

# SJI NEWSLETTER

Volume 27, No. 2

## Chief Justice Jim Hannah Inducted Into the Warren E. Burger Society

### Grant Deadlines

If you would like to apply for a grant from SJI, our next deadlines for FY 2017 are as follows:

February 1, 2017; May 1, 2017; and, August 1, 2017.

Our Facebook and Twitter offer the latest SJI updates and our grantees' work!



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Former SJI Board Chair Chief Justice Jim Hannah was posthumously inducted into the [Warren E. Burger Society](#) during the National Center for State Court's (NCSC) Annual Recognition Luncheon on No-



November 17, 2016. Chief Justice Hannah, who passed away in January 2016 at the age of 71, had served as SJI Board Chair since 2010, and also served as President of the Conference of Chief Justices (CCJ) and Chair of the NCSC Board of Directors. Attendees included 18 members of his family, along with members from the SJI Board of Directors. The ceremony was hosted by Kentucky Chief Justice John Minton, CCJ President and Chair of the NCSC Board of Di-

rectors. The Burger Society honors individuals who have volunteered their time, talent, and support to the NCSC in exceptional ways. It is named for the former Chief Justice of the United States who helped found the NCSC in 1971.

Other inductees included: Wallace Jefferson, former Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Texas and current Partner at Alexander, Dubose, Jefferson & Townsend in Austin, Texas; Donna Melby, Partner



with Paul Hastings, LLP in Los Angeles; Edward Mullins, Jr, Partner with Nelson, Mullins, Riley & Scarborough, LLP in Columbia, South Carolina; and Myron T. Steele, former Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Delaware and current Partner with Potter, Anderson & Corroon, LLP.

## Improving Access to Justice for Native Peoples in the State Courts



The [New Mexico Administrative Office of the Courts \(NMAOC\)](#) has released a new video documentary on [Improving Access to Justice for Native Peoples in State](#)

[Courts](#). The project was supported with SJI grant funding.

The primary objective of this project was to develop a training and qualification process for court interpreters of the Navajo language and the languages of New Mexico's Pueblos, which is culturally appropriate

and protects the rights of tribal members as they access the state court system. The project is intended to be replicable in other states with tribal populations, and includes training for judges and state court personnel. As you will hear and see in the documentary, participants from New Mexico's Pueblos and the Navajo Nation engaged in deep and useful dialogue as they grappled with issues of language access in state courts.

The NMAOC's project team maintains a robust online presence including a website featuring a calendar of events, the project's cumulative history, training, information about court interpreter credentialing, language access certification, and other resources. For more information, visit the [New Mexico Center for Language Access](#).

## Technical Assistance Available to Improve Civil Justice in the State Courts

In July 2016, the [Conference of Chief Justices \(CCJ\)](#) approved a resolution endorsing the Recommendations of its Civil Justice Improvements Committee. The Committee's report, [Call to Action: Achieving Justice for All](#), encourages the state courts to improve their civil justice systems by providing [13 recommendations](#). Since then, the *Call to Action* and supporting materials have been accessed, downloaded, and reviewed thousands of times, garnering attention from all stakeholders, including state courts, academia, and the media.

The Civil Justice Initiative is supported by a partnership between the [National Center for State Courts \(NCSC\)](#), and [Institute for the Advancement of the American Legal System \(IAALS\)](#) at the University of Denver. With continued support from SJI, the NCSC and IAALS will promote the implementation of these recommendations in state courts across the nation. This collaboration includes providing education, technical assistance, and practical tools to assist state and local courts in improving civil justice systems.



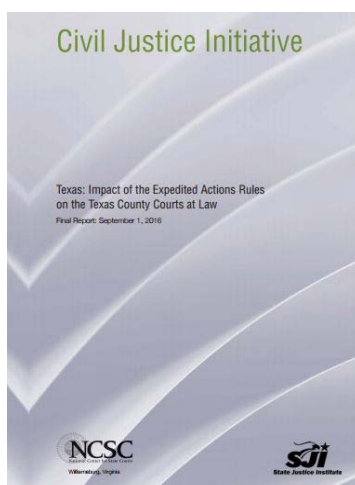
Expert technical assistance is available to state and local courts to implement the [Recommendations of the CCJ Civil Justice Improvements Committee](#). To be considered for this technical assistance, please

download and complete the full [CJI Implementation Request for Technical Assistance](#) form, and email to Blake Kavanagh, at [bkavanagh@ncsc.org](mailto:bkavanagh@ncsc.org).

An NCSC representative will contact you to discuss the request, including identification of appropriate experts and the scope of work anticipated.

## New Report on the Impact of Expedited Actions Rules in Texas

With support from SJI, the [National Center for State Courts \(NCSC\)](#) and the [Texas Office of Court Administration](#) partnered to evaluate the impact of the Texas Expedited Actions Rules, which were enacted in 2013 to reduce expense and delay in civil litigation. The rules are mandatory for almost all civil cases involving monetary damages of \$100,000 or less (“expedited actions”), and damages awarded for expedited actions cannot exceed \$100,000.



The evaluation compared characteristics and outcomes of civil cases filed both before and after the expedited actions rules were enacted. It also surveyed attorneys about the expedited actions rules and the impact on civil case management. Students from Baylor University

School of Law interviewed judges and attorneys to provide a more nuanced context about how the rules impacted strategic decision-making and calendar management in individual cases. Analysis of the case-level data indicated that the Expedited Actions Rules had a positive impact on civil case processing. In contract cases, settlements increased at the expense of summary judgment and trial outcomes, while trial rates grew in tort cases, replacing summary judgments. The new rules also decreased time to disposition for cases that settled. Cases disposed by trial or summary judgment experienced some initial delays, presumably due to the relative complexity of those cases, but cases lasting longer than 9 to 12 months resolved more quickly under the new rules. It has already been observed that the apparent impact of the new rules appears to be a function of routine communications about the new deadlines and restrictions by court administration, rather than conscious decisions by judges and attorneys to change case management practices, which tends to highlight the importance of including court administration in educational programs about civil justice reforms.

The full report is [online](#) and will be featured in upcoming editions of the NCSC’s [@TheCenter](#) publication, and a new civil justice newsletter that will launch soon.

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The State Justice Institute is a federally-funded, non-profit corporation established by federal law in 1984 to improve the quality of justice in the state courts.

