

Judge Coleman's Standing Rules of Trial Practice

Jury Selection

Prior to jury selection, the Court will provide potential jurors with a standard written questionnaire. The Court may also have potential jurors complete a supplemental questionnaire with additional questions specific to the facts of the case. Copies of the completed questionnaires will be provided to counsel but must be returned to the Court prior to opening statements.

Once the potential jurors are in the Courtroom, the Court will speak to them as a group about jury service, will provide an introduction to the courtroom and the courtroom staff, and will inquire about the potential juror's prior jury service and knowledge of the parties and witnesses in the case. After that, the Court will seat the first panel of potential jurors in the jury box. Those not individually called will be released to a waiting area. The Court will then question the panel of jurors individually. Once the questioning of the first panel of potential jurors has been completed, counsel will have the opportunity to propose any follow-up questions that might be warranted and to propose any strikes for cause. Once those matters are resolved, the Court will seat the second panel of potential jurors for questioning, and will proceed in this manner until a sufficient number of jurors has been questioned.

Issues to be raised outside the presence of the jury

At the beginning and end of every recess, and at the start of every trial day, Judge Coleman will provide the parties with the opportunity to raise any issues that must be addressed outside the presence of the jury. Any anticipated issues regarding evidence, the scope of testimony, the Court's rulings on motions in limine, or trial logistics may be addressed at this time, or at any time when the jury is not in the courtroom upon prompting by the Court. The Court strongly disfavors sidebars, and the parties are therefore encouraged to be proactive in raising issues that might warrant argument outside the jury's presence. It is the Court's expectation that any issues being raised before the Court will have first been discussed with opposing counsel.

Objections and Sidebars

Speaking objections are not permitted. The Court requests that counsel be consistent in their manner of objecting (i.e. whether they stand or remain sitting) and that objections be made at a consistent and appropriate volume.

Sidebars are strongly disfavored. In the event that a sidebar is necessary, the Court requests that only one lawyer from each side participate. The Court reminds counsel to keep their voices at low volume and to avoid noticeable gesturing during sidebars and to keep their arguments succinct.

Disclosure of Witnesses and Exhibits

It is the Court's expectation that, by the end of each trial day, litigants will inform opposing counsel of the witnesses that will be called on the following day, the order of their testimony, and any previously-unadmitted exhibits that will be used.

Trial Conduct

The only individuals who will be permitted to enter the well of the courtroom while the jury is present are the lawyers taking the case to trial and, at the Court's discretion, a paralegal or other staff member who will be seated at counsel's table throughout the trial. Clients and client representatives may leave the well of the courtroom for personal reasons but must sit in the pews until the next recess.

The Court will provide carafes of water and cups for counsel and the parties. The Court does not permit the consumption of outside beverages, including water, in cups or bottles other than those provided by the Court.

Counsel, the parties, and any witnesses are to exclusively use the North elevators in order to avoid contact with the jury. Counsel are to admonish their clients and any witnesses to avoid all contact with the jurors.

Courtroom Technology

It is the parties' responsibility to ensure their familiarity and competence with the courtroom's audiovisual technology. Trainings on the courtroom technology may be scheduled with the Court's AV Technology Specialist. The parties are strongly encouraged to arrange for such a training in advance of trial, as there is no guarantee that technological support will be available during trial. The parties are similarly encouraged to confirm the functionality of any digitally presented evidence outside the presence of the jury. The courtroom staff cannot provide technological assistance to counsel.