

Month Day, 2009

«Name»

«Title»

«Address»

Dear «Salutation»:

We are pleased to report that the National Center for State Courts (NCSC) was awarded a [cooperative agreement contract](#) from the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) to study appeals from tort, contract, and real property trials. This study, which has the support of the Executive Committee of the National Conference of Appellate Court Clerks (NCACC), provides an excellent opportunity for the «Appellate_Court_Division» to contribute to the very limited empirical knowledge of the factors that prompt litigants to seek appellate review and the outcomes of those reviews. Furthermore, this project will provide a wealth of knowledge upon which to draw for pursuing best practices and understanding important work of appellate courts, which is an integral part of the civil justice process. As you may know, «Appellate_Court_Division» participated in the 2001 Study of Civil Appeals, and your continued participation will provide the data necessary to develop appellate case processing trends.

This study of appeals involves three separate data collection components. In the first component, the NCSC will collect basic information, such as case processing details, dispositions, and issues on appeal, about the «Number_of_Cases» in which a party from trial filed a notice of appeal with the trial court in 2005. A list of those cases, which includes the trial court docket number, the first plaintiff's name, and the filing date for the notice of appeal, is enclosed. For this component, we may need the assistance of an experienced staff attorney to review the files and collect the information. The project budget includes funding to compensate on-site coders for this task. Alternatively, if your court offers online access (to court documents, briefs, and opinions), let us know, as we can gather all of the information we need without assistance from a coder.

The second component of this study addresses the impact of appellate alternative dispute resolution programs on case processing and dispositions. If your court has such a program, we are requesting the assistance of the program manager or coordinator. We are aware of the sensitivity of this information and would like to assure you that we will be collecting aggregate program-level data; no specific case-level outcomes will be collected.

The third component of the study involves documenting the operational and procedural characteristics of appellate courts nationwide. NCSC staff will attempt to gather most of this information from public documents, but for the sake of accuracy, we may need to contact you, or an appointed contact person, for clarification of information. These data will be compiled into a profile database that will be available on the NCSC's Web site. The database will provide detail about the diverse practices and structural frameworks within which the appellate courts operate, encouraging appellate courts to make informative and valuable comparisons for policy and court management decisions.

Although participation in this study is voluntary, the response of your «Appellate_Court_Division» is very important to this project, and I hope you and your staff will agree to assist us. We estimate that it should take your staff about 90 minutes on average to complete each appellate data collection form and 120 minutes on average to complete each spreadsheet on alternative appellate dispute resolution programs. In compliance with the Paper Work Reduction Act, we weighed the resources required to collect these data against the critical information that will be generated with your participation. This information has been reviewed and approved by the Office of Management and Budget (please see OMB control number XXX on the data collection forms).

I also encourage you to contact me if you have any questions about the reports, the current study, or the assistance that we will require of you. Please also let me know your preferred method of communication (e.g., e-mail, phone) and if we should be in contact with anyone else from the court to facilitate our correspondence. «NCSC_Contact» has been assigned as your court liaison and will be in touch with you in the near future to begin the data collection process. I look forward to working with you on this valuable project.

Sincerely,

Nicole L. Waters, Ph. D.
Project Director
(757) 259-1574
nwaters@ncsc.org

Court Liaison:
«NCSC_Contact»
[NCSC Title]
(757) 259-«Phone»
«Email»