



# Supreme Court of Illinois

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*This news release corrects the number of Judicial Circuits participating in the pilot project before today's announcement from 45 to 40.*

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## **CHIEF JUSTICE RITA GARMAN AND CHIEF JUDGE TIMOTHY EVANS ANNOUNCE COOK COUNTY APPROVED FOR COURTROOM CAMERAS PILOT PROJECT**

Chief Justice Rita B. Garman of the Illinois Supreme Court and Chief Judge Timothy C. Evans of Cook County Circuit Court announced Tuesday that media cameras soon will be allowed in some Cook County criminal courtrooms.

Chief Justice Garman said that the Supreme Court has given its approval for the Cook County Circuit Court to become part of a pilot program already being implemented in 40 other counties in Illinois.

Effective Monday, January 5, 2015, the media will be allowed to video and audio record proceedings at the George N. Leighton Criminal Court Building at 26<sup>th</sup> Street and California Avenue in Chicago in accordance with procedures contained in the Illinois Supreme Court Policy on Extended Media Coverage and a new local Circuit Court rule promulgated by Chief Judge Evans.

“The opening of Cook County criminal courtrooms to media cameras is a significant and very welcome step in our efforts to bring greater transparency to the judicial process, while protecting the rights of the accused, witnesses, and jurors,” Chief Justice Garman said. “The experience with media coverage in other judicial circuits has been overwhelmingly positive, and it is time to extend the pilot program to the most populous county in the state.

“This is a challenging undertaking, given the logistics of the Cook County court system and the large number of interested media outlets in the Chicago area. I am confident that Chief Judge Evans and his staff and the many individual judges who preside over cases in Cook County Circuit Court will rise to the challenge, just as I am sure that the members of the media will find that the procedures that have been adopted protect both the public’s right to know and the rights of victims, jurors, and others to be shielded from unwanted publicity.”

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## **Cook County Approved for Courtroom Cameras Pilot Add One**

Cook County becomes the 15<sup>th</sup>, and the largest Circuit, to be approved by the Supreme Court under its Policy for Extended Media Coverage (EMC) announced January 24, 2012 under then Chief Justice Thomas L. Kilbride.

Cook County Justices welcomed the move.

"I am very pleased. This is a good program all the way around," said Justice Anne M. Burke. "It's good for the entire legal system as a means of increasing transparency, educating the public and informing citizens as to how our system actually works as opposed to sensationalized snippets they are exposed to on TV series and in the movies.

"I commend Chief Judge Evans in working with all those involved to make this possible and I look forward to the day when cameras will be allowed throughout Cook County and in every courtroom in the state."

Justice Mary Jane Theis added: "Our judges work hard. They are conscientious and they take their work seriously. I believe that allowing cameras in Cook County courtrooms will allow the public to see how conscientious they are, and how justice is actually dispensed – not through the lens of movies and entertainment.

"Through it all, I believe it will enhance public confidence in the integrity of the judicial system. Let me applaud Chief Judge Evans for the leadership role he has taken in this matter. He was one of the first to favor cameras in the courtroom. It is no easy matter to harness the varying interests and overcome the complexities caused by the vastness of the Cook County court system. He and his staff deserve a great deal of credit in navigating the logistics to get to this point."

Chief Judge Evans expressed his deep gratitude to the Illinois Supreme Court, especially Chief Justice Garman and former Chief Justice Kilbride "I am extremely pleased that the public will now hear and see through extended media coverage exactly what is taking place in Cook County courtrooms – this is a tremendous step forward to enhanced transparency and accountability at every level of the court system," said Chief Judge Evans. "The public's understanding of how their justice system truly operates will be enhanced as they observe firsthand that litigants are treated with respect and that justice can be done fairly and impartially."

Evans noted that the use of media cameras in courtrooms has succeeded in other states and in other Illinois counties, and he is confident it will succeed in Cook County also.

"This is a big step forward," said Justice Kilbride, who announced the camera pilot project when he was Chief Justice in January 2012. "I thank Chief Judge Evans for his leadership on this issue and I am confident this will contribute to increased public understanding of how our courts operate while ensuring the protection of those rights which we all cherish."

The Supreme Court Order approving Cook County requires that a judge presiding over a proceeding with cameras file a report with the Chief Judge of the Circuit, the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, and each of the three Supreme Court Justices of the First Judicial District.

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## **Cook County Approved for Courtroom Cameras Pilot Add Two**

Under the Supreme Court's EMC Policy and new Cook County Circuit Court General Administrative Order No. 2014-12, a request for cameras at a hearing or trial must be initiated by the news media through a media coordinator selected by the media. The media coordinator will work with Circuit Court liaison on Chief Judge Evans' staff and the presiding judge to ensure adherence to all required procedures.

Notwithstanding a request by the news media, the Supreme Court Policy gives absolute discretion to the trial judge on whether to allow extended media coverage of a proceeding. Consistent with Article VI, Section 7(c) of the Illinois Constitution, which grants supervisory authority to the Chief Judge over his or her Circuit, the policy also gives discretion to the Chief Judge to disallow coverage.

A decision by a judge to allow or disallow coverage is not appealable.

The Supreme Court Policy provides that the request be made at least 14 days in advance of the time the proceeding is scheduled, although the time frame may be expanded or reduced by the judge. It encourages media pooling and requires media pooling where there are more media requesting extended coverage than the number of cameras the judge allows.

The Supreme Court Policy requires attorneys to inform the parties and the witnesses that a request for EMC has been made. It allows for parties and witnesses to object to the request, but it is not intended that such an objection, while in the discretion of the judge, will be automatically granted.

In prosecutions for sexual abuse, or when sexual abuse is an essential element, there will be no extended media coverage of the testimony of the alleged victim without the alleged victim's consent. An objection to extended media coverage by a testifying victim in any other forcible felony prosecution, and by police informants, undercover agents and relocated witnesses shall be presumed valid.

The Policy also prohibits media coverage in any juvenile, divorce, adoption, child custody, evidence suppression and trade secret cases, as well as in any court proceeding required under Illinois law to be held in private.

Extended media coverage of jury selection, the jury and individual jurors also is prohibited under the Policy.

A copy of the entire Supreme Court Policy is available on the Supreme Court's website at [www.illinoiscourts.gov](http://www.illinoiscourts.gov). Go to Quick Links, Supreme Court, and Extended Media Coverage Pilot Programs.

A copy of the new Cook County Circuit Court General Administrative Order can be viewed at [www.cookcountycourt.org](http://www.cookcountycourt.org). Go to Media, Extended Media Coverage Pilot Program.

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**Cook County Approved for Courtroom Cameras Pilot  
Add Three**

Included among the Circuits where cameras already have been approved are the 16<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup>, 21<sup>st</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup>, which include Kane, DuPage, Lake, Kankakee, Kendall, and DeKalb counties in the broader metropolitan Chicago area. Thus, the Chicago media, the third largest media market in the country, already has experience as to how the program is implemented under the Supreme Court Policy.

The 17<sup>th</sup> Circuit, which includes Rockford, has had more than 100 requests for camera coverage since it was approved for the pilot program April 30, 2012, and participants and observers there observe that extended media coverage has become a matter of routine.

Other Judicial Circuits and counties where the pilot program is operation are:

First Circuit, including Alexander, Jackson, Johnson, Massac, Pope, Pulaski, Saline, Union and Williamson counties in far southern Illinois;

Third Circuit, Madison County in southern Illinois;

Sixth Circuit, Champaign, DeWitt, Douglas, Macon, Moultrie and Piatt counties;

Ninth Circuit, Knox County;

10<sup>th</sup> Circuit, Marshall, Peoria, Putnam, Stark and Tazewell counties;

11<sup>th</sup> Circuit, McLean County;

14<sup>th</sup> Circuit, Rock Island, Henry, Mercer and Whiteside counties;

15<sup>th</sup> Circuit, Carroll, Jo Daviess, Lee, Ogle and Stephenson counties.

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**(FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT: Joseph Tybor, director of communications to the Illinois Supreme Court, at 312.793.2323 or Dawn Frison Cook, senior communications specialist to the Illinois Supreme Court, at 312.793.0870)**