

better
COURTS
— FOR —
MISSOURI

info@newmoplan.com | 573-635-0782 | PO Box 1524 Jefferson City Missouri 65102

February 4, 2009

The Honorable Laura Denvir Stith
The Chief Justice
The Missouri Supreme Court
Post Office Box 150
Jefferson City, Missouri 65102

Via hand delivery

Dear Madam Chief Justice:

It was with great enthusiasm and excitement that I listened to the State of the Judiciary address that you delivered before the Missouri Legislature last week. I applaud your proposals to reform the judiciary by making it more accountable and transparent. As you know, Better Courts for Missouri shares these same ideals. We are excited to work with you in striving to meet these goals that you have set forth. I believe that, together, we will be able to meet these goals and provide Missourians with a greatly improved Judiciary.

In order to fully accomplish our joint goals, the public needs to be involved in the reform process. I propose that we hold a series of public forums in order to gain input from the citizenry regarding Missouri's judiciary and how it can be reformed to make it more accessible, accountable, and transparent to the public. These forums should occur in every region of the state and be advertised through press advisories sent to the normal media channels.

If you wish, I would be happy to arrange transportation so that we will be able to jointly travel to these meetings. Our time together will be invaluable as we come up with additional ideas on how to improve Missouri's judiciary.

I cannot agree with you more that it is time to return to Missouri's Constitution (Article I, Section 14) where it states "Justice shall be administered without sale, denial, or delay." With the unwarranted amount of control that trial attorneys have over the judicial selection process, it is clear that this section of our Constitution has been thwarted. As part of our joint proceedings, I would ask that we, together, formulate a solution to the problem of trial attorney interference in the selection of judges.

Again, thank you for your visionary thoughts regarding accountability and transparency in the judiciary. I look forward to working with you to achieve these goals and hope to hear from you soon.

Sincerely,

James M. N. Harris