



# NEWS RELEASE

## Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts

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### **Eleven "Pilot" Courts Selected for Remote Public Access to Criminal Case Files**

Eleven federal courts are allowing Internet access to criminal case files as part of a pilot program adopted by the Judicial Conference of the United States. The Conference's Committee on Court Administration and Case Management, which is studying privacy and public access to electronic files in criminal cases, selected ten trial courts and one appellate court to participate. Access is already available, or will be very soon.

The majority of those courts allowed remote public electronic access to criminal case files before a Judicial Conference policy ended it last year because of potential safety and law enforcement issues. The new access is available over the federal courts' PACER (Public Access to Court Electronic Records) system for seven cents per page, as is access to civil and bankruptcy case records. Information about PACER and a list of participating courts can be found at: <http://pacer.psc.uscourts.gov/cgi-bin/links.pl>

The Conference in September 2001 voted to make most civil and bankruptcy case documents available over PACER to the same extent they are available at the courthouse. The Conference, however, prohibited Internet access to criminal case documents, with the understanding that the policy would be re-examined within the next two years.

At its March 2002 meeting, the Conference approved the pilot program and a plan to have the Federal Judicial Center track the participating courts during the course of the study and provide information to aid the review of the policy. The Conference is expected to consider the matter at its September 2003 meeting.

The 27-member Judicial Conference is the principal policy-making body of the federal court system. The Chief Justice serves as the presiding officer of the Conference, which is composed of the chief judges of 13 courts of appeals, a district judge from each of the 12 geographic circuits and the chief judge of the 'Court of International Trade. The Conference meets twice a year to consider administrative and policy issues affecting the court system and to make recommendations to Congress concerning legislation involving the Judicial Branch.

#### **Pilot Courts Participating**

##### Courts of Appeals:

Eighth Circuit

##### District Courts:

Southern District of California

District of Columbia

Southern District of Florida,

Southern District of Georgia

District of Idaho

Northern District of Illinois

District of Massachusetts

Northern District of Oklahoma

District of Utah

Southern District of West Virginia

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