

IN THE SUPREME COURT OF THE STATE OF KANSAS

Administrative Order

2022-CM-081

FILED

December 1, 2022

DOUGLAS T. SHIMA
CLERK OF APPELLATE COURTS

RE: Rural Justice Initiative Committee

Kansas rural communities face shrinking numbers of attorneys, which jeopardizes many Kansans' ability to obtain legal representation. With 2.938 million residents in Kansas' 105 counties in 2020, 57% of the state's population lived in only 6 urban counties—Douglas, Johnson, Leavenworth, Sedgwick, Shawnee, and Wyandotte. And 80% of all active Kansas attorneys live within those 6 urban counties. This leaves only 1,578 active attorneys to serve 1.255 million Kansans living in the state's other 99 counties. If unaddressed, this issue is likely to worsen as younger attorneys move into Kansas' urban counties and the attorney population in rural Kansas continues to grow older. The Supreme Court recognizes the need to address the unmet legal needs of rural Kansans and seeks to bring together individuals with diverse interests to consider ways to address this need.

Pursuant to the authority under Article 3, Section 1 of the Kansas Constitution, the Supreme Court hereby creates the Rural Justice Initiative Committee, effective the date of this order.

The duties of the committee include:

1. Collecting information and data about unmet legal needs across rural Kansas, including considerations for rural counties with different population densities.
2. Studying pertinent statistical trends related to Kansas' population and demographics, including those specific to attorneys and other professionals who support court and court-adjacent programs.
3. Studying rural incubator programs directed at professionals, including programs highlighted by the National Center for State Courts Rural Justice Collaborative, to determine whether those programs or elements of them may be useful to a coordinated Kansas effort.
4. Examining court-based and court-adjacent programs used in other states to bolster the availability of attorney services in rural areas.
5. Identifying strategies to provide attorney services remotely in rural areas.
6. Examining existing rural attorney recruitment projects in Kansas to make recommendations for supporting and expanding those projects.

7. Identifying options for non-traditional resolution of legal issues in rural environments, including alternative dispute resolution.
8. Assessing judicial best practices that facilitate meeting legal needs across Kansas and identifying any impediments to implement those best practices.
9. Recommending any necessary changes in law, regulation, or rule to improve the availability of attorney services in rural Kansas.
10. Within 18 months of the effective date of this order, delivering initial recommendations to the Supreme Court.

To prioritize the duties above, the Court suggests the committee meet and develop subcommittees within two months of the effective date of this order. The committee as a whole should also meet periodically to evaluate progress.

The following persons are hereby appointed to serve on the committee:

- Justice K.J. Wall, Kansas Supreme Court, chair;
- Judge Kim R. Schroeder, Kansas Court of Appeals;
- Chief Judge Daniel D. Creitz, 31st Judicial District;
- Chief Judge Kevin Berens, 15th Judicial District;
- District Judge Tom Drees, 23rd Judicial District;
- District Judge Richard Marquez, 25th Judicial District;
- District Magistrate Judge Regine Thompson, 12th Judicial District;
- Senator Elaine Bowers, District 36;
- Representative Tory Marie Blew, District 112;
- Stephen B. Angermayer, Attorney, Pittsburg;
- Paige Bangerter, Attorney, Dodge City;
- Andrew Bolton, Attorney, Louisburg;
- Stacey Blakeman, Assistant Dean of Career Services, University of Kansas, Lawrence;
- Ashley D. Comeau, Attorney, Plainville;
- Alan Cobb, Kansas Chamber of Commerce, Topeka;
- Aaron Cunningham, Attorney, Hays;
- Timothy Demel, Attorney, Beloit;
- Shirley Fessler, Director of Outreach and Accessibility, Kansas Coalition Against Sexual and Domestic Violence, Topeka;
- Wendee D. Grady, Assistant General Counsel and Director of Legal Foundation, Kansas Farm Bureau, Manhattan;
- Marilyn Harp, Executive Director, Kansas Legal Services, Topeka;
- Joslyn Kusiak, Attorney, Independence;

- Shawn Leisinger, Associate Dean for Centers and External Programs, Externship Director, Washburn University School of Law, Topeka;
- Angela Meyer, Attorney, Pittsburg;
- Joshua Ney, Jefferson County Attorney, Oskaloosa;
- Charles Peckham, Attorney, Atwood;
- Trisha Purdon, Office of Rural Prosperity, Kansas Department of Commerce, Coffeyville;
- Brad Ralph, Attorney, Dodge City;
- David J. Rebein, Attorney, Dodge City;
- Wendy Rohleder-Sook, Assistant Professor of Political Science and Director of Pre-Law/Legal Studies at Fort Hays State University, Hays;
- Ann Sagan, Director of Special Projects for the Kansas Board of Indigents' Defense Services, Topeka;
- Sally Shattuck, Attorney, Ashland;
- Brien Stockman, Attorney and Dane G. Hansen Foundation Trustee, Logan;
- Etta L. Walker, Attorney, Sharon Springs;
- Jake Worcester, Kansas 4-H Foundation, Manhattan; and
- Jill Zimmerman, Kansas Agriculture and Rural Leadership Program, Manhattan.

The group will be supported by Laurel Klein Searles, Chief of Attorney Services and Education, and other Office of Judicial Administration personnel as needed.

Dated this 1st day of December 2022.

FOR THE COURT



MARLA LUCKERT
Chief Justice