

SURVEY RESULTS OF APRIL 13 LAKE COUNTY BAR ASSOCIATION BENCH AND BAR CONFERENCE

Total Number of Surveys Received: 124

Not all participants answered all of the questions.

The numbers below are the tally of votes cast and *not the percentage* of votes cast.

1 Should the city and town courts be abolished and replaced with a lesser number of full time superior courts that would serve a similar function?

Yes: 35 No: 91

2 If you answered no to [the previous question], please answer the following question:
Should the city and town courts be absorbed into the Superior/Circuit court system?

Yes: 17 No: 73

3 Should any of the Superior/Circuit Courts relocate to other court houses or locations in the county?

Yes: 61 No: 54

4 If you answered yes to [the previous question], which if any Superior Court buildings should be closed? And if closed where should they be located (You may select more than one).¹

Courts that should close

Crown Point: 7 Gary: 22

Hammond: 17 East Chicago: 56

Several respondents answered that some court rooms should close and move, but not the entire building:

¹ The participants were informed to mark the box next to the court location that should close and write in where that court should move to. However, many participants only marked boxes and did not suggest where the courts should move to. Other participants marked “No” to the previous question but still marked courts for closure. Due to this and other peculiarities, tabulation for this question was problematic. Thus, the results are broken down as indicated.

One Gary Court Room should move: 2 (a third individual voted to move this court to Crown Point)

One Hammond Court Room should move: 1

Two Crown Point Sup. Cts. should move to Gary: 1

Options as to movement of courts

Move EC to Crown Point:	30	Move EC to Hammond:	6
Move EC to Gary:	6	Move EC to Dyer/St. John:	1
Move Gary to Crn Pt.:	13	Move Hammond to Crn Pt:	11
Move all Superior Courts to Gary:	1		

5 Should the development of additional specialized courts be encouraged?

Yes: 71 No: 48

6 If yes, what additional specialized courts?

Collection

Yes: 37	No: 25
Probate: 19	Family Law: 16
Drug Court: 7	Dom. Violence: 3
Plenary and MI: 1	Family and Juvenile Combined: 1
Foreclosure: 1	Jury Trials, Civil: 1
D Fel. Court: 2	Criminal: 2
Torts/PI: 2	Landlord/Tenant: 3
IV-D: 1	Mental Health: 1

One respondent indicated that the jurisdictional limit of city and town courts should be increased to \$20,000

7 Should the Felony Division designate one court or the magistrates to hear only D and C Felony cases?

Yes: 46 No: 53

8 Should the existing system of part time Probate Commissioners be abolished?

Yes: 60 No: 51

9 Should the part time probate commissioners be replaced with a full time judicial officer?

Yes: 56 No: 54

10 Should a full time probate court be established?

Yes: 66 No: 44

11 If your answer to question 6 [with regard to specialized courts] is yes as to location where should that court be located?

Crown Point: 24 Crown Point with satellites: 36

12 Do you prefer cases to be heard by:

Judges: 50 Magistrates: 3 No Preference: 63

13 In what manner should Magistrates/Referees be hired?

The Chief Judge Should independently make the decision: 3

Their Supervising Judge should independently decide: 48

They should be selected by open advertisement and majority vote of all Judges: 24

They should be selected through some form of merit selection: 24

Other:	
By open advertisement and merit selection:	8
Open advertisement and majority vote of the Division Judges:	3
By the Supervising Judge with open Advertisement:	2
By the Supervising Judge with merit Selection:	1
By the Supervising Judge with input from The Division Judges	1
By the Chief Judge and merit selection:	1
By the Chief Judge and merit selection and Open advertisement:	1
Supervising Judge with all other judges approval:	1
Supervising Judge or panel of judges:	1
Majority vote of the Division Judges:	1
By committee:	1
14In what manner should Magistrates/Referees be fired?	
The Chief Judge Should make the decision:	1
The Judge who supervises them should make the decision:	57
It should be determined by majority vote Of all judges:	46
Other:	8

By Majority vote of the judges in the
Division:

6

15 Should the entire court system be unified under one chief judge and one court administrator, and operating under one budget?

Yes: 42 No: 68

There were several qualified "yes" answers that are not included in the above totals

Yes, as long as city courts are not included: 3

Yes, as long as under an executive committee as opposed to a chief judge: 2

16 Do you believe patronage is an issue with regard to the hiring and firing of court support personnel?

Yes: 91 No: 26

17 Should the hiring, firing and utilization of court support personnel be ceded to a uniform human resources system?

Yes: 53 No: 66

18 Should court support personnel be pooled and shared by different courts on an as needed basis?

Yes: 63 No: 55

19 Should the Chief Judge's authority be increased to allow him or her to have the power of general supervision and direction of all court matters and judicial officers?

Yes: 37 No: 75

Five respondents indicated that this authority should be vested in an executive committee.

20 Should the Chief Judge's term be extended to three years?

Yes: 49 No: 59

21 How should the senior judges of each division be elected?

They should be appointed by the Chief Judge: 5

They should be elected by the Judges of their division: 108

22 Who should be responsible for reporting and compiling court data and statistics?

Each individual court: 31

Superior Court Admin: 70

The Chief Judge: 1

Other: 11²

23 Should the court statistics be compiled from the on line docket as opposed to other counting systems?

Yes: 82 No: 19

24 Should all the probation departments be consolidated?

Yes: 68 No: 45³

25 Should the court take a more active role in the collection of fines, costs and restitution?

Yes: 46 No: 62

Several respondents seemed to indicate that this was the responsibility of the clerk or the litigants and not the courts.

² This broke down as follows: Clerk: 3; Sup. Ct. Admin and CJ: 3; Clerk and Indiv. Cts.: 1; Indiv Ct and Sup. Ct. Admin: 2 and two others that were non-specific.

³ Several respondents indicated a qualified yes in that they thought the judges should be chosen by merit selection. However, their number were not significant enough to change the majority.

26 Should the tracking and reporting of the collection of fines, costs and restitution be changed?

Yes: 42 No: 47

27 As to Public Defenders

A. Should all the public defenders in both the felony courts, the county courts and the town courts work out of one independent public defenders office?

Yes: 68 No: 45⁴

B. Or should the courts that now hire their own public defenders continue to hire those public defenders?

Yes: 47 No: 53

Most respondents answered both questions.

28. Should there be an information desk/resource center for litigants in each courthouse?

Yes: 86 No: 28

29 If you answered yes to [the previous question] who should be responsible for running the information desks/resource centers?

Bar Assoc.: 12 Clerk's Office: 17

Judges or Courts: 10 Court Admin.: 40

⁴ Included in these numbers are several qualified yes votes and one qualified no vote. Three indicated a "yes" vote if the judges were merit selected; one "yes" vote, but that this should not apply to city courts; five "yes" votes if the judges were merit selected and if this did not apply to the city courts. There was one qualified "no" indicating that the respondent would agree to consolidation of public defenders if the judges involved were chosen by merit selection. Were these qualified yes votes changed to no votes the tally would be Yes: 59; No: 54.

Other:

Pro Bono Project:	4	Sheriff/Court Security:	6
Commisioners:	2	County Personnel:	1
County Council:	1	Lake Co. Bldg. Authority Dept.	1
Cooperative Effort of Bar, Judges, Clerk and Court Admin.:			1
Info Dept. with a phone system that leads caller to the clerk who then directs the caller to a website:			1
Someone who knows all the answers. But it would probably Be someone important's girlfriend or relative:			1