



# Supreme Court of Illinois

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## **SUPREME COURT APPROVES CAMERAS FOR COURTS IN KNOX COUNTY IN WEST CENTRAL ILLINOIS**

Chief Justice Thomas L. Kilbride of the Illinois Supreme Court and Circuit Chief Judge James Stewart of the 9<sup>th</sup> Judicial Circuit announced Thursday that Knox County will join 24 other Illinois counties in allowing news cameras and microphones in trial courtrooms under a pilot program approved by the Supreme Court earlier this year.

"Cameras and microphones in trial courtrooms have now expanded to one quarter of the counties in Illinois," Chief Justice Kilbride said. "This pilot project gives a real opportunity for citizens to see on their local newscasts how the judicial system works in Illinois.

"While participation continues to increase, the highest priority of the pilot project remains to balance carefully greater openness and access to our courts with dignity for the process and the guaranteed rights of all to a fair trial."

The Order is effective immediately.

Former Chief Judge Gregory McClintock, who retired from the bench earlier this month, made the initial application to participate in the pilot project. Judge James Stewart, who succeeded Judge McClintock as chief judge, affirmed the circuit's application.

The 9<sup>th</sup> Circuit is comprised of Fulton, Hancock, Henderson, Knox, McDonough and Warren counties, but for now Chief Judge Stewart asked that the experimental program be implemented only in Knox County as a model before the project is expanded to other counties in the circuit.

"Our judges in Knox County are eager to implement the Supreme Court policy on extended media coverage," Chief Judge Stewart said. "We look forward to having cameras and microphones in the courtroom so that residents will be able to see our judicial system in action, instead of relying on the 'reality-TV' type of shows that do not accurately portray how the justice system works."

The Supreme Court Order approving the 9<sup>th</sup> Circuit requires that a judge presiding over a proceeding in which cameras or audio are allowed must file a report with the chief judge of the circuit, the Chief Justice and the Supreme Court Justice in the district the Circuit is located.

**MORE**

## **Court Approves Cameras for 9<sup>th</sup> Judicial Circuit – Knox County Add One**

Chief Justice Kilbride announced on January 24 the Supreme Court's approval of an experimental program to allow news media cameras and audio in trial courtrooms.

The Supreme Court has allowed cameras to broadcast its own oral arguments, and those of the Illinois Appellate Court, since 1983. At that time, however, the court specifically rejected allowing news cameras during trial proceedings, and the issue made little headway until Chief Justice Kilbride and his fellow justices took another look.

The 14<sup>th</sup> Judicial Circuit in northwestern Illinois was the first to be approved for cameras. Chief Judge Jeffrey W. O'Connor of the 14<sup>th</sup> Circuit already has implemented a policy and cameras have been allowed in several proceedings there, including through the conclusion of the murder trial of Nicholas Sheley held in late September.

Knox County in the 9<sup>th</sup> Judicial Circuit joins McLean County in the 11<sup>th</sup> Judicial Circuit; DuPage County in the 18<sup>th</sup> Judicial Circuit; Alexander, Jackson, Johnson, Massac, Pope, Pulaski, Saline, Union and Williamson counties in the First Judicial Circuit; Boone and Winnebago counties in the 17<sup>th</sup> Judicial Circuit; Carroll, Jo Daviess, Lee, Ogle and Stephenson counties in the 15<sup>th</sup> Judicial Circuit; Madison County in the Third Judicial Circuit; Kankakee County in the 21<sup>st</sup> Judicial Circuit; and Henry, Mercer, Rock Island and Whiteside counties in the 14<sup>th</sup> Judicial Circuit where extended media coverage was approved earlier by the Supreme Court.

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