

E-SJI NEWS

30 Years of Improving the Administration of Justice in Our State Courts

Grantee Reports Designated with Hashtags on Facebook and Twitter

SJI will now use [#SJIGrant](#) to promote the activities, reports, or events of its grantees. The NCSC has also adopted [#NCSCReport](#) for select publications, which will include reports from SJI-funded projects.



SJI recently released a [30th Anniversary Report](#) highlighting its successes. For the past three decades, SJI has been dedicated to improving the quality of justice in our state courts.

In 1984, Congress established SJI to award grants to the state courts, charging it with the mission of “assuring each person access to a fair and effective system of justice.” In the 1970s, the Conference of Chief Justices (CCJ) was the driving force behind the creation of SJI. CCJ recognized that there was a vital need to secure federal funding for the state

Chairman of the Committee to build support for the legislation. He was joined by other CCJ members and the Conference of State Court Administrators (COSCA). Senator Howell Heflin, who was a former Chief Justice of the State of Alabama, held hearings and was an original sponsor of legislation to establish SJI. After six years of efforts by the Committee, CCJ, COSCA, state court judges, court administrators, and other key stakeholders, the State Justice Institute Act was signed into law in 1984 (42 U.S.C. 10701 et seq.). The Act created an 11-



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courts. CCJ authorized a task force for a state improvement bill. The task force proposed that an independent agency, called the State Justice Institute, be created to administer a national discretionary grant program to support state courts. In 1979, the task force was succeeded by the CCJ State Justice Institute Committee to work with Congress to create SJI. The Committee was headed by Chief Justice (ret.) Robert Utter from Washington State, who during a 7-year period, flew over 100,000 miles as

member Board appointed by the President with the advice and consent of the Senate. CCJ plays an important role in this process by preparing a nomination list for the President of the Board’s judicial positions and state court administrator position.

During the first decade (1984 to 1994), some of the pressing national issues that SJI addressed were family violence, drug abuse, juvenile justice, and alternative dispute resolution. In particular, SJI provided funding to assist state courts in dealing with family

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violence and drug abuse cases that were flooding court dockets. On a broader level, SJI supported projects that improved access to justice, addressed state-federal jurisdiction, and examined the future of the state courts. In the second decade (1994 to 2004), sentencing reform, domestic violence, and sexual assault were major focus areas in state courts. For example, the wave of sentencing reforms in the 1990s imposed heightened punishments. In response, SJI provided assistance to evaluate the effectiveness of those reforms. Also, SJI assisted in improving jury systems and promoting public trust and confidence in the state courts. Toward the end of this decade, SJI assisted the state courts in facing new issues, including the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, Hurricane Katrina, and courthouse violence.

With SJI support, the state courts were able to implement programs to protect against, and prepare for, security threats and disasters.

In the third decade (2004 to 2014), there was dramatic change in both court administration and in SJI's approach to the grant process. During this time period, almost every state in the U.S. was facing budget shortfalls, which threatened the administration of justice and forced state courts to reexamine their structure and available resources. In response to this crisis, SJI supported court reengineering initiatives. In addition, SJI supported projects that focused on improving performance measurement and court management, and reducing budgets while meeting service demands. Furthermore, during the last decade, issues once considered global became central to the state courts. For example, language access, immigration, and human trafficking introduced a

new set of challenges. SJI supported a variety of projects that were geared towards helping state courts ensure access to justice for all litigants.

SJI remains the only source of federal or private funding dedicated exclusively to improving the quality of justice in the state courts. There is a strong national interest in continuing to support the state courts, as there is with federal funding for state and local law enforcement, corrections, prosecution, and public defense.

For 30 years, SJI has leveraged funding whenever possible to help the state courts address the major issues. The effectiveness of the state courts is critical to ensuring that the public experiences the justice guaranteed by the Constitution. SJI is well positioned to aid the state courts in meeting this challenge.

Information Available on Unaccompanied Alien Children (UAC) and Dependency Filings in State Courts



The number of Unaccompanied Alien Children (UAC) from Central America entering the United States has been dramatically increasing.

Federal law provides a mechanism for UAC to seek Special Immigrant Juvenile Status

(SIJS). However, in order to obtain this status, federal law requires that a state court judge with juvenile jurisdiction first issue an order with certain required statutory findings that enable the juvenile to file for SIJS. These juveniles must

remain in the state court's jurisdiction until the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) has made a determination on SIJS. The state courts are experiencing an increase in cases seeking an order from a state court with these special findings required for



SIJS application. There is concern that the influx of cases will significantly strain state court budgets and resources, as these children are placed across the United States

The SJI-funded [Immigration and the State Courts Initiative](#) just released a [guidance memo](#) that provides information for state juvenile judges and courts on the SIJS process.

Courthouse Planning and Design Initiatives Blend Design and Functionality

The following are three examples of SJI-supported projects illustrating how the state courts can assume leadership for advocating courthouse planning, expansion, and redesign in their communities.

Before the start of any courthouse design project, careful thinking about the court's needs is necessary. Pre-design planning efforts may include long-term court system growth provision; future court service delivery mechanisms and impacts on space; court calendar management and judicial resource allocations; courthouse space standards; and facility requirements for supporting agencies. Given the significant costs of courthouse construction and the impact on long-term court operations and services, the court must make critical decisions during the planning, design, and construction phases of the project. This includes the court's contribution to cost effective building solutions by informing and advising the building planning/design/construction team, as well as the project funding authorities, about essential court operational requirements and quantifiable space needs.

SJI continues to support court facility planning efforts, and has provided funding to several courts to engage the [National Center for State Courts \(NCSC\) Facility Planning Team](#) in determining facility needs. These Technical Assistance grants enable courts to conduct pre-design analysis, such as long-term court system growth analysis and needs projection; court operation programming; building space analysis and architectural programming; and/or building concept feasibility and cost-benefit analysis.



The following are three examples of recent SJI-funded projects that addressed court facilities:

[Feasibility Analysis of the Long-term Growth of the Circuit Court, Multnomah County, Oregon](#) (SJI-11-T-172)

Beginning in 2012, the planning work addressed the growth estimate of the court system as well as its impact on the continued use of the existing historic courthouse in downtown Portland. The analysis included anticipated courtroom utilization and jury facility needs, in addition to other factors. Subsequent to the SJI grant, Multnomah County had decided to build a new courthouse to replace the 100-year old historic courthouse. The NCSC continues to work with the Court and County in developing the plans for a new courthouse.

[E-filing Courtroom Renovation Feasibility Study, Volusia County, Florida](#) (SJI-13-T-083)

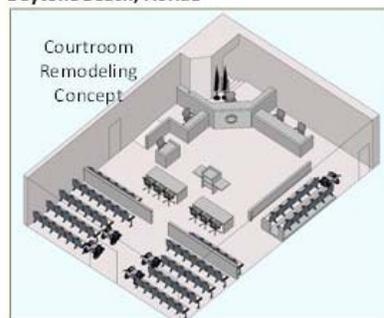
The Clerk of Court engaged the NCSC to determine how new technology and e-filing requirements will impact space in existing courtrooms. During this project, the NCSC assessed new e-filing requirements to determine how courtroom facilities and court work processes will be retooled to support a 21st century e-court environment. A series of courtroom layout concepts were developed which will serve as a guide for future e-courtroom renovations.

[Design Feasibility for a New Courthouse Construction and Site Planning Study, Kingman, Arizona](#) (SJI-13-T-203)

The Superior Court of Mohave County, Arizona recommended to the County a new courthouse initiative with a targeted construction budget cap. Building on a previous SJI grant completed in 2007, the NCSC consultants worked with the Court to determine the need for new facilities, and develop a construction implementation plan that fit with budget constraints. The project resulted in a revised space occupancy plan featuring a co-located Superior Court and Justice Court building at the County Administrative Complex, with phased construction alternatives and conceptual cost estimates.



Volusia County City Island Courthouse, Daytona Beach, Florida



NACM Educational Content Available Online



July 13-17, 2014. Keynotes and educational sessions were also live-streamed during the annual meeting for wide distribution. Topics included the future workforce of the courts; human trafficking; women in trial court leadership; dependency case management; ethics; managing high profile trials; self-represented litigation; and evidence-based sentencing.

SAVE THE DATE: The 2015 midyear meeting will be held February 8-10, 2015, in Austin Texas.

[The National Association for Court Management \(NACM\)](#) recently posted [videos](#) of keynote speeches and educational sessions from the 2014 annual meeting, held

E-SJI News Submissions

SJI is always accepting submissions from its grantees for the E-SJI News. Articles of 500 words or less from projects that are either: 1) ongoing, with information to share; or, 2) have recently completed and are beneficial to a larger state court audience, are of greatest interest. SJI reserves the right to edit all submissions for any reason.

Submissions, including all article content in Microsoft Word, images or logos, and any links, should be emailed to:

kathryn.tuck@sjj.gov by the 15th of each month.

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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.

