

BENCH-BAR OMBUDSMAN PROGRAM

The Champaign County Bar Association determined there is need for the designation of an ombudsman for purposes of being a liaison between members of the Bar and of the local judiciary. Such a position was first considered and proposed by the Bench - Bar Committee, and was then forwarded to the Board of Ggovernors. The Board of Governors approved the proposal with some modifications.

It is believed some formalization of an ombudsman position would result in a benefit including the following:

- A) Encourage constructive communication between members of the Bar Association and the judiciary, who may otherwise refrain because of various reasons;
- B) Create a central repository and more formal procedure for such communications;
- C) Provide a recognized source of communication between the Bench and the Bar that would have the credibility associated with a formalized procedure.

It is, therefore, resolved by the Board of Governors of the Champaign County Bar Association that the position of the Bench – Bar Ombudsman will be created and that position shall have the responsibilities enumerated below:

1. The Ombudsman's primary responsibility will be to receive and deliver any suggestions, criticisms or complaints between members of the judiciary and members of the Bar Association.
2. The Ombudsman will serve as a member of the Bench-Bar Committee of the Champaign County Bar Association.
3. The Ombudsman would not be required to consult with the Bench - Bar Committee before communicating with the party toward whom a complaint or suggestion was made, but would have the discretion to do so as s/he sees fit.
4. The Ombudsman would not be required to convey all communications received from any member of the Bar or Bench, but would have discussion in this regard.
5. A communication by the Ombudsman to a member of the judiciary would initially be limited to communication with the presiding judge, and any direct communication with a judge against whom a complaint is directed would be after initial communication with the presiding judge and with permission of the presiding judge.

6. A communication by the Ombudsman to a member of the Bar Association would be made directly to that member.

7. It is recognized that the guarantee of absolute confidentiality is not possible, but the Ombudsman would be required to maintain confidentiality to the extent possible.

8. The Ombudsman would be appointed by the Board of Governors for a one-year term beginning the last Friday in April. [Note: this shall be modified to require appointment within a month of the start of the membership year]

9. The Ombudsman shall report to the Board of Governors on an annual basis, which report shall give a general evaluation of the position and a statistically-based summary of the number, type and resolution of suggestions, complaints or criticisms received during the course of the year.