

Public Information and Community Outreach Committee

The Ninth Circuit is at the forefront of efforts to educate the public about the courts and the important role they play in a democratic society. Helping organize and coordinate these numerous and varied efforts is the circuit's Public Information and Community Outreach (PICO) Committee.

Established in 2000 by the Judicial Council of the Ninth Circuit, the PICO Committee focuses on projects and programs that improve public understanding of and confidence in the nation's judicial system. Its members include circuit, district, bankruptcy and magistrate judges, along with attorneys, clerks of court and media relations professionals. District Judge Alicemarie H. Stotler of the Central District of California, who had chaired the committee since its inception, stepped down in

September, when several new members also were appointed. The new chair of the committee is Chief District Judge Robert S. Lasnik of the Western District of Washington.

The committee has set out two goals: facilitating better relations between the courts and news media, and promoting existing community outreach programs that help educate the public about the courts. The emphasis on media relations stems from

recognition that most citizens are unfamiliar with the federal courts. They rely on the media for information about the courts, and base their opinions of the courts on what they have read in the newspaper or seen on television. Thus, the committee believes it makes sense for courts to assist the media, where feasible and appropriate, to ensure accurate and fair reporting.

The PICO Committee has been organizing media workshops in which judges and court staff can interact and share views with reporters and editors. In 2004, the committee co-sponsored workshops in Los Angeles and Boise, Idaho, and contributed to planning for a program held in San Francisco. All three events were highly successful with a good turnout by both judges and journalists.

Bill Manny, metro editor of the Idaho Statesman newspaper, was among the journalists who participated in the media workshop held in Boise.





U.S. District Judge Alicemarie H. Stotler, at podium, left, introduces panelists for the media workshop held in Los Angeles. The program featured Manny Medrano, a former assistant U.S. Attorney in Los Angeles, who is the U.S. Supreme Court correspondent for ABC News.

The Sept. 30 media workshop in Los Angeles, one of the world's most competitive media markets and home to the nation's busiest federal court, was co-sponsored by the United States District Court for the Central District of California. Entitled "Courts and the Media: Access, Influence and Ethics," the program opened with a panel presentation focusing on the shared responsibility judges and journalists bear to ensure that the public understands what goes on in the courtroom. A second panel comprised of attorneys and a media consultant talked for and against limiting media access to court documents and proceedings, and about whether reporters may soon be forced to reveal confidential sources.

The program also included luncheon remarks by Supreme Court correspondent Manny Medrano of ABC News. Other media panelists were Dave Boardman, managing

editor of the *Seattle Times* and a frequent participant in PICO events; special correspondent Linda Deutsch of *The Associated Press*; legal writer Henry Weinstein of the *Los Angeles Times*; and Katrina Dewey, editor of the Los Angeles edition of the legal publication *The Daily Journal*.

The May 13 workshop in Boise was a joint effort involving PICO, the U.S. District and Bankruptcy Courts for the District of Idaho, and the State Courts of Idaho. The program brought together federal and state judges, lawyers, law professors, freedom of the press advocates and working journalists from Idaho newspapers and television stations. In all, some 60 workshop participants spent nearly six hours together, listening to presentations and sharing views on a variety of topics of mutual interest and concern.

The program featured a look at the U.S. Patriot Act as seen through

the eyes of a prosecutor, Tom Moss, U.S. Attorney for the District of Idaho; a defense attorney, Tom Monaghan, deputy public defender for the district; and reporter, Betsy Russell, Boise bureau chief for the *Spokane Spokesman-Review*. District Judge Michael R. Hogan of Eugene, Ore., a PICO Committee member, moderated. There was also an open forum, moderated by Judge Lasnik and Idaho State Judge Randy Smith, in which reporters were welcome to bring up topics not covered previously.

The program ended with a luncheon presentation focusing on journalists' use of confidential government sources in reporting on the Wen Ho Lee nuclear secrets scandal.

The presenters were Los Angeles attorney Brian Sun, a PICO Committee member, and Lucy Dalglish, a former media attorney now executive director of the Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press in

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Washington, D.C. Mr. Sun represents Dr. Lee in a federal Privacy Act suit and is seeking to compel several reporters to reveal the sources of government leaks in the case. Ms. Dalglish's organization seeks to protect reporter privilege and has spoken out strongly against the effort to force reporters to reveal sources in the Lee case.

The April 28 media program in San Francisco was sponsored by the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of California. Titled "Covering the Federal Courts: A Legal Seminar and Roundtable Discussion for Journalists," the half-day program began with a workshop geared toward reporters new to the federal court beat, followed by a roundtable discussion of issues affecting the interaction between the judges and journalists.

Courts Reach Out to Students

The committee promotes and publicizes educational outreach programs sponsored by district and bankruptcy courts in the circuit. These include Law Day and Open Doors to Federal Courts, a national program organized by the Administrative Office of the United States Courts that involved a number of Ninth Circuit courts in 2004.

For the Central District of California, Law Day is actually Law Week. Hundreds of high school students



The Idaho program brought together the state's top judicial officers: Chief District Judge B. Lynn Winmill of the U.S. District Court for Idaho; Chief Judge Mary M. Schroeder of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit, and Chief Justice Linda Copple Trout of the Idaho Supreme Court.

visited the district court's Spring Street courthouse in downtown Los Angeles during the May 4-7 observance. Besides introducing young people to the federal courts, this year's program also included reference to *Brown v. Board of Education* in this the 50th anniversary year of the landmark decision that led to desegregation of the nation's public schools.

The Open Doors event held Feb. 6 by the Eastern District of California drew nearly 700 high school seniors and juniors to federal courthouses in Sacramento, Fresno and Bakersfield. The program was organized around the theme "Working for Justice: Careers in the Courts." Judges presided over mock trials concerning a student accused of receiving a stolen vehicle. Students assumed the roles of jurors in deciding the case and some portrayed the defendant. Afterward, attorneys from the offices of the U.S. Attorney and Federal Public Defender were on hand to talk about their careers and answer questions from students. Representatives of the district's probation and pretrial services offices and the U.S. Marshals Service also spoke.