

ABOUT THE RHODE ISLAND TRAFFIC TRIBUNAL

For the seventh straight year, the Rhode Island Traffic Tribunal (RITT) heard over one hundred thousand violations (102,147). In addition to these filings, the court also heard over 3,000 motion hearings and handled over 4,000 show cause hearings. The court's Appellate Division heard 117 Traffic and Municipal Court Appeals and 333 Appeals for the Registry of Motor Vehicles. Despite the large number of cases filed with the court during 2010, the RITT was able to dispose over 104,000 violations representing 104 percent of the cases that were filed. This continues the trend at the RITT for disposing more cases than are filed within a calendar year.

The RITT continued to be a major contributor to the general fund for the State. In calendar year 2010, the court receipted as payments over 13 million dollars. In conjunction with the Department of Revenue, the RITT was also a major contributor to the State of Rhode Island's Tax Intercept Program, collecting over \$358,000.

In addition to the amount of revenue raised by the RITT, there were several judicial functions that were expanded to assist the court in handling the thousands of citizens appearing on its calendars. In 2010 the Chief Magistrate expanded the accessibility of the Judges and Magistrates to the public by continuing the miscellaneous "2A" calendar. This calendar allows any "walk-in" motorist to have access to a Judge or Magistrate during the working hours of the court. The RITT also restructured its website and telephone payment processes which reduced costs to the motorist and provided an automated teller machine in the main concourse of the courthouse so that motorists have access to funds to enable them to pay their fines and court costs.

Furthermore, the RITT played an increasing role in providing services to the community. Many Judges and Magistrates of the court participated in numerous training programs offered by the Rhode Island State Police Training Academy and the Municipal Police Training Academy. These included presentations on court procedure as well as a moot court demonstration on Motor Vehicle Violations. Additionally, the court was a major participant in the Rhode Island Education Partnership. This participation included hosting several Moot Court Competitions for numerous middle and high school students of our State.

The RITT was a presenter at the 2010 Rhode Island Bar Association Annual Meeting. The seminar on Traffic Tribunal Practice was attended by over 100 members of the Rhode Island Bar. This meeting took place in June in Providence. It gave the court an opportunity to meet members of the bar and discuss the many issues and challenges facing Traffic Courts in Rhode Island and across the country.

The primary focus of the RITT in 2010 was to establish an important relationship with the 25 Municipal Courts in our State. The RITT was a principal speaker at the Municipal Court Judges' Association Annual Meeting. This was a continuing legal educational seminar where the Traffic Court had an opportunity to meet with all the Municipal Court Judges to discuss practice and procedures of those courts. Furthermore, the RITT visited six Municipal Courts at the end of 2010 in an effort to review their procedures and promote best practices for the administration of justice in those courts. Also, RITT staff worked with the Municipal Court Clerks and their Judges to create better lines of communications, ensure accurate reporting of fines and costs, reduce errors in reporting dispositions as well as ensure that payments are being made in a regular timely manner.

Consistent with the oversight function over Municipal Courts, the RITT met with several representatives of five cities and towns which were interested in creating municipal courts in their jurisdictions. These meetings included discussions of reporting requirements, financial responsibility, and an accurate analysis of potential revenue generation by the court. Representatives also had an opportunity to tour the RITT facility to get a first-hand look at the courtrooms and the digital recording system.

In addition, the RITT worked extensively on the implementation of the "Colin Foote Act." This piece of legislation (P.L. 2010 chapter 242 § 2) created new penalties for multiple moving offenses. This legislation was enacted to address the issues of individuals convicted of four separate and distinct offenses within an 18 month period of time. The court worked extensively with law enforcement and the Municipal Courts to implement this new law.

The RITT has continued to implement the E-Citation program. In 2010, the Barrington, Charlestown, Glocester, Westerly, West Warwick, and Woonsocket Police Departments joined the State Police, Burrillville, East Providence, Narragansett, North Kingstown, Pawtucket, Portsmouth, and Richmond as E-Citation agencies. In calendar year 2010, 62,755 E-Citations were issued. This represents an increase of 15,457 E-Citations over the previous year.

Through the funding assistance of the Office of Highway Safety, several additional departments are in the process of installing the required hardware for the program. E-Citations provide great benefits to all parties, police, motorists, and the courts. E-Citations are much clearer for the motorists to read and the "Know Your Rights" pamphlet is pre-printed on the rear of each ticket providing valuable information to the motorist. E-Citations also eliminates redundancy of data entry efforts, validates summons information at the time of initial stop, and to improve the accuracy of information, automates the return of disposition information from the courts to the police departments eliminating the need for police departments to re-enter this data in their RMS.

Also, the RITT has embarked on an effort to implement an IBM FileNet Enterprise Content Management System (ECM). Calendar year 2010 brought continued improvements to this project. An integrated data entry application was implemented to allow for case entry using the scanned copy of the summons. Further, this enhancement backfills the information where available, greatly improving the capabilities of the data entry staff and improving data quality. The RITT has scanned over 1,071,286 documents consisting of over 4.3 million images. The scanning staff has completed scanning cases with outstanding balances back to 1997, as well as keeping current with new case scanning.

The implementation of the ECM system has greatly improved operational efficiency and allows the RITT to be more responsive to customer inquiries. The RITT is working on Phase 2 of the project which should greatly improve automated workflow capabilities and leverage character recognition capabilities of the software.

Finally, the RITT relies heavily on automation to compete highly intensive tasks to achieve efficiency. In 2010, the RITT utilized interfaces with the DMV to transmit over 32,900 judicial orders for drivers license suspensions for failure to pay a court fine. Further, driving records were ordered for all court sessions using an interface with the DMV. The Judiciary and the DMV have been working on updating the interfaces to provide greater efficiency when the new DMV system is implemented. The RITT also processed 65,883 dispositions from the Municipal Courts utilizing interfaces.