

July 24, 2000

The Honorable Bill Owens
Governor of Colorado
136 State Capitol
Denver, Colorado 80203

Dear Governor Owens:

Last October, you issued Executive Order B-011-99, creating an unprecedented statewide task force to help reform Colorado's civil justice system. We are pleased to present to you the official report of the Governor's Task Force on Civil Justice Reform. The report contains our findings on the current status of civil justice in Colorado, as well as recommendations aimed at making civil justice better, quicker and more affordable for all Coloradans.

Colorado's civil justice system – including state trial and appellate courts as well as various state regulatory and licensing boards, commissions and agencies – touches the lives of virtually every person who lives in Colorado or does business in our state. Yet it is also a system approaching crisis. Overloaded court dockets, fueled by strong population growth and the changing needs of court users, are becoming common throughout much of Colorado.

At the same time, our state courts are handling civil cases of increasing complexity. Meanwhile, a large and growing number of Coloradans are choosing to navigate the civil justice system themselves – without the help of their own attorneys. These and other developments challenge the ability of state courts to resolve civil disputes in a quality, timely and cost-effective manner.

Faced with these trends, the leaders of Colorado's civil justice system – judges, magistrates, administrative law judges, hearing officers and professional staff – are laboring mightily to ensure the public's continued confidence in our state courts. But they can't do it alone. Only by working together on mutual priorities, with proper respect for the constitutional separation of powers, can the three branches of Colorado state government – executive, legislative and judicial – ensure that our civil justice system keeps pace with the needs of our changing society.

In keeping with your Executive Order, the Task Force's goal is for the report's recommendations to become the basis for public policy reforms – through legislation, judicial rule-making, or administrative and regulatory changes as appropriate. We also look forward to participating in public discussion on these and other civil justice reform proposals. Thank you for the opportunity to have participated in this worthwhile endeavor.

Sincerely,

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