



Supreme Court of Illinois

February 22, 2016

ILLINOIS SUPREME COURT ADOPTS POLICY FOR CAMERAS IN THE COURTROOM

Chief Justice Rita B. Garman announced on Monday that the Illinois Supreme Court has concluded its four-year pilot project permitting news cameras in Illinois courtrooms and has adopted a permanent Policy for Extended Media Coverage (EMC) in the Circuit Courts of Illinois.

The pilot project, which was launched by the Supreme Court on January 24, 2012, allowed the use of media cameras in certain courtrooms on an experimental basis. Since then, 15 judicial circuits have been approved to implement EMC, and more than 450 media requests have been made under the Policy.

Based on the success of the pilot project and the Court's continued goal of promoting greater transparency, accountability, and accessibility to the court system, the justices have amended the Policy to terminate its status as a pilot project and to allow each circuit court to decide whether it wishes to implement EMC.

"At every level of the judicial system, we do the people's work, and the people have an interest in observing how the judicial process functions," Chief Justice Garman said. "We are pleased with the success of the pilot project and with the great cooperation we have received from the media. It is time to make EMC more widely available."

As a pilot project, the process for obtaining Supreme Court approval to implement EMC was not standardized. Thus, the Supreme Court has also amended the Policy to include a standard application form to be submitted by the chief judge of a judicial circuit that has an interest in permitting news cameras in its courtrooms.

The new form requests information about the logistics of allowing cameras in the courtrooms of the applicant circuit, including details on proposed implementation dates, technological capabilities, and the court's media liaison function, as well as any administrative order, local rules, or policies related to extended media coverage.

The new application form will ensure consistency and efficiency in the process. It is designed to make the application and review process more uniform, minimize the need for the Court to request additional information from applying circuits, and ensure that judicial circuits that elect to implement EMC are fully prepared to permit cameras in the courtroom.

In addition to the new application form, the Court has created a new form for the submission of quarterly reports of EMC activity, so that the Court can monitor the success of the program and address any problems or concerns that may arise.

MORE

SC Amends Policy for Cameras in the Courtroom Add One

Since March 13, 2015, the Court has required participating circuits to submit quarterly reports on EMC activity, but the Policy did not set out a specific format for the reports. To ensure richer and more consistent reporting, the Court has created a three-part form to be used for the confidential quarterly reports.

First, the quarterly reports will contain aggregate information, including the number of EMC requests received, the types of coverage requested, the nature of the proceedings for which EMC coverage was sought, and the number of requests that were approved and the number denied.

Second, each circuit will also maintain and submit a log of EMC requests, including the case name and type of proceeding, the type of request, the name of the presiding judge, and whether and when the request was approved or denied.

Third, the quarterly report form invites the chief judges in participating circuits to share any observations, issues, or concerns that arose during that reporting quarter, as well as any suggestions that could help the Court improve the process.

"The new application and reporting forms were designed to provide a more efficient and uniform process in which chief judges can submit and the Court can review information related to extended media coverage," said Michael J. Tardy, director of the Administrative Office of the Illinois Courts. "Being able to thoroughly and timely review applications and reports aids the Court's tracking of the Policy, and determines whether any changes are needed to ensure the practice is working for courts and media alike."

Both the application form and the quarterly reporting form will be available on the Court's website and chief judges will have the option of submitting the forms electronically.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT: Bethany Krajelis, senior communications specialist
to the Illinois Supreme Court, at 312.793.0870.**