



2024 ANNUAL REPORT

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA COURTS

OPEN TO ALL, TRUSTED BY ALL, JUSTICE FOR ALL

MESSAGE FROM **CHIEF JUDGE ANNA BLACKBURNE-RIGSBY**

This Annual Report highlights some of the Courts' accomplishments in 2024 to fulfill goals and strategies outlined in our 2023-2027 Strategic Plan. We are working to best serve all court participants through efficient and accessible court operations, advanced and secure technology, and a focus on our community.

At the Court of Appeals, we are working toward the implementation of new technologies, including a next generation case management system. In 2024, we entered a contract with a vendor for its development and have updated procedures to prepare for a new system. More broadly, the Courts' Artificial Intelligence (AI) Task Force collaborated with the National Center for State Courts to develop a roadmap for assessing the ethical and innovative use of AI. This roadmap will help support our efforts to navigate both the opportunities and challenges of an evolving technology landscape.



We are also committed to supporting the legal needs of our community. The Court of Appeals oversees the admission of new attorneys to the D.C. Bar and administered the July bar exam to a record 2,729 applicants. We have also streamlined the bar application process to decrease the average wait times for attorney certification. Meanwhile, access to justice initiatives at the Courts seek to help people navigate the court system, obtain pro bono counsel or legal assistance, understand court procedures, and connect to social services.

I am proud of our accomplishments and look forward to what we can achieve in the future as we remain devoted to our vision of Open to All, Trusted by All, Justice for All. The Courts welcome the insights and feedback from our judges, staff, and community while we work to fulfill our strategic goals, as we could not effectively serve the public without you.

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ANNA E. BLACKBURNE-RIGSBY

CHIEF JUDGE, DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA COURT OF APPEALS

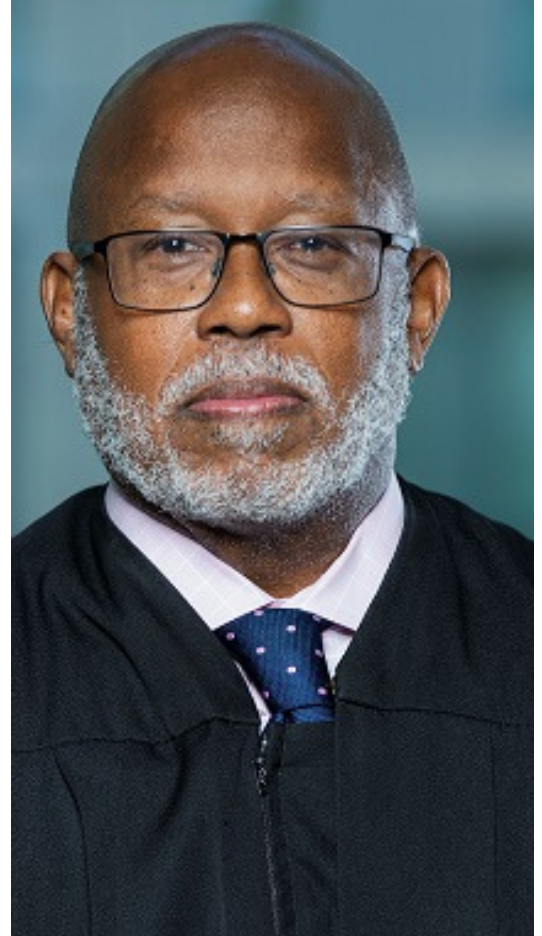
MESSAGE FROM **CHIEF JUDGE MILTON LEE**

This past year the Courts have continued a strong record of progress on a variety of initiatives to support the goals and strategies in our 2023-2027 Strategic Plan. We have worked to fulfill our vision of Open to All, Trusted by All, Justice for All by enhancing access to court participants, collaborative partnerships, and court operations so that we can serve the community fairly and efficiently.

In Superior Court, we have advanced access to justice by connecting people without attorneys to counsel through our Pro Bono Program, increasing online interactive guides for court forms, and expanding our Court Navigator Program that helped over 4,000 court participants in 2024 understand court procedures and forms, connect to hearings, and obtain court services. Supporting language access, we have worked to increase translations of documents for non-English speakers. We also began construction of a permanent space for a Justice Resource Center that will provide centralized access to social services.

Community outreach and partnerships remain a key priority for the Courts. In 2024, court staff participated in community events to educate about court services and judges visited local schools to engage our youth. We served the global community by hosting delegations from other countries to share insights about court administration. We have also enriched our community partnerships to support awareness and access to court services, including crime victims compensation, mediation, and safe shelter locations for vulnerable community members.

I look forward to what we will continue to accomplish over the next few years of this strategic planning cycle as we work to support the Courts' vision and mission. We could not accomplish any of our goals without our dedicated judges, staff, and local community – and I thank you for your tireless support.



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MILTON C. LEE, JR.

CHIEF JUDGE, DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA SUPERIOR COURT

MESSAGE FROM **HERB ROUSON, JR.**

Guided by our vision of Open to All, Trusted by All, Justice for All, the Courts have continued to implement our 2023-2027 Strategic Plan with notable accomplishments in 2024. Among the multiple initiatives to enhance our court operations, we have modernized our court facilities and technology and worked to foster and support a talented workforce.

In 2024, the Courts celebrated the new C Street Addition to the Moultrie Courthouse with a community ribbon cutting ceremony. The expanded court facilities add trial courtrooms, judges' chambers, and a renovated child care center serving the public. It has also been nationally recognized as an accessible and welcoming space by receiving the American Institute of Architects Justice Facilities Review Award for the best in justice facility design. Renovations and technology updates to other courtrooms, judges' chambers, and court facilities complement this courthouse expansion.



The Courts have also continued to invest in our judges and employees so that we cultivate a great place to work that can best serve the public. In 2024, we increased training opportunities for our staff and enhanced our efforts to acquire the best talent through community engagement. We are also focused on ensuring that our judges and staff prepare for the impact of artificial intelligence (AI). In the spring, we hosted a judicial and senior leadership conference that informed about the ethics and implications of AI. We are also working to expand AI training for judges and staff.

As the Courts work to fulfill the Strategic Plan, we remain steadfastly focused on serving the public. We will continue to discover opportunities and support efforts to deliver justice fairly and efficiently and foster a court system that is open and accessible to all.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Herb Rouson, Jr.' with a stylized flourish at the end.

HERB ROUSON, JR.

EXECUTIVE OFFICER OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA COURTS



ACCESS TO JUSTICE FOR ALL

The Courts promote access to justice for all by assisting court users navigate the court system and obtain legal services. In 2024, the Courts enhanced public access by increasing interactive resources and guides for submitting court forms, connecting people without attorneys to pro bono representation, and expanding the Court Navigator Program that links court users with court proceedings, procedures, and services. Assisting non-English speakers, the Courts also increased language translations of forms, orders, and other documents. With the aim of providing a one-stop resource for social services, development of the Justice Resource Center continued as the Courts began renovation of a permanent location.

INCREASING DOCUMENT TRANSLATION TO PROMOTE LANGUAGE ACCESS

Supporting a Strategic Plan initiative to enhance language access, the Office of Court Interpreting Services increased its translation of court documents by almost 60% from 2023 to 2024. These language translations of over 850 documents improved access by helping non-English speakers understand court orders, applications, forms, correspondence, mediation agreements, and other important court documents.

HELPING THE PUBLIC FILE COURT DOCUMENTS WITH INTERACTIVE GUIDES

The Courts help court participants submit forms through online interactive guides in partnership with ProBono.net. In 2024, this assistance was expanded to include the Application for Real Property Tax Appeal, which helps tax filers ask for relief from excessive property taxes. The Courts also updated the interactive guide for the Appeal from Income Tax Refund Denial to better assist court users seeking tax refunds.

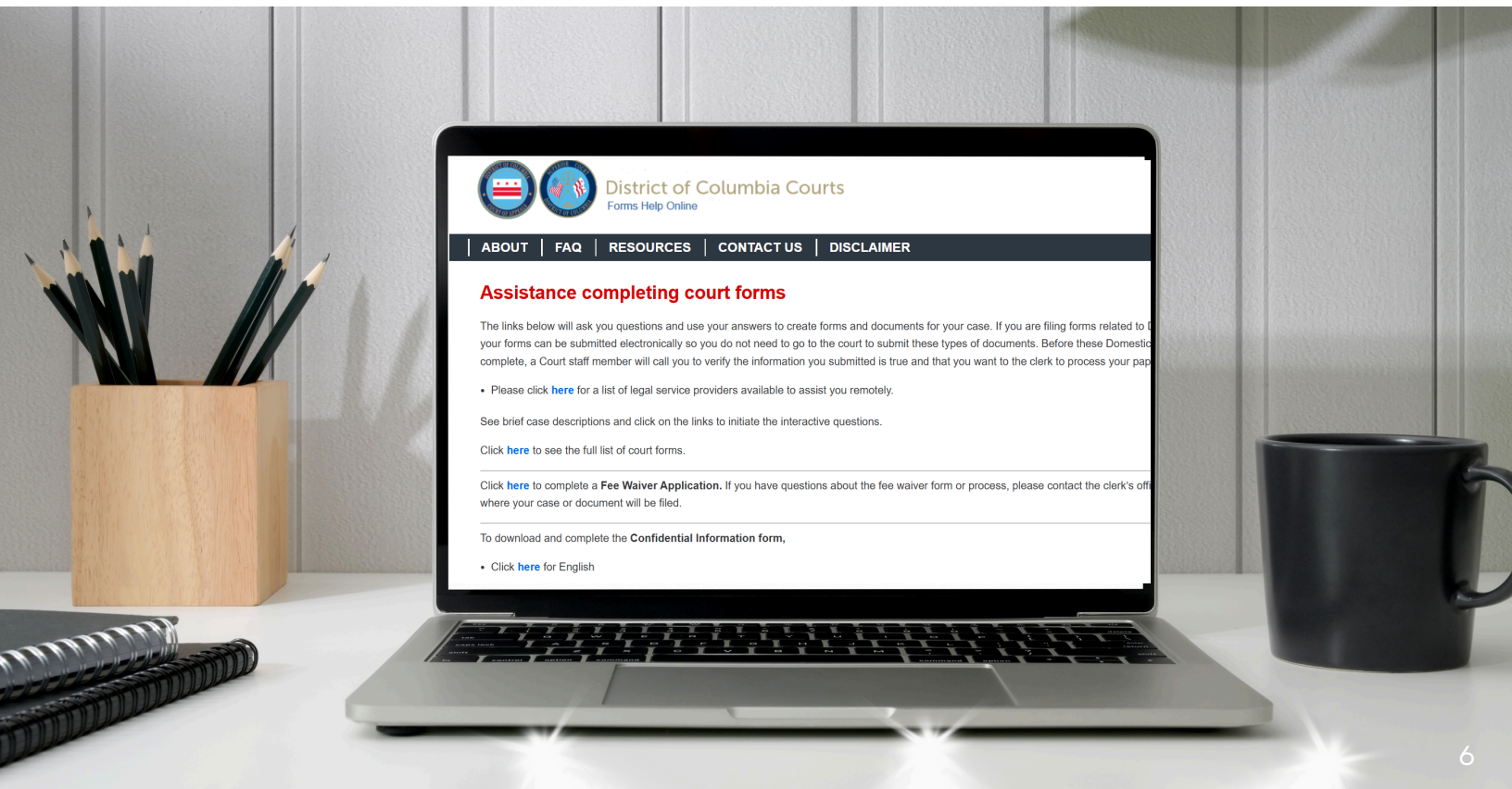


CONSTRUCTING THE JUSTICE RESOURCE CENTER

Renovation began in 2024 on a permanent space for the Justice Resource Center, which will be a one-stop resource for court users who need access to legal, social, and government services. By connecting people to resources across our community, the Center aims to best serve all who enter the Courts.

CONNECTING PEOPLE WITHOUT ATTORNEYS TO LEGAL ASSISTANCE

The Courts are working under the Strategic Plan to improve access to all litigants, including people who cannot afford an attorney. In 2024, the Pro Bono Program connected hundreds of attorneys and law students to help court participants needing legal assistance. The Program also created eight videos and a collection of user-friendly materials that inform pro bono counsel and court users about legal resources at the Courts.



ASSISTING COURT USERS THROUGH THE NAVIGATOR PROGRAM

In 2024, the Court Navigator Program helped over 2,600 court participants understand court procedures, locate forms, connect to remote hearings, and access legal services. The program currently assists people in landlord and tenant, small claims, and probate matters and plans to expand to the Court of Appeals in 2025. Navigators also helped more than 400 people seeking eviction prevention services through the Courts' new Eviction Diversion Program.

ENABLING DISABILITY ACCESS FOR COURT PARTICIPANTS AND STAFF

The Disability Access Program assists both court participants and staff with accommodations for disabilities. In 2024, the Program launched the ADA Request Submission Portal that allows court users to submit and track accommodation requests in an efficient, centralized platform. It also developed a training video on the effective use of Communication Access Real-Time Translations (CART) – a vital resource that provides text translations for deaf or hard-of-hearing court participants and jurors in court proceedings.

THE CHILD CARE CENTER SUPPORTS PUBLIC ACCESS

Free childcare services are offered to anyone with in-person business at the Courts, including jurors. The Child Care Center provides a positive, safe, and fun space for children ages 2.5 – 12 who are trained to use the bathroom. Staff work with parents to ensure children can participate in activities geared toward all ability levels and accommodate special education and disability needs. In 2024, the Child Care Center provided services to over 450 children of court users, jurors, and staff – a 44% increase from 2023.





PUBLIC TRUST AND CONFIDENCE

The Courts partner with the local community to increase awareness of and support for public services and foster trust and confidence. In 2024, the Courts connected to the community by informing about court services at local events and collaborating with organizations to enhance assistance to court participants. Connecting with the broader global community, the Courts also hosted international delegations to share insights about judicial administration.

PROMOTING AWARENESS OF COURT SERVICES

Supporting Strategic Plan initiatives, the Courts continued to promote awareness of the services we offer the public:

- The Courts partnered with a local non-profit Deaf Dawn to provide information to the deaf and hard-of-hearing community about access to court services.
- Employees participated in various community events to inform about mediation and other court services, including community presentations at American University, Adams Morgan Day, the H Street Festival, the Central American Resource Center.
- The Crime Victims Compensation Program held its first community resource fair for National Crime Victims Rights' Week by partnering with ten organizations and agencies to promote awareness of victim services. In 2024, the Program served more than 3,200 claimants and paid about \$5.9 million to victims of crime and their families in the District of Columbia.

PROVIDING SAFE SHELTER FOR COURT PARTICIPANTS

Organizations have partnered with the Courts to provide temporary safe shelter locations for vulnerable members of our community. In 2024, a platform that works with non-profits and agencies to reserve safe lodging increased the number of temporary housing locations from 3 to 10 to help more court participants quickly find a safe space.

ENHANCING MEDIATION SERVICES WITH COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

In a new partnership with Georgetown University's Conflict Transformation Lab, the Courts are providing students training and mentorship in

mediation practices. These connections will help the Courts train and obtain new mediators to help timely resolve civil cases.

ENGAGING THE GLOBAL COMMUNITY

The Courts are also committed to global engagement. In 2024, the Visitors Program hosted over 500 people and 30 delegations from countries including Tunisia, Indonesia, Ethiopia, and Japan. These visits offered judicial officers, administrators, and students insights into the Courts' initiatives and best practices for justice administration.





A GREAT PLACE TO WORK

A focus on fostering a great place to work for employees and judges ensures optimal service to the public by supporting a professional and productive workforce. In 2024, the Courts increased professional development opportunities through new or enhanced training programs and expanded efforts to hire the best talent through community outreach and partnerships. The Courts are also devoted to educating the workforce on the benefits and challenges of new technologies.

PROMOTING AWARENESS OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

The Courts are focused on the impact of Artificial Intelligence (AI) through new training opportunities. In 2024, the Joint Judicial and Senior Managers Spring Conference was titled "Navigating the AI Revolution: the Intersection of Artificial Intelligence and Judicial Integrity." This event informed judges and court leadership about AI ethics, judicial decision making implications, and strategies for upholding judicial integrity with new technology. In 2025, the Courts will expand AI training to ensure judges can assess emerging technologies related to the evaluation of evidence and cases.

EXPANDING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The Courts also expanded other professional development opportunities in 2024 and delivered more than 2,700 hours of training in workplace and people skills and over 1,400 hours in business and information technology skills through the Center for Education and Training. These hours included a series of judicial training days for courtroom staff to optimize service to the public.

ENHANCING EFFORTS TO HIRE THE BEST TALENT

Hiring and retaining the best workforce is central to effectively serving the public. In 2024, the Courts enhanced its efforts to acquire the best talent:

- Attended the first post-COVID career fair hosted by the DC Department of Human Resources and networked with potential job candidates.
- Reestablished a partnership with the DC Department of Employment Services to host youth interns at the Courts.
- Developed a QR Code that candidates can scan at community events to direct them to a list of open job positions.
- Provided training on services by the Human Resources Division Talent Acquisition Branch to new senior staff.

THE MANAGEMENT TRAINING PROGRAM SUPPORTS NEW LEADERSHIP

The Courts are committed to expanding leadership capacity by developing employees as agents of positive, strategic change. The Management Training Program offers a year-long series of training courses, assignments, and a team project to prepare staff for careers at the Courts with a vision of building a national model for court leadership.



EFFECTIVE COURT ADMINISTRATION

The Courts regularly assess operations to create an efficient, modern, and safe space for all court users. In 2024, the Courts integrated new technologies that have enhanced public access and modernized facilities. Through an Artificial Intelligence Task Force, the Courts have also worked to create a roadmap that will guide the ethical and innovative use of artificial intelligence and other emerging technologies.

DEVELOPING A NEXT GENERATION COURT OF APPEALS CASE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

Under the Strategic Plan, the Court of Appeals is working to implement a new, modern, and efficient case management system that will better serve court staff and users. In 2024, the Courts entered a contract with a vendor for the development of the new system after seeking broad input from staff, judges, court administrators, and information technology specialists. To prepare for a new system, the Court of Appeals also updated standard operating procedures and identified necessary system reporting requirements.



SUPPORTING THE ADMISSION OF NEW ATTORNEYS

The admission of new, qualified attorneys is critical to meeting the legal needs of our community. The Court of Appeals oversees the admission of new attorneys to the District of Columbia Bar. In 2024,

an enhanced application process has decreased the average time from application to certification by three weeks for attorneys seeking admission through transfer of Uniform Bar Exam scores and by over two weeks for attorneys seeking admission based on good standing in other jurisdictions. The Court of Appeals also administered the July bar exam to a record 2,729 applicants in the District of Columbia.

BUILDING A ROADMAP FOR TECHNOLOGY INNOVATION

Collaborating with the National Center for State Courts, the Artificial Intelligence (AI) Task force composed of court judges and employees worked to develop a roadmap that will define the priorities and guidelines for the ethical and innovative use of AI. The roadmap sought input from stakeholders across the Courts through focus groups and interviews and will be a foundation for assessing both the concerns and benefits of AI technology.

IMPROVING PUBLIC ACCESS WITH NEW CHECK-IN PROCEDURES

New check-in procedures at the Courts have streamlined public access to court services. New procedures for 2024 include:

- An electronic check-in application at the Northeast BARJ Drop-In Center offers juveniles and contractors easier and quicker access to services and proceedings with the Juvenile Behavioral Diversion Program. A dashboard was also developed that shows real-time check-in data and trends and automates end-of-day email notifications to follow-up with people who have not signed out. Efforts are underway to expand the system across all BARJ Drop-In Centers.
- A check-in process for proceedings in the Domestic Violence Division has improved wait times for court participants who are seeking settlement or judicial resolution of their cases in a timely manner.

MODERNIZING COURTS FACILITIES AND TECHNOLOGY FOR THE PUBLIC

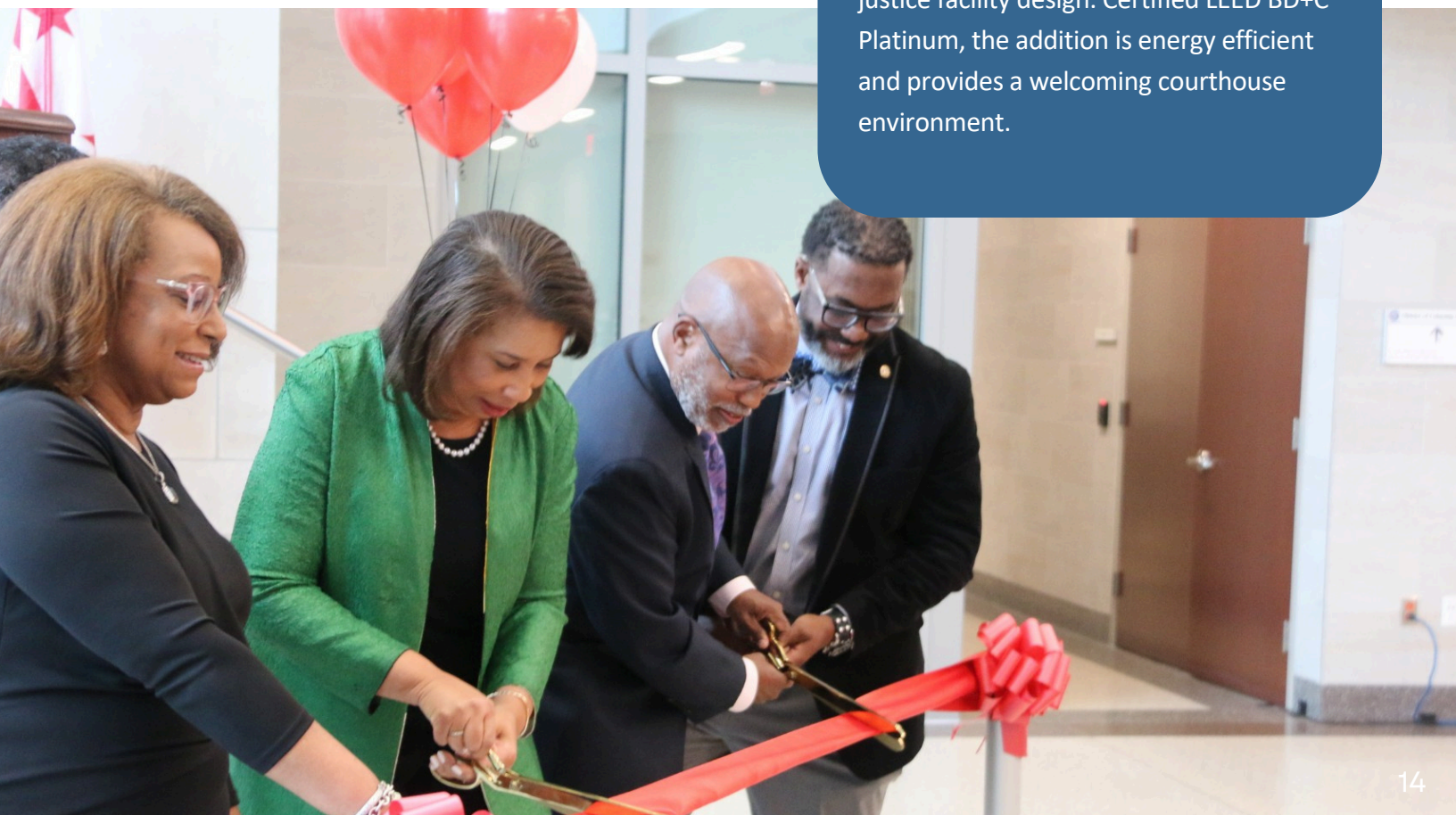
The Courts have worked to improve and maintain infrastructure and technology so that we have optimal facilities to serve the public:

- Courtroom operations have been enhanced with new laptops and document cameras for jury trials, repairs to monitors used for evidence, and a modern redesign of trial courtrooms. These updates also included training on courtroom operations and evidence presentation.
- The Courts have updated signage throughout the Judiciary Square building campus to improve directions for court visitors.
- Customer waiting rooms for the Domestic Violence Division have been redesigned with new artwork, flooring, and space to create a more welcoming and safer environment for the public.
- Magistrate Judges' chambers have been renovated with new technology and more space to accommodate future staffing.

THE AWARD WINNING C STREET ADDITION

The Courts celebrated the new C Street Addition to the Moultrie Courthouse with a ribbon-cutting ceremony in September joined by Congresswoman Eleanor Holmes Norton, Court of Appeals Chief Judge Anna Blackburne-Rigsby, Superior Court Chief Judge Milton C. Lee, Jr., Executive Officer Herb Rouson Jr., and Deputy Executive Officer Dana Friend. The courthouse expansion renovated about 175,000 square feet and offers 6 new trial courtrooms with detainee holding areas, 18 new associate judges' chambers, and a child care center.

Nationally recognized as an accessible, transparent, and contemporary space, the C Street Addition received the American Institute of Architects Justice Facilities Review Award that identifies the best in justice facility design. Certified LEED BD+C Platinum, the addition is energy efficient and provides a welcoming courthouse environment.





FAIR AND TIMELY CASE RESOLUTION

The Courts promote justice by advancing the fair and timely resolution of cases. In 2024, mediation services and judicial calendars were expanded to help amicably resolve legal matters and reduce wait times for parties to cases. The Courts also reviewed and updated procedures to ensure legal compliance and fair and efficient case processing.

EXPANDING MEDIATION SERVICES FOR QUICKER CASE RESOLUTION

Mediation is central to helping court participants efficiently and amicably resolve cases. In 2024, the Courts expanded mediation services for the public:

- Addressing the need for more mediations in landlord and tenant matters, the Courts increased mediation offerings by 50% from 2023 to over 2,100 cases mediated in 2024.
- 26 new mediators were trained to handle civil and small claims cases. In 2024, the number of civil mediations increased by 27% to over 900 and small claims mediations increased by 18% to around 700. The settlement rate also increased by almost 10% compared to 2023.
- 12 new domestic relations mediators were trained to handle complex cases involving property division. The mediation settlement rate in domestic relations cases increased by 56% in 2024.
- The Courts hosted trainings for current and new mediators to enhance mediation in the Addressing Truancy Through Engagement and Negotiation Dialogue (ATTEND) program that handles truancy issues for youth in the District of Columbia. In 2024, the number of mediations increased by 81% and the settlement rate increased by 76%.

SERVING COURT PARTICIPANTS WITH NEW JUDICIAL CALENDARS

Improving the case processing and timely resolution of cases, judicial calendars were reassigned for juvenile and domestic relations matters to reduce wait times for hearings.

UPDATING PROCEDURES TO ENSURE LEGAL COMPLIANCE

The Courts regularly assess and respond to legal changes to ensure the fair and timely resolution of cases:

- In response to the Secure DC Omnibus Amendment Act of 2024, a new template was created for Pretrial Release Orders in criminal cases to ensure compliance with the new statute and to speed up judicial orders.
- Under the Strengthening Traffic Enforcement, Education, and Responsibility (STEER) Amendment Act (D.C. Law L25-0161), the Courts also created a new template License Revocation Order to safeguard the public from people whose driver licenses should be revoked due to serious traffic violations. The new template ensures compliance with the statute and the quick issuance of orders.

