

Center for Legal and Court Technology Media Center

Hunton & Williams Sponsors Courtroom Information Project Firm Participates in Joint Project of the National Center for State Courts and William & Mary Law School

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Hunton & Williams, Virginia's largest law firm and one of the 40 largest firms in the world, today announced that it is sponsoring the Courtroom Information Project for federal and state courts. The Project is part of Courtroom 21 Project, the world leader in court technology demonstration, experimentation, training and education, located at the College of William & Mary. The Courtroom 21 Project is a joint project of the National Center for State Courts and William & Mary Law School.

According to Thomas G. Slater, Jr., Co-Chair of the firm's Litigation Team, "The Courtroom Information Project will offer Hunton & Williams increased efficiency in litigating for our widely diverse group of clients." The Courtroom Information Project is designed to give courtroom participants the visual and technological information they need in preparing for trial in any participating courtroom in the U.S. Specifically, the Courtroom Information Project provides free public viewing of web-accessible photos and accompanying explanatory information about the nation's courtrooms via www.courtroominformationproject.org.

Professor Fredric I. Lederer, Director of Courtroom 21, indicated that today, courtrooms vary in size, layout, and technology — all factors that play a significant role in the determination of trial presentation strategies. Even differences such as the amount of ambient light, the distance and line of sight between counsel and trier of fact, and the location of monitors and screens are considered by courtroom presenters. Lederer says that most lawyers find themselves with an advantage when arguing in a familiar setting. For example, something as simple as showing a client or witness where they will sit in the courtroom ahead of a trial can be important. Traditionally, firms send out 'scouts' ahead of a trial to find out the relevant courtroom information, which is both time-consuming and costly. The goal of the Courtroom Information Project is to accumulate and provide this type of information for all members of the court, which will, ideally, reduce these unnecessary expenditures and further enable swift and fair court proceedings.

The Courtroom Information Project began in 2001 under the supervision and direction of Richard Herrmann, a partner in the Delaware office of Blank Rome Comisky & McCauley LLP. Since its inception, the Judicial Conference has authorized the participation of the United States district courts and a number of State Supreme Court Chief Justices have given their endorsement. Currently, the project is in the beginning stages of gathering the documentation from the thousands of courtrooms and courts in the United States. The Project's aim is to provide timely and accurate courtroom information available in an easy-to-use web-based format all of which would not be possible without the support of sponsorship. "Hunton & Williams' sponsorship in the Project is extremely valuable," says Herrmann.

In an effort to educate all court participants before trial, viewers may check the availability of specific technology such as computer whiteboards, counsel laptop projections, or analog phones as well as learn of any restrictions

their courtroom of interest might have. Digital photos of each participating courtroom taken from various vantage points are available online.

In addition to providing specific courtroom information, there is also a feature that enables new courts to register their courtrooms and submit their details. Once registered, participating courts have exclusive access to login and update their respective records and photos as necessary. All together, the Courtroom Information Project website seeks to provide an up-to-date snapshot of the technological capabilities inside any participating courtroom in the United States.

Through its Litigation Support Center, staffed by experienced litigators, veteran legal assistants, courtroom technology and database specialists, and a technical and clerical support staff, Hunton & Williams offers a broad array of litigation support and trial presentation services. Firm partner Noel Clinard, the Practice Director of the Center, remarked, "The information being collected and disseminated by the Courtroom Information Project will be of substantial assistance to the firm's activities in this area."

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PO Box 3050 | Williamsburg, Virginia 23187-3050 | 757.221.2494 (p) | 757.221.3708 (f)

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