

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
May 14, 2003

Contact: Leah Gurowitz 879-1700

D.C. COURT ANNOUNCES NEW PROSTITUTION CALENDAR -- COLLABORATIVE EFFORT TO ADDRESS PROSTITUTION--

WASHINGTON, DC – D.C. Superior Court Chief Judge Rufus G. King III today announced a new initiative designed to address prostitution more comprehensively throughout the city. At a community forum on prostitution hosted by D.C. Councilmember Jack Evans, the Chief Judge announced a separate prostitution calendar in which all prostitution cases will be heard by the same judge with a goal of prompt disposition and long-term problem solving. That calendar will begin on June 2.

In announcing the initiative, the Chief Judge noted that “in the past, prostitution has been defined as a ‘victimless crime.’ We now know this is not at all true. I have heard from residents across the city about the problems they have experienced in their neighborhoods as a result of prostitution.”

The prostitution calendar judge will handle the case, from arraignment through conclusion, rather than the current system in which these cases are first brought to the arraignment courtroom with all other misdemeanors and felonies, and then sent to one of the six different misdemeanor judges.

The Chief Judge noted that the prostitution calendar judge will be able to hold prostitutes and johns, more accountable and can impose curfews and stay-away orders as conditions of release. Violations of these conditions are additional charges that will result in the defendant being brought back before the judge. Those in need of services, drug treatment or mental health counseling, for example, will have access to such services, which can also be imposed as conditions of release. For those caught soliciting prostitution, the U.S. Attorney’s Office has a “John School” that has a near-perfect success record.

The Chief Judge noted that two elements are key to the success of this initiative: first, all stakeholders in the criminal justice and law enforcement system must continue to work together. He expressed his appreciation to the Metropolitan Police Department, the US Attorney’s Office, Pretrial Services Agency, the Superior Court Trial Lawyers Association and the D.C. Council. Second, the Chief Judge said, “community input, cooperation and collaboration” is key. He urged the public to provide input to the Court: “As judges, we are public servants...so you need to let us know how the Court can best serve the community’s needs.”

#