

# The Supreme Court of Ohio

## OPERATING GUIDELINES FOR THE TASK FORCE ON COMMERCIAL DOCKETS

These guidelines are issued by the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Ohio and apply to the creation, organization, and operation of the Task Force on Commercial Dockets to assist the Court in exercising the authority granted to it pursuant to Article IV of the Ohio Constitution.

These guidelines are intended to establish consistent standards and procedures in implementing this authority. While these guidelines may impose specific duties upon other persons, the Chief Justice may waive compliance with any guidelines to assist the exercise of that discretion.

These guidelines have not been adopted as rules pursuant to Article IV, Section 5 of the Ohio Constitution, and should not be construed as requiring adoption.

- 1. Creation.** The Task Force on Commercial Dockets is hereby created by the Chief Justice.
- 2. Purpose of Task Force.** The purpose of the task force is to assess the best method of establishing commercial civil litigation dockets in the courts of common pleas of Ohio. The task force shall develop, oversee, and evaluate a pilot project implementing commercial civil litigation dockets in selected courts of common pleas. Following completion of the pilot project, the task force shall submit a final report and recommendations to the Chief Justice and the Supreme Court.
- 3. Membership.** The task force shall consist of no more than fifteen members appointed by the Chief Justice. However, the task force and other interested parties may nominate persons for open positions on the task force who they believe will serve the purpose for which the task force was created.

Membership should be broad based and multi-disciplinary, when required to represent a cross section of interests related to the subject matter of the task force. The membership should include judges, attorneys representing the various perspectives of the bar, court professionals including court administrators and clerks, law enforcement personnel when appropriate, funding authorities representing the appropriate source of funding, representatives from executive branch agencies when appropriate, recognized professionals in the subject matter, and lay persons when appropriate.

Membership should also represent the gender, racial, ethnic, political, and geographic diversity of Ohio.

**4. Terms.** Membership terms shall extend through the issuance of the final report and recommendations by the task force, to be completed by July 1, 2009.

**5. Co-Chairpersons of the Task Force.** The Chief Justice shall appoint two persons as the co-chairpersons of the task force.

**6. Meetings.** The task force shall meet as often as required to complete the work of the task force in the time period established by the Chief Justice. All meetings of the task force shall be open to the public.

Public notice of all meetings of the task force shall be provided on the Supreme Court Web site. Meetings shall be scheduled for a time and place so as to minimize costs to the Court and to be accessible to task force members, staff, and members of the public.

**7. Attendance.** All task force members shall make a good faith effort to attend each task force meeting. Should a task force member miss three consecutive meetings, the task force may recommend to the Chief Justice that the member relinquish the member's seat on the task force.

A member who is unable to attend a meeting may request that the co-chairpersons of the task force, in their discretion, allow the member to participate by telephone, video, or Web conference. Members participating in this manner shall be considered present for meeting attendance purposes. However, task force members are strongly urged to participate in person for a fully effective task force.

Task force members may occasionally designate a replacement for participation in meetings.

**8. Quorum.** There shall be a quorum present for the work of the task force when a majority of task force members is present for the meeting, including those who participate by telephone, video, or Web conference.

**9. Voting.** At any meeting of the task force at which a quorum is present or has been declared, the members may take action by affirmative vote of a majority of the members in attendance. Proxy votes shall not be permitted.

**10. Minutes.** Minutes shall be kept at every meeting of the task force and distributed to its members for review prior to the next meeting.

**11. Subcommittees.** The task force may form such subcommittees it believes necessary to complete the work of the task force. A subcommittee should consist of select members of the task force and such other persons who the co-chairpersons of the task force believe will assist in a full exploration of the issue under the review of the subcommittee.

Subcommittees should remain relatively small in size, generally not exceeding 4-8 members, and have a ratio of task force members to non-task force members not to exceed 1:3.

Paragraphs 7, 8, 9, 12, and 14 through 17 of these guidelines shall also apply to the work of subcommittees.

**12. Work Product.** The work product of the task force is considered a public record, and is the property of the Supreme Court.

**13. Progress Report; Draft Report.** The task force may issue a progress or draft report as it believes necessary to facilitate the work of the task force and to communicate the nature of its work to the public and various constituencies of the Supreme Court.

**14. Staff Support.** The task force shall receive staff support from one or more employees of the Supreme Court as may be necessary for the completion of its purpose as assigned by the Administrative Director. The employee shall assist the task force as necessary, but shall at all times be considered an employee of the Court.

**15. Budget.** The budget of the task force shall be set by the Supreme Court through its annual budget process and as implemented by the office or section through which the task force operates. The task force shall have no authority to set its own budget.

**16. Reimbursement of Expenses.** A task force member shall be reimbursed for the member's travel and meal expenses incurred in service to the task force as permitted by Supreme Court *Guidelines for Travel by Court Appointees*.

**17. Code of Ethics.** Every task force member shall be provided with a copy of the Supreme Court *Code of Ethics for Court Appointees* prior to commencing the member's service on the task force.

**18. Dissolution.** The task force may be dissolved by the Chief Justice at any time upon the Chief Justice's discretion or upon the recommendation of the task force indicating that the task force is no longer productive or has met the purpose for which it was created.

**19. Effective Date.** These guidelines are effective June 1, 2007.