

# Community Relations Committee

## Judicial Conference of Indiana

Meeting Minutes for Friday, February 2, 2024

The Community Relations Committee met on February 2, 2024, by video conference. The meeting was chaired by Judge Maria Granger.

1. **Members present.** Kelly Benjamin, Judi Calhoun, Chadwick Hill, Michael Morrissey, Jason Mount, Bill Nelson, Sean Persin, Stephanie Steele, and Maria Granger (chair).
2. **Staff present.** Dave Kuhnz and Sarah Kidwell provided staff assistance.
3. **Approval of Minutes.** The Committee approved the November 3, 2023, minutes by consent.
4. **Cameras in Court Updates.** Judge Persin asked for guidance with media wanting to get all audio instead of just from the required mics. Sarah and Dave suggested to continue use of the required mics and see how things go for a bit longer. Judge Persin also brings up a case where there was media coverage and a hung jury. It will be interesting to see the impact of media with the jury. Dave indicated that in Marion County Washington Township Small Claims Court the local judge provided advance direction to media and those in the Courtroom both verbally and in writing. At Judge Steele's request, Dave will ask the local judge for permission to share a copy of the guidance provided to the folks coming into the Courtroom.
5. **Promoting Confidence in the Judiciary.** Dave Kuhnz provided an update on the survey results of the NCSC's annual [State of the State Courts](#). There were four key findings: 1) public trust measures are unchanged, 2) support for remote hearings continues to rise, 3) increasing number see courts as political institutions, and 4) older generation are consuming traditional media on a local level whereas younger generation are looking more toward social media. State courts have the highest confidence rating. Judge Benjamin and Judge Granger are interested in more details as far as who was surveyed for these results, whether they were involved with courts or just a public perception. Dave will reach out to NCSC with follow-up questions and provide the committee with additional research. Judge Calhoun and Judge Benjamin question ways to get correct information out to the public, give folks a better understanding, and provide an avenue for talking about procedure. What about a meet the judge night, an event at the library, or a chance for members of the bar to meet the judges. Judge Hill commented that he allows adults to sit with him on the bench for specific hearings to give a single person at a time an impression of what judges actually do. Judge Nelson, Judge Steele, and Judge Persin all allow students to participate as Judge Hill asks. Others, including Judge Granger and Judge Benjamin, think that it seems really neat and are encouraged to try it themselves.
6. **Constitution Day.** Information is coming in April weekly message to encourage judges to find schools before summer break. Judge Granger indicated that participating leaves an impression on students. She was hesitant to organize a visit at first, but ultimately it was good. She picked out an idea and ran it by another person for feedback. All Community Relations members are highly encouraged to participate themselves and to encourage fellow judges to do so as well.
7. **Other business.** Sarah Kidwell indicated that the Judges Speakers Bureau will be updated with confirmation emails coming soon. Judge Granger asked if any funding is available

for promoting confidence in judiciary, maybe something that we can do as a group. Dave Kuhnz indicated that he would look into it.

8. **Next meeting dates.** Meetings for 2024 will be held via Zoom on Fridays at 1:00 p.m. (Eastern). The remaining quarterly meetings will take place on May 3, August 2, and November 1.

Respectfully submitted,

Sarah Kidwell and Dave Kuhnz  
Office of Communication, Education & Outreach