

Frequently Asked Questions about Trial Bar Membership

Trial Bar Membership

What are the benefits of Trial Bar membership?

Admission to the Northern District of Illinois District Court's Trial Bar is a distinction of prestige and experience. The Trial Bar was created to raise the level of quality and professionalism at proceedings in the Northern District of Illinois.

In order to appear as lead at testimonial proceedings in the Northern District of Illinois, an attorney must be a member of the Court's Trial Bar.

Trial Bar members are invited to participate in training programs and networking events, including events led by the Court's judges. Trial Bar members also have access to the Trial Bar attorney work room/lounge in 2302 A of the Dirksen Courthouse and are eligible to enroll their children and grandchildren at the Judge Joan Humphrey Lefkowitz Day Care Center on the second floor of the Dirksen Courthouse.

How do I become a member of the Trial Bar?

Trial Bar applicants must be sponsored by one current member of the Trial Bar who has known the applicant for at least one year. In order to qualify for the Trial Bar, attorneys must be a member in good standing of this Court's general bar and provide evidence that they have the requisite trial experience. An applicant must provide documentation that they have earned four "qualifying units of credit" through participation in or the observation of trials. An applicant can also receive simulation credits for successful completion of a qualifying trial advocacy class. Further details can be found at

<http://www.ilnd.uscourts.gov/assets/documents/Trial%20Bar%20Instructions.pdf>

Trial Bar application instructions are available at

<http://www.ilnd.uscourts.gov/TrialBarAdmission.aspx>

What responsibilities come with Trial Bar membership?

Among the responsibilities of Trial Bar attorneys is the duty to be available for assignment by the Court to represent and assist in the representation of those who cannot afford counsel. Once a Trial Bar member has been assigned and fulfilled the duty to provide pro bono representation, he or she will not be called upon again until each member of the Trial Bar has similarly fulfilled his or her obligation.

Other responsibilities include the duty to maintain current contact information with the Clerk and the duty to be available to supervise attorneys in the process of obtaining observation units

necessary to qualify for membership to the Trial Bar. Trial Bar members are also required to renew their Trial Bar membership every three years.

Trial Bar Membership Renewal

How do I renew my Trial Bar membership?

Local Rules require all Trial Bar attorneys to renew their Trial Bar membership every three years. All Trial Bar members must renew their membership by April 17, 2017.* You can begin the online renewal process [here](#). You should have also received an email with a link directing you to renew. Registration and payment can be made electronically.

What is the cost to renew my Trial Bar membership?

The renewal fee is currently a modest \$25, one-half of the current fee for admission to the Trial Bar.

What happens if I fail to renew my membership by the deadline?

All members of the District Court for the Northern District of Illinois' Trial Bar must renew their Trial Bar membership by the April 17, 2017 deadline.* Attorneys who do not renew their membership within one month of this date will be deemed to have withdrawn from the Trial Bar. If an attorney later wishes to have his or her Trial Bar reinstated, the attorney must file a petition for reinstatement that will be considered by the Court's Executive Committee. If the Executive Committee grants the motion to reinstate, it will direct that the attorney be included in the pro bono panel and remain there for one year or until the attorney is assigned. The attorney must also pay the Trial Bar admission fee in full.

Are attorneys employed by the government or legal aid organizations required to renew their Trial Bar membership?

Yes, all current Trial Bar members are required to renew their membership and pay the requisite fee by April 17, 2017.* However, attorneys employed by the government or a legal aid organization are exempt from pro bono assignments.

When is the deadline to renew my Trial Bar membership?

You must renew your Trial Bar membership by April 17, 2017.*

Why is the Court collecting information such as what languages I speak or where I practice law?

The renewal application includes a few brief questions. The Court is seeking this data to update attorney information in order to better serve Trial Bar members and to better understand the

composition of the Trial Bar. In some instances, this information may help make pro bono assignments. For example, if an attorney prefers to practice in the Western Division, then that attorney should receive an assignment only in the Western Division (even though we cannot guarantee that same accommodation for attorneys in the Eastern Division).

***I became a member of the Trial Bar less than three years ago. Am I still required to renew my membership?**

Members of the Trial Bar who were admitted to the Trial Bar [on or before December 23, 2016](#), are required to renew their membership by April 17, 2017. Trial Bar members with admission dates [after December 23, 2016](#), are required to renew by three years from their Trial Bar membership admission date.