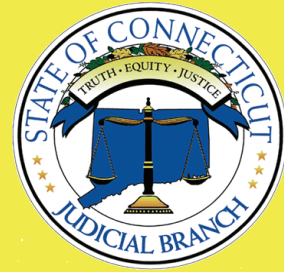


# CSSD Chronicle

State of Connecticut Judicial Branch  
Court Support Services Division  
Friday, December 10, 2010



## CSSD Regional Manager Trevor Johnson Travels to Russia as an RAROLC Connecticut Delegate



*Pskov delegation: First row (L to R) Russian Judge Vyacheslav Surov, Connecticut Judges Jonathan Silbert and Nina Elgo; back row, (L to R) Trevor Johnson, CSSD Regional Manager, and Connecticut Judge Raymond Norko*

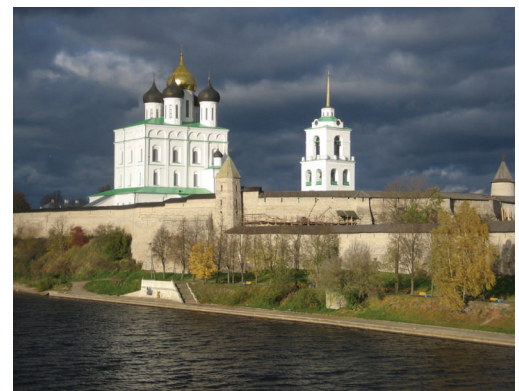
In October, CSSD Adult Probation Regional Manager Trevor Johnson visited Pskov, Russia as part of a delegation of Connecticut officials who presented at a seminar that highlighted effective criminal rehabilitative practices, and adult and juvenile alternatives to incarceration. Johnson was chosen in part to represent CSSD because of his background as a program director within an alternative incarceration program, his years working at the state's former Office of Alternative Sanctions, and his current role overseeing probation Risk Reduction efforts within adult probation. Other members of the Connecticut delegation included the Honorable Jonathan E. Silbert, Honorable Nina F. Elgo, Honorable Raymond Norko, and Dr. Elena Grigorenko, a native of Russia who currently teaches at Yale and has partnered with CSSD in the area of juvenile services.

The Connecticut-Pskov partnership began in 2001 when Judge Silbert, and the Honorable Barry R. Schaller, conducted an exploratory visit to Russia. They partnered with Russian Chief Regional Court Judge Anatoly Bodnar and agreed on a plan that would first focus on the reintroduction of jury trials in Pskov. In August of

2001, the partnership was granted membership in the Russian American Rule of Law Consortium ([RAROLC](#)), a group of legal communities working together to develop legal institutions and the rule of law in both the United States and Russia. Starting in 2001, Connecticut has hosted at least one judicial/legal delegation from Pskov per year, most recently during the spring of 2010. During their 2010 visit, Russian officials had the opportunity to visit community-based programs and attended a seminar that highlighted adult and juvenile alternatives. This resulted in the choice of topic for the two-day seminar in October at the Pskov Law Institute.

According to Johnson, the travel portion of the trip was quite an experience. It included an eight hour flight from JFK in New York to Helsinki, Finland, then a short flight from Helsinki to St Petersburg, Russia, and ended with a four hour van ride to Pskov. Upon their arrival, the Connecticut delegation was treated by their hosts to a wonderful traditional Russian dinner before retiring for the evening.

On the second day of the trip, the delegation traveled to the Pechory Monastery where they met with several Russian officials including Pskov's Regional



*16th c. Russian Orthodox Trinity Cathedral within 11th century Pskov Kremlin walls*

Chief Justice, Valery Kondratiev. Lunch was provided at a small, family-style restaurant on the grounds of a historic fort in Pechory. According to Johnson, the delegation was once again treated to outstanding cuisine and fellowship before heading off to observe a hearing at the Pskov Military Garrison Court, a three-judge court that only handles cases involving military personnel. “Pskov is one of Russia’s oldest cities, dating back over 1100 years,” said Johnson. “The architecture in this rural region was spectacular.”

The two-day Alternatives Seminar took place at the Pskov Law Institute of the Federal Penal Service where the delegation was given a brief history lesson on the Russian justice system—post Soviet Union—and the challenges the country has faced with attempts at judicial reform. Judge Silbert (who will only admit to being able to speak “decent” Russian), helped translate information from the Connecticut delegation on the Branch’s efforts to enforce criminal sanctions, electronic monitoring of clients, services for juveniles, and the role of community courts as a way of diverting misdemeanants and providing them with necessary social services. Johnson observed that many of the Russian presenters, and members of the audience, were more interested in punishment approaches, but there was also quite a bit of interest by attendees in evidence-based assessments and interventions as a way to reduce recidivism. According to Johnson, both days of the seminar went beyond the scheduled time due to the volume of questions that the Connecticut delegation received from those in attendance.



**Russian officials give a demonstration to Connecticut Judge Raymond Norko (center) on the use of GPS monitoring systems to track Russian offenders**

Johnson shared an interesting aspect of the trip to Pskov that was unique to him. As an African American, he never encountered another Black person during his five days in Russia which he felt added to the usual discomfort one normally encounters when visiting a foreign country. “Prior to my trip,” Johnson said, “I re-read an essay by American author [James Baldwin](#), titled *Stranger in the Village*, which chronicled Baldwin’s experience as an expatriate in Switzerland during the 1940’s and ‘50’s. Baldwin’s experience as a Black man helped me to mentally navigate the complexities and uniqueness of race within America and what it means to be both an American and a Black person in a virtually all-white foreign country. I often found myself wondering what the people of Pskov were thinking when I caught them staring at me as I walked the streets. I wondered how much they knew about the experience of Blacks in America, or for that matter, Blacks in other parts of Russia.”

Although Johnson was the only CSSD representative on the trip, he was quick to acknowledge the contributions made by CSSD’s Brian Hill, Deputy Director II (Research and Planning), and Michael Aiello, Program Manager II (Programs and Services). “The success of the presentation I gave in Russia, as a member of the Connecticut delegation, was really a team effort thanks to Brian and Mike.” Johnson also thanked Judge Silbert and Judge Elgo for interpreting for him during the trip, as well as providing an in-depth education on Russian culture. “Their example and appreciation of Russian culture was only exceeded by the hospitality of our Russian hosts and their genuine interest in Connecticut’s best practices,” said Johnson. “I left Russia with a sense of renewed commitment to justice efforts and a belief that I had witnessed and contributed in some small way to what could end up as one of the greatest societal transformations in history.”

For more information regarding the Russian American Rule of Law Consortium (RAROLC), visit the organization’s website at [www.rarolc.net/about](http://www.rarolc.net/about), or contact Trevor Johnson at [Trevor.Johnson@jud.ct.gov](mailto:Trevor.Johnson@jud.ct.gov).

*The CSSD Chronicle is a regular publication of information and news about the Court Support Services Division. Questions or comments on this edition, or suggestions for future articles, can be directed to [Linda.Grzeika@jud.ct.gov](mailto:Linda.Grzeika@jud.ct.gov)*