

Court Review

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EDITOR'S NOTE

We are pleased to bring you a collection of articles and issues related to the growing presence of self-represented litigants in our courts.

Our lead article is from two trial judges in Maryland, Dorothy Wilson and Miriam Hutchins. They deal with self-represented litigants daily in Baltimore and bring nearly 30 years of combined experience to the task of telling you what works best. They review the concept of neutral engagement, in which judges remain neutral but help to make sure cases are fully presented; discuss the ethics rules that apply to what the judge can and should do; and go step by step through how to handle a case involving a self-represented litigant on one or both sides.

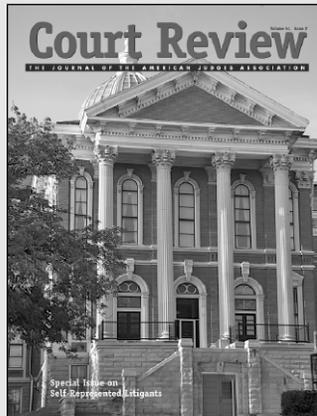
Our second article looks at helping self-represented litigants outside the judge's presence through a courthouse help center. Keven O'Grady, a trial judge in Kansas, takes you sequentially through the work his court did in the past two years in setting up a help center in their courthouse.

Our third article considers whether self-represented litigants are at a disadvantage in the presentation of their cases. Two Missouri researchers, Anne Janku and Joseph Vradenburg, took a look at available data regarding the outcomes of cases in that state in which self-represented litigants handled a variety of cases in the Missouri state courts. They found some evidence to support the conclusion that self-represented litigants are more likely to lose their cases, especially in certain case types.

We also have an essay on issues involved in counting the number of cases involving self-represented litigants. Data seem to show wide variation in how states count these cases. Researchers Richard Schauffler and Shauna Strickland review some of that data and urge a consistent approach so that the data will become more meaningful.

We close our issue with a Resource Page devoted to resources for judges concerning self-represented litigants, including training materials for judges and staff, background research and information, and how to get technical assistance to provide better access to justice.

As always, if you have suggestions for articles or authors or subjects you'd like to see in *Court Review*, please contact me (sleben56@gmail.com) or my coeditor, Eve Brank (ebrank2@unl.edu). Thanks for your continued membership in the American Judges Association and for reading this issue of *Court Review*.—SL



Court Review, the quarterly journal of the American Judges Association, invites the submission of unsolicited, original articles, essays, and book reviews. *Court Review* seeks to provide practical, useful information to the working judges of the United States and Canada. In each issue, we hope to provide information that will be of use to judges in their everyday work, whether in highlighting new procedures or methods of trial, court, or case management, providing substantive information regarding an area of law likely to be encountered by many judges, or by providing background information (such as psychology or other social science research) that can be used by judges in their work. Guidelines for the submission of manuscripts for *Court Review* are set forth on page 82 of this issue. *Court Review* reserves the right to edit, condense, or reject material submitted for publication.

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Cover photo, Mary S. Watkins (maryswatkins@mac.com). The cover photo is of the Buchanan County Courthouse in St. Joseph, Missouri. The courthouse is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Originally built between 1873 and 1876, it was rebuilt after a fire in 1885. Robert and Charles Ford were convicted in this courthouse of murdering the outlaw Jesse James; the Fords had been part of the James gang but said they killed James to collect a bounty from the Missouri governor. The governor pardoned the Fords after their conviction.

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