



# MARYLAND JUDICIAL COUNCIL

Meeting Minutes

March 25, 2026

**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 Rupp**  
*State Court Administrator*

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

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

**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*

## Judicial Council Members Present:

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

## Guests:

Richard Abbott	Eliana Pangelinan
Melissa Canada	Hon. Cathy H. Serrette
Amanda Miller	Hon. Michael W. Siri
Andrea Murphy	Nisa Subasinghe
Pamela Ortiz	Hon. Brett R. Wilson

## **1. Welcome – Hon. Matthew J. Fader**

Chief Justice Matthew J. Fader called the meeting to order at 9:30 a.m.

## **2. Approval of Minutes of the January 28, 2026, Meeting**

A motion was made to approve the minutes of the January 28, 2026, meeting. The motion was seconded and, after hearing no objections, the minutes were approved.

## **3. Executive Committee Updates**

### **a. Hon. Fred S. Hecker, Chair, Conference of Circuit Judges**

Judge Fred S. Hecker reported that, following the March 14 retirement of Judge James A. Bonifant, Judge Karla N. Smith joined the County Administrative Judges group, and Judge Richard J. Sandy joined the Conference of Circuit Judges.

The Conference of Circuit Judges met on March 23 and heard presentations on Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) and the new JIS project intake process. The Conference also discussed inviting the Secretary of the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services to the September 14 Joint Meeting of the Conference of Circuit Judges and District Court Chief Judge’s Committee.

### **b. Judy K. Rupp, Administrative Office of the Courts**

Judy K. Rupp, State Court Administrator, reported that JIS launched the enhanced Customer Services Portal in February. Additionally, Enterprise Justice (EJ) 2024 went live in mid-February, and the Maryland Case Search and Record Portal (Unified Portal) went live in mid-March.

The Judicial College is developing two AI-focused webinars and preparing to launch a pilot of digital materials in the classrooms.

The Circuit Court for Garrett County, in collaboration with the Programs Division, submitted a plan for an adult drug treatment court to Chief Justice Fader. Following the plan’s approval on March 4, every county in the state now has access to at least one problem-solving court.

The Statewide Judicial Needs Assessment measuring period is currently underway. The data collected will inform the design of the model used to request additional judgeships, which is updated every ten years.

The Court-Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) Conference was held at the Maryland Judicial Center in early March. On April 13, court leadership will participate in a COOP tabletop exercise simulating a cyberattack. The Maryland Judiciary was recently selected by the National Center for State Courts to host the 2027 Court Language Access Coordinators Conference.

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

The Supreme Court of Maryland (SCM) held oral arguments at Harford Community College this month. Over the last three years, the SCM has held oral arguments in six of the seven appellate judicial circuits and is scheduled to sit in the final circuit in October 2026.

Chief Justice Fader also reported that the yearlong Expanded Voir Dire pilot program concluded, with results forthcoming.

**d. Chief Judge John P. Morrissey, District Court of Maryland**

Chief Judge John P. Morrissey acknowledged judges for their participation in the Judicial Needs Assessment time study. He also recognized Judiciary staff involved in the legislative process, noting that District Court Headquarters submitted over 228 fiscal notes this legislative session, and thanked the judges who appeared before the General Assembly to testify on specific bills.

**e. Chief Judge E. Greg Wells, Appellate Court of Maryland**

The Appellate Court of Maryland (ACM) is exploring ways to improve the efficiency of scheduling cases for oral arguments. The court is also implementing a prehearing conference pilot program led by Senior Judge Donald E. Beachley. Chief Judge E. Greg Wells noted that the ACM plans to expand the pilot to include additional senior judges.

Chief Judge Wells also reported that the ACM will hear an en banc oral argument on March 31, which will be livestreamed.

**4. Security Subcommittee – Hon. Brett R. Wilson**

Chief Justice Fader proposed that the meeting be moved to a closed session for agenda item #4 to discuss public security, including the development and implementation of emergency plans, pursuant to General Provisions Article § 3-305(b)(10)(ii). The specific topic being courthouse security plans and recommendations.

Chief Judge Morrissey moved to close the meeting, and the motion was seconded by Chief Judge Wells. All members voted in favor, except for Judge Bibi M.

Berry, who was not present. The Council moved into a closed session at 9:48 a.m. and the closed session ended at 10:35 a.m.

## 5. Committee Updates

### a. Court Access Committee – Hon. Michael W. Siri

Judge Michael W. Siri, Chair, along with Pamela Ortiz, presented on the Court Access Committee. Over the past year, the Judiciary developed two 5-part video series for the public, titled [Appealing to the Appellate Court of Maryland](#) and [Standby Guardianship](#), as well as a 5-part video series for judges and magistrates, titled *Language Services Toolkit: Tips on How to Work with Court Interpreters*. In addition, the Committee, in collaboration with the Judicial College, developed and offered multiple professional development courses for Judiciary staff.

Following the Judicial Council’s approval of [Can We Help You? A Guide for Maryland Judiciary Court Staff](#), the revised guide was published and is now available both online and in print for Judiciary staff. The Judiciary also expanded the Bilingual Staff Program and the hired its first external bilingual candidate under the program in the Circuit Court for Anne Arundel County.

Judge Siri reported that, following the Judicial Council’s approval of the Video Remote Interpreting (VRI) Policy, the use of VRI in courtrooms has increased, enhancing access to justice for litigants and reducing costs for the Judiciary.

The Committee continues to monitor the Maryland Sign Language Interpreters Act, which established a State Board of Sign Language Interpreters and requires individuals providing sign language services to be licensed in Maryland. Pending legislation would delay the licensing requirement until January 1, 2028.

Upcoming initiatives include revising the Language Access Plan, considering the use of video interpreters for navigating court locations, completing a video project on estate administration to support personal representatives, and exploring plain language revisions to Judiciary documents and forms.

Chief Justice Fader asked whether the Committee has considered using Generative AI to assist with the Language Access Plan revisions. Ms. Ortiz responded that the Committee is exploring multiple approaches, including the use of AI, and noted that it is also considering how to effectively use AI to increase accessibility.

**b. Family Law Committee – Hon. Cathy H. Serrette**

Judge Cathy H. Serrette, joined by Nisa Subasinghe, presented on the Family Law Committee. Judge Serrette provided an overview of recent initiatives and accomplishments of the Committee’s workgroups.

- The Behavioral Health in Family Law Workgroup is focusing on parent assessments, court accessibility, and court processes.
- The Child Support Workgroup is implementing a child support problem-solving court program and preparing for the 2027 Child Support Symposium.
- The Custody Evaluator Standards and Training Workgroup conducted the Custody and Visitation-Related Assessment Training in October 2025.
- Following the publication of the *Intimate Partner Violence Screening Initial Implementation and Evaluation* report, the Family Mediation and Abuse Screening Workgroup was sunset in January 2026.
- The Guardianship and Vulnerable Adults Workgroup will host the Guardianship Summit on March 30-31, 2026.
- The recently formed Guardianship Statutory Revision Workgroup is in the early stages of conducting a comprehensive review of guardianship laws and National Probate Court Standards.

The Committee also continues to support judicial education. Its members have collaborated with the Judicial College to develop and offer courses, including *Hot Topics in Adult Guardianship, Removing Barriers to Inclusivity, Justice, & Fairness*, and *We’re All in This Together: Behavioral Health in Family Law Cases & Helping Families Heal*.

**c. Senior Judges Committee – Hon. James A. Kenney III**

Judge James A. Kenney III, Chair, along with Eliana Pangelinan, presented on the Senior Judges Committee. The Committee’s mission is to integrate senior judges as seamlessly as possible into Judiciary operations, with a particular interest in technology advancements and other changes in the way the courts do business.

In addition to covering dockets as needed, senior judges provide their expertise by serving on Judicial Council committees, subcommittees, and workgroups. They also participate in annual trainings and judicial education, including JIS security trainings and Senior Judge Technology Day.

Over the past year, the Committee has worked with the AOC to improve communication with senior judges, collaborated with the Judicial College to provide updates regarding the state prescription drug program change, and published the *Hot Topics Newsletter* for senior judges. In addition, the Committee presented the 2025 Senior Judge Award to Senior Judge Joseph M. Getty.

**6. For the Good of the Order**

No additional matters were raised, and Chief Justice Fader adjourned the meeting at 11:46 a.m.