



Hon. Matthew J. Fader, Chair
Chief Justice, Supreme Court of Maryland

Hon. Bibi M. Berry
Circuit Court for Montgomery County

Hon. Wayne A. Brooks
*District Court of Maryland
Howard County*

Hon. Yvette M. Bryant
*Chair, Standing Committee on Rules of
Practice and Procedure*

Hon. Debra J. Burch
Chair, Conference of Circuit Court Clerks

Hon. Yolanda L. Curtin
Vice-Chair, Conference of Circuit Judges

Nancy Faulkner
Secretary, Deputy State Court Administrator

Maria Fields
*Administrative Clerk, District 8
Baltimore County*

Hon. Fred S. Hecker
Chair, Conference of Circuit Judges

Hon. Geoffrey G. Hengerer
*District Court of Maryland
Baltimore City*

Hon. Michelle Karczeski
Vice-Chair, Conference of Circuit Court Clerks

Hon. James A. Kenney, III
Chair, Senior Judges Committee

Hon. Stacy A. Mayer
Circuit Court for Baltimore County

Hon. John P. Morrissey
Chief Judge, District Court of Maryland

Hon. Harris P. Murphy
Circuit Court for Kent County

Kara Pollak
*Chair, Conference of Circuit Court
Administrators*

Judy K. Rupp
State Court Administrator

Julee Snyder
*Vice-Chair, Conference of Circuit Court
Administrators*

Mary K. Smith
*Administrative Clerk, District 10
Howard & Carroll Counties*

Hon. Shaem C. P. Spencer
*District Court of Maryland
Anne Arundel County*

Roberta Warnken
Chief Clerk, District Court of Maryland

Hon. E. Greg Wells
Chief Judge, Appellate Court of Maryland

MARYLAND JUDICIAL COUNCIL

**Meeting Minutes
January 28, 2026**

Judicial Council Members Present:

Hon. Matthew J. Fader, Chair	Hon. John P. Morrissey
Hon. Bibi M. Berry	Hon. Harris P. Murphy
Hon. Yvette M. Bryant	Kara Pollak
Hon. Debra J. Burch	Judy K. Rupp
Hon. Yolanda L. Curtin	Mary K. Smith
Nancy Faulkner	Julee Snyder
Maria Fields	Hon. Shaem C.P. Spencer
Hon. Fred S. Hecker	Roberta Warnken
Hon. Geoffrey G. Hengerer	Hon. E. Greg Wells
Hon. Michelle Karczeski	

Guests:

Renée Abbott	Andrea Murphy
Hon. Pamela K. Alban	Sharon Reed
Robert Bruchalski	Jason Thomas
Shamika Dent-Williams	Gillian Tonkin
Hon. Sherri D. Koch	Kyle Unnewehr
Amanda Miller	

1. Welcome – Hon. Matthew J. Fader

Chief Justice Matthew J. Fader called the meeting to order at 9:30 a.m. and welcomed new members Michelle Karczeski, Mary K. Smith, and Julee Snyder.

2. Approval of Minutes of the November 18, 2025, Meeting

A motion was made to approve the minutes of the November 18, 2025, meeting. The motion was seconded and, after hearing no objections, the minutes were approved.

3. Executive Committee Updates

a. Chief Judge E. Greg Wells, Appellate Court of Maryland

Chief Judge E. Greg Wells reported that the Appellate Court of Maryland (ACM) began developing a policy on the use and misuse of artificial intelligence in case filings.

The ACM is also exploring options to address the recent increase in caseloads and its impact on ACM resources.

b. Chief Judge John P. Morrissey, District Court of Maryland

Chief Judge John P. Morrissey reported that, despite court closures due to inclement weather, most District Court locations successfully held remote bail review dockets on January 27.

The Maryland Online Resolutions pilot program was launched in Anne Arundel, Garrett, Howard, Montgomery, and Talbot counties.

c. Chief Justice Matthew J. Fader, Supreme Court of Maryland

The final administration of the legacy Uniform Bar Exam will take place next month, with the first administration of the NextGen Bar Exam scheduled for July.

The second meeting of the Maryland Statewide Steering Committee on Behavioral Health and the Justice System was held on January 12. The Committee received reports from each of its workgroups and heard a presentation on the hospital discharge process.

Chief Justice Fader reported that the 2026 Judiciary Legislative Package was submitted. He explained that, following the work of the Task Force to Ensure the Safety of Judicial Facilities, legislation was introduced in 2025 to establish

minimum adequate standards for courtroom security. The bill was amended to require local law enforcement agencies to submit a report on current security standards to the Chief Justice by September 2025. The bill was resubmitted as part of the 2026 Judiciary Legislative Package, and now requires reasonable best efforts to meet the minimum adequate security standards. In addition, the Judiciary also included funds in its budget submission for a grant program to assist local governments in meeting this standard.

d. Judy K. Rupp, Administrative Office of the Courts

Judy K. Rupp, State Court Administrator, reported that the Office of Legal Affairs and Fair Practices, in collaboration with the Judicial College, will launch the renewed *Preventing Sexual Harassment* course on March 2.

JIS completed the eBar upgrade, which went live in December 2025, and will conclude deployment of the Non-Case Revenue System this month. Enterprise Justice (EJ) 2024 is scheduled to go live during the weekend of February 13.

Additionally, JIS expanded the Everngam Trophy, which is awarded to jurisdictions with the highest annual completion rates for JIS trainings, to recognize both large and small courts. The 2025 recipients are the Circuit Court for Howard County as the large court and the Circuit Court for Queen Anne's County as the small court.

The Access to Justice Department released its annual report on [Resources for Self-Represented Litigants in the Maryland Courts – FY 2025](#). The department also collaborated with the Department of Juvenile and Family Services to develop and publish a [five-part video series on Standby Guardianship](#) on [mdcourts.gov](#).

The Research and Analysis Department concluded data collection for the Expanded Jury Voir Dire pilot and has begun data analysis. The department is also preparing for the Judicial Needs Assessment Time Study, which is scheduled to begin in early March 2026.

The Office of Problem-Solving Courts convened the 21st Annual Problem-Solving Court Symposium on December 10-11, 2025. The Mediation and Conflict Resolution Office held the 20th Anniversary Bookmark Art Contest Awards Ceremony on December 16, 2025, receiving a record number of over 4,000 entries from students statewide. The Department of Juvenile and Family Services will host the 2026 Guardianship Summit on March 30-31.

e. Hon. Fred S. Hecker, Chair, Conference of Circuit Judges

County Administrative Judges continue to meet biweekly. The group received presentations on EJ 2024 and the Expanded Jury Voir Dire pilot program. Following the retirement of Judge James A. Bonifant, Judge Richard J.

Sandy was appointed Circuit Administrative Judge for the 6th Judicial Circuit, and Judge Karla N. Smith was appointed County Administrative Judge for Montgomery County, effective March 14.

Judge Hecker also reported that the Conference of Circuit Judges met on January 26. The Conference reviewed and discussed the JIS Jury Management Operating Directive and requested additional information. The Court Operations Committee will present the revised Directive to the Conference at its March 23 meeting. The Conference also received presentations on the Public Perceptions Survey and the upcoming Judicial Needs Assessment Time Study.

4. Education Committee, Judicial Education Proposal – Hon. Pamela K. Alban

Judge Pamela K. Alban and Shamika Dent-Williams presented the Education Committee’s *Proposed Judicial Education Revamp*. The proposed restructuring outlines recommended courses for new trial judges to complete within their first five years on the bench.

Ms. Dent-Williams explained that the New Trial Judge Orientation program will continue to serve as the foundational program for new judges. The proposed restructuring will offer judges opportunities to explore a variety of topics in greater depth, including current laws, emerging issues, ethics, and technology. The Judicial College will work with each new trial judge and their administrative judge to recommend courses based on the judge’s prior experience and docket assignments. Judge Alban added that this approach will enhance judicial excellence, promote consistency across courts statewide, and strengthen public confidence.

A motion was made and seconded to approve the *Proposed Judicial Education Revamp*. The motion passed, and Chief Justice Fader accepted the recommendation of the Council.

5. Updated Social Media Guidelines for Judges – Hon. Fred S. Hecker

On behalf of the Workgroup on Judicial Social Media Policy, Judge Hecker presented the *Updated Guidelines Concerning the Use of Social Media by Judges and Judicial Appointees of the Maryland Judiciary* for approval. Key updates to the 2016 policy include updated and modernized definitions, comprehensive guidance on political activity, guidance on social media connections, and enhanced security protocols.

Judge Stacy A. Mayer inquired about the wording on page 5 under [Rule 18-102.15](#) (Responding to Judicial and Attorney Misconduct). She noted that, while the Rule uses the term “unprofessional,” the Guidelines use “unethical,” and questioned whether this wording suggests an expanded duty. Chief Justice Fader explained that the intent of the section is to report misconduct under the Rule and is not meant to broaden the duty. He and Judge Hecker will revise the language in that section to clarify the intention.

A motion was made and seconded to approve the *Updated Guidelines Concerning the Use of Social Media by Judges and Judicial Appointees of the Maryland Judiciary*, with the aforementioned change. The motion passed unanimously, and Chief Justice Fader accepted the recommendation of the Council, with the condition that the wording under Rule 18-102.15 be revised.

6. Committee Updates

a. Court Technology Committee – Hon. Sherri D. Koch

Judge Sherri D. Koch, along with Robert Bruchalski, Jason Thomas, and Renée Abbott, presented updates on the Court Technology Committee. In 2025, the Committee focused on initiatives related to information security, artificial intelligence (AI), data warehouse and analytics, digital evidence, and revenue systems.

In 2025, the Judiciary launched AIDA, an AI assistant designed to support translation, research, and document summarization and drafting. The committee also continued identifying areas to leverage AI to optimize case management workflows.

Additionally, an architecture and foundational platform for a data warehouse were completed, and the first phase—Maryland Judiciary Data Dashboard—was launched in April 2025.

Implementation of a system to support real property notifications has begun. Mr. Bruchalski explained that the subscription-based service will alert property owners to activity affecting their property—such as sales, deeds, and mortgages—as a measure to help prevent property fraud.

A system for collecting, storing, and displaying digital evidence was selected. Mr. Thomas explained that the system will allow parties to upload digital evidence directly to a case prior to a hearing and noted that it will support a wide range of formats. A workgroup was formed under the Major Projects Committee with pilot sites planned for 2026. A question was raised about whether parties would be able to upload evidence during court proceedings. Mr. Thomas responded that the workgroup would develop a process for submitting evidence in the courtroom.

Judge Koch reported that in 2025, the following workgroups completed their charges and were sunset: the Digital Evidence Workgroup, the Electronic Payment Workgroup, the E-Warrant Workgroup, and the Remote Hearings Workgroup.

Planned initiatives for 2026 include the launch of a new

eBar application, full implementation of the real property notification system, expansion and increased use of the Data Warehouse, expanded uses and adoption of AI and robotic process automation, and implementation of a unified electronic payment system.

b. District Court Chief Judge’s Committee – Hon. John P. Morrissey

Chief Judge Morrissey presented on the District Court Chief Judge’s Committee. The Committee is comprised of 12 District Court administrative judges, 10 District Court judges elected by the administrative judges to serve two-year terms, the Chief Clerk of the District Court, and an administrative clerk representative appointed to a two-year term.

Chief Judge Morrissey reported that the Committee met six times in 2025. He noted that the January meeting was adjourned early due to a matter at the Baltimore City District Court that required his presence, and the September meeting was held jointly with the Conference of Circuit Judges. Throughout the year, Committee discussions included the following topics:

- Best practices for dockets with interpreters
- Grant funding requests
- EJ 2024 go-live
- Best practices for issuing bonds
- Stipends for administrative judges
- Unified procedures for bailiffs regarding ADA requests
- Behavioral health
- MDEC
- The Judicial Needs Assessment Time Study
- Business processes for foreclosure cases
- Remote proceedings for work zone camera citations
- Standardization of pretrial services statewide
- Best practices for handling detainees
- Annual training for administrative judges

The Committee also received district updates from each administrative judge, as well as budget, legislative, and security updates, and feedback from the State’s Attorney’s Office. Additionally, the administrative judges formed an online discussion group, and participated in a leadership training held every three years for District Court executive leadership.

The Committee will hold its first meeting in 2026 on January 30.

7. For the Good of the Order

No additional matters were raised, and Chief Justice Fader adjourned the meeting at 10:58 a.m.