



EVERYTHING YOU WANTED TO KNOW ABOUT THE FIRST AND NINTH JUDICIAL DISTRICT COURT BAR ASSOCIATIONS BUT WERE AFRAID TO ASK

BY DARCY HOUGHTON, ESQ. & JENNIFER YTURBIDE, ESQ

The First and Ninth Judicial Districts operate in those counties that lie due south of Washoe County. The First Judicial District is comprised of Carson City and Storey counties. The Ninth Judicial District includes Douglas County, comprising portions of Lake Tahoe and Carson Valley. Both judicial districts cover a broad geographical area encompassing over 1,000 square miles with a combined population of approximately 100,000. With this broad geography, each district operates its own local bar association. The First Judicial District Bar Association has approximately 131 members and regularly meets in Carson City. The Ninth Judicial District Bar Association has approximately 45 members and regularly meets in Minden, Gardnerville and Lake Tahoe.

While these judicial districts are small in population, their demographics are rather diverse. Both districts serve as bedroom communities to other legal communities and both districts have a large proportion of attorneys working for state and local government – including the Nevada Supreme Court, the Legislative Counsel Bureau, the Attorney General’s office, the State Public Defender’s office and the District Attorney’s offices. In addition to state legal matters, attorneys in these judicial districts deal with typical corporate, family, estate and criminal matters as well as bankruptcy, land and water issues, TRPA and BLM issues, lobbying and gaming. In addition to a broad spectrum of legal matters, many interests arise from these communities, including businesses ranging from small to Fortune 500 and family farms of various sizes.

Until the last few years, both bar associations were not very active, holding just a few meetings each year with a local District Court judge speaking at one of the meetings. Over the last four years, both associations have been re-energized and have become much more active within their communities. With new leadership, both organizations now hold seven to nine luncheon meetings each year and are bringing low-cost continuing education to the local attorneys. While the initial round of speakers was easy to find, as elections were upcoming and many attorneys had legal issues they wanted to discuss, the associations are now soliciting speakers who are well-versed in matters associated with local practice. Upcoming speakers will include Chief Justice Hardesty and Bar Counsel Rob Bare; topics will range from a legislative session overview to an update on handling foreclosures in the current economy.

In addition to becoming more active on the continuing education front, in 2008, the bar associations joined forces to offer the first-ever Sierra Region Judicial Survey.¹ The survey, similar to the Washoe County Bar Association’s survey, was offered to every lawyer residing within, or listing an office within, the geography of the First, Third and Ninth Judicial Districts. The survey also covered all of the judges within those same districts. The surveys were tallied and feedback was provided to each of the District Court judges and each of the Justice Court judges who had at least 10 survey responses. Additionally, summary results were released to local news organizations. The committee overseeing the survey received positive feedback from

several judges indicating that they appreciated the candid feedback, as they rarely otherwise received it. The committee chose to initiate this survey at a time when few judges were up for re-election and hope that it will be a valuable tool for the judges, as well as for the local community, in understanding how their local judiciary is perceived by members of the local bar.

The more senior attorneys in these associations have an immense amount of wisdom and history that is often divulged at social gatherings. They can vividly remind us that it was not so long ago that Nevada really was “the wild west.” However, for the younger practitioners, those social gatherings add a dimension to the practice of law that is not obvious in daily practice.

The First and Ninth Judicial District bar associations understand that, while the local courts are not yet accepting electronic filing, they will in the future. As we realize not all attorneys have access to high-speed Internet, we believe that it is critical that the local attorneys stay current in office management, be updated to current electronic standards and also receive the necessary continuing education to remain current in their chosen practice areas. It is the goal of the leadership of these bar associations to bring a varied calendar of speakers to their meetings in order to ease this undertaking for the member attorneys. We hope to bring each attorney in the respective districts together at least a few times each year, to not only improve and grow their practices, but also to maintain the collegiality that exists in a smaller judicial district. **NL**

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¹ The Sierra Region is a judicial region recognized by the Nevada Supreme Court and encompassing the First, Third and Ninth Judicial Districts.