

## WESTERN DISTRICT OF MISSOURI (2011-2012)

The Western District of Missouri chapter had an active year. As in the past years, the chapter broke its activities into two seasons: a fall and a spring speaker series. In October 2011, it sponsored a luncheon featuring Giles Fowler, a local author of the book *Deaths on Pleasant Street*, a history of a famous triple homicide trial involving the prominent Swope family in Independence, Missouri in the early 1900's. In November 2011, author William Ouseley entertained a large audience on the subject of his book *Mobsters in Our Midst*, a definitive history of the notorious criminal regime of Nick Civella, with a focus on the period lasting from the 1950s through the 1980s. And in December 2011, the fall series of speakers concluded with an appearance by Mike Hoeflich, the former Dean of the University of Kansas School of Law, who lectured on his newly-published sesquicentennial history of the federal District Court for the District of Kansas, *Justice on the Prairie: 150 Years of the Federal District Court of Kansas*.

The spring speaker series opened in March 2012 with the appearance of the chapter's most prominent author of the year: Noah Feldman, the Bemis Professor of International Law at Harvard Law School. Feldman spoke on his award-winning book, *Scorpions: The Battles and Triumphs of FDR's Great Supreme Court Justices*. Feldman focused his comments on the Truman era and the appointment of Vinson to serve as Chief Justice. This event, co-sponsored with the Truman Library Institute, attracted over 250 attendees. The April and May 2012 presentations were a retrospective on the case of *Jenkins v. State of Missouri*, the controversial Kansas City, Missouri School District Desegregation case that spanned a 35-year period. The April session featured strategic overviews by the three principal attorneys for the plaintiffs (Arthur Benson), five of the suburban school district defendants (George E. Feldmiller) and the defendant State of Missouri (John Munich). The second session was devoted to a debate between the two principal experts in the *Jenkins* case: Professor Gary Orfield, the co-founder and director of UCLA's Civil Rights Project, one of the nation's leading research centers on issues of racial inequality in school districts, and David Armor, Professor Emeritus of Public Policy at George Mason University, a nationally prominent researcher and writer in the area of school desegregation and factors that contribute to achievement differences among students. Each discussed their expert opinions in the *Jenkins* case as well as how that case is viewed nationally nearly 40 years after its initial filing.

The chapter estimates that nearly 600 individuals attended its six events.

Finally, work is continuing on a permanent historical display in the Whittaker courthouse that will trace the history of the Court, its judges, and its most discussed cases. That project, prompted by Chief Judge Gaitan and the Court en banc, is taking shape under the capable leadership of the Court's Executive, Ann Thompson. Senior Judge Howard F. Sachs and AUSA Tom Larson have also played key roles in its research and development.

As of June 30, 2012, the chapter has \$11,188.19 on hand in its account.

Submitted by,

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