

United States District Court
Southern District of Indiana

Chambers of
Chief Judge Richard L. Young

310 United States Courthouse
Evansville, Indiana 47708
(812) 434-6444

May 13, 2016

Members of the Southern District of Indiana Bar:

I am pleased to announce that the United States District Court for the Southern District of Indiana has released Proposed Local Rule 87 for a thirty-day period of public comment. Proposed Local Rule 87, which is entitled Representation of Indigent Litigants, implements a new pro bono program that is designed to address the urgent and ever-increasing need to provide counsel for indigent litigants in certain civil cases.

To date, the court has relied upon attorneys who have voluntarily registered for its Civil Trial Assistance Panel and its Mediation Assistance Program to provide representation to indigent civil litigants. While these attorneys have generously answered the court's calls for assistance and provided invaluable service, the need for pro bono counsel has significantly outpaced the court's ability to recruit counsel using its existing programs. Given that approximately fifty percent of the filings in this district last year were made by pro se litigants, the court has found it necessary to join the other district courts around the country that have instituted mandatory pro bono appointment programs.

It is the court's goal to craft a program that will fulfill the needs of the district without placing an undue burden on the bar. I believe that Local Rule 87 strikes that balance. It creates a **Voluntary Panel** that will consist of attorneys who are willing to volunteer to represent indigent litigants in civil cases and an **Obligatory Panel** from which the court will recruit counsel if no attorney from the Voluntary Panel is available to appear in a given case. Recognizing that appointments made under Local Rule 87 might involve areas of the law with which an attorney might not be familiar, the court is working to create resources to assist volunteer and recruited counsel, including a document bank, continuing legal education programming and materials, and access to an attorneys advisor with expertise in the area of law that may be the subject of recruitment. Updated information regarding these resources will be made available on the court's website.

Local Rule 87 is a reflection of this court's commitment to try to do justice in all cases. In his Letter from a Birmingham Jail, Martin Luther King, Jr., said, "Injustice

anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.” Those attorneys who represent indigent litigants pursuant to Local Rule 87 will be providing a valuable service to their client, the court, and the larger system of justice. They will also be fulfilling the Oath they took when they were admitted to the Bar of Indiana, which states:

I will never reject, from any consideration personal to myself, the cause of the defenseless, the oppressed or those who cannot afford adequate legal assistance; so help me God.

Your continued support of the court’s pro bono efforts are greatly appreciated. We look forward to seeing you in court.

Yours very truly,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "R. Young", with a large, stylized flourish at the end.

RICHARD L. YOUNG,
Chief Judge