

## Los Angeles Clergy Conference Update



**TAMILA JENSEN**  
SFVBA President

**N**OT LONG AGO I HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO attend the Fifth Annual Court-Clergy Conference at St. Nicholas Greek Orthodox Church in Northridge. The purpose of the conference was to foster cooperation between local churches and the courts to assist the clergy in helping their communities with legal issues of all kinds.

Not only was it a well-organized event, but also it provided an opportunity to see the legal community from a different perspective, taking a look from the outside in. In doing so, the many ways our courts and we in the legal profession are integrated into the community at large was placed in vivid focus. We lawyers are part of the larger social fabric and it is good to be reminded of this from time-to-time. We know we have an excellent court system and this conference confirmed it.

In the future, the SFVBA hopes to work with the court on the Court-Clergy Conference here in the San Fernando Valley.

Included in the material used in the court-clergy program was the 2008 Los Angeles Superior Court Annual Report. Likely, many of us have seen it and glanced at its pages. A closer look gives some very useful information about the court, its programs, and how we as attorneys relate to it.

I am now going to rely heavily on the Annual Report, which is available from the Los Angeles Superior Court Public Information Office at Stanley Mosk or through the court's website. The court does a lot of things we do not really think about as we argue our clients' cases there, but which we ought to think about from time-to-time as part of a bigger picture.

For example, the Los Angeles Superior Court is not only the largest court in the State of California but probably also in the world. It includes 50 courthouses and related facilities, 431 judges, 135 commissioners, 39 referees, and operates 591 courtrooms. Court facilities range from the one judge courthouse on Catalina Island to the mega-Central courthouse, Stanley Mosk. Stanley Mosk is, again, not only the largest courthouse in California, but also one of the largest in the world.

To make matters even more interesting, the court must accommodate many non-English speakers. Last year, the top ten languages for which interpreter services were requested were: Spanish, Armenian, Korean, Mandarin, Sign, Farsi, Vietnamese, Cantonese, Cambodian and Tagalog. The court must deal with the special complications of celebrity and high profile trials with which few other courts need be concerned. We take all this in stride, but this is highly unusual.

The court has reached out to the public in creative ways. There are new videos explaining to the public the ADR process and jury service. There are eleven self-help centers throughout the system offering various levels of service. Last year, more than 46,000 people were assisted in the self-help center at Stanley Mosk. Another 115,000 were assisted at other centers.

There are many specialty courts such as the Proposition 36 Court, Teen Court, Women's Re-entry Court which was started in 2007, Drug Court, and Homeless Court, also started in 2007. The court runs a Drug Store Program which in 2007 let 1,200 middle-school children follow a student through the criminal and judicial process after a pretend drug arrest.

We are familiar with Adoption Saturday which has been operating for ten years and which helps more than 200 children be adopted each year.

When the courthouse is where we work every day, it seems like an old home. We do not see beyond the familiar courtrooms and people. But seen from a step back, the Los Angeles Superior Court is a world class institution doing an excellent job of delivering the services it is charged with providing, often in new and creative ways.

The SFVBA has always been proud of its association with our courts and judges. On February 21, join hundreds of members of the Bench and Bar at our Annual Judges' Night, honoring Judge Ronald Coen as the San Fernando Valley Bar Association Judge of the Year and Justice Barry Russell as the recipient of the Stanley Mosk Legacy of Justice Award. ⚖️

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