



The Idaho Judiciary

FY 2014 Annual Report . Executive Summary

*As the Third
Branch of
Government,
we provide access
to justice through
the timely, fair,
and impartial
resolution of
cases.*



Message from the Chief Justice

This past year was a transitional time for the Idaho Judiciary. From innovations in court technology and improved business processes to criminal justice reform to personnel changes, the Idaho Courts are being transformed in many exciting but challenging ways.

First and foremost, the Judiciary forges ahead with plans to provide Idahoans with a state-of-the-art case management and electronic filing system. This new system will better position the Judiciary to meet its goals to provide fair and timely justice, ensure access to justice, promote effective and innovative services, and increase public trust and confidence in the Idaho Courts.

Effective July 1 of this year, the Justice Reinvestment Initiative (JRI) brings significant change to the criminal justice system in Idaho. JRI is a collaborative effort between the three branches of Idaho government to reduce recidivism and decrease prison populations by promoting evidence-based supervision and correctional programs.

In August of this year, the Judiciary celebrated the completion and signing of the final decree in the Snake River Basin Water Adjudication (SRBA). The SRBA is the largest completed single-stream adjudication in the United States. It took more than 25 years to complete and required judicial determinations on more than 150,000 claims for surface and ground water rights.

There have also been many retirements on the district and appellate bench and many more likely to come in the near future. It is crucial during this time of transition that we continue to recruit the most highly qualified individuals to serve in the Judiciary and that we ensure they are adequately trained and supported.

Innovation, progress, and shifting demographics will change the face of the Judiciary in the coming years. Fortunately, we are well-equipped with effective leadership, immense talent, and strong partnerships with the Idaho Legislature and the Executive Branch. We look forward to the many benefits that will come from these changes for the good of all Idahoans.

Promoting Effective, Innovative Services through Judicial Excellence and Education

The Idaho Judiciary promotes leadership and excellence through ongoing improvements to judicial performance evaluation and education. To that end, the Idaho Supreme Court wishes to implement a Judicial Excellence and Education program to further those goals.

The Idaho Courts began the Judicial Performance Evaluation Project in 2000. Since then, district, magistrate, appellate, and senior judges have participated using the assessments for self-improvement. In FY14 the Court and the Judicial Council jointly applied for a grant to plan, strengthen, and implement a more effective judicial performance evaluation program.

Performance evaluation surveys are part of the Judiciary's larger plan to ensure excellence throughout a judge's service. This plan begins with the recruitment of highly qualified judges and continues through pre-bench orientation, new judge mentoring and education, periodic surveys and access to resources to improve performance, ongoing education, and extending to retirement and subsequent senior judge service. The Idaho Judiciary is committed to 100% participation in the program for district, magistrate, appellate, and senior judges. The Judiciary is seeking an appropriation to support this program and hopes to implement a pilot in July 2015, with statewide implementation slated for January 2016.

Court Highlights for Fiscal Year 2014

Highlights from Children and Family Services

- » A pilot project has begun in the Third and Fifth Judicial Districts to implement best practices for monitoring guardianship cases through enhanced case review procedures, ensuring protection for persons under guardianship.
- » The Idaho Supreme Court unanimously approved the statewide implementation of the Idaho Rules of Family Law Procedure (IRFLP) and all seven judicial districts have adopted the new rules. The IRFLP aim to simplify and streamline court processes, facilitating early case resolution, saving time for attorneys, and increasing access to the courts for self-represented litigants.

Highlights from Problem-Solving Courts and Sentencing Alternatives

- » An Idaho delegation attended the Pretrial Justice Policy Forum sponsored by the National Center for State Courts and the Public Welfare Foundation. The Idaho Criminal Justice Commission subsequently formed a statewide committee on Pretrial Justice, which is tasked with developing consistent, evidence-based practices in pretrial justice.
- » Idaho's Veterans treatment courts are expanding and making a difference. Eighty-seven veterans participated in these courts last year, bringing the total to 181.

Highlights from the Information Division

- » The Judicial Branch launched the first year of a business plan to significantly transform all court records and business practices through the use of technology. The focus is on improved access to court records, greater convenience for users, better information exchanges with judicial partners, and improved efficiency for court personnel.
- » The Court Technology Committee is leading the effort to transition the Courts to a fully electronic court record, which will include the use of electronic judicial workbench tools for judges, electronic filing for attorneys and self-represented litigants, and enhanced web-based portal access for the public.

Recognition, Awards, and New Developments

- » Patti Tobias served more than 20 years as the Administrative Director of the Idaho Courts. She recently accepted an excellent opportunity to work with the National Center for State Courts (NCSC), the premier national organization in providing leadership, services, and solutions to state courts.
- » Minidoka County magistrate judge Rick Bollar was presented with the 2013 Granata Award and Judge Gutierrez and Marreen Baker-Burton Presented with 2013 Kramer Award. Both awards are given annually to recipients who have made significant contributions to the Idaho Judicial System.
- » Former Chief Justice Linda Copple Trout was inducted into the University of Idaho Hall of Fame. She is the first female justice on the Idaho Supreme Court and the only female to serve as Chief Justice. She is a member of the Idaho State Bar Association and the American Inns of Court. She has served on a number of boards of directors as well as judicial and bar committees. She currently serves as the Court's Interim Administrative Director.
- » Norma Jaeger was presented the 2014 Lifetime Achievement Award at the Idaho Conference on Alcohol and Drug Dependency in recognition of her professionalism, her varied contributions, and her passionate commitment to the substance use disorder profession.

District Civil Filings are Down, though Felonies, Guardianship, Conservatorship, & Mental Commitment Cases Continue to Rise

- » District court civil case filings continue to gradually decline. They are 9% lower than last year and 28% lower than they were five years ago.
- » District court criminal filings have been on the rise over the past few years and are 13% higher than last year.
- » Both felony and misdemeanor drug cases have been steadily increasing. Felony case filings are up 67% and misdemeanors 16% higher than five years ago.
- » Since FY2009 guardianship and conservatorship cases have increased by 15% and are up 8% over last year.
- » Mental commitment cases have risen dramatically over the past several years and continued this pattern last year. More than 5,000 cases were filed last year, a 10% increase over last year and an 83% increase over five years ago.

Integrity

Fairness

Independence

Respect

Excellence

Innovation