

NEWS RELEASE

ARIZONA SUPREME COURT

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Supreme Court Approves Commercial Court Pilot Program

PHOENIX – Commercial disputes may soon be handled in a new venue thanks to an Administrative Order by the Arizona Supreme Court that was signed this week. In May 2014, the Supreme Court established an 18-member advisory committee to study the feasibility of establishing a special venue within the Superior Courts to address the unique needs of businesses engaged in commercial litigation. The Superior Court in Maricopa County is in the process of launching a three-year pilot Commercial Court program.

“This court recognizes that disputes between companies or involving the internal governance of businesses often raise issues that require specialized knowledge and that implicate potentially expensive discovery. By appointing experienced judges and establishing processes shaped for commercial litigation, we hope to show that these disputes can be resolved more efficiently and economically,” Chief Justice Scott Bales explained.

The advisory committee cited several reasons that a Commercial Court would be beneficial to Arizona, including:

- To make Arizona a more favorable forum for resolving business disputes;
- To improve the business community’s access to justice;
- To expeditiously resolve business cases and reduce litigation costs;
- To improve the quality of justice; and
- To gain the business community’s support for the State of Arizona’s dispute resolution system.

The pilot program is slated to begin July 1, 2015. The three judges who will be initially assigned to the pilot program are Dawn Bergin, Roger Brodman, and Christopher Whitten. Over the next several months, the Superior Court in Maricopa County will be taking other administrative steps to allow the Commercial Court to take on its first docket of cases.

The establishment of a Commercial Court is budget neutral and will be achieved through the use of existing judges and resources that are currently in place at the trial court level.

Once a case is assigned to Commercial Court, there will be a mandatory early scheduling conference to help address discovery issues and to adopt an efficient schedule for resolving the case.

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