

Vermont Association for Justice

July 24

The Chief Justice opened the discussion by thanking everyone for their time. He emphasized the difficult situation VT is facing with massive revenue cuts. He said that the legislature was admiring the steps they had taken and was willing to help them move forward. He introduced the NCSC and Mr. Douglas.

Mr. Douglas asked everyone to share their opinions as freely as possible, he emphasized that consensus was not necessary. He pointed out to the group the unique opportunity they were being granted by the Supreme Court to express themselves. He ran through a brief history of the NCSC and asked the group the following four questions:

Question 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?

The group felt that in larger cases more could get done more quickly in larger courthouses. They felt this could only be improved by regionalization.

The group felt that the bigger the jury pot the better.

Question 2: Is there technology that could be introduced into 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 justice services?

They felt there was a necessity for well-technologically equipped courtrooms.

Question 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?

The group did not foresee issues with adopting the federal court model for larger cases.

Question 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?

They felt that some criteria should be set up to decide what case should be tried where and by what judge.

They felt that small claims and whatnot are currently dominating the docket unnecessarily; and that other cases should be tried elsewhere.

A member of the group pointed out that litigation is getting more and more expensive; they have to be too selective in which cases they take on now.

The group felt that the Environmental Court has been a great success and is very easy and efficient to use.

A member of the group advocated the creation of specialty courts. The member felt that certain cases could be tried much more efficiently in such a forum.

The Chief Justice closed by thanking the group for their time and continued cooperation and support.