



Supreme Court of Illinois

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ILLINOIS SUPREME COURT APPROVES CAMERAS FOR KANE COUNTY

Chief Justice Thomas L. Kilbride of the Illinois Supreme Court and Chief Judge Judith Brawka of the 16th Judicial Circuit announced Tuesday that news cameras and microphones will be allowed in trial courtrooms in Kane County.

Kane becomes the 29th county and the 12th circuit in Illinois to participate in the pilot project allowing cameras in trial courtrooms.

"With the addition of Kane County, half of the Illinois Circuit Courts now participate in the Illinois Supreme Court's cameras in the courtroom pilot project," Chief Justice Kilbride said. "We appreciate Chief Judge Brawka and the 16th Circuit's willingness to test cameras in their courtrooms.

"Our hope is introducing cameras will give citizens greater access to their courts, yet still preserve the dignity of the judicial process and the guaranteed right to fair trials. We look forward to Kane County's results."

The order is effective immediately. The Sixteenth Judicial Circuit plans to implement the pilot project by Local Rule commencing Monday, June 10, 2013, along with an accompanying administrative General Order addressing use of electronic devices in the court room by the public.

Former 16th Circuit Chief Judge Robert Spence appointed a media committee to study cameras in the courtroom. The committee received input from attorneys, residents and members of the media while drafting local rules to supplement the Supreme Court's policy. After his appointment to the Illinois Appellate Court, Chief Judge Brawka continued to work diligently to further the work of the committee in determining how best to proceed.

"Appellate Judge Spence laid the foundation for the 16th Circuit to participate in the pilot project while he served as chief judge," said Supreme Court Justice Robert R. Thomas, whose Second Judicial District includes the judicial circuit. "Chief Judge Brawka continued to plan and prepare judges, attorneys and staff to be ready to take part in the program. As a result, people who'll watch or hear actual court proceedings will have a clearer picture of how the judicial process really works.

"The Sixteenth Judicial Circuit appreciates the opportunity to participate in the Illinois Supreme Court pilot program permitting extended media coverage in the courts," Chief Judge Brawka said. "Thanks to the efforts of the media committee in opening up the process for stakeholder and public input, the approved rules reflect reasonable accommodations for the involved parties.

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16th Circuit Approved for Extended Media Coverage Add One

"We will strive to continue to maintain fair and orderly court proceedings and look forward to the opportunity to contribute to a well-informed citizenry."

In applying for participation in the program, Chief Judge Brawka asked that the pilot project proceed only in the Kane County Courthouse in Geneva and the Kane County Judicial Center in St. Charles in order to provide a model before it is expanded to other branch court facilities in the Circuit.

One change the 16th Circuit has from other participating judicial circuits is that the media coordinator is required to provide written notice of the media's request for coverage of the case to the attorneys of record; parties appearing without counsel; and the judge presiding over the case. In the other circuits, the notice is carried out by the Clerk of the Court.

The Supreme Court Order approving the 16th 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 judicial district the Circuit is located.

In January 2012 the Illinois Supreme Court announced approval of a pilot project to allow news media cameras and audio in trial courtrooms in Illinois. Since then, 28 counties in 11 judicial circuits across Illinois have been participating in the pilot program, opening the trial courtrooms to news photographers and electronic news media to cover cases.

The 14th Judicial Circuit under Chief Judge Jeffrey W. O'Connor in northwestern Illinois was the first to be approved for cameras. Cameras have been allowed in several proceedings there, including the murder trial of Nicholas Sheley in September.

In DuPage County, the murder trial of Johnny Borizov concluded last week with camera and video coverage from Chicagoland media. The trial also had live coverage of several pre-trial hearings.

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 colleagues on the Court took another look.

Kane County in the 16th Circuit joins Lake County in the 19th Judicial Circuit; DeKalb and Kendall counties in the 23rd Judicial Circuit; Knox County in the Ninth Judicial Circuit; McLean County in the 11th Judicial Circuit; DuPage County in the 18th Judicial Circuit; Alexander, Jackson, Johnson, Massac, Pope, Pulaski, Saline, Union and Williamson counties in the First Judicial Circuit; Boone and Winnebago counties in the 17th Judicial Circuit; Carroll, Jo Daviess, Lee, Ogle and Stephenson counties in the 15th Judicial Circuit; Madison County in the Third Judicial Circuit; Kankakee County in the 21st Judicial Circuit; and Henry, Mercer, Rock Island and Whiteside counties in the 14th Judicial Circuit where extended media coverage was approved by the Supreme Court.

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