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ARKANSASCOURTNEWS

a publication of the Arkansas Administrative Office of the Courts *"Supporting Courts, Ensuring Justice"*

A photograph of Justice Brill, an older man with glasses, wearing a dark suit, white shirt, and a striped tie. He is standing at a podium, raising his right hand in a swearing-in gesture. In the background, other people are visible, including one person holding a camera to take a picture. The scene is set in a formal courtroom or hearing room.

JUSTICE BRILL SWORN IN AS CHIEF JUSTICE

Appeals on Wheels

New Judicial Council Board • Spotlight • and more

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Going Digital



The Administrative Office of the Courts has eliminated the paper version of *Friends of the Court* and gone to an online-only format. This allows room for regular content, more diverse court-related news, and more features on *you*, the people who do the work of the Judicial Branch.

The newsletter has been completely reformatted to utilize the new medium. It has undergone a name change as well, and will now be called *Arkansas Court News*, a title more fitting for its content.

The electronic version of the newsletter will be published on the Judiciary website:

www.courts.arkansas.gov/forms-and-publications/newsletters/friends-court

Arkansas Court News is a bi-monthly publication of the Administrative Office of the Courts.

Contributions, comments, and inquiries are always welcome.

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Justice Howard W. Brill Sworn In As Chief Justice



Oath of office administered by David Newbern, retired Arkansas Supreme Court Justice, to Justice Howard W. Brill with his wife, Katherine.

Justice Howard W. Brill was formally sworn in as Chief Justice of the Arkansas Supreme Court on October 23, 2015. The investiture ceremony took place in the courtroom of the Justice Building.

Justice Brill was appointed to fill the unexpired term of retired Chief Justice Jim Hannah on September 1, 2015. He will serve as Chief Justice until the term ends in December of 2016. Prior to taking the bench, Justice Brill was a professor at the University of Arkansas School of Law, where he has been on staff since 1975. He received his undergraduate degree from Duke University, his Juris Doctor (J.D.) from the University of Florida Law School, and a Master of Laws degree (LL.M.) from the University of Illinois. Justice Brill has authored many publications including *Arkansas Law of Damages* and *Arkansas Professional and Judicial Ethics* and served on numerous committees.

Before a room full of family, friends, and other officials, Rick K. Campbell introduced Chief Justice Brill by saying, “I have gotten close to Howard over the past 40 years and I can say that he is bigger than any appointment, honor, or recognition” and “He will be a wise and responsible manager of the duties entrusted to him.”

Justice Brill took the bench immediately following the oath of office and said, “I am fully aware of how much I have received and how I have been blessed and I know that in putting on this robe, there’s a responsibility that comes with it: a responsibility to serve and to serve in a certain way and I accept that responsibility.... I am most honored that the Governor asked me to serve. I’m most honored to be in this position and I look forward to serving the people of Arkansas for the next year and a half.”

The ceremony can be viewed in its entirety at www.courts.arkansas.gov.

Fall Judicial College and Judicial Council Meeting



The 2015-2016 Judicial Council Board poses with former board members at the Fall Judicial Council meeting in Texarkana. Pictured (back row, L to R): former member Hon. Robert Edwards; Hon. David McCormick; former member Hon. David Clark; former member Hon. Earnest Brown, Jr.; Hon. Barbara Halsey; JD Gingerich; Hon. Mary McGowan; Hon. Mike Medlock; Hon. James Cox. (front row): Hon. Gary Arnold; Hon. Rita Gruber. Not pictured: Hon. David Guthrie; Hon. Herbert Wright; Hon. Joanna Taylor; Hon. Leon Johnson; Hon. Carlton Jones.



Hon. Mary McGowan, Judicial Council president, presents Hon. Gary Arnold, immediate past president, with his service award.

The 2015-2016 Judicial Council Board met during the Fall Judicial Council conference October 14-16, in Texarkana.

Session topics included electronic evidence issues, the impact of the Affordable Care Act on the courts, the impact of secondary stress and vicarious trauma, an update on the Freedom of Information Act, and diminished capacity and other aging issues in the courts.

Judge Gary Arnold, outgoing Judicial Council president, was presented with an award in recognition for his service.



APPEALS on WHEELS



Arkansas Supreme Court Justices hold oral arguments before students at Searcy High School.

The Arkansas Supreme Court traveled to Searcy for oral argument in October as part of their Appeals on Wheels program. The Court convened in the Searcy High School auditorium in front of over 1,000 students from Searcy High School and Harding Academy—the largest group to observe an oral argument in the history of the Arkansas Supreme Court. Afterward, the justices met with groups of students to talk about oral arguments, the roles and responsibilities of a judge, and how courts work.

Appeals on Wheels is a Supreme Court outreach program designed to educate students about their state government. Twice a year, the Court travels the state to hold oral argument outside of Little Rock. Local students from middle school up through college age are invited to attend and are given the facts of the case to be argued beforehand so that they can better grasp the proceedings.

Amendment 80 to the Arkansas Constitution, adopted by a vote of the people in 2000, provides that the Supreme Court may meet at such times and places as designated by the court. Since the program began, the Court has held oral arguments outside of Little Rock 21 times. The Arkansas Supreme Court is committed to providing more Arkansans an opportunity to see how the state's highest court and appellate process work.

SPOTLIGHT ON: Judge Mary McGowan



Circuit Judge Mary McGowan

Judge Mary McGowan has been busy during her 25 years on the circuit bench. Her distinguished career has included work with Gridiron, drug courts, and many other important organizations. Judge McGowan currently serves as the Judicial Council President. She shares her story below.

How did you get to where you are today? Where did you go to school?

I am a Conway Wampus Cat and graduated from Conway High School. Then I went to the University of Texas at Austin. I wanted to major in classic civilizations. I'd had Latin and an excellent teacher at Conway High School and was interested in that. They had a great program so that's where I went. I wound up going to DC and working for Congressional Research Service that does all of Congress's research and that was just a great experience. I thought I would go to law school at night at Georgetown and work there during the day. I also applied to Arkansas as a back up

and I thought "I'll just go back to Arkansas again and get out of the crush of the city." My first indication that things were going to be a little different was the acceptance letter that was addressed "Mr. Mary." I got up to Fayetteville and thought I had made the biggest mistake of my life because there were all these people in suits and military uniforms and I was horrified and then I thought "Well, you can always transfer if it's not where you want to be," but I found there a group of friends, many of whom wound up on the circuit bench at the same time as I did. It was Collins Kilgore, Chris Piazza, Gary Isbell, Steve Engstrom. Needless to say I did not transfer and found it to be a great place in so many ways. Then I came to Little Rock and was a law clerk to a US District judge after that. I've been in Little Rock ever since.

Did you always want to be a judge?

No, I thought that, as a child of the 60s, I could make great social changes and I'd always been very interested in politics. After clerking for a US District Judge, I became much more interested because I thought not so much that you could make policy changes as a judge but you could affect lives. I began to think more about the judiciary rather than going to the legislative or executive branches.

What would you be doing right now if you weren't a judge?

I don't think about it much. I just keep thinking this is what I do. It's hard for me to think about because I've done it now so long, but probably practicing law. I don't think I would have ever left the legal profession.

What's the most significant change you've seen in the Judicial Branch during your years of service?

I'm not sure it's the most significant but certainly one thing that changed was Amendment 80, which brought about the combination of both circuit and chancery and also had us running on a non-partisan ticket. Those of us that were elected 25 years ago ran partisan and did several times before that changed. And also, our subject matter changed because of the merger, too. And just going through that whole process was huge. I was thinking about it the other day. It was massive. I think that is the biggest thing because, having come from the system prior to that time, it's definitely for the best. It was worth all the work.

What do you think is the biggest issue facing courts today?

I think it's the perception by the people. Apparently, education has determined in its wisdom not to teach civics anymore so you have literally generations of people that don't even get the basics that there are three branches of government and so that is a problem. And then, we [the Judiciary], just come under fire all the time. They [the public] don't like the results of a decision so they go after the judge making the decision instead of thinking "Well, that's the job – to make the decision." You're not going to please folks and both sides aren't going to be happy with the decision. Now it's just become a thing where judges are personally criticized for doing what they believe, having read the law and heard the testimony, is correct. I know retired Chief Justice Hannah did his utmost in trying to get the public more engaged: taking the Supreme Court out there and trying in various ways to get more positive publicity for courts. I just think it's going to take a lot of effort in the future to determine what roles these different branches have in our government and what you can do about it if you're unhappy with decisions.

When you're not at work, what do you like to do?

I read a lot. I came out of a generation where that's what you did rather than watch television. I like to read biographies but I also like to read what I call junk reading: murder mysteries and things. I also like art and have been just bowled over by the generosity of Alice Walton and what she's done with Crystal Bridges. So I try to get up there several times a year to see the exhibits, besides here at the Arkansas Art Center, which is very fine. Arkansas is really blessed by having such a devotion to the arts. The other thing I'm involved in Gridiron. 2016 is going to be its 100th year and it's going to be really big. There's so much material next year with all the news and with it being a presidential election year and all of that. That consumes time. Travel is also big. I've traveled all my life. For a long time in the summer we went to an island called Daufuskie, which is off Hilton Head. I have always loved beach vacations. I'm a certified scuba diver and feel very much at home in the water. Probably the most memorable though is an African safari. We just had the most incredible experience. There is literally nothing like seeing animals like that in the wild. It really is a phenomenal experience.

What's your favorite memory from working in the court system? What will you look back on most fondly from your career?

I think probably Drug Court just because you do have some happy times when you see how some people have actually succeeded and turned their lives around. I was committed to it early on. Then Chief Justice Jack Holt, Jr., started the first drug court and asked Jack Lessenberry to be the first drug court judge. When he retired, the Chief asked me if I would pick it up, so I started doing it in 1995 and it's grown. I remember Carol Anthony said, "I think it's the most important work we do," and it really is. It makes incredible differences in people's lives.

Access to Justice Commission Meets at Justice Building



Amy Johnson, Executive Director of the Arkansas Access to Justice Commission, speaks before members of the Arkansas General Assembly and the Arkansas Supreme Court.

For what is believed to be the first time in Arkansas's history, members of the Joint Judiciary Committee of the Arkansas General Assembly met along with the Arkansas Supreme Court at the Justice Building in October. At the meeting, the Court and the Joint Judiciary Committee heard testimony from the state's two legal aid programs, the Center for Arkansas Legal Services and Legal Aid of Arkansas, about the challenges their programs face. Representatives of the Arkansas Access to Justice Commission also testified at the hearing to the growing number of Arkansans representing themselves in court and the shrinking number of attorneys who live and work in rural areas of the state.

Arkansans who face criminal prosecution but can't afford a lawyer have a constitutional right to have an attorney appointed to represent them in court. No such right exists for victims of domestic violence, veterans denied military benefits, children in need of special education, and others who experience civil legal problems.

The Joint Judiciary hearing was one of a series of events that occurred during National Pro Bono Week, October 25th through 31st, which highlights the need for legal aid and recognizes attorneys across the country who volunteer their time to represent those who cannot afford legal representation.

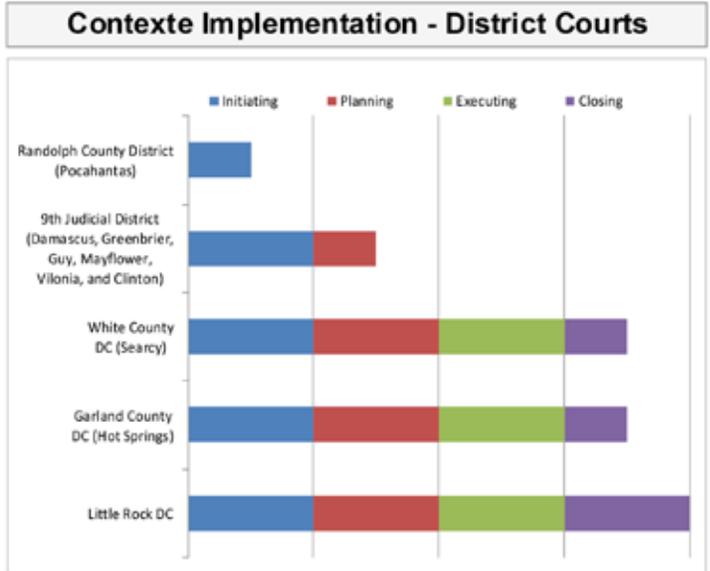
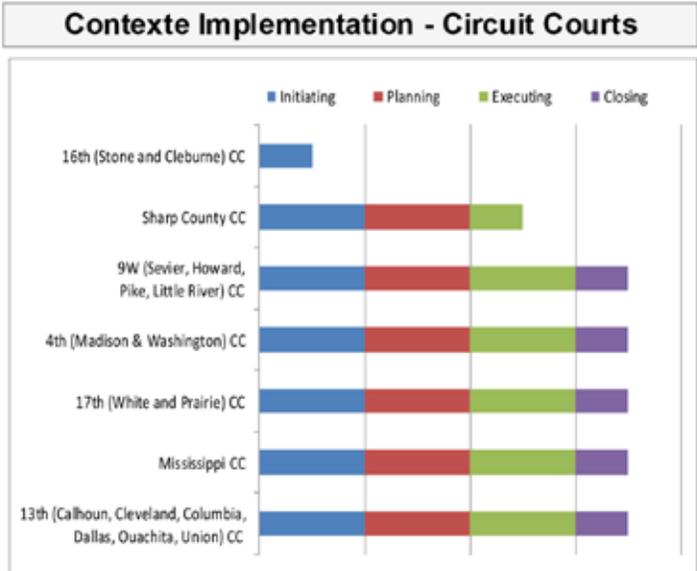
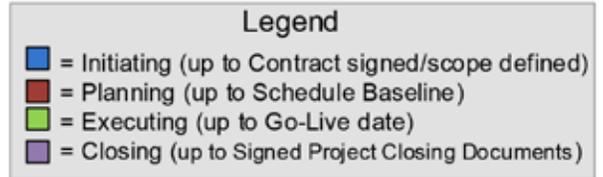


Members of the Joint Judiciary Committee of the Arkansas General Assembly heard testimony from the state's two legal aid programs.

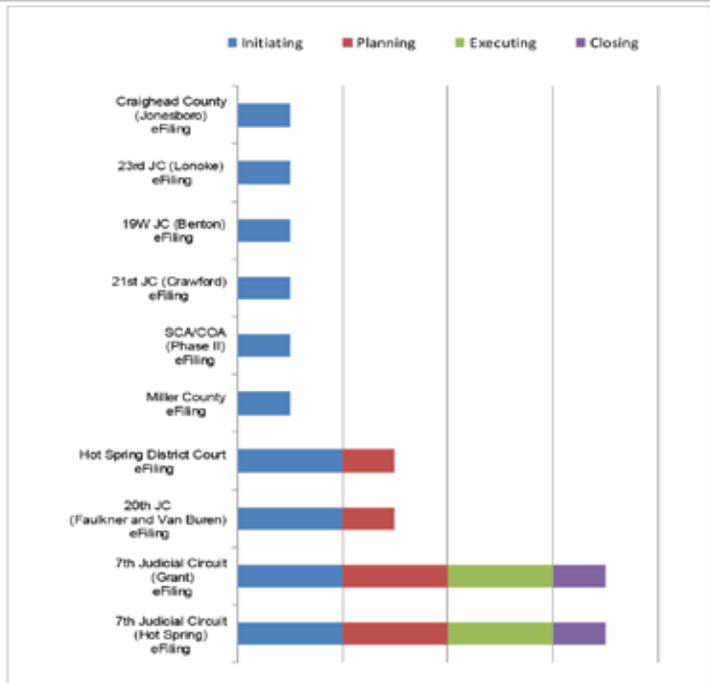
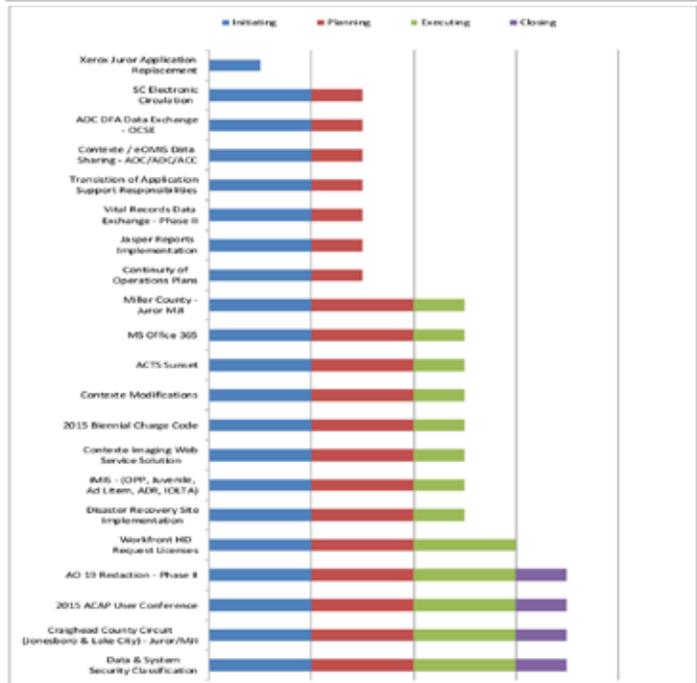
ACAP project update

(arkansas court automation project)

CIS Division Projects Progress at a Glance Week of November 23, 2015

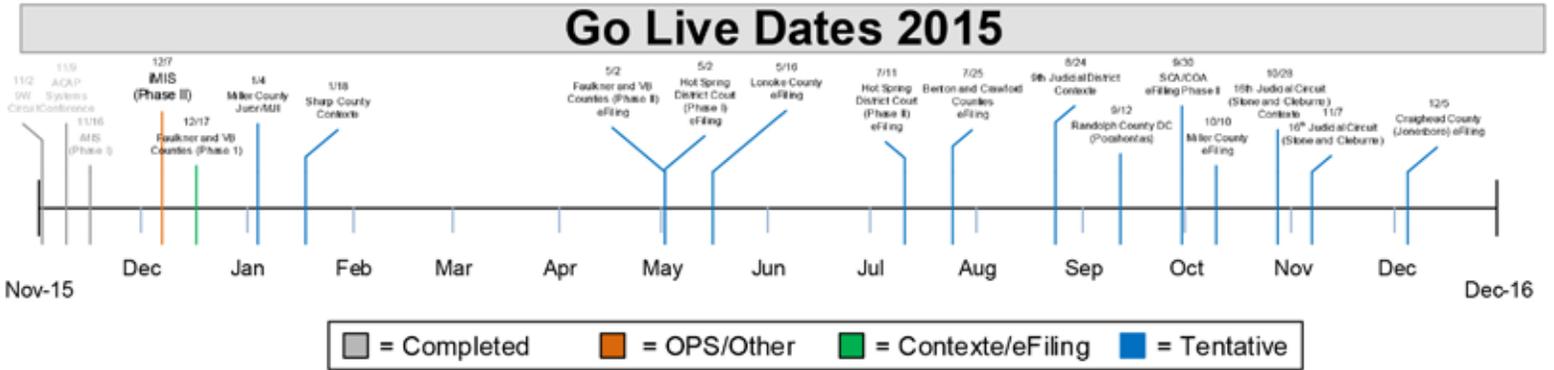


Other ACAP Projects



ACAP project update

(arkansas court automation project)



2015 First Branch Award Recipients Chosen



Circuit Judges Gary Arnold and Shawn Womack pose with Senator Jon Woods, one of two recipients of this year's First Branch Award.

Senators Jon Woods and Bill Sample were the recipients of the 2015 First Branch Award, given during the Fall Judicial Council meeting in Texarkana, October 14-16. The award was first conceived in 1992 as a way for Arkansas's trial court judges to honor members of the General Assembly for their efforts in support of the administration of justice and the rule of law.

2015 ACAP Conference



Tim Holthoff, Court Information Systems (CIS) Director, welcomes conference attendees and introduces the keynote speaker, Dr. Diane Robinson.

The second annual Arkansas Court Automation Projects (ACAP) Systems Conference was held November 9-10, at the Marriot in Little Rock. The conference provided an opportunity for court users of ACAP applications, including Contexte, CourtConnect, eFlex, Juror, and MyJuryInfo, to learn more about the programs and share their experiences with the AOC and other users.

The conference opened with a keynote address from Dr. Diane Robinson, Director of AOC Office of Research and Justice Statistics, entitled, “Data Quality is Everyone’s Job.” Other sessions included Fees, Fines, Foes, and Funds; What’s Next in Jury Management?; Are You CourtConnected?; The Road to the Digital Bench; e + Quality = eQuality, and many others. The software lab was open during the entire duration of the conference to answer questions and give hands-on instruction to users.



Conference attendees receive demonstrations of applications in the software lab.

New Faces

AOC

Diane Robinson - Data Quality Manager
Bettina Toth - Data Analyst
Syed Ameenuddin - Data Quality Analyst
Jarod Dickinson - PC Support Analyst
Tori Foreman - Outreach Coordinator
Victor Richardson - Public Education Coordinator
Nadine Holland - Judicial Education Specialist
Cecil Davis - Assistant CIS Director
Christy Lute - Functional Specialist
Shelly Smith-Flint - Regional Functional Specialist

Circuit Judges

1st Circuit - **Chalk Mitchell**

Court Reporters

12th Circuit - **Lawrence Martin**

Trial Court Administrators

14th Circuit - **Jessica Chadwick**

District Clerks

Conway County - **Lorraine Brown**
Jackson County - **Mendi Langley**
Lonoke County - **Micki Hayes**
Mississippi County - **Gaye Moody**
Yell County - **Brandy Chandler**

in the Judiciary

Hello
my name is

Are you a new court employee or know someone who should be featured in this section? We want to know!

Contact Meghan Sever at
meghan.sever@arcourts.gov

calendar of events

December

Juvenile Court Overview for Mediators 3

February

District Clerks Certification (Little Rock) 12

District Court Officers (Fayetteville) 25-26

March

Trial Courts Assistants Conference (Hot Springs) 3-4

Have a conference or program you would like to have added to the calendar? Email it to meghan.sever@arcourts.gov