

MINUTES OF THE WDMO FEDERAL PRACTICE COMMITTEE
January 21, 2011 – Kansas City, Missouri and Via Teleconference

Present in person: Willie Epps, Julia Kitsmiller, Lynnette Siegel, Lisa Nouri, Brian Gaddy, Doug Harpool, Diana Diaz, and Matt Dameron

Present via teleconference: Travis Poindexter, Marsha Fischer, Rodney Nichols, and Jeff Ray

Meeting and Approval of Minutes

The Federal Practice Committee for the U.S. District Court for the Western District of Missouri (“FPC” or “the Committee”) held its first business meeting of 2011 on January 21, 2011, at the offices of Shook, Hardy & Bacon L.L.P. in Kansas City, Missouri.

The business meeting convened at 12:00 p.m. Mr. Epps asked for additions or corrections to the minutes from November 17, 2010. Hearing none, Ms. Nouri moved for their approval and Ms. Kitsmiller seconded the motion. The Committee approved the minutes unanimously.

2011 Meeting Dates

Mr. Epps reviewed the Committee’s meeting dates for 2011 (attached to the meeting’s agenda) and noted the Committee’s intent to schedule the Jefferson City and Springfield meetings in conjunction with receptions or other local events.

Community Outreach

Ms. Diaz represented the Clerk’s office and facilitated the portion of the meeting concerning community outreach. She outlined the Court’s efforts to reach out to the community and educate different civic groups about the federal courts generally, and the Western District in particular.

Ms. Diaz reviewed the Power Point presentation created by the Clerk’s office for members of the Committee to present to civic groups. She noted that in the past members of the Committee have given the presentation in conjunction with a judge from the Court. Ms. Diaz highlighted the frequent topics of discussion, including jury service, the differences between federal and state court, and the process for selecting federal judges. Ms. Diaz noted that the Clerk’s office provides speaker notes for the Power Point presentation, and the Clerk’s office will tailor the presentation to a particular civic group based on the group’s interests. In addition to civic service groups (i.e., Rotary, Kiwanis, etc.), Ms. Diaz also encouraged members to consider giving the presentation to local chambers of commerce.

Ms. Diaz also distributed and reviewed the letter that Chief Judge Gaitan sends to community groups notifying them that the speakers program is available. Ms. Diaz also reviewed the pamphlet created by the Court to market the speakers program, and she solicited any ideas or suggestions for improving the marketing materials for the speakers program, including ideas for improving the website. She noted that the pamphlet would be made available online in the near future.

Ms. Nouri and Mr. Epps briefly outlined their experiences giving the Power Point presentation to civic groups. Ms. Nouri gave the presentation to the Downtown Rotary Club with Judge Fenner, and she noted there was a large crowd with an active question and answer session after the presentation. Mr. Epps gave the presentation to the Mid-Town AARP with Judge Maughmer, and he also noted an active question and answer session. Both Ms. Nouri and Mr. Epps encouraged members of the Committee to participate in the presentations, and they both conveyed positive experiences with the presentation. Mr. Gaddy also stressed that community outreach is an important role for the Committee, and he also encouraged participation by Committee members.

Regarding scheduling a program for the Springfield Rotary, Mr. Nichols indicated he has been unable to schedule something. He noted that a breakfast rotary club is forming in Springfield, and he indicated he may reach out to that nascent group to gauge its interest. Mr. Harpool suggested also reaching out to Kiwanis.

New Business

Mr. Epps expressed his recommendation for Ms. Kitsmiller to serve as Chair-Elect of the Committee in 2011. Mr. Dameron moved to so designate Ms. Kitsmiller, and Ms. Siegel seconded the motion. The Committee approved the motion unanimously with Ms. Kitsmiller abstaining from the vote.

Mr. Epps led a discussion about the Committee's plans for 2011. He indicated that in the past the Committee has developed a few initiatives for the Court to consider, including possible changes to the local rules or other updates that members of the Committee believe warrant consideration. Mr. Gaddy noted that the Committee previously solicited ideas from all ECF registered users, but the Committee did not receive any responses. Mr. Epps encouraged members to brainstorm and try to develop possible ideas for initiatives.

Regarding a possible program related to criminal sentencing, Mr. Epps indicated that the Court may ask the Committee to sponsor a forum concerning perceived sentencing disparities in child pornography cases. The forum would include speakers on the topic to provide an objective view of sentencing in such cases. Mr. Epps stated he believes the U.S. Attorney's office would be willing to participate, and he asked Mr. Poindexter to take the lead on doing some groundwork for sponsoring the forum, including identifying possible speakers.

To conclude new business, Mr. Epps noted that the Court is hosting the Eighth Circuit Judicial Conference in August 2012 and he asked all members of the Committee to keep those dates on their calendars as the Court will be asking the Committee to provide assistance.

Hearing no other business, the meeting adjourned at 1:00 p.m.