

Critical Needs vs. Practical Challenges

▪ AOC Director Arthur W. Pepin oversees the operation of New Mexico Courts

By Ian Bezpalko

Arthur Pepin graduated from the University of Washington School of Law (Seattle) in 1984, served four years in the Army's Judge Advocate General's Corps, worked a few years for a Philadelphia law firm and then for the New Jersey courts. Attorney General Tom Udall hired him in the Attorney General's Appellate Division in 1996. He was promoted to director of the Appeals Division by Attorney General Patricia Madrid in 2000. From 2000–2006, he supervised 16 attorneys and two support staff, testified in support of AG legislation, and argued numerous appellate cases in the New Mexico Court of Appeals, New Mexico Supreme Court, and the 10th Circuit Court. In August 2006, the Supreme Court appointed him to run the Administrative Office of the Courts.

1. Please describe your position and your path to it.

The Director of the Administrative Office of the Courts serves under the supervision and direction of the Supreme Court to supervise administration of all New Mexico state courts, provide data and reports on the cases and fiscal matters in courts, oversee court financing, and to “perform other duties in aid of the administration of justice and the administration and dispatch of the business of the courts as directed by the supreme court.” NMSA 1978, Section 34-9-3. There are administrative officers (Chief Clerks or Court Executive Officers) in the courts, and the AOC Director works with these judicial employees to support their court operations.

I graduated from the University of Washington School of Law (Seattle) in 1984, served four years in the Army's Judge Advocate General's Corps, worked a few years for a Philadelphia law firm and then for the New Jersey courts. Attorney General Tom Udall hired me in the AG's Appellate Division when I came to New Mexico from New Jersey in 1996. That Division handles all criminal appeals in New Mexico, as well as *habeas corpus* claims by prisoners. I was promoted to Director of the Appeals Division by AG Patricia Madrid in 2000. From 2000-2006, I supervised 16 attorneys and two support staff, testified in support of AG legislation, and argued numerous appellate cases in the

NM Court of Appeals, NM Supreme Court, and Tenth Circuit Court. In August 2006, the Supreme Court hired me to run the Administrative Office of the Courts, where I have been ever since.

2. You serve as director of the AOC. What is your role in the organization? Did your former duties as assistant attorney general prepare you for this position?

The AOC Director oversees, at the direction of the NM Supreme Court, the operation of all state courts in New Mexico (magistrate, metropolitan, district and appellate courts; not the municipal or probate courts). The AOC Director must approve the budgets of the individual courts, assist with human resources issues, manage the magistrate courts statewide (including all the magistrate facilities), oversee the efforts of courts to support legislative efforts (especially budget appropriations), and direct the operations of the many programs and activities the AOC directly administers or supports. These include statewide judicial automation, fiscal and human resource services, and programs funded through the AOC such as Court Appointed Attorneys in abuse and neglect cases, jury and interpreter services statewide which includes payments to jurors, interpreters and court witnesses; problem-solving courts (juvenile and adult drug courts, mental health courts, DWI courts, family reunification courts, etc.); judicial performance evaluation; and various state and federal grants. Additional projects that involve the AOC come from the Supreme Court. Such activities can include staffing efforts to improve the efficient operations of the courts, pilot programs to address needed actions (such as the ongoing e-filing project in the Thirteenth Judicial District), assisting the Judicial Education Center in its efforts, and improving citizen access to courts and to court records. There are many more such activities and programs.

It is obvious that while the Director oversees all of this work, it would be impossible to perform a small fraction of this work without extraordinarily qualified and dedicated employees. Most AOC employees work in Santa Fe in one of the following Divisions; Administration, Magistrate Courts, Human Resources, Judicial Information, and Fiscal Services. I am grateful for and repeatedly impressed by the hard work and

successes of AOC employees in the diverse and challenging areas in which the AOC carries out the directions of the Supreme Court.

I believe my work at the Attorney General's Office prepared me for the responsibilities of the AOC Director as well as any other preparation could. I have come to know many State Court Administrators (the most common title for the job we call the AOC Director) from around the country and it is surprising to learn the varied backgrounds that each brought to the job. Some worked for years in their state's AOC, obtaining advanced degrees in court management, but many are attorneys who came from differing types of work as lawyers, while others are not lawyers and have a business or academic background. I rely on my undergraduate degree in business administration when trying to understand budget issues, and I believe my years practicing in courts and working as staff to courts help me as I try to understand the practical challenges faced by the differing levels of courts in New Mexico.

Having said that, I believe nothing prepares a person to be the AOC Director better than an open mind and the willingness to trust talented and determined people who work for the AOC and the courts. To the extent the AOC has achieved any success during my tenure as its Director, it results directly from the leadership and strong support of the Supreme Court and from the great people I get to work with in the AOC and the courts.

3. You also serve or have served on numerous committees such as the Court Interpreters Advisory Committee, the Court Security Committee, the Judicial Education and Training Advisory Committee, the Judicial Information Systems Council, and the Statewide Traffic Records Executive Oversight Committee. What is your role in these legal and non-legal groups? Is it purely oversight or do you have a particular interest in these committees?

On these and many more committees my participation is often through many of the AOC employees who staff them or serve as members in my place. I am directly

involved in several, such as the Judicial Systems Information Council and the Court Security Committee you mention, as well as others such as the New Mexico Sentencing Commission. I rely on capable employees of the AOC to work with other committees. In some cases the AOC provides staffing and support, such as with the Chief Judges Council, while on other committees the AOC Director or an AOC employee serves as a voting member (such as the Capitol Buildings Planning Commission). The challenge when I am not directly involved is to make sure to take the time to stay informed about the activities of these groups. I believe that, in any large organization, communication about all of the organization's work is critical but also easy to overlook in the day-to-day challenges that require time and attention. I try to keep this in mind and stay current on the work of these committees, but it is an effort that will always require attention. My good fortune is that many people at the AOC are doing great work with these committees so if I lose track of them from time to time, good things still happen.

4. Two of the goals of the AOC are to provide adequate, equitably distributed resources to the courts and to ensure that the courts have current technology. Apart from electronic databases and converting paper files to electronic, what else is being done to meet these goals?

The appropriate distribution of resources has been especially challenging in the last few years as court funding has declined with the state's fiscal challenges. The AOC is directly involved with the Budget Committee of the Chief Judges Council in shaping court budgets. The Chief Judges Council serves as an advisory group to the Supreme Court and consists of the district, metropolitan and appellate court chief judges as well as elected judges representing the magistrate courts. The Budget Committee is composed of judges and judicial employees from all levels of courts who consider and make recommendations on budget issues. During the summer, the Budget Committee, with staff support from the AOC, adopts guidelines and holds hearings on all judicial budgets and then recommends approval of these budgets as amended during this process. The Chief Judges Council, also with staff support from the AOC, then makes changes it deems appropriate and recommends budgets to the Supreme Court, which has final say

on any budget or legislative request for the next legislative session. During this process, courts large and small have an equal opportunity to argue for programs, initiatives, legislation, and funding that is important to them.

One very important role the AOC has in trying to provide adequate and equitably distributed resources is to provide evidence-based input on resource requests. The AOC conducts or participates in many studies, through which decisions are made on such issues as which courts have the most critical need for new judges and staff, pay ranges for all jobs in the judiciary, tracking enrollment and success rates in problem-solving courts, and performance data for many programs. It is difficult to make sure these comparisons are “apples to apples” among various courts, but that is a goal we try to meet in the AOC’s role as administrative support for all courts and for the justice system as a whole.

The future holds many exciting promises for technology in the courts. Of course, there is a great deal of work between the promise and actual results. For several years, the AOC has overseen implementation of a new electronic case management system in the courts. That effort will conclude one year ahead of schedule and on budget, so that at the end of calendar year 2012 all courts will be on the new system. The new system, named Odyssey, is a great improvement over the old one (FACTs), especially because it is critical to efforts to manage documents electronically. Paper files become the exception and not the norm, and with electronic filing the data in documents will automatically populate the case management system. Errors are reduced, processing is much faster, court files are more secure, and public access is broadened through the Internet.

Other efforts to improve courts through technology include accepting credit card payments for court fines and fees by the Internet and telephone, providing computers at the courthouse to permit non-lawyers to file documents and gain access to court records electronically, meshing electronic citations issued by law enforcement with the courts’ case management system, and expanding the use of video communications for meetings, trainings, and even court proceedings. All of these initiatives are underway in various

stages from beginning to nearing completion. Each will improve court performance and should improve how citizens interact with courts.

5. Can you report on the status of the e-filing project in New Mexico? What are some current topics of discussion or phases of adoption?

E-filing is in the pilot phase in the Thirteenth Judicial District, composed of the counties of Sandoval, Cibola and Valencia. Right now, all documents after case initiation that are filed by attorneys in civil cases (not domestic relations cases) must be filed electronically. The court accepts the e-filings directly into the case management system, without the need for clerks to type in the information. All these documents are stored electronically, permitting judges and litigants to review any filed document instantaneously at any time, without printing paper documents. Notices and service of document copies can also be electronic, saving time and the cost of making and mailing copies. For a fee of \$6 (\$10 total if service is included), as many as 10 documents can be included in a single e-filing, which can be done at any time of the day or night from any computer.

Among the challenges of the e-filing pilot has been training attorneys how to use the system, convincing users that the \$6 fee is less costly than manually printing copies of paper documents and traveling to the court (or mailing them) to file and serve pleadings, and working through the many challenges any new program poses. This is why we started with a pilot program – to work out these issues before taking e-filing to other courts. The pilot is going well, so AOC is working with courts that have or soon will implement the Odyssey case management system to determine if the next step is to bring e-filing to Odyssey courts for civil cases or to implement criminal e-filing, at no cost to the District Attorney and Public Defender, in the Thirteenth Judicial District. If we proceed with criminal e-filing, it will be run as another pilot before civil and criminal e-filing go to other courts. Both the First (counties of Santa Fe, Rio Arriba and Los Alamos) and Second (Albuquerque) Judicial Districts, which are implementing Odyssey

this spring and summer, are eager to bring e-filing and electronic document management to these courts.

6. Do you believe that e-filing prevents lawyers from making a connection with the court clerks? Some senior attorneys have complained that the change in the 13th prevents them from being able to talk with the court clerks.

I believe e-filing does change the relationship between attorneys (or their staff) and clerks. There is likely to be less personal contact with the clerks at the windows of district courts. At the same time, filing documents will be faster, more secure, and with fewer data entry errors. The mandatory nature of e-filing is intended to overcome the natural tendency to avoid change. However, despite the benefits e-filing provides, there may be attorneys who prefer to file paper documents. In response to this concern, the Supreme Court has directed the AOC to develop some type of “good cause” exception to mandatory e-filing. It is important to remember that practicing attorneys are not the only ones affected by the choice between paper filing and e-filing. E-filing improves court efficiency with the new Odyssey case management system. Errors are reduced; access by court personnel, including judges, is easier and faster than with paper files; personnel time devoted to filing and tracking documents is reduced; and the ability of courts to provide public access to public documents is enhanced. While it is likely there will be less person-to-person contact between attorneys and court clerks, for courts the use of e-filing by most attorneys in most cases is an important step forward.

7. Do you believe that e-filing might negatively impact attorneys’ income over time?

I have a difficult time envisioning how e-filing will reduce income for attorneys. Any attorney who will succeed in the difficult challenge of running a profitable law firm will not lack for clients or work to do. E-filing may reduce the time an attorney can bill a client for the tasks of filing and serving paper documents. However, many attorneys do not qualify this work as “billable time” and simply absorb it into the firm’s overhead costs. Corporate clients may resist billing for such time. For those who do bill for these

tasks, the incidental loss of income should be more than offset by the ability to devote the time previously spent on filing documents to the legal needs of clients. The faster and easier practice of e-filing allows the attorneys and the firm's staff to spend more time on activities likely to be more productive for clients and, it seems to me, more productive for the firm's bottom line.

8. Is it true that PDF is the recommended, if not mandatory, standard? If PDF becomes a required standard format for document images, will Adobe have a de facto monopoly?

The Odyssey case management system, and the e-filing system used to put e-filed documents into the Odyssey system, does not require that the filing be in PDF format. Our e-filing system will accept PDF documents, but it also accepts documents created by most word processors and graphics programs. In fact, we accept almost any file format, whether graphics or text, in common use today.

Once accepted by the court for filing, documents must be put into a stable format that inhibits easy manipulation, and right now we are storing documents in Tagged Image File Format (TIFF). Many people are under the impression that TIFF is an open source graphics format, but TIFF is actually a proprietary format for which Adobe Corporation holds copyright. Currently, both TIFF and PDF are de facto standards for storing digital documents and Adobe holds copyright for both formats. The courts are open to storing documents in different formats and are very interested in the ongoing evolution of PDF-A, which is more resistant to manipulation and revision than TIFF or PDF. The PDF-A file format seems to be on its way to being accepted by the digital archiving community as a good format for long-term storage and archiving. The New Mexico Courts have no particular loyalty to Adobe or any other software company, but we must use tools that are accessible, effective, and in common use, and right now Adobe seems to have a significant edge in the digital documents realm.

I should mention that the AOC's Judicial Information Division has practiced due diligence and has implemented a number of open source applications in various areas to

reduce operating costs. If a stable, reliable open source format emerges that can be used for document management, I am confident that we will move toward adopting that format. Our basic philosophy regarding software platforms is that, all things being equal, we try to adopt best applications, regardless of the platforms on which those applications run. An example of this is our adoption of Odyssey, which runs on a Microsoft database platform. In fact, the application itself was created using Microsoft development tools. This meant that we had to implement Microsoft tools to support the application but we were willing to do so because of the advanced features offered by Odyssey.

9. As a follow up to the last question, are we not locking ourselves into a format standard similar to the NM Supreme Court's insistence that all its forms be in Word Perfect format?

As stated above, documents sent by a law firm for e-filing can be in virtually any format. Such a document will be "imaged" when accepted for filing. The Odyssey case management system generates merged documents using Microsoft Word ("Word"), not WordPerfect. However, attorneys are not required to use Word when sending a document for e-filing.

The Supreme Court adopted WordPerfect as a standard many years ago. WordPerfect has served the legal community well over the years and it can be argued that WordPerfect still provides better legal functionality than its competitors. However, it is clear that WordPerfect has lost the battle for word processing dominance and the New Mexico courts are adapting to these market forces. With Odyssey, the goal is not to force attorneys in New Mexico to use any particular software application; rather, we hope to continue to accept all common document and graphics formats as our e-filing program is implemented throughout the State. Of course, once we receive documents, we will convert them to a standard format for archiving and storage.

10. What is the outlook regarding the Word Perfect format? At some point, will the forms and other files be converted to .doc or .pdf?

I believe this question is answered in the answers given to the two prior questions. The Supreme Court recognized the need to adopt Word in magistrate and district courts in order to operate the Odyssey case management system. As courts implement Odyssey, we are purchasing Microsoft Word for those courts and training court employees in its use. However, I want to emphasize that we are accepting e-filed documents in almost any word processing format, so an attorney who is e-filing can use almost any document format the attorney prefers to use.

11. Are e-signatures supported?

Yes. The Thirteenth Judicial District "E-Filing Guide" is on-line at: <http://www.13districtcourt.com/efilemanual.pdf>, and at page 3 is a section on "Signatures and Verified Documents." As the Guide provides, under the local rule governing e-filing, "When e-filing, the electronic signature constitutes the signature of the participant as provided in Rule LR13-411(D)(1)." This section of the Guide also addresses other means of providing a signature in a signature block and how to e-file verified documents.

12. At the New Mexico State Bar's annual meeting in 2010, the new courthouses springing up in Rio Rancho and elsewhere in the state were described as state-of-the-art, complete with cd-roms. Some of the courts have installed wireless Internet access. Are there plans to utilize cloud storage, VOIP, and other electronic methods/applications?

Several courts in New Mexico have adopted VOIP, and it is under consideration in other courts and at the AOC. Cost, security, and time are factors courts consider in contemplating a switch to VOIP. We have also implemented wireless in courts and at the AOC. Of course, wireless requires an assessment of costs, particularly in light of our current budget crisis and the need for security. That said, it appears that wireless

networking will become more and more dominant over the next few years since it has the potential to reduce costs and greatly enhance networking flexibility and convenience. One challenge is that some of our historic buildings are not wireless friendly and it will be difficult to implement current wireless technologies in our most historic locations.

The Judicial Systems Information Council maintains an ongoing discussion on “cloud” computing, but for now we have not mandated adoption of public cloud technology. We are, however, continually refreshing technologies at our data center and the new technologies we are implementing are those associated with cloud computing such as virtualization, service oriented architectures, and dedicated storage arrays. As such, we are gradually creating a judicial private cloud, which differs from a public cloud in that our data always stays with us and is not entrusted to private entities.

We are definitely watching the advances in cloud computing. It may be that the wave of the future will be Software As A Service (SaaS) for case management, document management, and e-filing, which will be provided using cloud technologies by court case management vendors. Our Odyssey system, which is Internet-browser-based might be a good candidate for SaaS. For now, we are in no hurry to push our vendor in that direction. As with any new technology, we will have concerns about the security of court information and the reliability of public cloud storage for court data, so it is up to the vendor community to convince us that these technologies will be safe, secure and cost-effective, and will provide significant benefits to courts and stakeholders.

Another action underway in courts is electronic management of documents. Many courts are scanning already filed documents and preparing to make future filings electronic, either because they are e-filed or because the court scans paper filings. Electronic document management makes documents easily retrievable and substantially reduces the paperwork for which a court must find space and pay for storage. We are gradually implementing the technical infrastructure for redundant, persistent storage of digital documents that very much resembles cloud storage. In this regard, we are now implementing a “hot site” in Albuquerque that will provide a backup storage system that

mirrors the court data stored at the Judicial Information Division (JID) facility in Santa Fe. If the JID facility suffers a catastrophic failure, such as a fire, earthquake, tornado, etc., our case management system (and ultimately all other court data and systems, such as internal court e-mail) could be quickly brought back on line without loss of data. While such a recovery system is costly, it is also deemed critical to the security of our data and the ability of courts to return to live, reliable operations very quickly after a disaster. This backup system, which will be operational for the case management system by the end of summer 2011, goes as far or farther than any other state court system we know of regarding preparations for recovery of court operations in the event of a catastrophic disaster.

13. What is being done to assist *pro se* parties with completing and filing forms and other documents?

Funding cutbacks over the past three years put a real damper on efforts in the courts to increase the ease of access and provide assistance to unrepresented litigants. Some courts had begun to provide “*pro se* clinics” and similar efforts to have attorneys and other court personnel assist non-lawyers navigate the court system. Court staffs receive training on how to give helpful procedural information and referrals without giving legal advice or promoting a litigant’s “side” in a case. We have worked on making court processes more user-friendly to those who are computer literate by walking litigants through the process with decision trees leading to the next step as litigation progresses. With Odyssey, we are working to standardize court forms, which will assist attorneys and non-attorneys alike. The AOC played a prominent role in the adoption of a uniform cover sheet for domestic violence orders of protection in state and tribal courts to make it easier for police officers to immediately recognize such orders, whatever court issued the order.

More and more courts have put jury questionnaires and jury orientation materials on line, so that citizens called to jury service can navigate the system from home and

make their service easier once they go to court. The AOC and all the courts recognize that we must make courts accessible to the increasing number of litigants who do not have attorney representation. Even during difficult budget times, we are trying to achieve that goal. As funding becomes more available over time, I am sure we will expand these efforts.

14. Are there any plans to encourage third party providers to fill the gap between *pro se* parties and the court?

The work of the Reengineering Commission, which I discuss in response to Question #17, involves among other things a survey that include a question asking whether the limitations on paralegal practice should be relaxed to allow paralegals to give more assistance to litigants who are not represented by counsel. Depending on the response to this question, it may be an area considered in the Commission's work leading up to its final report. In addition, the Supreme Court has been very supportive of the Civil Legal Services Commission and its efforts to stabilize general fund appropriations. This effort is especially critical as some of the legal service providers funded by this Commission and perhaps federal monies have already been forced to engage in furloughs and layoffs due to prior budget cuts. Even now, before further funding cuts, legal aid providers turn away at least two qualified applicants for every client they accept, resulting in even more *pro se* litigants. *Pro bono* services from private attorneys are critical to help courts provide justice to these litigants.

One of the great successes of the access to justice program was *Pro Bono* Week in October 2010 and related year-round *pro bono* events statewide. Through the combined effort of the Supreme Court's Access to Justice Commission, AOC staff, and the State Bar's *pro bono* coordinator, local *pro bono* committees in each judicial district offered free public legal information seminars, free legal advice call-ins, and one-on-one consultations. These events provided general information to a number of attendees and private consultations to individuals. Across the state, 250 attorneys, paralegals, law

students, members of legal service organizations and judges, helped provide free legal help to approximately 1,500 New Mexico citizens. The New Mexico Supreme Court justices travelled the state to offer encouragement and gratitude to *pro bono* attorney volunteers. These efforts will continue to grow. In addition, successful proposals of the access to justice program for mandatory reporting of *pro bono* hours and monetary donations to legal service providers on the annual bar dues form doubled the amount of monetary donations from the prior year.

Also, although I realize this question is not really directed at criminal cases, the Supreme Court and the AOC have worked with the New Mexico Public Defender Department to try to stabilize and improve funding for indigent representation in criminal cases. While the courts and prosecutors certainly have resource needs, indigent criminal defense is recognized as the most underfunded part of the criminal justice system.

15. Has the recent election had any effect on the AOC?

Yes. The election does not have an impact on courts in the same way as executive agencies, where new Cabinet Secretaries are nominated and at-will employees face job changes. However, we have met with many new Cabinet Secretaries and Secretary-designates in agencies with which we have a great deal of interaction, such as the Department of Finance and Administration, Children Youth and Families Department, New Mexico Department of Corrections, and of course the Governor's office. Without a track record on which to assess the likelihood the Governor will sign legislation that reaches her, it is important for us to reach out to the Governor and her staff on legislative proposals supported by the courts. Changes in the legislature have had an impact on how we approach judiciary legislative initiatives, concerning both legislative sponsors and differences in how various committees with a new composition react to proposed legislation.

16. Has the recession had any effect on the AOC?

Yes. The overall appropriations to courts have fallen from over \$154 million in FY 09 to a proposed appropriation for FY 12 of less than \$135 million, a drop of more than 12%. Courts have been operating for at least the past two years with a statewide vacancy rate of 11.5% in authorized positions. An independent study of judge needs based on actual case filings shows we need more than 30 additional judges at a time when the state is unable to fund new judgeships. The Judicial Compensation Commission created by the legislature finds our judges are paid less than any other state in the mountain west. Our employees have had no raises for three years and have instead seen paychecks shrink as they must contribute a greater percentage to their pensions while the state pays a smaller percentage.

At least as important as these resource challenges has been the steady increase in case filings. Some types of criminal cases have held steady or declined as cases such as domestic violence have risen during the recession. A greater impact has been felt on the civil side, with significant increases in debt collection and foreclosure actions, among others. Increasing caseloads and high vacancies in court employee positions result in declining service to the public. Criminal cases get priority because courts must provide a speedy trial. Civil cases get delayed, leading to frustration for litigants, lives put on hold awaiting the outcome of cases such as divorce actions, and frustration for businesses as case delays make it very difficult to make business decisions that depend on the outcome of litigation.

On the positive side, the situation has forced courts to examine how we operate, looking for efficiencies in the way we do business and learning what we can live without. We have defined the “core” constitutional responsibilities for courts and what other, important things we want to do, such as continuing to operate problem-solving courts, which are not core constitutional functions of the courts. Whether the impacts from the recession end in New Mexico during FY 12 or later, courts have learned to be leaner and more efficient. Our employees are suffering under the strain of too much work and too few employees to do the work, but we have discovered how to do “more

with less.” The serious focus of the Reengineering Commission, discussed in more detail in Question #17, is to identify large-scale changes that can reap significant gains in efficiencies in work we do now and improvements in how we provide services to the public that ultimately pays the bill for court operations. Discovering and implementing the new ways we will operate in the 21st century is the “silver lining” in the very dark cloud that this recession has been.

17. Are there any new projects on the horizon for the courts?

One exciting initiative undertaken by the Supreme Court is reengineering the New Mexico Courts. The National Center for State Courts (NCSC), with funding from the State Justice Institute and no funds provided by New Mexico taxpayers, is assisting in an effort to examine any and every aspect of the Judiciary to determine what steps can be undertaken to improve the efficient and effective operation of the courts. The Chief Justice appointed 16 members of the Reengineering Commission to oversee this effort. The Commission includes judges and court staff, but also representatives from private business, prosecutors and defense attorneys, the State Bar, legislators, and various entities that frequently interact with the courts. The Commission is charged to examine how courts operate and to consider any suggestion, no matter how novel, that may improve how courts function in the 21st century.

A survey is now underway to solicit input from thousands of people, both in the court system and in business, politics, and anywhere else there are people interested in the future operation of the courts. Responses are invited through March 4, 2011, at <http://www.nmcourts.gov/index.php>, with all responses going anonymously to the NCSC. After the NCSC tabulates the survey results, the Reengineering Commission will conduct local focus groups on areas that seem to be good candidates for change in the judicial system. The Commission will then invite different groups interested in the identified areas for change to get input from a broad range of perspectives. The Commission is expected to focus on those changes that can provide the most benefit first, and report on

others that may be considered later. Its report should be ready this summer, so that necessary rule changes can be adopted and legislative initiatives or even changes to the New Mexico Constitution may be presented to the 2012 Legislature. While we all hope New Mexico experiences economic recovery and growth, it is important to look carefully at how we do things to be as efficient and effective as possible with the funds entrusted to courts. We may need more or less funding to accomplish the initiatives identified by the Reengineering Commission, but we must be certain that courts serve the public and execute the work required of courts with careful attention to getting the most out of every dollar provided to us.

18. Is there anything that you wish to add?

I am profoundly grateful that the Supreme Court gave me the opportunity to do this work. It is rewarding in many ways I did not anticipate, especially having the daily experience of working with people who are passionate about public service in the courts and who dedicate amazing energy and intelligence to improving our delivery of justice in so many varied contexts. People who come into contact with the judicial system, whether as litigants, jurors, legislators, readers of news stories, or in other ways, should gain from their experience confidence that the system is fair, impartial, timely, and is making the very best use of the resources entrusted to us. There will always be room for improvement, but I know that many, many judges and judicial employees are dedicated to fostering exactly that confidence in every person who has contact with the New Mexico judicial system.