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Editor's Note

Steve Leben

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Court Review

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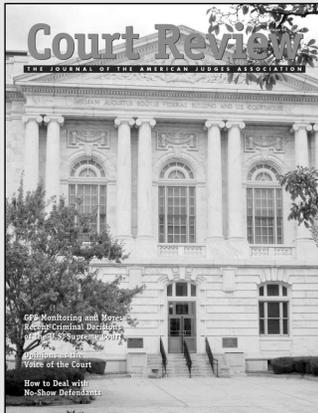
EDITOR'S NOTE

We begin the issue with Professor Chuck Weisselberg's annual review of the past year's criminal decisions of the United States Supreme Court. This is the fifth year he's provided the criminal-case summary for us, having taken on this helpful task for American judges after the death of Professor Charlie Whitebread in 2008. Professor Whitebread had provided *Court Review* readers with annual reviews of the Court's civil and criminal cases for more than 25 years. We have been thrilled with Professor Weisselberg's work: he places the new decisions in context, emphasizes what's most important for state-court judges (most of our readership), and tells us what's on tap for the coming year as well.

I'm pleased to announce that we've signed up a well-qualified author for a companion annual review of the Court's civil cases, which will lead off the next issue of *Court Review*. That article, by Professor Todd Pettys of the University of Iowa College of Law, is already posted on the AJA's website. (Go to <http://aja.ncsc.dni.us/publications/court-review.html> to access any of our articles from 1998 to the present.) We've recently started posting articles that are especially timely—like these annual reviews of the Court's civil and criminal cases—on the website as soon as they're ready. With the combination of Professors Weisselberg and Pettys, we now have two top-notch scholars doing an annual review of the cases decided by the United States Supreme Court, prepared especially for the needs of a judicial audience. If you ever have a chance to do so, please thank them: these summaries take a lot of work to prepare.

This issue contains three additional articles. The first is by Texas Chief Justice Wallace Jefferson, former California judicial administrator Bill Vickrey, and California judicial staff member Douglas Denton. They review how state-supreme-court opinions have grown longer and more complicated over the years; they also suggest ways that courts might better communicate their rulings to the public so as to enhance public perceptions that cases have been handled fairly. While their study focused on state supreme courts, many of the authors' suggestions would be applicable to any judge issuing a written opinion, and many might be worth considering as well by judges who rule orally from the bench.

The final two articles examine ways to reduce no-show rates by defendants for criminal-court hearings. Defendants who fail to appear for hearings can clog court calendars and, when warrants are issued, jails as well. In addition, of course, serving warrants to those who fail to appear takes law-enforcement resources. So finding ways to reduce the no-show rate is important to courts, to law-enforcement officials, and to the public budget. These articles present the results of two pilot projects that achieved some success in reducing no shows. In Jefferson County, Colorado, telephone calls from real people greatly reduced the no-show rate. In 14 counties in Nebraska, postcard reminders also reduced the no-show rate. Those who conducted each test project report what worked, what didn't, and what merits further consideration.—Steve Leben



Court Review, the quarterly journal of the American Judges Association, invites the submission of unsolicited, original articles, essays, and book reviews. *Court Review* seeks to provide practical, useful information to the working judges of the United States and Canada. In each issue, we hope to provide information that will be of use to judges in their everyday work, whether in highlighting new procedures or methods of trial, court, or case management, providing substantive information regarding an area of law likely to be encountered by many judges, or by providing background information (such as psychology or other social science research) that can be used by judges in their work. Guidelines for submission of manuscripts for *Court Review* are set forth on the inside back cover of this issue. *Court Review* reserves the right to edit, condense, or reject material submitted for publication.

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Photo credit: Cover photo, Mary Watkins. The photo is of the William Augustus Bootle Federal Building and United States Courthouse in Macon, Georgia, one of five locations at which the United States District Court for the Middle District of Georgia sits. The building, built in 1905, was renamed for Judge Bootle in 1998. Bootle, a 1954 appointee of President Dwight D. Eisenhower, issued several landmark civil-rights rulings during his career, including a 1961 ruling forcing the integration of the University of Georgia. Bootle retired in 1981 and died in 2005 at the age of 102.

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