



SUPREME COURT OF KANSAS

KANSAS JUDICIAL CENTER
301 S.W. 10TH AVENUE
TOPEKA, KANSAS 66612-1507

LAWTON R. NUSS
CHIEF JUSTICE

785-296-5322
kansascj@kscourts.org

January 6, 2012

Dear Judicial Branch Employee:

On behalf of the Supreme Court, I am pleased to inform you of developments in Project Pegasus since my letter of September 22, 2011.

Blue Ribbon Commission

One component of Pegasus is the Blue Ribbon Commission, which was charged by the Court to review the operations of the Kansas state courts. The Commission first met in March 2011. It officially completed its work when its Chair, Court of Appeals Judge Patrick D. McAnany, presented to the Supreme Court on the first working day of this new year the report titled "Recommendations for Improving the Kansas Judicial System." (Please see the accompanying photograph.)



This week each justice began reviewing the report. On Monday January 9 we will begin meeting as a Court to discuss its recommendations. We have reserved a number of January days for discussion and decision. We even moved our traditional January case docket to February. This move allows us to maximize our available discussion time and to make some decisions as early as possible. Because if any of the Court's eventual decisions require legislation, we intend for at least some of them to be presented to the legislature in sufficient time for its action during the 2012 session. The legislature officially convenes January 9.

The legislature will be dealing with many important issues this year. These include reworking its own districts, passing a state budget, and considering many of the governor's legislative agenda items such as reforming the following: KPERS, Medicaid, the tax structure, the school finance formula, and water law. The session will be complicated by the fact legislators are well aware this is an election year. Primary elections for some legislators will be contested in August, and general elections for all 165 legislators will be held in November. In short, the Judicial Branch legislative requests will be competing with these factors to gain the legislature's attention. So the Court needs to move quickly, but intelligently.

Weighted caseload study (WCLS)

The second main component of Pegasus is the WCLS – the only one ever conducted in the 150-year history of Kansas. The completed WCLS report was formally presented to the Court and the Blue Ribbon Commission in late October 2011. On November 4, the Court convened a special meeting to discuss the WCLS report in detail with the Commission Chair (Judge McAnany), the Judicial Needs Assessment Committee Chair (David King, chief judge of the 1st judicial district), and the Staffing Needs Assessment Committee Chair (Todd Heitschmidt, court administrator of the 28th judicial district).

The WCLS study results are already assisting the Court in allocating human resources and other assets in the Judicial Branch. The results will assist the Court even further with its review of the Commission's report and recommendations. And as I mentioned in my September 22 letter, any recommendations to modify human resource levels based upon this study will be accompanied by our requests to the legislature for proportionate modifications to our budget submission for FY 2013 (beginning July 1, 2012).

Reports' availability and your input

The reports of the Commission and the WCLS will be posted on the Court's website later this month.

http://www.kscourts.org/Judicial-Branch-Review/Blue_Ribbon_Commission/default.asp

I will let you know as soon as that posting is completed. By that time, the Court should have made some, but certainly not all, preliminary decisions based upon the reports. But you will still be able to provide input.

While you had the opportunity to speak at the 19 public meetings the Commission panels conducted in your area, actually seeing the Commission recommendations that are partly based upon those meetings is somewhat different. So at least one week will be reserved for you to submit your comments electronically. The specific procedures will be communicated when I notify you that the reports have been posted on the Court's website. Because you are the ones who will be directly impacted by some of the Court's eventual decisions, we sincerely welcome your comments.

As the Court has emphasized from the beginning of Project Pegasus, while we will look at possible improvements in the Kansas court system and for ways to make better use of taxpayer money, economics is not our sole consideration. We will also consider Kansans' access to justice and will work hard to ensure it. Throughout Pegasus, the Court has been committed to the principle that if changes are made, it is essential they be the right ones. You and the Kansans we all serve deserve no less.

My colleagues and I again sincerely thank you for your tremendous efforts for the citizens of Kansas. Your service during these trying times remains greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,



Lawton R. Nuss
Chief Justice

LRN/