

**COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT REFORM**  
**TOM DAVIS, CHAIRMAN**



**MEDIA ADVISORY**

For Immediate Release  
April 21, 2004

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**Government Reform Committee to Review**  
**Operations of District of Columbia Court System**

*Davis Looks At Courts Responsible for City's Most Vulnerable Residents*

**What: Government Reform Committee oversight hearing: "Justice for All: A Review of the Operations of the District of Columbia Superior Court"**

**When: APRIL 23, 2004, 10:00 a.m**

**Where: ROOM 2154, RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING**

**Background:**

The Committee will hold an oversight hearing to review the operations and case management of the D.C. Superior Court, with particular focus on the Family Court and the Probate Division – two courts that serve the most vulnerable residents of the District of Columbia.

Congress has long been concerned about the management and operations of the D.C. courts system. During fiscal year 2003, Congress appropriated funds for the Council for Court Excellence to conduct a study on progress made in achieving specific recommendations to improve the Court's management of its responsibilities for the D.C. Criminal Justice System. And in 2001, Congress created the District's Family Court within the Superior Court. The legislation also provided for more family court judges, required judges to have expertise and on-going training in family law, and mandated the standard of "one family, one judge" for family cases.

In addition to reviewing how the Court is implementing the 2001 Family Court Act, this hearing will look at the Family Court's efforts to improve communication and coordination with the Child and Family Services Agency and other DC agencies that provide services to children and families, and whether the Court is complying with

requirements of the Adoption and Safe Families Act in terms of meeting deadlines for adjudication, disposition, and permanency hearings.

Friday's hearing will also examine problems with the Probate Division highlighted by *The Washington Post* in a June 2003 series of articles. These reports indicated mistreatment and neglect of elderly, mentally ill and indigent people by the guardians and conservators appointed in the District of Columbia, including misuse and wasting of guardian and conservator accounts. The Committee is also interested in learning more about the administration of the Probate Division, including the appointment, responsibilities, and accountability of the Register of Wills and her staff, the relationship of the Register of Wills Office with practitioners, and the adequacy of the reporting requirements for conservators and the enforcement of those requirements.

Finally, this hearing will also focus on the management and performance goals of the Superior Court, as well as fiscal management and general court operations, including the clearance of cases, monitoring the judges' caseloads, and the use of the IJIS computer system to facilitate access to databases in use at the court. Additionally, the Committee will review the status of the D.C. Court site plan for Judiciary Square.

## **WITNESSES**

**The Honorable Rufus G. King III**, Chief Judge, District of Columbia Superior Court

**The Honorable Lee F. Satterfield**, Presiding Judge, Family Court, District of Columbia Superior Court

**The Honorable Jose M. Lopez**, Presiding Judge, Probate Division, District of Columbia Superior Court

**Cornelia M. Ashby**, Director, Education, Workforce, and Income Security Issues, U.S. General Accounting Office

**Elliott S. Hall**, Chairman, Council for Court Excellence

**Rhonda Dahlman**, Esquire, Legal Counsel for the Elderly, American Association of Retired Persons

**Nicholas Ward**, Esquire, Former Chairman, District of Columbia Bar Association Guardian and Conservator Committee

**Michael F. Curtin**, Esquire, former Deputy Register of Wills, and Member of the District of Columbia Bar

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