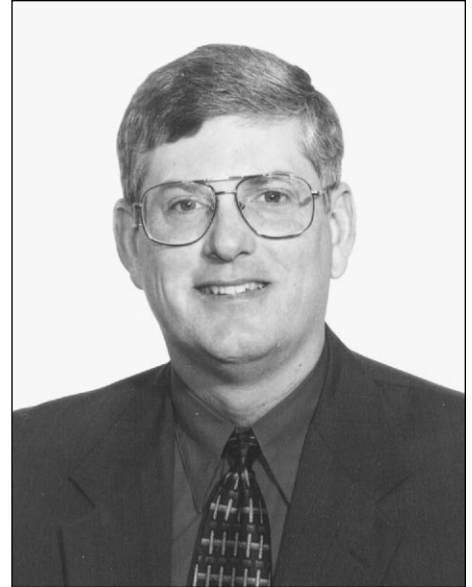


Settlement Week Thank You's

by *Kevin M. Oeffner*
Circuit Court Administrator



Settlement Week 2002 is history. It was a good week. We saw many civil cases settle, with the expectation that many more will settle in the aftermath of Settlement Week as the litigants await their trial dates. Here are the numbers. Notices for mandatory settlement conferences were mailed out on 723 cases. The average age of a case was 18 months. A few cases were one year old; one case dated back to 1995.

Of the 723 cases targeted for Settlement Week, 459 were disposed – a disposition rate of 63.5 percent. Cases were disposed by several means. A staggering 319 cases settled after notices for the mandatory settlement conferences were mailed out but before Settlement Week occurred. That's an amazing 44% drop-off just by notifying litigants that they have been ordered to appear for settlement conference. Seventy cases were settled during their settlement conferences. Eight cases were dismissed with sanctions, primarily because parties did not attend their settlement conference. The remaining 62 cases were disposed after Settlement Week; many of these cases settled just prior to their trial date.

To put the volume of cases disposed in perspective, consider the following: The average civil docket for a judge in this Circuit Court is about 500 cases annually. So in the weeks leading up to Settlement Week, and thanks to the efforts of 124 facilitators over three days, we realized an aggregate decrease of civil cases nearly equal to one annual docket.

The cases that were not disposed (264) have either been set for trial before a visiting judge or were returned to the originally assigned judge for one of several reasons. We expect that cases will continue to settle. The tendency for cases to settle after Settlement Week but before trial has been a consistent feature of past Settlement Weeks.

I mentioned earlier that the disposition rate relative to all cases targeted for Settlement Week stands at 63.5 percent nearly 30 days after the conclusion of Settlement Week. For comparative purposes, the disposition rate 30 days subsequent to Settlement Week in 1999 (our last Settlement Week) was 58 percent. We track cases up to 60 days after Settlement Week. We concluded the 1999 Settlement Week with an 80 percent disposition rate. Given that the current

rate is ahead of our pace the last time (63.5 percent as compared to 58 percent), we fully expect to end the 60-day reporting time frame with a disposition rate at or exceeding the 80 percent rate achieved in 1999.

The docket loss we achieved is a staggering accomplishment even if additional cases don't settle in the aftermath of Settlement Week, although we know they will. Our success is due in part to the terrific job done by staff and the commitment to this effort by Judge Steven N. Andrews and Judge Wendy L. Potts. Judge Andrews and Judge Potts assisted in much of the preparatory work, and placed settlements on the record during the three days of settlement conferences. Despite our careful preparations and attention to detail, our efforts would have been fruitless had it not been for the facilitators who gave of their time and expertise.

We estimated that 124 facilitators volunteered a total of 700 hours in the conducting of settlement conferences. By way of illustration, using a billable rate of \$200 per hour, the financial contribution on the part of the facilitators was about \$140,000. Not included in the time estimate above is case preparation and travel time to and from the courthouse. We've also learned of several facilitators who volunteered to meet with litigants after Settlement Week, pro bono, to try and wrap up cases where progress was made during the conferences.

I've given you the statistics pertaining to Settlement Week, but the real purpose of this article is to offer the court's thanks to the many facilitators who contributed to the success of our program. Their names are listed on the following page in alphabetical order.

These people conducted 343 settlement conferences. They functioned as the backbone of this program – an effort that could not have occurred were it not for their contribution of time and talent. On behalf of the judges and Settlement Week staff of the Circuit Court, I want to thank those named here for their efforts in making Settlement Week a resounding success.

Until next month...

(continued next page)

Settlement Week Thank You's

(continued from previous page)

Jody Aaron

Al Ackerman

Tracy Lee Allen

Peter Alter

Norman Ankers

Joseph Aviv

Leland Barringer

Seth Barsky

Jeanne Blake

Cheryl Bloom

Kathy Bogas

Robert Bondy

William Booth

Joseph Bourbeau

Janet Brandon

Cynthia Brazzil

Kevin Breck

Keefe Brooks

Jared Buckley

Bill Buesser

Lawrence G. Campbell

Charles Clippert

Thomas Cory

Tom Cranmer

James Cunningham

Sam Damren

Tom DeAgostino

John DeMoss

James Derian

Mark Dickow

Lamberto Distefano

Brian Einhorn

James Elliott

Ernie Essad

Cathy Farrell

Michael Feldman

Craig Forhan

Mark Frankel

George Fulkerson

Steven Galbraith

Joseph Garin

George Googasian

Deborah Gordon

Ronald F. Graham

Bill Hampton

Tom Hardy

Alan Harnisch

David Haron

Elbert Hatchett

Joseph Hemming

Ray Henney

Jeff Heuer

Mike Hohausser

Albert Holtz

Stephen Hopkins

Barry Howard

William Jamieson

Craig John

Alan Kanter

Nanci Klein

David Kohl

Stephen Kursman

Sharon LaDuke

Kathy Lang

Michael Leib

Ed Lennon

Gary Levitt

Richard Levitt

Mickey Lewiston

Michael Leib

Arthur Liss

Robert Liss

Joseph Lujan

Tom Marshall

J. Patrick Martin

David Mendelson

Joseph Migliore

Edward Miller

Paul Monicatti

John Monnich

Mike Morganroth

Fred Morganroth

Patrick E. Murray

Leonard Natinsky

Henry Nirenberg

Michael Nowakowski

Jules Olsman

Edward Pappas

H. Wallace Parker

J. Timothy Patterson

David Patton

Thomas Plunkett

David Potts

Steven Powell

Antoinette Raheem

Martin Reisig

Marcia C. Ross

Tom Ryan

Thomas Sawyer

Joel H. Schavrien

Michael Schloff

Kurt E. Schnelz

Steven L. Schwartz

John E. Scott

Joel H. Serlin

Kenneth Silver

Sam Simpson

Mark Snitchler

Kim Snover

Edward Soma

Michael Stacy

Mark Stern

Michael Sullivan

Tom Tallerico

James Tamm

Asher Tilchin

Thomas Trenta

Donald Walker

Neil Wallace

Robert Webster

Marty Weisman

Steve Wells

Mark Werder

Marc Whitefield

Boris Yakima