

Wyoming District Judges Conference

Business Meeting

April 24, 2025

The Spring 2025 meeting of the District Judges Conference took place on April 24, 2025, in the District Courtroom of the Sheridan County Courthouse in Sheridan, Wyoming. The meeting was held both in person and via video conference. Present at the meeting were Judges Catherine Rogers, Dan Forgey, Dawnessa Snyder, Jason Conder, Kate McKay, Joe Bluemel, Ed Buchanan, Peter Froelicher, Bobbi Overfield, Darci Phillips, Stu Healy, Ben Kirvin, Matthew Castano, Michael Causey, Steve Sharpe, Suzannah Robinson, and Michael McGrady. Judge Simpson, Catherine Wilking, Melissa Owens, Robin Cooley, and James Kaste participated via video. Absent were Judges Scott Peasley, Kerri Johnson, Josh Eames, and Misha Westby.

Chairman Bluemel called the meeting to order at 8:30 a.m.

The minutes from the business meeting on December 13, 2024, were presented, reviewed, and accepted. The Treasurer's report from April 24, 2025, was also presented, reviewed, and accepted.

Old Business

1. Judge Bluemel discussed the importance of being proactive in considering our future leadership.
2. Judge Bluemel provided the Report of the Docket Review Committee and noted that the docket review was favorable for our conference.
3. Committee Updates:
 - a. WJC Report –
 - i. Strategic Planning—Judges Bluemel and Snyder presented on the WJC updating its strategic plan in March. The final plan is likely to be adopted at the June WJC meeting. A copy of the draft strategic plan will be emailed to the conference.

- ii. Executive Committee Retired Judges – Judge Snyder discussed a proposed change to the retired judge policy requiring judges to seek help from their conference before requesting the assistance of a retired judge.
- iii. Court Security Assessments: Judge Bluemel shared that if a court security assessment is performed and includes recommendations, the judge is encouraged to request financial assistance for implementing those recommendations.
- iv. WJC Structure Assumption re: Communications between Committee Representatives & Conference—Judge Bluemel explained that committee representatives need to provide feedback and communicate with the conference about the committee activities. A significant amount of work is being done in the committees, and for the system to function correctly, decisions and recommendations should be made only after consulting with the conference.

b. Court Reporter & Technology Committee

- i. The Court reporter and e-filing representatives brought forth proposed rule changes to URDC Rule 908.
 - 1. Judge Sharpe moved that the conference amend Rule 908 and recommend the changes to the other corresponding rules. Judge Causey seconded the motion, and the motion passed
- ii. Discussion on the proposed changes to WRAP Rules 3.02 and 3.09, as well as the Rules Governing Access to Court Records, Rule 7. The conference supports the additional proposed rule changes that affect transcripts.
- iii. Judge Overfield proposed an idea from the court reporter committee to provide training for new judges, specifically related to court reporters, and will proceed with brown bag training.

c. HR Committee

- i. The HR committee will recommend to the WJC that, with the funds allocated by the legislature for raises, everyone will receive a raise: employees in the lowest market percentage will receive \$1,300, mid-

level market employees will get \$1000, and top market rate employees will receive a \$500 raise.

- ii. The Executive branch has a new policy of paying employees for the first six weeks of FMLA, and the judicial branch is considering adopting the same policy.

d. Bench Books Revision

- i. Judge Kaste worked with the bar on revising the format for the bench books. Judge Kaste walked us through the new bench book format.

e. Chancery Court Committee

- i. Judge McGrady replaced Judge Sharpe, and the conference discussed the proposed rule removing the opt-out provision in the Chancery Court.

New Business

- 4. Election of Judge Peasley to serve on Wyoming Judicial Council, replacing Judge Rogers – Passed
- 5. Committee Assignments
 - a. The conference updated committee assignments, and those changes will be reported to the Wyoming Supreme Court and the Wyoming State Bar
- 6. U.R.D.C. Rule 102 amendment to address limited entry of appearances with FSX and notice
 - a. Motion to approve Overfield, Robinson second, passed
- 7. Courthouse Security
 - a. Judges Kaste, Buchanan, and Causey will form a task force to draft a proposed rule change to URDC Rule 107, similar to Wyoming Supreme Court Rules, Rule 6. They will present the change to the conference and call for a special vote before July 1, 2025.
- 8. District Court Workload Study
 - a. The proposition of a District Court workload study was discussed. Judges would like more information from AOC. A brown bag was suggested, but Judge Bluemel believes that, given the importance of the workload study issue, an in-person presentation is more appropriate. Judge Buchanan

moved, and Judge Forgey seconded the motion to have AOC present to us at the September meeting. It passed.


For the Good of the Order

The Fall meeting will be held September 16-17, 2025, in Laramie, Wyoming, in conjunction with the Wyoming State Bar convention.

Adjournment

Judge Overfield then moved to adjourn the meeting. Judge Buchanan seconded the motion, which was unanimously approved by members present.

Submitted this 24th day of April 2025.



Dawnessa A. Snyder
Secretary/Treasurer