

**FIRST CIRCUIT JUDICIAL COUNCIL  
ACCESS TO JUSTICE COMMITTEE CHARTER, MISSION STATEMENT, AND COMPOSITION**

**SEPTEMBER 2022**

The federal judiciary has established as a core value the concept of "equal justice," defined as "fairness and impartiality in the administration of justice; accessibility of court processes; [and] treatment of all with dignity and respect." Judicial Conference of the United States, Strategic Plan for the Federal Judiciary (Strategic Plan) (September 2020). To that end, the federal courts seek to "[p]ursue improvements in the delivery of fair and impartial justice on a nationwide basis." *Id.*, at Strategy 1.1, p. 5. In recognition of this responsibility, all of the courts in the First Circuit provide a variety of resources to assist self-represented litigants, including on-line tools and pro bono programs. These resources are critical as, each year in the First Circuit, self-represented litigants file more than one-third of all new appeals, almost 20% of the new civil cases in the district courts, and up to 5% of new bankruptcy case.<sup>1</sup> However, there is significant variation in the resources available in courts throughout the circuit and nationally, and coordinating efforts or sharing policies and other materials may substantially benefit both litigants and the courts. Because the courts of the First Circuit have an obligation to provide full and equal access to all litigants, and because collaboration between courts will provide an opportunity to develop more robust and consistent resources for self-represented litigants, Chief Judge Barron, as Chair of the First Circuit Judicial Council, has established a First Circuit Judicial Council Access to Justice Committee (Committee).

The Committee is charged with (1) exploring the access to justice resources and pro bono programs available throughout the circuit and nationally, and (2) developing recommendations to improve their structure, scope, and implementation in the circuit. In doing so, the Committee will explore topics that may include, but are not limited to: review of local court rules, procedures, and forms; review of the structure and implementation of pro bono programs in the First Circuit and nationally; the development and availability of electronic resources for various constituents, including disabled, non-English speaking, and incarcerated litigants; and resource and funding issues and options. The Committee is asked to develop best practices or another similar document compiling its findings and recommendations in these areas.

The Committee will report directly to the Judicial Council of the First Circuit and shall be comprised of three Subcommittees addressing access to justice in the First Circuit Court of Appeals, the First Circuit District Courts, and the First Circuit Bankruptcy Courts, respectively. The Chief Circuit Judge or his designee shall serve as Chair of the Court of Appeals Access to Justice Subcommittee. The Chief Circuit Judge shall appoint the Chair of the District Court Subcommittee. The Chair of the District Court Subcommittee will appoint the other District Court Subcommittee members and the Chair of the Bankruptcy Court Subcommittee. The Bankruptcy Court Subcommittee Chair will appoint the other Subcommittee members.

---

<sup>1</sup> See generally caseload data published by the Administrative Office of the United States Courts (AO), including Table B-9, U.S. Courts of Appeals - Pro Se and Non-Pro Se Cases Commenced and Terminated, by Circuit and Nature of Proceeding; Table C-13, U.S. District Courts - Civil Pro Se and Non-Pro Se Filings, by District; and Table F-28, U.S. Bankruptcy Courts - Pro Se Bankruptcy Cases Commenced, by Chapter of the Bankruptcy Code.