

Court Information Release



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Judge Matthew F. Kennelly Appointed to Judicial Panel on Multidistrict Litigation

Chicago, Ill. - U.S. District Judge Matthew F. Kennelly has been named to the U.S. Judicial Panel on Multidistrict Litigation (MDL) by Chief Justice John Roberts. The MDL Panel consists of seven sitting federal judges, who are appointed to serve on the Panel by the Chief Justice of the United States.

“Judge Kennelly has significant experience with MDL matters, including, most recently, a pharmaceutical products liability case involving thousands of plaintiffs and several defendant drug manufacturers. His innovative approach to challenging cases and his commitment to active case management equip him well for this new role,” said Chief Judge Rebecca R. Pallmeyer.

The Judicial Panel on Multidistrict Litigation, known informally as the MDL Panel, was created by an Act of Congress in 1968. The job of the Panel is to determine whether civil actions pending in different federal districts involve one or more common questions of fact and that efficient administration favors transfer of the actions to one federal district for coordinated or consolidated pretrial proceedings. When the Panel makes a decision in favor of MDL treatment, the Panel will then select the judge or judges and court assigned to conduct such proceedings.

The purposes of this transfer or “centralization” process are to avoid duplication of discovery, to prevent inconsistent pretrial rulings, and to conserve the resources of the parties, their counsel and the judiciary. Transferred actions not terminated in the transferee district are remanded to their originating transferor districts by the Panel at or before the conclusion of centralized pretrial proceedings.

MDL cases have included litigation as airplane crashes; other single accidents, such as train wrecks or hotel fires; mass torts, such as those involving asbestos, drugs and other products liability cases; marketing and sales practices; patent validity and infringement; antitrust price fixing; data security breaches, securities fraud; and employment practices.

Judge Kennelly earned his undergraduate degree from the University of Notre Dame in 1978 and his law degree from Harvard Law School in 1981, where he was Executive Director of the Harvard Legal Aid Bureau. He served in private practice in Chicago from 1981 to 1982. He served as a law clerk to Judge Prentice Marshall of the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Illinois from 1982 to 1984. He returned to private practice in 1984 until his appointment to the federal district court in 1999. Judge Kennelly has conducted hundreds of jury trials as a practitioner and as a district judge.

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