

**D.C. AUDITOR RELEASES REPORT RECOMMENDING
OFFICE OF ADMINISTRATIVE HEARINGS REFORMS****FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:****September 8, 2016****CONTACT:**Candace McCrae, Office of the D.C. Auditor, 202-478-9129, Candace.McCrae@dc.govJune B. Kress, Council for Court Excellence, 202-785-5917, Kress@courtexcellence.org

Washington, D.C. – The D.C. Auditor today released a report examining the statutory duties, management, operations, and performance of the D.C. Office of Administrative Hearings (OAH), established in 2001 to increase the quality and fairness of administrative justice in the District government.

Although [*Administrative Justice in the District of Columbia: Recommendations to Improve D.C.'s Office of Administrative Hearings*](#) finds that OAH has not yet fulfilled its mandate to “provide a fair, efficient, and effective forum to manage and resolve administrative disputes,” it offers a wide range of recommendations to improve management and supervision and support internal reforms already underway.

In particular, the report recommends enhancing the authority of OAH’s Chief Judge in order to strengthen supervision and accountability, while granting administrative law judges (ALJs) longer terms or civil service status to ensure their independence. The report also outlines ways to help litigants, many of whom appear *pro se*, navigate a complex system by enforcing deadlines, expanding mediation, making case files available online, broadening use of telephone video conferencing, increasing language access, and improving OAH’s Resource Center.

The report was prepared by the Council for Court Excellence (CCE) for the Auditor’s office. CCE is a non-profit, non-partisan civic organization that focuses on the administration of justice in Washington, D.C. The CCE project team that drafted the report included members from the legal, business, and civic sectors. Michael Hays, litigation of counsel at Cooley LLP, and Charles Patrizia, litigation partner at Paul Hastings LLP, co-chaired the project committee.

Before OAH was established as an independent body staffed by highly-qualified ALJs, most appeals of administrative decisions were decided by employees of the same agency that issued the original decision, undermining confidence about the impartiality of the appeals process.

“This was an opportune time to evaluate whether the original intent of policymakers had been met, and what changes might be made to strengthen OAH’s operations,” D.C. Auditor Kathy Patterson said. A new Chief Judge, Eugene Adams, was named to lead OAH in 2015.

The report is based on interviews and surveys of ALJs and other staff, as well as litigants and counsel who have appeared before OAH; review of model legislation and practices at similar agencies throughout the nation; and examination of legislative history and intent.