

# THE GAVEL

*The Official Newsletter  
of the Georgia Council of Probate Court Judges*

Volume 12, Number 1

August 2004

## MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT



The new Council year began amidst wonderful camaraderie at our Wednesday night banquet that took place on April 15th.

My guests were struck by what a close-knit group we are. It truly is a blessing. At lunch the next day, I was sitting there waiting for Judge Cason to start the program, wondering if she was ever going to get around to it, when suddenly (albeit belatedly) I realized that this was my job. If I had that day to do over, I would at least have gotten the afternoon training session back on track, or gotten myself more focused. Drats! All I can do is to try to learn from my mistakes. In this I am comforted by the knowledge that you will help me do that, and I encourage your feedback. Meanwhile, thank you for bearing with me as I struggle to figure out how my predecessors assumed this mantle so easily.

That said, now let's take a look at plans for the upcoming year and a few things which have started off on the right foot. Do you remember the Mobile Law Office project we mentioned last year? The planned expansion into Probate Courts was not funded by last year's grant. This year I sent a let-

ter of support on behalf of the Council, and the applicants think their chances of getting the requested funding for the next grant cycle are good. Those eleven judges who have already expressed an interest will be the first ones considered if the grant proposal is approved.

Several of you have volunteered to serve on particular committees or have offered to help in any way you can. Thank you. Your support is very much appreciated. Although I am making headway on Committee assignments, it is not too late to jump onboard. If you want to explore the possibilities before committing, call me or email me, whichever you prefer. [A special word to lay judges: Please do not assume that we lawyer judges have all the answers. We may have an advantage when it comes to looking up the law, but sometimes legal answers are not the best solutions. A case in point occurred when Judge Hallman asked what to do about a sheriff who stood in the way of a much-needed mental health evaluation for a prisoner. In response, some of us lawyer judges discussed the legal remedies. Judge Dunn told me afterward that she thought the most effective approach would be to explain to the new sheriff what the potential political fallout

would be if a prisoner about whom he had been forewarned (as to problems with depression) were to commit suicide. In this kind of situation, the sheriff in her county is grateful for a "heads up" when his department is responsible for someone who might need special attention. She's right. Also, there are plenty of nonlawyer judges who are experts in given areas, judges who know much more law on those subjects than I will ever know.]

Ten judges have asked or agreed to serve on the new Mental Health Committee. Judge Lewis requested specific direction for the committee. Judge Grayson reviewed my notes of my thoughts on this and suggested some additions. Sue Jamieson, the attorney with Atlanta Legal Aid who had the last teaching slot on our April program and who had very useful information—would that she had had my spot!—was enthusiastic when I invited her to provide input and ideas. She and Judge Lewis are considering the first draft of my charge to the committee. Finally, in response to a letter I mailed to Rosalynn Carter, I received a phone call from her personal assistant. Together we decided that the best way to proceed was for me to

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## Probate Judge Executive Committee Minutes

Georgia Center • Athens, GA • April 13, 2004

Judge Guess called the meeting to order at 3:15 p.m. He informed the committee that he had mixed feelings with this being his last meeting as President. The minutes from the January 27, 2004 meeting were reviewed and approved by the Council.

### Budget

Ms. Smith and Judge Cranford provided the Council budget report, which are both in good standing. Judge Guess noted that the scholarship funds have been used up for the year. He also announced that scholarships have been granted to Judges Mary Cranford, Lavern Ogletree, and Harris Lewis, who will be Council delegates at the Probate College in Delaware.

### Committee Reports

- Judge McCoy reported on the awards committee. It was announced that during a teleconference the committee decided on nominees and awards recipients. He also stated the banquet and luncheon have been planned as well as certificates and plaques for the ceremonies have been made.
- Ms. Smith reported on behalf of Judge Self for the Court Rules and Forms Committee. Judge Self has been working with Wade Herren, AOC Research, on the promulgation of new Rule One (#1) dealing with local rules to make probate rules conform with superior court rules. The change is being made at the specific request of the Supreme Court. The committee is working on getting the rules distributed to the appropriate persons and filed with the Supreme Court.

Afterwards, copies will be sent to the judges upon approval by the Supreme Court.

- Judge Self will meet with Mr. Herren and Ms. Kesheia Floyd to go over the forms that will be changed as a result of the re-write of the Guardianship Code. The change in the code will be a major effort that needs to be completed by July 1st, 2005, and the AOC research staff will assist him with this project. During that time, they will also see what other forms need to be modified.
- Judge Tate reported for the Firearms Committee that changes will be made to the form and given to Ms. Terry Long, Department of Public Safety, who is an advisor on the project. The form will be front and back and will include guidelines. It is the committee's hope that DPS will formally adopt the form in its shorter version.
- Judge Tate reported for the Internal Assistance Committee. A draft of the bylaws for the commit-

tee was passed out to the council members that will need to be formally adopted. Cobb County Magistrate Court Judge Philip Taylor is scheduled to speak at the luncheon to give his recommendations regarding the committee and explain how their (magistrate) committee operates. Judge Tate also reported there have been no complaints received.

- Judge Ogletree opened the Legislative Committee by reporting that SR 277, the non-partisan bill, did not pass. She further reported that HB 137, to give increase to judges that handle elections, did pass the House but not the Senate Rules Committee. However, it did open up communication with the County Commissioners. The major problem with the bill was the \$10,000 figure. Next, she reported SB 478, which creates the State Office of Vital Records, did pass in an amended form. SB 229, which relates to when courts are to send

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## Message from the President *continued*

have a conference call with the Director of their Mental Health program office and an attorney who works with him. That call took place last Friday. The good director, Dr. Thomas Bornemann, is going to be an invaluable connection to resources for us, not only for information, but also, perhaps for any technical assistance we may need. Depending what the committee decides to tackle, there may even be a role for Mrs. Carter to fill down the road a bit.

So, the challenges are great, but

the opportunities are greater. Fortunately, the steady leadership of those who have been active in the Council coupled with the new energy brought by our colleagues who are embarking on such a course will help to overcome the rocky start of your fearless leader. I may get distracted or sidetracked on occasion, but I am persistent. With your help, I am looking forward to a great year.

2004-2005 Council President  
Judge Susan Tate, Clarke County

## Probate Judge Executive Committee Minutes cont.

licenses and reports of convictions to the Department of Motor Vehicle Safety, so as to change certain provisions relating to forwarding of information and fees did pass. HB 739, regarding retirement funding and making it possible for judges to choose a beneficiary other than a spouse, also passed. SB 44, regarding Guardian Ad Litem, did not pass and SB 406, regarding hunting with a dog, did not pass as well.

In addition to this report, Judge Bracewell reported for the Legislative Committee and spoke on the events of the legislative session. He reiterated that the following bills passed: HB 739, retirement funding allowing a beneficiary to be chosen other than a spouse and SB 478, pertaining to the creation of a state office of Vital Records passed in amended form. He also stated that the non-partisan resolution (SR 277) did not pass and never made it out of SLOGO.

He further reported that HB 1372, pertaining to providing an increase to election supervisors, did pass the House. The bill was sponsored by Senator David Schaffer, but did not get out of Senate Rules due to problems with monetary figures. Senate Bill 44 on Guardian Ad Litem and HB 869, impacting traffic, did not pass. In reference to HB 869, Ms. Moore reported that funding for Indigent Defense will be taken up during the special session. Senate Bill 406, regarding hunting with dogs, passed one side, but not the other.

- Judge Bracewell informed the committee that Senator David Schaffer was chosen as Republican

Legislator of the year. Representative Don Wicks was chosen as Democratic Legislator of the year; however, neither recipient will be available to receive their awards at the upcoming banquet. He also reported that the legislature now knows about the Council through their voices. Mark Middleton is scheduled to conduct a panel discussion on Thursday. In conclusion a few additional comments were made in regards to the legislature; Judge Mullis suggested that the entire Council visit the Capitol on a particular day outside of attending with COAG. Judge Bracewell reported that Judge Nancy Aspinwall did an excellent job of working with the legislature this session. Judge Ogletree announced she would like to see the legislative reception go back to the Depot (State). In closing, Judge Guess thanked Judge Bracewell for all of his work.

- Judge McCoy reported that the newsletter is presently being worked on and is scheduled to go out by the beginning of May. He reminded the committee to send any and all information to the AOC for submission. Judge Guess commented that the last newsletter looked great.

- Judge Van Horn was not present to give a technology report; however Jimmy Hill and James Johnson of the AOC/GCAC spoke to the committee. Mr. Hill informed them that he would be happy to work with the committee in reference to the programs that the judges utilize in their courts. He announced that they have programs such as Sustain, Probate CIS, and internet software. The AOC

staff is working to develop a closer relationship with the courts and the Council's technology committee. A brief discussion took place about having the AOC staff instruct a software course and putting this on the training council agenda to schedule a fall seminar. The discussion ended with the possibility of a new committee being assigned to work with the AOC technology staff.

- Judge Ogletree informed the Council that the Traffic Committee will meet next Friday, April 23, 2004, at 10:00 a.m. with AOC staff, Wade Herren and Ashley Stollar. The meeting will focus on information and infractions in other states, monitor the progression of HB 869, and look into drafting a criminal Benchbook that may not apply to other classes of court. The committee is seeking more assistance in drafting the Benchbook. Judge Tate inquired about supplements and the cost to supply the information to traffic court judges. She moved that the Council purchase benchbooks and supplements, with a second from Judge Harper. Judge Ogletree agreed to look into this.

### Report from AOC

Ms. Moore reported that AOC Facilities Planner, Judson Bryant has been busy. She stated that probate courts have not been given great consideration when it comes to new construction. Next, she informed the committee that the Commission on Interpreters will have information available to the judges during the training seminar. Ms. Moore also reminded them to pay attention to caseload reporting

# Probate Judges Training Council Minutes

Georgia Center • Athens, GA • April 14, 2004

Judge Hulseley called the meeting to order at 9:05 a.m.

## Approval of Minutes

Judge Stephenson moved to approve the meeting minutes from September 18, 2003 with a second from Judge Nation. There was some discussion on the minutes from the January 27, 2004, meeting that lacked a quorum and it was moved and properly seconded that the minutes be appended to today's meeting.

Judge Hulseley deviated from the agenda and called for the discussion and nominations of those officers who have expired terms. The chair, vice-chair, and secretary are all approaching the end of their terms. The following were nominated and approved by the council for the following positions: Judge Lillis Brown, Chair; Judge Griffin, Vice-Chair; and Judge Scoggins, Secretary.

## Report on Evaluations from 2003 Clerks Training Efforts

Ms. Carson reported that the clerks' training had a great crowd and facility; however, the clerks would like to change meeting locations. She will continue to keep training in the north and stated that Brasstown offered their facility for March for \$99.00 if ICJE agreed to contract for the next two years (2005-2006). The price would go up to \$119.00 for a one year contract. Other options included the Best Western at Dawsonville and the Jekyll Island Club. Judge Brown inquired about the Georgia Center and Ms. Carson stated that the regular fee would increase in cost. The center charges a fee of

\$26.00 per person per day.

## Report on Planning Status of Curriculum Topics for 2004 Fall Seminar

Ms. Carson reviewed the proposed schedule for the 2004 Fall Conference schedule with the Council and announced that the training would be at the Marriot on November 9-11, 2004. Due to the passage of the Guardianship Code, the Tuesday and Wednesday course will be on Revisions of Code, thus replacing the course on year's support. Year's support will be moved to the Spring of 2005. Thursday's training will remain the same.

Judge Guess suggested coordinating a volunteer program on senior connections to have wards visited. He felt this would be a good program for the group, if not for the fall, perhaps the spring. Judge Guess informed the group that the program is headed by Gordon Fowler, who is on staff three times a week and works with DeKalb and Clarke counties.

A brief discussion took place concerning the eight (8) hours and Judge Guess agreed that Ms. Carson could find faculty to fill this time in instruction. Mr. Reaves agreed that the hours could be filled with the use of Judge Guess' volunteer program, Mary Radford, and a third program. Ms. Carson agreed to video tape the seminar on Guardianship revisions to supply to new judges. Judge Brown moved to approve the course changes as discussed with a second from Judge Griffin. The motion passed with no objections.

## Report on Planning Status of

## Curriculum Topics for November 15-19, 2004, New Judges Orientation

Enclosed in tab 3 was the tentative schedule of the New Judges Orientation (NJO) to be held in Athens at the Georgia Center on November 15-19, 2004. After reviewing the schedule, the Council briefly discussed a possible date conflict with election run-offs and contested races. Judge Brown suggested not changing the date due to the fact that there will be training in two years. Ms. Carson informed the committee that she would not like to move the training to a different location due to logistics and the fact that everything is available at the Athens location.

Various suggestions were made during the discussion on possible topics for NJO. Mr. Reaves inquired about internet training for the new judges and Ms. Carson stated that the course was removed due to a lack of participation. After more discussion on training, Ms. Moore suggested using the Macon office as well as having the new judges meet with the AOC research staff for training. Ms. Carson agreed with her suggestion. Judge Guess suggested a statewide membership for Westlaw in the near future and inquired if it was possible. After discussing how the program is funded, Ms. Moore stated she would look into a contract.

The next discussion focused on the NJO schedule. The committee agreed to switch the Monday, November 15th Guardianship of Minor course with Wednesday's Introduction to Associated Court

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## Probate Judge Training Council Minutes cont.

Organizations. It was also agreed that Judge Lillis Brown will instruct the License and Permits course in place of Judge Cranford. Judge Cranford, along with Judges Ogletree and Harris Lewis, will attend a Guardianship conference in Denver during the orientation. All other courses will remain the same. Judge Baker moved to approve the schedule as discussed with a second from Judge Mullis. The motion passed with all in favor.

Ms. Carson reminded the Council that the Traffic Seminar is June 24-25, 2004, at the Renaissance Pineisle at Lake Lanier. Training on Evidence and Commercial Drivers License will be held in conjunction with the municipal court judges Thursday the 25th from 1:00-4:00 p.m. The instructor for the day will be Professor Millet and Darian Mize of the Department of Motor Vehicle Safety. On Friday, from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., there will be three tracks to choose from: alternative sentencing, immigration law, and fee and fines.

In a new discussion, Judge Scoggins inquired about moving the Spring 2005 conference to a later date, such as after the legislative session. He continued by stating that many of the judges attend the sessions for updates on new laws. After a brief discussion, Ms. Carson informed the committee that she has a two year contract with the Georgia Center and it was agreed to by the committee to forward meeting suggestions to her.

Ms. Carson informed the Council that on July 12th and 13th 2004, Spanish training for 30 clerks on each day will take place at the AOC Macon office. She would like for clerks that have not attended

the previous training to attend this one. The training, which is taught by Stephanie Langston, will focus on daily conversational Spanish to assist with Spanish speaking customers. For information on the program, the website address is: [www.handsonspanish.com](http://www.handsonspanish.com) or Ms. Langston can be contacted at [Stephanie@handsonspanish.com](mailto:Stephanie@handsonspanish.com)

Before the report concluded, the Council discussed moving the Spring 2005 conference around the state. Judge Brown advised that wherever the meeting is moved should be a central location able to accommodate the Council. The Council agreed that anyone with suggestions should forward them to Ms. Carson.

### Report on Non-Certified Judges for CY03

Ms. Carson reported on non-certified judges for calendar year (CY) 2003. After a brief discussion concerning those in delinquent status, the Council agreed to send out letters addressing each judge's situation and meeting training requirements.

Before concluding the report, Mr. Reeves made two announcements. He informed the Council that the Council of Superior Court Judges sponsored a cross class of court training in February and the Council President, the Honorable Martha Christian, invited all classes of courts to contribute to funding these educational programs. He proposed if interest is shown the CPCJ President recommend appropriate training topics and contribute financially. Mr. Reeves gave examples of topics such as Immigration, Cyber Crimes, and Expert Investigation for Evidence.

Secondly, Mr. Reeves informed the Council about a special project

at the University (UGA) in conjunction with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the Commission on Fairness and Access. The project involves formulating curriculum that is currently being worked on and will be available for conference activity in 2005, with possible multi-class court training. The course would focus on disabilities and the law. The subject matter will be submitted at the end of the fiscal year.

### New Judges Training

Judge Lillis Brown reported on the progress of new judges training and informed the Council that she will solicit mentors for the new judges. In June and July, notices will go out to candidates running for office that there will be a required new judges training. She also reported that there will be an August mentoring training in Savannah in which two hours is needed. At the August training, a reception for the new judges will be given by the membership committee. Judge Brown informed the committee that she needs the names and addresses of all candidates. In closing, she encouraged all mentors to attend the new judges training.

Ms. Carson reminded Judge Brown to keep her informed and to copy her on all distributions concerning the new judges. She also informed Judge Brown that she will need additional information from her in order to prepare for the training. In closing Judge Mullis suggested the use of mentoring materials Mr. Reeves has provided in previous years.

## Probate Judge Training Council Minutes cont.

### New Business

In new business, Ms. Carson asked the committee to consider giving credit to those participants who attended the Judicial Elections Campaign (Superior Court Council Conference) seminar. The conference was held on February 19, 2004. It was moved to give three (3) credit hours to those who attended the seminar with a proper second. The motion passed with all in favor.

Also under new business, Judge Baker brought up the discussion on training at the County Officers Association of Georgia (COAG) meeting. Ms. Moore informed the Council that the executive committee discussed having a program on what technology is available to the courts. The course would be presented by the Technology Division of the AOC to the entire Council. A brief discussion concerning the use of new forms in addition to Judge Self and Toomer's work was brought up. It was moved to include new forms (1 hour) and computer software (2 hours) availability in the Summer COAG curriculum. With a proper second the motion passed with all in favor.

Judge Hulsey reported to the Council that he has been working with GCIC in conjunction with

Judge Nation to set up training to give every judge an opportunity to obtain certification. The discussions have been to hold training in three different locations: the AOC Macon office, the Tifton Bar Association office, and North Georgia Dalton courthouse. He agreed, based on Judge Brown's request, to continue working on this project with Judge Nation as a subcommittee. A yearly training may possibly be set up for 2005. A brief discussion took place on various methods of distributing this information and Judge Hulsey agreed to provide a report at the August meeting.

Judge Mullis announced that she is rotating off the training council after 10 years of service. She has gained much knowledge and enjoyed herself while serving on the Council.

### Next Meeting Date

A brief discussion took place concerning the next meeting date and Ms. Carson stated she would like to defer the meeting from the COAG summer meetings. It was moved to change the training council meetings to twice a year, one in Athens and one in Savannah. It was seconded with discussion, the motion was amended to change the second

meeting to October at the Smarr facility if available, then given another second. The motion passed with all in favor.

### Adjournment

As there was no other business the meeting adjourned at 11:20 a.m.

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## In Our Thoughts



Fulton County Probate Judge Pinkie Toomer lost her mother in early March. The funeral was held in West Virginia.

Judge Kathy Tyler's twin brother passed away on April 17, 2004.

Retired Tift County Judge, Betty Hill-Winegard passed away on April 30, 2004. Judge Hill-Winegard served as a probate for 28 years.

The Family of retired Sumter County Probate Judge Sue R. Smith, who passed away on May 31, 2004. She served as Probate Judge of Sumter County from 1969-1988.

Former Bryan County Probate Judge Hermon Butler lost his wife, Claudine on May 28th.

Judge Judy Mullis of Lanier County lost her mother-in-law at the end of June.

Senior Judge Louise Taylor of Decatur County passed away on August 2, 2004.

*Please keep the families and friends of the departed in your thoughts and prayers.*

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## From the Editor

It is our goal to provide you with quality and informative information concerning the Council of Probate Court Judges. If you have questions or concerns or would like to submit an article, please contact Bernadette Smith, AOC, at (404) 463-3804 or via email at smithb@gaaoc.us



**Judge Darin McCoy**  
Editor, The Gavel

## Probate Judge Executive Committee Minutes cont.

and that salary surveys will go out the 1st of July.

### Old Business

Judge Guess announced that the AOC is working to assist Judge Self with forms. The research staff will highlight versions of the changes and he will review them. Judge McCoy inquired about what changes the form will reflect pertaining to the Guardianship Code, and Judge Guess responded that it will mostly be the terminology. The report concluded with the committee being informed of the January 1, 2005, effective date.

### Nominations

Judge Guess reported that on March 23, 2004, the nominations committee held a conference call to nominate four officers for the Council. He announced that

Judge Jeffery Chavis of Jeff Davis County was nominated as member-at-large and Judge Mary Cranford was nominated to succeed herself as Secretary-Treasurer. Furthermore, Judge Betty Cason was nominated as First Vice President and Judge Mike Bracewell was nominated to serve as President –Elect. Judge Susan Tate will serve as Council President for 2004-2005.

### New Business

In new business, Judge Guess informed the committee about the National College of Probate Judges Treat Award (Tab 4). He briefly explained that each year, at the College's annual meeting, a recipient is honored with this award. In the past, Judge Guess and Professor

Mary Radford, as well as other members of the Council, have received this award. An announcement was posted in the agenda outlining the qualifications and deadline for receiving nominations.

### Next Meeting Date

The next meeting is tentatively scheduled for August 1-4, 2004, at the Clarion-Jekyll Island, in conjunction with Summer COAG.

### Adjournment

Before the meeting adjourned, Judge McCoy announced that this would be his last meeting as an officer, and he stated that he has learned a lot during his terms. Ms. Moore thanked the Council for their show of support during the loss of her father earlier in the year. Judge Mullis, with the committee in agreement, thanked Judge Guess for all of his great work and commitment to the Council.

With no other business to discuss, Judge Mullis moved to adjourn the meeting. With a second from Judge Tate, the meeting adjourned at 4:50 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted By  
Bernadette Smith for  
Judge Mary Cranford, Secretary

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## Important Contact Information

### *Institute of Continuing Judicial Education (ICJE)*

The University of Georgia  
123 Dean Rusk Hall  
Athens, Georgia 30602  
Fax: 706-542-4211  
Office: 706-542-7491  
<http://www.uga.edu/icje/index.htm>

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Conference Facilitator  
Dr. Lynda Hanscome  
Educational Program Specialist  
Becky Elkin  
Administrative Secretary

### *Administrative Office of the Courts*

(Main Office)  
244 Washington Street, S.W.  
Suite 300  
Atlanta, GA 30334  
Fax: 404-651-6449  
Office: 404-656-5171  
[www.georgiacourts.org](http://www.georgiacourts.org)

### *Council of Probate Court Judges Website*

[www.georgiacourts.org/councils/probate](http://www.georgiacourts.org/councils/probate)

*Note: Please remember to use your Georgia Courts Directory as a source for contact information.*

*Please Recycle*



## Fourth District Probate Judges Meeting • June 9, 2004

The members of the Fourth District Probate Judges met at 11:30 A.M. at the home of Judge Betty Cason in Carrollton, Georgia, on Wednesday, June 9, 2004. The following counties were represented: Butts, Coweta, Carroll, Heard, Lamar, Meriwether, Monroe, Spalding, Troup and Upson. Guests in attendance were: Court Administrator for the Coweta Circuit Fred Roney, Elmira Barrow with the Coweta Circuit ADR, Tracy Johnson with the Towaliga Circuit ADR, Judge Dennis Blackmon, Carroll County Sheriff Terry Langley, and Attorney Kelsey Johnson.

Following a delicious meal pro-

vided by Judge Cason, the meeting was called to order by District President Judge Gary Hamby. The business meeting focused on the new legislation HB 1 EX, which involves new surcharges for funding indigent defense. Members discussed concerns with the lack of clarity in the bill as to which Probate filings should be assessed the additional \$15.00. It was felt that this surcharge should not be added to the firearm and marriage licenses and that an additional assessment on every filing in the Probate Court would be excessive. Consensus of opinion was that this legislation would require some "cleaning up" in the next

legislative session.

Elmira Barrow and Tracy Johnson provided the judges with an informative and enlightening program on the benefits of Mediation in the Probate Court. The judges were encouraged to utilize this procedure as it has been found to be successful. Although an agreement may not be reached, the attempt at mediation tends to make hearings go smoother. It gives the involved individuals the opportunity to express their feelings and explore all aspects of the issues in a more informal and less threatening manner than they experience in a courtroom setting.

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### Note of Appreciation

RE: Pictures and Thanks

Dear Judge Cranford,

Just a note to let you know how much I appreciated receiving the lovely photos from the seminar I attended. I especially enjoyed the candid snapshot of myself and my sister. It is nice to be included in the probate judge's training seminar. It allowed me time to get reacquainted with fellow judges, meet the "new kids on the block", and it also keeps me abreast of the new rules and regulations. I am just sorry I did not see more senior judges in attendance.

I feel the Council does a fine job in keeping our judges well informed in these training sessions. I know it takes a giant effort in order to pull it all together. Sherry Carson and Marla Moore deserve a lot of credit for making all the sessions so successful. Please relay to them my appreciation for a job well done!

I would like to thank the Council for the warm hospitality shown to my two guests.

Please keep me informed of any future seminars or sessions you feel I would benefit from. I thank you again for all your kindness and hard work.

Sincerely yours,  
Anne W. Edwards

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### Farewell

To My Fellow Probate Judges:

If you have not heard, I was not re-elected for another term. It was a hard fought race and I did all I could, however it was not to be. I have thoroughly enjoyed my term and will dearly miss all of you, especially my friend Bill Self. You make up a contingent of very special servants for the people. Never forget that fact. Each one of you are specially made and have a tremendous responsibility on your shoulders...you have my respect and honor. I am deeply saddened to be departing from your body. God Bless each of you.

Judge Greg Grayson  
Catoosa County

# Third District Probate Judges Meeting • June 2, 2004

**Present at Meeting:**

Rockdale County – Host – Judge Lillis Brown  
Cherokee County – Kipling McVay  
Clayton County – Judge Pam Ferguson  
Fayette County – Judge Martha Stephenson  
Fulton County – Judge Pinkie Toomer  
Gwinnett County – Judge Walter "Jim" Clarke  
Henry County – Judge Del Butrill (joined for luncheon)

*Old Business:*

(A) Election of Dist. 3 Officers

President – Judge Kipling McVay  
Secretary – Pinkie T. Toomer  
Treasurer – Lillis Brown

(B) Collection of Dues

• Judge Brown reported that invoices have gone out to all District 3 Members and bank account has already been established (by Judge Brown)  
• Several member counties have already paid the required \$50.00 annual dues.

*New Business*

(A) Reviewed District 3 Proposed Meeting Schedule:

- First organizational Meeting at Spring Probate Judge's Meeting in April 2004
- Second Meeting – First Wednesday in June (June 2, 2004)
- November 2004 Meeting – At Fall Conference (breakfast or luncheon meeting TBA)
- January, 2005 – Hosted by DeKalb County (Details TBA)

(B) Discussed (HB 1EX) and ramification of collection of additional \$15.00 fee.

(C) Possible Topics for Future Luncheon Meetings

- Discussion of legal issues unique to larger counties
- Specific case discussion. Bring issues to luncheon for roundtable discussion with other judges
- Review of Appellate Opinions
- Sharing forms used by courts
- Law Clerk Forum/Inclusion with our Luncheon Meetings

Luncheon held at Victorian House Restaurant

*Action Items*

• For Judge McVay or designee: Determine when and where breakfast/luncheon meeting will be held at the Fall Meeting in November, 2004

• Hold This Date: November 10, 2004 – Dist 3 Mtg at the Fall Conference (Place and Time TBA)

Meeting Adjourned: 3:00 p.m.

Attachment to Minutes: District 3 Membership Contact List

Minutes Prepared by: Pinkie T. Toomer (Fulton County)

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## Court Fee Contact Info at Georgia Superior Court Clerks Cooperative Authority

GSCCCA Fines & Fees Division  
P.O. Box 29645  
Atlanta, GA 30359

Phone (404) 327-7320 Toll Free (866) 847-4058  
Fax (404) 327-7325 Toll Free Fax (866) 847-4105

Email [finesandfees@gsccca.org](mailto:finesandfees@gsccca.org)

Website [www.courttrax.org](http://www.courttrax.org)

Other [www.state.ga.us/legis](http://www.state.ga.us/legis)

**David Williams**, Executive Director  
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**John Myers**, Project Coordinator  
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**Mike Smith**, Communications Director  
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**Sharon Fort**, Communications Assistant  
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**Karen Crumbley**, Financial Manager  
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**Connie Nelson**, Accounting Assistant  
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**Justine Dooley**, Administrative Assistant  
[Justine.dooley@gsccca.org](mailto:Justine.dooley@gsccca.org)

# Probate Case Count

Case count for 2003 has officially ended. The Probate Courts have done an exceptional job in increasing their reporting percentages. The average percentage for all four quarters combined was 81%. Congrats to a job well done, we hope to see 2004 percentages even higher!

Caseload numbers support requests for additional resources (i.e., money, personnel, etc.),

establish caseload trends, as well as justify grant requests. Additionally, this information is extremely useful in long-term facilities planning.

Online Reporting Instructions

Go to: <http://caseload.gaaoc.us/>

A user name and password are required to access information

please contact AOC Research Associate, Skye Scarbrough, at (404) 656-5171 or via email at [Scarbros@gaaoc.us](mailto:Scarbros@gaaoc.us) for this information.

It is necessary to fill out all personal information, if you do not have an email address you must put NA in the box. The form is identical to the 2003 filing form, so all numbers will be in the same vertical order. Once all numbers are in, you will be asked to verify and submit the final results. Once this is done, you will not be able to edit the numbers. If there is a mistake and the numbers must be changed, please contact Ms. Scarbrough and she can change them in the database.

## Calendar of Events

### **September**

**14-16, 2004**

Probate Clerks Seminar  
Comfort Inn-Jekyll  
Island

### **November**

**9-12, 2004**

Judges Fall Seminar  
Savannah

### **November**

**15-19, 2004**

Newly Elected Judges  
Orientation  
Georgia Center-Athens

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## The Gavel

Georgia Council of Probate Court Judges  
Administrative Office of the Courts  
244 Washington Street, SW, Suite 300  
Atlanta, GA 30334

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