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**ILLINOIS SUPREME COURT APPROVES APPELLATE COURT
SETTLEMENT PROGRAM**

The Supreme Court of Illinois announced Monday approval of an experimental appellate court settlement program to provide an alternate method of resolving certain civil cases in Illinois.

The program will operate in the First Judicial District which consists of Cook County, and goes into effect January 1, 2005.

“The program is intended to give parties to an appeal an opportunity and forum to discuss their case, simplify or limit the issues, negotiate settlement and consider any matters that may aid in disposition of the appeal or resolution of the action or proceeding,” according to the new Supreme Court rule (Rule 310.1) establishing the program.

The program will be funded by an increase in appellate court filing and appearance fees. The new filing fee will be \$100—up from \$25—and \$75 of that amount will go toward funding the program. In addition, the attorney appearance fee will be increased from \$15 to \$50, with \$35 of that amount directed toward funding the new program.

Last session, the General Assembly authorized creation of a special fund in the State Treasury as a repository for the fees to fund the program. The special fund will be known as the Reviewing Court Alternative Dispute Resolution Fund.

No criminal cases and only some civil cases will be eligible for the settlement program. Civil cases excluded include juvenile court proceedings, adoption and paternity proceedings, contempt proceedings, decisions of the Illinois Industrial Commission and election contests, as well as some others.

Appellate judges or retired judges are likely to handle the settlement conferences in the First District.

Judge Alan J. Greiman, chair of the Executive Committee of the Illinois Appellate Court in the First District, said about 38 appellate courts in some 30 states, including the 7th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in Chicago, have similar programs.

“We look forward to it being successful here,” said Judge Greiman.