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The saga of my membership in the Conference of State Court Administrators (COSCA) began August 1, 1988. By chance, the annual meeting of CCJ/COSCA was taking place that same week, so I was unable to attend. The following December, because my wife and I were days away from the due date of our first child, I also missed the mid-year COSCA meeting. It was, therefore, a full year after my appointment as state court administrator before I had my first contact with the organization. During that first year I had no communication from any other COSCA members or from anyone at the National Center for State Courts (NCSC). During the following year my early attempts to engage with COSCA or the NCSC were not very successful. It appeared to me that there were a few members who were close personal and professional friends, who were well-connected to the Center, and who ran the organization. I found that “breaking in” to the organization and finding ways to participate were difficult.

How things have changed! Today some of my closest and most valued friendships are centered in COSCA. My now-grown children maintain acquaintances from across the country which they forged through their participation in the summer meetings. My professional reliance upon the Center, its talented employees, and my COSCA colleagues is constant.

The advent of new technologies has made communication easier than it used to be and, hopefully, COSCA has developed some new programs which are more successful at reaching out to new members. Still, I suspect that it can seem a little overwhelming to arrive at a national meeting for the first time and navigate the sometimes-primitive array of rules, policies and traditions.

This Guide is offered as a small but sincere attempt to help my new colleagues as they take on the many challenges of a new role and to try to point out the many ways to take advantage of participation in the COSCA community. Welcome!

J. D. G.
Membership
You are automatically a member of COSCA upon your appointment as the State Court Administrator – there is no application, no membership fee, and no vote for approval! There are only fifty-six of us – so your active participation is both valued and needed.

Meetings
There are two meetings of the membership each year. The Annual Meeting is coordinated jointly with the meeting of the Conference of Chief Justices (CCJ). It takes place in late July or early August at various locations across the United States. Location and dates are usually set two to three years in advance. The host state works with the NCSC and a joint planning committee of CCJ and COSCA to plan educational sessions which are always excellent. CCJ and COSCA almost always meet together for all sessions. The schedule includes time for each of the Conferences’ committees and Board of Directors to meet. There is usually an impressive social program with planned activities which allow participants to see and experience the history and culture of the meeting site. A separate program for spouses and children is also available. As a result, many members bring along their families for the Annual Meeting. There is a registration fee for the meeting which is collected by the NCSC which typically covers the cost of most official activities and provided meals. There is a separate, very reasonable registration fee for spouses, guests and children. Member states are responsible for the payment of their own travel, lodging, and related expenses.

The Mid-Year Meeting is held in December each year (most often the first week) and is usually in a location with a warmer climate. You will likely hear reference to the unofficial COSCA “palm tree” rule which limits the December meeting to those locations which can produce a palm tree… CCJ and COSCA meet separately for this meeting (the CCJ meeting is in January) so it tends to be much smaller and more informal than the Annual Meeting. The educational sessions more often include more core court administration topics and COSCA members are often included in the presentations. There is also time scheduled for meetings of committees and the Board of Directors. There are no set social activities or programs for spouses or children. There is a small registration fee collected by the NCSC and member states must pay their own travel, lodging, and related expenses.

During the Annual Meeting and the Mid-Year Meeting the official Business Meeting of the membership takes place. The meeting room is set with table placards and a seat for each state and territory represented in the Conference. Each member is authorized to speak and vote on all issues. The agenda is usually long and includes reports and recommendations from committees, proposed resolutions, and other action items. The meeting is chaired by the COSCA President. It is primarily during these two meetings each year that the official business of the Conference is conducted and official action is taken. Members who are unable to attend a meeting may designate in writing a substitute to attend and vote in place of the member. Voting by proxy is not authorized.

While it may seem trivial to mention, you should note that at both the Annual and Mid-Year meetings a Hospitality Suite is provided by the local hosts at the completion of each day’s official events. This setting provides an excellent opportunity for you to visit and converse informally with COSCA and CCJ colleagues, NCSC staff, and other guests of the Conference. It is often just as educational as the education program! It is a great venue for new members to create connections with other members of COSCA.

Committees
Much of the substantive work of COSCA is accomplished through the activities of its committees. Because we are a small organization with few members, there is a very real need for active participation by as many members as are willing and able to serve. Work on one or more committees is, in my view, the
best way to become engaged in the work of COSCA, to have an opportunity to meet and work with other members, and to share knowledge, skills and abilities and provide leadership on a wide array of issues.

**How to Become a Committee Member.** For almost all committees, the membership changes annually with the appointments prepared prior to the Annual Meeting and recommended by the COSCA President-Elect. The President-Elect’s proposals are ratified by the Board of Directors during the Annual Meeting, take effect at the end of the meeting, and expire at the end of the following year’s Annual Meeting. In order to assist the President-Elect with the appointment decisions, written communication is sent to all COSCA members in the spring each year asking members to submit their preferences for committee service. The President-Elect uses this information to guide his or her appointments. The President-Elect also designates the Chair of each committee. Members should feel free to contact the President-Elect and convey additional information about their preferences and willingness to serve. Because the COSCA Bylaws grant broad authority to the President-Elect in making committee appointments, there could theoretically be great change in committee memberships from year to year. In practice, there is generally much stability, with a recognition that most committee work extends beyond the time limits of a single term of office.

**Committee Types.** According to the COSCA Bylaws, we have “standing committees,” “other committees” and “joint committees.” Both “standing” and “other” committees are made up of COSCA members only. Most are organized around a legal or court management issue, although there are a few which are focused on the inner workings of COSCA, such as Nominating, Service to New Members, and Education. “Joint Committees” have an equal number of members appointed from both COSCA and CCJ and are co-chaired by one member of each Conference. The President-Elects of COSCA and CCJ select the members to represent their Conference.

**Committee Meetings.** Time for meetings of all committees is scheduled at the Annual and Mid-Year meetings of COSCA and CCJ. Because the Annual Meeting is the only opportunity for both Conferences to be together, this is the only time face-to-face meetings of all members of a Joint Committee can occur. Meetings of Joint Committees are often scheduled during the Mid-Year meetings of CCJ and COSCA, but only include that Conference’s representatives. However, the other Conference’s members made attend telephonically. Any action taken during the Mid-Year meeting of Joint Committees is ratified by action of the full committee during the Annual Meeting or in interim telephone conference calls.

Committee meetings also take place from time to time via telephone conference call. These calls are usually arranged and facilitated by NCSC staff.

All COSCA committee meetings are open, allowing any Conference members to attend. Especially for newer members, taking the time to sit in on several committees provides an excellent opportunity to observe firsthand the topics and activities addressed by the various committees. Such attendance provides great information about current issues in the courts and also helps in deciding the best place to focus one’s COSCA participation in the future.

Each COSCA committee is staffed by one or more members of the NCSC staff. The names of designated staff are shown on the official list of CCJ and COSCA Committees. These staff members are great sources of information about the work of the committees they staff and would be happy to answer any questions you might have about their committees.
Officers and Board of Directors

The COSCA leadership structure consists of four officers (President, President-Elect, Vice-President, and Past President) and six at-large directors who serve for a three-year term. All positions are elected by the membership at the Annual Meeting, based upon a recommendation from the Nominating Committee. Each year there is an opening in at least two of the six Board of Director’s positions and the Vice-President’s position. (The Bylaws provide that once elected, the Vice President automatically becomes the President-Elect the next year and then serves as President the following year.) Any COSCA member is eligible for election to the Board. A minimum of one year’s service on the Board is required to be considered as Vice-President.

Each fall the Nominating Committee will seek nominations from all members for service on the Board or as Vice-President. You are welcome to nominate yourself and/or a colleague. The committee is charged with ensuring that we have racial, gender and geographical balance among the Board and officers. (I have both chaired and served on the Nominating Committee for many years and can report that while seniority also plays a part, it is not determinative. The committee members usually look for members who have expressed an interest and willingness to serve and who have also demonstrated that interest by their past service and leadership with COSCA committees or other work within COSCA.)

The Nominating Committee meets at the Mid-Year meeting and votes on a slate of officers which will be presented for election at the following Annual Meeting. Members who are elected at the Annual Meeting begin their service immediately upon the close of the meeting.

Service on the Board of Directors usually requires two additional meetings per year in addition to the Mid-Year and Annual Meeting, as well as one or more telephone conference calls. Expenses for attendance and participation in these additional meetings are paid by the NCSC.

The History of COSCA

COSCA members can take pride in the fact that we share a connection with an organization that was at the beginning and the very center of the development of the profession of court administration in the United States. Some of that history is captured in a publication which was produced with the assistance of COSCA and which is worth reviewing at some point. Theodore J. Fetter, a former COSCA member, is the author of A History of the Conference of State Court Administrators, 1955 – 2005. It can be accessed via the COSCA website.

NATIONAL CENTER OF STATE COURTS

Organization and Structure

The NCSC, established in 1971, was founded as the central resource for the nation’s state courts. While the Center has a relationship with and provides resources to many court-related organizations and conferences, it has a special and unique relationship with COSCA and CCJ.

Pursuant to the NCSC Bylaws and Articles of Incorporation, the Center is guided by the “Council of State Court Representatives,” which consists of the members of CCJ and COSCA. The annual meeting of the Council is actually the Annual Meeting of CCJ and COSCA. While there are some general tasks given to the Council, its main task is to select the Center’s Board of Directors. As a member of COSCA, and therefore a member of the Council, you will receive a ballot each year on which to cast your vote for members of the NCSC Board. Nominations are made by the NCSC Board’s Governance and Nominations Committee. In addition to at-large members, there are four CCJ members and four COSCA members who are automatically members of the NCSC Board. The current President of CCJ serves as Chair of the NCSC Board and the current President of COSCA serves as Vice-Chair. (The four COSCA members who serve on the NCSC Board are the COSCA President, President-Elect, Vice President and Past President).

What this means is that, in a very real sense, the Center “belongs” to CCJ and COSCA. It is a
tremendous resource which we should support and of which we should take advantage. If you ever have questions about or issues with the Center you should contact your COSCA representative on the NCSC Board. My own experience over many years is that the Center’s leadership and its staff are extremely interested in receiving any concerns you may have and are very open and responsive to such inquiries.

The NCSC Board meets three times each year, including just before or after the CCJ/COSCA Annual Meeting. Attendance and participation in meetings of the NCSC Board is funded by the NCSC.

**Funding of the NCSC**

Resources to support the NCSC are derived from a combination of state assessments, payments for domestic and international research and consulting services, education and conference fees and private development.

The most stable source of NCSC revenue comes from the State Assessments which each COSCA member works to secure from his or her state. The amount of each state’s assessment is based upon a formula which is adopted by the NCSC Board with much input from CCJ and COSCA. The formula combines a base amount with a population component in order to maintain parity among the states. You should know that your state receives a similar request for payment for participation in the National Conference of State Legislators and the National Governors Association. Historically, the vast majority of states pay the full assessment every year. From time to time, due to fiscal crisis or special circumstances, a state is unable to pay all of the assessment. NCSC staff and members of the COSCA Board are able to assist COSCA members to provide information and support which might prove helpful at the local level to support the payment of the state assessments.

Beginning in 2013 a separate and additional formula-based assessment was approved by CCJ and COSCA to create the funding necessary to support the ongoing costs associated with the certification and testing of foreign language court interpreters. This formula also uses a base amount and an additional amount based upon the number of Limited English Proficient persons in the state.

Thus, you will receive from the NCSC two invoices each year – one for the general state assessments which will be labeled as the “NCSC Membership Charge” and a second for the foreign language interpreter services which will be labeled as the “State Language Access Assessment”. The invoices are usually mailed in October and show a due date of January 31. There is no fee for late payment.

**Executive Office**

The President of the NCSC is chosen by and serves at the pleasure of the NCSC Board of Directors. I have had the pleasure of serving as a COSCA member during the terms of four NCSC Presidents. From my perspective, each brought strengths and weaknesses to the job but all were and are totally dedicated to providing effective leadership and support for the nation’s State Courts. Two of the Presidents, Ed McConnell and our current President, Mary McQueen, were members of COSCA before assuming their positions. Mary served as the state court administrator in Washington and was President of COSCA in 1995-96. She has an insider’s view of the variety and difficulty of issues faced by COSCA members and has worked to align the resources and expertise of the NCSC better with the needs of state courts and state court administrative offices. My own experience is that NCSC Presidents are always willing to receive and quick to return the phone calls and contacts from COSCA members – therefore, you should not hesitate to make the call if you have questions, needs or concerns. The President is almost always in attendance at the Annual and Mid-Year meetings and provides a report on NCSC activities during the COSCA Business Meetings.

Also housed in the Executive Office is the Executive Vice-President and General Counsel, a position now filled by Rob Baldwin. Rob is a former COSCA President and long-time state court administrator in Virginia. Among other duties he works...
directly with the NCSC Board of Directors and has contact with all of the NCSC staff and constituent organizations – so he has the “broad” view and is a good contact for COSCA members.

ICM Institute for Court Management

Institute for Court Management

ICM is the education wing of the NCSC. Currently directed by John Meeks, the Division is responsible for providing national courses for court administration which are offered both in traditional training settings across the country as well as on-line. The Division also manages the certification programs available to those who participate in the courses, leading to recognition as a Certified Court Manager, Certified Court Executive, or an ICM Fellow.

Many COSCA members provide opportunities for members of their staff to participate in these programs. It is also possible to contract with the Center to bring a course to your state to make it more easily available to employees. ICM is also a great resource and source of information if you are looking for a speaker for an education program being offered in your state.

External Affairs

This Division of the NCSC is currently led by Jesse Rutledge and includes Knowledge and Information Services, Association Services, Communications and Development. Their work includes all communications and marketing efforts for the Center, private development efforts, the planning for major conferences sponsored by the NCSC, and constituency support services to all of the Center’s professional associations, including CCJ and COSCA.

The Knowledge and Information Services Division responds to thousands of requests for information and research each year and has access to the largest collection of court administrative resources in the world. COSCA members can request those services – without cost – at any time. When COSCA members need information from their colleagues about a particular topic, the KIS staff will assist in framing the questions, developing the survey, sending it out to all COSCA members, and receiving and compiling the responses. It is a great service; but to work well, it requires that each of us use discretion in the type and frequency of our requests so as not to overwhelm our colleagues. Secondly, it requires that we respond when information is sought so that the responses are as complete and comprehensive as possible. You should also know that all of the information compiled is archived. KIS is an excellent starting point when you are looking for information about an issue which is new for you or for your state – it is very likely that someone else has already faced the issue and information may have already been compiled.

The Division also maintains and operates the library and database of electronic materials. Whenever your office or a related organization in your state publishes a special report or publication on a court-related topic, please remember to send a copy to KIS so that it can be placed in the NCSC library and shared through the electronic database.

The Association Services staff provides assistance to all of the judge and court-related professional associations for which the NCSC extends constituency services, including CCJ and COSCA. For a new COSCA member, one person who will be an essential contact is the designated NCSC staff assistant for COSCA. Presently (and for many years in the past) that role is filled by Shelley Rockwell. She staffs, arranges and attends all meetings of COSCA and the COSCA Board of Directors and maintains all of the information at the NCSC relating to COSCA and its members. As such, she is a key contact and is always happy to take your call and help you get to the right person. Also, it may be helpful to know that a similar NCSC position exists for the Conference of Chief Justices and is filled by Brenda Williams. She can help you with CCJ issues and will be a good reference for you to give to your Chief if he/she needs assistance from the Center.

About 2% of the NCSC’s revenues come from private contributions which are solicited and managed by the Development Office. There is an active Lawyers Committee which meets annually and includes private attorneys and firms from across the country and a General Counsel Committee made
up of in-house counsel from some of the country’s largest corporations. If you have attorneys from your state with a special interest in the support of state courts and court-related issues, you should recommend their participation in these committees.

COSCA members should also be aware of the Friends of the Court program. This allows individuals to make a tax-deductible contribution to the work of the NCSC. While my personal contributions to the Friends of the Court are very small, I believe that it is important for members of COSCA to express personal support for the national organization which is central to the work we do. You will never be subjected to a “pitch” for a contribution; in fact, I do not believe I have ever heard it discussed at a meeting. My thought, however, is that a contribution is a great way for COSCA and our members to demonstrate our leadership in supporting the Center, its staff and its programs.

**Government Relations Office**

Many issues and activities addressed by Congress and various federal agencies have an impact on state courts. This relationship between state courts and the federal government is managed by the NCSC Government Relations Office. The office is located in the Center House, on property owned by the NCSC and located in Washington, D.C., just across from the U.S. Supreme Court. The current Director is Kay Farley. Her duties include taking the federal legislative priorities and policy initiatives which are adopted annually by CCJ and COSCA (each COSCA member is asked to vote and rank priorities) and provide leadership to implement them through work in Congress and a host of federal agencies. She and her small staff work with the Joint CCJ/COSCA Government Relations Committee to coordinate that work.

From time to time, you or your Chief may be asked to contact a member of your congressional delegation to support these efforts. The office is a great resource and a good place to start when you have issues involving federal legislation or agencies affecting your court system. They regularly work with members of Congress and congressional staff and can assist in setting up meetings on your behalf. There is also limited meeting space at the Center House which you can utilize when needed as well as a bedroom suite that can be reserved and used by COSCA members for trips to D.C. You will receive regular written reports from the office with updates on all of the activities and issues of interest to the judiciary. The office also tracks and shares information about potential federal grants and other funding which is available for state courts.

**Court Consulting Services**

The NCSC Consulting Division is located in Denver, Colorado and is currently directed by Dan Hall. The main responsibility of Dan and his staff is to provide contracted consulting services and technical assistance to state courts. The Division employs some very capable and experienced professionals who are available for contract work on a short- or long-term basis. I suggest that if you have a special project, or issues which may be new for your state or may be too big for your staff to handle, you should contact Dan and inquire about possible NCSC assistance. Where no in-house NCSC expertise is available, independent contractors are brought in to provide services. Even if you are unsure about the availability of funding or whether contract services would be helpful, it is a good idea to give the Division a call to solicit advice and/or request a bid on the project. My experience is that Division professionals are always willing and able to provide sound advice whether or not you end up contracting with them for services.

In 2014 the NCSC acquired the Judicial Ethics Center at the time of the dissolution of the American Judicature Society. Research, publications, and technical assistance in all areas related to the rules and opinions about judicial ethics are available through the Center.

The NCSC also budgets technical assistance funds for states which are distributed by this Division. I have made use of such assistance to bring in NCSC
staff to speak at a program, to get limited expert advice about a project, or to offset some of the cost of a paid consulting project. (I will admit that I was a member of COSCA for several years before I was aware that these resources were available).

Research Division

This Division is currently under the leadership of Dr. Tom Clarke. The development and provision of cutting-edge research into all areas of court administration and practice was a central part of the initial core mission of the NCSC. A quick review of the seminal literature on court administration published in books, treatises and academic journals will demonstrate the profound impact which past and current NCSC researches have had and continue to have on the field. Under the Center’s roof is found the largest collection of academically trained researchers dedicated to the study and improvement of state court systems of any institution in the country. Sometimes that research is conducted by the Division alone; at other times it is conducted in conjunction with other research or academic institutions.

Most of the employees who work within the research division are required to generate funding to support their work; most often this is accomplished through the submission of research proposals to organizations (both private and governmental) offering funded research. To some extent, therefore, the research agenda is driven by those who are funding the research. Members of CCJ and COSCA are asked, from time to time, to provide input on areas of greatest need and issues of most importance to state courts. These findings are used by the research staff as funding proposals are developed.

The products and findings of the research staff also find their way back into the educational programs sponsored by ICM or of CCJ and COSCA. Members of the research staff are often used by the Court Consulting Division to provide direct services in the field providing both research and consulting services to state and local courts.

What is the practical use of any of this information to a new COSCA member? I will mention three items which have worked for me. First, I suggest you make the Center your first stop for information. If you have a problem which arises which is new for your state or court system, check first with the Knowledge and Information Services Division of the Center (KIS) – it is very possible, even likely, that the issue is not a new one and that employees within the Research Division have studied the problem and published their findings and recommendations, all of which will be available to you through KIS. Second, if it is truly a new and cutting-edge issue, it may well be that NCSC researchers are interested in working with you and using your state as one of the locations in which to conduct field research to study the problem. If your state has access to funding, you may want to consider hiring the Center to carry out the research directly for you. Third, if you are offering educational programs for judges and court staff, the Research Division is a great location to make use of some of the best presenters and subject matter experts in the country.

Technology Division

Dr. Clarke also serves as the Director of the Technology Division. This Division can be somewhat removed from COSCA’s radar and from your work in directing state court operations, making it somewhat less visible to most COSCA members. Staff members have represented the courts in the formulation of national technical standards to improve the functioning of court case management, document management, e-filing, and data transfer systems. Much of this work is done in close consultation with the COSCA Statistics and Joint Technology Committees. COSCA members can also call on members of the Technology Division staff for consultation and advice about the process for procurement, evaluation, and operation of court-related software and for court-based technologies of all types. Members of the Technology staff may also be used by the Consulting Division when the NCSC is contracted by a state to provide technology-related services.

International Programs Division

Of all of the work of the NCSC the area that is least visible to the members of COSCA is the work of the International Programs Division (IPD). The IPD offices are located in Arlington, Virginia, and the Division is currently under the direction of Jeff Apperson. I have had the pleasure over the years
One of the most successful and engaging activities of COSCA during the last several years has been the selection, drafting, debating and adoption of a paper on a topic of particular importance to state courts. The process started during the preparation for our 1999 Annual Meeting. The idea at the time, under the guidance of then COSCA President Bill Vickery (CA), was to use the drafting of a “thought piece” as a way to generate discussion about an important policy topic as a means to enhance our educational program. The focus was not on the written paper but rather on the debate and discussion which occurred as a result of the paper. Over time, the process has matured and, while we still use the paper and its discussion as an important part of our educational program, much more emphasis is placed upon the paper itself and the policy recommendations that are contained therein.

It is reasonable to state that the consideration and adoption of COSCA policy papers has fundamentally changed our organization. Our new relationships with many other organizations, both governmental and private, have been a result of the policy positions taken in our papers. Whereas our main focus in earlier years was on education and networking, we of meeting many of the members of the IPD staff. Their educational and professional credentials and their incredible array of international experiences are most impressive. They have been engaged in projects to improve the administration of justice in places like Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Bosnia, El Salvador, Egypt, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Indonesia, Iraq, Lebanon, Kosovo, Mexico, Mongolia, Nigeria, Philippines, Rwanda, Uganda and Serbia. In addition to bringing the “best” of American court administrative practices to foreign court systems, IPD has also brought back significant revenue enhancement to the NCSC. In recent years the field has become much more competitive and revenues fluctuate but in years’ past, IPD revenue was used to support domestic services in each of our states and to offset the need for additional state assessments to support domestic programs.

From time to time, the Division requires the services of short-term court administrator “experts” to serve as consultants for foreign projects. Several COSCA members have been involved in this work. (Some of my most rewarding and enjoyable experiences in COSCA have involved international work on IPD projects). The IPD utilizes a consultant registry where COSCA members can indicate their willingness and interest in such service.

The Division also operates an International Visitor Program which hosts foreign judges and court officials for U.S. tours. You may be asked to work with the IPD by hosting visitors in your state.

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**NCSC SENIOR STAFF AND ORGANIZATION**

President / CEO
Mary McQueen

Exec. Assistant to President
S. Smith

Exec. Director, Human Resources
D. Mason

Exec. Director Gov’t Relations
K. Farley

VP Court Consulting Services
D. Hall

VP Research & Technology
T. Clarke

VP External Affairs
J. Rutledge

VP Institute for Court Mgmt.
J. Meeks

VP International Programs
J. Apperson

CFO & VP Finance and Admin.
G. Williams

Executive VP & General Counsel
R. Baldwin
Policy Papers

One of the most successful and engaging activities of COSCA during the last several years has been the selection, drafting, debating and adoption of a paper on a topic of particular importance to state courts. The process started during the preparation for our 1999 Annual Meeting. The idea at the time, under the guidance of then COSCA President Bill Vickery (CA), was to use the drafting of a “thought piece” as a way to generate discussion about an important policy topic as a means to enhance our educational program. The focus was not on the written paper but rather on the debate and discussion which occurred as a result of the paper. Over time, the process has matured and, while we still use the paper and its discussion as an important part of our educational program, much more emphasis is placed upon the paper itself and the policy recommendations that are contained therein.

It is reasonable to state that the consideration and adoption of COSCA policy papers has fundamentally changed our organization. Our new relationships with many other organizations, both governmental and private, have been a result of the policy positions taken in our papers. Whereas our main focus in earlier years was on education and networking, we are now much involved in the process of providing national leadership on policy issues important to the field of court administration.

The drafting of the paper is hard work and requires considerable time. We rely on COSCA members who have experience or expertise with the topic and, more importantly, a willingness to devote the time to the effort. Some of our newest members have become involved, taken a leadership role, and provided lasting service to COSCA through their work with the policy papers. All volunteers are welcome!

Rehnquist Award Dinner

In November of each year the NCSC hosts a dinner in the grand hall of the U.S. Supreme Court at which the Chief Justice of the United States presents the annual Rehnquist Award for Judicial Excellence. The award honors a state trial court or appellate judge who has been nominated by their state and selected by an NCSC selection committee. All members of COSCA and CCJ receive an invitation to the event. It is usually over-subscribed so members need to reply in a timely manner to be included. All costs for attendance must be borne by each state. The event is usually held in conjunction with meetings of the COSCA and CCJ Board of Directors and other meetings arranged by the NCSC.

It can be expensive, the room is packed, clearing security is a pain, and the acoustics make it difficult to hear; but the grand and historic setting and the distinguished nature of the crowd make for an event that every COSCA member should attend at least once. All members are also encouraged to consider nominating judges from their states for the Rehnquist Award. It is a great way to recognize the service of an outstanding member of your state judiciary who would otherwise go unnoticed on a national level.

NCSC Website

The NCSC Website can be found at www.ncsc.org. Like most successful organizations, the NCSC utilizes the website as the primary vehicle for communication and information sharing with constituents and the public. Research materials and publications, biographical and contact information for NCSC staff members, dates and registration information for meetings and conferences, information and updates on a plethora of NCSC projects and programs – all can be accessed via the website. There is a separate website for COSCA which can be accessed through the NCSC website. A membership list, current committee list, and copies of policy papers are among materials available on the COSCA website. You can reach it directly at http://cosca.ncsc.org.

Judicial Salary Survey

There is no issue more sensitive yet more common to all COSCA members than judicial salaries. It is, therefore, unsurprising to find that the NCSC provides resources to maintain comparative data and information about judicial salaries. Where a state is listed among comparative rankings and how data is analyzed and displayed can either assist or
detract from local efforts to improve judicial compensation – so the compilation and reporting of the data can be a sensitive issue for the NCSC.

For many years the NCSC published and distributed a hard-copy report on a semi-annual basis which listed and compared the salaries of Chief Justices, Associate Justices, Chief Court of Appeals Judges, Associate Court of Appeals Judges, General Jurisdiction Judges, and State Court Administrators. Information was reported by state within geographical regions and also on tables which compared and ranked all states by position. In more recent years, at the request of judges from states with a high cost of living, a second set of salary rankings adjusted by the comparative cost of living was added.

The NCSC no longer publishes the printed report but maintains the information on the NCSC website as the Judicial Salary Tracker. Each COSCA member is authorized on behalf of each state and territory and is requested to ensure that the information from his or her state is correct and up to date.

State Court Organization

One very common and often repeated experience of all state court administrators is to be asked by local judges, legislators, the press or others about how a particular issue is handled in other states. “How do they structure their limited jurisdiction courts?” “Do their judges have law clerks?” “Who submits the court’s budget?” “Have they implemented e-filing?” Etc., etc., etc. In my years of experience fielding such questions, I have found no resource more valuable than State Court Organization. It began in 1980 as a joint project between the Bureau of Justice Statistics and the NCSC, guided by and resulting from the work of the COSCA Statistics Committee. It began as a hard-copy publication which was revised every several years. It later evolved into an electronic publication. With the recent withdrawal of BJS from the project, it is now an electronic document which resides on the NCSC website and is available for real-time revision by each COSCA member. It is a treasure trove of comparative information about every aspect of state courts, including structure, governance, budgeting, selection, performance, personnel, administration and technology. I continue to use it regularly as a starting point for research on a wide range of issues. For a new COSCA member, it is an essential resource. One good way to review the publication is to take a look at the information in all of the tables from your own state. You will likely learn something that you did not know or may find that it contains information that is in need of revision. If so, contact the appropriate NCSC staff and they will work with you to update the content.

Special Awards

The NCSC and COSCA regularly honor members and others with special awards. As a COSCA member you will receive requests to submit nominations. I previously mentioned the Rehnquist Award which is awarded annually at the Rehnquist Dinner in Washington D.C. Two other awards should be highlighted because COSCA members are often recipients of the awards.

Beginning in 1974 the NCSC has awarded the Warren E. Burger Award for Excellence in Court Administration. This prestigious award is given annually and recognizes a state court system official who has “made a significant contribution to the field of court administration.” Several current or former COSCA members have been recipients. The selection is made by a committee of the NCSC Board of Directors.

In 2001 the Ken Palmer Award was created by COSCA to honor Ken Palmer, a former member who was very active in COSCA and who died at a much too early age while serving as AOC Director in Florida. The award is presented to current or former members of COSCA who have demonstrated extraordinary leadership and excellence in judicial administration. Nominations are solicited bi-annually, and the selection is made by a committee of COSCA members.
COSCA Service to New Members Committee

One of the committees of COSCA has as its primary focus the support of new members of the organization. Several programs and activities are utilized as a way to help new state court administrators with their new responsibilities and to connect with their new COSCA colleagues. The particular programs which are offered change from year to year depending upon the chair and the members of the committee. New COSCA members should feel free to contact the members of this committee with questions, concerns, or requests for assistance and information.

At the Mid-Year and Annual Meetings new COSCA members will usually be invited to attend the meeting of the Services to New Members Committee where an orientation to COSCA occurs. In recent years, a special luncheon has been held at the Annual meeting to which all new members of COSCA and CCJ are invited and recognized. During the COSCA Business Meeting at the Annual and Mid-Year meeting, first-time attendees are introduced and recognized.

From time to time, the COSCA Committee utilizes a mentor Program. New members are contacted soon after their appointment and offered the opportunity to be paired with another member, usually from a nearby state or a state of a similar size or court structure as that of the new member. The Mentor simply commits to be available to welcome phone calls and questions or to offer other assistance as requested by the new member.

In recent years the NCSC has reinstated a previous practice of inviting new members of CCJ and COSCA to an orientation session at the NCSC headquarters in Williamsburg, Virginia. This can be a great opportunity to receive helpful information about the NCSC, the services it can provide to you and your state, and to meet members of the NCSC staff with whom you will work in the years to come. If you are invited, you should accept.

Conference of Chief Justices. Since the creation of COSCA’s predecessor, the National Conference of Court Administrative Officers, the organization of state court administrators has been tied to and, to some extent, dependent upon the Conference of Chief Justices. The membership of CCJ is similar to that of COSCA in that it includes the Chief Justice of each of the U.S. states and territories. CCJ is led by a President, other officers and a Board of Directors.

From the beginning, meetings of COSCA have been held in conjunction with the meetings of CCJ. For some of our meetings, the rooms are set so that the chief justice and state court administrator of each state are seated together. For most of our history, the two organizations have joined for all educational sessions and have worked in concert in the development of policy positions and other engagement in issues of importance to state courts and the state judicial branch. In recent years the use of joint committees, made up of both CCJ and COSCA members, has worked to enhance these joint efforts. In many ways, the national organization, structure and activities of CCJ and COSCA replicate the relationship between the roles of each chief justice and state court administrator.

The opportunity for COSCA members to work closely and directly with the nation’s chief justices is a great benefit of active participation in the organization. New COSCA members should visit with their chiefs about participation in CCJ and COSCA. In my experience over the years, most states have been represented by the active participation of both their chiefs and administrators. There are a few exceptions where there is little or no participation. In a small number of cases a state’s chief is active in CCJ but the administrator does not participate in COSCA, or vice versa. I am aware of instances in which an administrator had a desire to be active but was serving with a chief justice who was unconvinced about the value of participation. Sometimes a call from another member of CCJ or COSCA can help to provide information that proves helpful. If such a situation occurs, feel free to reach out to COSCA or the NCSC for possible assistance. Active representa-
tion and participation in CCJ and COSCA by each state provides benefits and is a great source of helpful information for the state, enriches the professional lives of the chief justice and state court administrator, and strengthens and enables the working relationship between a state’s chief and administrator so as to lead and serve the state judicial branch more effectively.

**Other Court and Court-Related Organizations**

There are a myriad of other national organizations with which a new state court administrator will interact or about which you will hear through participation in COSCA. Many are designated and known by a combination of letters of the alphabet, so figuring out with whom one is dealing can be a bit overwhelming for a period of time. The following is a list of some of those groups and their relationship to COSCA:

- **National Association of Court Management.** NACM is the country’s largest association of court administrators, most of whom serve at the trial court level. Many COSCA members are also members of NACM and, in recent years, NACM has recruited judges as members. At least one member of the NCSC Board of Directors is a NACM representative. The NACM President is an invited guest at the COSCA Mid-Year and Annual Meetings. The NACM President is invited to attend the Annual and Midyear COSCA meetings and COSCA members are actively encouraged to consider membership in NACM.

- **Council of Chief Judges of the State Courts of Appeal.** The CCJSCA is composed of the chief judges from each state’s courts of appeal. Staffing for the organization is provided by the NCSC. They have an annual education conference. There is a dues structure for the organization somewhat similar to the formula for state assessments. In some states these dues are paid from the same source as state assessments. In others they are paid separately from the budget of the court of appeals.

- **American Judges Association.** The AJA is a membership organization, most of the membership of which consists of general and limited jurisdiction judges. They have semi-annual education conferences. Their staffing is provided by the NCSC.

- **National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges.** The NCJFCJ is a separate non-profit with no direct connection with the NCSC or its affiliate organizations. It is supported by a large professional staff and headquartered in Reno, Nevada. Its primary membership is composed of trial court judges who work in the juvenile and family court division. The Council provides education and research through national and regional conferences and in partnership with state judicial education programs. It often has funding which can be made available to assist your judges in attending Council meetings or to offset the cost of bringing presenters to your state.

- **National Association of Women Judges.** The NAWJ is an affiliate association to and staffed by the NCSC. Its membership is open to all judges and its focus is judicial education and increasing the number and advancement of women judges at all levels.
National College of Probate Judges. Because of the variety across the country in the way probate matters are handled, the NCPJ represents a mix of general and limited jurisdiction judges, both lawyers and non-lawyers, who preside over probate matters. The College provides education through an annual meeting, and the organization is staffed by the NCSC.

National Conference of Appellate Court Clerks. The membership of the NCACC is composed of the chief clerks of state appellate courts. They conduct an annual meeting with educational sessions and are provided staffing by the NCSC.

National Association of State Judicial Educators. NASJE is one of several national organizations which is not an entity of COSCA but the membership of which is primarily composed of employees of state administrative offices of the courts. In addition to AOC judicial educators, NASJE membership includes national and state judicial education providers and colleges and universities that are involved in providing judicial branch education. They conduct an annual meeting with educational sessions and are provided staffing by the NCSC.

Conference of Court Public Information Officers. Like NASJE, the CCPIO is not a COSCA-created entity, but many of its members are employed as public information officers in state administrative offices. Other members are employed directly by the Supreme Court or are employed and working at the trial court level. The CCPIO hosts an annual conference and is staffed by the NCSC.

Court Information Technology Officers Consortium. CITOC was created as a result of a joint resolution adopted by COSCA and NACM to provide a structure for education and collaboration of court technology directors. Because these officials are employed at both the state and local levels, a joint effort between COSCA and NACM was prompted. Membership in CITOC for court technology officers who work in state administrative offices requires the approval of the state court administrator. The organization has an annual meeting, an active list serve, and is staffed by the NCSC.

Council of Language Access Coordinators. CLAC was created pursuant to a resolution adopted by COSCA to provide a structure for meetings of the court interpreter directors of each state. Meetings of the officers had taken place previously within a different framework, but with little interaction with COSCA. COSCA and CCJ adopted a new funding formula for state payments to the NCSC to support language access services and also created a new framework for the organization. There is also a Language Access Advisory Committee (LAAC), composed primarily of members of COSCA, which provides leadership for issues involving court interpreters.

State Justice Institute. SJI is a creation of Congress which is led by a Board of Directors appointed by the President and confirmed by the Senate. Included on the Board are representatives
from CCJ and COSCA. When vacancies occur, CCJ and/or COSCA provide the President with a recommendation of three potential nominees from which to choose. SJI receives an annual appropriation from Congress for the purpose of making grants directly to state courts or to organizations which support state courts or are involved with issues that affect state courts. The Executive Director of SJI usually attends the Mid-Year and Annual meetings of COSCA.

- **National Judicial College.** The NJC is located in Reno, Nevada, and is affiliated with the University of Nevada at Reno. The College provides judicial education courses for general and limited jurisdiction judges on its campus in Reno. The NJC will also contract to bring its courses to individual states. The Dean of the NJC usually attends the COSCA Mid-Year and Annual meetings.

- **National Consortium on Racial and Ethnic Fairness in the Courts.** The NCREFC is an organization which grew out of gatherings of the leaders of state racial and ethnic commissions or committees which had been created by supreme courts or state bar associations. It is not really a membership organization but rather provides a structure for information sharing and for the hosting of an annual meeting. Staffing is provided by the NCSC.

- **Judicial Family Institute.** Your only interaction with JFI will likely occur during the Annual Meeting of CCJ/COSCA. The group was originally composed of spouses of chief justices who were present at the annual meeting and who began to meet for education or to discuss potential projects. In recent years JFI has sponsored a Law and Literacy session at the beginning of each Annual Meeting. Staffing is provided by the NCSC.

**COSCA Liaisons to Other National Organizations**

With so many court or court-related organizations with which COSCA has a direct or indirect relationship, many steps are taken by COSCA in an attempt to maintain and foster communication and interaction. This effort includes outreach to organizations representing the other branches of state governments, including the National Governors Association, the National Conference of State Legislatures and the Council of State Governments. One method is through the extension of invitations to those organizations to send a representative to attend the Mid-Year or Annual Meetings of COSCA. Often those organizations reciprocate and invite COSCA to send representatives to their meetings. These meetings are attended by the COSCA President or a COSCA member appointed by the President. Because there are so many potential meetings, each President usually makes several liaison appointments. A member who attends as the official COSCA liaison receives funding from the NCSC to support the attendance. COSCA liaisons are asked to participate in the educational and business meetings during the assigned conference. Such participation allows the liaison to learn of any policies or activities of the organization which might have an impact upon COSCA or its members. Additionally, the liaison may be specifically asked to advocate for a particular COSCA policy or position when it is known that such a topic will be on an agenda for discussion or consideration. Any COSCA member who has an interest or willingness to attend such a meeting as the COSCA liaison should share that interest with the COSCA President or President-Elect.
These comments conclude where they began—
with words of welcome and encouragement. COSCA
membership has the potential to provide you with
information and a network of resources otherwise
unavailable, all of which will allow you to do your job
better in your home state. Participation in COSCA
provides exciting opportunities to be involved and
engaged at a national and international level with a
myriad of issues involving court administration and
the role and operation of the judicial branch. As a
result of your regular attendance and participation in
COSCA activities, you will create new bonds—
professional relationships and personal
friendships with colleagues from
across the country, all engaged in a
common mission.

Every new member of COSCA arrives with a
unique background and set of skills and experiences.
Our membership is as diverse as our state court
structures and modes of doing business. For the or-
ganization to reach its potential, the unique perspec-
tive of all members is required.

Congratulations on your appointment. Wel-
come to COSCA.