

Draft Minutes

Connecticut Judicial Branch Access to Justice Commission: Subcommittee on the American Bar Association and Technology & Access to Justice

**11 April, 2012
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The Subcommittee on the American Bar Association and Technology and Access to Justice met at 2:00 p.m. on Wednesday, April 11, 2012 at the Law Offices of Atty. Herman Woodard Jr.

Committee members in attendance: Atty. Woodard Jr., Chair; Atty. Jeffrey Dowd, Ms. Sandra Lugo-Gines, and Atty. Susan Nofi-Bendici.

Members absent: Ms. Rhonda Stearley-Hebert & Ms. Jennifer Ensign.

Also present: Ms. Heather Collins, Support Staff.

The meeting was called to order at 2:10 p.m. by Attorney Woodard.

- I. Atty. Woodard welcomed the Subcommittee members and there was a motion to approve the minutes of the January 2012 meeting. The motion was unanimously approved.
- II. Updates from members on assigned tasks and review and prioritization of Subcommittee charge activities:
 - Ms. Lugo-Gines discussed the need to make a specific recommendation to the Judicial Branch's internal Web Board regarding the development of accessibility standards for websites. Current federal law requires federal agencies to comply with certain standards but there is not currently the same mandate for states. Atty. Nofi-Bendici noted that the ctlawhelp.org website is accessible by clicking on "accessibility" at the bottom. The site conforms to the federal Section 508 guidelines. Ms. Ensign will be a critical part of developing a specific recommendation; Ms. Lugo-Gines and the members agreed that the Branch's ADA sites should be the first accessible pages developed for the public. The Subcommittee will consider more specific language for an accessibility pilot at its next meeting.
 - Atty. Dowd and Ms. Lugo-Gines discussed hearing loop technology. While it would be beneficial to users of a certain type of hearing aid, cost is a consideration. Since the last meeting, a vendor looked at a small Rockville courtroom and determined that it would cost just under \$5,000 for the equipment and installation. There was general consensus that if the Subcommittee develops a recommendation related to hearing loop technology, that it would be that the Branch investigate installing the equipment in a larger and more used courtroom, such as an arraignment courtroom in a large judicial district.
 - Ms. Collins reported on the plethora of access to justice issues and trends across the country. As this subcommittee is focused in part on technology, there

was discussion on how the Branch can expand access using video equipment, smart phone applications and other technology. The Tennessee Supreme Court's [Justice for All](#) initiative recently launched an [online pro bono website](#) in which income eligible self-represented parties can contact a lawyer for assistance by email questions. The site also features a page for [lawyers who want to help](#) which includes links to legal aid, bar associations, mediation programs, etc. There was also discussion of the new [Arkansas iProBono](#) smart phone app, which lets licensed Arkansas attorneys view pro bono cases, sort through them, and request them, "with the push of a button." There was further discussion on what Connecticut is doing to facilitate ATJ using technology and Atty. Nofi-Bendici said a legal aid organization is in the process of developing an online program that would direct people with questions about legal aid to the correct resource, and another telephone hotline whereby volunteer attorneys would devote as much time as they can by returning phone calls to people who need legal assistance. Attorneys who would volunteer under the auspices of Statewide Legal Services are covered by their malpractice insurance. There is a 'pro bono your way' initiative underway with the launch last fall of the [probono.ctlawhelp.org](#) website, which provides attorneys with specific information, including contact information, on how to volunteer.

- There was discussion about the use of videoconferencing to facilitate pro bono and other ways in which it could be used. It has been used by the Branch as an accommodation for people with disabilities under the ADA act. Attorney Woodard suggested that the bar could use it to confer with incarcerated defendants who are not brought to court when their case is on for pre-trial discussion, and there was discussion about its viability for pro bono conferencing between attorneys in remote locations. The members discussed the feasibility of surveying members of various bar associations to ask attorneys a.) if they would like to use v/c, and b.) how it would be useful.

- Atty. Nofi-Bendici reported on her examination of the Branch's website for ATJ resources, and she developed a list of more than a dozen, as well as [external site resources](#) from legal aid providers.

- III. The Subcommittee members next discussed the priorities of the charge and decided that it making recommendations to the larger Commission on what a 'one-stop' ATJ page should contain. In general, it was agreed that such a page would probably be most frequently used by: self-represented people; people with limited English proficiency; people with disabilities; the elderly and members of the bar. The members each agreed to review the site for a particular segment and email Atty. Woodard the results.
- IV. The Committee did not set a date for its next meeting; Ms. Collins will email the members for their availability. The meeting was adjourned at 3:45 p.m. by Attorney Woodard.