

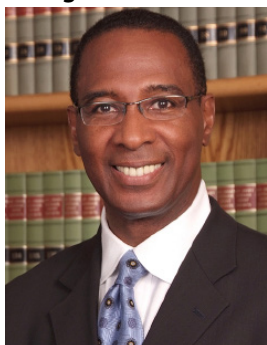
# JUDICIARY TIMES

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## *Pretrial Service Officers Crucial to Justice Reform*

**By Judge Glenn A. Grant  
Acting Administrative Director of the Courts**



Judge Glenn A. Grant

The state of New Jersey is moving closer to full implementation of the criminal justice reform initiative scheduled to commence on Jan. 1, 2017. In five months we will have completely transformed the handling of criminal cases in our system. We will be replacing monetary bail or financial resources for determining whether a defendant should be released pending trial with a new process that relies in part on an objective risk assessment instrument.

Another aspect of this reform effort is the creation of a Pretrial Services Unit that statewide be staffed by more than 200 pretrial services officers. The officers will be responsible for monitoring defendants who are released pending trial. The reform initiative also includes establishment of speedy trial processing deadlines for the filing of an indictment and the disposition of criminal charges for those defendants held in jail.

As I indicated previously, the move to reform the state's criminal justice system grew from the work of the Joint Committee on Criminal Justice, a special committee of the Supreme Court established by Chief Justice Stuart Rabner to examine the issues of bail and speedy trial reform. The committee included the attorney general, the public defender, judges, county prosecutors, defense counsel, court administrators, representatives of the Legislature, and a representative of the American Civil Liberties Union. The Joint Committee developed

and issued a series of recommendations that were incorporated into this landmark legislation.

Voters also approved a constitutional change to permit judges to keep high-risk defendants detained without bail. Pilot programs are underway in three vicinages, Camden, Morris/Sussex and Passaic, and planning for implementation throughout the remainder of the state is proceeding. The work of the pretrial officers, who will be hired over the next several months and into next year, is critical to our efforts to reform the criminal justice system and to ensure fairness and protect our communities.

The tasks that our pretrial services officers will undertake will include using an evidence-based risk assessment tool to measure a defendant's risk of failure to appear in court and of committing a new crime, making recommendations to the court regarding release and conditions, monitoring a defendant upon release, ensuring that defendants are notified of future court appearances and notifying the court of any violations of release conditions and in appropriate instances initiating the release revocation process. As you can see, these officers will play a critical role in implementing this reform program.

Our judges and staff have been working tirelessly on this effort and we have made remarkable progress in implementing the myriad of changes to make this project a reality. For both Chief Justice Rabner and the Supreme Court, I would like to acknowledge all of those who have contributed – and continue to contribute -- their time, energy and creativity to this important initiative. Thank you for your enthusiastic efforts in this historic undertaking to make our entire criminal justice system fairer and better. This endeavor reaffirms the commitment of the Judiciary to provide justice and fairness to all citizens who come into contact with our courts.