Administrative Office of the Courts

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Longtime New Mexico court administrator retiring

SANTA FE – Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) Director Arthur "Artie" Pepin is retiring after 18 years leading the judicial agency that supports operations of state courts across New Mexico.

"Because of Artie's innovative leadership, courts have improved an array of judicial services for the public," said Chief Justice David K. Thomson. "He embodies all the characteristics of a true leader — integrity, vision, compassion and an ability to inspire and collaboratively work with other people to achieve common goals."

Pepin said, "Working for the Supreme Court and serving the Judiciary truly has been an honor and privilege. I am proud of many things that have been accomplished but I hope any lasting impact I leave will include my respect for the courts and dedication to our mission to bring justice to all New Mexicans. As long as those principles remain the focus of the AOC, progress on any issue is possible."

Pepin's retirement is effective Oct. 1. Karl Reifsteck succeeds Pepin as the new AOC director. Reifsteck joined the AOC as deputy director in January 2023, and previously was a district court judge and the court executive officer in the Thirteenth Judicial District of Sandoval, Valencia and Cibola counties.

"I join the Chief Justice in saluting Artie's leadership and integrity," said Reifsteck. "Artie's dedicated public service career is inspiring. He has been a great mentor to me personally, particularly teaching me how to lead through adversity and head up new initiatives. I wish him all the very best for his retirement."

Pepin has served as AOC director since 2006. He was director of the criminal appeals division in the New Mexico Attorney General's Office from 2000 to 2006. Previously, he worked for the New Jersey Court of Appeals, and served in the U.S. Army.

In 2022, Pepin received an award from the National Association of Pretrial Services Agencies for his work to improve New Mexico's pretrial justice system. The National Center for State Courts selected Pepin in 2014 for its Warren E. Burger Award for Excellence in Judicial Administration. He served as President of the national Conference of State Court Administrators and Vice Chair of the Board of Directors for the National Center for State Courts in 2016-2017.

The AOC oversees financial, personnel and information technology operations for New Mexico courts, administers a wide range of judicial programs, and serves as a liaison with the legislative and executive branches of government.

During Pepin's tenure, courts improved their use of technology by implementing a statewide electronic case management system and instituting electronic filing of documents in civil and criminal cases. The language access program within the AOC received the top ranking in the nation in 2021 for its assistance, including interpreters, to people with limited English proficiency, low literacy and for deaf and hard of hearing individuals. Pepin also led a commission that developed initiatives to speed up the resolution of felony cases in Bernalillo County and relieve jail overcrowding.

Pepin guided the way as New Mexico courts have implemented evidence-based practices for decisions about people awaiting trial on criminal charges. He and the late Supreme Court Justice Charles Daniels promoted reforms that moved the state away from a bail system that relied on a person's ability to afford a money bond to secure their release from custody pending trial.

Under Pepin's leadership, the Judiciary started building a network of pretrial services programs across the state. Additionally, AOC formed centralized units to provide data-driven information to judges for pretrial decisions and perform after-hours monitoring of defendants with court-ordered location tracking devices as part of their conditions of release pending trial.

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AOC Director Artie Pepin