On behalf of Justice Simeon Acoba (ret.) and myself, and all the members of the Judicial Administration Committee (“JAC”), the following is our brief report for the Board that you requested.

The JAC committee is made up of members from the judiciary and bar whose mission is to maintain a close relationship on matters of mutual concern to the bench and bar and coordinate activities relating to improvement of the judiciary and administration of justice.

The 2019 JAC consists of both judge and attorney members and the members are:

Associate Justice Simeon R. Acoba (ret.), Co-Chair
Associate Justice Richard Pollack
Judge Joel August (ret.)
Judge Ronald Ibarra (ret.),
Judge Randal Valenciano.
Judge Rowena Somerville
Judge Melvin Fujino
Judge Brian Costa
Steven J.T. Chow, Co-Chair
Kyleigh Nakasone
Dennis Chong Kee
Hayley Cheng
Kahikino Noa Dettweiler
Vladimir Devens
Kirsha Durante
Kevin Takata
William Harrison
Edward Kemper
Carol K. Muranaka
Dyan Mitsuyama
Lester Oshiro

Since 2012, the JAC has coordinated Bench-Bar Conferences and Forums. Members of the Judiciary and bar are invited each year to discuss systemic issues involving criminal and civil litigation in both Circuit and District Court that could be improved for the betterment of the legal practice. In 2019, for the first time, the JAC included a breakout session for family law judges and practitioners.
The Bench-Bar Conference was conducted and hosted by the JAC on October 11, 2019. In preparation for the conference, the JAC had twelve regularly scheduled monthly meetings and subgroups (civil circuit/district court, criminal circuit/district court and family court) of the committee held additional meetings in preparation for the 2019 Bench-Bar Conference.

The Bench-Bar Conference was held in the afternoon in conjunction with the Bar Convention, and was attended by 34 judges, two Judiciary staff, and 166 lawyers. The participants were divided into seven groups in terms of their interests: the district court civil law group, the district court criminal law group, two circuit court civil law groups, two circuit court criminal law groups, and a family court group. Each group was assigned specialized topics relevant to its respective subject areas. Materials in support of the common and specialized topics were gathered by the JAC and emailed to all the participants.

Chief Justice Recktenwald spoke to each group and he and other members of the Hawaii Supreme Court and the Intermediate Court of Appeals also attended the group discussions. Other members of the administrative director’s office also attended. The JAC members invited the participants, planned the sessions, and acted as discussion leaders and reporters in the group sessions.

The JAC will prepare a report of the comments and suggestions made by the judges and lawyers and the report may be published in the Hawaii Bar Journal. As with the last bench-bar conference, Chief Justice Recktenwald indicated he will address the comments and suggestions in a public written response. In a survey of the participants as of October 28, 2019, on a scale of 1(low) to 5 (highest) 68.66% of the responding participants rated the conference “5”, and 28.36.% rated the conference “4” on “overall evaluation,” and 64.18% rated 5 and 29.85% rated “4” on “overall usefulness.” There were no evaluations below a “3” for any of the categories surveyed. We hope the results of the conference have been and will be of benefit to the bar and to the judiciary and thus also to clients and to the general public.

We are especially thankful to Pat Mau-Shimizu for the support and help of the HSBA staff. Thank you for the opportunity to provide you with this update.

/s/ Simeon R. Acoba          /s/ Steven J.T. Chow
SIMEON R. ACOBA, JR.          STEVEN J. T. CHOW
Associate Justice (ret.)      Co-Chair, HSBA Committee on
Hawaii Supreme Court          Judicial Administration
Co-Chair, HSBA Committee on
Judicial Administration