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Statement of Division 10 - Government Contracts
and Litigation of the D.C. Bar

Concerning

Funding by the District of Columbia Council of
the Superior Court's Multi-Door Project*

The Government Contracts and Litigation Division (10) of the D.C. Bar would like to go on record in support of Division 4's (Courts, Lawyers and the Administration of Justice) comments addressed to the Honorable Wilhelmina Rollark, urging the D.C. City Council to include in the Superior Court's fiscal year 1986 budget funding for the Multi-Door project.

Division 10 believes the Multi-Door project is a cost-effective way of addressing the Court's problems of delay and backlogs. Division 10 also believes the project to be in the very best interest of the District of Columbia citizens.

*STANDARD DISCLAIMER

The views expressed herein represent only those of Division 10-Government Contracts and Litigation of the D.C. Bar and not those of the D.C. Bar or of its Board of Governors.

In addition, the availability of mediation in the Small Claims Court will allow the recent increase in the jurisdictional limit there to have the desired effect of conserving judicial resources by allowing the increased number of cases filed in that court to be handled without a significant re-allocation of judge time to the Small Claims Court, thus allowing judges to handle cases in the civil division in a more timely fashion.

We believe that it is incumbent upon the District of Columbia's legislators and courts to take steps to address the backlog problem in ways that avoid the need for significant new amounts of federal or other funding. However, should the District require more federal monies for the Superior Court in the future, it will be in a stronger position if it can argue that it has implemented less costly and creative solutions to the problem of delay in case resolution such as the Multi-Door Project.

Finally, a 200-case experiment with mandatory arbitration for civil cases which is projected for Phase II of the Multi-Door Project will yield valuable information about this important potential solution to court backlogs. Division IV is in the final stages of preparing a study on whether mandatory arbitration should be adopted in the Superior Court, and our research indicates that there is significant evidence from courts around the country that mandatory arbitration saves time, money and court resources.

In conclusion, Division IV believes that funding for the Multi-Door Project -- while perhaps not an insignificant amount this year -- will, in the long-run, result in significant savings. Therefore, for this and the reasons expressed above, we urge the Council to include funding for this project in the fiscal 1986 Superior Court budget.

CLAUDIA RIBET *

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