

PRESS RELEASE
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The United States District Court for the District of Massachusetts has established a two-year pilot program, beginning on January 1, 2008, to have a limited number of civil cases initially randomly assigned to a magistrate judge, rather than a district judge. If all parties subsequently consent, those cases will remain with the magistrate judge for all purposes, including trial. If all parties do not consent, the cases will be randomly reassigned to a district judge. In this program, one out of every twelve civil cases in the Boston (Eastern) Division will be initially assigned to one of the five magistrate judges in Boston. A similar program has worked well in the Springfield (Western) Division of the District Court, and will be emulated in the Worcester (Central) Division of the District Court as well. More than 20 other Districts have comparable programs.

Chief Judge Mark L. Wolf stated that: "The District Court is always looking for better ways to serve the public. The initial assignment of some civil cases to magistrate judges will provide parties the opportunity to obtain a civil trial more quickly if they elect to consent to a trial by a magistrate judge. This program will also even more fully utilize our talented magistrate judges. The performance of the pilot program will be evaluated annually. After two years the District Court will decide whether to perpetuate the program."

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