



## Supreme Court of Appeals State of West Virginia

# News

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### Monongalia County Justice Center dedicated

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MORGANTOWN, W.Va. -- The Monongalia County Justice Center will serve the needs of citizens for the next 50 years and conveys the magnificence and importance of the rule of law in American society, speakers said Tuesday, Sept. 15, during a grand opening and dedication ceremony.

“This Justice Center will be place of refuge for the tides of conflict,” said Seventeenth Judicial Circuit (Monongalia County) Judge Phillip D. Gaujot.

After the ceremony, tours were given of all areas the building, vacant except for furniture. Judicial officers will move in from their current offices in the Monongalia County Courthouse and elsewhere in late September.

The Justice Center is in a former regional postal facility, built in the early 1970s. The Monongalia County Commission bought it from the federal government and renovated it at a cost of \$22 million over a period of seven years. The center was the brainchild of former Commissioner Bob Bell.

Speakers at the opening ceremony repeatedly thanked past and current Monongalia County commissioners for their commitment to the project. “The amazing thing about this process is the number of people it took to make it work,” said Seventeenth Judicial Circuit Judge Russell M. Clawges, Jr.

“They have made this dream a reality,” said Seventeenth Judicial Circuit Judge Susan B. Tucker. “This building isn’t about individuals, but about the citizens of Monongalia County,” she said. The focus of work inside will be on “achieving justice for all.”

Supreme Court Justice Brent D. Benjamin said, “This is a day many generations from now, they will look back on and say, ‘They did the right thing.’”

“This building is not just extraordinary, but is magnificent,” Justice Benjamin said.

The modern, airy structure was renovated with past and future uses in mind, said Tom Potts, president of Silling Associates, the architect.

“The most challenging thing is to be able to use the existing structural system to our advantage and being able to lay out the courtrooms in a manner that worked within

the structural column grid so there weren't any sight-line issues and you could get the maximum space in the courtrooms," Potts said.

"The way modern court facilities are put together now, secure and public circulation systems had to be overlaid in the existing building. That resulted in a significant reconfiguration of the main elevation. So public corridors are all glass-filled and have good sight lines to the outside."

The first floor has offices for Monongalia County Prosecuting Attorney Marcia Ashdown and Circuit Clerk Jean Friend and their staffs, probation officers, the Day Report Center, drug courts and teen court. The second floor has offices and courtrooms for four magistrates and two family court judges. The third floor has offices and courtrooms for three circuit judges, plus space for an additional judge and courtroom if the county ever has need of one.

"It's a day we have looked forward to. Enjoy the building," Judge Clawges told the large crowd gathered outside the front door.

"This is a historic moment for Monongalia County," Judge Gaujot said.

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