

**STATEMENT OF INTEREST OF THE HONORABLE LEE F. SATTERFIELD IN
SUPPORT OF REQUEST FOR RE-DESIGNATION AS CHIEF JUDGE OF THE
SUPERIOR COURT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA**

SUBMITTED TO

THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA JUDICIAL NOMINATION COMMISSION

ON

MAY 23, 2012

**LEE F. SATTERFIELD
CHIEF JUDGE**

It has been an honor during the past four years to serve the District of Columbia community as the Chief Judge of the Superior Court of the District of Columbia.

In this statement, I set forth a summary of programs and initiatives the Court has accomplished during the past four years, areas where work still needs to be done, and my vision for the Superior Court during the next four years, if I am fortunate to be re-designated as Chief Judge.

During the past four years, through a team effort involving my Judicial Leadership Team, the Board of Judges, Senior Judges, Magistrate Judges, managers and Court staff, I believe the Superior Court has improved the services that it provides to the residents of the District of Columbia and to all individuals who use or need its services. I believe, however, that there is more we can accomplish going forward. I note that these improvements would not have been possible without the assistance of members of the Bar and all of the Superior Court partners and stakeholders who have made significant contributions to improving the administration of justice.

It is my strong belief that as the Superior Court Judicial Officers and Court staff continue to perform as a team, the better the Court is able to provide services to the public. Leadership development and team work are important to improving services. To foster a team spirit and to support my Judicial Leadership Team, consisting of the presiding and deputy presiding judges, in carrying out the duties

that I have assigned to them, I have conducted all day meetings at least twice a year, in addition to the day-to-day or week-to-week contact with judicial leadership relating to matters within specific divisions. At these leadership team meetings, we worked to enhance our leadership skills by working on issues such as communication, team dynamics and culture, values, and values-based management. We also focused on areas such as employee engagement and discussed the judicial and employee viewpoint surveys. Attached as Appendix 2 is a sample copy of a leadership team meeting agenda and letters from various organizations where I have lectured on leadership development over the past four years.

To foster a team spirit among employees, to learn about areas of employee concerns and to gain new ideas about how to improve services, I have met with all new employees six months after their appointment date and each month my staff randomly invites up to ten employees from different divisions of Superior Court to a brown bag lunch with me in my chambers. At these meetings, employees engage other employees from different divisions, discuss their concerns about Court operations and offer feedback on how the Court can improve services to the public. After each lunch I always feel more inspired to do a better job. I have attached as Appendix 3 sample responses that I have received from employees who have attended a brown bag lunch.

In order to provide quality services to the community, it is important to understand the concerns of the communities the Court serves. In addition to the numerous community meetings I attended, I also invited the Advisory

Neighborhood Commissioners (ANCs) from six out of eight wards in the District of Columbia to the Court for evening meetings and meals with me, members of my Judicial Leadership Team and Senior Managers to discuss their concerns and ideas and to provide information to them about the Court in order to promote confidence in the Court and the judicial system. Attached as Appendix 4 is a sample response from one of the ANCs who attended a meeting. If re-designated, I would hold such a meeting with the ANCs in the other two wards.

SUMMARY OF THE INITIATIVES ACCOMPLISHED AND PROGRAMS ESTABLISHED OVER THE LAST FOUR YEARS

- To improve services to juvenile offenders and promote public safety, the Court opened two new juvenile drop in centers and implemented a Juvenile Behavioral Diversion Program;
- To improve access to justice for self-represented litigants, the Court conducted a two-day training session in 2009 to enhance judicial officers' abilities to handle cases involving self-represented litigants and is conducting an additional half-day follow-up session for judicial officers on May 18, 2012.
- To improve access to justice, as the District of Columbia Courts Code of Judicial Conduct has been amended to provide more guidelines relating to Court proceedings involving self-represented parties, in addition to maintaining current resource centers, with the assistance of members of the Bar, the Court created more resource centers for self-represented litigants such as in child support cases;

- To improve access to justice, the Court implemented a Housing Conditions Calendar which provides greater access for self-represented tenants to seek expedited relief for landlord housing code violations;
- To improve access to justice, additional judicial resources were assigned to handle Landlord and Tenant matters;
- To improve access to justice, the Guardian Assistance Monitoring Program was fully implemented in the Probate and Tax Division;
- To reduce reoffending by individuals accused of crimes, to hold offenders accountable to the community where the alleged crime occurred, to provide more services to adult offenders, and to better reach out to the community, the Court expanded its Community Court case management approach to all misdemeanor cases.
- In order to improve public confidence in the Court and make jury service for city residents easier, a new jury management system was implemented and other measures were established such as standard Felony 2 jury panels. These measures contributed to an increased jury yield by 9.5% from 2009 to 2010 and an increase in the jury utilization rate by 5% and are expected to help improve the yield and utilization rates over the next four years.
- In order to improve public confidence in the Court, staggered scheduling of Court matters in each Division was instituted to

minimize waiting time for individuals with matters before judicial officers.

- In order to improve public confidence in the Court and access to justice, trial date certainty which is the norm in the Civil Division has been achieved in criminal Felony 2 cases, that is, no Felony 2 trial was continued in 2011 due to lack of availability of a judicial officer.
- In order to enhance the administration of justice, a high technology courtroom was installed. The new technology includes screens for showing evidence and power point presentations, digital displays and a high definition document camera to help jurors better understand the evidence and their obligations under the law.
- Finally, the Religious Freedom and Civil Marriage Equality Amendment Act, which legalized same-sex marriages in the District of Columbia was passed by the City Council. March 3, 2010 was the effective date of the Act, and the first day on which same-sex couples could apply for marriage certificates. On that day, more than 150 same-sex couples came to the Court to apply for marriage certificates. The Court's staff performed admirably and, for me, it was one of my proudest moments as Chief Judge. Through a media campaign, the Court explained the process, what to expect upon arrival at the courthouse and what documents individuals needed to bring to the Court's Marriage Bureau. That day ended without any complications, and Court staff provided outstanding service to hundreds of people

applying for marriage licenses. In short, the Marriage Bureau team, Family Court leadership, the Clerk of the Court office and the Executive Office set an example as to what we can achieve to benefit the public through teamwork.

VISION FOR THE FUTURE

I believe we should always aspire to be a great Court and to focus on how we can do things better. In order to be a great Court we must be more timely in resolving motions, continue to reduce the amount of time that Court participants wait to have their cases heard by judicial officers on the dates of their scheduled hearings and continue to work on making the Court system more user-friendly. To accomplish these goals, I will need the full support of the judicial officers and Court staff and the Superior Court must perform as one Court. I expect to work within the existing budget to ensure that judicial officers and staff have sufficient tools and resources to adequately get the job done. I also will continue to evaluate our existing programs and initiatives to ensure that they provide the best services to the public. We must accomplish these goals while continuing to improve the infrastructure and space needs at the Superior Court. Over the next four years, if fully funded by Congress, the most significant infrastructure improvement to alleviate the significant space needs in the Superior Court is the expansion of the Moultrie Courthouse on C Street. This expansion is in the design phase and if it moves to the construction phase a great deal of the Chief Judge's time will be

devoted to ensuring that during the construction of the C Street expansion, Court operations, and Court services to the public, continue at a high level.

The fastest growing division in the Superior Court is the Probate and Tax Division. Due to an aging population in the District of Columbia, probate cases have increased significantly. For example, the filing of adult guardianship cases increased from 228 in 1992 to 480 in 2011. Currently, there are 2193 cases pending. Adult guardianship cases are long-term cases and are monitored by the Court until the ward dies, recovers or transfers. Court staff, guardianship attorneys, student volunteers, and frequently, the judicial officers are involved in monitoring such cases as a guardian is required to file a guardianship report twice a year. Problems with such reports are reviewed by a judicial officer. Judicial resources were added to this Division over the past four years, but this continued trend upward may require that more judicial resources be devoted to the Division during the next four years. In addition, a plan is currently being developed to expand the Probate Resource Center in order to double the number of Court participants who are eligible to benefit from this service in the near future. This expanded model will double the number of attorneys and the number of volunteers providing this service. Finally, electronic filings of Court cases will continue to expand and this expansion will include the Probate and Tax Division.

The other division where more judicial resources are needed is the Domestic Violence Unit. I had hoped to be in the position for the Court to increase judicial

resources in that Unit over the last four years. If re-designated, I will continue to focus on adding more judicial resources to that Unit.

CONCLUSION

All of the accomplishments and successes in the Superior Court over the past four years were due to the judicial leadership team, the Board of Judges, Court managers and Court staff, with the assistance of Court partners and many members of the community. It would be an honor to continue to lead this Superior Court team into the future and serve the District of Columbia community as the Court's Chief Judge. Each judge can make a difference, one case at a time. See, for example, Appendix 5 which is a letter I received from a party in a domestic violence case. Imagine the benefit to the public when judges make a difference as a team in the cases we hear. Accordingly, I request re-designation as the Superior Court's Chief Judge.

Thank you for considering this request.