



## **STATE OF THE COURT ADDRESS - 2009**

MR. CHAIRMAN, COUNTY COMMISSIONERS, ELECTED OFFICIALS, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN. SPRINGTIME REPRESENTS A TIME FOR HOPE AND RENEWAL. IT IS ALSO THE TIME I PRESENT TO YOU MY ANNUAL STATE OF THE COURT ADDRESS. I AGAIN HAVE THE PLEASURE OF THANKING YOU FOR YOUR CONTINUED SUPPORT OF OUR COURT.

THIS YEAR OUR COURT HAS FACED THE SAME CHALLENGES THAT ALL OF US HAVE FACED, BOTH AS ELECTED OFFICIALS AND PRIVATE CITIZENS. WE MUST CONTINUE TO DO OUR JOBS, AND PROVIDE OUR CITIZENS WITH THE BEST POSSIBLE SERVICE IN AN ERA OF DECLINING REVENUES AND SEVERE BUDGET CUTS. THIS HAS BEEN A DIFFICULT TASK, BUT IS A TASK THAT OUR COURT HAS MET. I WOULD BE LESS THAN CANDID IF I TOLD YOU IT HAS BEEN EASY. BUT, DIFFICULT CHALLENGES PRESENT NEW OPPORTUNITIES AND OUR COURT HAS MET THESE CHALLENGES. THE COURT IS NOW LEANER AND GREENER.

BEFORE I TALK ABOUT HOW WE ARE DOING THIS, I WOULD LIKE TO INTRODUCE THE MEN AND WOMEN WHO PROVIDE JUDICIAL SERVICES TO OUR 1.2 MILLION CONSTITUENTS. BEING AN OAKLAND COUNTY JUDGE IS OFTEN TIMES A LONELY EXPERIENCE. YOU HAVE TO MAKE CALLS THAT ARE GUT-WRENCHING, SOMETIMES INCREDIBLY COMPLEX AND OFTEN CONTROVERSIAL. LET ME INTRODUCE TO YOU MY COLLEAGUES WHO WERE ABLE TO TAKE TIME OUT OF THEIR BUSY SCHEDULES.

LATER TODAY I WILL BE PRESENTING OUR TRIENNIAL BUDGET TO THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE. OVER THAT PERIOD THE COURT WILL BE CUTTING OVER 4 MILLION DOLLARS FROM THE BUDGET THAT HAS ALREADY BEEN CUT NEARLY 6 MILLION DOLLARS SINCE 2003. THESE CUTS ARE DEEP AND HURT. OUR BENCH HAS NOT BEEN SPARED THE PAIN.

WE BELIEVE THAT WE CANNOT ASK OTHERS TO MAKE A SACRIFICE WHEN WE ARE NOT PREPARED TO DO SO. THE BENCH WILL CONTINUE TO STUDY THE CUTS TO SEE IF WE CAN SAVE POSITIONS. THESE BUDGET CUTS ARE EMOTIONAL AND DIFFICULT BECAUSE WE ARE DEALING WITH PEOPLE WHO HAVE SERVED THE COURT AND COMMUNITY WELL.

THAT'S JUST THE BEGINNING OF BEING LEANER.

THE JAIL HAS 202 LESS JAIL BEDS. THE COURT HAS DEALT WITH THIS LOSS OF JAIL SPACE, WITH THE HELP OF THIS COMMISSION AND LEADERSHIP OF CHAIRPERSON BULLARD, BY ENTERING INTO A TETHER PROGRAM. THE CIRCUIT COURT JUDGES WERE THE FIRST TO PILOT THIS PROGRAM WHICH HAS NOW BEEN JOINED BY NUMEROUS DISTRICT COURTS. APPROXIMATELY 35 INMATES WHO WOULD BE IN JAIL, PARTICIPATE DAILY IN THIS PROGRAM.

WITH THE HELP OF MANY OF THE DISTRICT COURTS IN THE COUNTY, WE HAVE ALSO INSTITUTED A VERY SUCCESSFUL FELONY PLEA PROGRAM, ALLOWING FELONY PLEAS TO BE TAKEN BY THE DISTRICT COURT, THEREBY SAVING VALUABLE TIME IN CRIMINAL CASES AND MOVING PEOPLE OUT OF THE SYSTEM QUICKER.

THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE COORDINATING COUNCIL, ALONG WITH THIS COMMISSION, HAS DONE A TREMENDOUS SERVICE TO THE CITIZENS OF OAKLAND COUNTY BY HELPING TO ALLEVIATE THE NECESSITY FOR BUILDING A NEW JAIL AT A TIME WHERE A NEW JAIL FACILITY WOULD PUT AN UNIMAGINABLE STRAIN ON THE BUDGET.

COMMISSIONERS HELAINE ZACK AND JEFF POTTER, WHO SERVE ON THE CJCC, CHAIR THE PLANNING COMMITTEE. THE COMMITTEE IS CHARGED WITH COMING FORTH WITH NEW MAJOR JAIL BED SAVING PROJECTS. OTHER COMMISSIONER MEMBERS OF THE CJCC ARE COMMISSIONERS, SHELLEY TAUB, MATTIE HATCHETT AND KIM CAPELLO.

THE LEGISLATION THAT PASSED AS A RESULT OF THE CJCC AND BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS, PUBLIC ACT 140, HAS PROVEN AN EFFECTIVE TOOL IN PREVENTING MASS JAIL RELEASES.

WE HAVE ALSO NEEDED TO LOOK AT THOSE HISTORIC PROGRAMS THAT HAVE MADE OUR COURT UNIQUE. THE BUDGET ISSUES HAVE IMPACTED OUR DRUG COURTS AND HAVE ALLOWED US TO BE CREATIVE IN FUNDING THEM.

THE RESTORE FOUNDATION IS A VEHICLE FOR PRIVATE FUNDING OF THIS MOST SUCCESSFUL PROGRAM. IN ONLY SIX MONTHS RESTORE HAS RAISED NEARLY \$100,000 DOLLARS. RESTORE WILL ALLOW THE COURT TO CONTINUE THE DRUG COURT PROGRAMS WHICH WILL TURN AROUND LIVES AND ALSO ALLOW US TO DIVERT PEOPLE FROM JAIL.

I WOULD LIKE TO THANK THOSE WONDERFUL CITIZENS WHO, LED BY OUR COUNTY'S OWN, MIKE AND MARIAN ILITCH, HAVE JOINED THE RESTORE BOARD. THEIR NAMES ARE ON THE SCREEN BEHIND ME.

THE TREASURER OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF RESTORE IS IN ATTENDANCE TODAY AND I WOULD LIKE TO INTRODUCE HIM TO YOU. BILL MATTHEWS IS THE FATHER OF JUDGE CHERYL MATTHEWS AND FORMER MANAGING PARTNER OF PLANTE MORAN. HIS FINANCIAL ACUMEN AND PRACTICAL ADVICE HAVE BEEN INVALUABLE TO RESTORE.

ANOTHER HISTORIC PROGRAM THAT WE ARE LOOKING AT IS YOUTH ASSISTANCE, PERHAPS THE MOST SUCCESSFUL COLLABORATIVE PROGRAM WE HAVE. YA DIVERTS YOUTH FROM THE COURT AND IS AN ESSENTIAL PART OF THE FAMILY DIVISION. SHORTLY, I WILL BE CALLING FOR A YOUTH ASSISTANCE SUMMIT BRINGING TOGETHER THE COURT, THE COMMUNITIES, SCHOOL DISTRICTS AND THE COMMISSION TO INSURE YA'S LONG TERM STABILITY.

ALSO MAKING US LEANER, BUT ALSO LEADING THE WAY TO BECOMING GREENER ARE TWO PROGRAMS THAT HAVE TAKEN OFF SINCE I LAST SPOKE WITH YOU...

EFILING, UNDER THE LEADERSHIP OF JUDGE MICHAEL WARREN, AND JUDGE ON-LINE INITIATED BY JUDGE EDWARD SOSNICK. LAST WEEK OUR BENCH VOTED TO REQUIRE EFILING IN ALL OF OUR CIVIL/CRIMINAL DIVISION COURTROOMS BY OCTOBER 1, 2011. EFILING WILL GREATLY DIMINISH OUR NEED FOR PAPER, SAVING BOTH FORESTS AND LANDFILL SPACE.

AND, THE JUDGE ON-LINE PROGRAM HAS RECEIVED RAVE REVIEWS. YOU ARE FAMILIAR WITH EFILING, BUT MAY NOT BE WITH JUDGE ON-LINE. THIS PROGRAM ALLOWS MATTERS TO BE HEARD BY THE COURT VIA SECURE TELEPHONE LINES. LAWYERS NO LONGER HAVE TO COME TO COURT FOR A HEARING, BUT MAY REMAIN IN THEIR OFFICE OR ANOTHER COURT SAVING GAS, TIME AND MONEY. RECENTLY, JUDGE YOUNG HANDLED A MATTER WHILE SHE AND THE LAWYERS WERE ALL AT DIFFERENT LOCATIONS. THE ONLY PERSON ACTUALLY IN THE COURTROOM WAS HER CLERK. BUT, THEY WERE ABLE TO RESOLVE THE ISSUE. WE VIEW JUDGE ON-LINE AS THE PRECURSOR TO VIDEO-ON-LINE.

TECHNOLOGY GIVES US THE OPPORTUNITY TO DO MANY MORE THINGS THAT WILL HELP THE GREENING OF THE COURTHOUSE. IF LAWYERS AND PARTIES CAN APPEAR VIA TELEPHONE OR TELECONFERENCING THINK OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL SAVINGS ON GAS AND POLLUTANTS.

THANKS GO TO PHIL BERTOLINI AND BOB DADDOW FOR THEIR ASSISTANCE IN THIS PROGRAM.

I ALSO WANT TO REPORT ON ANOTHER COLLABORATIVE EFFORT WHICH IS IN ITS INFANCY AND THAT IS ONGOING MEETINGS BETWEEN THE CHIEF JUDGES AND COURT ADMINISTRATORS OF THE CIRCUIT COURTS IN WAYNE, OAKLAND AND MACOMB COUNTIES, AS WELL AS THE CHIEF JUDGE OF THE US DISTRICT COURT. THESE MEETINGS WILL BE FOCUSED ON REGIONAL ISSUES, SUCH AS COORDINATING RESPONSES TO A HOMELAND SECURITY DISASTER AND ALSO TO DISCUSS TECHNOLOGY AND BUDGET ISSUES, COMMON TO ALL OF OUR COURTS. AND I MIGHT ADD THAT RECENTLY OUR

COURT HOSTED THE WAYNE COUNTY CIRCUIT COURT LEADERSHIP WHO ARE INTERESTED IN OUR EFILING AND JUDGE ON-LINE PROGRAMS.

ANOTHER PROGRAM THAT ALLOWS US TO BE LEANER AND GREENER RELATES TO OUR JURORS. EFFECTIVE THIS YEAR WE WILL NOT BE CALLING JURORS IN ON FRIDAYS. JUDGES WHO WISH TO START TRIALS ON FRIDAY WILL BE ABLE TO PICK A JURY EARLIER IN THE WEEK AND THEN HAVE THEM START THEIR SERVICE WHEN THE TRIAL STARTS. OUR STUDIES HAVE SHOWN THAT WE CAN SAVE TIME AND TAXPAYER DOLLARS, BUT STILL HANDLE THE SAME NUMBER OF TRIALS, BY GOING TO THIS SYSTEM.

THE COURT STANDS WITH THE OTHER BRANCHES OF GOVERNMENT TO ADDRESS THE ECONOMIC CRISIS FACING OUR COMMUNITY. I CAN SAY, WITHOUT HESITATION, THAT TO MEET THIS CHALLENGE, WE HAVE BECOME LEANER AND GREENER. NEVER FORGETTING, HOWEVER, THAT WE SERVE THE RESIDENTS OF THIS COMMUNITY. AGAIN, I THANK YOU FOR YOUR ONGOING SUPPORT, AND I THANK OUR BENCH FOR ITS COMMITMENT TO OUR CONSTITUENTS.