

DISTRICT OF WYOMING 2008-2015

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During the period from 2008-2015, the Wyoming Federal District Court saw unprecedented changes. In the beginning of 2008 there were two active district court judges, Alan B. Johnson in Cheyenne and William F. Downes in Casper, and one senior judge, Clarence A. Brimmer. The district had two full time magistrate judges, William C. Beaman, the Chief Magistrate Judge, serving in Cheyenne, and Judge Stephen E. Cole, serving in Yellowstone National Park. There were also five part-time magistrate judges.

The first change in this lineup occurred on June 2, 2010, when Nancy D. Freudenthal was sworn in as the seventh federal district court judge in Wyoming's history. Judge Freudenthal filled the position created when Judge Brimmer took senior status in September 2006. Several significant changes followed. After serving as Magistrate Judge for over 30 years, Judge Beaman retired on January 28, 2011. Scott W. Skavdahl took the position of Chief Magistrate Judge on February 1, 2011. A few months later, District Judge Downes retired on August 5, 2011, creating a vacancy at the Casper Courthouse. Judge Skavdahl took the oath of office for that position on November 8, 2011, becoming the eighth federal district court judge in Wyoming's history. Kelly H. Rankin was sworn in as the Chief Magistrate Judge on June 7, 2012.

Magistrate Judge Stephen Cole retired on May 5, 2012. After he retired, Mark Carman was sworn in on February 25, 2013. In another significant change, the District went from five part-time magistrate judges in 2008, to only three part-time magistrate judges in 2015.¹

¹ Judge Karen Marty, a part-time magistrate judge in Rock Springs, Wyoming, passed away February 24, 2016, leaving only two part-time magistrates in the District of Wyoming.

While the District experienced historical personnel changes during this period, it also underwent a significant facelift in its facilities. In 2008, the District celebrated the opening of the Yellowstone Justice Center, moving from the U.S. Engineer's Office referred to as "The Pagoda Building" that was originally built in 1903. The second floor of the Joseph C. O'Mahoney Federal Center in Cheyenne, Wyoming, also saw a number of updates. These projects included the completion of a new courtroom, a new library, moving the Magistrate Judges' chambers from the front hallway into the back hallway, and the creation of new chambers for Judge Johnson. The Clerk's office was also updated and reconfigured. The Ewing T. Kerr Federal Building in Casper, Wyoming, also saw several renovations to the Clerk's office and grand jury room.

During this period the District's case load has remained relatively unchanged. However, the District has seen an increase in *pro se* filings by both prisoners and non-prisoners. The District embarked on a pilot program with the Wyoming State Penitentiary to allow inmates to use electronic filing for their cases. The District has also implemented a system to provide jurors with exhibits electronically through the Juror Evidence Recording System (JERS). These changes reflect the shift away from paper to electronic forms of communication.

Additionally, the District started a process of placing the magistrate judges in the draw for a certain percentage of civil cases. This move, along with an emphasis on consent to the magistrate judges, has allowed the District to better utilize its two full time magistrate judges.

The history of the federal courts in the modern era, of course, consists principally of the story of the judges who have served and the cases they have heard and decided. As noted, Wyoming is a three-judge district court. But when the judges are still living and contributing to the work of the court and to society in general, a discussion of their lives and work is necessarily incomplete. On October 24, 2014,

the Wyoming Federal District Court lost Judge Clarence A. Brimmer, who had faithfully served the people of Wyoming for over forty years.