

Hon. Fred S. Hecker
Circuit Administrative Judge
Fifth Judicial Circuit
Chair
(410) 386-2837



Hon. Yolanda L. Curtin
Circuit Administrative Judge
Third Judicial Circuit
Vice-Chair
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Conference of Circuit Judges

Maryland Judicial Center
187 Harry S. Truman Parkway
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

A meeting of the Conference of Circuit Judges was held via Zoom on Monday, March 23, 2026,
beginning at 9:30 a.m.

Members Present:

Hon. Fred S. Hecker, Chair
Hon. Yolanda L. Curtin, Vice Chair
Hon. Audrey J.S. Carrión
Hon. DaNeeka V. Cotton
~~Hon. William W. Davis, Jr.~~
~~Hon. Jeffrey S. Getty~~
Hon. Wendy S. Epstein
Hon. ShaRon M. Grayson Kelsey

Hon. Julia A. Martz Fisher
Hon. Vicki M. Pauler
~~Hon. Richard J. Sandy~~
Hon. S. James Sarbanes
Hon. Brian D. Shockley
Hon. Brenda A. Sexton
Hon. Anthony F. Vittoria
Hon. Lara C. Weathersbee

Guests:

Debra Burch (Chair, Conference of Circuit Court Clerks) Kara Pollak (Chair, Conference of Circuit Court Administrators)
Nancy Faulkner (Deputy State Court Administrator) Judy K. Rupp (State Court Administrator)
Olya Jerschowsky (Project Admin. to the SCA) Hon. Brett R. Wilson (On behalf of Judge Getty)
Andrea Murphy (Staff)

Welcome – Hon. Fred S. Hecker

Judge Fred S. Hecker welcomed conference members and reminded them that the meeting was being livestreamed for the public. He welcomed new member, Judge Richard J. Sandy, Circuit Administrative Judge for the 6th Judicial Circuit.

Approval of the Minutes of the January 26, 2026, Meeting

The Conference approved the January 26, 2026, meeting minutes.

Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) – Olya Jerschowsky

Olya Jerschowsky provided an overview of the rule adopted by the U.S. Department of Justice requiring state and local governments to comply with Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.1 AA by April 24, 2026. The rule applies to all public-facing content, including mdcourts.gov; peoples-law.org; county or local government websites maintained on behalf of a Maryland court or clerk's office; public-facing, web-enabled applications operated by the Maryland courts; and public documents in MDEC or on Case Search.

The Judiciary has developed compliance guidance, identified web content requiring remediation, evaluated remediation tools, and purchased CommonLook licenses. The Judicial College conducted two WCAG awareness webinars and a CommonLook training for license holders. A CourtNet accessibility toolkit was created, and a Teams site for remediators has been established to provide support. Regarding MDEC, Ms. Jerschowsky noted that Tyler products are not anticipated to be compliant with WCAG standards until 2030, and that no changes to court operating procedures are anticipated until Tyler provides an automated solution.

Ms. Jerschowsky outlined the next planned steps. Judiciary departments have been assigned to remediate content on mdcourts.gov, and AOC Web Services will work with local jurisdictions to address their content on the site. Circuit courts will manage remediation of content on local circuit court websites. Remediation can be performed using Adobe Acrobat or Microsoft Word, and training on these applications is being developed. Circuit courts may also purchase licenses if they prefer to use CommonLook.

Judge Hecker requested that the AOC consider meeting individually with court leadership in each jurisdiction to provide guidance on the steps each circuit court must take to comply with WCAG standards. Ms. Jerschowsky will coordinate with AOC staff and the court leadership to schedule visits to each jurisdiction.

JIS Intake Process – Hon. Fred S. Hecker & Judy K. Rupp

Judge Hecker, along with Judy K. Rupp, informed members that JIS is implementing a new project intake process. An executive board has been established to determine whether project requests should be considered and to provide final approval. An advisory committee has also been established to review new projects and make recommendations on project implementation.

The executive board will consist of senior leadership, including a circuit court judge. The advisory committee will be composed of Judiciary representatives in various roles, also including a circuit court judge. Members were asked to confer with their benches and send the names of judges interested in serving on the executive board and/or advisory committee to Judge Hecker. Ms. Rupp noted that the new process will begin in April, and the committees will meet monthly to review project requests. When asked whether the new process will affect previously submitted project requests, Ms. Rupp responded that they would not be impacted.

Old Business – DOC Attorney Visitation – Hon. Fred S. Hecker

Judge Hecker asked if members encountered any additional issues with the Department of Corrections or local detention centers allowing attorneys access to their detained clients. Judge Vicki M. Pauler responded that, since she initially brought the matter before the Conference, private attorneys have continued to experience these issues, as well as general difficulties communicating with the local detention center. Although she inquired with the Office of the Public Defender, they have not reported any issues.

Judge S. James Sarbanes added that another matter had been brought to his attention regarding attorneys experiencing difficulties accessing video or body camera evidence. Judge Yolanda L. Curtin suggested inviting the Secretary of the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services to this year's Joint Meeting of the Conference of Circuit Judges and the District Court Chief Judge's Committee to discuss these matters. Andrea Murphy will invite the secretary to the September meeting. Members may send any additional topics they wish to discuss with the Secretary to Judge Hecker.

For the Good of the Order

No additional matters were raised, and the meeting was adjourned at 10:34 a.m.