

PRESS RELEASE

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DELEGATION OF RUSSIAN JUDGES VISIT OAKLAND CIRCUIT COURT

Oakland County, MI (April 1, 2008) – On April 1, the Oakland County Circuit Court hosted a delegation of five judges from Russia. The judges are visiting southeast Michigan to participate in the Open World Program’s rule of law theme to gain a better understanding of America’s judicial system. The program is through the Open World Leadership Center, an organization established by Congress in 2001 to sponsor citizen diplomacy initiatives in an effort to foster networking between American and foreign leaders.

The delegation’s itinerary included stints in several courtrooms and visits with judges and court administrative staff. Of particular interest was a presentation on how the Court summonses and qualifies prospective jurors. The delegation also observed the seating of a jury in Judge Michael Warren’s courtroom. The delegation watched Judge Steven Andrews preside over the arraignment and sentencing of criminal defendants during his weekly Tuesday morning criminal call. In the afternoon, the group traveled to the County Jail for a guided tour by Oakland County Sheriff Michael Bouchard. The delegation headed back to Court in the late afternoon to observe Judge Edward Sosnick preside over a session of the Juvenile Drug Treatment Court.

Circuit Chief Judge Wendy Potts commented: “It is a unique opportunity for us to welcome members of the judiciary from Russia. With the advancements in travel and technology, this is truly becoming a small world. It is fitting that we should meet our colleagues from half way around the globe and spend time talking about our respective judicial systems and how we can improve the administration of justice for all of our citizens.”

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Candidates in the Open World Program are nominated to participate by the U.S. and their country's government and nongovernmental agencies. Applications are then reviewed by selection committees made up of U.S. and Open World staff. A nominee's leadership potential and involvement in community or political work is a major factor in the selection process. Open World rule of law visits have contributed to sister-court relationships between 19 pairs of U.S. and Russian legal communities.

In recent years, the Oakland's Circuit Court, in conjunction with the National Center for State Courts, has also participated in a court observation program for visiting Korean judges. The exposure to court procedures first-hand has provided these international judges the experience and opportunity to see how justice is administered in Oakland County and the United States.

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