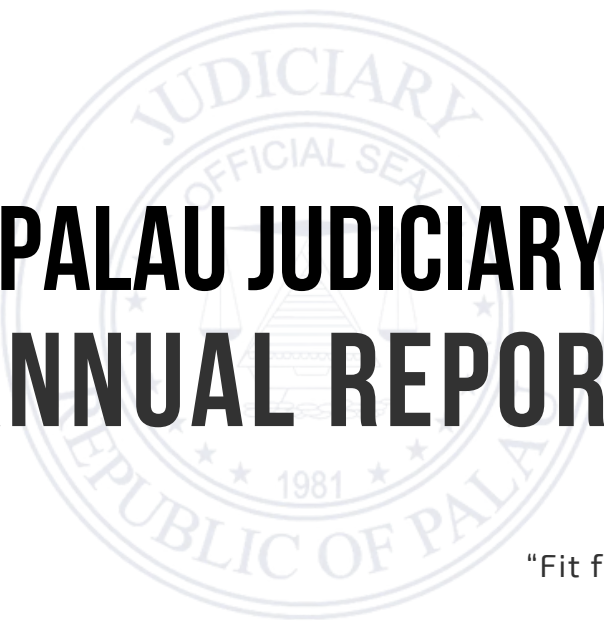


PALAU JUDICIARY ANNUAL REPORT



"Fit for Tomorrow"

20
23



2023 Annual Report

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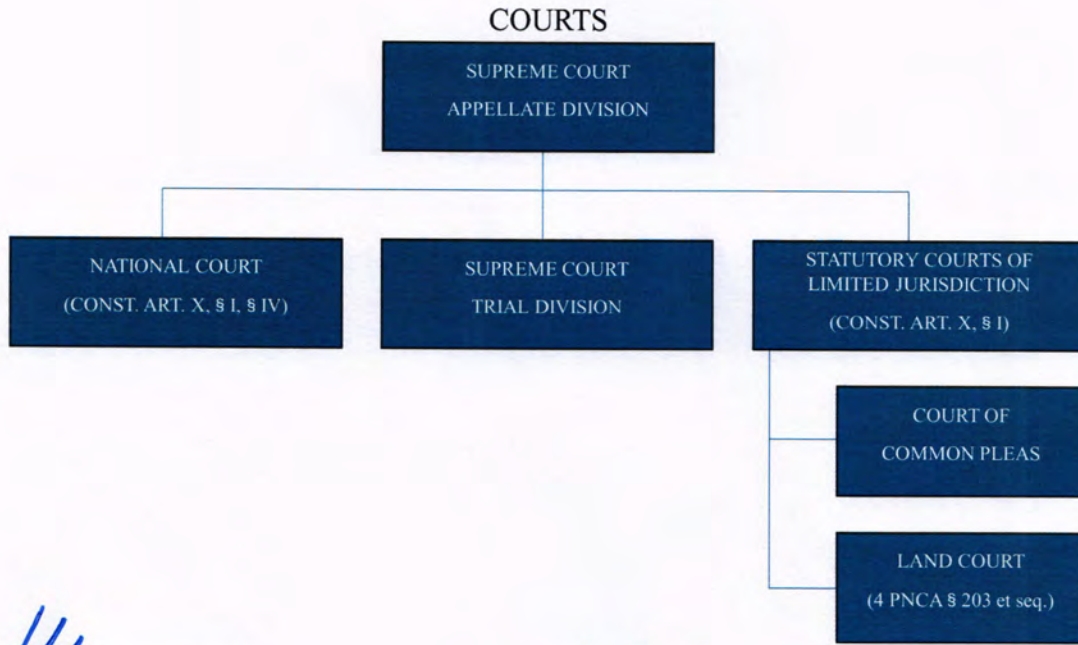
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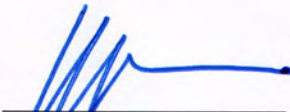
MESSAGE FROM THE CHIEF JUSTICE

The Republic of Palau Unified Judiciary hereby releases its 2023 Court Annual Report. A successful judicial system is one that is trusted and respected by the people. In order to gain and maintain the people's trust and respect, it is crucial that the judicial system be transparent, accessible, and perceived as a fair, just, and impartial institution. The annual report provides a measure of that transparency and accessibility.

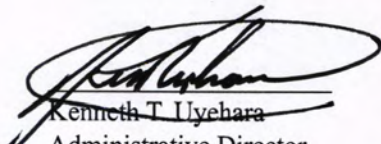
The purpose of the annual report is to give the public and all court users and visitors a clear and comprehensive view of the Judiciary's organization and operations, as well as the courts' activities, performances, achievements, and challenges. Through this annual report, the public and all court users and visitors get a glimpse of the civil servants—justices, judges, administrative personnel, and support staff—who keep the wheels of justice turning day in and day out, and the respective role each plays within the Judiciary. Additionally, the report explains the functions and jurisdictions of the various courts—Appellate Division of the Supreme Court, Trial Division of the Supreme Court, Court of Common Pleas, and Land Court—and the courts' activities, workload, and performances for the previous year.

The annual report is available at the Judiciary's library in Ngerulmud and the Judiciary's website (palausupremecourt.net). I wish to end this short message by thanking all those who contributed to the making of this Report. Special thanks and congratulations for a job well done go to the Annual Report Committee – Kenneth T. Uyehara, Administrative Director, Ryobch Luii, Budget Officer, Lue Dee Kotaro, Administrative Assistant/Chamber Clerk to the Chief Justice, Cher A. Kyota, Deputy Assistant to the Office of the Chief Justice, Halora Paulus, Law Librarian, Knox O. Tkel, MIS Acting Department Head, and Sherene Adolf, Courtroom Clerk/Interpreter I .





 Oldjais Ngiraikelau
 Chief Justice
 Palau Supreme Court

5/23/2024
 Date

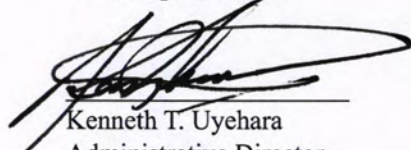

 Kenneth T. Uyehara
 Administrative Director
 Palau Judiciary

5/22/2024
 Date




 Oldjais Ngiraikelau
 Chief Justice
 Palau Supreme Court

5/23/2024
 Date


 Kenneth T. Uyehara
 Administrative Director
 Palau Judiciary

5/22/2024
 Date

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MISSION AND VISION

Mission

The mission of the Palau Judiciary is to preserve and enhance the rule of law by providing a just, efficient, and accessible mechanism for resolving disputes. The Judiciary will interpret and apply the law, as modified by custom and tradition, consistently, impartially, and independently, in order to protect the rights and liberties guaranteed by the laws and Constitution of the Republic of Palau.

Vision

The Courts of the Republic of Palau will provide justice for all while maintaining the highest standards of performance, professionalism, and ethics. Recognizing the inherent dignity of every person who participates in the justice system, the Judiciary will treat each participant with respect and will strive to make the process understandable, affordable, and efficient. Through the thoughtful, impartial, and well-reasoned resolution of disputes, the Judiciary enhances the public trust and confidence in this independent branch of government.

THE COURTS

The Palau Unified Judiciary consists of the constitutional courts, the Supreme Court and the National Court (inactive), and the statutorily established courts, the Court of Common Pleas and the Land Court.

Palau Supreme Court

The Supreme Court is a “Court of Record consisting of an appellate division and a trial division.” ROP Const. Art. X, § 2. The Appellate Division is a court of last resort. It has final review jurisdiction over all decisions of the Trial Division and all lower courts. ROP Const. Art. X, § 6. In other words, it hears and determines appeals from the Trial Division, the Court of Common Pleas, and the Land Court, and its rulings constitute binding legal authority not subject to review by another court.

Appellate Division

Appeals are heard by three justices. Under the initial structure of the Supreme Court, all justices served in both the Trial and Appellate Divisions. ROP Const. Art. X, § 2. On November 19, 2008, the Fourteenth Amendment to the Constitution was adopted, keeping intact the basic structure of the Supreme Court but removing the limit on the number of justices and calling for the separation of the appellate justices “provided the OEK appropriated funds for additional justices of that division.” Once the OEK appropriated funds in 2016, the Chief Justice promulgated formal rules for the separation of the justices on January 5, 2017. There are now three full-time justices in the Appellate Division. When one or more of the justices are conflicted in a case, replacements are assigned from a pool of non-resident, part-time associate justices. These are generally judges serving in other regional jurisdictions. Currently, there are four non-resident justices.

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Trial Division

The Trial Division has original and concurrent jurisdiction with the National Court over all matters in law and equity, but exclusive jurisdiction over all matters affecting Ambassadors, other Public Ministers and Consuls, admiralty and maritime cases, and those matters in which the national government or the state government is a party. ROP Const. Art. X, § 5. There are now three full-time resident justices of the Trial Division—the Honorable Kathleen M. Salii, Lourdes F. Materne, and Honora E. Remengesau Rudimch. Justice Salii is the Presiding Justice of the Trial Division and as such, she is responsible for assigning cases to the trial court justices, monitoring case management, and responding to public and governmental inquiries regarding the work of the Trial Division. There are four non-resident, part-time associate justices who are appointed to the Trial Division to handle cases in which all Trial Division justices have irresolvable conflicts.

Court of Common Pleas

The Court of Common Pleas was created by statute in 1981 and officially established in 1982 to handle “common” civil and criminal cases. It has jurisdiction to hear civil cases where the amount claimed or in dispute is \$10,000 or less. It does not, however, adjudicate cases involving land interests, regardless of the amount claimed or in dispute (Land cases are heard in the Land Court—see next section). Generally, the civil cases that come before the Court include name changes, family law matters, and simple estate settlement proceedings. For alimony and child support cases, there is no cap on the amount in controversy. The Court also hears small claims, where the amount claimed is \$3,000 or less, in less formal hearings. The Court of Common Pleas may also adjudicate criminal cases. Prior to July of 2017, criminal cases were assigned to the Court of Common Pleas by the Chief Justice. Since the separation of the justices from the Trial Division and the Appellate Division, the Rules of Criminal Procedures were amended to allow cases involving minor offenses defined by statute as misdemeanors, petty misdemeanors, or violations to be filed and tried in the first instance in the Court of Common Pleas. Appeals from cases adjudicated by the Court of Common Pleas are filed directly with the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court. The Chief Justice has also designated the Court of Common Pleas to handle civil domestic abuse cases brought under the Family Protection Act (“FPA”), which was enacted in November 2012. To meet the requirements of the FPA’s mandates, the Court has created forms and protocols to ensure that the Court is always available to assist persons seeking orders of protection, both during the Court’s normal operating hours and afterhours, if victims of abuse need immediate protection. The Court is also collaborating with other agencies, including the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Health and Human Services, and the Ministry of Education to successfully implement the FPA’s mandates.

Land Court

The Land Court was established in 1996 and is vested with jurisdiction over civil cases involving the adjudication and certification of title to land. The Land Court makes determinations with respect to the ownership of all lands within the Republic, including the return of land that became public as a result of its acquisition by previous occupying powers through force, coercion, fraud, or without just

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compensation. Appeals from the Land Court go directly to the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court. The Land Court currently includes one Senior Judge. Land Court proceedings are generally conducted in Palauan, although translations are available for non-Palauan speakers.

ADMINISTRATION

Administrative Head

The Chief Justice is the Administrative Head of the Judiciary and, as such, he may assign judges from one geographical department or functional division of a court to another department or division of that court and he may assign judges for temporary service in another court. ROP Const. Article X, § 13. The Chief Justice also appoints, with the approval of the associate justices, an administrative director to supervise the administrative operation of the Judiciary. The Office of the Chief Justice serves as the focal point of all incoming and outgoing activities of the Palau Judiciary. The Special Assistant to the Chief Justice and the Chamber's Administrator are responsible for updating the Chief Justice on the progress of all assigned matters. This office oversees the administrative functions of the Judiciary and coordinates with other offices.

Administrative Director

This was a year of movement. The historical building was evacuated to make room for the planned renovation. The Land Court, the Presiding Justice, the Marshals office, the Probation Office, the Property Management Office, the Library, the Management Information Systems office, and the Office of the Court Counsel were all relocated from the historical building. The migration of our operating system from our old computer servers to new servers was accomplished.

With this temporary relocation came considerable stress. To manage that stress, the Judiciary launched an employee wellness program. As part of this program, exercise activities and events were planned and implemented. Participation in several walk-a-thins, trash pickups, volleyball, the biggest loser, and other exercise programs and events kept staff on the move.

Judiciary staff also participated in job shadowing programs with the Guam Judiciary and in the CNMI Judiciary and Mediation Training, which took place in Hawaii.

The renovation, relocation, migration, wellness, training, and management of change prepares the Palau Judiciary to be "Fit for Tomorrow."

DEPARTMENTS

Appellate Clerk of Courts

The mission of the Clerk of the Appellate Court is to provide courteous, efficient, and professional service to the courts and the public. On February 5, 2016, President Tommy E. Remengesau Jr.,

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signed into law Public Law No. 9-55, through which the Olbiil Era Kelulau (OEK) appropriated funds “for the purpose of implementing the separation of personnel within the trial and appellate divisions by hiring new personnel for both divisions of the Palau Supreme Court.” On December 15, 2016, the public was notified of the revised proposed “Rules Implementing the Separation of the Justices” and invited to comment. The “Rules Implementing the Separation of the Justices” were then promulgated on January 5, 2017.

Trial Clerk of Courts

The Office of the Clerk of Courts is the largest department within the Judiciary and is the primary point of contact for persons interacting with the courts. The main purpose of the office is to provide administrative support to judicial officers and service the public. It is responsible for the overall management of cases within the judiciary from initial filing to final disposition. The Clerk of Courts oversees a number of sections with important functions vital to its operations: Vital Statistics, Land Records, Land Registry, and Mediation. It also receives and disburses court-related funds, such as fines and restitution. The Office of the Clerk of Courts also handles a variety of miscellaneous services such as certification and notarization of documents.

For the year 2023, the Clerk of Courts recorded a total of 380 birth certificates, 165 death certificates, and 91 marriage certificates. These are what we categorize as vital statistics.

For Land Registry, a total of 778 Certificates of Title were issued, and 1,329 Determinations of Ownership were registered.

For mediation, 9 cases were referred to mediation and none were settled within the year.

Office of the Court Counsel

The Office of the Court Counsel is primarily responsible for assisting the justices and judges with legal research related to the cases that come before them. In addition, court counsels assist in preparing court publications and provide advice on the legality of administrative operations. The office consists of two to three attorneys per cohort, operating under one-year contracts, and who are predominantly recruited from federal and state courts in the U.S.

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Marshals Division

The Marshals Division was created in 1998 through legislation codified in 4 PNC § 502. Marshals are responsible for serving court papers, including jury summons, executing bench warrants, acting as bailiffs, and providing security for the courts. Marshals are also authorized to make court-ordered arrests.

Probation Office

The Probation Office is comprised of five (5) employees consisting of one (1) Chief Probation Officer, three (3) Probation Officers, and one (1) Probation Clerk. Together they are responsible for ensuring sentencing orders are followed and completed on time, and making sure the terms and conditions of probation are met. In doing so they coordinate educational opportunities, job placement assistance, as well as counseling for the defendants and juveniles. The Probation Office also prepares and submits pre-sentence investigation reports to the judges to assist them in determining the appropriate sentence for defendants and juvenile delinquents.

Law Library

The Law Libraries, Ikesakes Law Library in Koror and Mokoll Memorial Law Library in Ngerulmud, welcome attorneys, judges, and the general public. These libraries provide legal research materials for the growing needs of the Palau judicial system, practicing bar, and general public. Housing over 15,000 volumes, they strive to provide access to comprehensive and current legal materials and resources in an efficient and timely manner. To improve their scope and purpose within Palau Judiciary and their services to the public, the Law Libraries continue to enhance operational efficiency through regular updates to their collections. Patrons have access to Westlaw Online Research, Land Court Title Search, and recordings of court proceedings. Photocopying is available at \$0.50 per page.

Archive Department

The Archive Department was established in March 2019. The mission and vision of the Archive Department is to provide a systematic and strategic approach to creating and controlling a comprehensive records management system for the preservation and organization of closed or disposed case files and to avail the record electronically for public research. The goal is to ensure that court cases from the Appellate Division, Trial Division, Court of Common Pleas, and Land Court that are designated as “disposed” are collected, maintained, and archived.

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Property Management Office

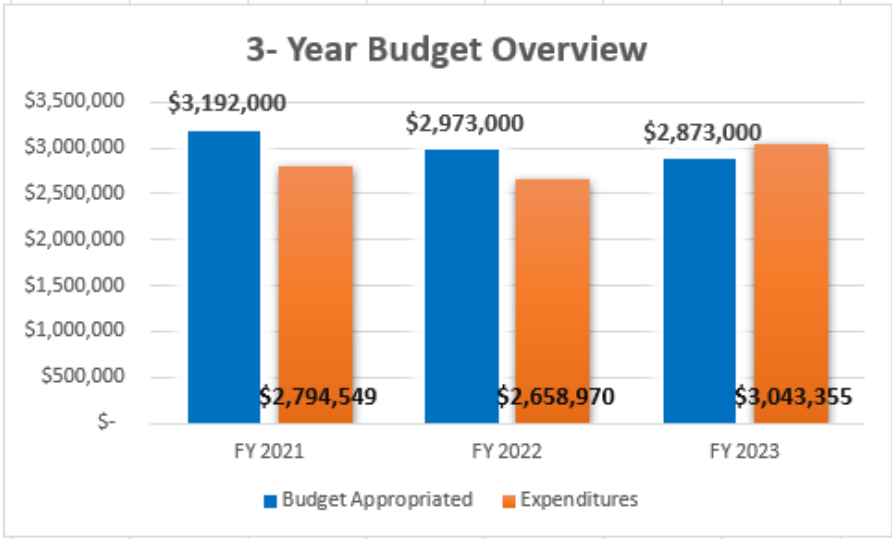
Under the supervision of the Property Manager, the Property Management Office maintains Court buildings and grounds, keeps inventory of Court property, and procures supplies for use in the administration of the Judiciary.

Management Information Systems

The MIS Division provides the Judiciary with computer resources to serve the public more accurately and efficiently. The MIS Division maintains several networked databases that provide ready access to records and cases to all members of the court staff. Members of the public are welcome to access court records electronically at the Office of the Clerk of Courts, located in Judge Pablo Ringang Building in the Court Complex in Koror.

Budget Office

The Budget Office is responsible for managing the financial resources of the Judiciary in accordance with the laws, regulations, and policies of the Republic of Palau. With personnel of three (3) staff, the office oversees the following: (1) financial statements and reporting; (2) cash receipts; (3) accounts receivable; (4) cash disbursements; (5) accounts payable; (6) appropriations; (7) audit; (8) revenue forecasts; (9) grants; (10) budget; and (11) employee timesheets for payroll processing. The office utilizes a straightforward financial management system that is effective and transparent to ensure that the accountability of Judiciary’s financial resources is maintained.



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Human Resources

The Human Resources Office headed by the Human Resources Manager is responsible for effectively managing the Judiciary's employees. It is responsible for overseeing all personnel matters, including recruiting, hiring, and administering benefits; as well as scheduling employee evaluations; pay increases; and training and development for all staff members. It is also responsible for ensuring that the Judiciary's employees are equitably managed and appropriately compensated. The Human Resources Office provides effective policies, procedures, and serves to make sure that the Judiciary's mission, vision, and values are part of the organization's culture. As an active member of the Belau Educators and Employers Alliance (BEEA), the Judiciary, through its Human Resources Office, continues to support and accommodate the career pathways curriculum for high school students throughout the school year by hosting interested students upon requests from their school. The office also continues to host students attending the Summer Work Experience Program (SWEP), provide college internship programs, and offer career support to students interested in working for the Palau Judiciary. Additionally, the office works actively with the Palau National Scholarship Board to identify and recruit prospective graduates every semester in hopes of building a workforce with a strong education foundation.

New Hires in 2023

In 2023, the Palau Judiciary welcomed Vicky Cheng, Heidi Johnson, and Dylan Houle as the 2023-2024 court counsels.



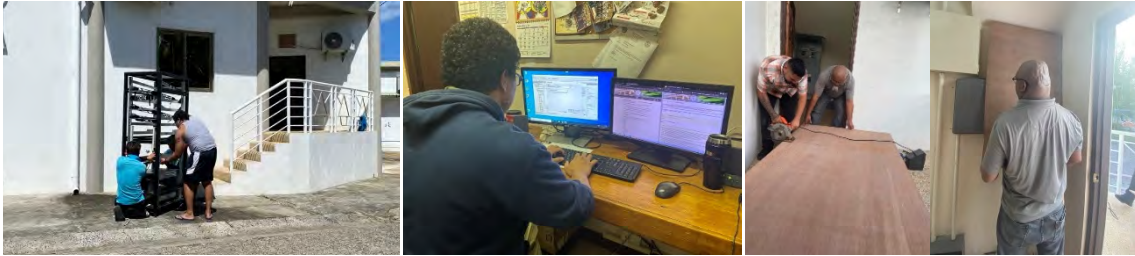
Three other positions were also filled in 2023: Mr. Skilang as Marshal I, Ms. Sasao as the CoCP Chamber Clerk, and Ms. Alfonso as a Courtroom Clerk/Interpreter.



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JUDICIARY HIGHLIGHTS

Information Systems Upgrades | April 13, 2023 – May 8, 2023



From April 14, 2023 to May 8, 2023, the Management Information Systems Division underwent relocation, relocating all our servers, phone systems, and network. One of the great feats of this project was the successful migration of all our servers from our old servers to the new ones, which was long overdue. The server upgrade will ensure the reliability and efficiency of the systems to better serve the courts and their patrons.

Presidents' Day/ Chief Justice Nakamura Birthday Remembrance

Every year on June 1st, it is the Judiciary's tradition to honor and pay respect to our predecessors and public servants who paved the way for our great Nation. We embark to Peleliu to commemorate the Nation's very first Chief Justice- Chief Justice Mamoru Nakamura on his birthday and in celebration of President's Day, we also remember our first (1st) President, Haruo Remeliik, and fourth (4th) President, Kuniwo Nakamura. Unfortunately, we also lost one of our very own great and long-lasting public servants, Senator Jonathan "Cio" Isechal. To pay our respects, we visited their resting place and left a flower wreath.



Those that partook on behalf of the Judiciary were Ms. Cher A. Kyota, Deputy Assistant to the Chief Justice, Ms. Juanita Udui from Land Court, Mr. Keith Ngirchomlei, Court Marshal, Mr. Noel Sadang, Property Management Office and our very own Court Counsels, Ms. Hannah Morrissy, Ms. Alexane Welsch, and Mr. Fatjon Kaja.



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Wellness Initiative

Palau Supreme Court Health and Wellness Program



The Palau Supreme Court Health and Wellness Program, initiated to promote a healthy lifestyle among court employees, has proven to be a commendable success. The program incorporates a unique approach by integrating health and fitness with community service. The centerpiece of this initiative is the “Biggest Loser Challenge,” a monthly weight-check mechanism that aims to incentivize healthy living.

Biggest Loser Challenge:

Employees are weighed at the end of each month, with a financial penalty of one dollar per pound gained. This financial incentive encourages staff members to adopt healthier eating habits and engage in regular exercise.



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Physical Fitness Activities:

The program hosts various physical fitness activities designed to cater to different fitness levels. These activities, such as a Walk-A-Thin and Volleyball Tournaments, contribute to improved cardiovascular health, strength, and overall well-being.



Community Involvement:

Activities extend beyond the court premises, with a focus on community service. Employees participate in events that not only enhance physical fitness but also contribute positively to the community, such as clean-up initiatives.



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Achievements and Impact:

1. Healthier Lifestyle Choices:

Employees have shown a noticeable shift towards healthier lifestyle choices, including improved dietary habits and increased physical activity.

2. Financial Incentive Success:

The Biggest Loser Challenge's financial penalty system has proven effective in motivating participants to maintain or lose weight.



Future Prospects:

1. Expand Program Reach:

Consider expanding the program to involve other government agencies or private sector organizations to promote a culture of wellness across the community.



2. Data Tracking and Analysis:

Implement a system for tracking and analyzing participant data, enabling the program to make informed decisions and improvements based on results.



3. Recognition and Incentives:

Introduce recognition programs or additional incentives for outstanding individual and team achievements to further motivate participants.

In conclusion, the Palau Supreme Court Health and Wellness Program has successfully integrated health-conscious initiatives with community service, fostering a culture of well-being among Judiciary staff. With continued commitment and strategic enhancements, the program is poised to make a lasting positive impact on the health and vitality of the court community and beyond.



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Job Shadow Trainings

Guam Judicial Center Job Shadowing Program

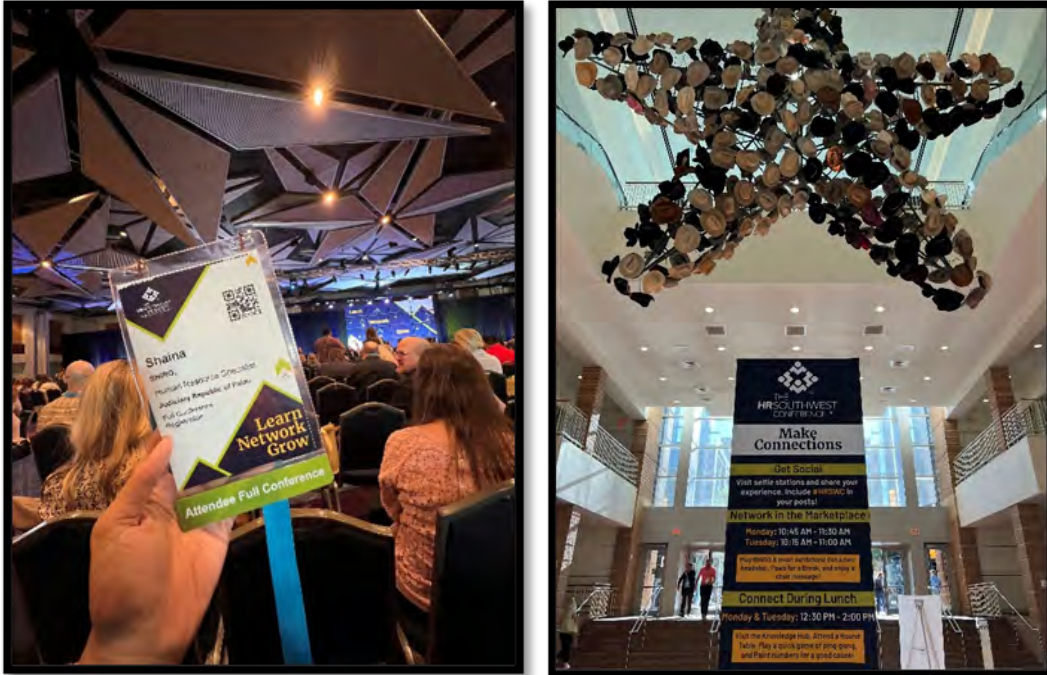
The Guam Judicial Job Shadowing Training provided an invaluable opportunity for the Judiciary Republic of Palau.



During this program, participants had the unique opportunity to immerse themselves in the work environment of the Guam Judicial Center. Over the course of five days, the Palauan delegation gained valuable insights into the operations of their counterparts in Guam, fostering a cross-cultural exchange of ideas and practices. This initiative not only allowed for a deeper understanding of judicial functions but also provided a platform for discovering and adopting more effective approaches to tasks, enhancing professional development and collaboration between the two jurisdictions.

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HR Southwest Conference (HRSWC)

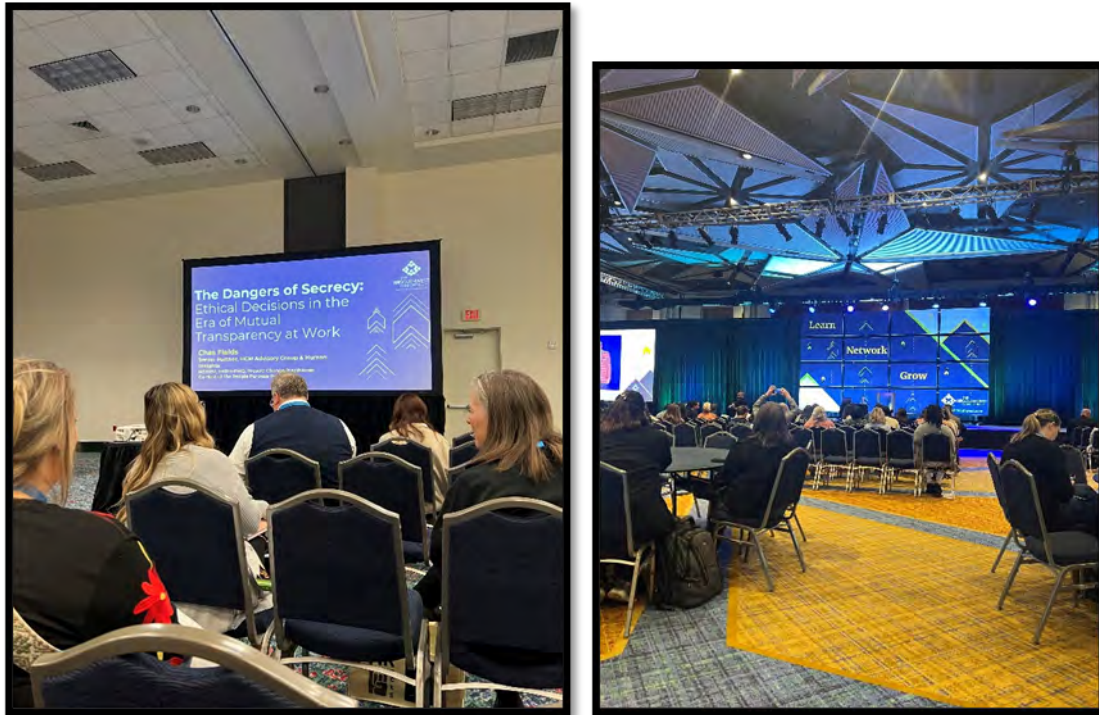


Representing the Judiciary Republic of Palau, the Human Resources Department had the privilege of attending the HR Southwest Conference (HRSWC), an annual event organized by the Society for Human Resource Management. Held in Fort Worth, Texas, this four-day conference is a premier regional trade show and gathering for professionals in business services. The HRSWC provided a unique platform with numerous advantages:

Networking Opportunities: Engaging with industry peers, experts, and potential employers allowed for meaningful connections, idea exchange, and relationship building.

Learning and Development: The conference offered a diverse range of workshops, sessions, and keynote speeches, providing insights into the latest trends, best practices, and innovations in the field of human resources.

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Exposure to New Technologies: Exploring cutting-edge tools, software, and solutions enabled a deeper understanding of how technology can streamline HR processes and enhance efficiency.

Certification Credits: Many sessions at the HRSWC offered continuing education credits for HR certifications, such as SHRM-CP or PHR, contributing to ongoing professional development.

Career Advancement: Staying informed about industry changes and learning from successful HR leaders positioned attendees for career growth. The conference also served as a platform to discover job opportunities.

Vendor Exhibits: Visiting vendor booths allowed for a firsthand look at new products and services, offering valuable insights into potential solutions for organizational challenges.

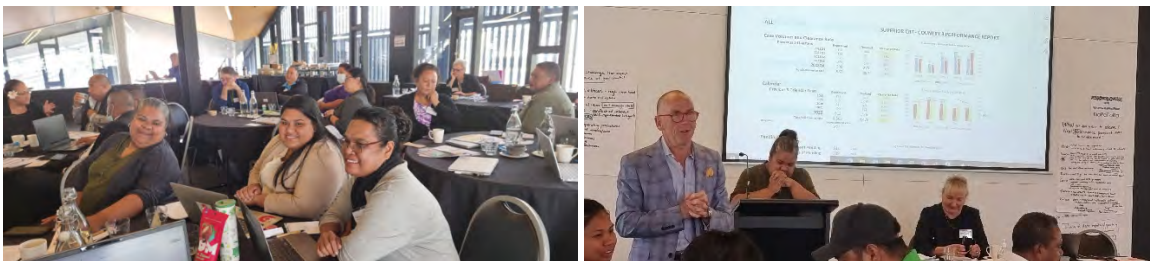
Inspiration and Motivation: Keynote speakers and thought leaders shared valuable insights, success stories, and strategies, inspiring attendees and providing motivation for their roles in HR.

In summary, the HR Southwest Conference proved to be a comprehensive and enriching experience, contributing to both personal and professional growth while fostering connections and knowledge exchange within the dynamic field of human resources.

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Court Performance Management and Annual Reporting hosted by PJSP in Wellington, NZ | March 6-10, 2023

In March 2023, court staff and judicial officers from 13 Pacific countries attended the Pacific Justice Sector Programme’s Court Performance Management and Annual Reporting workshop in Wellington NZ. Participants looked at how court data is captured, analyzed, and reported, then worked through their own data to understand how their home courts are performing against various indicators, and what responses might be needed as a result.



Budget Office, MIS, Law Libraries, and Appellate Division Job Shadowing Training in Saipan | April 1-7, 2023

Similar to the Guam Job Shadowing Program, employees from the Law Library, Management Information System, and Budget embarked on a shadowing trip to Saipan to gain valuable insights

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that would help improve our services to the public. On this trip, each department spent the whole week with their respective counterparts in the CNMI Judiciary. The delegation was very fortunate that Saipan's Chief Justice, Justices, and Judges took time from their busy schedules to meet and provide insight into their roles in the CNMI Judiciary.



PIALA – Pacific Island Association of Libraries and Archives and Museums

The 32nd Annual PIALA Conference was held in Palau during November 13-17, 2023. Members represented Saipan, Colorado, Pohnpei, Yap, Hawaii, Florida, Guam, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, Michigan, New Zealand, and Palau. The theme: “Re-evaluate, Re-focus, Re-connect: Adapting to the new norm in the Pacific,” gave delegates an opportunity to reflect upon the

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importance of their role in our communities and society, and to better prepare for any challenges they might face.



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Mediation Training



In early 2023, the Judiciary was considering expanding and training ten (10) new mediators. The Judiciary selected four (4) Palau Bar Members, four (4) Judiciary staff members, including the mediation clerk, and two (2) civilian/community members and former employees, for a total of ten (10) mediators. In June 2023, the ten (10) court appointed mediators began their mediation training with Hawaii mediators, Elizabeth Kent and Ned Busch. Training was conducted once a month through 3 hour zoom sessions. They began with the basics, the purpose and definition of mediation, before moving on to understand the core values and principles of mediation.

Until Mid-September, all ten (10) mediators were able to conclude training by attending a week of in-person training in Honolulu, Hawaii. The venue was the Community Church of Honolulu located in Nuuanu. They had use of two classrooms, but the classes were held outdoors on a patio.

Upon arrival in Hawaii, they wasted no time and got straight to business the next morning. Instructors welcomed incoming mediators with such great aloha spirit and enthusiasm, it made mediators eager to learn. The instructors were experienced and knowledgeable, and mediators got right into training. The training session began with an in-depth review of the principles of Mediation followed by Mediation Simulations. Aside from instructors, the guest speakers were Ms. Vince Abramo, Dr. Peter Adler, Mr. Lou Chang, Judge Willie Domingo, and Bob Marks. The guest speakers presented various mediation styles and coached the mediation simulations exercise.



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Tuesday morning began with a visit to the Hawaii Supreme Court Building. Mediators were welcomed and had the honor of meeting with Justice Sabrina McKenna and were given a tour of the Judiciary History Center Museum that included an exhibition of Hawaii's early court system and its evolution.



All participants performed well during the mediation simulation. Although, a few had difficulty with the critiquing of the instructors. Mr. Sherwin Yamaguchi, Ms. Lalii Chin Sakuma, and Ms. Vameline Singeo drew on their past experience in mediation, and they did very well in the exercises.



The rest of the attendees learned as they went through each simulation and improved as they progressed. Cher and Lalii progressed so far that they were coaching others on how to practice the process of mediation. The training experience was immersive and intense but appropriate given the short period of time.



Even after a successful training, mediators continue meeting with instructors once a month through zoom sessions.



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Employee of the Year



For the first time, the Judiciary was invited to join the other two branches of government to recognize hard-working government employees. The event also included recognition of exemplary employees that stood out from the rest of the employees of each government agency. Congratulations to Marshal I Wyzer M. Seklii, who was designated as the 2023 Judiciary Employee of the Year!



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At the end of each year, the Judiciary recognizes hard-working employees who have done an exceptional job by each awarding employees the Employee of the Year Award in their respective departments. Twelve awards were presented to these outstanding employees in hopes of fostering outstanding performance and dedication of employees to their respective duties. Additionally, this annual event is intended to convey the Judiciary’s gratitude to the value and amount of work that each employee does on a daily basis. Congratulations to the twelve (12) Employees of the Year!

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Land Registration Office

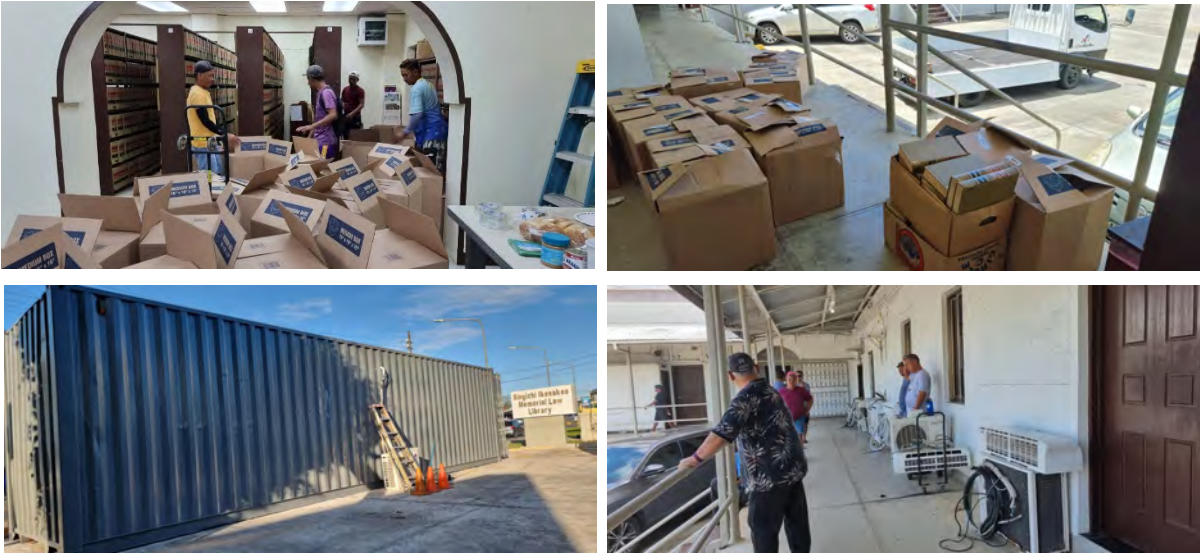
Beginning in 1974 and with the passage of 35 PNC Chapter 11 that was enacted in 1986 and amended in 1987 created the Land Claims Hearing office (“LCHO”) to proceed to determine the ownership of lands and provide for the return to the original landowners or their heirs. The time established to complete this work was eight years.

In 2023 the Land Registration Office (LRO) function was transferred to the Palau Judiciary with three Land Recordation Officers. They came with 4,721 pending land claims. The remaining unregistered land area equates to 94,035,758 square meters or 25.83% of Palau’s land area. The amount of unregistered land area is 36.307 square miles out of the total land area of 140.860 square miles.



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Renovation Grant Signing



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STATISTICS

The Palau Judiciary recognizes its obligation to dispose of cases in a timely manner. Accordingly, the courts seek to expediently finalize cases. The “clearance rate” reflects cases “cleared” or finalized as a percentage of (in relation to) the total number of cases filed.

A total of 1,974 cases were filed in 2023. A total of 1,895 cases were disposed of by the end of 2023, with 832 left pending—carrying over to the year 2024. The overall clearance rate for the year 2023 is 95.99%. The figure below shows the number of cases filed for each case type in 2023.

CATEGORY	FILED	Disposed	Pending	Clearance Rate
Appellate	41	43	14	104.87%
CA/DA	58	58	1	100.00%
Citations	1362	1296	206	95.15%
CIVIL ACTION	190	162	237	85.26%
CP/CA	113	97	24	85.84%
CRIMINAL	56	56	29	100.00%
DISCIPLINARY PROCEEDINGS	3	3	0	100.00%
JUDICIAL DISCIPLINARY PROCEEDINGS	1	1	0	100.00%
JUVENILE	1	1	2	100.00%
LAND	81	109	308	134.57%
SMALL CLAIMS	62	63	11	101.61%
SPECIAL PROCEEDING	6	6	0	100.00%