

Skagit County Superior Court

Skagit County Courthouse
205 W. Kincaid Street, Room 202
Mount Vernon, WA 98273

Phone: (360)416-1200



September 3, 2020

The Honorable Debra L. Stephens
Chief Justice, Washington State Supreme Court
415 12th Ave SW
PO Box 40929
Olympia, WA 98504-0929

Re: Proposed JISCR 13

Dear Chief Justice Stephens:

I am writing to express my support for passage of the proposed amendments to JISC Rule 13. As a long-time member of the JISC who has witnessed the negative consequences of a lack of information sharing between courts, I urge you to consider the importance of the proposed amendments to the availability of judicial information statewide.

I have served as a trial court judge in Washington for more than twenty one years. Seventeen and a half of those years were spent in District Court and the balance in Superior Court. When making decisions from the bench it is crucial for the judge to have accurate information available to facilitate informed decisions. For example, with regard to DUI charges the law makes distinction in consequences for the defendant based on the number of prior offenses. On occasion the attorneys appearing before me have misstated this crucial information. Accordingly, I have made a practice of reviewing the information available to me on JABS to ensure that my actions from the bench are based on correct information. Every day our court depends on access to information from other courts. Several courts already have their own case management systems, and still more are planning separate systems. As those courts move to their own systems, we stand to lose critical information that judges and court staff need unless some mechanism is in place for courts to reliably share information.

The initial proposal to amend JISCR 13 that came before the JISC in 2014 was a response to a concern that the exodus from the statewide information system by some courts would cripple the quality of information obtainable by the courts. Admittedly, the initial proposal was one-sided and punitive. In response to the very real concern about the integrity of information available to all courts, in 2019 Chief Justice Fairhurst appointed a committee of stakeholders representing a wide swath of courts including those which had adopted or proposed to adopt separate systems. I was one of them. Over four lengthy and grueling sessions, the committee drafted the proposal before you. In the end, I believe we arrived at an extremely fair rule that allows for separate systems while protecting the integrity of the statewide system. The assembled JISC agreed with nearly unanimous support.

BRIAN L. STILES
JUDGE, DEPARTMENT NO. 1

DAVID A. SVAREN
JUDGE, DEPARTMENT NO. 3

HEATHER D. SHAND
COURT COMMISSIONER

LISA WEST
ADMINISTRATOR
SUPERIOR & JUVENILE COURTS

LAURA M. RIQUELME
JUDGE, DEPARTMENT NO. 2

DAVE NEEDY
JUDGE, DEPARTMENT NO. 4

JAMES DOLAN
COURT COMMISSIONER

MICHELLE COOK
SUPERIOR COURT MANAGER

The proposed amendments to JISCR 13 provide for clear communication and collaborative planning between courts and AOC to ensure minimum disruption to statewide data sharing. They also provide the JISC as the forum for settling any disagreements between courts and AOC regarding any temporary mitigation required to ensure that judicial officers and court staff have information that is critical to public safety.

I urge the Supreme Court to pass the proposed amendments to protect the integrity of the information we depend on for the administration of justice.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

David A. Svaren
Judge, Skagit County Superior Court
Former DMCJA and SCJA Representative, Judicial Information System Committee

Cc: Hon. Charles Johnson
Hon. Barbara A. Madsen
Hon. Susan Owens
Hon. Steven C. González
Hon. Sheryl Gordon McCloud
Hon. Mary I. Yu
Hon. Raquel Montoya-Lewis
Hon. G. Helen Whitener

From: [OFFICE RECEPTIONIST, CLERK](#)
To: [Linford, Tera](#)
Subject: FW: JISCR 13 (proposed)
Date: Friday, September 4, 2020 10:00:10 AM
Attachments: [JISCR 13 letter.docx](#)

From: David A. Svaren - Superior Court Judge [mailto:dasvaren@co.skagit.wa.us]
Sent: Thursday, September 3, 2020 1:23 PM
To: OFFICE RECEPTIONIST, CLERK <SUPREME@COURTS.WA.GOV>
Subject: JISCR 13 (proposed)

Dear Clerk,

Attached is a letter to the Chief Justice with copies to the rest of the Justices. This constitutes a comment to proposed JISCR 13 which comments are due by September 30 and is being submitted pursuant to the Court's instructions. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

David Svaren, Judge
Skagit County Superior Court