

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
NORTHERN DISTRICT OF ILLINOIS
219 SOUTH DEARBORN STREET
CHICAGO, ILLINOIS 60604

CHAMBERS OF
REBECCA R. PALLMEYER
CHIEF JUDGE

312-435-5600

October 1, 2021

Dear Dirksen Courthouse:

An employee/contractor, last in the Dirksen Courthouse yesterday, September 30, has tested positive for COVID-19. The individual was on the 13th and 25th floors of the Courthouse. I understand that this individual was not on any other floors of the building and wore a face covering in the Courthouse.

I have also learned, however, that the individual attended the Seventh Circuit *en banc* oral argument. Judge Sykes has told me that under Seventh Circuit orders, hearings are not yet open to the public, and that signs posted on the courtroom doors so stated. I recognize that there were no court staff or officers at the doors, enforcing this restriction, but it is disappointing that so many of our district court personnel failed to adhere to it. Equally troubling, although I personally was not in attendance, I have heard from more than one source that there were a number of law clerks and externs in the courtroom; that not all of them were masked; and that many of those present appeared to be unconcerned with the requirement of social distancing. This means that many individuals were in the courtroom in violation of the Seventh Circuit's orders and this court's orders, which require that persons attending any large indoor gathering be masked and socially distanced.

You know my views: I continue to believe that the most powerful tool against this virus is vaccination, and that persons who have been vaccinated are largely well-protected against infection by this virus or transmission to others. That said, not everyone can be vaccinated, and vaccinations are not 100% effective. We thus continue to require wearing of masks, social-distancing, and handwashing. I expect court staff to adhere to these requirements at all times, whether or not someone is "watching."

Persons who violate the court's orders can expect to be removed from the Courthouse. All of us need to do our best to keep one another, and the community, safe.

Yours truly,



Rebecca R. Pallmeyer
Chief Judge
Chair, Dirksen Courthouse Building Security Committee