



On May 21, 2025, at 08:34, Kevin Baron <kmb.137.95@gmail.com> wrote:

Good Morning,

My name is Kevin M. Baron, a resident of East Orange, New Jersey. I am writing as a member of the public and will not be representing any organization at the May 28, 2025, public hearing. My perspectives, which I wish to share, are informed by personal experiences as a paralegal, a victim of domestic violence, a member of the LGBT community, and as a tenant who successfully defended against several unwarranted landlord-tenant actions. I have also witnessed the struggles of friends and loved ones in accessing quality, affordable legal counsel—an issue particularly acute for middle-class individuals unable to access need based aid yet unable to afford quality or any legal representation. While I am prepared to attend in person, I would appreciate the option to make my statement remotely if possible.

I respectfully request an opportunity to speak on the following Committee Reports and specific recommendations/topics, within the allocated five-minute timeframe:

**1. Committee on Diversity, Inclusion, and Community Engagement Report:**

- **Support for Recommendations 2025:02, 2025:03, 2025:05, 2025:06, and 2025:09, specifically focusing on:**
  - Enhancing the fee waiver application process (e.g., using SNAP/Medicaid as automatic qualifiers) and considering a sliding scale for court fees to improve access for individuals of lesser socioeconomic status.
  - Expanding pro se litigant access to "Appellate E-Courts" or JEDS for appellate matters, and improving access to appellate case law/briefs.

- Commending the expansion of live-streamed appellate arguments and advocating for further expansion to Superior Court trials (Law/Chancery), subject to judicial discretion, to make public streaming the norm.
- Implementing more rigorous training for Family Part judges regarding the LGBT community, particularly in domestic violence cases involving same-sex parties.
- Utilizing technology to capture statistical case data per judge, analyzing outcomes against demographic variables (including LGBT status) to identify potential biases and inform targeted judicial training.

## 2. Family Practice Committee Report:

- **Opposition to Proposed Rule Amendment A.**
- **Advocacy for expanded use of fictions or initials** on publicly accessible documents (e.g., Appellate Briefs, Family Court trials) to increase public understanding and access to Family Part records. Requesting further committee research into technologically feasible solutions for a dual private/public docket.
- **Partial support for changing the record access standard from "good cause" to "judicial discretion,"** while addressing the challenge of notice requirements for unrelated public members. Suggesting court-facilitated notice or allowing access with redactions (initials only) when no direct party relationship exists.
- **Addressing the impact of P.L. 2023, c. 322 (Victims' Access to DV Records):**
  - Need for administrative directives for implementing the law, particularly regarding victims' access to a defendant's expunged/sealed DV history.
  - Recommending clarification on post-conviction procedures in parallel criminal matters, ensuring victims with previously dismissed civil TROs can re-apply or seek an FRO hearing stay pending criminal case determination, with outcomes considered under the preponderance of evidence standard in light of new criminal findings or plea deals.
  - Modifications to court processes to facilitate victims' access to otherwise inaccessible records (e.g., PTI, expunged records) for use in FRO hearings or renewals.
- **Recommendation to address delays in the 10-day Final Restraining Order (FRO) hearing process.** Drawing from personal experiences where such hearings extended to six months, I urge the Court to implement stricter

scheduling requirements for FRO trials to ensure they meet statutory timeframes and align with the trial scheduling standards of other court divisions and parts. This is a critical general practice concern impacting timely justice for domestic violence victims.

### **3. Criminal Practice Committee Report (including Supplemental Report):**

- **Support for rule changes concerning violations of pre-trial release conditions.**
- **Recommendations for:**
  - Improved dialogue with, and information provided to, alleged victims regarding pre-trial violations and plea hearings, ensuring their right to provide statements before sentencing.
  - Enhanced public accessibility to criminal case scheduling and publicly filed documents.
  - Further development of trauma-informed court practices in both criminal and family dockets.

### **4. Landlord/Tenant Forms/Processes and Special Civil Part:**

- Supporting the return of the hearing date on the served summons.
- Recommend enhancing L/T return of service forms to improve judicial oversight of service adequacy.
- Enhancing SCP officer service of process/return service requirements, especially for substituted service (e.g., posting), to mandate detailed information (manner, location, proof like GPS/photos) on returns.
- Considering technology like body cameras, gps location data, mobile friendly forms to enable delivery photos and photos of the posted documents for SCP officers to improve transparency and verify complete and proper service as is required to be effectuated.
- Additional clarifying language on rent due in non-payment complaints to avoid confusion regarding payoff amounts and the accrual of such amounts.
- Adding language to Judgments for Possession to explicitly state they are not money judgments and to clearly differentiate them from monetary awards for breach of contract or other torts.
- Establishing a clear mechanism for removing erroneous judgments for possession from records and ensuring cases marked "excluded from public access" in LT matters are fully hidden on eCourts following a motion granting such relief and developing internal policies to enable the Court to grant such relief *sua sponte*, when erroneous judgments are entered in error by the Court or Clerk (ie. Instances where a judgment from another case is uploaded in error by the clerk and an Order to delete is granted, or

judgments later vacated), as these erroneous and/or vacated/deleted filings can have a real impact on an individuals ability to find suitable housing despite no error on their part.

Thank you for considering my request. I look forward to the opportunity to share my perspectives with the Court.

Sincerely,

/s/

Kevin M. Baron

East Orange, NJ

kmb.137.95@gmail.com