



# Ohio Judicial Conference



Legislative Platform  
2025-2026

&

Biennial Report  
2023-2024

# A Word from the Ohio Judicial Conference

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January 2025

The Honorable Mike DeWine, Governor  
Vern Riffe Building, 30th Floor  
77 South High Street  
Columbus, OH 43215

The Honorable Rob McColley, President  
The Ohio Senate  
1 Capitol Square, Room 201  
Columbus, Ohio 43215

The Honorable Matt Huffman, Speaker  
The Ohio House of Representatives  
Vern Riffe Building, 14th Floor  
77 South High Street  
Columbus, Ohio 43215

The Honorable Nickie Antonio, Minority Leader  
The Ohio Senate  
1 Capitol Square, Room 303  
Columbus, Ohio 43215

The Honorable Allison Russo, Minority Leader  
The Ohio House of Representatives Vern Riffe  
Building, 14th floor 77 South High Street  
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Wendy Zhan, Director  
Legislative Service Commission  
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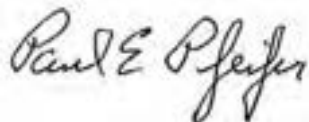
Enclosed is the 2025-2026 Legislative Platform and 2023-2024 Biennial Report of the Ohio Judicial Conference. We hope that you will consider the issues presented in the Platform and contact us if you are interested in working together on one or more of them. Of course, we also stand ready to provide you with independent information or comment on any issues of interest to you that might impact Ohio's courts or the judiciary.

As a record of proceedings of the Conference for the past two years and a plan for the next two years, these materials constitute our statutory obligation to report and make recommendations for the improvement of the administration of justice.

Please visit our website at [www.ohiojudges.org](http://www.ohiojudges.org), where you will find additional information about the Conference and greater detail regarding the various issues raised in the legislative platform. To conserve resources, we have reduced our reliance on printed materials and increased reliance on our website. We hope you will visit it often.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,



Paul E. Pfeifer, Executive Director



# Table of Contents

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Section 1: Governance ... Page 4

Section 2: Legislative Activities ... Page 11

Section 3: Legislative Platform ... Page 15

Section 4: Committee Reports ... Page 18



Section 1:  
Governance

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# Officers

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The officers of the Ohio Judicial Conference are elected by the members to serve two year terms. Normally, an officer is first elected as 2nd Vice Chair, and then serves sequentially in the other officer positions.



**Honorary Chair**  
Chief Justice Sharon Kennedy  
Supreme Court of Ohio



**Chair**  
Judge John J. Russo  
Cuyahoga County  
Common Pleas Court



**Chair Elect**  
Judge David Hejmanowski  
Delaware County Probate  
& Juvenile Court



**First Vice Chair**  
Judge Michael Hess  
Fourth District Court of  
Appeals



**Second Vice Chair**  
Judge Carla J. Baldwin  
Youngstown Municipal  
Court



**Immediate Past Chair**  
Judge Paula C. Giulitto  
Portage County  
Domestic Relations  
Court



**Secretary/Treasurer**  
Paul Pfeifer  
OJC Executive Director

# Executive Committee

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The Judicial Conference Executive Committee meets quarterly to establish Judicial Conference policy, to receive updates, to consider recommendations from Judicial Conference committees, to review and make recommendations with regard to the work of Judicial Conference staff, and to adopt resolutions that express judicial consensus.

The Executive Committee is comprised of approximately 50 judges. The Executive Committee consists of the officers and co-chairs of the committees of the Judicial Conference; the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Ohio; the Chief Justice and the Chief Justice-elect of the Courts of Appeals of Ohio; the presiding officer and the presiding officer-elect of each member judicial association; the Administrative Director of the Supreme Court of Ohio; and the Executive Director of the Ohio Judicial Conference.

## ***Standing Committees and Co-Chairs***

### *Appellate Law & Procedure*

Judge Craig R. Baldwin

Judge Sean C. Gallagher

### *Civil Law & Procedure*

Judge David M. Gormley

Judge Gene A. Zmuda

### *Community Corrections*

Judge Emanuella D. Groves (2023 only)

Judge Howard H. Harcha, III

### *Court Administration*

Judge John J. Russo

Judge James A. Shriver

### *Court Technology*

Judge Ronald P. Forsthoefel

Judge George P. McCarthy

### *Criminal Law & Procedure*

Judge Brian F. Hagan

Judge Cynthia Westcott Rice

### *Domestic Relations Law & Procedure*

Judge Diane M. Palos

Judge Matt C. Staley

### *Innovative Specialty Courts*

Judge Taryn L. Heath

Judge John W. Rudduck

### *Judicial Education*

Judge Michael Hess

### *Judicial Ethics, Professionalism & Diversity*

Judge John M. Durkin

Judge Deirdre Logan

### *Ohio Jury Instructions*

Judge Patrick Carroll, ret.

Judge Mary Jane Trapp

### *Jury Service*

Judge Matthew L. Reger

Judge James F. Stevenson

### *Juvenile Law & Procedure*

Judge Luann Cooperrider

Judge James A. Shriver

### *Legislative*

Judge Paula C. Giulitto

Judge John R. Willamowski

### *Magistrates*

Judge Beth W. Cappelli

Judge Timothy N. O'Connell

### *Probate Law & Procedure*

Judge Laura J. Gallagher

Judge Jack R. Puffenberger

# Executive Committee (contd.)

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*Public Confidence &  
Community Outreach*  
Judge Eugene A. Lucci  
Judge Brendan Sheehan

*Publications*  
Judge Deborah Nicaastro

*Retired Judges*  
Judge Margaret A. Clark, ret.  
Judge Mel Kemmer, ret.

*Traffic Law & Procedure*  
Judge Jonathan Starn  
Judge Terri L. Stupica

***Judicial Association Leadership***  
***OCAJA***  
***Ohio Courts of Appeals Judges Association***  
Judge Thomas Osowik, Chief Judge  
Judge John Willamowski, Chief Judge Elect

***OCPJA***  
***Ohio Common Pleas Judges Association***  
Judge Taryn L. Heath, President  
Judge Brendan Sheehan, President Elect

***OADRJ***  
***Ohio Association of Domestic Relations Judges***  
Judge Beth A. Smith, President  
Judge Randall D. Fuller, President Elect

***OAJCJ***  
***Ohio Association of Juvenile Court Judges***  
Judge Frank J. Janik, III, President  
Judge Bradley Smith, Vice President

***OAPJ***  
***Ohio Association of Probate Judges***  
Judge Laura J. Gallagher, President  
Judge James T. Walther, President Elect

***AMCJO***  
***Association of Municipal/County Judges of Ohio***  
Judge Terri L. Stupica, President  
Judge Julie Monnin, First Vice President

Bob Horner  
Administrative Director  
The Supreme Court of Ohio

# OJC Staff

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# ORC Sections

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## R. C. 105.91 – THE OHIO JUDICIAL CONFERENCE

### **§105.91 OHIO JUDICIAL CONFERENCE; MEMBERS; DUTIES**

There is hereby established an Ohio judicial conference consisting of the judges of the supreme court, courts of appeals, common pleas courts, probate courts, juvenile courts, municipal courts, and county courts of Ohio organized and operated upon a voluntary membership basis for the purpose of studying the coordination of the work of the several courts of Ohio, the encouragement of uniformity in the application of the law, rules, and practice throughout the state and within each division of the courts as an integral part of the judicial system of the state; to promote an exchange of experience and suggestions respecting the operation of the judicial system; and in general to consider the business and problems pertaining to the administration of justice and to make recommendations for its improvement.

### **§ 105.911 JUDICIAL IMPACT STATEMENTS**

(A) If a bill or resolution introduced in the general assembly appears to affect the revenues or expenditures of the courts of Ohio, to increase or decrease the workload or caseload of judges or members of their staffs, or to affect case disposition, the Ohio judicial conference may prepare a judicial impact statement of the bill or resolution on its own initiative or at the request of any member of the general assembly. The Ohio judicial conference may prepare a judicial impact statement before the bill or resolution is recommended for passage by the house of representatives or senate committee of the general assembly to which the bill was referred and again before the bill or resolution is taken up for final consideration by either house of the general assembly. The judicial impact statement shall include an estimate, in dollars, of the amount by which the bill or resolution would increase or decrease revenues or expenditures and any other information the Ohio judicial conference considers necessary to explain the fiscal effect of the bill or resolution. The statement also shall include an analysis of the bill or resolution's administrative and procedural effects on the courts of this state.

(B) The Ohio judicial conference shall distribute copies of a judicial impact statement as follows:

(1) For consideration by the senate or house of representatives rules committee, or the standing committee to which a bill is referred, two copies to the chairman together with a copy to each member of the committee;

(2) For final consideration, a copy to each member of the house that is considering the bill.

If the member who introduced the bill or resolution or who requested the statement is not a member of the house or rules committee considering the bill, the Ohio judicial conference shall send the member a copy.

(C) In preparing a judicial impact statement the Ohio judicial conference may request any court, department, division, institution, board, commission, authority, bureau, or other instrumentality or officer of the state or of a county, municipal corporation, township, school district, or other governmental entity of the state to provide any of the following information:

(1) An estimate, in dollars, of the amount by which the bill or resolution would increase or decrease the revenues or expenditures received or made by the court, instrumentality, officer, or entity;

(2) Any other information the Ohio judicial conference considers necessary for it to understand or explain the fiscal, administrative, and procedural effects of the bill or resolution.

The Ohio judicial conference first shall contact the Ohio legislative budget office for information regarding the fiscal effects of the bill or resolution. If the Ohio legislative budget office does not have the fiscal information sought by the Ohio judicial conference, then the Ohio judicial conference and the Ohio legislative budget office jointly may request any of the entities described in division (C) of this section to provide the fiscal information.

A court, instrumentality, officer, or entity shall comply with a request for information as soon as reasonably possible after receiving it. The Ohio judicial conference

# ORC Sections (contd.)

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shall specify the manner of compliance in its request and, if necessary, may specify a period of no longer than five days for compliance. The Ohio judicial conference may consider any information provided under division (C) of this section in preparing a judicial impact statement.

(D) The failure of the Ohio judicial conference to prepare a judicial impact statement before a bill or resolution is taken up for consideration by the house of representatives or senate committee, or by either or both houses for final consideration, shall not impair the validity of any bill or resolution passed by either or both houses of the general assembly.

(E) This section does not affect the duty of the Ohio legislative budget office to prepare fiscal analyses pursuant to section 103.14 of the Revised Code.

(F) As used in this section:

(1) With regard to a bill or resolution, “procedural effects” includes all court-related procedures, including pretrial, trial, and post-trial proceedings.

(2) With regard to a bill or resolution, “administrative effects” includes matters pertaining to the business of the courts, including clerical processes, records management, planning and research, changes in court personnel, calendar management, facilities and equipment, workload distribution, court reorganization, and the creation or addition of judgeships.

## **§ 105.92 COMPATIBILITY OF OFFICE**

Membership in the Ohio judicial conference does not constitute holding another public office.

## **§ 105.93 PUBLICATION OF REPORTS**

The Ohio judicial conference may publish reports and recommendations and at its election sell and distribute the same upon such terms and conditions as may be authorized by its executive committee.

## **§ 105.94 GRANTS, GIFTS, BEQUESTS AND DEVISES**

The Ohio judicial conference may receive grants, gifts, bequests, and devises and expend them for expenses of members in attending executive and standing

committee meetings and for special research or study relating to the administration of justice. The conference shall file annually, but not later than the fifteenth day of March, with the supreme court, a full report of all grants, gifts, bequests, and devises received during the preceding calendar year, when received, and to whom and for what expended.

## **§ 105.95 BIENNIAL REPORTS TO GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

On or before February 1, 1965, and biennially thereafter the Ohio judicial conference shall submit in writing to the general assembly and to the governor a report of the proceedings of the conference together with any recommendations for legislation.

## **§ 105.96 PERSONNEL; COMPENSATION, EXPENSES**

The Ohio judicial conference may employ personnel and such research assistants as may be required to carry out the purposes of the conference. Their compensation and necessary expenses shall be paid from the state treasury out of funds appropriated therefore. All disbursements shall be by voucher approved by the chairman of the conference.

## **§ 105.97 JUDGES NOT REIMBURSED FOR COURSE FEES**

A judge who attends any continuing education program or course offered by the Ohio judicial conference shall pay the requisite fees associated with the program or course and shall not receive reimbursement for the fees from moneys appropriated by the general assembly to the conference.

Section 2:  
Legislative  

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Activities



# Legislative Activities

## **The Judicial Conference Assists Legislators with Legislative Initiatives and Constituent Inquiries.**

The Ohio Judicial Conference works, at all points in the lawmaking process, to communicate with the Ohio General Assembly about ways to improve the administration of justice. The Judicial Conference works with legislators who request judicial input on their initiatives early in the lawmaking process. During the 135th General Assembly, many legislators approached the Judicial Conference to discuss their legislative ideas prior to and immediately after introduction. Feedback from our various committees helped those legislators to realize the practical impact that their proposals would have on Ohio courts.

## **The Judicial Conference Identifies the Legislative Priorities of Ohio Judges.**

The Ohio Judicial Conference submits a Legislative Platform to each General Assembly. The platform outlines initiatives that the Judicial Conference supports and recommends for adoption by the General Assembly during its two-year session. Some highlights of our 2023-2024 Legislative Platform included adoption modernization and safeguarding judges' personal information.



## **Judicial Education at the OJC Annual Meeting 2024**

**The Judicial Conference Monitors Legislation that Impacts the Judiciary.** The Judicial Conference reviews all legislation that is introduced in the General Assembly to determine whether a bill may affect the administration of justice. This information



## **Judge Matt Reger and Representative Brian Stewart, Judicial-Legislative Exchange 2023**

is published electronically in the bi-weekly Legislative Newsletter, which is sent to our membership. Our law and procedure committees meet regularly to analyze and discuss how various legislation improves or weakens the administration of justice. The Legislative Committee meets every month to discuss all topics legislative. Letters and emails are frequently sent to sponsors and Senate and House committee chairs to convey concerns, recommendations, or support.

## **The Judicial Conference Publishes Judicial Impact Statements.**

Under statutory authority granted in section 105.911(A) of the Revised Code, the law and procedure committees provide the Ohio General Assembly with information on legislation that significantly impacts Ohio courts. The Judicial Conference communicates regularly with bill sponsors through judicial impact statements that describe the effect a bill will have on the judiciary, and when possible, provide recommendations for improvement. Judicial Impact Statements convey detailed information on how the bill affects court workload, case dockets, administrative or judicial procedures, revenues, and other relevant matters and are approved by the Judicial Conference's Executive Committee. Copies of Judicial Impact Statements from the 135th General Assembly as well as from past General Assemblies can be found on our website ([www.ohiojudges.org](http://www.ohiojudges.org)).

# Legislative Activities (contd.)

**The Judicial Conference Publishes Information on Laws Passed.** The Ohio Judicial Conference regularly distributes information on laws as they pass and become effective. Enactment News, bench aids, or special mailings inform judges about changes to the law that affect the courts and the administration of justice in Ohio. The Ohio Judicial Conference acts as the central repository for all information on enactment of statutes that impact Ohio's judiciary. Our website ([www.ohiojudges.org](http://www.ohiojudges.org)) contains effective dates, summaries, and any necessary forms.

**The Judicial Conference Promotes Inter-branch Collaboration.** The Legislative Committee of the Judicial Conference plans and organizes several programs designed to foster collaboration and partnership between the branches of government. These programs include:

- **New Legislator Program.** The Judicial Conference makes presentations before House and Senate committees to help legislators understand the role the Judicial Conference plays in providing information and analysis of bills with a judicial impact. Judges often attend meetings with caucus staff to present our Legislative Platform, to answer questions that legislators may have about the conference, and to get acquainted with members so that aides and other staff know who to contact when they have a question about Ohio courts and judges. We also work with the Supreme Court of Ohio and Ohio State Bar Association to co-sponsor a reception for new legislators at the Ohio Judicial Center.

- **Roundtables & Panel Discussions.** The Judicial Conference Annual Meeting is often an opportunity for judges and legislators to come together. Frequently the Judicial Conference Legislative Committee plans and organizes a roundtable or panel discussion of an issue of mutual interest to legislators and judges, or other criminal justice communities and judges. This often takes place during the educational portion of the Annual Meeting but can occur whenever the need arises.

- **Judicial-Legislative Exchange Program.** The Judicial-Legislative Exchange Program facilitates reciprocal visits between judges and legislators. In this program legislators visit judges at their courts, observing court sessions and other aspects of the judges' work and judges visit legislators at the Statehouse, attending committee hearings and session. The exchanges are opportunities for both judges and legislators to better appreciate each other's day-to-day work as well as to build personal relationships that promote communication and cooperation.

All of the legislative activities and publications are completed with the help and guidance of the OJC Legislative Committee, which was co-chaired by Judges Paula Guilitto and John Willamowski in 2023-2024.

**Judge Stacy Wall and the first graduate of her specialized mental health court, Scott. Miami County Common Pleas Court, May 2, 2024**



Section 3:  
Legislative  

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Platform



# Legislative Platform

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## 2025-2026 Ohio Judicial Conference Legislative Platform

The Ohio Judicial Conference works to encourage legislation that supports several core principles:

- The Ohio Judiciary is a co-equal branch of Government that, under the Constitution, cannot be marginalized by the Executive or Legislative branches.
- The Ohio Revised Code should be as easy as possible for a layperson to understand and should not contain provisions that are duplicative, unnecessarily complicated, or which have not withstood constitutional scrutiny.

### CRIMINAL LAW AND COMMUNITY CORRECTIONS:

**RC 2929.15 Sentencing Caps.** The 90- and 180-day sanctions caps in RC 2929.15, in many cases, undermine the purpose of probation.

**Judicial Release.** The various forms of early release from prison should be streamlined and simplified so that rather than having many early release mechanisms that are confusing and rarely used, the Code has few early release mechanisms that are consistently used. Early release that does not allow for judicial discretion cannot properly be called judicial release.

**Criminal Code, Traffic/DUI Law, and Drug Law Simplification.** Title 29, Title 39 (Drug Laws), and Title 45 (Traffic Laws/DUI Law) should be revised and simplified.

**Violations of Temporary Protection Orders.** If a person is previously convicted of domestic violence or any other of the delineated offenses in the Revised Code that would escalate a subsequent domestic violence charge to a felony, and if a person in that category is accused of a violation of a protection order, then that violation should be considered an F5. Persons with a history of domestic violence or related convictions are a significant safety risk to a person protected under an order.

**Interference with Custody.** RC 2919.23 defines the crime of interference with custody. Penalties for the crime are spelled out in subsection (D), and the current language makes the crime more serious “[i]f the child who is the subject of the violation ... is removed from the state.” However, “removed from the state” has resulted in ambiguity in cases and should be clarified to say “is removed from Ohio to another state,” or “is taken across state lines,” or “is taken from any state in the United States to a different state.”

### JUVENILE JUSTICE:

**Juvenile Justice Reform.** Reform last drafted as 134 HB 500 (and previously in 132 HB 394) should be adopted. It includes altering mandatory bindover for juveniles to adult court.

**Truancy Reform.** Allow flexibility for juvenile courts to work with local school districts to intervene earlier and continue truancy plans into the subsequent school year.

### FAMILY LAW:

**Caretaker Review.** A working group of judges and practitioners should review the caretaker language enacted in 135 HB 33 to recommend consensus statutory changes.

# Legislative Platform (contd.)

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**Family Law Reform.** Family law judges have helped develop a comprehensive proposal to reduce conflict, reinforce positive parental behavior, and encourage effective parenting plans.

**Parental Duty of Support-Age Limit and School Enrollment.** A court should have the authority to continue a child support order beyond age 18 if, among other things, the child continuously attends a recognized and accredited high school on a full-time basis on and after the child's eighteenth birthday.

## TRAFFIC AND OVI LAW:

**Review and Modernization of License Suspensions and Reinstatement Fees.** Unnecessary or ineffective suspensions should be removed from Title 45; reinstatement fees should be uniform – not vary based on reason for suspension; barriers to legal driving privileges should be removed, including for child support suspensions. Language prohibiting driving under suspension of a license should include the language “or whose privilege to obtain a license has been suspended.”

**Insurance Verification Modernization.** Insurance verification has a tremendous impact on the municipal court caseload and real-time electronic insurance verification method should be implemented. Proof of insurance should also be required upon renewing or obtaining vehicle registration.

**US/Canada Reciprocity.** The Ohio BMV should be authorized to enter into an agreement with Canada or the province of Ontario for the purposes of reciprocal enforcement of traffic violation sanctions.

## PROBATE LAW:

**Mental Health Professionals.** There is a need in many counties for additional mental health professionals to have the authority to testify in hearings for involuntary commitment and continued commitment.

**Guardianship Modernization.** To modernize Chapter 2111 of the Revised Code and Sup.R.66 to make them consistent with current guardianship needs and to allow for the appointment of appropriate non-profit corporations to serve as guardians. See 134 HB 488 and 134 SB 199.

**Psychiatric Deterioration.** To create a new category of mental illness and allow for emergency evaluation of persons who are suffering from mental deterioration. See 135 HB 249.

**Probate Modernization.** To enact the Ohio Association of Probate Judges' proposals for concealments modernization and guardianship modernization.

## COURT ADMINISTRATION:

**Municipal Court Funding and Revenue.** RC 1901.31(C)(1) provides that the salary of certain municipal court clerks is set by either the court or the local legislative authority, depending upon whether the court brings in enough revenue to pay for itself. The court should set the salary of its clerk, and the salary and who sets it should not be dependent upon the court's revenue.



# Legislative Platform (contd.)

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**Court Computerization Fees.** The 129<sup>th</sup> GA passed an increase in computerization fees, from \$3 to \$6, for Common Pleas General Division only. Similar provisions in other sections regarding other court jurisdictions should be increased as well. Additionally, 135 SB 94 made drastic changes to a court's authority over fees and funds for computerization of the offices of the clerk of court. The OJC would like to see these changes corrected so that courts retain oversight over these funds.

**Sealing and Expungement of Records.** As the legislature expands access to sealing and expungement of criminal records, courts are left to process more applications, with no additional revenue retained by the court to offset the additional work. These statutory changes should be accompanied by appropriations, and in the absence of appropriations, the court should be able to keep a greater portion of any fees.

**Private Information of Public Servants.** HB 341 of the 132nd General Assembly added judges and magistrates to the list of “designated public service workers” whose personal information is not subject to disclosure under public records law. Because judges and prosecutors are elected officials whose addresses must be verified, their addresses remain available for public viewing. To ensure the safety of members of the judiciary, this loophole needs to be corrected so that judges’ addresses remain entirely confidential. A process can be created whereby residency can be challenged (and verified) without the information being publicly available

**Appointment of Counsel.** RC 305.14 should be modified to allow common pleas and county court judges the ability to employ legal counsel of their choosing in any matter of public business coming before the court or in the prosecution or defense of any action or proceeding in which the judge or other court official is a party or has an interest in an official capacity. RC 309.09 should allow the judge to set the amount of compensation for legal service by order and also allow the judge discretion to have the compensation be paid from the county general fund or from another court fund. The hourly compensation for legal services should not exceed the highest hourly compensation paid by the board of county commissioners for an attorney to represent the board or other county officials. These provisions would balance the separation of powers between the branches of government to allow a court to obtain fair representation by an attorney of their choosing.

**Uniform Juror Pay.** Currently the State of Ohio has no uniformity in juror compensation. R.C. 2939.04 provides that grand jurors shall not be paid more than \$40 per day. R.C. 2313.22 provides that the payment of jurors is fixed by the county commissioners of each county. The only specific monetary provision in this statute requires that a juror who serves more than 10 days must be compensated at \$15 per day or 1 ½ times the amount set by the county commissioners. Federal courts pay jurors \$50 per day (up to \$60 per day after 10 days in a petit jury and after 45 days in a grand jury) and the federal minimum wage is \$58 per day. Jurors are a necessary component of the civil and criminal justice systems and participation in a jury should be supported as much as possible.

## APPELLATE LAW:

**Appellate Review of Felony Sentencing.** Appellate judges have long struggled with how to review lengthy sentences imposed consecutively for felony offenses, as the “contrary to law” standard in existing law is not defined and has been interpreted inconsistently. A working group of appellate judges have drafted a proposal that provides that individual or concurrent sentences within a range are appealable on the grounds that the sentencing judge abused his or her discretion; that consecutive sentences are presumed valid if the total sentence length is below a certain threshold; and that consecutive sentences above that threshold are presumed invalid, but may be upheld if the record supports their imposition.

Section 4:  
Committee  

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Reports



# COMMITTEE REPORTS

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*Note: during the 2023-2024 biennium, the OJC created an ad hoc committee to revise the enumerated working committees and make changes to their stated purposes. All changes were approved by vote of the OJC membership at the 2024 Annual Meeting and will go into effect starting in 2025. Any changes will be indicated in italics next to the individual committee report.*

## **Appellate Law and Procedure Committee**

The Appellate Law & Procedure Committee analyzes pending legislation with a judicial impact on laws regarding appeals, courts of appeals, and appellate procedure, and reviews issues and proposals of relevance to judges with appellate jurisdiction. Much of the Committee's attention over this biennium was on proposals to change R.C. 2953.08, appellate review of felony sentences. Additionally, the Appellate Law & Procedure Committee is generally opposed to any change in appellate districts that is not based on deliberative research that indicates population or workload shifts necessitate such action.

## **Civil Law & Procedure Committee**

The Civil Law and Procedure Committee is responsible for tracking and analyzing legislation that will affect the policies and procedures of courts with jurisdiction over civil matters. It also drafts bench cards and bench aids on relevant topics. The Committee has worked closely with other stakeholders on issues as varied as asbestos litigation, private selling officers in foreclosures, and protection of public expression.

## **Community Corrections Committee**

The Community Corrections Committee provides a judicial perspective and advice on legislation and innovation in the field of community corrections. The committee reviews community corrections programs, policies and proposals, makes recommendations to the judiciary and provides input as needed into the planning of various workshops, trainings and forums for judges, and court personnel on the subject of community corrections, jails, sentencing alternatives and other related topics. Legislative topics that routinely engage the Committee are the various forms of judicial release and transitional control.

## **Court Administration Committee**

The Court Administration Committee reviews issues and proposals concerning general court administration and court reform. The work includes analyzing court staffing needs, establishing facility and equipment standards, and facilitating efficient court operations. The Committee also analyzes pending legislation with an impact on court administration, such as laws relative to a court's authority to set and enforce its own security policies and procedures with respect to guns or bills that concern bail processes and attendant risk-assessment tools.

## **Court Technology Committee**

The Court Technology Committee explores new developments in court technology and policies related to it, and serves as a resource to help Ohio judges effectively use technology. Topics of interest range from artificial intelligence, legal help portals, risk prediction tools, case management systems, and remote alcohol monitoring devices. The Committee sponsors a Court Technology Conference for judges and vendors in April of each year.

# COMMITTEE REPORTS (contd.)

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## **Criminal Law & Procedure Committee**

The Criminal Law and Procedure Committee is responsible for tracking and analyzing legislation and rule amendments that will affect the policies and procedures of courts with jurisdiction over criminal matters. Occupying much of the Committee's time and attention during the 135th General Assembly were the various bills creating new offenses and penalties.

## **Domestic Relations Law & Procedure Committee**

The Domestic Relations Law & Procedure Committee reviews issues and proposals of relevance to judges with domestic relations jurisdiction and analyzes pending legislation with judicial impact on family law and procedure. The committee meets jointly with the Executive Committee of the Ohio Association of Domestic Relations Judges on a quarterly basis.

## **Innovative Specialty Courts Committee**

The Innovative Specialty Courts Committee exchanges ideas and recommends policies related to the operation and administration of Ohio courts with specialized dockets (mental health courts, drug courts, re-entry courts, etc.). The Innovative Specialty Committee works to identify additional resources for and to facilitate the continued operation of these dockets. Because of the continuing addiction epidemic, there has been a great deal of legislative interest in specialized dockets, diversion programs, and collateral consequences for drug offenses. *This committee changed its name from the Specialized Docket Committee to the Innovative Specialty Courts Committee to avoid confusion with the Supreme Court's Specialized Docket Commission, which certifies specialized dockets.*

## **Judicial Education Committee**

The Judicial Education Committee works with the Executive Committee, the judicial associations, and the Ohio Judicial Conference staff to develop, organize, and present the Annual Meeting Judicial Education Program. The 2023 Annual Meeting was held September 14-15. The theme was "The Ohio Judiciary in Changing Times." The 2024 Annual Meeting took place September 19-20.

## **Judicial Ethics, Professionalism, and Diversity Committee**

The Judicial Ethics & Professionalism Committee reviews ethics opinions, advisory opinions, judicial canons, and rules of professional conduct. The committee comments on proposed amendments to the Code of Judicial Conduct and serves as a judicial resource on ethics and professionalism. The Judicial Advisory Group (JAG) is a group of judges, within the Judicial Ethics and Professionalism Committee, who work with the Ohio Lawyers Assistance Program (OLAP) to provide confidential assistance to judges concerning mental health, substance abuse, general stress, and judicial temperament. *This committee will continue in 2025 as the Judicial, Ethics, and Professionalism Committee. A separate ad hoc Diversity Committee will be formed.*

# COMMITTEE REPORTS (contd.)

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## Ohio Jury Instructions

The Ohio Jury Instructions Committee drafts pattern civil and criminal jury instructions for use by all Ohio judges and lawyers. Instructions are drafted or revised based on legislative enactments and controlling case law as well as requests from attorneys and judges. The OJI Committee is the oldest of the Judicial Conference committees, meeting on a Friday and Saturday seven times a year plus a 3-day summer retreat.

## Jury Service Committee

The Jury Service Committee examines all aspects of jury service and makes recommendations for the proper and efficient functioning of the jury system. Specifically, the committee is exploring best practices for modern juries and making juror pay uniform statewide in an effort to increase the juror pool.

## Juvenile Law & Procedure Committee

The Juvenile Law & Procedure Committee analyzes pending legislation with a judicial impact on juvenile laws and procedures and reviews issues and proposals of relevance to judges with juvenile jurisdiction. It makes recommendations to improve the Ohio Revised Code, Ohio Rules of Juvenile Procedure, and relevant Rules of Superintendence for the Courts of Ohio. The Committee tracked several bills during the 134th General Assembly, including HB 239 (dealing with mandatory bindover of juvenile defendants) and SB 288 (the criminal justice omnibus that had many provisions that impacted juveniles).

## Legislative Committee

The Legislative Committee advises the Judicial Conference staff and the Judicial Conference committees as they evaluate the judicial impact of legislation and respond to inquiries from legislators and others. The Legislative Committee publishes a biweekly legislative newsletter that is sent to all sitting judges and several organizations within the justice community. The committee also publishes BillBoard, which contains links to judicial impact statements and testimony on bills and is sent to members of the legislature. The Legislative Committee is also responsible for the annual Judicial-Legislative Exchange.



**Judge Randall Fuller visits the Statehouse to testify on 135 HB 122 (Reps. Pavliga, Miller) on May 2, 2023. The bill expanded intimidation offenses to include guardians ad litem and court-appointed special advocates.**

# COMMITTEE REPORTS (contd.)

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## **Magistrates Committee**

The Magistrates Committee collaborates with the Ohio Association of Magistrates on magistrate issues and examines magistrate qualifications, duties, training, and compensation. The committee also identifies those activities of magistrates that are of greatest importance to judges. The Committee receives regular updates from the OAM on matters important to Ohio's magistrates, and often provides feedback from the perspective of judges. *The scope of this committee is being expanded to reflect the types of bills being introduced by the General Assembly. Starting in 2025, the committee will be renamed Judicial Officers and Organization.*

## **Probate Law & Procedure Committee**

The Probate Law & Procedure Committee reviews matters and proposals of relevance to judges with probate jurisdiction and analyzes pending legislation and rule change proposals with an impact on probate laws and procedures.

## **Public Communication and Community Outreach Committee**

The Public Confidence and Community Outreach Committee promotes activities that instill public confidence in the Ohio Judiciary by helping judges educate the general public about the function and operation of the state's judicial system. During the biennium, the Committee assisted in updating all of the Judicial Conference's Citizen Guide Brochures. The committee is also making website upgrades.

## **Publications**

The Publications Committee provides guidance to Judicial Conference staff in its efforts to produce publications that meet the needs of Ohio judges by providing timely and relevant information, by encouraging dialogue, and by enhancing the Judicial Conference's ability to serve as the voice of Ohio judges. A quarterly publication, "For the Record," provides articles of interest. *This committee has been disbanded, with the understanding that OJC staff will take up most of the work of publishing newsletters and other information. The PCCO Committee will take up any outstanding responsibilities.*

## **Retired Judges Committee**

Retired judges in Ohio provide a pool of qualified jurists who can sit by assignment whenever a judge is unable to preside over his or her court. The Retired Judges Committee reviews and makes recommendations on issues faced by retired judges. Of note, the Committee monitors Ohio Public Employee Retirement System (OPERS), Ohio Public Employees Deferred Compensation Plan.

## **Traffic Law and Procedure Committee**

The Traffic Law & Procedure Committee analyzes pending legislation with a judicial impact on traffic laws and reviews matters and proposals of relevance to judges who preside over traffic cases. Recent topics of Committee discussion include impaired driving, driving privileges and reinstatement fees (including reinstatement amnesties), and insurance verification modernization.



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