

COMMENTS OF RETIRED JUDGE BURT PINES

I endorse the recommendations of the Strategic Evaluation Committee and urge the Judicial Council to implement them without undue delay.

As a former member of the Judicial Council, I witnessed many of the problems identified in the SEC report, such as misleading statements by senior management regarding the true staffing levels of the AOC; misinformation regarding the "furloughs" voluntarily taken by AOC staff; the difficulty in understanding and lack of transparency in the AOC budget and budget process; and the absence of important information in staff reports regarding the full range of options, alternatives, costs, impacts, and policy considerations with respect to proposals submitted for the Council's approval.

The Committee's report is truly exceptional. It is thorough and comprehensive; its findings and recommendations are well researched and supported by solid facts; and it is presented in a clear and convincing manner. The committee members, all volunteers, deserve our eternal gratitude for their extraordinary contribution to the judicial branch.

Although the Committee's report was focused primarily on the AOC and not on the workings of the Judicial Council, there is the obvious implicit criticism of the Council for not doing a better job of overseeing the operations of the AOC. In this respect, it should be mentioned (and I did so in my departing remarks to the Council) that over the last 18 months, there has been a transformation in the way the Council conducts its business, thanks to the leadership of the new Chief Justice. The meetings are more open; public comment is welcome; new committees have been formed (e.g., the SEC) to oversee various operations of the AOC; the Council's discussions are more substantive and robust than in the past; and the Council is actively engaged in overseeing the AOC (e.g., as evident by the decision to terminate the CCMS program). I have every confidence that the Council will seriously consider the SEC recommendations and act upon them in a timely fashion.