



# YOU ARE (or were) HERE:

## Eastern District of Washington Unveils Historical Displays

By Renee McFarland and Sean McAvoy

On September 28, 2017, the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Washington unveiled a series of historical display exhibits, permanently located in the lobbies of federal courthouses throughout the district. The exhibits follow the theme of “You Are Here,” and explore key events, decisions and judicial officers that led to the establishment and growth of the Eastern District’s federal judiciary.

Educational panels in each of the exhibits take visitors through the different types of cases heard by the district and bankruptcy courts, which include civil, criminal and bankruptcy proceedings, as well as key roles and players in federal litigation and ceremonial proceedings over which the judicial officers preside. The Spokane exhibit also contains an interactive touchscreen display that provides a timeline tour of critical cases heard by the federal judges assigned to the Eastern District.

Exhibits are open to the public during normal business hours (8 a.m. to 5 p.m.) at the following courthouse locations:

Thomas S. Foley  
United States Courthouse  
920 W. Riverside Ave.  
Spokane, WA

William O. Douglas  
United States Courthouse  
25 S. 3<sup>rd</sup> Street  
Yakima, WA

Richland U.S. Courthouse  
& Federal Building  
825 Jadwin Ave.  
Richland, WA

**A reminder:** All adult visitors to the U.S. Courthouse must present a federal, state, or tribal government-issued picture identification, a Canadian picture driver’s license, or a United States or foreign picture passport to gain access to the facilities. Visitors will be screened by court security officers upon entry.

**For more information** about the Eastern District of Washington, visit the district court’s website at [www.waed.uscourts.gov](http://www.waed.uscourts.gov). A timeline featuring key events and a chart containing landmark cases and judge profiles can be found on the district court’s website at <http://www.waed.uscourts.gov/timelines>.



Left: Educational panel depicting “Key Components of the Federal Judiciary,” Richland U.S. Courthouse & Federal Building; Right: Educational panel with Judge Edward F. Shea quote, Thomas S. Foley United States Courthouse, Spokane; courtesy United States District Court for the Eastern District of Washington (WAED). Below: Educational panel describing a civil case from multiple perspectives, William O. Douglas United States Courthouse, Yakima; courtesy WAED.

## Q&A with Sean McAvoy

### District Court Executive/Clerk of Court

**NWLawyer:** As a starting point for this conversation, can you tell us a little bit about the Eastern District of Washington itself?

**McAvoy:** The Eastern District of Washington covers the 20 counties east of the summit of the Cascade Mountains. The U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Washington comprises 10 Article III (district) judges and two full-time magistrate judges. Additionally, the U.S. Bankruptcy Court for the Eastern District of Washington is comprised of three bankruptcy judges. The Eastern District has staffed courthouses in three locations: Spokane, Yakima, and Richland, and its district judges travel among and preside over cases in each of the three locations.

**NWLawyer:** What was the impetus for the historical display exhibits? When did this project begin?

**McAvoy:** The judges and court unit executives for the Eastern District of Washington maintain a continuing dedication to civics education and public awareness of the judicial history of the district. The court conducts ongoing

public outreach through scheduled presentations, classroom visits, mock trials, and multiday institutes. These outreach events target students in middle school and high school, as well as high school government/civics teachers. In an effort to supplement its already strong public outreach, the court approved the concept of a historical exhibit installation in each of its court locations in late July 2014. The intent of these displays was to strengthen the understanding of the history of the federal courts in the Eastern District of Washington for all who visit its federal courthouses. A committee formed in August 2014, consisting of district and bankruptcy judges, court unit executives, the Ninth Circuit Librarian, facilities managers from the General Services Administration (GSA), and the GSA historian. In September 2014, the court released to the public its Request for Qualifications, a solicitation that invited design firms from across the country with experience and expertise in designing, building, and facilitating creative and interactive exhibits to respond. The Historical Exhibit Committee selected the exhibit design firm, approved the design and content, and verified accuracy of written text.



IN THE NEAR FUTURE,  
WE PLAN TO ADD  
INTERACTIVE EXHIBITS  
TO THE DISPLAYS.



Above: Educational panel depicting “Courtroom Architecture and Layout,” Thomas S. Foley United States Courthouse, Spokane, courtesy WAED.

Below: Lobby, Thomas S. Foley United States Courthouse, Spokane, with educational panels and interactive touchscreen display; courtesy WAED.



**NWLawyer:** Does any person deserve special recognition for their involvement?

**McAvoy:** GSA should be recognized for allowing the installation of the exhibits in its public lobbies. The Federal Bar for the Eastern District of Washington should also be recognized, as it is through the payment of their attorney admission fees that these displays were possible.

**NWLawyer:** How were the exhibits financed?

**McAvoy:** No appropriated funds were used for the design or installation of these historical exhibits. Rather, the Eastern District turned to its attorney admission fund, comprised of pro hac vice and standing attorney admission fees. The attorney admission fund may only be used for purposes that benefit the members of the bench and the bar in the administration of justice, and clearly judicial and historical education of the citizens (and potential future lawyers and litigants) in this district advances that purpose.

**NWLawyer:** Could you explain the process by which the subjects of the exhibits were chosen?

**McAvoy:** Working in partnership with the exhibit design firm, Sea Reach Ltd. of Sheridan, Oregon, the Historical Exhibit Committee identified a “places, cases, and faces” approach to historical education for the displays. With that as a starting point, the committee and firm researched and integrated the formation of the district, its U.S. courthouse locations, the judges who have served since formation, and those cases having significant impact on both the district and federal law. Additionally, the exhibits explore the different roles included in the federal judicial process, ranging from bankruptcy case administrators to U.S. probation officers.

**NWLawyer:** Of the cases you profiled, which do you find the most interesting?

**McAvoy:** *Alvarez et al. v. IBP* (1999). As a part of their skilled and dangerous

job, workers at a Pasco slaughterhouse and meat-packing plant were required to wear extensive protective gear, such as chain mail aprons and Plexiglas arm sleeves, during their shifts. The workers, who were unionized, tried to negotiate pay for time spent donning and doffing this gear through collective bargaining, but they were unable to come to an agreement with their employer. The resulting lawsuit spanned several years and several appeals.

Also, I was very interested in *In re Washington State Apple Advertising Commission* (2003). In 1937, the Washington State Legislature created a commission to promote the state's apple harvest. For every box of Washington apples sold, the commission's members (apple farmers and distributors) paid a fee. The commission used those funds to create ad campaigns promoting the state's apple crop, building the "Washington apple" into a powerful brand. Between 1937 and 2003, the proportion of the nation's apples grown in Washington rose from 15 to 70 percent.

Washington's Apple Commission was one of many state-created advertising organizations that turned their products into household names. But in the 1990s and early 2000s, some members of those organizations filed lawsuits in federal courts, claiming that by requiring them to pay the fees, the organizations were effectively forcing them to advertise for their competitors—thus infringing on their free speech rights.

**NWLawyer:** Which cases profiled do you think have had the greatest impact on Eastern Washington residents?

**McAvoy:** *In re Hanford Nuclear Reservation* (1991). In the late 1980s, in response to citizen requests, the government released previously classified information, including the fact that during the 1940s and early 1950s the stacks of the Hanford reactors had emitted Iodine-131, a radioactive chemical, into the air.

Also *Community Association for Restoration of the Environment v. Cow Palace, LLC* (2015). In February 2013, two nonprofit organizations filed lawsuits against several Washington



Educational panel depicting bankruptcy and naturalization proceedings, William O. Douglas United States Courthouse, Yakima; courtesy WAED.

State CAFO [Concentrated Animal Feeding Operation] dairies over waste disposal practices.

**NWLawyer:** How do you plan to update the exhibits over time?

**McAvoy:** In the near future, we plan to add interactive exhibits to the displays in Yakima and Richland. While the content of the static panels will remain in perpetuity, the interactive timelines will be updated with new judicial officers, pertinent legislation, and cases of historical significance decided by the court. The court now owns the rights to the coding for the interactive timeline and will maintain its content as current. **NWL**

THE INTENT OF THESE DISPLAYS WAS TO STRENGTHEN THE UNDERSTANDING OF THE HISTORY OF THE FEDERAL COURTS.



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