

ASHTABULA COUNTY COURT

WESTERN DIVISION

117 WEST MAIN STREET

GENEVA, OHIO 44041

CASEY P. O'BRIEN, JUDGE
MICKEY L. MIHALICK, CLERK

TELEPHONE: 440-466-1184
440-466-1185

Testimony of Casey O'Brien – Judge of the Ashtabula Western County Court in Support of HB 413, and the Consolidation of Eastern and Western County Courts

5-6-2024 - Good Morning, Chairman Hillyer, Committee Members, Representative Fowler - Arthur. Thank you for the opportunity to speak on behalf of HB 413. My testimony presents a unique perspective as, in theory, I would be one of the two part time judges to merge into one full time Judge of the new Ashtabula County, County Court. As you have heard, Eastern and Western County Courts were long ago created primarily due to the physical proximity each in relation to the largest geographic County in the State of Ohio – Ashtabula County. Each Court long served its citizens by offering a local courthouse closer to the needs of those in its jurisdiction.

Over the years the caseload had been steady for that of a part-time Judge. Recently caseloads have declined in part due to the effects of the Covid 19 pandemic. When combined with the advances in technology (virtual hearings) and the modern requirements mandated of all courts, including security and physical layout of antiquated buildings, the need for a local court in two separate venues has been offset by the benefits of combining the Courts into one.

The Supreme Court has long held the position that part-time Courts should be phased out in favor of full time Judges and this bill will continue those efforts. The additional merger of some of the Northeastern Villages and Townships into the Conneaut Municipal Court will further enhance the efficiency of both Courts.

While many of the local citizenry, staff and public officials would rather not see change that moves the Ashtabula Western County Court out of its present location, many feel that the time has come for the combination to occur. It will be up to the Ashtabula County Commissioners to determine where the new Court will be located.

I have a wonderful, hard working staff who represent the Court well and will continue in whatever capacity the Court evolves into.

In conclusion, I have no objection to the proposed combination of the Ashtabula Eastern and Western County Courts as proposed in HB 413. If the committee members have any questions, I would be glad to take them now. Thank you.

Judge Casey O'Brien
Ashtabula Western County Court