

## Court Information Release



**United States District Court**  
Northern District of Illinois, Eastern Division  
219 South Dearborn Street, Chicago, Illinois 60604

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### **District Court seeks comments on proposed amendments to local rules governing General and Trial Bar, pro bono assignments**

On September 22, 2016, the full court met in executive session and approved a proposal to amend the Local Rules of the District Court for the Northern District of Illinois pertaining to counsel admitted to practice in the court and is now seeking public comments on the amendments.

Chief among the proposed changes are modifications to procedures for pro bono assignments including selection procedures and consequences of relief from assignment.

“Pro bono assignments are critical to providing access to justice for low income people in our district. The proposal changes would allow attorneys to have more flexibility in the manner they serve on pro bono assignments. We believe these proposed changes, which are the direct result of feedback from our district’s Trial Bar, will enhance the administration of pro bono assignments in our district,” said Chief Judge Rubén Castillo.

Other notable proposed changes to local rules include a renewal requirement for members of the court’s Trial Bar. Under the proposed rules, members of the court’s Trial Bar must complete a membership renewal form every three years, which includes past pro bono assignments. Attorneys failing to renew membership within one of month of their membership expiration will be deemed to have withdrawn.

The rule amendments were motivated by feedback provided to the court by the Northern District of Illinois Pro Bono Advisory Committee and by the Trial Bar in a survey the court conducted at the end of 2015.

In 2015, 596 attorneys were recruited to pro bono cases in the Northern District of Illinois, up significantly from 204 attorneys in 2007. The court may assign a member of its Trial Bar to represent a party who lacks the resources to retain counsel by any other means in a civil action or appeal. Under the court's local rules, admission to the Northern District of Illinois Trial Bar includes a duty to accept assignment by the court to represent or assist in the representation of those who cannot afford counsel.

The proposed amendments have been made available for public notice and comment pursuant to Section 2071 (b) of Title 28 of the United States Code. The proposed amendments are listed on the court's website: [ilnd.uscourts.gov](http://ilnd.uscourts.gov). Comments are due by November 30, 2016, and may be emailed to [ilnd\\_localrules\\_comments@ilnd.uscourts.gov](mailto:ilnd_localrules_comments@ilnd.uscourts.gov).

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