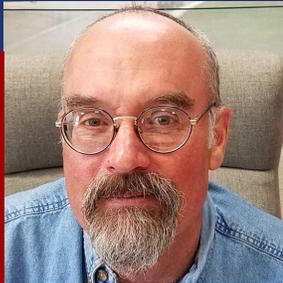


SEVENTH JUDICIAL DISTRICT COURT

RURAL COURT COLUMN

BY JUDGE STEVE L. DOBRESCU AND JUDGE GARY D. FAIRMAN



Judge Steve L. Dobrescu



Judge Gary D. Fairman

WHITE PINE COUNTY HEARS CASES INVOLVING INMATES AT ELY STATE PRISON

The Seventh Judicial District includes White Pine, Eureka and Lincoln counties, and it is the largest judicial district in Nevada at 23,714 square miles. The court sits at courthouses in the county seats of Eureka, built in 1876; Ely, built in 1906; and Pioche, built in 1938. The stately courthouses are uniquely constructed in the architecture of the periods. Judges Steve L. Dobrescu and Gary D. Fairman preside over the two departments in the district.

Both judges began their respective careers by serving as law clerks to the Honorable Merlyn H. Hoyt. Fairman served as a law clerk in 1978, and Dobrescu served in that role in 1986. The high level of integrity and professionalism established by Hoyt in the 1970s has been continued to the present. Attorneys from Reno, Elko and Las Vegas regularly practice in the district and often comment favorably on their experience.

Law and motion days for each county are fixed by local rule, with trials and evidentiary hearings scheduled during the remainder of each week. An active drug court, presided over by both judges, was established in White Pine County in 2005 and in Lincoln County in 2013. Many graduates have

regained control of their behaviors with positive life changes through this specialty court treatment program.

In addition to the general docket, the district court in White Pine County hears all habeas corpus, civil rights, major civil litigation, gross misdemeanor and felony cases involving inmates at Ely State Prison (ESP), Nevada's only maximum security prison, housing Nevada's most violent inmates. Both departments' dockets are continually kept busy with inmate cases. All inmate criminal cases require them to be transported from ESP to the courthouse for hearings and trials. ESP security teams must often provide six or more personnel armed with automatic rifles and shotguns to accompany inmates to court, and they provide both inside and exterior security at the courthouse, which otherwise has virtually no security in place for the court and other county offices housed in the building.

A U.S. Marshall's report in 2007 concluded that the current courthouse should not be used for court purposes due to the antiquated building and lack of security. During the past 15 years, White Pine County has periodically engaged architects to design a new courthouse concurrent with the modification and expansion of the county's adjacent sheriff's office and jail facility. Previous efforts at financing the project have not been successful, but the county currently has funds to build most of the combined project.

At the time of the writing of this article, White Pine County has a bill at the legislature to provide \$10 million in supplemental funding to complete the project. The proposed legislation has been endorsed by the Nevada District Judges Association. The outreach to the legislature is supported by ESP's use of the courthouse involving inmate criminal cases, 75 percent of which are serving prison

terms arising from cases in Clark County. It is projected that construction will begin on the courthouse this summer. **NL**

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JUDGE STEVE L. DOBRESCU attended grade school and high school in Ely. He graduated from the University of Nevada-Reno before attending the McGeorge School of Law, where he graduated with distinction in 1986. He has served as a deputy district attorney in White Pine County from 1987-2001 until his appointment as a judge in the Seventh Judicial District. He also had a private practice from 1989-01, and has served as a deputy district attorney in Lincoln and Eureka counties.

JUDGE GARY D. FAIRMAN is a native Nevadan, having lived in Ely with his family for 41 years. He graduated from Reno High School, the University of Kentucky and California Western School of Law. He practiced law for 33 years. He was appointed to the bench by Gov. Brian Sandoval in 2013 and ran unopposed when elected to the position in 2014.