

United States District Court

Northern District of California

San Francisco, California 94102

March 22, 1990

Chambers of
Robert F. Peckham
United States District Judge

M E M O R A N D U M

**TO: MEMBERS OF THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON CIVIL JUSTICE
REFORM ACT OF 1990**

FROM: BOB PECKHAM

The Chief Justice and Chairman Biden tentatively plan to meet during the week of April 2. Larry Averill, the Administrative Assistant to the Chief Justice, has two questions for us:

1. Where is there agreement on S.2027 with minor changes?
2. What is a better way to attain Senator Biden's objectives in a way that will preserve his credibility?

RFP:ojm

c: Chief Judge Charles Clark
Magistrate Wayne Brazil
L. Ralph Meham
James E. Macklin
Robert Feidler
Karen K. Siegel

AGENDA FOR MEETING, MARCH 23, 9:00 AM EST

1. What alternatives do we wish to pursue. Wayne Brazil has prepared since yesterday the attached memorandum (Attachment 1) to assist us. We have already received the March 13 draft of a staff alternative. See Bob Feidler's fax.

2. Should we ask for professional assistance for the subcommittee?
 - (a) Suggestion that a professional be found for the duration.

 - (b) Wayne Brazil's availability for most of April.
((a) and (b) are not mutually exclusive.)

3. What schedule shall we set for ourselves, and when shall we next meet?

I am enclosing for your information a copy of a memorandum from Chief Judge Oakes (Attachment 2). I am also enclosing a copy of the last draft (3/12/90) on case management of the Federal Courts Study Committee (Attachment 3). The Committee met on March 13, and I have been told the final version is close to the 3/12/90 draft. That is good news. It is closer to what is now the Judicial Conference's view on case management.

General comments/suggestions for agenda items for 3/23/90 meeting:

1. Remind committee that we need Biden for other bills.
2. Should part of the package we propose to Biden include a commitment by the Judicial Conference to have the Advisory Committee on Civil Rules take action at its meeting early this June on the following:
 - a. amending Rule 16 to include much of what the bill would require courts to do at the discovery-case management conference.
 - b. amending Rule 16 to impose new duties on counsel to meet and confer prior to the initial Rule 16 conference in order to come up with a discovery-case management plan of their own.
 - c. amending the discovery rules to require counsel, at the time they file their client's complaint or answer, and before they conduct any formal discovery, to (1) identify all persons with relevant knowledge, and (2) disclose all documents that support the positions their client takes in its complaint or answer.

At a minimum, we must be sure that Chief Justice Rehnquist knows that the Advisory Committee has on its agenda consideration of the items covered in paragraphs b. and c., above.

We also should remind Chief Justice Rehnquist and Senator Biden that less than 2 years ago, in the Judicial Improvements and Access to Justice Act of 1988 (most provisions effective in mid-1989), Congress formally increased the amount of time that must elapse between the date that the Conference submits proposed changes in the rules to Congress and the date such rules can become effective (May 1 to December 1). This reflects Congress' judgment that more time is needed for consideration of such matters by the public. See 28 U.S.C. §2074.

3. Should part of the package of proposals we make to Biden include a commitment by the Judicial Conference to conduct intensive experiments with different approaches to cutting costs and delay? If so, how should such experiments be set up? Should we commit to experimenting, among other things, with a tracking system like the one proposed in the bill? If so, in which court or courts?
4. I fear that the March 13 draft of an alternative bill would do little to address the central problem as perceived by Biden: reducing costs incurred by the users of the system. The March 13 draft would compel only those courts with serious delay problems to take any action, but cost and delay are not coterminous problems and costs (to users) can be a serious issue even in courts whose dockets are relatively current.

ITEM BY ITEM RESPONSE TO BIDEN BILL

Section 471:

(a)(1) Within 12 months, each district court shall develop a civil justice expense and delay reduction plan.

We agree.

This first paragraph is acceptable without change except:

(1) we do not want such plans to be "in accordance with this chapter" as it is currently written.

(2) This paragraph says the plans shall apply to all civil proceedings. It makes sense to address all civil proceedings in such plans, including things like student loan collection cases and social security matters, but such matters should be treated very differently from other civil cases. For example, such matters should not be subject to the same kind of scheduling order requirements as are other (more mainstream) cases, and there is no need for Article III judges to handle the early stages of such matters.

(a)(2) We agree that local advisory groups should be appointed, that they should be representative, and that they should formulate proposals about what the local plans should contain. *There should be at least two additional district judges.*

Such groups should not be given the power, however, to dictate the contents of the plans. Rather, ultimate authority to determine the contents of the plans should remain in the hands of the district court (by majority vote of the active article III judges).

We could accept statutory language that makes it clear that each district court must adopt some plan (to insure that the judges don't reject the proposals of the advisory group, then do nothing).

Could we accept statutory language that required the district court to set forth reasons for rejecting or changing proposals made by the advisory body?

Could we accept statutory language that required the district court to explain why it adopted the various

components of its plan, or how it thought those components could contribute to reducing the problem of cost or delay?

(a) (3) Should the plans be implemented by local rule?

28 USC sec. 2071 imposes procedural requirements for adopting local rules, including periods for public comment. Could district courts comply with these procedures and still complete the adoption of their plans within 12 months?

Should the statute say what procedure the court should use when it receives public comment on its proposed plan? Or how much time each court should be given to consider and respond to such comments?

Section 471 (b): Can we accept a statute that forces each district court to include some items in its plan? Does the answer to this question depend in part on the nature of the items each court would be forced to include in its plan?

As written, the bill would force each district to include in its plan the following items. For each item I suggest a position or a modification.

(1)&(2): We cannot accept the system of differentiated case management that is set forth in paragraphs (1) and (2) of sec. 471(b).

We cannot accept the notion that every court must set up a series of tracks, each with its own distinct procedures and timeframes, and that every civil case must be assigned to a track at the time of filing.

Could the Judicial Conference commit to launching intensive experiments with this kind of tracking system in 2-5 courts?

In such experiments, should track assignment decisions be made by a track coordinator (clerk), or by the assigned judge?

When should the track assignment decision be made? At the time of filing? At the initial Rule 16 conference? Not until the case is "at issue"?

Instead of the track system set forth in the bill, could we accept statutory language that required each plan to

include measures that would insure that:

1. a judicial officer assesses every civil case within a certain period after it is filed and either makes judgments about what that case needs (time for and nature of discovery, times for motions, trial date, etc.) or fixes a time by which such determinations will be made.

In such a system, the judge could be required, within a specified time, to enter an order in each case that set forth a pretrial plan that was tailored to meet the particular needs of that case, and in each such plan the judge could be required to address specifically discovery, motions, settlement, and ADR.

Judges also could be required in each such plan to fix the time frame for discovery, motions, settlement negotiations, ADR, and trial.

2. the progress toward disposition of each case is monitored and reported at fixed periods to the assigned judge.

(b) (3): We could accept a mandatory discovery-case management conference in all but exempted classes of cases (expedited), as long as the conference could be by telephone or in person, and as long as individual courts were given the discretion to permit magistrates to preside at such conferences, after considering the views on this issue of the local advisory group.

Courts should not be required to hold these conferences within 45 days of the first appearance by the first appearing defendant. Rather, courts should be required to hold such conferences within some period after the case is at issue, or after the complaint is filed, unless the court makes a determination that the conference would be more productive if held outside the presumptive time frame and enters an order setting forth why the conference should not be held within the time frame and fixes a date certain for that conference.

Who should set the presumptive time frames for such conferences? Should they be set through the rules committee process? by local rule, after inputs from the local advisory groups?

or by Congress?

Should we go farther than the bill in its present form by placing some of the responsibility for such case development planning on the lawyers? This could be done by requiring counsel, prior to the discovery-case management conference, to meet and confer and to formulate their own detailed plans for scheduling, focusing, and limiting discovery, and for scheduling motions and settlement negotiations. See Local Rule 6 from the Central District of California and my proposed rule for Informal Information Exchange and Formal Discovery Planning.

We also might propose a rule, akin to rules being considered by the Advisory Committee on Civil Rules, that would require counsel to disclose names of persons with relevant knowledge and documents that support their positions in the case at the time they file their complaint or answer and before they conduct any formal discovery. Significantly, such disclosures would take place before the first discovery-case management conference. Such a rule could make these conferences much more productive.

The bill would require the judicial host of the conference to do the following things:

[before discussing these, we should address the fundamental question of who should determine what matters must be covered in these conferences? Rules Committee process? Local Rules, after inputs from local advisory groups? or Congress?]

(A) explore the parties' receptivity to settlement.

We agree that this should be addressed in all such conferences.

(B) identify the principal issues and consider whether they should be addressed in stages or bifurcated.

We agree that these matters should be covered in all such conferences.

- (C) prepare a discovery schedule and plan, including limits and controls.

We agree that these matters should be covered in all such conferences, but we do not agree that the schedule and controls should be in conformity with pre-set systems for categories of cases.

- (D) require an attorney with authority to participate in the conference and permit participation by phone except in complex cases.

We agree, but recommend more flexibility in deciding whether participation may be by phone even in complex cases.

- (E) fix the time to file, hear, and decide motions.

We agree that the time to file motions should be fixed at such conferences, but it is not feasible to fix the times when they will be heard or the times by which they will be decided.

We do not agree that the judge should be required to fix the dates for filing motions in conformity with pre-set time frames that have been adopted for entire categories of cases.

- (F) fix the dates for additional conferences and the final pretrial conference.

We agree.

- (G) fix the date for trial.

We agree (even for complex cases).

- (H) decide whether and how to use a magistrate.

We agree that this subject should be addressed at this initial conference and that in very complex cases it would be desirable to have the magistrate present at this conference.

We also agree that if a magistrate is to be used, the judge should enter an order specifying what the magistrate is to do (the boundaries on the magistrate's authority are fixed already by statute, 28 U.S.C. 636, and Rule 72.

(I) in complex cases, calendar a series of monitoring conferences.

We agree that at least the first in such a series of conferences should be calendared at this first conference,

but we do not agree that all courts should be prohibited from having magistrates preside over some such monitoring conferences.

(b) (4) we agree that procedures that consume fewer judicial resources should be followed in simple or routinized cases, and that a target date for disposition of such cases should be set early in their pretrial life. At least in some classes of cases, however, (like student loan cases), it may not be necessary to fix dates for completion of discovery and for filing motions. Many such cases involve no discovery and are terminated by default judgments or rulings on early motions for summary judgment.

(b) (5) dates for trial should be set at the discovery/case management conference.

We agree.

(b) (6) We do not agree that presumptive time limits for completion of discovery should be fixed for different tracks.

Unless a great many different tracks were established, the presumptive limits would not put sufficient pressure on counsel to conclude discovery promptly. A large "standard" track would offer more time to complete discovery than many cases will need. We can put more time pressure on attorneys in individual cases by fixing limits that are dictated by the needs of the individual cases.

(6) (B) (i):

We agree that deadlines should be extended only by order of the court on good cause shown, but we do not feel that a showing that more discovery will not delay the trial should constitute "good cause" for extending the discovery cut-off date.

(6) (B) (ii):

We agree that requests for extensions of discovery deadlines should be signed by the clients as well as lead counsel.

(6) (B) (iii):

We believe it would be healthier in complex cases to set a final discovery cut off date at the initial discovery-case management conference.

- (b) (7): We do not agree that there should be track-specific discovery rules or procedures.

We agree, however, that courts should be required to consider, at the initial discovery-case management conference, whether it would be appropriate to have discovery proceed in stages or phases, and whether settlement or ADR processes should be used at the completion of various phases or stages.

- (b) (8): We agree that courts should refuse to hear discovery motions unless counsel certify that they first have attempted in good faith to work the matter out without the intervention of the court.

- (b) (9): We do not agree that courts should be required to establish, for different tracks, time guidelines for filing and deciding substantive and discovery motions.

- (b) (10): We agree that each district court should be required to consider, with inputs from its advisory group, whether arranging for the establishment of ADR programs would enable parties to reduce the cost of resolving certain kinds of disputes or would expedite disposition.

We do not agree that every court should be required to make available the full range of ADR mechanisms.

We recommend that the Judicial Conference set up a national advisory and resource group on ADR programs that could help district courts determine which ADR programs are appropriate for them and to help courts implement the programs they select. (See Linda Finkelstein's proposal).

(b)(11): We believe that each court should be required to consider, with inputs from its advisory group, whether establishing an ENE program would be feasible and, if established, whether such a program would help parties reduce costs or expedite disposition.

We do not agree that every court should be required to establish an ENE program.

(b)(12): We agree that courts should have authority to order representatives of clients to participate, at least by phone, in settlement conferences.

(b)(13): We agree that each court should set up systems for periodically publishing data about caseload progress and pending motions.

(b)(14): We agree that it would be useful to have periodic reviews, with inputs from local advisory groups, of functions being performed by magistrates.

We do not agree that it would be useful to have such reviews at intervals of less than three years.

(b)(15): We do not understand what this provision contemplates.

(c), (d), & (e): We believe that each district should be required to report its plan to the Judicial Conference, and that the Judicial Conference should be empowered to order individual districts to reconsider their plans, or to add to them.

We do not believe that each district should be required to report its plan to its Circuit Council and that such councils should be required to pass judgment on each such plan.

Sec. 472. Model Plan.

We agree that the Judicial Conference, working through the FJC, should develop several model plans.

Any district that had not adopted a plan of its own within 12 months should be required to adopt one of the model plans developed by the Conference.

Sec. 473. Report by the FJC.

We agree that the FJC should prepare a report that describes the local plans that are adopted and that attempts to assess the impacts of some of these plans.

We do not agree that such a report should describe how each plan implements a tracking system, because we do not believe that courts should be required to adopt tracking systems [with possible exception of a few experimental courts].

We also do not think that this report could meaningfully assess the impact of all such plans. Instead, we suggest that the report focus on a few, hopefully representative plans, and study their impact in detail.

Sec. 474. Backlogs in district courts.

We believe that each district court, with the assistance and suggestions of its local advisory group, should be required, within a specified period, to assess its current docket on both the civil and the criminal side.

Such assessments should be made before the local plans are developed.

The Judicial Conference should prescribe a minimum list of kinds of information that each court would be required to generate about itself. In addition to information about its docket (age, etc.), this self-profiling should include a description of the current case management practices of each judge and magistrate, including an account of whether individual judges use different management approaches in different kinds of cases and, if so, what rationales support the differences.

Such assessments should address disposition rates in a sophisticated manner that takes into account weighted caseloads and other differences between kinds of cases.

Sec. 475. Automation.

Automation is desirable and should be set up so that judges can learn about their own calendars and dockets the kinds of things set forth in this section.

Sec. 476. Manual for Litigation Management.

We agree that such a Manual should be prepared.

We are not sure that it will be possible to show, in such a Manual or elsewhere, "how provisions in the plans have increased the time available for trial and for the deliberate adjudication of cases on the merits." Moreover, it might be more consistent with the objectives of this legislation to try to show how the commitment of judicial time to assertive case management has helped the parties reduce or at least cabin the cost of litigation and to speed the disposition of their disputes.

Sec. 477. Authorization.

What amount is sufficient will depend on what the bill finally entails.

Sec. 478. Congressional Review.

We agree that the FJC should prepare as comprehensive and analytically penetrating report as is possible.

Sec. 479. Case Management Training.

We wholeheartedly endorse this provision and the appropriation of funds for this purpose.

biden.pro

UNITED STATES COURT OF APPEALS

MAC 2/10/90

SECOND CIRCUIT

CHAMBERS OF

JAMES L. OAKES

CHIEF JUDGE

BRATTLEBORO, VERMONT 05301-0696

March 15, 1990

To: All Chief Circuit Judges

cc: Chief Justice Rehnquist
Chief Judge Charles L. Brieant, S.D.N.Y.
Judge Robert F. Peckham, N.D. Cal.
Ralph Mecham, Director, AO
Steven Flanders, Circuit Executive, 2d Cir.

Re: S. 2027 (The "Biden Bill," a/k/a Civil Justice Reform Act
of 1990)

Following our breakfast and meeting of yesterday, I went over to Capitol Hill to pay my respects to the New York, Connecticut, and Vermont Senators, only to find that they were all on spring break. Through the offices of Senator Leahy, to whom I had already spoken adversely about the Biden Bill, I managed to have an hour-and-a-half conference with Ann Harkins, general counsel to the Subcommittee on Law and Technology of the Committee on Judiciary, and with Katherine Collins, counsel to that subcommittee, which Senator Leahy chairs. I was able to get across to them the concerns, or some of them, that we have with the bill as discussed particularly at breakfast, including our opposition to the tracking aspects and the fact that former New Jersey state court judges, now federal judges, think that the federal practices are much better as reported by Leon Higginbotham, the bad experience we had with the master calendar system which we had gotten rid of twenty years ago, the unfortunate aspects of taking away magistrates' initial discovery powers, etc. I was able to suggest to them some witnesses, including the Southern District of New York's Milton Pollack, a senior judge who does the work of two ordinary active judges both in Manhattan and Houston and on the Multidistrict Panel and who is one of the greatest individualized case managers that I know of, and Nina Gershon, a magistrate in the Southern District who was the first person to call my attention to the dangerous aspects of this legislation.

I also learned, however, more about how the bill came about and what the real aims behind it are. According to my sources, Senator Biden and his office, particularly an administrative assistant named Peck, have been working on this for over two years, and the bill is really tops on the list of Biden priorities.

Chief Circuit Judges

March 15, 1990

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Indeed, I may have come along in the nick of time to persuade Senator Leahy not to sign on as a co-endorser as so many others have done, as you know. The bill is at the instance of the large corporations, many of which are headquartered in Delaware, who are gravely concerned about the costs of litigation including but not limited to the cost of discovery, and think that compelled federal court case management may be the way to reduce that cost. Proponents of the bill are said to include not only large industrial corporations and products liability defendants but insurance companies, unions, I believe they mentioned the NAACP, and, as my sources indicated, a joining together of groups that are generally on opposite sides of the fence. Senator Biden is going to have one more day of hearings, but he really has the bill on a fast track, as was mentioned at breakfast.

Ms. Harkins, who seems to be quite politically astute, indicated that so far as the Senate was concerned, we might get some changes made, but we would have to get some Christmas tree ornaments to put together on a package, because some form of bill was definitely going to come out.

At the end of our discussion, which ended, as it had begun, on very pleasant terms, the women asked me if I would be willing to testify against the bill, and I said of course, subject to the views of the other judges. I am sure these people will keep us informed, and I think they are genuinely interested in the judges' concerns.

Sincerely yours,

James L. Oakes
James L. Oakes
Chief Judge

MARCH 12 language before FCSC - not
necessarily final language!

- D. Congress should make no change in the existing law governing *voir dire*, and federal judges—and the Federal Judicial Center in its education programs—should continue to stress both elements of the federal jury selection method.

Federal Rules of Criminal Procedure 24(a) and Civil Procedure 47(a) authorize the trial judge to question prospective jurors or to allow the lawyers to do so. If the judge conducts the *voir dire*, the judge must either allow the attorneys to ask additional questions, or ask any questions submitted by the parties that the judge deems proper to ask.

We believe both elements of this approach are essential explanations for the admirable success of federal jury selection: judicial control of the *voir dire* and judicial receptivity to appropriate supplementary participation by the attorneys. We urge judges to honor both elements and urge Congress to make no change in this fair and efficient system.

Federal jury selection methods produce fair juries, in much less time than other systems that require questioning by the lawyers or allow lawyers to control the process. The federal *voir dire* rule is an essential element in enabling federal district courts to conduct trials fairly and expeditiously—the virtues that are so attractive to so many litigants and that account for the extraordinary caseload pressures on these courts in the modern era. Indeed, federal *voir dire* practices are such a notable success that we not only oppose proposals to change them; we commend them to the rulemaking authorities of state courts.

Federal Judicial Center orientation programs for district judges emphasize the importance of judges' honoring the letter and the spirit of these two procedural rules. The Center should continue this emphasis.

Mr. Harrell dissents from the proposal on *voir dire*:

E. Civil Case Management

1. We encourage case management efforts by district courts, in particular (1) early judicial involvement to control the pace and cost of litigation (especially but not exclusively in complex cases), (2) staged discovery, (3) use of locally development case management plans, and (4) additional training of judges in appropriate techniques of case management.

The past two decades have seen a virtual revolution in the role of federal district judges. Their early involvement and active roles in the management of litigation—facilitated by the 1983 amendment

to Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 16—help explain the federal district courts' ability to keep abreast of their increased workload. During the same period federal litigation has become much more complex and there have been rapidly mounting demands on judges' time from criminal cases. Greater use of active case management, and development—in cooperation with the bar—of local plans to control cost and delay in civil cases, will be necessary to keep courts abreast of rising workloads and secure “the just, speedy, and inexpensive determination of every action” in accordance with Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 1. Recent reports on the civil justice system have been helpful in highlighting areas of concern and offering specific recommendations for consideration, although many recommendations in the recent literature are already standard practice in many federal courts, or represent proposals that have been tried and discarded.

We endorse the trend toward more vigorous case management by district judges. The 1983 amendments to the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure facilitate this process, and judges should make appropriate use of their authority under the rules. Many cases, especially but not exclusively those that are complex or hotly contested, call for judicial management measures such as status conferences; targets for completion of various pretrial stages; and close supervision of discovery, including prompt decisions on discovery issues by the judicial officer primarily responsible for discovery matters in the case. The growing importance of case management techniques calls for even more judicial education about the range and implementation of such techniques to eliminate unnecessary cost and delay while maintaining judicial impartiality.

The field of case management is relatively young, however, and districts vary greatly in such things as caseload, geography, and legitimate local preferences. With case management as with alternative dispute resolution, these factors point to the importance of retaining considerable flexibility for districts to experiment with different procedures and adapt case management techniques and plans to local conditions. Thus we believe that to mandate highly specific cases management plans for all federal districts would be unwarranted micro-management of the courts.

Some systems report favorable experience with “tracking” or “differentiated case management,” in which cases are classified as simple, standard, or complex and treated differently in such respects as time limits for discovery and trial. Such techniques are worthy of further consideration, but more study is needed to learn

whether tracking or much more individualized case management is generally preferable for the federal civil caseload. In any event, case tracking programs should be so organized as to retain significant decisions in the hands of judicial officers and ensure sufficient flexibility to accommodate the needs of individual cases.

2. Employment Discrimination Actions

- a. District courts should employ the authority provided by 42 U.S.C. § 2000e-5(f)(5) to appoint a master if a case is pending for more than 120 days after issue has been joined.
- b. To enhance federal district courts' ability to appoint counsel for claimants in employment discrimination actions pursuant to 42 U.S.C. § 2000e-5, the Federal Judicial Center should undertake a study of experience under the statute, including the responses to it of the district courts and bar associations (in local rules or otherwise). On the basis of this study, Congress should consider the need to amend the statute to enhance its effectiveness.

Chapter 3 noted the special characteristics of employment discrimination litigation and the substantial increases in the numbers of such cases in the federal courts. These cases are among the most wrenching of the various categories of federal court litigation. Plaintiffs often have a great deal of emotional investment in the outcome. To the degree that plaintiffs litigate without counsel, they create special demands on the court. The monetary stakes in some of these cases are so small, however, that, even with the potential to recover attorney's fees, claimants sometimes find it difficult to litigate in federal court because they cannot find counsel to take their cases.

42 U.S.C. § 2000e-5(f)(1) authorizes district courts, "in such circumstances as the court may deem just," to appoint attorneys for persons pressing certain employment discrimination claims and to permit the action to commence without payment of fees, costs, or security. We endorse the goals of the statute: providing better access to the courts for deserving claimants and reducing the substantial judicial burdens of employment discrimination litigation brought by pro se plaintiffs.

Experience, however, has revealed several obstacles to the statute's effective implementation. Lawyers' concern over possible legal malpractice actions, and the cost of insuring against such claims, have made them reluctant to accept appointment. And Congress has not provided funding for litigation costs,

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JUDICIAL CONFERENCE SECRETARIAT

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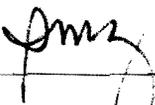
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K Siegel

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