

ATJ 2018 conference

(Justice Simeon R. Acoba)

Good morning everyone and welcome to the access to justice conference.

We especially welcome Judge Katzmann to Hawaii—the State that recently occupied a place on the docket of the U.S. Supreme Court—and look forward to his remarks.

I would like to briefly bring you up to date on the commission’s work.

Last year I reported that Hawaii had been one of seven states awarded a grant of close to 100,000 through the NCSC to formulate a plan for extending access to justice to 100% of those in need in our state.

The grants were spurred by a resolution of the conference of chief justices that committed to the 100% principle in all states. We completed our work on an action plan at the end of 2017.

In 2018 we received another grant for the implementation of that plan from the NCSC and the Hawaii Justice Foundation in the amount of 160,000 for the period of May 2018 to May 2019.¹ Those monies will fund two projects.

The first is the community navigator project intended to reach discrete communities that face barriers because of ethnicity, culture, language, income, age, or geography. That project will train trusted persons from those communities— navigators-- to provide assistance in their own communities by providing information, and through self- help venues or referrals to knowledgeable persons or legal service providers.

The second project is the health and social services coordinator/roundtable project. This aims to align and to assist coordination of public and private agency services through a roundtable structure headed by a coordinator

¹ The grantee under the grant from NCSC is the Hawaii Justice Foundation and the Hawaii Justice Foundation added money to the grant; the commission is not the grantee but coordinates the work under the grant.

with the capability of convening the many agencies needed to facilitate the efficient and necessary delivery of services to clients.

Aside from our annual projects such as the ATJ conference, our efforts in 2018 include the court navigators program in which trained lay persons will assist unrepresented litigants in court by providing information about court procedures and by accompanying them to court proceedings. The program has been launched on Maui in the second circuit and is being developed on Oahu in the first circuit.

I would like to take a few minutes to note that May 1, 2018 marked the 10th year anniversary of the establishment of the ATJ commission.

A decade ago we could not foresee what the commission would become, but in 2008 an article in the bar journal noted the following:

“The role of the commission is...to consult about, to collaborate with, and to help coordinate ... civil justice efforts statewide. The Commission should propose, initiate and evaluate” and the article ended with the “hope that the Commission will have a positive impact on bringing equal justice to all.”

The Hawaii supreme court adopted Rule 21, establishing the commission on April 24, 2008; the Rule became effective on May 1, 2008, the 50th anniversary of Law Day, and the commission held its first meeting on July 23, 2008.

This conference is also the 10th annual ATJ conference. The first conference in 2009 featured then Chief Justice John T. Broderick, Jr. of the New Hampshire State Supreme Court. He observed that state courts were playing a larger societal role as a result of the diminishing efficacy of civic, community, and religious institutions.

If you recall, 2008 was the start of the great recession and funds and financial support were in short supply. But the commission did receive a boost from a contribution by the Hawaii Justice Foundation that was administered by the bar.

The commission and its committees started out as and remain today an entirely volunteer effort--its members contribute their time, expertise, and funds, in order to meet the commission's objectives.

The impact of the Commission has been to heighten and to broaden awareness of the need for civil legal assistance and to provide a platform for shared opportunities to advance equal justice.

Access to justice considerations have become an integral part of practically every discussion involving the law, the judiciary, the bar, and to some extent social concerns beyond the legal system. We have established a broad commonality of interest and purpose for the future. But maintaining a high level of accomplishment and achievement requires committed leadership, and we thank Chief Justice Recktenwald for providing that leadership.

In closing, we thank Avi and Carol Muranaka the chairs of the conference committee, Bob and the Hawaii Justice Foundation, Gunner Schull and the Cades Foundation, the bar and its executive director Pat Mau Shimizu, and the Richardson School of Law for their support of this conference.

Thank you.