



# Idaho State Judiciary

*Providing equal access to justice, promoting excellence in service, and increasing the public's trust and confidence in the Idaho courts.*

## **KEEPING THE COURTHOUSE DOORS OPEN**

The challenging economic times facing Idaho and most other states have made the simple, but essential, priority of the Idaho Courts to “keep the courthouse doors open.”

Recognizing the severe financial constraints facing state government, the Idaho Courts have requested no general fund enhancement in Fiscal Year 2012. At the same time, the Court voluntarily contributed 1% of its general fund budget in the spirit of “sharing the burden” with the rest of state government.

The Court has taken extraordinary steps to reduce its budget and has appreciated the budget flexibility and support, including an emergency surcharge to generate revenue to balance the Fiscal Year 2011 budget, and beyond that has been provided by the Executive and Legislative branches.

The tough economic times are not over, but Idaho's Courts are dedicated to keeping the courthouse doors open and continuing to provide all of our citizens justice without delay, as required by Idaho's Constitution.

## **HIGHLIGHTS FROM YEARLY REPORTS TO THE GOVERNOR & LEGISLATURE\***

*\*To access full program reports, please visit our website at: <http://www.isc.idaho.gov/legislat.htm>*

### ***Family Court Programs Strengthen Families and Protect Children***

Idaho saw a 7% increase in divorce and child custody cases in 2010. Family Court Services responded to more than 50,000 requests for information and services and met with parents in 2,700 cases to help develop age-appropriate parenting plans and case resolutions. More than 9,000 parents attended education classes designed to help parents learn ways they can reduce a child's exposure to parental conflict. A new domestic violence court was implemented in the City of Nampa (Canyon County). The 7th Judicial District received a grant to develop and implement a high-intensity domestic violence court in Bonneville County.

### ***Community Based Sentencing Alternatives Continue to Reduce Prison Growth***

In 2010, 2,316 felony, misdemeanor, and juvenile offenders were supervised by drug and mental health courts across the state, and a total of 641 offenders graduated. At the end of the year, 1,258 (84%) of felony drug and mental health court participants had either graduated or remained in the program. These offenders were managed in the community rather than being sentenced to prison, resulting in significant costs savings to Idaho taxpayers.

### ***Court Assistance & Self-Help Center Responds to Increase in Demand for Services***

With the continued downturn in the state's economy, the number of Idahoans seeking court and legal information continues to rise. The number of requests for assistance climbed 9% to 54,503 in 2010. To meet this demand, the Center redesigned its Web site, which contains the forms and instructions approved for statewide use, including links to all available interactive forms. Legal Services Corporation, an independent reviewer, determined Idaho's nationally recognized Interactive Court Forms Project to be a success.

### ***Guardianship and Conservatorship Program Enhances Protections for Vulnerable Idahoans***

There were just over 1,200 new guardianship and conservatorship cases filed in 2010. Idaho counties (excluding Ada County because they have an internal review process) have submitted 853 annual reports for review by the Administrative Office of the Courts. There is nearly \$95 million dollars being managed by conservators for incapacitated persons throughout the state. In 2010, an on-line training course based on best practices standards was developed for guardians and conservators in Idaho.

### ***Idaho Court Technology Continues Tradition of Success***

Technology continues to play an essential and progressive role in the efficiency, cost, and convenience of Idaho's Courts. Law enforcement officers can now issue electronic citations, reducing the average traffic stop from 12 minutes to three minutes. As a further convenience, the courts are testing a system called CourtPay that allows people to pay their tickets online. ISTARs, the statewide court case management system, results in improved collection rates by identifying individuals who owe the court more than \$50 and sending that information to the Idaho State Tax Commission. Last year, over \$3,200,000 was collected involving over 16,000 cases.

### **RECOGNITION, AWARDS, AND NEW DEVELOPMENTS**

#### ***National Media Award Honored Idaho Drug Courts***

4th Judicial District Judge Ron Wilper was recognized in August with a national media award at the National Association of Drug Court Professionals conference in Boston. The award was given for developing a public service announcement in support of drug courts in Idaho.

#### ***Domestic Violence Court Draws National Attention***

The Ada County Domestic Violence Court received national attention at the Association of Family and Conciliation Courts (AFCC) 47th Annual Conference in Denver. AFCC is an interdisciplinary association of professionals dedicated to improving the lives of children and families through the resolution of conflict. The conference was attended by judges and professionals from around the country as well as Israel, New Zealand, and England.

#### ***Olson and Castleton Received Top Judicial Honors***

Bonneville County Mental Health Court Coordinator, Eric Olson, was presented with the 2010 Kramer Award and the Director of Judicial Education for the Idaho Supreme Court and former Magistrate Judge, Lowell Castleton, was selected as the 2010 Granata Award recipient. The recipients are chosen annually by virtue of their significant contributions to the Idaho judicial system. Both awards were presented in September in Idaho Falls.

#### ***Openness and Accountability Expanded Through Web Site***

Idaho courts promote openness and accountability through the use of its Web site by making opinions, proposed court rules available for public comment, case information, self-help forms, and Supreme Court committee information available online. The judiciary continues to strive to make information on the Internet as accessible as possible.

#### ***Judicial Council Changes***

The Idaho Judicial Council selected James Carlson as its new Executive Director, effective January 1, 2011. Mr. Carlson has tried more than 160 jury trials in state and federal courts and has handled over 20 cases on appeal before the Idaho Supreme Court, the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals and the United States Supreme Court. Robert Hamlin, who retired as Executive Director, was honored for his outstanding service to the Idaho Courts at the Idaho Judicial Conference.

#### ***District Court and Domestic Relations Filings on the Rise***

- There has been a dramatic rise in District Court civil filings in the past few years; statewide, new filings have increased by 31% since 2006. The greatest change has occurred in the last two years and is likely due to the economic decline.
- District Court criminal filings were also up in 2010, increasing 14%, over the previous year.
- Domestic relations cases continue to be filed in higher than average numbers. There was a 5% increase in 2010 and a 9% increase since 2006.

