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# A MESSAGE

from the Joint Committee on Judicial Administration

Dear Friends of the District of Columbia Courts:

Every five years, the D.C. Courts develop a Strategic Plan to share the Judicial Branch's goals and priorities with the residents and businesses of the District of Columbia that we serve. As its title reflects, the Plan illuminates a clear path towards our vision for the D.C. Courts: *Open to All, Trusted by All, Justice for All*. We first adopted this vision statement a decade ago. Since then, we have been gratified to see many other courts adopt our vision, or something similar, as it succinctly captures key principles of American justice. The Plan defines how we will achieve our goals of fair and timely case resolution, access to justice, a strong judiciary and workforce, a sound infrastructure, and public trust and confidence in the courts.

The release of this Plan marks the beginning of the D.C. Courts' second decade utilizing strategic management practices to enhance court performance. The Plan builds upon great progress made by our hard-working judiciary and personnel, as well as community and justice system partners and members of the Bar. We have improved access and services to court participants; modernized and preserved historic court facilities; strengthened our workforce and judicial system partners through education and training; and provided fair and impartial resolution of over 100,000 cases annually.

As we look ahead, there will be many challenges. The pace of change continues beyond anything we imagined. Developments in science and technology are altering everything from criminal investigations to presentation of evidence in the courtroom. The public expects greater access to information and, increasingly, to be able to conduct court business online rather than visit the courthouse. Our population is becoming more racially and ethnically diverse, giving rise to language access requirements, cultural competency issues for court personnel, and the need for responsive court services. These and other developments will place new demands on the Courts.

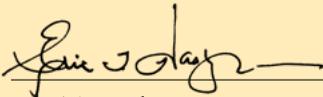
The Courts' 2013–2017 Strategic Plan will help us navigate this changing terrain while we focus on key priorities: enhancing timeliness and efficiency, while ensuring that every case receives individual attention; expanding access to court information and services; maintaining a strong judiciary and workforce; operating safely, effectively, and efficiently; and fostering public trust and confidence.

We thank everyone who shared their experiences and opinions to help create this Plan. We also thank the Courts' Strategic Planning Leadership Council (SPLC), co-led by Judge Phyllis D. Thompson, Associate Judge, Court of Appeals and Judge Herbert B. Dixon, Jr., Associate Judge, Superior Court, which conducted the

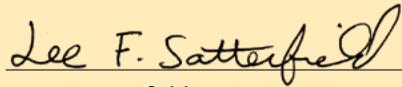
comprehensive outreach and crafted this Plan. The Council worked tirelessly, conducting surveys and focus groups with many groups, and garnered very substantial feedback that the Courts will continue to examine over time. The SPLC will monitor the implementation of this Plan and keep

the Joint Committee apprised of our progress over the next five years.

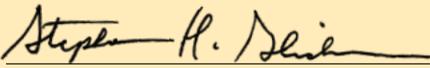
We look forward to working together to achieve the vision set forth in these pages.



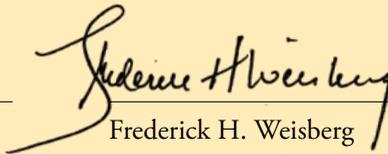
Eric T. Washington  
Chief Judge, Court of Appeals  
Chair, Joint Committee on Judicial Administration



Lee F. Satterfield  
Chief Judge, Superior Court



Stephen H. Glickman  
Associate Judge, Court of Appeals



Frederick H. Weisberg  
Associate Judge, Superior Court



Rhonda Reid Winston  
Associate Judge, Superior Court

# INTRODUCTION

2013 marks the beginning of the District of Columbia Courts' second decade operating within a courtwide strategic planning and management framework that establishes priorities and performance goals for the Judicial Branch. Building on the significant accomplishments made under the two previous strategic plans, this new Plan, *Open to All, Trusted by All, Justice for All: Strategic Plan of the District of Columbia Courts, 2013–2017*, establishes as priorities for the next five years:

- enhancing **timeliness** and efficiency while ensuring that every case receives individual attention and a **fair judicial process**;
- expanding **access** to court information and services to meet public expectations and the needs of diverse community;
- maintaining a **strong judiciary and workforce** who provide excellent public service;
- ensuring that the Courts' **infrastructure** supports safe, effective and efficient operations for the administration of justice;
- fostering **public trust and confidence** in the Courts through enhanced accountability, community outreach, and high standards of professionalism.

In determining these priorities, the Courts sought the views of a broad array of justice system participants and stakeholders. The Courts' Strategic Planning Leadership Council undertook a year-long community outreach effort through surveys and focus groups, which resulted in approximately 4,000 individuals and organizations contributing to our long-range planning process. Litigants, jurors, justice system and community partners, members of the Bar, judicial officers, and court personnel provided their opinions on the Courts' performance, goals, and objectives to achieve our vision of a court system that is *Open To All, Trusted By All, with Justice for All*.

### **ENHANCING TIMELINESS WHILE ENSURING FAIRNESS**

Justice system participants identified enhancing timely case resolution as the top priority the D.C. Courts should address in the next five years. Under the previous Strategic Plan, the Court of Appeals worked to improve time on appeal and the Superior Court developed and continues to monitor performance standards for all case types. The new Plan advances these efforts by calling for implementation of case management plans for all major case categories and other best practices to reduce delay and wait times for litigants, witnesses, attorneys, law enforcement and other court participants. The Courts will additionally expand and assess the use of staggered

calendars (piloted under the 2008–2012 Plan), by which litigants are scheduled to appear in court at different times of the day, to reduce wait times for court hearings and congestion at security check-points. The Court expects a greater impact in the future as other agencies and the public adapt to the new calendaring process.

The Plan also directs the exploration of alternatives to in-person court appearances and the use of paper documents to conduct court business, such as telephone and video conferences and email, electronic case filing and expanded online access to court dockets and documents.

Additional strategies will enhance timely and efficient case resolution by making changes that affect jury service. Although jury trials comprise a small percentage of overall case dispositions, the Courts recognize that jury service, even a one-day, one-trial system, imposes a burden on District residents, thousands of whom are called for service as frequently as every two years. The Plan directs the Courts to improve the use of jurors by examining new approaches for verifying trial readiness and assembling panels for jury selection.

Finally, over the next five years, through continued implementation of a data warehousing and business intelligence initiative, the Courts will build capacity to provide information and analysis

with near real-time reports for judicial officers and court administrators concerning management and disposition of cases, budgeting, personnel, juror efficiency and other areas.

Enhancing timeliness will not be accomplished at the expense of ensuring fairness. The Plan directs the Courts to focus on ensuring that court participants are given an opportunity to be heard, are treated respectfully and impartially by judicial officers and court personnel, and can understand court processes, orders and decisions. These procedural aspects of the court experience are vital to court participants' perceptions of a fair judicial process.

The Plan's previously discussed strategy to enhance the efficient use of jurors will be augmented with an emphasis on enhancing the representativeness of juries by improving the juror summoning process and other strategies. Additionally, the Courts will continue to focus on fairness for indigent parties by ensuring that *pro bono* and court-appointed attorneys have the appropriate training and experience to provide high quality legal representation for their clients.

## **EXPANDING ACCESS TO COURT INFORMATION AND SERVICES**

A second priority for the D.C. Courts over the next five years is to expand access to court information and services, through effective use of technology, community-based services, language translation, and other means. Increasingly, the public expects round-the-clock access to electronic information, including court dockets and case documents.

The Courts responded under previous Plans by establishing several community-based service centers, providing online case dockets, conducting court hearings remotely through video- and web-conferencing, and completely updating our internet site in 2011. This Plan calls for expansion of electronic and community-based services to provide court information and assistance, which will not only improve access but also enhance timely case resolution.

The District of Columbia's population continues to be racially and ethnically diverse, with a rising population of Latino residents as well as people from African nations and from Asian and Pacific Island countries. To meet the challenges of ensuring access to the Courts for an increasingly diverse community, the Plan directs the Courts to ensure that information and services are readily available in the foreign languages found most often in our community. In addition, the Plan calls

for the Courts to further a plain-language initiative to ensure that all written documents, such as court forms, orders and decisions, are written in easily understandable language, without legal jargon whenever possible. The Plan also specifies that judicial officers and court personnel will

*“The D.C. Courts’ strategic planning process has helped strengthen our institutional identity, commitment to mission, and mutual responsibility for the Courts’ performance.”*

— CHIEF JUDGE ERIC T. WASHINGTON

receive cultural competency and diversity training to enhance their service to court participants with different backgrounds.

In addition to providing access to those with cultural and language diversity, the Plan addresses access for special needs populations such as the elderly, self-represented litigants, persons with mental health issues, and those with physical disabilities.

While senior citizens comprised only about 1 in 10 District residents in 2010, the Court experienced a 20 percent increase in adult guardianship filings from 2009 to 2011. This increase is expected to continue. Older court users may require accommodations such as large-print documents, additional seated waiting areas, and other modifications in court facilities or services.

An increasing number of litigants cannot afford or choose not to use attorneys, and the Courts will continue to pursue partnerships with the Bar to provide self-help centers for unrepresented litigants, to expand the availability of limited-scope representation, and to employ technology that facilitates access to court services, such as online chat capability and forms which can be completed and filed electronically.

### **STRONG JUDICIARY AND WORKFORCE**

The third priority of this Plan is to ensure that the D.C. Courts continue to provide high quality justice and service to the public with limited resources in these difficult economic times.

The Courts’ strong judiciary and workforce are our most important assets in meeting this challenge. We are fortunate to have a very distinguished judiciary of over 100 Associate and Senior Judges, appointed by the President of the United States following a local nomination

process, who are assisted by 25 Magistrate Judges. Additionally, we have a highly skilled team of approximately 1,200 personnel who are dedicated to public service and the mission of the Courts. However, like many federal government agencies, the Courts anticipate that a significant number of our senior personnel will retire in the next three to five years, necessitating a courtwide workforce and succession planning effort, as well as reorganization of some positions and job functions. As new employees are hired, with different skill sets and work expectations, the Courts must make adjustments in work processes, performance management, employee development, leadership and supervision, and the work environment. The Human Resources Division has a vital role to play in guiding the Courts through these transitions, and is changing to become a strategic partner in forecasting and meeting the Courts' human capital needs in the future. The Human Resources Division has developed its own strategic plan, which implements and expands on the strategies of the courtwide Plan. It has already launched a number of initiatives to address future workforce needs, including a new human resources information system and a workforce planning project.

The Center for Education and Training likewise has an important responsibility in the coming years to anticipate and prepare our changing workforce for new job responsibilities brought about by advances in technology, and new knowledge, skills and abilities of court personnel. This Plan identifies a number of training areas for judicial officers and court personnel, including training on cultural competency issues, self-represented litigants, elderly court users, and persons with mental health issues.

Under the previous Plan, the D.C. Courts launched the "Building a Great Place to Work" initiative to create a workplace culture and environment that foster high performance and employee satisfaction. This led to the Courts' biennial participation in the Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey and the Working on Wellness and Work-Life Balance programs, as well as numerous training initiatives for senior managers.

Continuing the "Building a Great Place to Work" initiative, this Plan calls for the creation of programs and work processes designed to promote employee engagement and well-being. Recent research has clearly established the link between highly engaged employees and high-performing organizations, and the benefits of focusing on employee well-being in terms of higher productivity and retention of skilled personnel.

## **CONTINUED SAFE, EFFECTIVE AND EFFICIENT OPERATIONS**

Another focus over the next five years is to maintain a safe, sound and efficient infrastructure as the Courts face budget constraints. The Courts' physical facilities and technology must be safeguarded and maximized to promote effective and efficient operations. Towards this end, the Plan calls for continued implementation of the D.C. Courts' Facilities Master Plan, which guides the allocation of capital funding to support facilities' upgrades, renovation and construction projects, and the IT Strategic Plan, which directs technology initiatives and projects to enhance case processing and other business operations.

Guided by feedback from court users, the Courts will focus on ensuring that facilities are fully accessible and easily navigable by the public with the assistance of effective signage, maps, information displays, and the like. In the area of technology, the Courts will expand the use of electronic and social media to communicate with the public and court personnel, and increase access to online court services and use of email, video- and telephone-conferencing, and other technology to streamline court processes and reduce the need for in-court appearances.

The Courts will continue to devote resources and attention to maintaining a safe and secure

physical environment for the administration of justice. In recent years, the Courts have invested substantially to enhance the security infrastructure, including physical structure improvements such as new magnetometers and x-ray equipment, a new access control system, and new garage entry barriers, as well as hiring a full-time Chief Security Officer and an Access Control Manager. This Plan directs ongoing implementation of physical security enhancements identified in annual, courtwide Security Assessments, preservation of court records and data, and annual security-awareness training for all employees.

## **PUBLIC TRUST AND CONFIDENCE IN THE COURTS**

An ongoing goal of the D.C. Courts is to maintain the trust and confidence of the community we serve. This Plan contains three objectives that we believe are foundational to public trust and confidence in the Courts.

First and foremost, the D.C. Courts must be accountable to the community we serve. We must instill confidence that disputes are resolved based on the facts and the law by a fair and knowledgeable judiciary. We must ensure that appropriate information and services are available to the public. Additionally, the Courts are committed to continue implementing courtwide and division performance measures to assess our progress

and guide actions to meet strategic and operational goals. The Plan directs that the Courts will continue to seek and manage public funds prudently, and will operate transparently by making caseload, financial and program assessments readily available. The Family Court Social Services Division will continue to promote public safety by providing effective supervision, rehabilitation, and treatment of court-involved youth.

Second, the D.C. Courts are committed to maintaining public trust and confidence by enhancing understanding of the Judicial Branch. The Plan outlines strategies to accomplish this objective, such as participating in public meetings, conducting community forums, and promoting civics education. Through these efforts, the Courts can communicate clear expectations about our role in the administration of justice and related processes. Additionally, providing up-to-date information about court operations, programs, and services through multimedia will help facilitate the public's understanding, trust and confidence.

Lastly, it is incumbent on us to set standards for conduct and performance for all who serve the judicial system. Public trust and confidence in the Courts cannot exist without respect for the institution as the third branch of government. A

new Code of Judicial Conduct was promulgated in 2012, and the Courts expect to develop codes of conduct for court participants and personnel in the near future.

### **COURT VALUES UPDATED**

In this Plan, the Courts' Values, which were originally developed a decade ago for the 2003–2007 Plan, have been updated. The Courts' workforce and internal work environment have changed, as has the external environment in which we operate. It became clear that it was time to review our Values and to re-commit our workforce to

*“Our court values are  
fundamental to our  
judiciary and personnel.  
Accountability, excellence,  
fairness, integrity, respect,  
and transparency—all  
are essential to ensuring  
trust and confidence in  
the Courts.”*

— CHIEF JUDGE LEE F. SATTERFIELD

practicing the Values in all aspects of our work and in our interactions with others. The Values are core principles which underlie a code of expected behavior and conduct among the D.C. Courts' judiciary and court personnel.

These Values reflect the input of our judicial officers, managers and staff, as well as the expectations of the public we serve. They prescribe individual and organizational standards to which we hold ourselves accountable, and enable the Courts to manage both continuity and change, as we continue to focus on our mission while remaining flexible, innovative and responsive to our changing environment. Court leaders will model the Values and establish an environment in which judicial officers and court personnel are expected to adhere to them at all times.

## ACCOUNTABILITY

We take responsibility for our conduct and are answerable for our performance.

## EXCELLENCE

We provide the highest quality of service in everything we do.

## FAIRNESS

We are impartial in our actions, decisions and treatment of others.

## INTEGRITY

We demonstrate the highest standards of ethical behavior.

## RESPECT

We treat everyone with dignity, courtesy and understanding.

## TRANSPARENCY

We are open in our processes and communicate our actions and decisions clearly.

# VISION

of the District of Columbia Courts

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**OPEN TO ALL,  
TRUSTED BY ALL,  
JUSTICE FOR ALL**

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First created in 2003, the District of Columbia Courts' Vision Statement has been adopted in whole or in part by several courts around the country. Simple and compelling, our Vision describes the court system we aspire to be:



We are guided by this Vision when we develop strategic goals and priorities for the Courts, allocate resources, make decisions, and perform our day-to-day work.

# MISSION

of the District of Columbia Courts

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**To protect rights and liberties, uphold and interpret the law,  
and resolve disputes peacefully,  
fairly and effectively in the District of Columbia.**

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The Mission Statement of the District of Columbia Courts describes our purpose as an organization. As the third branch of the Government of the District of Columbia, the Courts are entrusted with the essential role of preserving the rule of law while protecting public safety. Increasingly, courts are challenged to stay focused on the core mission of fairly and timely resolving cases and controversies brought before them, while remaining cognizant of the changing needs of the community and public expectations that the Judicial Branch should solve complex social problems. The D.C. Courts continually strive to perform our mission effectively and efficiently while remaining accessible, innovative and responsive to the community we serve.

*“True peace is not  
merely the absence  
of tension, it is the  
presence of Justice.”*

— DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.

# VALUES

of the District of Columbia Courts

The D.C. Courts' Values are core principles which underlie a code of expected behavior and conduct for the D.C. Courts' judiciary and court personnel. It is the personal responsibility of each judicial officer and court employee to carry out his or her duties, and to interact with colleagues, judges and managers, co-workers and subordinate personnel, all court participants, and members of the public, in accordance with these Values at all times. Collectively, the Values articulate a court culture which exemplifies the highest standards of professionalism, service, and performance. The important mission of the Judicial Branch demands no less from all who are privileged to work within the court system.

*“Your beliefs become your thoughts.  
Your thoughts become your words.  
Your words become your actions.  
Your actions become your habits.  
Your habits become your values.  
Your values become your destiny.”*

— MAHATMA GANDHI



## ACCOUNTABILITY

We take responsibility for our conduct and are answerable for our performance.

## EXCELLENCE

We provide the highest quality of service in everything we do.

## FAIRNESS

We are impartial in our actions, decisions and treatment of others.

## INTEGRITY

We demonstrate the highest standards of ethical behavior.

## RESPECT

We treat everyone with dignity, courtesy and understanding.

## TRANSPARENCY

We are open in our processes and communicate our actions and decisions clearly.

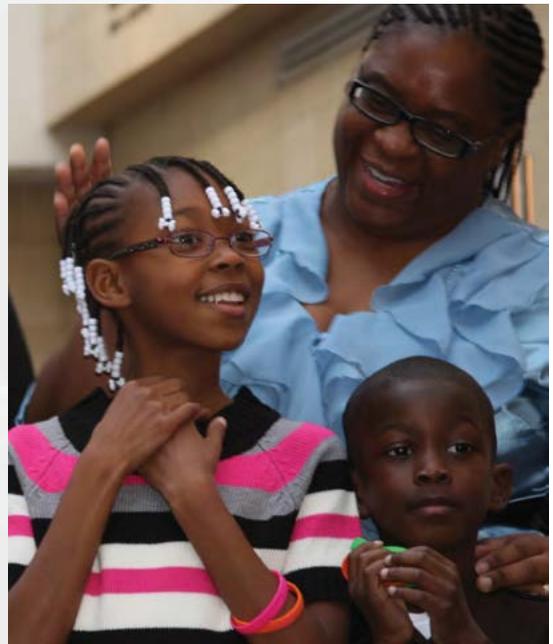
# GOAL 1

## Fair and Timely Case Resolution

Courts exist to provide justice, to resolve disputes, to enhance social order, and to interpret and apply the law. For that reason, courts must resolve conflicts fairly and timely. Judges must provide fair outcomes while ensuring that their actions and language reflect respect and impartiality, and enhance the public's understanding of the process in which they are a participant. Through these actions and others, the courts will establish greater confidence that proceedings and treatment of litigants are free of bias. At the same time, we must continually provide effective management and develop innovative procedures to ensure that disputes are resolved without undue delay.

### **A** The D.C. Courts will resolve cases fairly and impartially.

- 1 Ensure procedural fairness for litigants by providing appropriate opportunities to be heard, respectful treatment, impartial case processing, and clear explanations of court procedures and decisions.
- 2 Enhance fairness in jury trials by conducting civics education on the importance of jury service during events such as National Jury Appreciation Week, continually updating juror sources, and utilizing other means to increase citizen response to juror summonses.
- 3 Provide high-quality legal representation for indigent parties by ensuring that volunteer and court-appointed attorneys have the appropriate training and experience.



Adoption Day

**B** The D.C. Courts will manage and resolve cases in a timely and efficient manner.

- 1 Provide efficient case processing by implementing case management plans, performance standards, and other best practices for all case types.
- 2 Promote timely case resolution by providing optimal resources to judicial officers that support courtroom operations, effective case management, and timely judicial decision-making.
- 3 Minimize delays for court participants by expanding use of staggered calendars, providing sufficient back-up judicial resources, and implementing practices to reduce scheduling conflicts.
- 4 Enhance efficient and timely case resolution and customer satisfaction by leveraging technology to include expanded e-filing and online document access, appropriate alternatives to in-person court appearances such as video and telephone conferencing, and other approaches.
- 5 Improve the efficient use of jurors by examining new approaches for verifying trial readiness, calling jurors for service, and assembling panels.

*“I want to do more for our citizens who report for jury duty. We must recognize their time and use it wisely.”*

— CHIEF JUDGE LEE F. SATTERFIELD



Judge José Lopéz shares information on the Domestic Violence Unit.

# GOAL 2

## Access to Justice

Courts must be open and accessible. The D.C. Courts are committed to providing equal access to all who seek to come before us. We continually strive to eliminate unnecessary barriers to services and to ensure that court processes and procedures do not create barriers. Limited English proficiency and/or limited knowledge of the court system can also be a barrier to accessing court services. Our courts will ensure that the services we provide make justice available to our diverse community.

### **A** The D.C. Courts will ensure access to court services for all persons.

- 1 Enhance court services to every segment of the community by studying the feasibility of creating a “Public Service Center” to expand the functions and services of the current Information Center.
- 2 Expand access to the Courts by increasing the establishment of community-based service centers, exploring co-location opportunities with other government agencies, and providing additional after-hours services.
- 3 Enhance assistance to the public by training court personnel on the unique needs of special populations such as the elderly, self-represented persons, and individuals with physical and mental health issues, and by providing services to meet the needs.
- 4 Promote access to legal services for litigants without lawyers by expanding the use of limited-scope representation, encouraging self-help centers in partnership with the Bar, and employing technology such as online chats and fillable forms.



Court greeters assist the public.

**B** The D.C. Courts will promote understanding of court proceedings and processes through plain language initiatives, language interpretation and translation services, and other approaches.

- 1 Help the public better understand court processes and procedures by using plain language in written documents.
- 2 Ensure language access for limited English proficient (LEP) individuals by maintaining an up-to-date Language Access Plan and conducting outreach initiatives to inform members of LEP communities of available court resources and assistance, through public service announcements, presentations at community meetings and similar efforts.

*“Ensuring appropriate language access to the courts for persons with limited English proficiency is an important issue facing our justice system.”*

— CHIEF JUDGE ERIC T. WASHINGTON



PHOTO COURTESY OF NATIONAL CENTER FOR STATE COURTS

Chief Judge Eric T. Washington speaks at the 2012 National Summit on Language Access.



Judge Milton Lee (right) congratulates a Fathering Court graduate.

# GOAL 3

## A Strong Judiciary and Workforce

Maintaining a strong judiciary and workforce is essential to achieving excellence in the administration of justice. The Courts must attract, employ, retain, and manage a workforce that is highly qualified and diverse. The Courts must continue the professional development of judges and court employees to ensure that they adhere to the highest standards of integrity, excellence, professionalism, and accountability. The Courts must be culturally aware and treat all persons with respect and fairness. Additionally, the Courts must value and support all employees to promote high achievement, engagement and job satisfaction.

**A** The D.C. Courts will maintain a strong judiciary and workforce who adhere to the highest standards of conduct and who are committed to excellent public service.

- 1 Encourage professional development through mentoring, coaching, job rotation, and other educational opportunities and initiate an inter-divisional cross-training program.
- 2 Foster understanding and respect for all persons by developing and implementing an Employee Code of Conduct and trainings on cultural competency, civility, generational differences, and the value of diversity.
- 3 Meet current and future employee and organizational needs that will support service excellence by implementing the Human Resources Strategic Plan.
- 4 Ensure that the Employee Performance Management System is fair and promotes individual accountability by assessing the current system and making changes as needed.



Chief Judge Lee F. Satterfield welcomes Associate Judge Jennifer Di Toro to the Superior Court bench.

**B** The D.C. Courts will be a Great Place to Work that supports and encourages an engaged workforce.

- 1 Enhance the physical, emotional, social, and financial health of employees by promoting well-being initiatives.
- 2 Strengthen internal communication and workplace satisfaction through greater use of technology, periodic forums with court personnel, and communication plans for all initiatives.
- 3 Enhance employee contribution and connection to their work by seeking broad input and encouraging innovative and collaborative approaches to improve work processes, resolve problems, and enhance customer service.
- 4 Promote employee engagement by sponsoring employee appreciation events during Public Service Recognition Week.

*“Our employees have great ideas for improving how we serve the public and for making the D.C. Courts a great place to work; we just need to find ways to tap their creativity.”*

— EXECUTIVE OFFICER ANNE B. WICKS



Executive Officer Anne B. Wicks (second from right) congratulates Management Training Program awardees.

# GOAL 4

## A Sound Infrastructure

Just as courts preserve and enforce the rule of law, so must our courthouses provide physical facilities and technology that serve as an appropriate foundation for a modern judicial system. Court buildings must provide sufficient, functional space for the administration of justice. Technology must meet the present and future needs of court users and the workforce. We must have proper security procedures, technology, personnel, and architectural features to protect not only the safety of the people and property within and around the courts, but also the integrity of the judicial process.

### **A** The D.C. Courts will use technology to enhance case management and information sharing.

- 1 Enhance case processing, information management, and performance measurement and reporting through targeted technology investments.
- 2 Employ technology to readily communicate with the public and court personnel by expanding the use of electronic and social media.
- 3 Utilize technology to ensure timely access to court documents, proceedings, and services by expanding video and web conferencing opportunities, providing internet and online services, and employing other means to broaden accessibility of court information and services.



Top: Historic Courthouse. Bottom: Moultrie Courthouse.

**B The D.C. Courts will ensure that facilities are accessible and support efficient and effective operations.**

- 1 Ensure that court facilities are physically accessible to all persons and are easily navigable by the public through effective signage, information displays, and other means.
- 2 Assure that capital investments are cost-effective and that the physical environment is appropriate for operations and functional for personnel and the public through continued implementation of the Courts' Facilities Master Plan.

**C The D.C. Courts will provide a safe environment for the administration of justice and ensure that operations continue in the event of an emergency or disaster.**

- 1 Ensure the safety of persons in the courthouse by performing ongoing reviews of physical security, conducting a comprehensive annual Security Assessment, and implementing security enhancements based on risk levels and best practices.
- 2 Protect the Courts' records by implementing best practices, employing technology to secure information, and conducting annual security-awareness training.
- 3 Ensure that the Courts can function during emergencies by maintaining a Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP) that is coordinated with all justice system partners, continuously updated, and routinely communicated.

*“We have made tremendous strides in leveraging technology to work more efficiently and provide better services for the public, such as expanded e-filing, our newly re-designed internet, on-line chat services, and electronic access to case dockets.”*

— CHIEF JUDGE LEE F. SATTERFIELD



Opening of Northeast Balanced and Restorative Justice Center

# GOAL 5

## Public Trust and Confidence

Public trust and confidence in the courts are essential to an orderly society. People must have confidence that disputes are resolved by a fair and knowledgeable judiciary who decide cases on the facts and the law. The courts must communicate clear expectations for the administration of justice, its processes, and behavior appropriate to the process. At the same time, independence in decisions does not exempt the courts from accountability for our performance, responsiveness of services, and appropriate use of public monies. We must continually strive to be open and accountable for our actions and decisions, while providing impartial and consistent justice.

### **A** The D.C. Courts will be accountable to the public.

- 1 Ensure that appropriate programs and services are available to the public by monitoring changing demographics, seeking community input, and implementing best-practice strategies.
- 2 Address community issues through collaboration with justice system and public service partners, the Bar, universities, and other organizations.
- 3 Assure sound fiscal practices and adequate resources by responsibly seeking and managing public funds.
- 4 Ensure the effectiveness of court operations by establishing performance measures, monitoring results, and evaluating programs and services.
- 5 Operate transparently by making caseload information, financial reports, budgets, and program assessments readily available.
- 6 Promote public safety by providing effective supervision, rehabilitation, and treatment of court-involved youth.

*“We must never forget that the only real source of power that we as judges can tap is the respect of the people .”*

— SUPREME COURT JUSTICE THURGOOD MARSHALL

**B** The D.C. Courts will actively work to enhance public understanding of the judicial branch.

- 1 Educate the community about the Courts' role and authority by participating in public meetings, conducting community forums, and promoting civics education.
- 2 Provide up-to-date information about court operations, programs and services through a variety of media including cable TV, the Courts' website, and public service announcements.

**C** The D.C. Courts will create an environment of courtesy, civility, respect, and decorum.

- 1 Promote appropriate and respectful behavior by court users by developing a Courthouse Code of Conduct and communicating it through signage, videos, and external publicity.
- 2 Ensure that court personnel demonstrate professionalism, exemplify the Courts' Values, and provide excellent customer service through in-service training programs, coaching, and role modeling.

*“Civics education is tremendously important for today’s youth, as they need to understand their role in the community and how our government works, so they can be fully contributing members of society.”*

— CHIEF JUDGE ERIC T. WASHINGTON



Employees seeking feedback from court participants

# CONTRIBUTORS

## to the D.C. Courts' 2013–2017 Strategic Plan

Many people and organizations contributed to this Plan. The Courts' Strategic Planning Leadership Council planned and coordinated a year-long outreach effort to gather the opinions of justice system participants. An unprecedented number of litigants, jurors, justice system and community partners, members of the Bar, and, of course, the D.C. Courts' judiciary and court staff, participated in surveys and focus groups to provide their views regarding the Courts' priorities over the next five years. This Plan reflects the input of approximately 4,000 court stakeholders.

In recognition of Law Day, on May 2, 2011, the Courts conducted a one-day survey of everyone visiting the Judiciary Square complex, including litigants, their family members and friends, attorneys, witnesses, jurors, law enforcement and social services agency personnel, and others. Over 70 judges and court staff volunteered to hand out surveys in four court buildings on the Judiciary Square campus. These volunteers wore "You Be the Judge" t-shirts and encouraged court visitors to give their feedback on the Courts' performance at the conclusion of their visit. Approximately 1,300 individuals returned completed surveys, providing valuable information

as to court users' perceptions of the quality of their experience.

In June 2011, with the assistance of the D.C. Bar, the Courts conducted an electronic survey of attorneys with cases filed in the Superior Court and Court of Appeals between January 2009 and March 2011. Approximately 1,150 attorneys provided input on a variety of topics pertaining to fair and equal treatment of court participants; timely case resolution; access to court information and services; responsiveness of court personnel; clarity of court processes, orders and decisions; and the like.

The D.C. Courts' judiciary and court staff contributed immensely to the development of this Plan. In July 2011, the judiciary participated in a strategic planning survey which solicited their input on a variety of topics related to calendar and case management, service to the public, the Courts' role and responsibilities in the community, court administration and funding, workplace environment, continuing education opportunities, and the like.

In September 2011, all D.C. Courts' judicial officers and personnel participated in the 2011

Employee Viewpoint Survey, a federal government survey that the Courts have elected to administer biennially to our workforce. This survey, which is conducted by the U.S. Office of Personnel Management for federal government agencies, solicits employee perceptions in areas such as skills/mission match, leadership, work/life balance, workplace satisfaction, performance management, and workforce development. Nearly three-quarters of the D.C. Courts' workforce participated in the survey, and the results have been used to inform the goals and strategies of the 2013–2017 Strategic Plan as well as the Human Resources Division's Strategic Plan.

In November 2011, the Superior Court Board of Judges attended a strategic planning session to discuss the judicial survey results and identify issues and strategies for the 2013–2017 Strategic Plan. Approximately 100 judicial officers were present for this session. In April 2012, the Court of Appeals Board of Judges met to review and discuss judicial and attorney survey results pertaining to the appellate court. In April 2012, a session was held with Superior Court Magistrate Judges to discuss matters particularly relevant to them.

The Courts held a series of seven strategic planning sessions for court managers and staff in February 2012. Nearly half of the Courts' workforce, or approximately 500 employees, participated in the "Many Voices, One Court: Strategic Planning Forums." Employees contributed many ideas on how to improve service to the public and make the D.C. Courts a "Great Place to Work." Their input is reflected throughout the Plan, and has also led to several efforts already underway to enhance internal communication and employee engagement.

From January through April 2012, the Courts sought input from justice system and public service agencies which interact regularly with the Courts. A survey solicited these institutional users' in-depth comments on the Courts' role in addressing important public safety and justice issues in the District of Columbia and our progress in meeting strategic goals of the Courts' 2008–2012 Strategic Plan.

We were very gratified to receive approximately 100 responses from members of the following organizations:

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|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------|
| Appellate Bar                                                                           | • Domestic Violence Legal Empowerment and Appeals Project (DV LEAP)    | D.C. Access to Justice Commission                       |
| Council for Court Excellence                                                            |                                                                        | D.C. Courts' Security Committee                         |
| D.C. Consortium of Legal Service Providers, <i>representing the following agencies:</i> | • The Employment Justice Center                                        | D.C. Courts' Standing Committee on Fairness and Access  |
| • The American Civil Liberties Union of the Nation's Capital                            | • The Legal Aid Society                                                | D.C. Criminal Justice Coordinating Council              |
| • Advocates for Justice and Education                                                   | • Jeremiah's Circle of Friends                                         | D.C. Advisory Neighborhood Commissioners                |
| • The Archdiocesan Legal Network, Catholic Charities                                    | • Legal Counsel for the Elderly                                        | Domestic Violence Implementation Committee              |
| • The Asian Pacific American Legal Resource Center                                      | • Mil Mujeres                                                          | Estates, Trusts and Probate Law Section of the D.C. Bar |
| • Ayuda, Inc.                                                                           | • Neighborhood Legal Services Program                                  | Family Court Trial Lawyers Association                  |
| • Bread for the City                                                                    | • Our Place, D.C.                                                      | Family Law Section of the D.C. Bar                      |
| • Capital Area Immigrants Rights (CAIR) Coalition                                       | • The Public Defender Service of the District of Columbia              | Pretrial Services Agency                                |
| • Central American Resource Center (CARECEN)                                            | • The Quality Trust for Individuals with Disabilities                  | Superior Court Trial Lawyers Association                |
| • The Children's Law Center                                                             | • University of the District of Columbia David A. Clarke School of Law | U.S. Attorney's Office of the District of Columbia      |
| • D.C. Crime Victims Resource Center                                                    | • University Legal Services                                            |                                                         |
| • D.C. Law Students in Court                                                            | • Washington Area Lawyers for the Arts                                 |                                                         |
| • The District of Columbia Bar Pro Bono Program                                         | • The Washington Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights                   |                                                         |
| • The D.C. Volunteer Lawyers' Project                                                   | • The Washington Legal Clinic for the Homeless                         |                                                         |
|                                                                                         | • Whitman-Walker Health Legal Services Program                         |                                                         |

In addition to soliciting direct feedback from court participants and personnel, the D.C. Courts' Strategic Planning Leadership Council reviewed studies and reports on the demographic and economic profiles of the local community, public safety and criminal justice issues, and other topics pertaining to court administration and operations, to develop the 2013–2017 Strategic Plan. The Council benefited from an informative presentation on demographic trends in the District of Columbia by the D.C. Office of Planning. The Council met with the Courts' Standing Committee on Fairness and Access, and with the Security Committee, to discuss issues to be addressed over the next few years.

Collectively, this wealth of input by individuals and organizations that care about the District of Columbia's justice system enabled the Council to assess the Courts' progress in meeting strategic goals candidly and from multiple perspectives, and to develop a Plan for 2013–2017 that will sharpen our focus on unmet needs and new challenges to the administration of justice.

# ABOUT

## the District of Columbia Courts

Comprised of the Court of Appeals, the Superior Court, and the Court System, the District of Columbia Courts constitute the Judicial Branch of the District of Columbia Government. The Courts serve the 600,000 residents of the District of Columbia, and also hear cases involving residents and businesses of the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area, which has a population of over 5.5 million. Approximately 100,000 new cases are filed in the D.C. Courts annually.

As the District of Columbia's highest court, the Court of Appeals reviews all appeals from the Superior Court as well as decisions and orders of D.C. Government administrative agencies. Final judgments of the Court of Appeals are reviewable by the United States Supreme Court. The Court of Appeals also manages the admission of attorneys to the District of Columbia Bar and attorney disciplinary matters, through the Board on Professional Responsibility, and regulates the practice of law in the District of Columbia.

The Superior Court is a trial court of general jurisdiction which handles virtually all non-administrative legal matters in the District of Columbia. Cases are processed in the Civil, Criminal, Probate, and Tax Divisions, a Domestic Violence Unit, and a Family Court, which also operates the District of Columbia's juvenile probation department. The Superior Court offers alternative dispute resolution services and a crime victims'

compensation program. In addition to hearing cases involving local issues, the Superior Court is a frequent venue for matters that uniquely occur in the Nation's Capital, such as citizens exercising their First Amendment rights to redress grievances against the federal government, or engaging in civil disobedience in an effort to highlight issues of national importance.

The Court System provides services to both the Court of Appeals and Superior Court, and includes a variety of administrative divisions which provide technical and support services.

The D.C. Courts have nearly 100 full-time, active judicial officers, including two Chief Judges, 69 associate judges, and 25 magistrate judges, and senior judges who hear cases on a part-time basis. Associate judges are nominated by the President of the United States and confirmed by the U.S. Senate. They serve 15-year terms, and are eligible to be re-appointed. The Courts employ a staff of approximately 1,200 employees. Court governance is provided by the Joint Committee on Judicial Administration, a policy-making body chaired by the Chief Judge of the Court of Appeals. An Executive Officer is responsible for the administration of the Courts subject to the supervision of the Chief Judges. The Courts' annual budget is approximately \$300 million. For more information, visit the D.C. Courts' website at: [www.dccourts.gov](http://www.dccourts.gov).

# STRATEGIC PLANNING

Leadership Council

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