

Dear Attorneys and Trustees,

The Bankruptcy Clerk's offices for the District of North Dakota and the District of South Dakota are entering into a three-year Horizontal Consolidation Pilot Project initiated by the Judicial Conference of the United States Courts. It will study the impact of combining leadership of both courts under one Clerk of Court to determine if there are efficiencies and financial savings that can be achieved by sharing Human Resources, Budget, Finance and IT functions under this structure. The pilot will have little effect on attorneys and parties appearing in the Bankruptcy Courts in either district. The processes and procedures that are currently in place for each of the Bankruptcy Courts will not change. For example, the local rules for each district will remain in place.

Frederick M. Entwistle, Bankruptcy Clerk for the District of South Dakota, will be dually appointed to serve in the Bankruptcy Court for the District of North Dakota upon the retirement of Dianne G. Schmitz, Bankruptcy Clerk for the District of North Dakota. The effective date of the Horizontal Consolidation Pilot Project is May 1, 2018.

In an effort to gather useful data related to the Horizontal Consolidation Pilot Project, the Judicial Conference Committee on the Administration of the Bankruptcy System (JCUS Bankruptcy Committee), along with the Bankruptcy Judges and Clerks of Court for the District of South Dakota and the District of North Dakota, asked the Federal Judicial Center (FJC) to survey bankruptcy attorneys and trustees about the services provided by the two Bankruptcy Clerk's offices. The survey is part of the two courts' ongoing commitment to provide the highest level of service possible and is also a component of a study concerning the sharing agreement between our two courts that will begin in May.

The FJC is the research and education organization for the federal courts and is located in Washington, D.C.

The FJC will be sending all attorneys and trustees of record with either of our courts during the past two years a questionnaire about the Bankruptcy Clerk's offices in the district(s) in which they work.

Only the FJC researchers will see your completed questionnaire(s). The researchers will prepare reports from the aggregated survey results for the JCUS Bankruptcy Committee and our two courts. In doing so, the researchers will compile the responses so as to protect your confidentiality, and no responses will be directly attributed to you or to any other specific respondent.

We hope you will take the opportunity to provide us with feedback about the services of our Bankruptcy Clerk's offices. If you have any questions about the survey, please contact Beth Wiggins of the Federal Judicial Center (202-502-4076; [bwiggins@fjc.gov](mailto:bwiggins@fjc.gov)).

Sincerely,

Shon Hastings  
Chief Bankruptcy Judge  
District of North Dakota

Charles L. Nail, Jr.  
Chief Bankruptcy Judge  
District of South Dakota