

THE SUPREME COURT OF WASHINGTON

IN THE MATTER OF THE ACCESS TO JUSTICE ) O R D E R  
TECHNOLOGY PRINCIPLES )  
 ) NO. 25700-B-

WHEREAS, the Washington judicial system is founded upon the fundamental principle that the judicial system is accessible to all persons; and

WHEREAS, responding to the unmet legal needs of low and moderate income people and others who suffer disparate access barriers or are otherwise vulnerable, and the need for leadership and effective coordination of civil equal justice efforts in Washington State, the Supreme Court established an Access to Justice Board as a permanent body charged with responsibility to assure high quality access for vulnerable and low and moderate income persons and others who suffer disparate access barriers to the civil justice system. The Supreme Court further ordered that, among other responsibilities, the Access to Justice Board shall work to promote, develop and implement policy initiatives which enhance the availability of resources for essential civil equal justice activities, develop and implement new programs and innovative measures designed to expand access to justice in Washington State, and promote the responsiveness of the civil justice system to the needs of those who suffer disparate treatment or disproportionate access barriers; and

WHEREAS, in working to fulfill those responsibilities, the Access to Justice Board recognized that developments in information and communication technologies, including the Internet, pose significant challenges to full and equal access to the justice system, that technology can provide increased pathways for quality access, but it can also perpetuate and exacerbate existing barriers and create significant new barriers. The Board determined it must plan and act proactively to take maximum advantage of the opportunity to destroy or minimize

such barriers and to create more effective and efficient means of access to the justice system and increase the quantity and quality of justice provided to all persons in Washington State; and

WHEREAS, in 2001 the Access to Justice Board empowered and charged a Board committee to engage in a broad-based and inclusive initiative to create a body of authoritative fundamental principles and proposed action based thereon to ensure that current and future technology both increases opportunities and eliminates barriers to access to and effective utilization of the justice system, thereby improving the quality of justice for all persons in Washington State; and

WHEREAS, over a three-year period the Board and committee fulfilled the responsibility of broad and inclusive involvement and the development of "The Access to Justice Technology Principles", with accompanying comments and proposed action based thereon; and The Access to Justice Technology Principles have been endorsed by the Board for Judicial Administration, the Judicial Information System Committee, the Board of Trustees of the Superior Court Judges' Association, the Board of Trustees of the District and Municipal Court Judges' Association, the Board of Governors of the Washington State Bar Association, the Minority and Justice Commission, the Gender and Justice Commission, the Attorney General, and the Council on Public Legal Education; and

WHEREAS, a statewide Judicial Information System to serve the courts of the State of Washington was created by the Supreme Court in 1976 to be operated by the Administrative Office of the Courts pursuant to court rule, and charged with addressing issues of dissemination of data, equipment, communication with other systems, security, and operational priorities; and

WHEREAS, consistent with the intent of this Order, pursuant to RCW 2.68.050 the courts of this state, through the Judicial Information System, shall, in pertinent part, promote and facilitate electronic access of judicial information and services to the public at little or no cost and by use of technologies capable of being used by persons without extensive technological ability and wherever possible by persons with disabilities, and;

WHEREAS, the application of the Access to Justice Technology Principles to guide the use of technology in the Washington State justice system is desirable and appropriate; and

WHEREAS, the wide dissemination of the Access to Justice Technology Principles will promote their use and consequent access to justice for all persons;

Now, therefore, it is hereby

ORDERED:

(a) The Access to Justice Technology Principles appended to this Order state the values, standards and intent to guide the use of technology in the Washington State court system and by all other persons, agencies, and bodies under the authority of this Court. These Principles should be considered with other governing law and court rules in deciding the appropriate use of technology in the administration of the courts and the cases that come before such courts, and should be so considered in deciding the appropriate use of technology by all other persons, agencies and bodies under the authority of this Court.

(b) The Access to Justice Technology Principles and this Order shall be published expeditiously with the Washington Court Rules and on the Washington State Bar Association website, and on the courts website as maintained by the Administrative Office of the Courts. The following introductory language should immediately precede the Access to Justice Technology Principles in all such publications and sites:

"These Access to Justice Technology Principles were developed by the Access to Justice Board to assure that technology enhances rather than diminishes access to and the quality of justice for all persons in Washington State. Comments of the Access to Justice Board committee drafters accompanying the Principles make

clear the intent that the Principles are to be used so as to be practical and effective for both the workers in and users of the justice system, that the Principles do not create or constitute the basis for new causes of action or create unfunded mandates. These Principles have been endorsed by the Board for Judicial Administration, the Judicial Information System Committee, the Board of Trustees of the Superior Court Judges' Association, the Board of Trustees of the District and Municipal Court Judges' Association, the Board of Governors of the Washington State Bar Association, the Minority and Justice Commission, the Gender and Justice Commission, the Attorney General, and the Council on Public Legal Education."

(c) The Administrative Office of the Courts in conjunction with the Access to Justice Board and the Judicial Information System Committee shall report annually to the Supreme Court on the use of the Access to Justice Technology Principles in the Washington State court system and by all other persons, agencies, and bodies under the authority of this Court.

DATED at Olympia, Washington this 3rd day of December 2004.

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