

Court Information Release



United States District Court
Northern District of Illinois, Eastern Division
219 South Dearborn Street, Chicago, Illinois 60604

Release Date:
June 22, 2010

Contact: Joel Daly
(312) 435-5693 (phone)
joel_daly@ilnd.uscourts.gov

CHIEF JUDGE JAMES F. HOLDERMAN PROVIDES HIS ANNUAL “STATE OF THE COURT” ADDRESS

CHICAGO – Following a long-standing annual tradition, Chief Judge James F. Holderman, on Tuesday, June 22, 2010, spoke at a luncheon sponsored by the Chicago Chapter of the Federal Bar Association and provided insight into the state of the United States District Court for the Northern District of Illinois, its workload, and its operations of the past year.

Civil case filings increased 6.2% in 2009 over 2008, to a total 8,305, which is the highest annual civil case filing total in the last five years. The number of criminal felony defendants charged in 2009 dropped 1.2% to a total of 1,046 as compared to a total of 1,059 felony criminal defendants charged in 2008. The number of defendants charged with felony immigration violations rose 41% to a total of 126 defendants charged in 2009 compared to 89 defendants charged in 2008. Bankruptcy case filings rose 27.9% in 2009 to 52,663 cases compared to 41,168 bankruptcy case filings in 2008. As for efficiency, the court in 2009 continued to remain in the top 10% of U.S. District Courts across the country with a median time from filing to disposition of civil cases of 6.2 months.

The court began 2009 with only a single vacant district judgeship created by former Judge Mark Filip’s resignation in March 2008. During the 2009 calendar year, Judges Robert Gettleman, David Coar, and Elaine Bucklo took senior status. In February 2010, Judge Blanche Manning also took senior status. Consequently, there are five district judge vacancies currently open, with a sixth to occur at the end of July when Judge Wayne Andersen retires. This is the most district judge vacancies that the court has experienced in its 191 year history.

There were significant changes for the magistrate judge bench in 2009 as well. Magistrate Judge Martin Ashman and Magistrate Judge Arlander Keys shifted to recalled status, and have maintained active judicial calendars. These changes in status opened two magistrate judge positions on the court. An additional magistrate judgeship was created for the court’s Eastern Division in 2009. In the past few weeks, the three magistrate judge vacancies were filled, and the court was very pleased to welcome new Magistrate Judges Sheila Finnegan, Jeffrey Gilbert, and Young Kim to our magistrate judge bench.

The court was also pleased to welcome new Chief Probation Officer Kristine Phillips in May 2010. Chief Phillips has served in the district's probation office for over 20 years and takes over for former Chief Probation Officer Richard Tracy, who retired May 1, 2010. The district also has a new United States Marshal, Darryl McPherson, whose nomination by President Obama was confirmed by the United States Senate on May 28, 2010. Marshal McPherson previously served as a Deputy U.S. Marshal in Chicago for over a decade.

As of June 1, 2010, the court had over 25,000 registered e-filers, which is 18% more than a year ago. The daily rate of document filing is up 15% to a total of 867 electronic documents filed with the court per day compared to the daily filing average of 733 electronic documents a year ago.

Chief Judge Holderman spoke of various other initiatives of the Clerk's Office and the court's judges. He thanked his fellow judges and members of the court's bar for their work in providing justice and access to justice in the court over the past year. He stated that he is looking forward to addressing the challenges of continuing to provide justice in the best way possible in the year to come.

**PREPARED TEXT FOR THE
“STATE OF THE COURT” ADDRESS ON JUNE 20, 2011
by Chief Judge James F. Holderman**

Good afternoon. Welcome to the 2011 “State of the Court” address. I would specifically like to thank the Chicago Chapter of the Federal Bar Association, President Maria Vathis and the other officers, directors and members for this invitation. I am grateful to have the opportunity to continue this annual tradition.

The “State of the Court” at this time, in a word, is “Good,” and it remains “Good” only due to the efforts and dedication of the people in this room. I hope I am able to say that next year, but I am concerned. Last Thursday afternoon, I, and all federal judges in the country, received an e-mail from Jim Duff, the current Director of the Administrative Offices of the United States Courts, which gave us some grave budgetary news. I will quote from it:

The Judiciary faces the potential of unprecedented budget cuts in Fiscal Year (FY) 2012. Earlier today, the House Financial Services and General Government appropriations subcommittee, which funds the Judiciary, approved its FY 2012 appropriations bill.

* * * *

Preliminary estimates indicate that if the House bill were to become law, the courts would have to cut spending on salaries [of court personnel] by the equivalent of about 5,000 court support staff through a combination of layoffs, furloughs, buyouts, and early outs [across the country].

* * * *

The Senate Appropriations Committee has not begun consideration of FY 2012 appropriations bills and has not announced a schedule for doing so. Press reports indicate that the Senate is waiting for the outcome of debt reduction

talks led by Vice President Joseph R. Biden, Jr., before moving forward on FY 2012 spending bills.

* * * *

As an initial step in addressing this severe situation, I urge all court units to implement immediately a hiring freeze on current vacancies as well as positions that become vacant. Further, I encourage all courts to limit spending this fiscal year to essential purchases only. These actions will better position the courts for the large budget shortfall expected in FY 2012 and will generate higher carryforward balances that can be used as additional financing for the FY 2012 financial plan.

I do not want to dwell on the direness of what the future may hold next year if Congress does not recognize the appropriate funding needs of the Third Branch. The people working on and for the courts of the United States have always been resilient throughout our country's history no matter what the challenge. We intend to be so again.

So, to provide you a good basis of where we stand now, I will discuss today's "State of the Court" in the Northern District of Illinois in three main areas:

1. The first is what I call "Core Court Functions" including key court personnel changes, caseload trends, and court services.
2. The second area is "Court Security and Courthouse Construction," and as you can tell from just looking at the Dirksen U.S. Courthouse the construction that has taken place during the past year continues underway; and
3. The third is "Court Initiatives" to provide better access to justice in our court, to provide better justice when access is obtained, and to provide public education and information about court processes in our District, as well as assisting other courts, both other district courts and courts of appeals, along with building better relations with other branches of government in our country and with judiciaries of other countries elsewhere in the world.

These key functions and initiatives could not be achieved without you, the people in this room who are members of our court's bar, the officers of the court. I have often said that I believe we have some of the finest lawyers in the country appearing in our court and as your Chief Judge my belief is even more fervently held. All the judges on our court appreciate the job you do for your clients to further justice in our district.

During my time as Chief Judge, which will hit the five-year mark in 10 days, I have had tremendous support from my colleagues on the bench. I cannot tell you how much I appreciate their hard work, advice, wisdom, assistance, and friendship. When I speak with other Chief District Judges around the country, as I did at the annual Chief District Judges Meeting in D.C. this past April, I feel blessed by the collegiality we have on our district court, and the mutual respect we judges on our court share for one another.

I feel equally blessed to have the excellent people we have working in our Court's Clerk's Office. I would like to recognize some of the key supervisory personnel of our Clerk's Office and other Court Unit Heads. Of course, Mr. Michael W. Dobbins is the Clerk of Court, who has worked in the United States Court system for over 35 years.

With us are some of the top managers of our District Court's Clerk's Office: Ms. Nellie Finch, Operations Manager; Ms. Donna Carey, Administrative Services Manager; Mr. Ted Newman, Judicial Support Manager; and Mr. Mark Tortorici, the Systems Manager. We also have Ms. Gretchen Van Dam, the Circuit Librarian at the William J. Campbell Library, located on the 16th floor of the Dirksen United States Courthouse.

Joining us is our Chief Probation Officer, Ms. Kristine Phillips. It has been a little over a year since Chief Phillips was appointed as Chief Probation Officer of the Northern District of Illinois. Chief Phillips's probation officers have the responsibility of preparing pre-sentence reports for every criminal defendant our judges sentence and monitoring the post-incarceration conduct of over 2,500 offenders during their supervised release. Under Chief Phillips, I am confident the Probation Department will continue to carry on the same tradition of excellence. We appreciate their work.

Also here is our Chief Pretrial Services Officer, Ms. Ann Marie Carey. Chief Carey's pretrial services officers monitor pretrial defendants out on bond and provide the key informational reports to allow us judges to determine when pretrial bond is appropriate. We appreciate the excellence of her department during her tenure as Chief.

Chief Carey and Chief Phillips, in addition to assisting with job placement and skill building opportunities, have implemented a number of programs such as the "Planning for Tomorrow," which will be going into its third year next month and has provided informational presentations to over 500 defendants and their families to better acclimate to prison life, and to better assimilate back into society when their prison terms are concluded, or the "Makin' It Work" four-day training course for offenders, which addresses barriers to employment, what one needs to know to get a job and keep a job, interviewing skills and resume writing. And, of course, the continuing "Helpful Hanger" program, which provides business attire to people re-entering the work force. All of these programs provide great

assistance and reduce recidivism. I will discuss our district's new cooperative Reentry Program further in a few minutes.

We are also honored to have present United States Marshal Darryl McPherson, the U.S. Marshal for the Northern District of Illinois. Marshal McPherson served as a Deputy U.S. Marshal in Chicago since 1999 and as the U.S. Marshal since July of 2010. We could not have asked for a finer person to fill this position. I am confident he will continue to do as excellent of a job as he has done over the past year.

Additionally, I would like to recognize and introduce my chambers staff to provide you the faces to put with the names of the people with whom you may be in contact when working with my chambers: Mr. Joel Daly, the Court's Information Officer, Ms. Alyce Mobley-Morris, my Courtroom Deputy; Mr. Larry Collins, my Administrative Assistant; Ms. Colleen Conway, my Court Reporter, Ms. Amy Rettberg, my Executive Law Clerk; Ms. Marron Mahoney, my Senior Law Clerk; and my two judicial assistants, Ms. Margaret Winkler and Ms. Gabriela Kennedy.

I appreciate everyone's excellent work very much.

If any of you ever have any questions with which you think my chambers can assist you, you can contact any of these folks and they will be happy to help you.

I. CORE COURT FUNCTIONS

A. Key Court Personnel Changes

I now turn to our court's new judges and our judicial vacancies.

2010 was a year that saw more changes in the membership of the Court's bench than perhaps in any other year in the Court's history, adding three new magistrate judges and three new district judges. The effect of all of this judicial movement has been that, from late April of 2010 through the first few days of January 2011, new judicial officers were joining the Court at a rate equaling about one new judge about every six weeks.

As for our district judges, we presently have 19, of our designated number of 22, active district judges on board. After long and honorable public service, Judge Wayne Andersen elected to retire from active status at the end of July 2010. We miss him. At that point, we had 6 vacancies on our bench – the most in the history of the district. Fortunately, joining our bench in September 2010 were District Judges Sharon Johnson Coleman and Gary Feinerman. Filling the 3rd of the 6 vacancies in January 2011 was District Judge Edmond Chang. They are each doing an excellent job.

As I said, we still have 3 vacant district judgeships. To date we have lost more than 3 years of judicial time with the continuing vacancies on our district judge bench. Obviously, the sooner these vacancies can be filled, the better things will be for the Court, the bar, and the public we serve. That's why both Senators Durbin and Kirk have formed their Bipartisan Federal Judicial Review Commissions. We appreciate Senators Durbin's and Kirk's efforts to fill our vacancies and those in the other district courts of Illinois.

It has been difficult for us in Northern Illinois to be down three active judges and working at less than 90% active district judge capacity, but we will continue to endeavor, and we continue to be blessed to have the assistance of 14 senior judges. Several of our senior judges continue to receive a full share of new civil and criminal cases. As you know, Judge David Coar, who had taken senior status in August 2009, retired December 31, 2010. We miss him. The work of our senior judges is all the more important, given filing levels that continue to increase and persisting judicial vacancies.

As you may recall from last year's speech, our Court had the honor and privilege of being joined by three outstanding new Magistrate Judges, Sheila Finnegan, Jeffrey Gilbert, and Young Kim.

Judges Finnegan, Gilbert, and Kim joined a Magistrate Judge bench that continues to do an excellent job with Judge Sid Schenkier continuing to serve as the Presiding Magistrate Judge. Also, both Magistrate Judges Martin Ashman and Arlander Keys, who have both reached retirement age, agreed to stay on in recalled status. We are thrilled that they have done so.

As for our Bankruptcy Court bench, that has remained steady this passed year at full strength. We have a great group of judges on that bench. Chief Judge Carol Doyle remains at the helm of that court and has done an outstanding job. However, as was announced in March, commencing on July 1st the Honorable Bruce W. Black will be the new Chief Bankruptcy Judge. Bruce and I were classmates in law school and I look forward to working with him.

Our bankruptcy judges face an ever-increasing case load because of our current economic times. In 2010, we saw a 15.2% increase over 2009 , with 65,443 new bankruptcy cases commenced. Bankruptcy filings are now approaching levels not seen since the 2005 Bankruptcy Act.

B. Caseload

Speaking of caseloads, as for the district court's caseload, the total civil filings in 2010 increased, up 4.6% of the 2009 level - for a total of 8,844 civil case filings in 2010. Patent cases and mortgage foreclosures are two categories of civil filings showing market increases. Patent case filings have increased by 35.7%. And, while mortgage foreclosures are still a long way from the levels seen in 2003, we may have roughly 1,000 mortgage foreclosures filed by the end of this year. Actual numbers for this year 2011, of course, are not yet available. We will to have wait and see.

As far as efficiency is concerned, our court, in 2010, continued to remain in the top 10% of U.S. District Courts across the country with a median time from filing to disposition of civil cases of 6.2 months.

On the criminal side, 2010 saw 945 defendants against whom felony cases were commenced, which was a slight 3.7% decrease below the number reported for 2009 of 1,046. As in most years, fraud and drug-related offenses account for roughly half of the court's criminal cases. A category that has grown in recent years are criminal cases involving immigration offenses. Immigration cases account for 15.0% of felony defendants commenced in 2010.

C. Trials

The number of civil jury trials grew by close to 60% during 2010. We had 57 civil jury trials during 2009, and 92 during 2010. On the criminal side, there were 68 criminal jury trials during 2009, and 56 during 2010, about a 15% drop.

The increase in civil jury trials, however, appears to have continued through the first half of 2011 when compared to the first half of 2010: with the number of civil jury trials (64) up more than 50% of what they were last year at this time (41).

D. Electronic Filing And Information Technology

1. Electronic Filing and Electronic Record Maintenance

We are now half-way through our sixth year since the conversion to mandatory electronic filing in 2005. As of June 1, 2011 there were over 28,500 registered electronic filers in our district as, which is about 11% more than we had a year ago.

On a daily basis, attorneys are currently e-filing an average 880 electronic documents every day, which is a 1.5% increase over the daily average of 867 documents a year ago. It appears that the bench and bar in our district have, for all intents and purposes, successfully made the conversion to electronic filing.

2. Information Technology

a. Courtrooms

By the end of August 2011, twenty-eight of our courtrooms will have brand new sound systems, and eight out of those twenty-eight will have integrated evidence presentation

technology and video conference systems installed. This hopefully will assist you in presenting your cases in our courtrooms.

b. Building Kiosk System

The building kiosk system was upgraded with new web based software designed and developed by a District Court staff member. The new design makes it easier for attorneys and members of the public to find daily court call information and the location of courtrooms and judges chambers.

c. Website

As for the court's upgraded website, www.ilnd.uscourts.gov, both the on-line version and mobile version, which went "live" a little over two years ago, we have received good feedback. We can always improve, and if you have a suggestion, please e-mail me and let me know.

I appreciate the efforts of Mark Tortorici, and the key folks under him in our Systems Department.

II. COURT SECURITY AND COURT CONSTRUCTION

A. Security

The U.S. Marshal's Service, which includes the CSOs, are responsible for all security at the Dirksen U.S. Courthouse not just the persons in the Courthouse, taking over all the duties previously performed by the Federal Protective Service at the Dirksen U.S. Courthouse. This program is a part of a pilot program in 5 districts across the country. It is good to have one federal agency to look to for the safety of all of us.

The U.S. Marshal's Service, under the direction of new U.S. Marshal McPherson, is also still overseeing the security systems installed in each of our judges' homes to protect us and our families there. We appreciate their diligence.

In addition to my other responsibilities as chief judge, I chair the Court Security Committee and am personally committed to ensuring the safety of every person who works in or comes to the courthouses both here and in Rockford. I consider it my number one job as chief judge. We continue to be diligent.

B. Construction in Our District Courthouses

1. Everett McKinley Dirksen U.S. Courthouse

Anyone who has been around the courthouse is aware of the General Services Administration's construction project, one of which is to update the heating and air condition system. Frankly, anyone whose been around the Dirksen Courthouse, as I have, over the last forty years, knows the heating and air conditioning has never been right. So its about time to fix it. Commencing in September 2010, and at three-month intervals through April 2012,

judges chambers and courtrooms will rotate to temporary facilities that have been constructed on the 10th floor while the renovations by GSA's contractor, Turner Construction, take place on each floor 17 through 25. Work on all the floors from 17 and above has progressed nicely with minimal disruption, at worst, to the court. Thanks to the adept work of folks in our Clerk's Office overseen by Donna Carey. I thank them all because personnel from the Clerk's Office have been performing the duties of moving judges and their chamber's staff to the 10th floor when each specific floor has had to be vacated for renovation. Right now, it's the people assigned to the 20th floor, which, as you know, housed the District Court Clerk's Office, that are now on 10. They are beginning their move back today and in July the 21st floor will go to 10 as GSA works its way up the building. We appreciate your patience.

2. Stanley J. Roszkowski United States Courthouse

GSA's continuing construction of the Stanley J. Roszkowski United States Courthouse in Rockford has been delayed and to my chagrin, and I know to the chagrin of Senator Durbin and the Rockford-area Congressman Don Manzullo, is scheduled for completion near the end of September 2011. We hope to be conducting business in the new courthouse by mid-fall 2011. You are all invited to the ground breaking when it is scheduled.

III. OTHER COURT INITIATIVES

A. The Seventh Circuit E-Discovery Pilot Program

We presented the May 1, 2011 Seventh Circuit Electronic Discovery Pilot Program Interim Report on Phase Two at the Seventh Circuit Bar Association Annual Meeting and Judicial Conference on May 17, 2011. Although Phase Two was originally planned to last one year, the Committee early in Phase Two determined that a two-year duration, through May 2012, would be preferable and would allow a fuller evaluation of the Principles's application during Phase Two. Our Pilot Program has been the subject of both national and international attention. I encourage you to educate yourself about the pilot program, employ the procedures, and encourage other lawyers and judges to do the same. More details are available at our new website: www.DiscoveryPilot.com.

B. James B. Moran Second Chance Reentry Court

We recently celebrated the one year anniversary of the James B. Moran Second Chance Reentry Court program by hosting on April 22, 2011 a graduation for the 5 out of 10 participants that completed the program. This program is for people recently released from prison. The program targets offenders with substance abuse issues who are also at medium to high risk of re-offending in the community based on the Risk Prediction Index. The Reentry Program began with ten cases under the direction of Judge Joan Gottschall and Judge Ruben Castillo. The Federal Judicial Center plans to study the effectiveness of such programs across the federal system and our district will be a part of that study.

C. Local Patent Rules

We have just finished our first full year under the Local Patent Rules that went into effect on October 1, 2009. There was a marked increase of 35% in patent infringement case filings from 143 cases during 2009 to 194 cases during 2010.

D. Pro Bono Service

In addition to the items I have mentioned to make the justice more available to all in our court, we judges from time to time over the years have called upon you, our Trial Bar members, for your professional assistance, and you have generously given of your professional time *pro bono* to assist us in bettering our court processes and furthering access to justice in our court for those who can not afford counsel.

To better serve the needs of the entire district, starting August 1st of this year, we are going to make Trial Bar pro bono appointments on a district-wide basis. We don't expect Trial Bar members' names to come-up randomly more frequently than once a decade for pro bono appointments and do not want to burden counsel busy with paying clients, but we in our profession all have some obligation to give back.

We judges do appreciate your *pro bono* efforts and to say "thank you," as we have done for the past eleven years, in conjunction with the Chicago Chapter of the Federal Bar Association, we set aside an afternoon each year to acknowledge those members of our bar whose *pro bono* efforts are worthy of special recognition.

1. May 19, 2011 Awards Ceremony

At the ceremony "Awards for Excellence in Pro Bono Service" were presented by our judges to eleven area attorneys, including one newly elected Cook County circuit court judge, Judge Stan Hill, for the contributions they each have made in helping those most in need of assistance through *pro bono* work in the Northern District of Illinois.

2. Access to Justice

As for further continuing initiatives providing access to justice, we continue to carry-on, with funding assistance from the Chicago Bar Foundation, our court's *Pro-Se* Help Desk operated by attorneys Catherine Caporusso and Deanne Medina. We also have our *Pro Se* Settlement Assistance Program, overseen by attorney Cunyon Gordon of the Chicago Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under the Law, which also includes the prison civil rights area, handled by the Prisoner Assistance Program, headed by attorney Jim Chapman.

In 2010, Ms. Cunyon Gordon took over for Ms. Laurie Wardell as the point person for the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights. As an aside, Ms. Wardell, one of my former law clerks, took over as an Administrative Judge at the EEOC for Magistrate Judge Young Kim when he joined our court. The Settlement Assistance Program, in 2010, provided assistance in 50 civil cases: 39 were employment related cases, 6 were prisoner cases, and 5 were other types of cases. Of these 50 cases, there was a 78% success rate of settlement. Only 11 of the 50 did not settle in 2010.

Attendance at the court-sponsored training sessions of the Settlement Assistance Program and subsequent appointment as settlement counsel provides credit towards

becoming a member of the Trial Bar. We have scheduled a new Settlement Assistance Program Training for Wednesday, September 7, 2011, from 3:00 to 6:00 p.m., in the Parson's Memorial Courtroom, room 2525, in the Dirksen U.S. Courthouse. You will learn from the best by attending.

During 2010, the Settlement Assistant Program had 65 volunteer lawyers who dedicated upwards of 2500 hours toward easing the workload of the court and helping pro se litigants.

Through these programs and others, we continue to strengthen and support the valuable public service we all have the obligation to provide to promote access to justice in our court. We again thank you for your services.

E. Media

Turning now to providing access to information about justice in our court, as you know, consistent with our court's tradition, we have had some high-profile trials lately, a trend that will certainly continue. Our attempts to keep the public informed and to assist the media in covering these and other cases will continue and we are always open to suggestions. The media personnel have, for the most part, cooperated, and the vast majority are appreciative of our need to balance the public's right to know with other concerns, such as safety, privacy and the right of each party in each case to a fair trial.

We will continue to try to assist them in reporting the news happening in our court.

F. Our Court's Outreach Programs

1. National Judicial Involvement and Assisting Other Courts

Many of our judges in addition to their work here in our district continue to be involved on a national level.

a. MDL

For example, in addition to handling our own increased load of assigned cases in the Northern District of Illinois, as of June 1, 2011, 15 of our district judges also are presiding over 876 additional cases assigned to us by the U.S. Multi-District Litigation Panel.

b. U.S. Judicial Conference

Additionally, several of our judges serve on national advisory committees to the United States Judicial Conference, the governing body of the U.S. Courts. For the past several years, District Judges Aspen, Norgle, Zagel, Kennelly, Lefkow, St. Eve, Kendall, and Dow, Magistrate Judge Denlow, and Bankruptcy Judges Wedoff and Cox have been members of these national advisory committee. We appreciate their work.

c. Federal Judicial Center

In March 2011, I was honored to be appointed by Chief Justice Roberts to serve on the seven member board of the Federal Judicial Center. The Federal Judicial Center is the education and research arm of the federal judicial system. Chief Justice John Roberts personally presides at its board meetings and oversees its work. I will do my best throughout my 4-year term to develop and promote continuing education and training for federal judges

and court employees, to make recommendations about the operation and study of the federal courts, and to develop and promote meaningful information and analysis based on research regarding federal court procedures. We should always be looking for ways to do it better and those of you who know me well, know that I am personally committed to doing just that.

d. National Pilot Projects

Along the line of trying new things to do our job better, there are two hot-off-the-presses national pilot projects that have recently attracted some media attention, the “Cameras Pilot Project” and the “Patent Pilot Project.” Our district judges voluntarily applied to participate in both, and we were selected.

1. Cameras Pilot Project

The “Cameras Pilot Project” is officially known as the “Digital Video Recording Pilot Project” because that is more appropriate and accurate of a description. The way it will work is: with the consent of the parties, in civil jury and bench trials, the court proceedings will be recorded digitally on court-operated cameras and after the trial will be made available on a national server, which will be capable of being linked through our court’s website. Judges can volunteer, but the parties must consent and it is only in civil cases.

2. Patent Pilot Project

The “Patent Pilot Project,” in which our district is also participating, was established by Congressional statute and signed into law by President Obama in January 2011. In each participating district, judges can volunteer to be a designated group of judges who agree to take on supervision of patent cases that their non-designated colleagues don’t want to handle.

The idea is to get the patent cases, which are typically complicated, on the dockets of judges who are most amenable to presiding in those cases. The Patent Pilot Project has a term of 10 years and periodic reports must be presented to Congress on the findings.

We U.S. District Judges in northern Illinois look forward to working in both of these new areas of these pilot projects. We will see what happens. I will report more next year.

e. Judges' Voluntary Work with Other Courts

Moreover, several of our judges also volunteered this past year to serve by designation on other federal courts, at both the trial and appellate levels. In doing so, we judges not only assist those other courts with their case loads, but again it helps us stay attuned to how we can do things better, which is helpful to you and to us here in our district.

2. Judges Providing Educational Programs

Regarding educational programs, almost all of the judges of our court have continued to volunteer their time on a variety of continuing legal education programs put on by various Bar Associations and Inns of Court, or continue to teach at various law schools. We encourage our judges to participate in such endeavors. Not only are these programs good for bench/bar relations, but we judges always learn something that makes us better at our job.

3. Visitors to Our Court

Also, our court is constantly being visited by people ranging from young school children from around the Chicagoland area to judges and dignitaries from foreign governments. We encourage this also.

As for the experiences we provide to school children and young adults, I have consulted with and appointed a court-annexed committee of educators who helped us develop uniform education programs. We placed these materials on our website to enhance the students' field trips from their schools to the Courthouse. I believe it is important that students, who are the future of our country, fully understand the judiciary's proper role in our government and in our society. These educational materials are designed to help that understanding.

As I mentioned, we are visited by foreign judges and dignitaries, who come to learn more about our procedures and legal concepts, such as Judicial Independence, the application of the principles of the Rule of Law we have in our country, and about our Constitution and its bedrock doctrine of Separation of Powers. This past year, judges and others from several countries in Europe and Asia came to visit our Dirksen U.S. Courthouse. They spoke with judges and other personnel of our court. There is no question that these discussions have developed better relations for our country around the world.

4. Home-Front Government Relations

Turning to home-front government relations, this past year our Chicago courthouse hosted several different Congressional hearings for House and Senate members. In fact, both Senators Durbin and Kirk, and other members of Congress, have visited us more than once to use our court facilities for Congressional purposes. The experience has not only aided the public and those other governmental bodies, but also enhanced relations within our governmental branches.

Our court also, this past year, provided courtrooms for the United States Court of Claims and for more than a dozen different federal agency administrative law judges at various times throughout the year to assist them in better serving the public.

IV. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, I hope this gives you each some insight into our judges' and our court's work this past year. We have a number of continuing programs on the horizon to better serve the public and the bar in the coming year. I look forward to reporting to you on those next year. Until then, I assure you that our court will continue its mission to administer justice by upholding the Constitution and the Rule of Law for all people.

As the judges of our court know, I consider that my role as chief judge is to provide each judge all the support and assistance that I can, in every way I can, to allow them all to administer justice in the best way they can.

It is an honor and privilege to serve as your chief U.S. district judge. I thank our judges and each of you, who work for the court, along with all the members of our court's bar, for your assistance this past year, and I look forward to working with you on the challenges of the year to come.

Thank you.