

Maricopa Lawyer
Clerk's Corner
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By Michael K. Jeanes, Clerk of the Superior Court

Making and Breaking the Rules

Criminal rules rewrite underway

A task force created by the Chief Justice of the Arizona Supreme Court recently started its work updating the criminal rules of procedure. Throughout the year, the group will hold public meetings to discuss rules and pending changes while workgroups retool individual rules to bring forward for the larger task force's consideration. In part, the task force will clarify, organize, and translate the rules into plain English. The result of the committee's work will be a rule change petition filed by January 2017, with changes the Supreme Court approves taking effect in January 2018.

The task force has representatives from public and private practice; municipal, justice, state, and appellate courts; academia; urban and rural areas; and people versed in victim, witness, and defendant interests. Public input will be part of the process in hopes of preparing a draft that addresses the needs and concerns of all who use the rules of procedure. Follow the task force's progress online at <http://www.azcourts.gov/cscommittees/Task-Force-on-the-Arizona-Rules-of-Criminal-Procedure>.

Saturday hours success

The Clerk's office has been breaking the rules of Monday through Friday office hours. Piloted in October of 2015, the Clerk's office has held three additional Saturday events in 2016 to issue marriage licenses and process passport applications. Customer feedback and strong numbers have encouraged the office to periodically add the weekend day of service.

In February, the Clerk's Customer Service Center was scheduled to be open on Saturday the 13th but also opened on Valentine's Day in response to interest from the public and the Maricopa County Justice Courts. Six Justices of the Peace performed more than 100 free marriage ceremonies for couples on Valentine's Day. Valentine's Day is the office's highest volume day for issuing marriage licenses, and weekend hours allowed the Clerk's office to assist hundreds more customers.

The office also heard from customers who struggle with having everything the federal government requires for passports on their first visit to the office. Saturday office hours help those customers keep from taking more time off work to complete the application process on a second visit. For staffing and demand, Saturday hours have been limited to the downtown Phoenix location.

Whether during the regular workweek or a special weekend event, customers can make appointments in advance or walk-in for service processing their passport application or getting a marriage license issued. To schedule an appointment, call the Clerk's office at 602-372-5375 and contact the Clerk's correspondence section using phone prompts 7-1-2-2.