



United States District Court

CHAMBERS OF
DAVID C. GODBEY
CHIEF JUDGE

NORTHERN DISTRICT OF TEXAS
1100 COMMERCE STREET, ROOM 1504
DALLAS, TEXAS 75242

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May 16, 2023

The Honorable Charles E. Schumer
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510-3203

Via email
Attn: Evan Littleton Turnage

Dear Senator Schumer:

I write in response to your letter of April 27, in my capacity as Chief Judge of the Northern District of Texas. I do not write on behalf of any of the individual judges of this District, nor do I speak for the judiciary generally.

As a starting point, I am confident that all the judges in this District are 100% faithful to their oaths of office. Nevertheless, I am cognizant of the public perception of improper judge-shopping in single-judge divisions. The issues of single-judge divisions are long-standing, and they are not limited to any one class of litigant.

The allocation of cases among our judges is a complex matter. In addition to the fair administration of justice, we must also consider: the number and type of civil and criminal cases filed in a division, which varies significantly from division to division; the convenience of the jurors, witnesses, parties, and attorneys; the desire of communities to have local judges; the burden of travel on court personnel; and the need to provide judicial support for divisions without a resident district judge. Our system of case allocation among available judicial officers is one that has evolved over the years to meet the particular needs of our District, and we constantly reevaluate it.

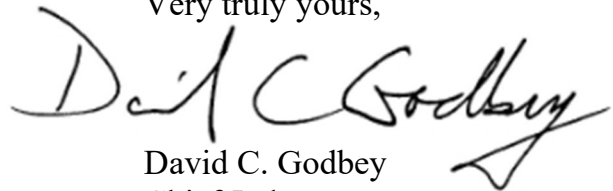
The Northern District of Texas has some unusual characteristics that also require consideration. First, the District is geographically large. It encompasses more than 96,000 square miles. That is approximately 75% larger than the entire State of New York. It stretches more than 400 miles across, both North to South and East to West. It is also diverse, including the dense, urban Dallas/Fort Worth Metroplex, as well as sparsely populated rural counties in our North, West, and South reaches.

So the random assignment of all civil cases across this District would present logistical challenges far beyond those of the smaller districts you mention, or the random assignment of a small slice of civil cases such as patent cases.

I also bring to your attention a provision of our Local Rules which requires that the district judges as a whole determine the method by which cases are assigned to individual judges. *See* L. Civ. R. 83.3. It is common for the Chief Judge to tweak the percentage assignment to particular judges after consultation with the affected judges, which I did in the Orders you cite. But, I am not authorized to impose unilaterally a new method of case allocation for our District.

I hope this information is helpful to you. If you have any other concerns or questions regarding case assignment in this District, I would be happy to try to address them.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David C. Godbey". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping "D" and a long, trailing flourish at the end.

David C. Godbey
Chief Judge

cc: Chief Judge Priscilla Richman
Judge Roslynn Mauskopf
N.D. Tex. District Judges
David Best