

Legislators – 15

1. **Are there court services or administrative activities currently performed at the county level that could be performed either regionally, centrally, or electronically to improve the efficiency or cost-effectiveness of court operations? Please explain.**

This makes great sense to me; however, I lack the direct knowledge of the system to suggest which activities should be considered.
Yes. Eliminate the system whereby you have legal practitioners filling small contracts to provide representation for children and parents in child abuse and neglect proceedings--often covering more than one court--and instead have regional juvenile courts where the judges and the legal practitioners are experts and specialize over a long period of time. (Few judges and legal practitioners have expertise in the area of child abuse and neglect, and these cases require a different approach, where law and social work and social support networks overlap.)
I think so
I don't know
don't know
Given our weak county system, I believe it would be more efficient to look to having a regional/statewide function (and include electronic support.)
questions being made that could be handled by some kind of info unit, free up local staff
Eliminate the side judges Eliminate probate courts, functions to superior court
Perhaps some of the courts should ride circuit like the Environmental Court.
don't know
I really don't know. I have faith that the court system knows what is best for them.
I don't know what the budgeted cost of the in-person pro se education is, but it seems that perhaps we could find a digital version of that so that people have access to the information at their convenience and at a lower cost to the state.

2. **Is there technology that could be introduced in the court system that would make judicial operations more cost-effective or improve access to the court system, while at the same time maintaining the quality of judicial services? Please explain.**

Same as above
probably
Allow the use of groupware for jury trials. This type of technology greatly increases the ability of jurors to discuss the case without any personal differences by using anonymity for discussions. This will help jurors to come to fairer conclusions faster.
closed circuit television to eliminate some transportation/time/personnel costs, perhaps
I would want to be very cautious in this area, as even the current use of video status hearings causes me some concern in terms of the importance of personal appearance and contact. It is also critical to maintain the full appearance of integrity in the system, that is, to not allow technology to create appearances of inappropriate weighting of information, or risks of disclosures that should not be public. Within those caveats, I would assume there would be many gains from potential use of "e-records" and the like -- and including for transparency of the system and easy public access to public processes/decisions and pleadings.
I'm sure there is, what is being done to investigate tech innovation and implementing same?
Use web cams for hearings 1-800 lines for jurors, rather than collect calls More communication with jurors by email
Use of the computer to record all files starting with new filings from a date certain or a date upon which you have the money to do so..
I really don't know. I have faith that the court system knows what is best for them.
We need to avail ourselves of digital court proceedings as much as possible, especially when hearings are routine and involve transporting prisoners for very short time in court. I know there is concern over the impact of seeing a judge in person but we need to at least try this and monitor the results to see if it can be a permanent change to the judicial system.

3. What can be done to allow more flexibility in the use of judicial resources (people, facilities, dollars), particularly as workloads and funding levels increase and decrease?

Closing courts - or having courts open on specific days, with staff "riding circuit." Also, very open to technological improvements.
1. Eliminate the one-year rotations. This system makes it almost impossible to implement the "best practice" in child protection at the judicial level called "one family, one judge," which is designed to ensure that all the issues coming before the court get handled by one judge. 2. Eliminate the side judges. 3. Where there are several courts housed in one court, e.g. in Addison, eliminate the multiple court managers. 4. Consolidate the probate courts, where there are two in one county.
don't know enough
The jury selection process might be better enhanced by using technology thus reducing the costs that are involved.
see above
I'm not sure I have enough knowledge to provide good ideas, other than that it seems that there are often delays waiting for the appearance of all parties. There may be many situations where sanctions (beginning with immediate postponement unless the opposing party would be injured) could be used more aggressively.
employees should be able to tell everything you need to know
Establish swat teams made up of possibly under utilized employees
Perhaps you can look into more volunteers to do some of the work. I helped out in the Addison County Probate filling and recording many many file for several years. I am not sure what work volunteers can do but I am sure there are some.
I know that the Side Judges want more responsibly and that might be able to help the workload.
Not sure beyond above responses.

4. Are there ways in which the types of cases heard in our various courts (superior, district, family, environmental, probate, judicial bureau) could be reallocated in a way that would increase the effectiveness of judicial operations or improve court efficiency? Please explain.

See #3.
don't know enough
I don't know
don't know
Although I understand the benefits of judicial rotations, I'm not sure that is outweighed by the efficiencies that might occur if judges stayed in the same court, as a result of the specific familiarities within that system.
changing judges every year is a very inefficient system
Establish one county court to do all business now done by probate, superior and family courts.
The Environmental Court has become far too separate from the rest of the judicial system. It would be good for environmental law to expose the thought processes of different judges to this subject matter for instance. The probate court provides a very different and needed type of service to the public. I would like to keep its personal touch but would consider making its decisions appealable to the Supreme Court rather than the De Novo Superior Court appeal that now exists. The Supreme Court needs to have the ability to fully manage the Superior Court. Consider ways in which access to Superior Court could be improved. The cost of litigation is so great now that everyday people are often unable to access justice. I think it is worth looking at either expanding the jurisdiction of small claims court or creating a middle tier between small claims and Superior Court. Some have mentioned that New York has such a system though I know nothing about it.
I believe the Supreme Court has a limit on the number of pages you can file for an appeal or attached paper work or so. I do not know if this is a problem in the lower courts or if they keep on filing paper work after paper work but if it is this should be looked into. The issue of legality of this also has to be considered but I am sure something can be worked out. I learned from Peter Langrock, in my early days of legal work, that there is always another way to solve a problem and when you find that one other way there is always one more way to do something. You just have to keep on trying.
I don't know.
Not sure

5. Please suggest other ideas that would enhance the efficient and effective delivery of judicial services to Vermonters.

Thank you for your efforts and for taking the time to poll legislators.
Incorporate the system that has been demonstrated to work so well in NY state whereby parents at risk of losing their children are provide with greater supports--a combination of legal representation, social work support, etc. This program has reduced the number of children in foster care, reduced the length of foster care stays, and saved the state money. The outcomes for children are better.
I do not have a great deal of experience with judicial services. Besides the use of technology that I mentioned above I would also like to see more done via mediation. I understand that much is already done through mediation but is there more ways to encourage the mediation process to reduce the court load?
people seem frustrated at the inability to predict when they need to be in court for a case. Is there a way to track such things on line?
Are there greater opportunities to engage in clinical programs with VLS for students to assist in the work of the courts? Would an "ombudsman" type office for pro se parties and minor cases be useful in guiding citizens to the right court and the expected preparations?
design better systems for pro se litigants
Review penalties and determine which are too strict with elimination of jail sentences the goal
Have a volunteer there to read the paper work to the client. I came across clients that could not read and they were young like age 20 or so, or volunteers can translate the paper work into English, not interpret it or tell them the law but read it.
I know that the Side Judges want more responsibly and that might be able to help the workload. They have told me that they could increase the level of responsibility in small claims and estates.
I am not intimately familiar with the judiciary and so cannot comment on some of these questions very well. I do think that checking what other states are doing could provide some answers and if resources are available, we should hire a consultant to guide us to a more efficient and effective judiciary.