

Court Information Release



UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE NORTHERN DISTRICT OF ILLINOIS
EASTERN DIVISION
219 SOUTH DEARBORN STREET
CHICAGO, IL 60604

Release Date:
May 9, 2008

Contact: Joel Daly
(312) 435-5693 (phone)
(312) 554-8239 (fax)
joel_daly@ilnd.uscourts.gov

CHIEF JUDGE HOLDERMAN DELIVERS ANNUAL STATE OF THE COURT ADDRESS

CHICAGO – The state of the court is “Good” according to Chief Judge James F. Holderman in his annual “State of the Court Address,” which he delivered on May 9, 2008 – the 160th anniversary of legislation establishing Chicago as an authorized site for a United States District Court in the State of Illinois.

Holderman said there was a brief period this past year that the district court was at full strength: after newly-appointed District Judge Robert Dow joined the court and before former District Judge Mark Filip resigned to take the number two post in the United States Department of Justice.

On the magistrate judge bench, Magistrate Judge Susan Cox joined the court in late August 2007. Magistrate Judge Morton Denlow completed his term as the presiding magistrate judge in January 2008, and Magistrate Judge Sidney Schenkier took over that post. The 8-year terms of Magistrate Judge Geraldine Soat Brown in Chicago and Magistrate Judge P. Michael Mahoney in Rockford were renewed in April 2008.

On the bankruptcy court, Chief Judge Carol Doyle assumed the role of chief judge on July 1, 2007, when former Chief Judge Eugene Wedoff completed his term.

The court’s civil case load remained fairly steady in 2007 at 7,606 new civil case filings, 99.5% of the civil filings in 2006. The court remained in the top ten districts across the country in median time from filing to disposition of civil cases, at 6.2 months. On the criminal side, 933 defendants were charged with felonies in the district during 2007, down 15% from the 1,106 felony defendants charged in 2006.

Electronic filing continues to run smoothly. The court now has over 17,800 registered e-filers, 20% more than at the end of 2006. E-filings of initial complaints commenced November 1, 2007 as did electronic filing fee payments through the pay.gov system. The court receives over 660 e-filings each business day and about 25 new civil complaints are e-filed each day.

In response to a survey of approximately 5,000 lawyers and the docketing departments of 80 law firms in the Northern District of Illinois, the court redesigned its website to make the information most readily desired more readily accessible. The new website design was launched on March 1, 2008. At that time, the court also introduced a mobile version of its website, the first United States District Court in the country to do so.

Judicial security has been beefed-up at judges' homes due to legislation sponsored by Senator Dick Durbin. Also thanks to Senator Dick Durbin, long awaited construction of the new United States Courthouse in Rockford will get underway later this month.

The court continues to provide judges with criminal background checks of jurors upon the presiding judge's request and continues to provide employment protection for jurors when needed. The court this past year also continued a number of programs to enhance access to justice for those who could otherwise not afford it by encouraging *pro bono* representation by lawyers, providing a *Pro Se* Help Desk, which advises *pro se* litigants on court procedures, and continuing the Settlement Assistance Program for *pro se* litigants. The court also has continued to work cooperatively with the media in its coverage of cases and events at the Dirksen U.S. Courthouse.

Several judges of the court participated in a variety of continuing legal education and other education programs in 2007. Some judges also served by designation on other federal courts, both trial and appellate, outside the Northern District of Illinois to assist those courts with their workloads.

In 2007, the court hosted numerous programs for visiting schoolchildren from the Chicago area, as well as for foreign judges and dignitaries from ten foreign countries. Administrative law judges from eleven different governmental agencies held proceedings at the courthouse during 2007. And the court hosted five different congressional hearings for U.S. Senators and Representatives at the Dirksen U.S. Courthouse.

Chief Judge Holderman said, "the judges of the court will steadfastly continue their mission to administer justice by upholding the Constitution and the Rule of Law for all people." He thanked those in attendance for their assistance in that endeavor during the past year and stated he looked forward to the challenges of the year to come.