



Report to Governor C.L. "Butch" Otter and the 1st Regular Session of the 63rd Idaho Legislature

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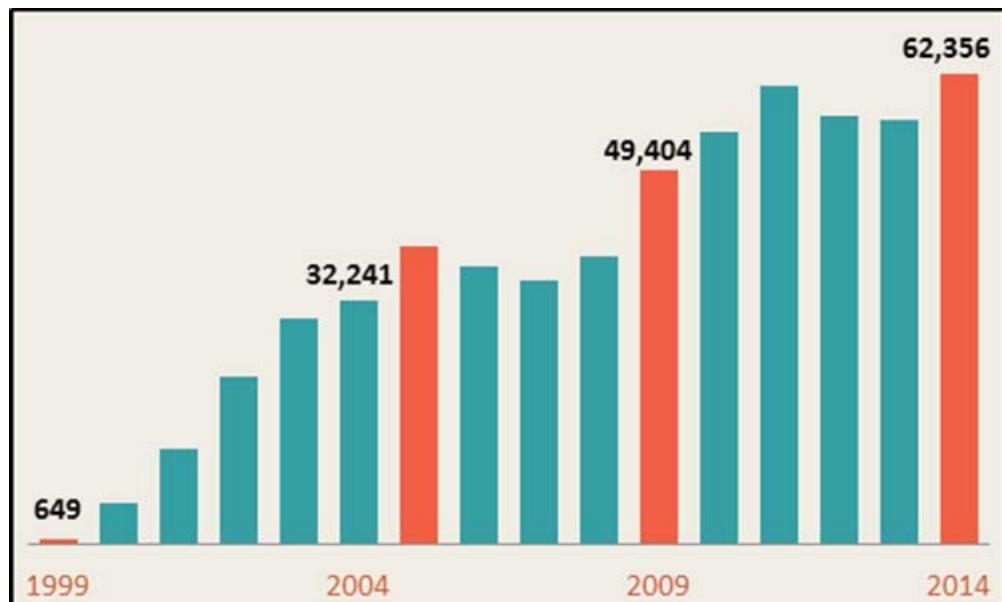
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Court Assistance Office

Promoting Equal Access to Justice

For 16 years, the Court Assistance Office (CAO) has served as a resource for increasing access to the courts and last year reached a historic high of 62,356 office contacts.



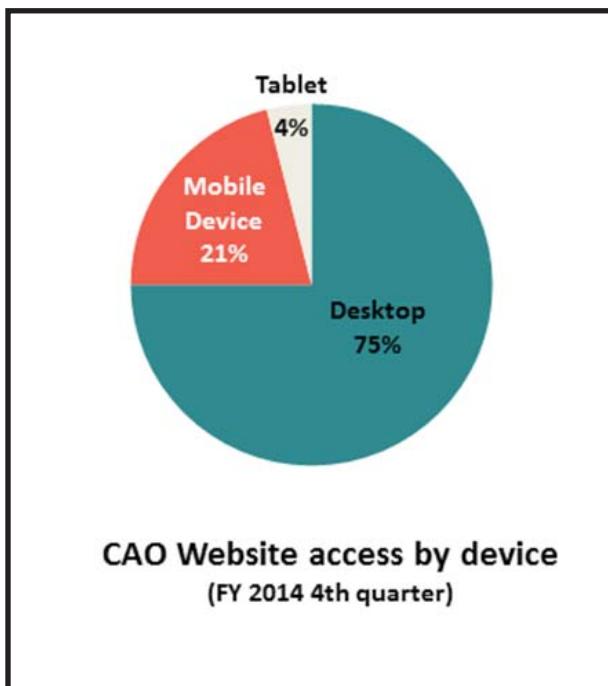
The Court Assistance Office is a one-stop clearinghouse where someone in need of legal services can find various forms of legal information and resources. A primary goal of the office is to connect litigants with attorneys. Last year, court assistance officers helped connect 16,825 people with available resources to help them find an attorney. However, for litigants who cannot or choose not to hire an attorney, court forms become essential for court access. The Court Assistance Office now provides over 400 forms and instructions. In order to help self-represented litigants navigate the most commonly used family law forms, pre-filing form workshops have become more widely available.

PRE-FILING FAMILY LAW WORKSHOPS NOW OFFERED IN SIX JUDICIAL DISTRICTS

The 2nd Judicial District began offering pre-filing family law workshops for the entire district earlier this year. The workshops provide instructions and information on the court forms and process to self-represented litigants in a classroom type setting. They are offered in conjunction with family court services and are effective at providing important information to parents to help them develop their parenting plans and schedules. Parents often comment that they cannot believe anyone could complete the forms without the assistance from the workshop.

The 2nd Judicial District also received new computer and videoconferencing equipment that will enable them to explore options for providing remote services to the rural counties in the district. This could include remote attendance at the workshops and distance form review.

The workshops have proven to be key to increasing the quality and completeness of pleadings that are filed with the court by self-represented litigants. In the 6th Judicial District, a local attorney who volunteered pro bono service hours by assisting with the pre-filing form workshops had the following comments about his experience: "The people bring a plethora of issues, from the most complicated to the least. They are fortunate to have the 6th district CAO available. Everything is well organized and our local CAO works hard to improve each workshop."



VISITORS TO THE CAO WEBSITE INCREASED BY 70% LAST YEAR

There was a significant increase in visitors to the CAO website at over 307,000 this year, up from 180,000 visitors last year. There were also over 7 million hits to the Court Assistance site, compared to 5 million last year.

CAO website users are now increasingly more reliant on mobile devices to access the website. In fact, during the last quarter of FY2014, as many as 21% of visitors accessed the website using a mobile device. It is expected that these numbers will continue to increase; as a result, efforts will be made to increase usability for mobile device visitors.

Interestingly, the most requested brochure on the website was one provided by Idaho Legal Aid Services, Inc. on "Advice for Renters and Homeowners: Utility Bills." This type of information about website access is of great benefit as decisions are made regarding additional services and prioritization of resources.

PLAIN LANGUAGE INTERACTIVE INTERVIEWS ARE BEING DEVELOPED TO ENABLE E-FILING OF CAO COURT FORMS

The existing CAO form packets are currently being converted into plain language interactive interviews that will enable users to complete court pleadings by answering a series of simple questions. These interviews help simplify the form completion process much like tax preparation software. They keep the complexities of the legal form behind the scenes so that the user can focus solely on gathering the necessary information.

When e-filing becomes available, the completed forms will then be directly linked to the court e-filing system. This will allow people to complete and file CAO court forms directly from their homes or anywhere that Internet access is available. The initial versions of the interviews should be available for use with a printing option in 2015.

ATTORNEY WORKSHOPS NOW AVAILABLE IN FOUR JUDICIAL DISTRICTS

The 3rd Judicial District began offering workshops where attendees can visit with an attorney to receive brief legal advice. This workshop is now available in four judicial districts and also provides opportunities for attorneys looking to provide pro bono (no cost) services. Efforts will be made to expand the availability of workshops throughout Idaho.

IDAHO COURTS ARE COMMITTED TO THE MISSION OF PROVIDING OPEN AND EASILY ACCESSIBLE SERVICES BY EXPANDING OPPORTUNITIES FOR SELF-REPRESENTED LITIGANTS TO UTILIZE COURT SERVICES.

12-22-14

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