

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

JUNE 14, 2016

**The Delaware Judiciary welcomes release of DSBA/ACTL survey of Delaware Bar.
Recommendations will guide Court reforms.**

The Delaware Judiciary today welcomed the release of a report by the Delaware State Bar Association (DSBA) and the Delaware Chapter of the American College of Trial Lawyers (ACTL) on a survey of members of the Delaware Bar that was conducted over the past year on the operations of Delaware Courts and that solicited suggestions on ways in which the Courts might improve.

The survey came at the request of Chief Justice Leo E. Strine, Jr. in 2015, who in consultation with judges, attorneys, and other system partners, set a goal of involving the Bar and others in setting and implementing the Courts' agenda.

"We welcome this constructive and candid feedback, which results from thousands of hours of work by some of the most distinguished members of our Bar. We are incredibly grateful to the local chapter of the American College of Trial Lawyers and the Delaware State Bar Association for their hard work. Obviously, it is always uncomfortable to get something like a performance review. But, there is a long tradition on the part of the Delaware Judiciary of caring deeply about the views of lawyers, litigants, and the public generally about how we can serve them better. We sought out this unvarnished input in that tradition, with the goal of making a strong judicial system even stronger. In the coming months, the Judiciary will work closely with the Bar Association, the ACTL, and other key constituencies to examine the report's recommendations and to come up with a concrete action plan to address it," said Chief Justice Strine.

Study co-chairs, Bartholomew J. Dalton and Thomas J. Allingham II of the American College of Trial Lawyers said they were pleased the Chief Justice sought out their participation in the study. "The goals of the College involve the protection of the rule of law and the fair administration of justice. The Delaware Courts — through the Chief Justice and the full cooperation of the all the Courts — have again showed why the Delaware Judiciary is the best in the country by allowing a full examination of how they operate. The results show that a very good court system can always be made better," said Dalton and Allingham in a statement.

DSBA President Richard "Shark" Forsten said the Bar appreciates the outreach from the Chief Justice and the entire Judiciary. "Every organization needs to engage in constant self-examination if it wants to get better. Since taking the helm of the Judicial Branch, the Chief Justice has initiated a number of studies and programs to take a fresh look at how we can make our system of justice better and the DSBA looks forward to continuing its work with the Judicial Branch to make our court system the best it can be," Forsten said.

Over the past year, members of the ACTL and DSBA interviewed more than 100 members of the Bar, including judges, in face-to-face conversations and reviewed more than 1,300 responses from

Delaware attorneys and others to an online survey. The results were then analyzed and reports were created for each of the Courts and for Administrative Law. The reports, will be available online on the Delaware State Bar Association website at www.dsba.org, summarize the responses from both the interviews and surveys and offer recommendations for each of the Courts and Administrative Law based on that feedback. The DSBA and ACTL then submitted the reports to the Delaware Judiciary.

Chief Justice Strine noted that just the process of seeking out opinions from the Bar has already stimulated initiatives by the Judiciary to improve its performance in key areas that are addressed in the study. By way of example, early feedback from the study's initial interviews — which were presented at last year's Bench and Bar conference — resulted in:

- Amendment of the Supreme Court Rules governing interlocutory appeals to make them clearer and easier for practitioners to employ;
- Amendment of the Supreme Court's internal procedures to enable the Justices to confer in advance of an oral argument when they believe that would be useful;
- Focus by the Court's Criminal Justice Council of the Judiciary in its review of the problem-solving courts on making sure those courts were working in a cooperative, integrated way that maximizes their effectiveness and makes their schedules more convenient to lawyers, litigants, and key agency service providers;
- Creation of a working group to review the Administrative Procedures Act and the handling of appeals from regulatory agencies;
- Discussion with Criminal Justice system partners on ways the Courts could work more effectively efficiently with our partner agencies.

The study has also helped refine the Judiciary's work on creating an integrated case management system for criminal justice agencies along with a statewide and Branch-wide electronic filing system for criminal cases.

Former DSBA President, and study co-chair, Gregory B. Williams thanked all the members of the Delaware Bar who responded to the survey and all the people who gave their time to help compile the responses into the report that was presented to the Court. "This is yet another example of the strong, cooperative relationship between the Delaware Bar and the Delaware Judiciary that keeps our court system strong and among the very best in the country," he said.

For more information, please contact
Sean O'Sullivan, Chief of Community Relations
(302) 255-0093
Sean.O'Sullivan@state.de.us