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**National Conference of Court of Appeals Clerks**  
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I appreciate the opportunity today to talk with the Appellate Clerks from around the country. I am here in two capacities: one, as Chair of the Budget Committee of the Judicial Conference; and also as Chief Judge of the Western District of Kentucky, with the good fortune of working with my own excellent Clerk of Court, Jeff Apperson. In each of these roles I am dependent upon the competence and professionalism of our court administrative leaders. In each of these roles, it is equally important that court administrative leaders have a perspective of the overall political and financial landscape. Today, I hope to give you some of that perspective: (1) about how our budget and financial management processes operate; (2) judiciary's current fiscal situation; and (3) what the future holds.

First, we must all recognize that today you administer judicial activities in a vastly different way than in the mid-80's. The responsibilities of budget decentralization have dramatically transformed your job. Fifteen years ago some 80 percent of a Clerk's responsibilities revolved around maintaining records. In those days courts could not so much as buy ballpoint pens or yellow pads without going through Washington. The very title "Clerk" now seems an inadequate misnomer for the responsibilities of your job. Clerks are now responsible for formulating budget and spending plans; conducting complex procurements; and accounting for millions of taxpayer dollars. These jobs require specialized skills and a lot of administrative talent.

Budget decentralization is also the cornerstone of our administrative and political budget strategy. It is the foundation for good financial management at every level. It is central to