



## NEWS RELEASE

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### **Additional courtroom to help with baby boom generation**

The Probate Division of the Jackson County Circuit Court is readying itself for the increased need that is expected as the baby boom generation goes gray.

On Friday, May 4 there was a dedication of the new courtroom that was just constructed on the 9<sup>th</sup> floor in an area that was once used as office space. The new courtroom is located at the Jackson County Courthouse, 415 E. 12<sup>th</sup> Street, Kansas City, Mo.

“We have needed an additional courtroom for probate matters for over 30 years,” said Judge Kathleen A. Forsyth. “We are thrilled the County provided \$225,000 in construction and design funds.”

Judge Forsyth and two commissioners, who are assigned by the court to hear probate cases, have been juggling the availability of one courtroom for many years. The lack of courtrooms on the 9<sup>th</sup> floor created confusion for the public and significant inconvenience for those who had their hearings moved to courtrooms on other floors, especially those in wheelchairs or otherwise disabled. It also created scheduling difficulties for judicial officers and staff.

In Missouri, the number of people who are age 65 and older is expected to increase by 72 percent in the next 20 years according to the U.S. Census Bureau. That will have a major impact on the probate division of the court.

Last year, there were 3,608 probate cases filed at the Jackson County Circuit Court. Of those, 325 cases were adult guardianship and conservatorship cases. That’s a 37 percent increase in 10 years.

In addition, the filings for guardianships of minors have gone up 100 percent in 10 years. There were 463 cases filed in 2011. Children obtain a guardian when the Court finds that a parent is unfit, unwilling or unable to parent their child.

The guardianship cases take a significant amount of time as the Court monitors the financial affairs and well being of incapacitated, disabled or minor people over the course of many, many years. Those pending cases are mounting.

In addition to the construction of the new downtown courtroom, the County is also studying how to create additional courtroom space at the Independence Courthouse Annex.

County officials, former probate judges, bar association presidents, and probate practitioners were on hand for the dedication of the additional courtroom.

The first hearing in the new courtroom is expected to be next week.

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