

May 01, 2013

D.C. Chief Judges Celebrate Law Day on Twitter

Summing up courthouse policy and practices in 140 characters isn't easy, but the chief judges of Washington's local courts gave it a try this morning as part of this year's Law Day festivities.

Replying to tweets with the hashtag #AskTheCJs, Chief Judge Lee Satterfield of the D.C. Superior Court and Chief Judge Eric Washington of the D.C. Court of Appeals spent an hour collaborating on responses via Twitter. A photo posted by the court showed the two judges seated with tablets in front of a large television screen displaying the Twitter feed.

The judges fielded two questions about jury duty, tweeting that the court was making efforts to tailor the number of people summoned to meet courthouse needs. They engaged in creative abbreviating to stay within the 140-character limit.

"[T]he # of jurors needed depends on the # of cases we have that go to trial....," they wrote. "We are working to get more people to show up when summoned, so that the time betw jury summons will be lengthened."

One Twitter user hoping to pursue a legal career asked a series of questions about what advice the judges would give to new lawyers entering the field. The judges urged the questioner to look for internships, noting both judges interned for law firms when they were in law school.

"It's both what you know - the law - & who you know, so make sure you study, & attend local bar activities to meet accomplished attys," they wrote.

Another user asked Washington if alternating chief judges was important for the court; Washington is unopposed in his bid for a third term as chief judge. The judges (it wasn't clear if Washington alone crafted the reply) wrote: "Alternating for the sake of alternating does not necessarily serve the public well. CJs should stay if performing well."

Asked about the hardest decision they ever had to make, the judges demurred, writing, "Every dispute that comes before a judge is given serious consideration, so it's hard to pick just one."

The courts' Law Day celebration also included a talk on the role of African Americans in the abolitionist movement and the adoption of the Emancipation Proclamation. Hari Jones, curator of the African American Civil War Memorial Freedom Foundation and Museum, delivered remarks outside the appeals court this afternoon.



Photo by Anita Jarman. Chief Judge Lee Satterfield, bottom left, and Chief Judge Eric Washington take part in a Twitter Q&A.

Posted by Zoe Tillman on May 01, 2013 at 02:22 PM