

**ELKINS FAMILY LAW TASK FORCE**  
**Minutes of the June 23-24 Meeting**  
**San Francisco, California**

Justice Laurie Zelon, Chair, called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. on Monday, June 23, 2008, at the Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) in San Francisco, California.

**Task Force Members Present:** Hon. Laurie D. Zelon, (*Chair*), Ms. Tülin D. Açikalin, Hon. Sue Alexander, Hon. Lorna A. Alksne, Hon. Irma Poole Asberry, Mr. Richard Barry, Hon. Louise Bayles-Fightmaster, Hon. Jerilyn L. Borack, Ms. Linda D. Daeley, Ms. Julie C. Dodge, Ms. Patricia Foster, Ms. Ana María García, Hon. Michael J. Gassner, Hon. Barry P. Goode, Mr. José Octavio Guillén, Mr. Vahan Hovsepian, Hon. Joan K. Irion, Hon. Irwin H. Joseph, Hon. Mark A. Juhas, Mr. Lawrence E. Leone, Ms. Margaret Little, Ph.D, Ms. Judy B. Louie, Hon. Patricia M. Lucas, Mr. Mark E. Minyard, Ms. Suzanne Clark Morlock, Ms. Sandra Joan Morris, Ms. Lorie S. Nachlis, Hon. Kimberly J. Nystrom-Geist, Ms. Rebecca L. Prater, Hon. Vance W. Raye, Mr. Stephen B. Ruben, Ms. Caron Caines Smith, Hon. Nancy Wieben Stock, Mr. Hugh K. Swift, Hon. B. Scott Thomsen, and Mr. Peter M. Walzer.

**Task Force Members Not Present:** Ms. Kathy Banuelos and Mr. Drew Liebert.

**Task Force Staff:** Ms. Diane Nunn (*Lead*), Ms. Tamara Abrams, Ms.Carolynn C. Bernabe, Ms. Deborah Chase, Ms. Charlene Depner, Ms. Donna Hershkowitz, Ms. Bonnie Rose Hough, Ms. Katie Howard, Ms. Rita Mah, Mr. Lee Morhar, Mr. Ronald Overholt, Ms. Deana Piazza, Ms. Patricia Rivera, Ms. Gabrielle Selden, Mr. William C. Vickrey, Ms. Susie Viray, Ms. Julia Weber, Ms. Bobbie Welling, Mr. Don Will, and Mr. Christopher Wu.

**Others Present:** Ms. Sharon Ngim and Ms. Barbara Siebel

**Item 1            Welcome and Introduction of Members and Staff**

Justice Zelon, Chair, and Ms. Diane Nunn, lead staff, welcomed task force members. Mr. William C. Vickrey, Administrative Director of the Courts, on behalf of Chief Justice Ronald M. George and members of the Judicial Council, expressed appreciation of the members' commitment and willingness to serve on the task force. Members and staff made introductions including their affiliations and what they most hope the task force will accomplish.

**Item 2            The California Courts System Overview**

Ms. Nunn described the Judicial Council, which is a 28-member policymaking body of California's court system. Ms. Nunn talked about the California Courts, including the Supreme Court, Appellate Court, Trial Courts, Family Law, Court Connected Services, and Self Represented Litigants. Ms. Nunn gave a brief overview of the structure of the California judicial branch, including the Judicial Council and its internal committees, advisory committees, task

forces and commissions, Administrative Office of the Courts, Center for Families, Children & the Courts (CFCC), and the trial and appellate courts.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:15 p.m.

## **TUESDAY, JUNE 24, 2008**

Justice Laurie Zelon, Chair, called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. on Tuesday, June 24, 2008, at the Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) in San Francisco, California.

### **Item 1 Key Efforts and Survey Responses**

Judge Jerilyn Borack described the role of the Judicial Council's Family and Juvenile Law Advisory Committee. Ms. Bonnie Hough discussed the Task Force on Self Represented Litigants. Ms. Julia Weber described the Domestic Violence Practice and Procedure Task Force and Resource Guidelines Project, and Presiding Judges Advisory Committee.

Ms. Weber provided an update on the survey with 29 responses. There were great ideas and significant variation but also a lot of common themes. She summarized responses to five questions:

- 1) What do you hope the task force will accomplish during its tenure?
- 2) What is the most important change the task force can recommend?
- 3) What benefit would that have for the people involved in family law proceedings?
- 4) What changes could be implemented right away without additional resources?
- 5) Additional suggestions or comments; power point of survey summary attached.

### **Item 2 Task Force Scope, Values, and Principles**

Justice Zelon and Ms. Katie Howard, special consultant with the Center for Families, Children & the Courts, facilitated the discussion on the task force goals, framing and coming to an agreement on what the scope of the task force would be; defined values and guiding principles to directly support the task force; and developed an operational framework that included the work plan and defined subject matter working groups. Fact Sheets and other information will be released on the Elkins Task Force website.

Justice Zelon identified four task force working groups: Representation, Research and Best Practices, Resources, and Rules and Cultural Changes. Working groups will meet by phone and/or in person between task force meetings and will make recommendations to the full task force.

Justice Zelon provided a brief description of the working groups and asked members to rank their preferences for working group assignment. Justice Zelon informed members that she would seek balance in the working group's membership.

### **Item 3            Future Meetings Schedule**

Key dates for future meetings were discussed. The September 16, 2008, meeting will be held in either San Francisco or Los Angeles. Members were asked to note future meetings.

The task force anticipates releasing the final report to the Judicial Council by December 2009.

### **Recommendations for the Next Task Force Meeting**

- Working Groups Report Back
- Public Comments
- Guidance on What to Tell to the Constituents

### **Item 4            Other Business**

Justice Zelon thanked the task force members for devoting their time and effort to this important project and the AOC staff for their dedication and presentations. Staff will follow up on the working group descriptions.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:05 p.m.