

EXPLANATION OF CASE ASSIGNMENT SYSTEM IN  
THE PITTSBURGH AND ERIE DIVISIONS OF  
THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT  
FOR THE WESTERN DISTRICT OF PENNSYLVANIA

Beginning July 1, 2007, the court will institute a new system for assignment of civil cases among the district judges and magistrate judges. Under the new system, the Clerk shall assign each non-prisoner civil action to a district judge or a magistrate judge by automated random selection such that a magistrate judge will be assigned a case, in the first instance, approximately one-third of the time. All prisoner civil cases and non-death penalty habeas cases shall be assigned to a magistrate judge. Death penalty habeas cases, cases requesting preliminary injunctive relief, bankruptcy appeals and motions filed under 28 U.S.C. § 2255 shall be assigned to district judges only.

In the event the action is assigned to a magistrate judge, each party shall execute and file within 20 days of its appearance a form, either consenting to the jurisdiction of the magistrate judge or electing to have the case randomly assigned to a district judge. If a party elects to have the case assigned to a district judge, the magistrate judge shall continue to manage the case by deciding non-dispositive motions and submitting reports and recommendations on dispositive motions, unless otherwise directed by the district judge.

The court strongly encourages participation and cooperation in the expanded use of the magistrate judges as judicial officers with full authority to manage and ultimately dispose of civil actions.