

# INFORMATION and GUIDELINES

for Criminal Practice before

The Honorable Janet T. Neff  
United States District Judge

United States District Court  
for the Western District of Michigan

Honorable Janet T. Neff  
401 Ford Federal Building  
110 Michigan St., N.W.  
Grand Rapids, MI 49503-2363

Revised: January 2012

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## DIRECTORY

HONORABLE JANET T. NEFF  
United States District Judge

United States District Court  
401 Ford Federal Building  
110 Michigan St., N.W.  
Grand Rapids, MI 49503-2363  
Telephone: (616) 456-6774  
FAX: (616) 456-6947

Judicial Assistant - Chris Bockheim

Case Manager - Rick Wolters

Law Clerks - Kathleen Geiger  
Rita Buitendorp

Court Reporter - Kathy Anderson  
Telephone: (616) 914-2384

United States District Court Clerk's Office  
Tracey Cordes, Clerk  
399 Ford Federal Building  
110 Michigan St., N.W.  
Grand Rapids, MI 49503-2363  
Telephone: (616) 456-2381

Judge Neff's office is open Monday through Friday from 8:30 AM to 5:00 PM.

## I. Calendar

The Case Manager is in charge of all calendar matters. If you need a scheduling change, you must first reach agreement with opposing counsel and then contact the Case Manager. In situations where an opposing attorney will not consent to the proposed change, the party requesting it should send a letter to the Case Manager, stating reasons for the change. It is incumbent upon the party requesting a change to notify the opposing party of the request and, if granted, the new date. Judge Neff's Case Manager, Rick Wolters, may be contacted by calling (616) 732-2746 or by emailing [rick\\_wolters@miwd.uscourts.gov](mailto:rick_wolters@miwd.uscourts.gov).

Do not contact the Judge or her law clerks to request a scheduling change.

## II. Motions

### A. Dispositive

Dispositive motions shall be filed and heard in accordance with W.D. Mich. LCrR 47.1. If dispositive motions are based on supporting documents such as depositions or answers to interrogatories, then only those excerpts that are relevant to the motion shall be filed. This Court will hear oral argument on dispositive motions where requested, and where it appears that argument will be helpful. To request oral argument on a motion, state "ORAL ARGUMENT REQUESTED" in the caption and the heading of the brief.

In cases where oral argument is heard and counsel wishes to project evidence on the monitors in the courtroom, projection of exhibits is accomplished by using the electronic evidence presentation equipment in the courtroom. The evidence presentation allows for the projection of evidence on various monitors located at the bench, the witness stand, the lectern, the jury box, and the counsel tables. This technology eliminates the cumbersome process of handling paper evidence. Counsel planning to use the equipment are encouraged to contact the Court's IT department well in advance of their court proceeding to inquire about training and practice sessions. Practice sessions and testing of the equipment must occur prior to the day of a scheduled court appearance. You may contact the Court's IT department by sending an e-mail to [courttech@miwd.uscourts.gov](mailto:courttech@miwd.uscourts.gov) or by calling (616) 456-2523. Information concerning the features of the system are available at the court's website: [www.miwd.uscourts.gov](http://www.miwd.uscourts.gov) (click on *Courtroom Technology* link). *Counsel is also advised to notify chambers – in advance of the hearing – of its intentions to use technology resources in the courtroom.*

B. Non-Dispositive

Non-dispositive motions shall be filed in accordance with W.D. Mich. LCrR 47.2. They will be referred to a Magistrate in Grand Rapids, Michigan, pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 636(b)(1)(A). In accordance with 28 U.S.C. § 471 *et seq.*, it is the policy of this Court to prohibit the consideration of discovery motions unless accompanied by a certification that the moving party has made a reasonable and good faith effort to reach agreement with opposing counsel on the matters set forth in the motion. *See* W.D. Mich. LCrR 12.4.

### **III. Ex Parte Applications**

Ex parte applications are disfavored and should be avoided except in the most extreme circumstances. Where such cases arise, the party submitting the application must state in the application that opposing counsel has been contacted in an attempt to resolve the situation through normal motion practice and why such an option is unsatisfactory, or, why contacting the opposing party would be inappropriate under the circumstances. W.D. Mich. LCrR 12.4.

### **IV. Orders**

All proposed orders should be filed via ECF.

### **V. Transcripts of Court Proceedings**

If a transcript of a court proceeding is desired, Judge Neff's Court Reporter, Kathy Anderson, should be contacted directly, either by telephone (616) 914-2384 or by e-mail, [kathy\\_anderson@miwd.uscourts.gov](mailto:kathy_anderson@miwd.uscourts.gov) and a confirming letter sent.

### **VI. Stipulations**

All stipulations should be submitted by electronic filing for the judge's approval with a proposed order, or the stipulation itself can include the phrase "IT IS SO ORDERED" with a place for a signature and date.

### **VII. Guilty Plea**

If the defendant anticipates entering a guilty plea, the plea should be scheduled before the duty magistrate judge one week prior to the date of the final pretrial conference. If the signed plea agreement has been filed, but the defendant has not entered a guilty plea at least five (5) days before

the final pretrial conference, counsel remains obligated to timely file the final pretrial conference documents.

### **VIII. Motions for Departure or Variance/Sentencing Memoranda**

Not less than seven (7) days before the date set for sentencing, any party seeking an upward or downward departure under the Sentencing Guidelines or a variance based on the application of the factors set forth in 18 U.S.C. § 3553(a), or both, must file and serve a separate and clearly captioned motion seeking such relief. All sentencing memoranda, including memoranda in support of a motion for departure or variance, shall be filed by the same date. Copies of all motions and sentencing memoranda shall be served upon the probation officer. Counsel is strongly encouraged to file a sentencing memorandum in all cases, unless the case is of a routine nature. Any correspondence received by chambers from defendant or from others with regard to defendant's character, will not be made a part of the record, nor be considered at the time of sentencing unless submitted on behalf of defendant by a CM/ECF filing and attached to counsel's sentencing memorandum. See attached Administrative Order No. 07-031.

### **IX. Final Pretrial Conference**

#### **A. Submissions**

1. At least **five (5) days** prior to the final pretrial conference, each party shall file:
  - a. Trial briefs (optional with defendant).
  - b. A joint statement of the case and statement of the elements of the charged offenses. Unless the case is very complex, the joint statement of the case should not exceed one paragraph. If the parties are unable to agree on the language of a joint statement of the case, then separate, concise, non-argumentative statements shall be filed. The purpose of the joint statement of the case is to summarize the nature of the case. [In a jury trial, the statement(s) of the case will be read to the prospective jurors during jury selection. The elements of the charged offenses will be included in the preliminary jury instructions.]
  - c. Proposed voir dire questions in jury trials. The Court will conduct voir dire, taking into account questions proposed by the attorneys that have been submitted for review before the final pretrial conference. Counsel is advised to review the standard voir dire questions posed by the Court as stated in Attachment 2. Counsel should submit only voir dire questions not included in

this Court's standard voir dire questions. Attorneys may be permitted limited additional voir dire.

2. The parties are required to submit a copy of the joint statement of the case, statement of the elements of the charged offenses, and proposed voir dire questions in jury trials compatible with Word Perfect by e-mail to Judge Neff's Judicial Assistant, Chris Bockheim at [chris\\_bockheim@miwd.uscourts.gov](mailto:chris_bockheim@miwd.uscourts.gov).

B. Attendance

1. Counsel shall be present one-half hour prior to the final pretrial conference for an in-chambers conference.
2. The attendance of defendant at the final pretrial conference is required.

C. Motions

1. All pending motions shall be heard at the time of the final pretrial. Counsel shall refer to the Criminal Case Management Order deadline for all Motions in Limine.

D. Matters to be Addressed:

1. Status of any plea negotiations.
2. Jury selection procedure.
3. Number of witnesses expected to be called and estimated length of trial.
4. Identity of all expert witnesses, and agree (if possible) upon the qualifications of expert witnesses.
5. Stipulations of uncontested facts.
6. Any evidentiary or other legal issues that may arise during the course of trial.
7. Admissibility of exhibits (if possible). The parties shall number and label their exhibits for identification prior to the final pretrial conference. Any party intending to introduce into evidence summaries pursuant to FED. R. EVID. 1006 must make available at or before the final pretrial conference copies of all such summaries and duplicates of the supporting documents summarized.
8. Jury instructions. This Court uses the Sixth Circuit's Criminal Pattern Jury Instructions (West Publishing).

## **X. Trial**

### **A. Courtroom Decorum**

The purpose of this paragraph is to describe certain basic principles concerning courtroom behavior and decorum. The requirements stated in this rule are minimal, not all-inclusive, and are intended to emphasize and supplement, not supplant or limit, the ethical obligations of counsel under the Rules of Professional Conduct or the time honored customs of experienced trial counsel. These requirements apply to all counsel and all persons at counsel table.

1. This Court expects all attorneys and parties to act with courtesy and respect toward everyone in the courtroom. Avoid disparaging personal remarks or acrimony toward opposing counsel and remain wholly detached from any ill feeling between the litigants or witnesses. Address all remarks to the Court, not to opposing counsel. Refer to all persons, including witnesses, other counsel and the parties, by their surnames and not by their first or given names.
2. Please be careful with the courtroom furniture. For example, do not put briefcases with metal feet on the tables.
3. Stand near the lectern while examining a witness and making statements to the jury, except that counsel may approach the clerk's desk or the witness for purposes of handling or tendering exhibits. The recording system picks up voices only when they are speaking into a microphone.
4. Offers of, or requests for, a stipulation should be made privately — not within the hearing of the jury.
5. Counsel shall admonish all persons at counsel table that gestures, facial expressions, audible comments, and the like, as manifestations of approval or disapproval, during the testimony of witnesses or at any other time, are prohibited.
6. Cell phones or other electronic devices shall be in silent mode or turned off. The Court reserves the right to take appropriate action for violation of this policy.
7. Water is provided at counsel table and may be brought into the courtroom in appropriate containers. No other beverages are allowed.
8. Gum chewing and eating are prohibited in the courtroom.

B. Daily Schedule and Time Frames

Trial begins at 8:30 a.m. and recesses between 3:00 - 3:30 p.m. There will be a break mid-morning and early afternoon and a lunch break. This schedule is subject to the other demands of the docket. Counsel must have enough witnesses to fill up the day.

C. Recesses

At each recess, outside the presence of the jury, counsel will be asked if there is anything that should be raised before the next session. Counsel may not be able to anticipate everything, but many matters should and will be taken up during the recesses.

D. Submissions for Jury Trial

1. The parties shall jointly file the following not later than **five (5) days** prior to the trial:

- a. Joint proposed jury instructions. Counsel shall submit **one joint** set of instructions. This Court uses the Sixth Circuit's Criminal Pattern Jury Instructions (West Publishing). A copy of these instructions is available on the Court's website ([www.miwd.uscourts.gov](http://www.miwd.uscourts.gov)) under the Attorney Information tab. You will notice certain instructions contain bracketed language and/or blank lines. The bracketed language represents optional language you may or may not want to include. If you want to include the language, please remove the brackets. If you do not want the bracketed language, please delete it altogether. In addition, the blank lines represent names or phrases which must be completed by you before you submit it to the Court. No instruction submitted to the Court shall contain brackets or blank lines.

Pattern instructions with no changes may be submitted by number, using the numbering system of the pattern instructions. Pattern instructions with changes, such as removal or inclusion of bracketed language and filled in blanks, shall be submitted in their entirety, one instruction per page. If you would like to add language to a pattern instruction, or have the Court consider additional instructions not included in this set, you may do so *provided* you indicate the source of the language or instruction you propose. The parties must make every reasonable effort to agree on the substantive instructions stating the elements of the crime.

Directions for completing these jury instructions are as follows:

- (1) List by number the instructions to be used with no changes.

- (2) Of those instructions to be used with bracketed language or blanks, please delete the brackets, leaving the language intact, or delete the bracketed language altogether. Fill in all blanks. Please submit these instructions in full text, one instruction per page.
- (3) If you would like to change language on a pattern instruction, or submit additional instructions, please submit each instruction in full text, one instruction per page, and indicate the source of the additional language or instruction. Indicate objections, if any, to opposing counsel's proposed instructions, with a summary of the reasons for each objection. Place each objection at the bottom of the specific instruction page.
- (4) **Instructions must be submitted in the order which you propose they be given to the jury.**

b. Joint proposed jury verdict form(s).

2. The parties are required to submit a copy of the joint proposed jury instructions and the joint proposed verdict form(s) compatible with Word Perfect by e-mail to Judge Neff's Judicial Assistant, Chris Bockheim at [chris\\_bockheim@miwd.uscourts.gov](mailto:chris_bockheim@miwd.uscourts.gov).

#### E. Jury Selection

1. Counsel shall be present for an in-chambers conference one-half hour prior to the start of jury selection.
2. A jury will generally be selected as follows:
  - a. The courtroom clerk will call 12 names for the jury panel, plus one or two names for alternates, and such persons will be seated in the order they are called. Alternates will sit in seats 7 and 14.
  - b. The Court will conduct voir dire, taking into account questions proposed by the attorneys that have been submitted for review before the final pretrial conference. Attorneys may be permitted limited additional voir dire. The Court may sua sponte, in its discretion, excuse a juror for cause.
  - c. Attorney challenges for cause will be heard at side bar. The Court will excuse any prospective juror for cause where appropriate, replace the excused juror, and the process will be repeated.
  - d. When the Court has determined that none of the prospective jurors in the jury box should be dismissed for cause, the parties may exercise their peremptory

challenges. *See* 28 U.S.C. §1870. Counsel will be given a sheet of paper with the appropriate number of challenges identified.

(1) In the first round of challenges, the government will write its peremptory challenges and give the paper to defense counsel who will then write defendant's peremptory challenges. After defense counsel writes defendant's peremptory challenges, the paper is returned to the Court. The Court will then excuse the challenged jurors.

(2) The challenged jurors will be replaced, and the process repeated in the same manner except defense counsel will exercise its peremptory challenges first during the second and all subsequent even-numbered rounds.

(3) The process repeats itself until there is a jury.

(4) No backstrikes are permitted.

(5) In a case with multiple defendants, the Court may allow additional peremptory challenges. *See* 28 U.S.C. §1870.

3. Alternate juror seats are designated before jury selection for purposes of exercising peremptory challenges, but the jurors will not be informed of the designation until just prior to deliberation. FED R. CRIM. P. 24

#### F. Exhibits

1. **Six notebooks** with the exhibits shall be prepared before trial. The exhibits should be divided and tabbed with the exhibit numbers or letters. A list of the exhibits on a form similar to Attachment 1 attached to these Guidelines should be located in the front of the notebooks. One set of notebooks is for the Court, one set for the Court's law clerk, one set is for the courtroom clerk, one set is for the use of the witnesses, and there should be a set of notebooks to be used by each party or counsel for the parties. When bringing a document to the attention of the Court and witnesses, counsel asking the questions should refer to the notebook volume and exhibit number.
2. The exhibits shall be clearly identified. In cases where counsel wishes to project evidence on the monitors in the courtroom, projection of exhibits is accomplished by using the electronic evidence presentation equipment in the courtroom. The evidence presentation allows for the projection of evidence on various monitors located at the bench, the witness stand, the lectern, the jury box, and the counsel tables. This technology eliminates the cumbersome process of handling paper evidence. Counsel planning to use the equipment are encouraged to contact the Court's IT department well in advance of their court proceeding to inquire about training and practice

sessions. Practice sessions and testing of the equipment must occur prior to the day of a scheduled court appearance. You may contact the Court's IT department by sending an e-mail to [courttech@miwd.uscourts.gov](mailto:courttech@miwd.uscourts.gov) or by calling (616) 456-2523. Information concerning the features of the system are available at the court's website: [www.miwd.uscourts.gov](http://www.miwd.uscourts.gov) (click on *Courtroom Technology* link). *Counsel is also advised to notify chambers – in advance of the hearing – of its intentions to use technology resources in the courtroom.*

3. As a general rule, all evidentiary and demonstrative exhibits must be shown to opposing counsel prior to the beginning of trial. Do not wait until the witness is on the stand to show these items to opposing counsel.
4. Offer exhibits into evidence as soon as the foundation has been laid. Often, when counsel waits until the end of the examination or the case to make the offer, the witness has completely discussed the document during testimony and the document is not in evidence.
5. Offer exhibits that have identical foundation requirements in a group. It wastes time to lay a separate foundation on several identical kinds of documents, showing the witness one at a time. If they are all the same type of document, show the witness exhibits 1 through 10, ask the witness to identify the exhibits and lay a foundation (e.g., checking account statements of John Doe for the months January through June 2001). If the parties have stipulated to the admissibility of exhibits before trial, then those exhibits will be admitted as a group after opening statements and before the first witness is called. These stipulated exhibits can then be referenced without the necessity of establishing a foundation.




## ATTACHMENT 2 - STANDARD VOIR DIRE QUESTIONS

1. Do you have any health, hearing, vision or other special disability or problem that would make serving as a member of this jury difficult or impossible?
2. This trial is expected to take \_\_\_ days. Does that prospect present a scheduling problem for anyone?
3. Have you heard or read anything about this case?
4. Is there anything about the case itself that would make it difficult for you to be fair and impartial?
5. Do you know any of the attorneys or witnesses?
6. Will your relationship with anyone named preclude your participation on this jury?
7. Have you ever had a dispute with the federal government?
8. Have you ever served as a juror in a criminal or civil case or as a member of a grand jury in either federal or state court?
9. Have you ever been involved, in any court, in a criminal matter that concerned yourself, any member of your family, or a close friend either as a defendant, a witness, or a victim?
10. Do you have any training or employment in the legal field?
11. Have you, any member of your family, or any close friend ever been employed by a law enforcement agency?
12. Because this is a criminal case, each defendant is presumed innocent. Do you understand and accept this basic principle of American law? Can you abide by this rule?
13. In a criminal case such as this, the jury decides whether the government has proven its case against each defendant. Is there anyone who, for religious, moral, ethical or other reasons, believes he or she could not perform this duty?
14. The government bears the burden of proving a defendant's guilt "beyond a reasonable doubt." This is a heavier burden of proof than the proof required in a civil case. Do you accept that this is the law, and will you have any difficulty abiding by it?

15. Do you also realize that the term “reasonable doubt,” which will be used several times throughout the course of this trial, does not mean “beyond all doubt,” and that the law does not require a person to be proved guilty to a mathematical certainty?
16. At the end of the trial, you will be given instructions on the law that applies to this case. Will you abide by the law and apply the law to the facts of this case? If any of my instructions are in conflict with your own beliefs or if you personally disagree with my instructions, will you set aside your own beliefs and agree to abide by the instructions as given?
17. Will you be able to render a verdict after all the evidence and testimony are before you, the lawyers have made their arguments, and I have instructed you on the law?

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT  
FOR THE WESTERN DISTRICT OF MICHIGAN

FILED  
07 APR 19 PM 1:24  
RECEIVED  
CLERK  
WESTERN DISTRICT OF MICH  
BY: 

RE: CHARACTER REFERENCE LETTERS  
\_\_\_\_\_ /

Administrative Order

No. 07-03  
1

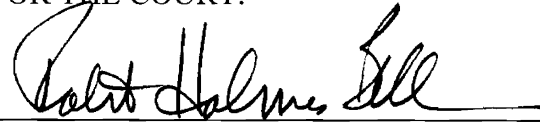
WHEREAS, the Court receives numerous character reference letters related to sentencing in criminal cases, and

WHEREAS, the Court has determined that it is necessary that those letters be filed in a timely fashion so that the parties can be prepared for sentencing;

IT IS HEREBY ORDERED that, absent good cause, character reference letters shall be filed with this Court at least seven (7) days prior to the date set for sentencing.

DATED: April 19, 2007

FOR THE COURT:

  
ROBERT HOLMES BELL, Chief Judge  
United States District Court  
Western District of Michigan