

## California Courts News Transcript

**Title: Media Day at the Sacramento Court**

**Date: 9/1/09/09**

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Most journalists who cover the courts these days are general assignment reporters, working on a wide variety of stories. They don't have time to specialize in any one area. Plus the judicial system tends to be confusing and intimidating. So judges in Sacramento invited reporters to a get acquainted session. The presiding judge opened with a pledge:

Hon. James M. Mize, Presiding Judge *"Obviously I won't always be able to give you everything you want, but I'm going to give you what I can and I'm going to give it to you straight and if I can't tell you something I'm going to tell you."*

This was a 2-hour crash course in how the court works. About 30 reporters listened to Judge Hom describe the "Anatomy of a Criminal Case" including the way cases get resolved.

Hon. Russell Hom *"We're going to discuss how we go from having 11 or 12,000 cases filed to the point where we're only trying about 725."*

Judge Perkins went through what happens in civil court, and defined some legalese in plain language. Like, what in the world is a demurrer?

Hon. Alan Perkins *"It's basically a way of saying 'So what?'"*

Reporters were very interested in learning how to find information. Management staff was on hand to explain what's available, and where it can be found.

Meredith Bostian, Director of Civil Operations  
*"Civil cases, there's very few instances where you can't have access to information."*

Judge Thorbourne walked them through the juvenile division. And Trish Meraz presented the bad news.

Trish Meraz, Juvenile Operations Director  
*"No you do not have access to records and you do not have access to court hearings because of course juvenile hearings and records are closed. There are exceptions, though."*

Judge McFetridge described the process and challenges in family law cases.

Hon. James McFetridge *"70% of our litigants in the family relations court are self represented."*

*"As a judge, do you ever find out how many of your restraining orders are violated? I don't."*

It's also good to know which office to go to when searching for information. So there was a tour of the building, and encouragement to use the available tools.

Meredith Bostian, Director of Civil Operations  
*"If you're looking for future hearing dates, you have to come here to this kiosk."*

A practical session to help reporters do the best job possible when covering the courts.

Chelsea Phua, Sacramento Bee Reporter

*“Actually answered some of the questions that I had about access to documents because that’s what we always want to know, what’s publicly available, what we can get.”*

Lynsey Paulo, KCRA-TV Reporter

*“I’ve been to a lot of continuing education conferences for media, this was helpful. I liked that it was very succinct.”*

There’s a benefit for the courts, too, and the community.

Hon. Brian Van Camp

*“The better the media understands what and how and where we do what we do, the better they’ll be able to communicate to the public, and that’s all important.”*

I’m Leanne Kozak reporting from Sacramento for California Courts News.

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