

News Advisory

From the Rhode Island Judiciary



Court cases in six towns to move

September 6, 2011: District Court criminal cases in six Rhode Island towns will soon shift to the Noel Judicial Complex in Kent County to ease crowding in courthouses in Providence and Wakefield, Chief Judge Jeanne E. Lafazia announced today.

Effective October 3, all open criminal cases and all future cases emanating from Lincoln, Glocester, North Providence, Smithfield, North Smithfield, and North Kingstown will be heard in Third Division District Court in Kent County. North Kingstown is moving from Fourth Division in Wakefield, while the other five towns are moving from Sixth Division in Providence.

The cases will be heard on the second floor of the Noel Judicial Complex at 222 Quaker Lane, Warwick.

The change, however, does not affect people who appear on court payment calendars for cases that have been resolved. Those people will continue to make payments at their current locations.

All new District Court civil cases from those six communities as of October 3 will be filed and heard in Kent County. Civil cases already filed prior to that date will remain in Providence or Wakefield.

Felony arraignments from those six towns will take place in Kent County but trials in Superior Court will take place in their county of origin. Misdemeanor appeals from Third Division District Court will take place in Kent County Superior Court unless one or both parties wishes to file for the appeal to be heard in the original county of jurisdiction.

In its latest session, the General Assembly approved the changes at Chief Judge LaFazia's request to ease crowded conditions at the Garrahy Judicial Complex in Providence and the McGrath Judicial Complex in Wakefield. Parking is difficult for litigants in downtown Providence, while there is ample free parking at Kent County, she noted. RIPTA bus service to the Noel Judicial Complex is available.

No courtrooms are being closed in Providence or Wakefield. There were no construction costs associated with the move to Kent County and no new judicial officers were hired. Chief Judge Lafazia herself will handle the first three months of calendars for the six towns that have been relocated.

Previously, the General Assembly approved moving Cranston, Johnston, Foster, and Scituate from being heard in Providence County to Kent County for similar reasons.

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