



APPELLATE JUDICIAL COMMISSION

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Edward R. Martin, Jr.
Office of the Governor
State Capitol Building, Room 216
Jefferson City, MO 65101

Via Hand Delivery

31 July 2007

Dear Mr. Martin,

I can only interpret your rather extraordinary letter of yesterday, addressed as it was to me rather than to the Commission, as a desire to give me personal advice as to how you think the Commission should function. In that spirit, I thank you for sharing your thoughts.

With respect to the operations of the Commission, you indicated an awareness of the different roles that each commissioner serves on the Commission. Indeed, one of the most important features of the Appellate Judicial Commission is the diversity of its composition. The Eastern, Southern, and Western Districts of Missouri are each represented by two individuals on the Commission: one lay member appointed by the Governor, and one lawyer elected by members of the bar in that appellate district. Each of these members serves a six-year term on the Commission, and the staggered nature of the terms allows the Commission to preserve continuity of operations and function efficiently.

The seventh member of the Commission, and the one who traditionally serves as Chair, is the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court. Unlike the members from the constituent districts, however, the Chief Justice only serves as a Commissioner during her two-year term as Chief. Since my term as Chair of the Commission began a short time ago, I have performed the duties and responsibilities of Chair diligently and fairly and in compliance with my responsibilities under the Constitution and Rules.

Finally, as I have emphasized to you and others in the past, the Appellate Judicial Commission exists separate and apart from the Supreme Court of Missouri, and it is to the Commission that requests, should any be necessary or appropriate, should be directed. In this regard, allow me to correct a further misunderstanding evident from your letter. Mr. McLeod is a lawyer-member of the Commission, elected by the members of the Missouri Bar in the Western District of Missouri to a six-year term. The Commission selected Mr. McLeod to serve as its Secretary. As is appropriate to that role, Mr. McLeod will continue to respond on behalf of the Commission to requests to it for information or documents.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Laura Denvir Stith", is positioned below the word "Sincerely,".

Hon. Laura Denvir Stith
Chair, Appellate Judicial Commission