

Georgia Commission on Child Support
November 22, 2013
Meeting Minutes

Present were:

Commissioners:

Judge Louisa Abbot, Chair
Rick Smith
Representative Timothy Barr
Judge Lisa Branch
Chuck Clay
Judge Michael Key
Katie Connell
Dr. Roger Tutterow
Judge Lisa C. Rambo

Pat Buonodono, Staff Attorney
Elaine Johnson, Staff
Bruce Shaw, Staff

Guests:

Philip Ladin, Co-Chair of the Calculator/Technology Committee
Catherine Fitch, Policy Analyst, Administrative Office of the Courts
Tracy Mason, Trial Court Liaison, Administrative Office of the Courts
Jill Travis, Legislative Counsel
Stephen Harris, Associate General Counsel, DHS
Ryan Bradley, Policy Unit, DCSS
Megan Miller, Staff Attorney, Atlanta Legal Aid Society

The meeting began at 11:00 a.m.

I. Welcome and Introductions

Judge Abbot called the meeting to order, thanking all in attendance for their participation.

II. Review/Approval of Minutes of Last Meeting

Judge Abbott inquired if everyone had an opportunity to review the minutes from the Commission meeting on September 27, 2013. Seeing no complaints for the contrary, Judge

Abbot entertained a motion to adopt the minutes as submitted. Chuck Clay moved to approve the minutes; Representative Timothy Barr seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

III. Old Business

A. Committee Reports

1. Statute Review Committee

a. LC 29 5737

Judge Key reported that the Committee's work for the upcoming legislative session is complete and several revisions have been written for the child support guidelines and combined into LC 29 5737.

Pat Buonodono went over the revisions in LC 29 5737 that have not yet been approved by the Commission: lines 32 to 39 and lines 183 to 222, regarding language surrounding pre-existing orders, the word "time" has been included for clarification purposes; lines 151 and 152, inclusion of veterans' disability benefits in gross income for purposes of calculating child support; line 389, a definition for TANF is provided; lines _____, changes are made to clean up inconsistencies involving language surrounding IV-d agencies and child support services.

Katie Connell stated she presented LC 29 5737 to Jonathan Tuggle, Chairman of the Family Law Section of the State Bar, and no opposition is expected from that group.

Judge Abbot opened the meeting for discussion on LC 29 5737, none was offered. A vote to approve LC 29 5737 as presented was made. LC 29 5737 was approved unanimously.

Jill Travis explained two bills of the same substance will be pre-filed simultaneously in the House and Senate with the hopes of expediting its passage.

Judge Key inquired if any issues arise or changes are made to the legislation, whether or not the issues or changes should be brought to the Statute Review Committee or to the full Commission; Judge Abbot replied her preference would be for the Statute Review Committee to review any issues and in turn make any recommendations to the full Commission.

2. Technology/Calculator Committee

Philip Ladin began by advising that the biggest issue for a web based calculator as identified by recent surveys is internet connectivity. This has created a change in direction for the Committee, which is now looking into contracts to rebuild the current calculator as well as a more cost efficient contract to maintain the current calculator. A proof of concept has been made to demonstrate the possibilities of a web based calculator but it is apparent that we must continue to make a downloadable version of the calculator available.

3. Economic Study Committee

Dr. Tutterow stated the Economic Study Committee has thus far only had one working session and identified two action items in that working session: to solicit bids to conduct the economic study to arrive at the appropriate basic child support awards, and to conduct a case sample of counties to see how deviations are used and to research common mistakes made on child support worksheets. He also reported that twelve counties have been selected for this study: Atkinson, Banks, Barrow, Bartow, Cherokee, Columbia, Dougherty, Glynn, Peach, Pike, Taylor, and Telfair. These counties were selected to appropriately reflect the state in per capita income and population density. Excluded from the candidates of possible counties for the study were the 24 counties used in the previous two studies.

B. Other Old Business

No other old business was brought forth for discussion.

IV. New Business

A. Request to establish guidelines for Committees, i.e., required attendance for quorum, etc.

Pat Buonodono stated that upon review of the statute creating the Commission, a quorum for the Commission consists of a majority, but of the Committees there is no specific mention of a quorum. She went on to state that there is nothing in the statute that gives the Commission authority to establish a quorum for its committees. She did ask Judge Abbot to strongly encourage committee members to attend their meetings.

Judge Abbot asked the Commission for permission to review the attendance of the committees and to subsequently appoint others from outside the Commission who would bring value to the committees. The floor was opened for objection to this proposal and none was offered. Judge Abbot stated that geographical diversity would be important and that many of these committee meetings can be attended by phone. She would be open to any suggestions for potential committee members.

B. Other new business

No other old business was brought forth for discussion.

V. Close of Meeting and Scheduling Next Meeting

Pat Buonodono stated that after the holidays would be best due to obvious scheduling difficulties. Judge Abbot stated she would confer with Pat Buonodono and Elaine Johnson after the meeting and decide upon an appropriate date, likely to be in February.

The meeting adjourned at 11:40 a.m.