

# Judge lends ear to judicial complaints

## King hopes for collaborative tone within system

BY KAREN DEWITT

Examiner Washington Editor

Attacks on judges across the nation haven't fazed Rufus G. King III, chief judge of the Superior Court for the District of Columbia. Every Monday between 8 and 9 a.m., he still sees anyone and everyone who wants to complain about the justice system.

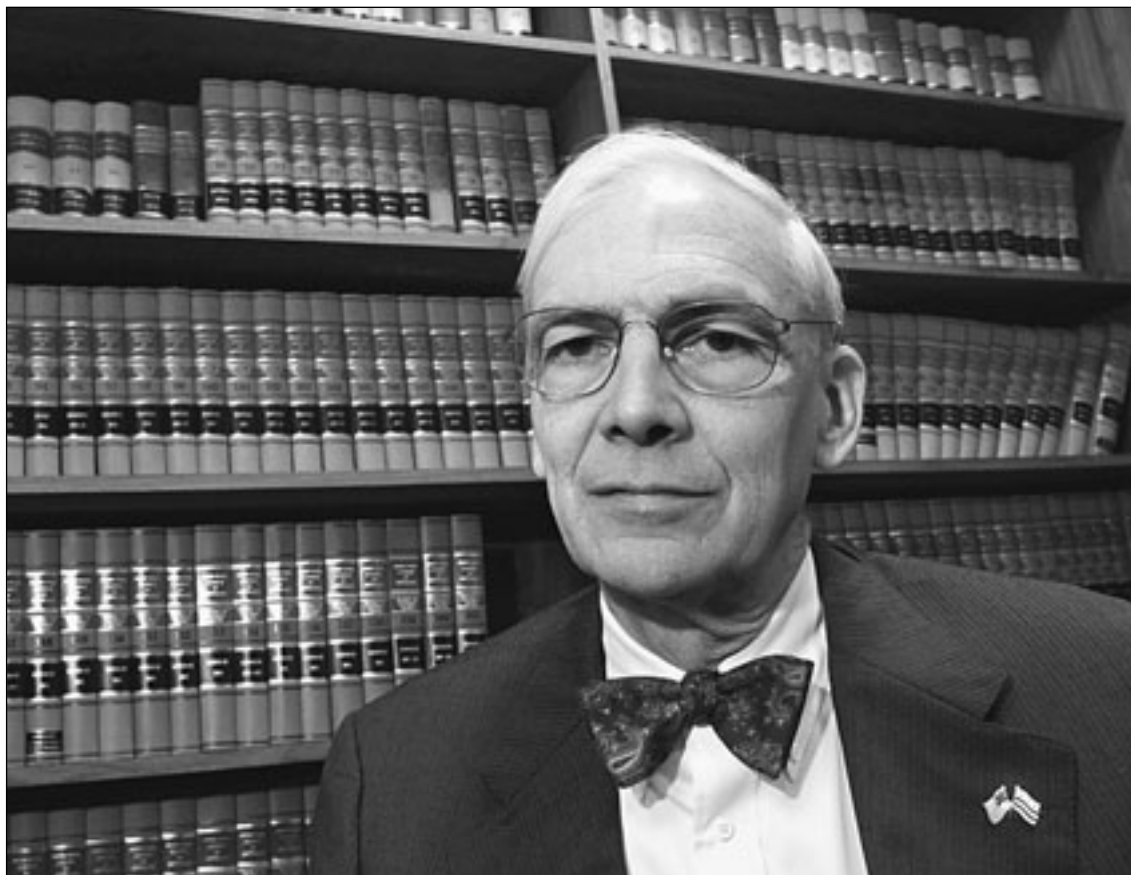
"Usually people are unhappy with a judge or a sentencing," said King, who was appointed to the Superior Court in 1984. "The remedy is the court of appeals. It's not magic. But I'll spend a little extra time with people because it helps set a tone."

Setting a more collaborative tone is something King has been doing ever since he was appointed chief judge four years ago. During his tenure — he has begun his second term — he plans to continue to build on the therapeutic, or problem-solving, court system that has expanded under his leadership.

### Court as a community

Like any institution, the court system is a community in and of itself, one that processes nearly 200,000 cases per year — involving everyone from drug dealers and abusive spouses to juvenile offenders and street hustlers. But not every offense requires the same punishment, particularly criminal behavior that stems from social ills like poverty, abuse and addiction.

King, whose book-lined office is



Jeff Mankie/Examiner

Chief Judge Rufus G. King III poses in his office, located within the H. Carl Moultrie Courthouse in Washington.

in the H. Carl Moultrie Courthouse, said that therapeutic courts, which took off a decade ago, provide a coordinated approach to those who find themselves caught in the justice system. The problem-solving courts dispense punishment but also offer services such as drug treatment, job training or restitution programs. What makes them effective, proponents say, however, is the strict accountability built into the system to make sure miscreants take personal responsibility for their behavior.

"Some people call it 'Nanny Court' because of the chiding and cajoling, and trying to draw the constant connection between behavior and punishment," said King, noting that in more traditional court procedure — with the emphasis on guilt or innocence — there is often a long period between arraignment and sentencing.

Some in the legal system oppose the idea of therapeutic courts because they say judges are acting like social workers, but King said that drug abuse is an example of

a crime that isn't easily solved by jail time.

"Drug abuse doesn't lend itself well to a criminal justice system because solving the problem is a two-step-forward, one-backward problem," said King.

Problem-solving courts are "counterintuitive" to many, King said. "There is the view that if people can't conform, put them in jail, but there is a much more constructive way to get at the underlying issue."

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## CAPCO designed to bring firms to D.C.

Promising small businesses in the District can now compete for \$50 million in venture capital under a new city program formally launched Tuesday.

The DC Certified Capital Company Program, or CAPCO, proposed by Mayor Anthony A. Williams and enacted by the City Council last year, was established to provide small businesses — with potential — with venture capital to get off the ground.

"What this does is it brings more tax dollars into the District," said Barry Margeson, project manager of reSTORE DC, a mayoral initiative focusing on commercial revitalization. "That's the bottom line of the whole thing."

The \$50 million was pumped in by insurance companies, who will benefit with a 10-year tax credit equal to 10 percent of their contribution. The credit kicks in two years.

Three venture capital groups will control the initial funds: Wilshire DC Partners, Advantage Capital and Enhanced Capital. The investments are expected to stimulate job growth and provide an incentive to retain, expand and attract new business to the District.

Michael Neibauer

## Orange dropping strong hints about his candidacy for mayor

If there's a line between being a mayoral explorer and a candidate, Council Member Vincent Orange is standing on top of it.

Orange, D-Ward 5, on Tuesday was passing out a press release package in the council chambers that led with the following headline: "Vincent Orange a candidate for mayor? More likely than not."

In the release, Orange is quoted as telling a church audience, "I stopped by to let you know that more likely than not, I will become a candidate for mayor this summer."

Additionally, the council member's press release included the results of an exploratory committee poll that found 451 of 535 respondents believe Orange should run. There also was a profile of Orange in GolfStyles Washington magazine and a 49-minute DVD-ROM on the almost-candidate titled "Explore 2006 — Orange for Mayor."

The other exploring council member, Ward 4 Democrat Adrian Fenty, has set June 1 — when his poll results are complete — as his decision date.

Michael Neibauer

# D.C. may attempt to stub out smokers

## Smoke-free establishments could receive tax credits

BY MICHAEL NEIBAUER

Examiner Staff Writer

The District is moving closer to moving smokers outside.

The number of smoke-free bars in the city could skyrocket under legislation introduced in the City Council Tuesday that would provide incentives to ban smoking and levy penalties on establishments that decline to do so.

The bill, introduced by City Council Member Carol Schwartz, R-at large, provides tax credits and tax deductions for bar and tavern owners who ban smoking in their

places of business. It also would force owners who allow smoking to install expensive ventilation systems and to pay four times the annual licensing fee.

"I remain concerned that mandating every bar, restaurant and nightclub in the city to prohibit smoking would be detrimental to the city's economy ...," Schwartz said. "Not to mention the problem of having people out on the sidewalk smoking and disturbing residents in the neighborhoods."

"Hospitality is our No. 1 industry and really our only industry. And we don't have agriculture or manufacturing to go to for additional revenues. The bottom line, I believe, is choice."

Schwartz, chair of the council's public works and environment committee, has stood in the way of smoke-free legislation for years. She introduced a similar compromise measure in 2003 that never came to a vote.

Smoke-free advocates aren't about to back such a deal.

### Incentives unnecessary

"It's not a good solution when the best thing is for everybody to be smoke free," said Angela Bradbery, co-founder of Smokefree DC. "You shouldn't give businesses a break for doing something they should be doing in the first place. One hundred percent smoke free would be a level playing field."

In the states and jurisdictions — including Montgomery County — where governments have installed smoke-free laws, the bars and restaurants have fared as well or better than before the statutes were in place, Bradbery said. The Smokefree DC Web site links to reams of statistics backing that claim.

But Schwartz cited numbers from the Restaurant Association of Maryland, compiled from state comptroller data, that the num-

ber of Montgomery County restaurants with liquor licenses dropped from 507 to 402 after the law there was established, a "truly alarming" figure, she said.

"Everyone has their statistics," Schwartz said.

Schwartz's measure joins two additional bills already introduced that call for smoke-free bars and restaurants. A public roundtable discussion in the public works committee on the three proposals is scheduled for June 14.

But D.C. political insiders said Schwartz has put herself in a bind. The majority of the council, it appears, favors a 100 percent smoke-free law. So if she allows her bill to escape committee, it will likely be amended once it reaches the full council.

"I want 100 percent smoke free, but I want something," said Council Member Kwame Brown, D-at large. "Now we have nothing."

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### Clarification

A story published in the May 17 edition, "Patients find comfort through palliative care," did not identify fully a doctor quoted. Dr. Loren Friedman is the director of the palliative care program at Virginia Hospital Center. The program is not a separate center as a front-page caption suggested. *The Examiner* regrets the error.