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Conference of Circuit Judges

MARYLAND JUDICIAL CENTER
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Meeting of the Conference of Circuit Judges

A meeting of the Conference of Circuit Judges was held Monday, May 20, 2024, via Zoom for Government, beginning at 9:30 a.m.

Members Present

Hon. Audrey J. S. Carrión, Chair
Hon. Fred S. Hecker, Vice Chair

Hon. James A. Bonifant

Hon. Donine M. Carrington Martin

Hon. DaNeeka V. Cotton

Hon. Yolanda L. Curtin

~~Hon. William W. Davis, Jr.~~

Hon. Jeffrey S. Getty

~~Hon. Stacy A. Mayer~~

Stephanie Medina

Hon. Dana M. Middleton

Hon. Vicki M. Pauler

Hon. Richard J. Sandy

~~Hon. S. James Sarbanes~~

Hon. Brenda A. Sexton

Hon. Brian D. Shockley

Hon. Richard R. Trunnell

~~Hon. Kevin R. Tucker~~

Also Present:

Melissa Canada (staff)

Nancy Faulkner

Kelley O'Connor

1. Welcome and Approval of Minutes – Hon. Audrey J.S. Carrión

Judge Audrey J.S. Carrión opened with a reminder that the meeting was being livestreamed for the public to view. She moved for approval of the meeting minutes from March 25, 2024. Judge Fred S. Hecker made a motion to approve the minutes, with a second from Judge Jeffrey S. Getty. After hearing no objections, the amended minutes were approved.

2. Circuit Court Senior Judge Use Guide – *Hon. James A. Bonifant*

Judge James A. Bonifant is a member of the Senior Judge Use Workgroup. The assistance from senior judges is essential, and the goal is to provide as much time, information, and support as possible when one is assigned. As such, the workgroup collaborated with the Senior Judge Scheduling Workgroup to develop a best practice guide for senior judge assignments.

The guide provides a current list of senior judges and the jurisdiction(s) in which they are available to sit. A list of court contacts has been identified at each court location to help facilitate assignments. Sample letters along with local practices are also included. The best practice guide will be housed in a central-access location in order to provide up-to-date information. The guide was unanimously approved by the conference.

Judge Hecker, who chairs the Court Technology Committee, added that the Senior Judge Scheduling app is scheduled to be released this year. Debra Kaminski from Judiciary Human Resources Division was enlisted to ensure all senior judge information was accurately reflected in the app's system. When a court uses the app to find a senior judge, only those judges who are authorized to sit in that jurisdiction will be listed. The app will also track the number of hours the senior judge sits to ensure they do not go over the time allowed.

On another topic, Judge Richard R. Trunnell inquired about whether sitting judges' law clerks should write opinions for retired judges, and he asked judges to share local practices with respect to the use of law clerks. Judge Bonifant stated that in his court, the law clerk assigned to the absent judge is typically assigned to the senior judge who sits in their place. Judge Carrión stated there is a law clerk dedicated to senior judges in the Circuit Court for Baltimore City, however, sitting judge law clerks are not prohibited from assisting other judges. Judge Yolanda L. Curtin added that senior judges are encouraged to write their own opinions because law clerks in her court are typically stretched between multiple judges.

3. Discussion of recommendations to the Rules Committee on changes to *voir dire* – *Hon. Audrey J. S. Carrión*

The Standing Committee on Rules of Practice and Procedure (Rules Committee) met last week to discuss potential changes to the voir dire process in Maryland. Judge Carrión provided a letter expressing concerns on behalf of the Judiciary, and she indicated that her testimony at the hearing was very well received. The committee discussed how jury trials are conducted in federal court and that the numbers are not comparable to jury trials in Maryland. Federal courts also have access to more resources. Many judges in Maryland believe the current framework of the voir dire in Maryland is sufficient to ensure fair and impartial juries and that expanding the process would have a negative impact on efficiency. Ultimately, the matter was

referred to a subcommittee for additional research. Members of the Judiciary will continue to be a part of the discussion moving forward.

4. Magistrate's Task Force – *Hon. Audrey J. S. Carrión*

Chief Justice Matthew J. Fader recently requested volunteers interested in joining a taskforce to explore a number of issues unique to magistrates. There was a large response from magistrates and judges who were former magistrates. Justice Fader is reviewing the list of names and will reach out to those selected when the taskforce is established.

5. For the Good of the Order

Having no further items to discuss, the meeting ended at 10:00 am. The next meeting will be joint with the District Court Chief Judge's Committee on Monday, September 23, 2024, at the Maryland Judicial Center Room 237, beginning at 9:30 a.m.