

Iowa Business Specialty Court Pilot Project Opens for Business May 1

Written by Iowa Judicial Branch
Monday, 29 April 2013 15:17

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Des Moines, April 29, 2013 —The Iowa Business Specialty Court Pilot Project will begin accepting qualifying cases Wednesday, May 1. The three-year pilot project will accept a broad range of qualifying complex commercial cases with \$200,000 or more in dispute and will be staffed by judges specially trained in the complex issues facing businesses.

The supreme court, with assistance from the state court administrator, selected three outstanding judges to preside over the business court docket. The selection was based on the judges' educational background, judicial and trial practice experience in complex commercial cases, and personal interest in the project. The judges are Michael Huppert, of Des Moines; Annette Scieszinski, of Albia; and John Telleen, of LeClaire.

The three judges and Iowa Supreme Court Justice Daryl Hecht, who chaired the Iowa Civil Justice Reform Task Force, will be available to the media for interviews during a 3:30 p.m. conference call May 1. Members of the media interested in joining the conference call should contact Iowa Judicial Branch Communications Officer Steve Davis at steve.davis@iowacourts.gov or 515-725-8058.

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Biographies of each of the judges are at the end of this news release. Group and individual photographs of the judges are also available.

In August 2010, the 84 member Iowa Civil Justice Reform Task Force was formed to study and consider court innovations to make Iowa's civil justice system faster, less complicated, more affordable, and better equipped to handle the demands of Iowa litigants and users of the civil justice system. The membership represented business, labor, medicine, industry, consumer groups, the bench and the bar. For more than a year, the task force studied innovative litigation procedures and programs that have been implemented in other parts of the country. One of the recommendations of the task force was a business specialty court pilot project.

The Iowa Supreme Court formalized the three-year pilot project by supervisory order on December 21, 2012. The pilot project's memorandum of operation, details on the criteria for case eligibility, the joint consent form used for transferring cases to the business court, and additional information about the pilot project are posted on the Iowa Judicial Branch website at: http://www.iowacourts.gov/Business_Court_Pilot_Project/.

Business Court Judges

District Judge, Michael D. Huppert, Polk County

Business Court Judge Michael D. Huppert was appointed to the district court bench in December of 1999 and serves Iowa's 5th Judicial District. He earned his bachelor's degree summa cum laude from Drake University in 1979, and his law degree from Drake University

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Law School in 1982, where he was inducted into the Order of the Coif.

Prior to his appointment to the bench, Judge Huppert was a partner with the Patterson Law Firm in Des Moines, where he maintained a general civil litigation practice with emphasis in insurance defense, commercial litigation, real estate, and debtor-creditor relations. During his tenure as an attorney, he was also responsible for managing an asbestos litigation caseload of approximately 1,000 cases in state and federal court. During his judicial career, Judge Huppert has presided over a wide range of cases that would currently qualify for inclusion in the Business Court program, including matters with issues such as breach of commercial contracts, banking transactions, certification of class actions, and complex insurance coverage issues.

Judge Huppert is a member of The Iowa State Bar Association, the Polk County Bar Association, the American Judicature Society, and the American College of Business Court Judges. He is also a member and former director of the Iowa Judges Association and currently serves that organization as the chair of its Legislative Policy committee. He is a Master of the Bench and former president of the C. Edwin Moore American Inn of Court.

District Judge, Annette J. Scieszinski, Monroe County

Business Court Judge Annette J. Scieszinski is in her 17th year serving Iowa's 8th Judicial District. She graduated valedictorian of her class from Winfield-Mt. Union High School in 1973, graduated from Iowa Wesleyan College in 1977, and received her law degree from the University of Iowa College of Law in 1980, where she served on the editorial board of the Iowa Law Review.

Judge Scieszinski practiced law for 15 years in Albia, and was elected Monroe County Attorney for two terms. She has served in many civic roles and has been appointed to several state leadership posts, including President of the Iowa Judges Association in 2004. In her work with The Iowa State Bar Association, Judge Scieszinski has guided programming at the statewide Bench-Bar Conference for many years and continues to be active on the Board of Directors of the Public Service Project. Judge Scieszinski brings a broad variety of case and trial management experience to the business court, with an emphasis on expeditious and cost effective trial practices.

Judge Scieszinski is a frequent speaker on professionalism and ethics for lawyers and judges, both in Iowa and nationally. She represented Iowa judges at the first National Conference on Public Trust and Confidence in the Courts. She is an Iowa delegate to the National Conference of State Trial Judges, has been elected an officer of that group, and has also chaired the Ethics Committee for the American Bar Association's Judicial Division.

District Judge, John D. Telleen, Scott County

Business Court Judge John D. Telleen was appointed to the district court bench in Iowa's 7th Judicial District in April, 2011. He earned his Bachelor of Arts Degree from Augustana College in Rock Island, Illinois, in 1980 (Political Science Major; cum laude) and his law degree from the University of Iowa College of Law (Juris Doctorate with Distinction) in 1984. Prior to his judicial appointment, Judge Telleen was in private practice with Lane & Waterman, L.L.P., Davenport, Iowa, as an associate from 1984 through 1989 and a partner from 1990 until 2011.

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Judge Telleen's primary practice area as an attorney was civil litigation, including personal injury, medical negligence, environmental insurance coverage, commercial, asbestos exposure, and broker/dealer litigation, in addition to advising general business and corporate clients. A significant focus of his practice became complex insurance coverage matters in Iowa and other states including Ohio, Wisconsin, California, Kentucky, Idaho, and Kansas. Judge Telleen became a certified civil mediator in 1988 and regularly mediated tort, contract, and other disputes.

Judge Telleen's current professional associations include the Iowa Judges' Association, American and Iowa Bar Associations and the Inns of Court. Professional associations while in private practice included: Induction into Iowa Academy of Trial Lawyers 2006; American Bar Association; The Iowa State Bar Association; Scott County Bar Association; Iowa Defense Counsel Association; Illinois State Bar Association; Rock Island County Bar Association; and Illinois Defense Counsel Association.

Iowa Supreme Court Justice Daryl Hecht

Justice Hecht, Sioux City, was appointed to the Iowa Supreme Court in 2006.

Raised near Lytton, Iowa, he received his bachelor's degree from Morningside College in 1974 and his J.D. degree from the University of South Dakota in 1977. He received his L.L.M. degree from the University of Virginia Law School in 2004.

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Justice Hecht practiced law in Sioux City for twenty-two years before his appointment to the court of appeals in 1999.

Justice Hecht is a past president of the Iowa Trial Lawyers Association. He has served as a member of the Board of Directors of the Boys and Girls Home and Family Services, the Morningside College Alumni Association, the Woodbury County Judicial Magistrate Nominating Commission, and the Woodbury County Compensation Commission. Justice Hecht served as chairperson for the supreme court's Iowa Civil Justice Reform Task Force. The Task Force final report was presented to the members of the Iowa Supreme Court on January 30, 2012.

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