trial on, we can do settlement conferences if the parties and the attorneys are willing to work towards things. I do not know what our exact numbers are or our success rate on that, but I know that we have settled a lot of cases through that program. As far as the family protective orders, we can get you the information, but I do not know the answer to that question today.

Chair Miller:
If you could submit that to the Committee because I am sure there are other people that have interest in that as well.

Judge Wiese:
Absolutely. We have several hearing masters that handle protective orders on a 5-days-a-week basis, but as far as the specific answer to your question, we just do not have the stats with us.

Assemblywoman Summers-Armstrong:
I have questions regarding these settlement conferences. I am interested in the data because of the number of cases where people get criminal convictions or they take a deal without going to trial; I am concerned about how that affects people's lives long-term, whether or not people are understanding the result of a compromise. It is the same thing as a conviction and I wonder if this is a clear process to them. I know many of these folks are represented by counsel, but we know that a lot of people settled their criminal convictions, and it is of concern.

Following up on the family question, I went on a tour with Clark County to some of their services that they provide for homeless families. There was a discussion about how some folks who are experiencing homelessness are losing custody of their children and how they are trying to do some reunification with families in Clark County. I was wondering if you had any data through the family court area on how many people are losing kids from homelessness, which may qualify as neglect, and where the unification is coming from. I just think that is very interesting that when you are homeless and you lose your kids, it is classified as neglect.

Judge Wiese:
I think it is a good question. I do not know that homelessness is something that we track for each case, but if it is not, it is something that we should keep track of. Let me check with our Family Division and I will get the information for the whole Committee.

Chair Miller:
Could you include the definition that the courts are using for homelessness because I know typically many people assume homelessness would infer unhoused or not having actual consistent shelter, people that are literally living and sleeping on the streets. However, I know in the school district, the definition of homelessness is much broader. Those would include individuals who may have a structural shelter, but it is not their own. You are going

from home to home, couch to couch, this person's place today, that person's place next week. That is still under the definition of homelessness. I think that would help clarify for us if we understood the actual definition that the courts are using.

Judge Wiese:
I will find that out, but I do not know that the courts would be finding somebody abusive or neglective based on the definition or term of homelessness. I think they are looking at the best interests of the children and trying to decide what is in their best interest. I do not know that homelessness actually comes into play in that, but I will find out.

Chair Miller:
If it does not, we would love to hear that as well.

Assemblywoman Cohen:
Thank you for the presentation. I was going to ask some questions about specialty courts and what the different courts had to offer, and then I went to your website and found that information. However, I would like to ask about your Law Enforcement Intervention for Mental Health and Addiction Diversion Program. Can you give us more details about that? As we have talked about in this Committee frequently, mental health and addiction often go hand in hand with court intervention. How was that program helping and what does the program entail?

Steven Grierson:
Law Enforcement Intervention for Mental Health and Addiction is a unique program for the Eighth Judicial District Court. Its genesis was at the request of the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) to try to find a way to divert people entirely from entering the felony system. We are supposed to handle cases in jurisdictions that have cases filed. Diversion and deflection are way out in front of the court systems. Our district court is in a place where we can attempt to support those types of programs, and the DHHS gave us a grant to start that.

We created a coordinator position that is the central hub of all of the referrals from Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department police officers. When they are out in the community, when they find cases and folks that they believe do not belong or they believe should not be cited or arrested to go into the system, then they make the referral to the coordinator. Our contracts for treatment services, because we have so many of them for so many of our other specialty courts, apply to this same particular population because they are just people. So the referrals come into the coordinators and it is an absolutely wonderful project to see these graduates progress. They have a graduation over at the Metro offices and it is purely deflection and diversion for the district court. Very successful.

Assemblywoman La Rue Hatch:
Thank you so much for this presentation. My question to you is the same that I had for the Second Judicial District Court. What is the breakdown of demographics of your employees, the staffing challenges you are facing, and the steps you are taking to address those?

Judge Wiese:
As far as the gender breakdown of our judges are concerned in our Civil/Criminal Division, we have 24 females and 6 males with 2 vacant seats. In our Family Division, we have 16 females and 7 males with 3 vacant seats. Overall, it is 40 females and 13 males for our judges, and I will pass it to Mr. Grierson for the breakdown of the rest of the employees.

Steven Grierson:
There is a report that is done every other year of our demographics and labor, and whether or not our population is appropriate. I will get that report and provide it to the Committee as it explains everything including their analysis of our demographics of our employees. With respect to recruiting, we have modified our recruitment strategy because it is difficult to employ and then retain employees right now. But we have very few vacancies because we are recruiting to a pre-select list. We are not recruiting to the vacancy anymore. If we have an opening, we are recruiting to a pre-select list of the people that are eligible to be hired. Therefore, if someone leaves, we can go right to the next person on the list and make an immediate offer. Our efforts on retention and keeping vacancies full is much better now because of that approach.

Assemblyman Orentlicher:
My question has to do with efforts to promote the quality of judging. I know when I go to cast my ballot, I am always unsure whom should I vote for even though I feel I am sophisticated in this area. It is one of the questions I get asked a lot, "Can you give me advice on the judicial races?" It is not the best way to promote quality to have you go before the voters and you do have the courts of appeal that can reverse you. However, I wonder what you do internally. I am thinking of some models from my academic life; for example, we do peer assessments of professors who are on the tenure track where the more senior colleagues go to observe classes, write reviews, and provide advice. I remember when I was in medical school, the best teaching was in our anatomy course because the whole department would sit in during the lectures. The professor lecturing would have all their peers there. Do you do anything like that with peer assessment to make sure you get to the highest quality of judging?

Judge Wiese:
When a new judge starts, we have an orientation that our administrative staff does, and we also have training that the judges do for each other. We have several new judges that have just recently started in the past couple of months, and we are working on putting together a training program for them so that the other judges can provide some guidance on things that a new judge may not understand. Also, we have, through the AOC, a district judges conference every year where we meet for a week and we get training on things that are up and coming and things that the Supreme Court and the AOC thinks that we need additional training on.

Each new judge has to go through a two-week general jurisdiction training at the National Judicial College up here in Reno, and they also have to do an ethics training. The family

judges have to do an extra four- to five-day training. We have those kinds of training opportunities, but as far as peer review with one judge looking over another judge's shoulder, it is a little bit difficult to do that with elected officials. I like the idea, but I think it is more difficult to implement than we would like to think. I do not know that the judges who may need the extra help would be willing to have somebody looking over their shoulder or watching their hearings, but we can look into that.

Assemblywoman Newby:
Thank you for your presentation. The Eighth Judicial District Court exists in a very diverse community. How do you ensure equal access to justice for folks who may have language or cultural barriers to the way that our judicial system is set up?

Steven Grierson:
Our best approach for that has been through our Legal Aid Center relationship for access to justice and the ability for people to file forms or get guidance on how to file forms. Many of our forms are available through guided interviews and you can do them from the convenience of your home. The questions are formatted by the Legal Aid Center of Southern Nevada. They are trying to help guide them on what it is they have to answer in order for their case to get heard and to have access to a decision or whatever the next step is. Our best effort is through our legal aid centers for that particular concept.

Assemblywoman Newby:
Speaking directly towards the language barrier, I am assuming you have translators. Can you talk about that and the efficacy of that program?

Steven Grierson:
Yes, we have full-time interpreters on staff that are funded by Clark County. We also have a variety of contract interpreters in many different languages. Now with technology it makes it much easier for an interpreter to consult with any area of Clark County. These interpreters also provide services to the Clark County Department of Family Services and the Department of Juvenile Justice Services if they need it or if they need to call in. I believe we have approximately 10 interpreters full-time and probably 40 to 50 contractors in a variety of languages. We even flew people in from, it was either Utah or Colorado, for a trial because the case was in German. Yes, we have robust interpreter language barrier reduction, the ability to handle almost all languages. I do not know of one that we have not been able to handle yet.

Chair Miller:
When you say a variety of languages, how many languages? Knowing the statistics here in Clark County, ten languages is not representative of our southern Nevada population. Can you tell us maybe how many languages they specialize in and which languages?

Steven Grierson:
The full-time interpreters are for Spanish. The contract interpreters cover all of the other languages that you can think of. I have a list of all of the languages that we cover and I will provide that to you. It is a long list of languages.

Chair Miller:
Is it over 100?

Steven Grierson:
If I remember correctly, I believe it is approximately 50 different languages.

Chair Miller:
Okay, so it is close to half of what is spoken in southern Nevada. Making sure that the ability to have interpreters for all our different languages must be looked into. I would love to cross-reference that list with you at a future date. That is the end of our members' questions. Thank you so much for your presentation and we will move on to our last agenda item which is public comment. [Public comment was heard.]

We have completed our business for today. We still have one presentation on Wednesday next week, but the rest of the week will be full of bill hearings for each day. Also, due to the nature of the bills that we have on Monday, we will be changing our start time to 9 a.m. With that, we will go ahead and adjourn. Thank you, have a great weekend.

The meeting adjourned [at 9:41 a.m.].

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED:

_____
Aaron Klatt
Committee Secretary

APPROVED BY:

_____
Assemblywoman Brittney Miller, Chair

DATE: _____

EXHIBITS

Exhibit A is the Agenda.

Exhibit B is the Attendance Roster.

Exhibit C is a copy of a PowerPoint presentation titled "Nevada's Judiciary," presented by Katherine Stocks, Director and State Court Administrator, Administrative Office of the Courts, and John R. McCormick, Assistant Court Administrator, Administrative Office of the Courts.

Exhibit D is a copy of a PowerPoint presentation titled "Second Judicial District Court," dated February 17, 2023, presented by Lynne K. Simons, Chief Judge, Second Judicial District Court.

Exhibit E is a copy of a PowerPoint presentation titled "Eighth Judicial District Court Overview," presented by Jerry A. Wiese II, Chief Judge, Eighth Judicial District Court.