

**NEWS RELEASE****Judicial Conference Adopts Courtroom Sharing Policy As Latest Cost-Saver**

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**September 16, 2008** — In furtherance of its aggressive cost containment efforts, the Judicial Conference of the United States today adopted a policy for senior trial judges to share courtrooms in new construction. In addition, the Conference took steps to develop and implement a courtroom sharing policy for magistrate judges, to study the feasibility of and develop an appropriate policy for sharing courtrooms by non-senior district judges in large courthouses, and to study courtroom use in bankruptcy courts, and if the results warrant, develop a sharing policy for those courtrooms.

The Conference's Committee on Court Administration and Case Management, which proposed the courtroom use recommendations to

the Conference, reported that "the new policies strike the appropriate balance between the Judiciary's fundamental responsibility of ensuring the fair and efficient administration of justice and the general governmental responsibility to be good stewards of the taxpayers' money."

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A courtroom use analysis was requested by a House of Representatives subcommittee, and the comprehensive study was conducted by the Federal Judicial Center. The U.S. Courts Design Guide (Design Guide) policy changes adopted today apply to new courthouse construction and additional courtrooms in existing buildings.

In addition to these changes, the Conference previously had approved a comprehensive review of the courts' Design Guide, which included a reduction in the space allotted to chambers, clerks' offices and other court entities; entered into an agreement with the General Services Administration that will ensure consistency in the calculation of rents; and placed caps on annual increases in rent.

Today the Conference also adopted a pair of significant changes in the pay system used for most federal judiciary employees, steps that also should result in Judiciary cost savings. Specifically, the Conference approved 40 new position benchmarks, job titles, and classification levels for the Court Personnel System (CPS), the compensation structure for about two-thirds of the federal Judiciary's employees. In recommending the change, the Conference's Committee on Judicial Resources said, "The current job duties and responsibilities performed by court employees will be more accurately reflected than at any time in the last 15 years."

The Conference also altered the salary progression policy and performance management guidelines. Both salary-related measures flow from a Court Compensation Study begun in 2005 to "explore fair and reasonable opportunities to limit future compensation costs." In September 2007, the Conference approved modernizing the benchmarks and altering the CPS salary funding and progression policy. Today's action approved several components of

the previous two recommendations.

In 2004, the Judicial Conference approved a comprehensive strategy for controlling future costs in the Judiciary. Subsequently, the Conference approved budget caps through fiscal year 2017 for the Judiciary's major accounts. Cost-containment strategies, in addition to those affecting compensation, have been implemented, including a temporary space moratorium and a revision of the U.S. Courts Design Guide to control growth in space rental requirements, the aggregation of IT servers to eliminate duplication, and the sharing of administrative functions in the courts.

The Judicial Conference is the principal policy-making body for the federal court system. The Chief Justice serves as its presiding officer. It is composed of the chief judges of the 13 courts of appeals, a district judge from each of the 12 geographic circuits, and the chief judge of the Court of International Trade. The Conference meets twice a year to consider administrative and policy issues affecting the court system, and to make recommendations to Congress concerning legislation involving the Judicial Branch.

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