



## **Top National State Court Leadership Associations Launch National Task Force on Fines, Fees and Bail Practices**

**Williamsburg, VA (February 3, 2016)** -- The nation's two national state court leadership associations have formed a National Task Force on Fines, Fees and Bail Practices to address the ongoing impact that court fines and fees and bail practices have on communities – especially the economically disadvantaged -- across the United States. The Conference of Chief Justices (CCJ) — the association of the top judicial leaders from the 50 states, D.C. and the U.S. territories — and the Conference of State Court Administrators (COSCA) — the association of court executives that oversees judicial administration in the state courts — are leading this effort.

The Task Force is comprised of national judicial and legal leaders, legal advocates, policy makers from state, county and municipal government, academics, and the public interest community. It is co-chaired by Ohio Chief Justice Maureen O'Connor and Kentucky State Court Administrator Laurie K. Dudgeon. The Task Force is working with the support and commitment of the State Justice Institute (SJI), and is coordinating with key stakeholders, including the Department of Justice. Several CCJ and COSCA members attended a two-day White House hearing in December led by DOJ that outlined the severity of this issue and the critical need to find solutions.

The Task Force co-chairs have formed three working groups:

- Access to Justice and Fairness
- Transparency, Governance & Structural Reform
- Accountability, Judicial Performance and Qualifications, and Oversight

Among other responsibilities, the Task Force will:

- draft model statutes, court rules, written policies, processes and procedures for setting, collecting and waiving court-imposed payments;
- compile and create suggested best practices for setting, processing and codifying the collection of fines and fees and bail/bonds;
- review and revise suggested guidelines for qualifications and oversight of judges in courts created by local governments or traffic courts, including reviewing and updating state codes of judicial conduct and the jurisdiction of judicial conduct commissions to ensure their applicability to all judges;
- sponsor a court “hackathon” designed to develop innovative technological solutions that ensure courts are providing 21<sup>st</sup> century customer service through mobile applications and software platforms; and
- develop an online clearinghouse of information containing resources and best practices.

CCJ and COSCA have long taken the position that court functions should be funded from the general operating fund of state and local governments to ensure that the judiciary can fulfill its obligation of upholding the Constitution and protecting the individual rights of all citizens. In 1986, CCJ and COSCA adopted, *Standards Relating to Courts Costs*. Subsequently, in 2012, CCJ and COSCA adopted a position paper titled *Courts are Not Revenue Centers* and the “*Principles of Judicial Administration*” developed by the National Center for State Courts (NCSC).

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