

District of Alaska

Lawyer Representatives' Annual Report District of Alaska

From: LRCC Alaska District Chair Gregory S. Fisher

Re: 2008-09 District Report

Key Activities

The District of Alaska is in the process of planning for celebrations to commemorate its 50th Anniversary in February 2010. During the year, the District welcomed three new part-time Magistrate Judges, Leslie Longenbaugh (Juneau), Michael Thompson (Ketchikan), and Scott Oravec (Fairbanks). Lawyer representatives met quarterly with available district judges, magistrates, the Clerk of Court, the U.S. Attorney, and the Federal Defender to discuss matters of interest. Topics varied and included, among other subjects, efforts underway to commemorate the District of Alaska's 50th Anniversary, the opening of a new satellite office for the USAO in Juneau, publication criteria, and efforts to strengthen and improve communication channels between the Bench and Bar.

In August 2008, Judge Fisher, Judge Dorothy Nelson, and Judge Tashima heard oral argument on a number of appeals from the District of Alaska for the annual 9th Circuit Alaska Calendar. The panel also participated in a Bench/Bar CLE co-hosted by the Alaska Bar Association and the Alaska Chapter of the Federal Bar Association. In addition, Judge Nelson accepted an invitation to address a lunch meeting of the Alaska Chapter of the Federal Bar Association. Gregory Fisher, Ken Diemer, and Peter Partnow guided the Judges and law clerks on a hike after work one evening.

Also in August 2008, Chief Judge Kozinski visited the District on a brief trip. Lloyd Miller and his wife Heather Kendall-Miller hosted Judge Kozinski at a dinner.

In May 2009, the District meeting occurred in conjunction with the Alaska Bar Association convention. As part of convention activities, Magistrate Judge Deborah Smith coordinated a Criminal Law practice and procedure CLE that was co-sponsored by the District and the Alaska Chapter of the Federal Bar Association.

50th Anniversary

The District of Alaska is planning a number of events beginning in the range of January-February 2010 to commemorate the court's 50th Anniversary. Chief Judge Sedwick convened a committee of judges, lawyers, and other interested persons to help plan and coordinate these events. Committee co-chairs are Ida Romack and Leroy Barker. Mr. Barker is a distinguished lawyer with a long and respected career in Alaska. Other key members of the committee include Senior Judge Holland, Senior Judge Singleton, Court Librarian Cate Davidson, lawyer and historian Tim Lynch, and former

lawyer representative Donna Willard. Planned events include informational exhibits at local museums, publications addressing leading cases and figures, and other public relations ceremonies.

Federal Bar Association

The District's Judges and lawyer representatives are actively involved with the Alaska Chapter of the Federal Bar Association. The Chapter currently meets once a month. Each lunch meeting features a speaker or presentation addressing a topic of interest to the federal bar and bench for which MCLE credit is available. Speakers in the past year have included the District's Court Rules Attorney Tom Yerbich (who addressed the Chapter on Local Rules and FRCP amendments), Lloyd Miller and Heather Kendall Miller (who discussed Indian Law issues in connection with President Obama's administration), Pam Richter and Natalie Day (personnel from the Court Clerk's office who discussed common errors they see practitioners making), Chief Justice Dana Fabe of the Alaska Supreme Court, and Judges Sedwick, Beistline, Holland, and Burgess (who discussed federal practice and procedure issues). Upcoming or planned events include one or more of the Judges who will sit on the Alaska Calendar in early August 2009, Federal Defender Rich Curtner (who will address CJA panel issues), and Leroy Barker (Co-chair of the District's 50th Anniversary committee). The Chapter may host Judge Kleinfeld at a lunch in late September, and is also attempting to set up a videoconference presentation by Chief Judge Kozinski. Plans are underway to schedule a lunch meeting to address pro bono subjects (hopefully with Leonard Feldman, who is the District's pro bono appellate coordinator).

Lawyer Representatives

The current lawyer representatives for the District of Alaska are Gregory Fisher, Ruth Hamilton Heese, Sara Gray, and Frank Pfiffner. Gregory is completing his term which expires in September of this year. His replacement has not yet been named. Ruth's term expires in September 2010. Sara's and Frank's terms will expire in September 2011. In addition, Lloyd Miller is serving a term on the Circuit Conference Executive Committee. Gregory Fisher also serves as the President of the Alaska Chapter of the Federal Bar Association, Ruth Hamilton Heese is the Chapter Treasurer, and Lloyd Miller is an At-Large Member of the Chapter's Board.