

MINUTES OF JOINT HEARING - ASSEMBLY AND SENATE COMMITTEES ON JUDICIARY  
55th Session, February 13, 1969

The meeting was held in the Heroes Memorial Building and was called to order at 2:45 P.M. by Senator Monroe, who conducted the hearing.

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY MEMBERS PRESENT: Torvinen, Lowman, Reid, Prince, Bryan, Swackhamer, Fry, Schouweiler, Kean.

SENATE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT: Monroe, Hug, Young, Swobe, Bunker, Christensen, Dodge.

SUPREME COURT JUSTICES PRESENT: Justice Collins, Justice Batjer, Justice Thompson.

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL PRESENT: Frank Daykin.

Senator Monroe introduced the members of the Senate Judiciary Committee. Assemblyman Torvinen introduced the members of the Assembly Committee on Judiciary.

SENATOR MONROE: This is a public hearing for the purpose of reviewing legislative proposals which came out of the Citizen's Committee for the Study of the Judiciary.

We have here representatives from the Northern part of the state and from the Southern part of the state. We will hear from some of them during the meeting.

SB 83, SB 84, SB 85 and SB 86 have been submitted to us as a result of their study. Also, SJR 5 which embraces the major changes.

TOM WILSON: RENO, NEVADA: I am acting chairman of the two steering committees, one from the North and one from the South, of our state. We have 14 members of the steering committees here with us today. These committees were selected at meetings which were held in both sections of the state last summer, with probably one hundred people in attendance. The concensus of their opinion is here. You will get opinions from both the North and the South.

I would now like to introduce Bert Fitz from Reno.

BERT FITZ: I understand that all candidates for the Legislature received copies of this statement, subsequent to their filing. But I would like to refresh your memories before getting into the highlights of this resolution.

The Nevada Judicial system was created in 1864 and has served us well, but now certain weaknesses have shown up; the election system, the discouraging of many potential good judges by denying them any security, and so forth. In recognition of these problems, the Nevada Legislature ordered the 1967 Legislative Commissions to study this situation, calling generally for court-wide system, retirement, discipline and removal.

Mr. Fitz then read a prepared paper which is attached to these minutes.

Eleven members of the Northern District of these committees are here in this room with us.

MR. LOGAN: Chairman of Steering Committee in Southern Nevada: Las Vegas:

I have here the concensus report from the Southern part of the state. Mr. Logan then read this report and it will be found at the end of these minutes.

ERNEST NEWTON: Representing Nevada Taxpayers.

I have prepared three charts. I will deal with the first one rather briefly. It involves SB 83, SB 84, SB 85 and SB 86. We would not need a constitutional amendment to implement it. Would assist the Chief Justice who would operate with the consent and advice of the other justices of the Supreme Court to carry out nine functions on SB 85.

At the bottom of the list there are two other provisions and responsibilities which would be undertaken by the court administrator, and that would be to provide schooling for newly appointed judges and justices and magistrates, to provide for them a school in the operation of their court either in conference of trial judges at the University of Nevada or otherwise.

He will also provide the Chief Justice with statistical information on which to base decisions that assign available judges where they will do the most good, be most valuable. It cannot be informal and on a hit and miss basis if the judge is to determine a critical need.

The Supreme Court would make assignments to the various District Courts. The last provision is for the Supreme Court to assume responsibility for the adequacy and administration of the State Law Library. SB 86.

Second Chart illustrates the effect of the general plan in SJR 5, which is the Judicial Article. The article proposes to establish within the Supreme Court not less than three and as many as the Legislature provides for justices. The District Courts, which are a lower level of service, are set by the Legislature. Currently, we have 18 judges of District Courts. They may be assigned wherever desirable for special functions, juvenile matters or any other sort of specialized case in which some particular judge might show extraordinary competence.

On the left, you will notice that magistrates are provided. They would be part of the District Court, something more than hearing officers and something less than a District Judge. We are leaving that matter to the Legislature to define after adoption.

There are five ways in which vacancies can be created.

1. Rejection by the voters.
2. By death.
3. By retirement at age 70.
4. By retirement for disability.
5. By removal.

Vacancies in the Supreme Court would be filled by a five-man commission, two members from the State Bar, two "non-lawyer" citizens, and the Chief Just of the Supreme Court or his nominee.

Each appointment is for a term of four years and each would be eligible for reappointment. If a new justice is needed, the Governor will select from three nominees given him by the five-member commission. The article provides that he doesn't make the appointment within 30 days he cannot appoint anyone until this is done.

On the District Bench, there is also a commission which is a temporary commission and which operates on a one-time basis, five members of the permanent commission and two others. One of these two others should be a lawyer in the district where the vacancy occurred and one a layman in the same district.

Appointments in all cases would be for an unexpired term. At the end of the term, which would be established much the same as it is now, (appointments could be for not less than one year) the judge would go before the electorate on the question as to whether or not he should be retained.

The last chart describes how judges and justices are removed, and how vacancies are created. By disability we mean any disability which would prevent proper performance and which is likely to be permanent.

On number 5, reasons for removal would be such things as habitual intemperance, non-performance of duties, or a complaint which is made against him. Judicial discipline can go to the Commission on that. This will be the Chief Justice or some other justice if the Chief Justice is the one complained about. A man could not sit on his own case.

When a complaint is filed, the Commission on Discipline may make a preliminary investigation. They may dismiss the case, or they may order a hearing. They must serve notice to the justice and ask him if he desires a hearing. If a hearing is desired, a hearing is held in which case counsel is required for both the Commission and the complained against judge.

At the conclusion of the hearing, the Commission on Discipline may recommend either censure or retirement or removal. The filing action in every case is by order of the Supreme Court.

Procedure for retirement for disability is the same as for removal. The only difference is the grounds provided for these procedures.

SENATOR MONROE: The filing action would be with the Supreme Court but at the start, it seems to me, the administrator has a right.

MR. NEWTON: No, only judicial discipline.

SENATOR MONROE: He could be disciplined without a hearing by the Supreme Court.

MR. WILSON: We have heard from the two committees. Individual testimony will come from the different people on the steering committees.

SENATOR MONROE: We want to thank all of you for the amount of work you have done on this. It was a fine activity of citizenship.

We will now open the hearing for general comments.

CHIEF JUSTICE JON COLLINS: As the Chief judicial officer of the state, I am pleased to tell you that we are unanimous in our opinion that there needs to be a very comprehensive review and on our behalf this is unanimous, or nearly so. There is a great need for revising the judicial article of this state.

Article 6 of our constitution has served the state for 105 years with only two basic modifications. The fact remains that the judicial business of the United States and of this state is going through rapid development and is increasing. Problems that are to be dealt with now clearly contemplate some revision for this day and age.

All that is old is not bad, but when the need for change is completely demonstrated as it is now we feel that there is a serious need for these new ideas. The committee under Senator Dodge has made a good study of this. They have worked long and hard and have studied all amendments needed to make a strong judicial system.

This is not something that can be done overnight and we are feeling that, unless action is taken now following this study, there might be some rapid check-mate type of thing done by future legislators. Right now, while it has been studied, is the time for the people of this state to consider the advisability of change in the Nevada Judicial system.

To do the proceedings justice, I think we should call on Judge Thompson, who is the immediately preceding Chief Justice.

JUSTICE GORDON THOMPSON: I had the pleasure of working with Senator Dodge and many others on the past study of the Nevada Judicial system. We are in complete accord with everything Senator Dodge has proposed to me.

I would like to make some comments which may be out of place. It was my lot to serve as Chief Justice over a period of four years and during that service, I learned of many, many roadblocks in the operation of our court system that are constitutional roadblocks. We cannot overcome them unless we have this amendment.

We have problems of transferring cases and transferring justices. We can't use the services of retired judges. We have absolutely no supervision over the judicial system. We do not know anything about case loads. We don't know about specific cases at specific times. This real accumulation of many, many problems has led to the retardation in handling an ever-increasing load of problems that come before us.

You may have heard that some attorneys have expressed some disagreement with some of these proposals. That has always been the case among members of the bar. They have never been able to agree upon any particular item.

The citizen's conferences were conducted over two long days in both parts of the state and the wonderful people who took the time to come and hear our problems did understand them when they left the conference. Their report is a meaningful report. It had deep consideration by them and their suggestions are very good.

There is one difficulty we have always had, and I say it candidly, and I don't know if it is jealousy between the courts or just what. There is some kind of a mistrust and it goes in both directions. We want to obviate it and knock it out completely.

Members of the Legislature, I hope you will not look at any attempt of the justices of the Supreme Court as an effort to feature their own case. This is not so. We were all on the Supreme Court by appointment first. For all practical purposes, we enjoy tenure. History shows that once you get there, you can normally stay there, unless you are a horribly bad judge.

You must look forward twenty or thirty years at what might be the situation then. As Nevada grows, we will have many, many new judges. We want to know who they will be and if they will be good judges.

This study has established beyond any refutation at all that in states with appointive systems about 80% of the lawyers are interested in judicial office. In states where judges are elected, about 18 to 20% are interested. We must devise systems so that attorneys will be interested and then we can select our judges from a proper basis.

Honestly, we are not feathering our own nest. We need a retirement system badly. The report says we have been served magnificently for 105 years. Not true. We have had some excellent judges and some very poor ones. We have both kinds now.

We will never accomplish anything unless the Legislature is willing to take the bull by the horns and help us work this out.

MR. REID: I would like your reaction on the mandatory retirement age. Why did you feel that this should be age 70?

JUSTICE THOMPSON: It was not my idea that it should be age 70. However, I would say that the philosophy at the present time in judicial operation is to interest a lawyer in practice of judiciary after about fifteen years of private practice. Normally, this would be directed toward attorneys in the 40-45 age bracket. They have had enough practice to qualify and still young enough to devote a full 20-25 years of service a judicial capacity so the state gets top mileage out of him if he is a good one.

There is a general feeling that by the time one is 70 it is time to quit. I think that is the general, underlying reason.



MR. REID: Then you are not completely sold on age 70?

JUSTICE THOMPSON: It is a good age.

MR. REID: The way I read the proposed changes to the constitution, the magistrates would be appointed by the district court. I have talked to some of our judges and they are not too sold on this.

JUSTICE THOMPSON: I don't believe it is absolutely necessary, but this seemed to be the wisest way to go about it.

MR. REID: Do you think appointment by the governor would be better?

JUSTICE THOMPSON: Yes.

MR. LOWMAN: How about using the same commission or a like commission to appoint the district judges?

MR. TORVINEN: When we are talking about district court magistrates, we are talking about administrative magistrates, not trial magistrates.

MR. REID: Are we talking about persons who presently conduct traffic courts comparable to magistrates?

MR. FRANK DAYKIN: The Legislature may provide by law or rule any increase with that law for the qualifications for the magistrate. It was made flexible, so that as conditions change in the state we can add different systems which might be necessary at that time. Therefore, the constitutional provision is primarily either trial magistrates by election or by appointment, other than district judges. This would be a matter raised ultimately for the Legislature to determine.

SENATOR MONROE: We thank the justice for his remarks.

JUSTICE COLLINS: There is one other member of our court that we maybe should hear from, particularly as having to do with public elections in the judicial process. He is the most recent one of us to face a public election.

JUSTICE BATJER: No one warned me that I might be considered as Exhibit A. I don't know if this means I am a good example of the present system or an example of why we should do away with the present system.

Justices should not be going scurrying around the country soliciting funds. They do not have these funds themselves and they have to raise them from friends and associates. Sometimes they come from undesirable sources. My financial wounds are not healed yet.

The system as it is has tremendous cost and it is almost ridiculous to have to campaign state-wide for this office. There is a great deal of harm being done. You are taken away from your job.

When you are a Supreme Court Justice by appointment, you are there on a rather controversial basis and if you are gone for six months out campaigning you cannot be doing your job, so the cases fall to other judges.

From my experience, at least for the last month or two of the campaign, I did not participate in any of the cases. It did not look like my chances were too good, and they did not want to have cases still pending. From a practical standpoint, electioneering has an adverse effect on the court. There were matters heard in September and October that I did not get to work on until December or January.

MR. JACK FRANKEL: Attorney at Law and secretary for California on judicial qualifications, discipline and removal commission in California.

It is a pleasure to be here and to discuss these problems with you, in so far as they relate to the work that we are doing in our commission. I brought with me a copy of our current report. It might serve some purpose and then later I will be available for questions.

I thought I would raise a few questions that I see in your proposal and then be available for questions.

You have here a magnificent opportunity to get a re-structure and revision in your system, a very rare opportunity. The courts are not just right and if you are able to get substantially this kind of package enacted, you will be one of two or three states in the United States having this kind of a judicial system. You will be ahead of California.

I will be most specific. Generally, I think this is well drawn in terms of what is put in the constitution and what is left out. At the same time it is clear. It is not overly general.

I have a question on composition. I would wonder whether you would want the Chief Justice to be on the commission and chairman of the commission. I suppose the theory is that here you have the head of all judicial security. You are putting an unusual burden on the chief justice. He is head of the court system. He is going to be hearing about problems involving judges and may be contacting these judges in an administrative way to make assignments. Whether he will act or will not act, he will get criticism. This is a very difficult situation to put anybody in. He will be calling me and I will wonder if I am going to get the axe or just get sent somewhere. The Supreme Court acts as reviewing agency and he could not participate on it.

The Chief Justice would carry too much weight. He would be the only non-appointive one and where does that leave all the other members of the commission?

Any information he had, he could easily give to the chairman or administrative officer and he would be able to be much franker with the commission if he was not sitting on it.

I am wondering if you need seven members, in a state such as this. I am wondering if five would not be enough, where you have only 25 judges. Even if it grew to 100, a total of 5 could do it. There should be at least two lawyers and two judges, whatever way you go.

I don't believe "confidentiality" is mentioned, although the Supreme Court would act confidentially, I am sure. I would recommend that the word "confidential" be put in the constitution so the Supreme Court could rule it had to be that way. It seems to me this should be specifically so stated.

Concerning grounds for removal in #4: Basically, you are talking about misconduct. "Censure" is apparently intentionally omitted there. This, apparently, leaves the way open for grounds other than as stated here. There should be power to adopt further disciplinary grounds to which censure could be applied. I see no grant of substantive disciplinary rules.

A further possibility is to put further language in here. It is too vague and would be void under due process. You might want to itemize something as conduct inappropriate to the administration of justice and so forth.

One other point: This, in its language, applies to judges and justices. Is it intended to include lower officers, such as magistrates? No matter what the lower system is, if there is a magistrate acting as a judge, it would be well to have him subject to this, too. I should say magistrates should be included in the section even though supervised in some other way.

I have a question about the name, "Judicial Qualifications Commission". We have it in California and this is not too good. "Disciplinary Commission" seems to be too strong. Would you like a less harsh name, like "Commission on Tenure"? It is better to start out with the power and authority there but not to show it too much. If it is too strong, the commission is afraid to act. It is better not to have it too much in evidence.

Generally, it is very well done, and I approve heartily of the basic structure.

SENATOR DODGE: Mr. Franklin appeared before a meeting of the subcommittee in which this matter was considered fully, about whether we wanted this type of thing in Nevada. These people would be interested in knowing statistically how your commission is going in California, how many judges have resigned as a result, and so on.

MR. FRANKEL: We have 1,030 judges and this includes about 250 of the lower type judges. We have had the system since 1961. 1968 figures would be as good as any. We had 132 complaints, 38 of which resulted in some investigation by the commission. Many were closed because they obviously were not valid. In 35 instances the judge was contacted, stating what complaint had been made, but not always stating the name of the person complaining. Some were comparatively minor and some were major.

There were two cases in which, during the course of the proceedings the judge resigned or retired. Those were quite serious. One was a disability case. None actually brought to any hearing. There was this great "in-between" where some admonition was made. Firm hearing are very rare. We had only one that went all the way through. In that instance, the judge prevailed before the Supreme Court and the removal recommendation was not followed.

The great advantage of this system is that it shows what is expected and what is intended of the public and of the bar. It shows that action can be taken whether it is court conduct, intemperance or whatever, there is a permanent method of taking action.



Of course action can only come about as a means of correction if a situation actually exists.

MR. REID: Can you tell me how judges of justice and municipal courts are chosen in California?

MR. FRANKEL: Initially, they are appointed but they come up for election each six years. They stay on by being elected. Yours are appointed by county commissioners. Some don't like that way but that is the trend. About 90% are appointed by the governor. The only times they are not appointed by the governor is when a judge did not wish to give the governor his election. There would be no vacancy until he chose to run.

SENATOR DODGE: It has been said to me that while this commission might work well in California, it is more formal there than it would be here where everybody knows everybody. Would you comment on that?

MR. FRANKEL: It would be very difficult for a system like this to work in one court because it would be like a family. That is the reason I suggested against the Chief Justice being on the panel. It might be too much within the family. You should have some system and I can't think of a better one than this. You should have a state system, rather than an arm of a local court.

SENATOR DODGE: How long has your commission been in existence in California?

MR. FRANKEL: Seven and one-half years.

SENATOR DODGE: Could you make an observation about what the effect has been in general working performance by the judiciary since you have had this?

MR. FRANKEL: You can't expect too much of this commission. It is not supervisory. It should only get into the matter when there is a specific accusation. It can check on assignments and things in an administrative way and in a disciplinary way.

There are two ways it could do a good job. First, specific instances, as ticket-fixing and acting insolent to the parties and witnesses, being over-bearing and just not treating people good. These things do happen. Here is a way you can zero in on it. Some one was in court and they might tell a horrible tale which is verifiable. If someone can shrug his shoulders and do nothing, it is a travesty of law and order.

A judge might say "I don't care what anybody says. This is my court and I will run it as I please. I am going to do it my way". There should be a way of doing something about this. We have had a number of these instances. With this law you can look at it and say "this is just not acceptable conduct." You can ask questions around and if this wide-spread, you can do something about it.

Second, the judges have said that it raised the whole level of the judges looking at his role. It affects the way a judge looks at himself, his own performance, even if he is a dedicated person. Everyone should have someone looking over his shoulder. He should know if he goes off

the deep end of something.

SENATOR DODGE: Read a paragraph from a central Nevada newspaper to the effect that the people of Nevada are being asked to give up their rights to the judiciary, giving way to a virtual judicial dictatorship.

SENATOR DODGE: Mr. Frankel, could you comment on the ability of the Judicial Commission if we appointed it to prevent judicial dictatorship.

MR. FRANKEL: When something specific happens, this is a much more direct way of acting than through an election. I don't think the right to vote for them is wasted any. There are things which would shake voters if they knew about them, such as being intoxicated in court, or not deciding cases for years and years. There might be senility or early mental incompetency. The judge could be ill for years on end but this doesn't get decided in a public way. This new law is an effective way of dealing with it.

Where you are just trying to weigh two individuals that is a different situation. The commission can say Judge Jones is there and he has been mediocre and there is another man there that could do a better job. Now this can't be done. There has to be another way.

MR. KEAN: You recommend reducing the commission from 7 members to 5. There would be two lawyers and two judges. In our small state, there might be two lawyers sitting in judgment on a judge and he might have to go before that judge the same day with a case. Wouldn't that cause trouble?

MR. FRANKEL: That is a theoretical possibility that has not existed at all in California. I can see different cases where people are going to have to disqualify themselves. Is this a reason not to have lawyers on the commission?

MR. KEAN: Maybe there shouldn't be lawyers on the commission.

MR. FRANKEL: You have to have lawyers on it. It is so seldom that it gets right down to that kind of thing. There could be other ways of doing it. Whatever disadvantage there might be through that way would be more than compensated through the advantages.

MR. KEAN: You said that 132 complaints were filed. Who may file them?

MR. FRANKEL: Anybody can. Most come in from just citizens who have heard about the local judge or some case has come to their attention. There are a lot of these complaints going around right now. I am surprised they have not sent them to your commission.

CHARLES SPRINGER: My purpose here today is only to file, in triplicate, if I am allowed to do so, recommendations made by the bar association. The recommendations I am submitting to you were made and adopted by the bar association. However, there was not the same degree of agreement. Most of the provisions were approved 2 to 1. This provides a substantial body of dissent and we ask that you make these recommendations a part of your study.

MR. DAYKIN: How many members of the Washoe County Bar Association were in on this?

MR. SPRINGER: Sixty-five or seventy members were there, which is the highest number we have gathered at any one meeting.

MR. TORVINEN: I would like to throw out a question. I have some reservations about doing away with a third lower court level. In the long run, I have some grave concern about it. I think the transition of everything from Justice to District in a period of a few months would cause a very chaotic condition. Could we leave the constitution where it said more clearly that a third court could be created?

SENATOR DODGE: This is one of the fundamental decisions that we need to make.

The problem here seems to me to be how do we get rid of the trial de novo, which in my opinion is indefensible. The reason we have had it is we have had inherent problems and have not exerted ourselves to try to solve these things. I can't see why we should have two trials. If we could answer all the questions about leaving the justice court and making it a true trial court so you would have a record to go up on appeal with, we could then have a three trial system and that might not be repugnant.

I suppose then the appeal would lie to the District Court or a writ of review. If we were, in effect, to make this lower court a court of record, then we have to review the method of selection, tenure and discipline, and qualifications on that job much more closely than if we did, in fact, make it ministerial in nature.

We really don't have all the answers and we want your help in solving this one. What we do with the rest devolves on how we are going to accomplish this one. We have all contested trials be transferred to the district level. We are trying to develop reliable records that could be used on appeal. Many things could be done on that lower level.

An alternative is if the Legislature determines that the magistrate should decide jurisdiction then district court could be given discretion to grant an appeal--- no absolute guarantee that he will get another trial.

I would like to point out then more specifically that we thought we were leaving enough latitude to go either way, because we have said in effect in section 1 that the Legislature may provide by law or the Supreme Court by any rule creation of court system in Nevada, appointments of judges and magistrates and the qualifications for such a magistrate.

When we talk about having two court system, we are talking about one trial and one appeal, or you could do it with a three level system and appeal up to the district court. You still have two-level courts, one trial and one appeal.

We surely did not think we had arrived at anything that was an overwhelming course of action and could not consider any other suggestion. However, trial de novo is just not defensible.

TOM COOKE: Member of the Board of Governors of the State Bar and also minority member of the Washoe County Bar.

I voted the other way. I am speaking only for myself. I think this is the guts of the whole thing.

We have got to try and find a better method of selecting judges, bearing on a merit system. We must be assured that if we make a mistake it can be rectified. It seems to me that this proposal submitted by the Study Committee does this.

I am sure that any lawyer can go through this and find a lot of things to find fault with. I think some of these suggestions should be studied, along with other things.

I do want to go on record as being in favor of the proposed method of selecting our judges.

SENATOR MONROE: SB 83 is certainly a minor piece of legislation. We look to have a hearing on SB 84 and possibly SB 85.

SB 86 places the State Law Library under the Supreme Court. Any comments on any of these bills?

MILDRED HYER: STATE LAW LIBRARIAN: I would like to comment on section 3 of SB 86 and also section 6. This is the bill to remove the Law Library from the State Library and place it under the jurisdiction of the Supreme Court.

It exempts librarians from 284, the Personnel Act, which could create a morale situation. At the present time, all employees are related. To set aside a part and make them eligible for higher possibilities is not conducive to good morale. To select four seems somewhat arbitrary.

The State Library has been the Federal Document Depository for more than a century. Materials transferred to the proposed Law Library would be less available to the general public, aside from the fact that the general public is reluctant to go into a special library.

Five vacancies exist now in the Law Library and a search for these could be begun at once if it were not moved. Many of our materials were purchased for and were intended for the general use of the public. An example might be a History of Divorce in the United States or the History of Crime and Justice in America. If retained in the State Library, such materials are available to anyone. Present practice calls for retention of the material in the State Library and a card being placed in the Law Library. It is placed in the library where it can be most useful. Such procedure is acceptable and would not denude the Library of these materials. The Law Library would cooperate with the State Library. All libraries must cooperate with each other and even cooperate with other states. We can form a network for increased sharing of equipment and personnel for maximum use. The trend is toward increasing coordination rather than toward separation. We are now working for a firm outline for such inclusion on the use of equipment and forces. It is not believed that sufficient funds are available for each library to be sufficient unto itself.

The State Library does oppose the separation of the Law Library from the State Library because it will result in increased cost and lesser service to the people of the State of Nevada.

JUSTICE COLLINS: May I give a few comments on some of the points raised by Mrs. Hyer? Sge is a very grand lady and it is an unenviable position



to take a stand contrary to hers because she is a good librarian and excellent friend.

Referring to section 3, having to do with personnel of Supreme Court being in the unclassified service: All present members are in the unclassified and if transferred, it would include the 14 and probably two more who would be in that role. I really wonder if that is the type of objection that would assure the defeat of this measure, which has an important role in the court's function.

The Law Library is the principal tool of the court. The material that is in these books is something that we just cannot get along without. We feel this highly specialized Library should be in our control. Ninety percent of the use of that library is by the judges and attorneys.

As regards the other objections under section 6: There would be an absolute minimum of difficulty in that regard because our people would work very closely with Mrs. Hyer and some of the documents she feels should not be moved, might be left there.

There is another rumor that the library might be moved across the street to the legislative building. We might allow this simply to make more room for everybody.

SENATOR DODGE: This is a fairly late development. We explored with Judge Hyde the possibility of setting up seminars for the municipal judges.

The court administrator, section 9, arranges for instruction. If the legislature receives this legislation favorably and supports it, we can institute a course of study this fall for these lower judges. There is an appropriation of \$15,500. For that money, we can pay the travel expenses of all the municipal judges in Nevada, house them in Reno, and pay whatever constructional costs that are involved, and institute something for Nevada that, as far as I know, does not exist anywhere else.

SENATOR MONROE: We want to thank everyone again for the work they have done, and especially Senator Dodge.

The Hearing was adjourned at 4:45 P.M.



*is Harry*

CITIZENS CONFERENCE ON NEVADA COURTS

Reno, Nevada, July 10-11, 1968

CONSENSUS STATEMENT

The Nevada judicial system, created in 1864, has served us well for more than a century. Now, with the population growth and changed conditions of recent years, certain weaknesses have developed which should be eliminated or minimized.

It has been our good fortune to have many dedicated and competent judges, but the present election system deprives the people of the services of many excellent potential judges, puts unfair and unnecessary burdens on those who take judicial office, and denies them the security and independence which are essential for the best judicial service.

Our state suffers from lack of a unified system of courts and an effective administrative program.

In recognition of these problems, the 1967 Legislature ordered a study of the Nevada court structure by a subcommittee of the Legislative Counsel Bureau. We are <sup>in</sup> accord with the recommendations of that committee as presented to us by its Chairman, Senator Carl F. Dodge, calling generally for a state-wide unified court system with effective administrative provisions, a judiciary selected and retained in office on the basis of merit, with adequate provision for retirement,

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discipline and removal.

#### COURT ORGANIZATION

In order to meet present conditions and to fulfill the future requirements of the citizens of Nevada for an integrated, efficient judicial system, uniformly administered, we recommend ~~elimination~~ of Justice and Municipal Courts and that a two-level court system be adopted. Such a system should consist of a Supreme Court and District Courts. Magistrates subject to District Court supervision and direction should be appointed to assist in the performance of District Court functions.

We recommend a detailed study into the costs and income distribution inherent in such a two-level system by an appropriate agency under the direction of the state Legislature.

Double appeals should be eliminated. Allocation of Magistrates should be governed by the needs of the areas to be served. Specially trained judges should be assigned to all juvenile cases.

#### COURT ADMINISTRATION

In order to efficiently operate an integrated judicial system an administrative assistant to the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court should be appointed to assist the Supreme Court in fulfilling its responsibilities as the head of the Nevada judicial system. The primary qualification of such

3-

officer should be administrative ability, regardless of legal background.

#### JUDICIAL SELECTION AND TENURE

We recommend the adoption of a selection system which includes nomination by a non-partisan commission and appointment by the Governor, with tenure subject to periodic vote of the people.

The value of the judge ultimately selected by the Governor rests in large measure, if not fundamentally, upon the skill and dedication of the commission who nominate him. The commission should include lawyers because of their ability to assess the legal qualifications of a prospective candidate, and laymen by reason of their ability to make wise judgments as to his character.

We believe that competitive elections for judicial office, costing thousands of dollars in campaign funds, some or all of which are contributed by others, should be eliminated. The solicitation of campaign funds is incompatible with the dignity and impartiality of the judicial office. We believe that judges should be freed from election campaigning, thereby making more time available to them for judicial duties.

#### JUDICIAL COMPENSATION

The salaries paid our judges should be commensurate

4-

with their responsibilities and sufficient to attract qualified and competent lawyers to the bench. Our Constitution should permit a judge's salary to be increased during his term in office, and the remuneration of our judges should be reviewed periodically.

In the proposed two-level court system we recommend that Magistrates should be made state employees and eligible for our state retirement program, and that these Magistrates should receive sufficient compensation to attract competent personnel.

We recommend that the fees derived by the judiciary from performing civil marriages should go directly to the state.

#### RETIREMENT

A fair and adequate retirement program should be maintained and reviewed periodically. A mandatory retirement age for judges should be fixed by the Legislature, and retired judges should serve on specific assignments as directed by the Supreme Court.

#### DISCIPLINE AND REMOVAL

We endorse the procedure for the discipline and removal of judges by the establishment of a commission made up of judges, lawyers and laymen to conduct confidential investigation

5-

of complaints and to recommend appropriate disciplinary or retirement action by the Supreme Court.

#### ACTION PROGRAM

The conferees are in ~~unanimous~~ agreement that a state-wide citizens committee composed of representatives from the Northern Nevada Conference and representatives from the Southern Nevada Conference should be formed to immediately implement a state-wide program of public information in support of the proposed changes set forth in the Dodge Committee report.

The proposed changes in the judicial system will require Constitutional amendments. This will take time. The citizens committee must take action now.

To insure that the work of the citizens committee is timely and appropriately taken, a steering committee should be formed. The initial membership of this steering committee should be selected from the conferees attending this Conference. Selected from Group No. I are the following:

Joseph McMullen  
Mrs. L. Curtis Farr  
Byron Stetler  
Neil Plath  
Mrs. Esther Nicholson  
Del T. Landing

*John W. Brown*  
From Group No. II:

Thomas Wilson  
Bert Fitz  
Ernest Newton



6-

From Group No. III:

Edward Manville  
Chris Sheering  
Mrs. William Knudtsen  
Charles Munson  
Mrs. Elizabeth Helgren  
And a representative of the Nevada Parent  
Teachers Association, who will be named later.

CITIZENS CONFERENCE ON NEVADA COURTS  
LAS VEGAS, NEVADA, JULY 12--13, 1968  
CONSENSUS STATEMENT

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/-

(First Draft)

1           The people of Nevada have been fortunate in having  
2   a relatively efficient judicial system, with many able and  
3   dedicated judges. The Conference recognizes that changes  
4   must come if this system is to continue to meet the needs of  
5   the people in the future and that modernization should be  
6   planned to prevent crises before they occur. Certain problems  
7   now exist which have aroused concern among governmental  
8   leaders as well as the citizenry at large. A preliminary  
9   report by a sub-committee of the legislative counsel bureau  
10   calls attention to these problems and suggests proposed  
11   remedies. We commend the sub-committee's study and endorse  
12   its recommendations in principal.

13   COURT ORGANIZATION

14           The judicial system of Nevada should be an  
15   integrated one, uniformly applying the laws of the state for  
16   all citizens. To achieve this goal, changes should be made  
17   in the present court structure to provide for a two level  
18   court system patterned along the recommendations of the  
19   sub-committee's report. ✓The two level court system would be  
20   composed of the supreme court and district courts. The  
21   supreme court would be the appellate court and exercise  
22   administrative control and supervision over the entire  
23   system. The district court would be the trial courts in all  
24   cases. District judges would be assisted in their duties by  
25   magistrates appointed by and responsible to the district

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LAS VEGAS, NEVADA

1 court.

2 Comprehensive study and comparative analysis of the  
3 financial structure of the judicial system, including costs  
4 and income, should be made.

5 All judicial officers must be given the opportunity  
6 for training to achieve the highest degree of judicial  
7 performance.

#### 8 COURT ADMINISTRATION

9 In order for the Supreme Court of Nevada to fulfill  
10 its assigned role in the state government, it must accept  
11 supervisory powers over the judicial system. An administra-  
12 tive assistant should be appointed to assist that court in  
13 performance of this part of the judicial function. The  
14 administrative assistant ideally should be legally trained  
15 and must necessarily have a good administrative and accounting  
16 background.

#### 17 JUDICIAL SELECTION AND TENURE

18 The present method of election of district court  
19 judges and supreme court justices is not entirely satisfactory.  
20 The distraction created by engaging in frequent election  
21 campaigns is incompatible with the judicial process. The  
22 judicial power of this state must be entrusted only to  
23 competent, industrious persons who are able, experienced,  
24 highly trained and possessed of judicial temperament.  
25

1 Although the present system has produced a high caliber of  
2 judges and justices, it cannot guarantee that these goals  
3 will always be reached.....

4 We recommend the establishment of non-partisan  
5 judicial selection commissions basically in conformity with  
6 the plan outlined in the sub-committee's report. These com-  
7 missions, as recommended, should contain lawyers, judges and  
8 laymen. They should seek out, screen, interview and  
9 investigate potential justices and judges when a vacancy  
10 occurs. Of those so considered, three nominees should be  
11 submitted to the Governor. Neither the nomination process  
12 nor the ultimate appointment should be governed by political  
13 considerations.

14 Each judge should be required to submit himself and  
15 his record, at regular intervals, to the electorate for their  
16 determination as to whether he should be retained in office.

#### 17 COMPENSATION AND RETIREMENT

18  
19 Salary and retirement benefits should be such as to  
20 attract able and qualified attorneys to judicial office,  
21 and should be reviewed periodically by the legislature.

22 The constitutional limitation on salary increase  
23 during a judicial term of office should be repealed. It  
24 should be mandatory for a judge to retire at an age to be  
25 determined by the legislature, and the chief justice should

1 be empowered to assign competent retired judges, with their  
2 consent, to active judicial duty as needed.

3 DISCIPLINE AND REMOVAL  
4

5 We strongly endorse the sub-committees' proposal  
6 for a commission to receive and investigate complaints  
7 regarding conduct and performance of judges and make  
8 recommendations to the supreme court for their removal  
9 from office when necessary.  
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# HOW JUDGES ARE REMOVED

1. By rejection of the Voters.
2. By retirement at age 70.
3. By death.
4. By retirement for disability.

A. Upon complaint of anyone.

B. Commission on Judicial Discipline.

## Composed of

1. The Chief Justice
2. Two other Justices
3. or Judges
4. Two members of the
5. State Bar of Nevada
6. Two laymen appointed
7. by the Governor

1. Makes preliminary investigation

- a. Dismisses or
- b. Orders a hearing

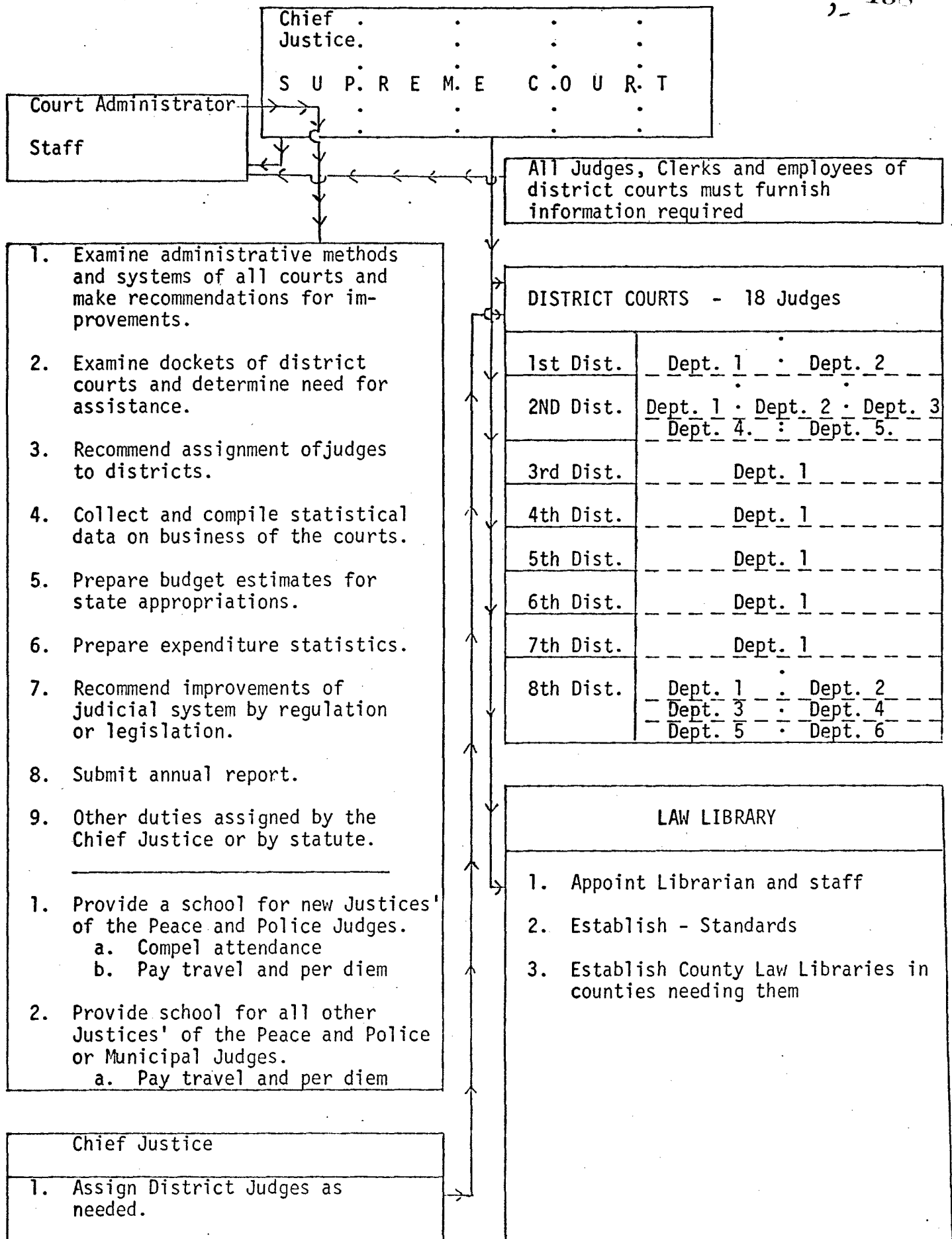
2. Recommends

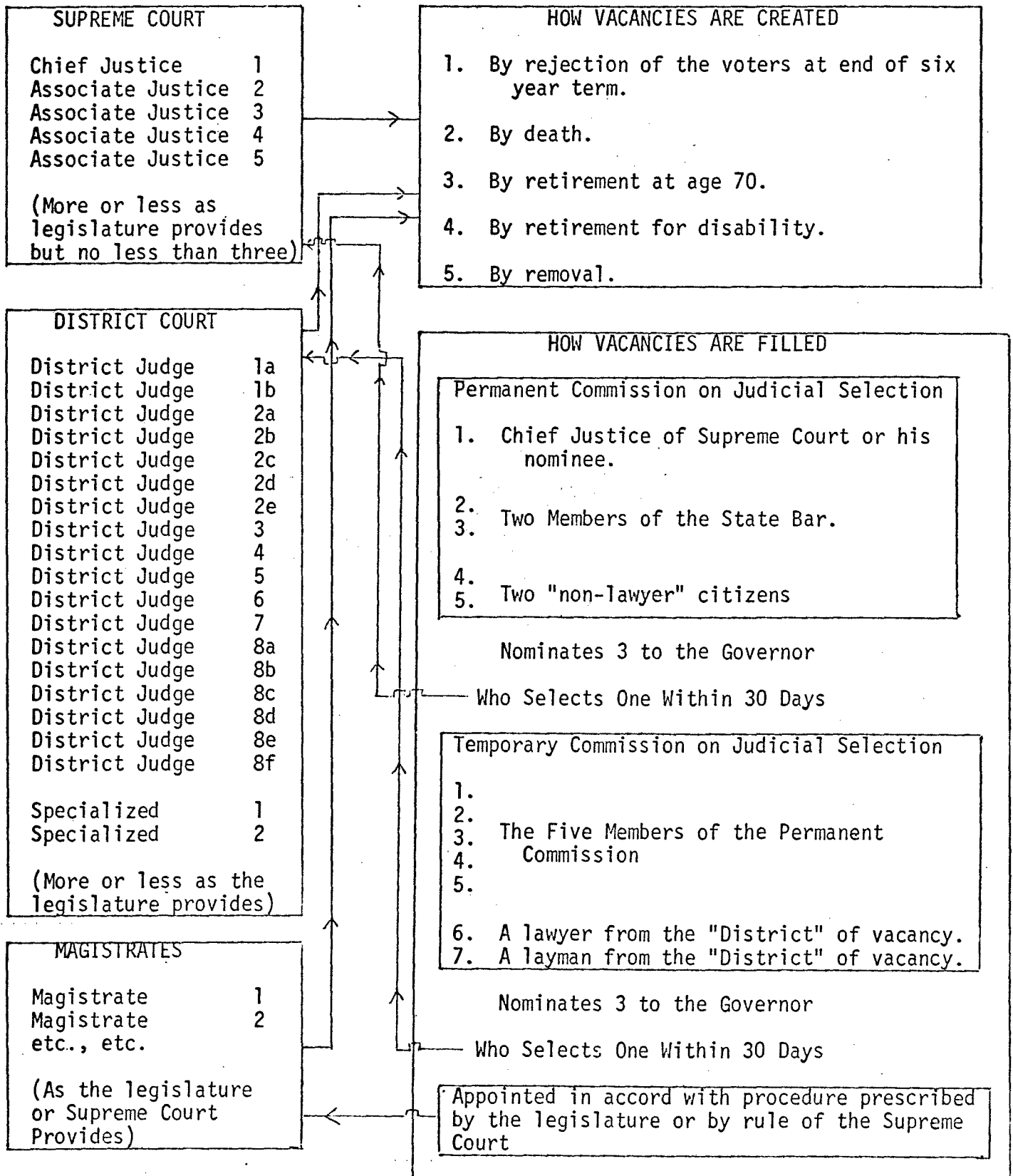
- a. Censure
- b. Retirement
- c. Final Action is by Supreme Court

5. By Removal (same procedure as 4, supra.)

## Grounds for Retirement or Removal

4. Mental or physical disability which prevents proper performance of judicial duties and which is likely to be permanent in nature.
5. Willful misconduct, willful or persistent failure to perform the duties of his office; or habitual intemperance.





1968 REPORT OF THE  
COMMISSION ON JUDICIAL QUALIFICATIONS  
TO THE GOVERNOR

MEMBERS

Hon. Murray Draper (Chairman)  
Presiding Justice, Court of Appeal  
First Appellate District, Division Three  
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Stockton

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Attorney Member  
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Benjamin H. Swig  
Public Member  
San Francisco

Ronald L. Tiday  
Attorney Member  
Garden Grove

Jack E. Frankel, Executive Secretary  
3041 State Building  
350 McAllister Street  
San Francisco



LETTER OF TRANSMITTAL

To His Excellency, Ronald Reagan  
Governor of the State of California

The 1968 Report of the Commission on Judicial Qualifications  
is presented herewith, pursuant to the provisions of Section 11091  
of the Government Code.

February  
1969

Murray Draper, Chairman

1968 REPORT OF COMMISSION  
ON JUDICIAL QUALIFICATIONS

I

The Commission has now completed seven and a half years of regular operation. The concept of a tribunal always available to receive and investigate charges against judges, which ten years ago was hotly debated, has long since received approval and support among all ranks of the judiciary. During 1968 Pennsylvania, Louisiana, Michigan, Alaska, Oregon and Idaho changed their state laws to put comparable programs into operation, all patterned after the successful experience in California. The relevant provisions from the California Constitution are on the last page.

II

The statistical side of the year's work can be quickly stated. As of December 1, 1968, 1030 judges were within Commission jurisdiction as follows:

Appellate Courts	52
Superior Courts	406
Municipal Courts	324
Justice Courts	248

During 1968 132 complaints were filed with the Commission of which 48 warranted some inquiry or investigation. In 35 instances this included asking the judge for his explanation and reply. In two cases the judge resigned or retired from office thus terminating the investigation. This is but a fraction of the total retirements this year. The great majority of retirements and resignations are by judges who have never been brought to the attention of the Commission. There was no recommendation during the year to the Supreme Court for censure, removal or retirement. The number of valid complaints is small.

The great majority of the communications to judges for their comment were not major accusations but involved matters which the Commission concluded were of sufficient significance to deserve the particular attention of and, in some cases, correction by the judge. Often the judge's response absolved him of any fault. In several instances, after receiving their explanations, judges were admonished; in some cases the inquiry itself had the effect of a cautionary notice. In such matters the precise Commission action depends upon such factors as the nature and extent of the infraction and the attitude and cooperation of the judge. Some of these cases were terminated after an exchange of letters while others have required extensive investigation and review extending over many months. A substantial contribution to better judicial performance is being rendered by the ability of an impartial body comprised of representatives from the public, the legal profession, and the judiciary to act promptly, effectively and confidentially.

### III

The word "Qualifications" in the Commission's title is to some extent a misnomer. Jurisdiction is limited to specific conduct, condition or activity which falls within one of the five grounds spelled out in the Constitution, i.e., wilful misconduct in office, wilful and persistent failure to perform duties, habitual intemperance, conduct prejudicial to the administration of justice that brings the judicial office into disrepute or disability that seriously interferes with the performance of duties and is or is likely to become permanent. Unless allegations come within one of these five areas a problem or situation is outside of the Commission's purview.

The power to act against a judge for misconduct or wrongdoing is totally different from the power to act for or against a prospect for judicial office during the selection process.

California Constitutional Provisions

Article VI - Judicial

Section 8. The Commission on Judicial Qualifications consists of 2 judges of courts of appeal, 2 judges of superior courts, and one judge of a municipal court, each appointed by the Supreme Court; 2 members of the State Bar who have practiced law in this State for 10 years, appointed by its governing body; and 2 citizens who are not judges, retired judges, or members of the State Bar, appointed by the Governor and approved by the Senate, a majority of the membership concurring. All terms are 4 years.

Commission membership terminates if a member ceases to hold the position that qualified him for appointment. A vacancy shall be filled by the appointing power for the remainder of the term.

Section 18. (a) A judge is disqualified from acting as a judge, without loss of salary, while there is pending (1) an indictment or an information charging him in the United States with a crime punishable as a felony under California or federal law, or (2) a recommendation to the Supreme Court by the Commission on Judicial Qualifications for his removal or retirement.

(b) On recommendation of the Commission on Judicial Qualifications or on its own motion, the Supreme Court may suspend a judge from office without salary when in the United States he pleads guilty or no contest or is found guilty of a crime punishable as a felony under California or federal law or of any other crime that involves moral turpitude under that law. If his conviction is reversed suspension terminates, and he shall be paid his salary for the period of suspension. If he is suspended and his conviction becomes final the Supreme Court shall remove him from office.

(c) On recommendation of the Commission on Judicial Qualifications the Supreme Court may (1) retire a judge for disability that seriously interferes with the performance of his duties and is or is likely to become permanent, and (2) censure or remove a judge for action occurring not more than 6 years prior to the commencement of his current term that constitutes wilful misconduct in office, wilful and persistent failure to perform his duties, habitual intemperance, or conduct prejudicial to the administration of justice that brings the judicial office into disrepute.

(d) A judge retired by the Supreme Court shall be considered to have retired voluntarily. A judge removed by the Supreme Court is ineligible for judicial office and pending further order of the court he is suspended from practicing law in this State.

(e) The Judicial Council shall make rules implementing this section and providing for confidentiality of proceedings.

REPORT TO THE WASHOE BAR ASSOCIATION  
UPON THE PROPOSED CONSTITUTIONAL  
AMENDMENT TO THE NEVADA CONSTITUTION

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MR. PRESIDENT: Your committee submits the following unanimous report upon the proposed constitutional amendments.

It is the conclusion of the entire committee that the proposal, in its present form, is defective and should either be altered or disapproved by this Bar Association, and that the areas of our disagreement and reasons therefor should be conveyed to our legislative delegation. This decision was not lightly arrived at, but was the result of numerous meetings and much thought by the members of your Committee.

Initially, we will note that proponents of the legislation have contacted various individuals upon the Committee and suggested that if the basic theme of the proposed constitutional amendment was proper then we should overlook any disagreements which we might have to individual portions of the report in order that the proposal might be presented to the Legislature without opposition. The Committee gave serious consideration to this suggestion, but concluded that something as important as completely redesigning the Constitution of the State of Nevada, as it applies to our court structure, should be critically studied in detail prior to passage, and if there are any areas in which it may be improved, it should be done now.

The Committee has noted what it considers to be the most important defects in the proposed amendments and in this report will discuss them in the order in which they appear in the proposal.

First: Notice was taken by the Committee of the radical change proposed in the Constitution of our State relative to the judicial department of our government.

1-167

Article VI of the Constitution of Nevada is entitled "Judicial Department." It sets forth in some five pages of detailed provisions the court structure of this State. In this Article we find three state courts authorized, a Supreme Court, District Courts and Justices' Courts; we find the composition of each court, the jurisdictional limits of each court, and other matters properly describing the composition of courts in Nevada.

Article VI of our Constitution has effectively served the people of Nevada for over a century. It has provided certainty and stability to the administration of justice while at the same time allowing for some necessary modifications necessitated by changing times.

The subject study, "Nevada's Court Structure" proposes an amendment to our Constitution which would, paradoxically, remove the constitutional description of our "court structure" from Article VI and placing it in the changing makeup of subsequent legislatures and supreme courts.

In lieu of some five pages of text delineating our court structure, the proposed amendment substitutes a single sentence, to-wit:

"The judicial power of this state is vested in a unified court system, comprising (sic) a supreme court and a district court."

What about other courts and their jurisdiction?  
The amendment provides only that,

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/—

"The legislature may provide by law, or the supreme court may provide by rule not inconsistent with any such law" for the creation of geographical divisions of the district court, assignment of judges to specialized functions, and, most importantly, for the appointment of "one or more magistrates in one or more divisions, and the jurisdiction and qualifications of such magistrates."

We must clearly understand, then, that the essential purpose of "Nevada's Court Structure" is to eliminate Nevada's court structure as constitutionally proclaimed and place its future formulation in the hands of subsequent legislatures or supreme courts. Although the new proposal does specify that the Supreme Court should have appellate jurisdiction, and the District Courts original jurisdiction, all other direction is omitted.

The Committee anticipates the argument that in a fast-growing and progressive state a great deal of elasticity should be allowed in such matters so that the Legislature or Supreme Court might effect changes immediately. After consideration, it is the Committee's unanimous conclusion that the makeup of our courts is such a fundamental matter and so much a part of the very foundation of our government that it should be established at the constitutional level.

Our position should not be understood, of course, as anything in the nature of opposition to change in the Constitution, or as an assertion that the present Constitution has achieved a level of perfection. We assert only that change of our judicial structure should be achieved only with the utmost of prudence inherent in the process of

constitutional amendment, and with the exact proposal submitted in advance to the public.

1-160

We believe that some change may be in order for our court structure, but proposed changes should be carefully delineated and when finally approved invested with the permanency and dignity of constitutional enactment. We do not believe that the people of this State would be served by removing the judicial matters from them. Rejection of this portion of the report is recommended, with the intent that a clear statement be included in the Constitution setting forth with particularity what the proposed court structure will be so that the electorate may vote on a particular system.

Second: The selection and retention of judges. A great deal of attention was given by the Committee to the central question of the election of judges, or the proposed alternative of removing this right from the public. Members of the Committee weighed the various arguments for each system, and the Committee was divided as to which was the preferable system. It was felt that substantial legitimate arguments could be presented for each position. No member was unalterably opposed to the changing of the elective system, given the proper safeguards. However, the Committee was unanimous in its opinion that the elective system should be continued until it is proven by experience that the appointive system, accompanied by a strong disciplinary commission, will serve the needs of the people of this State.

In making this recommendation the Committee considered the following factors:

A. A constitutional amendment providing for creation



of a commission for supervision of the judiciary has already passed one session of the Legislature. This is Assembly Joint Resolution 5 of the 54th Session. We favor this amendment and believe that the Association should go on record as supporting it. Upon passage of this Act, we shall have the opportunity to observe the activities of the judicial review commission and be able to judge accurately the workability of such a commission under the special circumstances existing in Nevada. At this point we insert the cautionary reminder that the situation in our State is much different from that in neighboring California and the larger states. Here judge knows judge and lawyer knows judge on uniquely close and personal terms. This situation must be conceded to be a possible impediment in the field of judicial discipline and provides additional reason to believe that we should proceed to observe the judicial review committee in action before taking any action on the subject. 1-170

B. The elective system does provide safeguards to the public. The historically minded will recall examples of judges being replaced apparently because of some fault in their performance. We can recall no instance in which a clearly competent judge has been replaced by a clearly incompetent one. This is not to argue the merits of the elective system, but to maintain that it does provide some safeguards for the public. Some members of the Committee believed that the present proposed judicial review commission contains no real safeguard. All members of the Committee believed that more assurances should become evident before precipitously eliminating a system that has served us quite well for over one hundred years.

C. The Committee saw no real hazard in continuing the present system for a reasonable period of reflection, /-171 evaluation and experience with a judicial review commission. The Committee notes that in the last election in Washoe County, four of the five judges, all incumbent and competent, were up for election. None was even opposed. We must remember that only members of the Bar are eligible for judicial office, and we must credit our own members (demonstrated by the above example) with some good sense in these matters. The Committee feels constrained to note that under our present system Washoe County has an excellent judiciary, and we do not feel that an emergency change is required in order to provide the County with a high quality of justice. The Committee does not see any chance that our judicial system will fall at the hands of an improvident electorate were we to follow this Committee's recommendation of prudent delay and observation.

The Committee unanimously concluded that until this judicial review commission is established and operating, with a demonstrated record of achievement, the Bar should not support a change from the elective process.

Third, and finally, we noted various other objections of more modest significance and will mention several such problems.

~~A. The Act places a portion of the function of the state library system under the jurisdiction of the Chief Justice of the Nevada Supreme Court. We feel that the Chief Justice has enough in the way of administrative duties, coupled with his judicial functions so that it is unreasonable~~ NOT APPROVED

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~~to expect the Chief Justice to enter into the further administrative duties of librarian, and that we should not compound any further administrative duties upon the Court.~~

B. Our present system provides for the rotation of the Chief Justice of the Nevada Supreme Court every biennium. The Act as proposed would provide that the Chief Justice be elected by his fellow Justices, and it was proposed that this be for life. The Committee does not feel that popularity or seniority should be a factor in the administration of the Court's work or the judicial system of the State of Nevada, but believes that five men sit on the Court whose talents for leadership and administration could be well used, and in doing this on a two year rotational basis over a period of ten years, each one of our judges can contribute in this regard.

C. A further proposal is made that the Court sit in panels. We note that when the additional two judges were added by the Legislature only two years ago, they specifically placed in the legislation that it was their intent that the Supreme Court sit in bank, the idea being no doubt that the State would have the benefit and wisdom of the thinking of the entire Court. We believe that such recent legislative intent should be honored, and that it would be improper for us to change the legislative policy only two years after securing their assistance in achieving the additional Justices of the Supreme Court. The Committee is certain that it need not remind this Association of the need for respectful co-operation with our Legislature.

In conclusion, we believe that one of the most real

and important problems facing our judiciary has not been met , -170  
in the statutory proposals presented, namely, that of assuring  
adequate compensation for the judiciary. If we are to maintain  
the current caliber of our judges and continue to attract  
such men, it is imperative that their compensation be brought  
to a realistic level in line with our sister states.

We support the request made by Chief Justice Jon  
Collins that the salary be established at \$35,000 for the  
Supreme Court and \$30,000 for the trial court. If the  
continued eminence of our courts is to continue, we must  
initiate and pass such a measure at this Legislature, and  
we feel that this is the single most important contribution  
that this Association can make to the administration of  
justice at this time.

We would urge that this is the direction and aim  
which this Association should pledge itself to during this  
legislative session.

Respectfully submitted.

John Squire Drendel

Peter Echeverria

Leslie M. Fry

Frank R. Petersen

Charles E. Springer

Eugene J. Wait, Jr.

Jerry Carr Whitehead