

NEBRASKA SUPREME COURT

Office of Public Information



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Supreme Court Authorizes Television News Cameras in Trial Courts

Judges in the 2nd Judicial District (Sarpy, Cass, and Otoe Counties) have established a pilot project to test the use of still and video news cameras in their courtrooms. Beginning June 1, the Nebraska Supreme Court has approved local court rules to allow expanded news coverage by broadcasters for trials held in the courtrooms of Judges William Zastera and Randall Rehmeier in the District Court; Judge Jeff Funke in the Otoe County Court, Judge John Steinheider in the Cass County Court, and the Sarpy County Law Enforcement Center Courtroom.

“We in Nebraska have a proud tradition of public access to our courts – this is a modern extension of that access; allowing the public into the courtroom through the news camera,” said Judge Randall Rehmeier, district court presiding judge for the 2nd Judicial District.

The Nebraska Supreme Court is pleased with the willingness of the judges of Cass, Sarpy and Otoe Counties to open their courtrooms to television cameras. According to Chief Justice Mike Heavican, “The right of citizens to a fair trial is of utmost importance. The right of citizens to see courts at work is also an important goal. Allowing television cameras into our courtrooms provides us with a mechanism to become more visible and show Nebraskans the very important work of this branch of government.”

News stations will have restrictions on which portions of a trial can be covered, similar to the restrictions developed in similar pilot projects. All proceedings required by law to be private will be strictly prohibited from media coverage. In addition, expanded media coverage of cases with juveniles, child custody, police informants, undercover agents and similar witnesses are prohibited unless consent of all parties to a case is obtained.

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Note to journalists:

Rules apply to both television and still cameras-

Any district court presided over by Judges Zastera and Rehmeier in Cass County, Otoe County, and Sarpy County (District Courtroom #1) are open to coverage with appropriate notice.

County courts in Cass (Judge Steinheider) and Otoe (Judge Funke) are open to coverage with appropriate notice.

The Sarpy County Law Enforcement Center Courtroom is available at 7:45 a.m. with entrance through the Sheriff's office and no notice period.

District Court rules:

<http://www.supremecourt.ne.gov/rules/external/2dJudDistCtMedia.pdf>

County Court rules:

<http://www.supremecourt.ne.gov/rules/external/2dJudDistCtyCtMedia.pdf>