

UNITED STATES BANKRUPTCY COURT  
SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF INDIANA

**UPDATE ON LOCAL COURT BUDGET AND STAFFING FROM  
CHIEF JUDGE JAMES COACHYS**

In January I alerted the bar to the budget challenges this Court faced. At that time, I advised we would cut six positions by the end of January, reducing Clerk's office staff to 58. I foreshadowed the possibility of further staff cuts.

Since that memo, the decline in filings and growing pressure on the Judiciary's budget prompted us to eliminate an additional eight positions from the Clerk's office by the end of September. (Two of those 'eliminations' were the transitions of Laura Trepes to the Judicial Assistant position in my chambers, and of Cathy Ford to the Judicial Assistant position in Judge Otte's chambers. Both Laura and Cathy continue to perform Courtroom Deputy duties as time allows.)

As we start the next fiscal year, we have 50 Clerk's office staff, the smallest number on board since the mid-1980's. The areas hardest hit by the most recent cuts have been Courtroom Services and Case Management. The recent cuts also meant that our Financial Department has been reduced by 50% over the past three years.

Fiscal Year 2014 Outlook

We now know our funding for the first few months of FY2014. While the Judiciary as a whole gets at least as much funding as it did for the equivalent period post-sequestration in FY2013, we will receive locally less than we were allotted for the same time period – because the Judiciary's fixed costs have increased and because our filings have declined and our staff has shrunk more than other courts. However, we believe that the staff cuts made to date will be sufficient to avoid further elimination of positions in FY2014 – if funding for the entire fiscal year is consistent with what we've been given through early January. Staff has been advised that furlough days unrelated to a government shutdown remain a possibility.

Impact on Customers

The dramatic drop in staff has unfortunately begun to have an impact on our customers. Besides the reduced hours of operations in Terre Haute, we know that Courtroom Deputies and Case Managers sometimes are not able to process orders or take other actions as quickly as occurred in the past.

**Your patience is appreciated.** Here are some ways that you can help us operate most effectively with our reduced staff:

- Contact a Case Manager or a Courtroom Deputy about the entry of a non-emergency order only after at least ten business days have passed since any objection deadline (or after the submission of an order following a hearing). Contact before that time only disrupts the normal flow and may cause further delays.
- Let the Courtroom Deputy know – by phone – when a motion to continue a matter is going to be filed for a hearing that is set in the next 24 hours.
- Advise the Courtroom Deputy –by email or phone – when an emergency motion has been filed.
- Submit orders along with your motions or objections to claims, so no one has to contact you to request same after the objection period expires.
- Remember that an amended Chapter 13 plan does NOT take off a hearing set on a creditor’s objection to the previous plan. [See the announcement of June 18, 2013, on the Court’s website for additional background on this point.]
- Put the Judge’s initials on any order you submit.
- Distinguish between the two Heathers when making contact! Heather **Butler** is Courtroom Deputy for Judge Carr. Heather **Heiser-Davis** is Courtroom Deputy for Judge Coachys.

Thank you for your continuing patience and understanding.

October 21, 2013

/s/ James K. Coachys  
Chief Bankruptcy Judge