

MBA NEWS



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MASSACHUSETTS BAR ASSOCIATION WILL HOST TOWN HALL-STYLE FORUM TO DISCUSS SETTING FIRM AND FAIR TRIAL DATES IN CIVIL CASES

BOSTON, Mass.—The Massachusetts Bar Association will host on March 20 a town hall-style forum to discuss a Massachusetts Superior Court initiative to ensure firm and fair trial dates for civil cases. A panel of six, including Superior Court Chief Justice Barbara J. Rouse, will participate in the 4 p.m. event at Suffolk University Law School.

“The MBA is pleased to be able to provide this unique opportunity for lawyers and court administrators to talk about court issues at an informal event, which is sure to stimulate productive dialogue,” said MBA President David W. White Jr., who will serve as moderator of the interactive forum.

The topic of the forum is the Firm and Fair Trial Date initiative, which Rouse kicked off when she was appointed chief justice two years ago. The initiative aims to reduce the need for continuance requests from attorneys and to set reliable and firm trial dates. The project is an offshoot of reforms that followed the 2003 Monan Report, which assessed the state courts and outlined a blueprint for change.

So far, the initiative has resulted in a 22 percent reduction statewide of continuances, Rouse said. In addition, the court is trying 60 percent of cases on their first or second trial date.

MBA Civil Litigation Section Council Chair Jeffrey N. Catalano and White collaborated with Rouse and others in the Superior Court to present the forum.

“This will be a terrific opportunity to learn of the progress of the Firm and Fair Trial Date initiative and to convey thoughts on the initiative’s progress to those members of the judiciary who are most influential in administering the process,” Catalano said.

Other panelists include:

- Hon. John C. Cratsley, Associate Justice, Superior Court
- Hon. Stephen E. Neel, Associate Justice, Superior Court
- Susan Donnelly-Murphy, Murphy & Riley PC, Boston
- Elizabeth N. Mulvey, Crowe & Mulvey LLP, Boston
- Douglas K. Sheff, Sheff Law Office PC, Boston

Incorporated in 1911, the Massachusetts Bar Association is a non-profit organization that serves the legal profession and the public by promoting the administration of justice, legal education, professional excellence and respect for the law. The MBA represents a diverse group of attorneys, judges and legal professionals across the commonwealth.