

Representing Yourself Before the Judicial Panel on Multidistrict Litigation

The Clerk's Office of the United States Judicial Panel on Multidistrict Litigation (Panel) acts as a central resource for all matters pending before the Panel.

1. The Clerk's Office will:

1. accept papers submitted by *pro se* litigants.
2. provide procedural assistance to *pro se* litigants appearing before the Panel.

Appearing Pro Se

The *Pro Se* page of our website provides information to individuals who are representing themselves before the Panel without the assistance of an attorney. This web page is intended as an informative and practical resource for these litigants and is not a substitute for legal advice from an experienced attorney. The information is procedural in nature and should be read in conjunction with the [Rules of Procedure of the United States Judicial Panel on Multidistrict Litigation](#).

When you are without an attorney, you are proceeding "pro se." If you represent yourself before the Panel, you are called a "pro se litigant" or a "self-represented litigant." "*Pro se*" is a Latin term, meaning "on one's own behalf" and a "litigant" is someone who is either suing someone or is being sued in court.

The right to appear *pro se* in a civil case in federal court is contained in a statute, 28 U.S.C. § 1654. Thus, anyone can appear *pro se*, and anyone who appears before the Panel without an attorney is considered *pro se*. There are, however, certain limitations to self-representation, such as:

- Corporations and partnerships must be represented by an attorney.
- A *pro se* litigant may not represent a class in a class action.
- A non-attorney parent may not appear *pro se* on behalf of a child.

Accept Papers Submitted by *Pro Se* Litigants

All papers from *pro se* litigants must be submitted directly to the Clerk's Office. The Clerk's Office will check the papers for compliance with the [Rules of Procedure of the United States Judicial Panel on Multidistrict Litigation](#) (signature, service, etc.), and if in order, will file the papers with the Panel. All papers submitted to the Panel must contain the **Panel heading, MDL title, MDL number (if assigned), district court case caption(s), name of the filing** and a **completed Proof of Service**. (A completed Proof of Service serves as proof that a copy of the document was sent to the other involved parties or their attorneys.)

Upon filing a new Motion to Transfer for coordinated or consolidated pretrial proceedings, the filing party is instructed to provide a descriptive MDL title for the litigation. After the filing is reviewed, the Clerk of the Panel will determine and make available the official MDL title. Once a new litigation is assigned an MDL number or a civil action is considered related to an MDL, the MDL docket number must appear on all papers submitted to the Panel. The only exception is when new Motion to Transfer papers are filed, at which time, the filer will include an MDL number section, but exclude the number (MDL- _____).

The district court case caption includes the names of the plaintiff(s) (the parties bringing the action) and the names of the defendant(s) (the parties being sued) separated by the letter "v." for versus.

Documents submitted to the Panel must be styled in the following manner:

BEFORE THE JUDICIAL PANEL ON MULTIDISTRICT LITIGATION	
IN RE: ABC 123 LITIGATION	MDL-1234
Jane Doe v. ACME Corp., et al. S.D. Florida, C.A. No. 9:11-11111	
PLAINTIFF JANE DOE'S RESPONSE TO DEFENDANT'S MOTION TO TRANSFER	
Plaintiff Jane Doe hereby files.....	

Provide Procedural Assistance to *Pro Se* Litigants

The members of the Clerk's Office may assist *pro se* litigants by explaining Panel procedures and filing requirements. However, they are not permitted to give advice on legal strategy, to represent litigants in court, or to participate in any discussion with *pro se* litigants regarding the merits of a particular case. (28 U.S.C. § 955 states that "The clerk of each court and his deputies and assistants shall not practice law in any court of the United States.") Additionally, the Clerk's Office may not calculate deadlines, draft papers, fill out forms, serve papers, act as interpreters, or notarize documents.

The Clerk's Office also has a number of [forms, instructions, and manuals](#) that it provides to the public upon request.

Questions regarding the Panel's procedures should be directed to the Clerk's Office either by telephone, by mail, or in person during normal business hours.

Contact the Clerk's Office

For more information regarding the procedures of the Judicial Panel on Multidistrict Litigation, you may contact the Clerk's Office at (202) 502-2800 during normal business hours, 9:00am - 4:00pm, Monday - Friday (except federal holidays).

Please note that the Court cannot accept collect calls.

You may also speak to a staff member in person by visiting the Clerk's Office during normal business hours (no appointment is necessary).

You may also submit your questions by writing to the Clerk's Office at:

U.S. Judicial Panel on Multidistrict Litigation

Thurgood Marshall Federal Judiciary Building
One Columbus Circle, NE
Room G-255, North Lobby
Washington, DC 20544-0005