

Judiciary Approves Pilot Project for Cameras in District Courts

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The Judicial Conference of the United States today approved a pilot project to evaluate the effect of cameras in federal district courtrooms and the public release of digital video recordings of some civil proceedings.

The pilot, which will be national in scope, will last up to three years. It will evaluate the effect of cameras in district court courtrooms, video recordings of proceedings, and publication of such video recordings. Details of the development and implementation of the pilot will be determined by the Conference's Committee on Court Administration and Case Management (CACM).

Courts that participate in the pilot will, if necessary, amend their local rules (providing adequate public notice and opportunity to comment) to provide an exception for judges participating in the pilot project. Participation in the pilot will be at the trial judge's discretion.

Under the pilot, participating courts will record proceedings. Recordings by other entities or persons will not be allowed. Recording of members of a jury will not be permitted, and parties in a trial must consent to participating in the pilot.

The Federal Judicial Center will conduct a study of the pilot, and produce interim reports at the end of its first and second years. The Administrative Office of the United States Courts will provide funding for equipment and training as needed by a participating court.

Electronic media coverage of criminal proceedings in federal courts has been expressly prohibited under Federal Rule of Criminal Procedure 53 since the criminal rules were adopted in 1946, and by the Judicial Conference since 1972. In 1996 the Conference rescinded its camera coverage prohibition for courts of appeals, and allowed each appellate court discretion to permit broadcasting of oral arguments. To date, two courts of appeals—the Second and the Ninth—allow such coverage. In the early 1990s the Judicial Conference conducted a pilot program permitting electronic media coverage of civil proceeding in six district courts and two courts of appeals.

In other matters, the Conference:

- Approved a new Strategic Plan for the Federal Judiciary, which upholds the Judiciary's tradition of meeting challenges and taking advantage of opportunities, while preserving core values. The plan includes goals to enhance the Judiciary's accessibility, timeliness, and efficiency. The plan also stresses the importance of attracting, developing and retaining judicial and court executive talent, and calls for increased education and training for judges and staff on security, ethical conduct, integrity, and accountability. The strategies and goals advanced in the plan are organized around seven issues – providing justice, effective and efficient management of public resources, the Judiciary workforce of the future, harnessing the potential of technology, enhancing access to the judicial process, the Judiciary's relationships with the other branches of government, and enhancing public understanding, trust, and confidence.
- Found a continuing need for all authorized bankruptcy judgeships (316 permanent and 36 temporary) and therefore recommended to Congress that it not eliminate any of them. Still pending in the Senate is a House-passed bill based on the Conference's 2009 recommendation for creation of 13 additional bankruptcy judgeships and conversion of 22 existing

temporary judgeships to permanent status. More than 1.5 million bankruptcies were filed in the federal courts during the 12-month period ending June 30, 2010 – a 20 percent increase over the filing for the same period in 2009.

- Approved the establishment of a program involving the Government Printing Office, the American Association of Law Libraries and the Administrative Office, that would provide training and education to the public about PACER service, and would exempt from billing the first \$50 of quarterly usage by a library participating in the program.

The 27-member Judicial Conference is the policy-making body for the federal court system. The Chief Justice serves as its presiding officer. Its other members are the chief judges of the 13 courts of appeals, a district judge from each of the 12 geographic circuits, and the chief judge of the Court of International Trade. The Conference meets twice a year to consider administrative and policy issues affecting the court system, and to make recommendations to Congress concerning legislation involving the Judicial Branch.