



**IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT  
FOR THE SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF MISSISSIPPI**

**INTERNAL RULE 1**

*as amended effective March 26, 2025*

**ASSIGNMENT OF CASES TO JUDGES AND MAGISTRATE JUDGES**

This *Assignment of Cases to Judges and Magistrate Judges* will apply to all cases filed on or after March 26, 2025, except as provided in Sections XI and XIII below.

Each civil case filed in this Court will bear a number as follows: The number of the division 1- Southern Division at Gulfport; 2- Eastern Division at Hattiesburg; 3- Northern Division at Jackson; 5- Western Division at Natchez, followed by a colon and the last two digits of the year in which the case is filed, followed by the letters "cv", followed by the sequential number of the case filed in the division. Civil cases may be assigned on the percentage distribution described below by use of a manual or automated random draw. The district judge and magistrate judge assignment in each case is indicated in the case docket by the initials of the district judge and the magistrate judge, as follows:

DCB	District Judge Bramlette	ASH	Magistrate Judge Harris
LG	District Judge Guirola	LGI	Magistrate Judge Isaac
KHJ	District Judge Johnson	RPM	Magistrate Judge Myers
DPJ	District Judge Jordan	MTP	Magistrate Judge Parker
TSL	District Judge Lee	BWR	Magistrate Judge Rath
TBM	District Judge McNeel		
HSO	District Judge Ozerden		
CWR	District Judge Reeves		
KS	District Judge Starrett		
HTW	District Judge Wingate		

Each criminal case filed in the Southern District will bear the same number format as the civil docket number, with the exception of the letters "cr" being substituted for the letters "cv."

**I. ASSIGNMENT OF CIVIL CASES TO DISTRICT JUDGES**

Civil cases in this district are to be assigned a district judge as follows:

**A. NORTHERN DIVISION** - Civil cases will be assigned as follows:

Judge Wingate - 22%      Judge Jordan - 22%      Judge Reeves - 22%  
Judge Lee - 12%      Judge Johnson - 22%.

**B. SOUTHERN DIVISION** - Civil cases will be assigned as follows:

Judge Guirola - 26%      Judge Ozerden - 37%      Judge McNeel - 37%.

**C. EASTERN DIVISION** - Civil cases will be assigned as follows:

Judge Starrett - 40%      Judge Ozerden - 30%      Judge McNeel - 30%.

**D. WESTERN DIVISION** - Civil cases will be assigned as follows:

Judge Bramlette - 80%      Judge Starrett - 20%.

**II. ASSIGNMENT OF CRIMINAL CASES TO DISTRICT JUDGES**

Criminal cases in this district are assigned to district judges as follows:

**A. NORTHERN DIVISION** - From and after December 21, 2020, criminal cases will be assigned randomly and without regard to grand jury schedules as follows:

Judge Lee - 11%      Judge Jordan - 21%  
Judge Johnson - 15%      Judge Wingate - 21%  
Judge Bramlette - 11%      Judge Reeves - 21%.

**B. WESTERN DIVISION** - Criminal cases will be assigned as follows:

Judge Bramlette - 100%.

**C. EASTERN DIVISION** - Criminal cases will be assigned as follows:

Judge Starrett - 55% Judge Johnson - 45%.

**D. SOUTHERN DIVISION** - Criminal cases will be assigned as follows:

Judge Guirola - 18% Judge Ozerden - 30% Judge McNeel - 52%.

**E. RELATED CRIMINAL CASES** - Upon notice filed by the United

States Attorney, a criminal matter which is related to a previously assigned criminal case will be transferred by the Clerk of Court to the judge with the previously assigned criminal case. For purposes of this order, criminal cases are related if they involve substantially the same parties and factual situation, relate to or are based upon the same act or transaction, or involve actions connected with or constituting part(s) of a common scheme or plan.

**III. CAPITAL HABEAS CASES** - All habeas corpus cases filed in this district

reviewing a sentence of death will be assigned to district judges equally, regardless of division, utilizing the sequence: HTW, DPJ, HSO, CWR, KHJ and TBM. A case previously assigned to a district judge which is returned to this district will not impact this sequencing.

**IV. REASSIGNMENT** - The Chief Judge may, after conferring with the affected

district judge(s) or magistrate judge(s), reassign cases in any division in order to ensure an equal distribution of the workload and to effectuate a prompt disposition of all pending matters.

- V. PARTICIPATION** - No district judge of this court will participate in any way or to any extent with the processing or disposition of any case which is not assigned to the judge by action of this plan unless agreed to by the district judge to whom the case is assigned.
- VI. REVERSALS AND REMANDS** - If any case is subsequently reversed or remanded, the Clerk of Court will assign such case to the same district judge who previously tried or handled the case and who will have the sole responsibility for the case's final disposition, unless that district judge agrees to the assignment of the case to another district judge or the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals so dictates. If the latter occurs, then the case will be returned to the draw and reassigned.
- VII. REFERRAL OF CIVIL CASES TO MAGISTRATE JUDGES**
- A.** Referral of civil cases to a magistrate judge for trial will be in accordance with the provisions of FED. R. CIV. P. 72-73.
- B.** The notice required by FED. R. CIV. P. 73(b) concerning the opportunity to consent to trial by a magistrate judge will be included with the pretrial notices and instructions or provided upon request of the parties.
- C.** The consent form(s) will be filed in the division in which the case is pending. No consent form will be filed unless all parties have consented to the referral of the case to a magistrate judge.

- D.** In those cases which are referred to a magistrate judge, only the magistrate judge's designated initial(s) will appear in the case number suffix.
- E.** Pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 636 (b)(1)(B), the following matters are hereby referred to the magistrate judge to conduct hearings, including evidentiary hearings, and to submit proposed findings of fact and recommendations for disposition:
- (1) prisoner petitions challenging conditions of confinement;
  - (2) applications for post-trial relief made by individuals convicted of criminal offenses, excluding capital cases; and,
  - (3) social security appeals.

An Order of Reference executed by the district judge assigned to the case is required in all other cases assigned to a magistrate judge. Motions to vacate, set aside or correct the sentence pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 2255 are referred to the sentencing judge.

#### **VIII. ASSIGNMENT OF CIVIL CASES TO MAGISTRATE JUDGES**

- A.** Except as provided in paragraphs B and C below, in all civil actions filed in this district, the following shall apply:
- 1. Magistrate Judge Harris** is assigned all civil cases assigned to Judge Jordan, 50% of the cases assigned to Judge Reeves, 31% of the cases assigned to Judge Bramlette, and 8% of the cases assigned to Judge Lee.

2. **Magistrate Judge Isaac** is assigned all civil cases assigned to Judge Wingate, 50% of the cases assigned to Judge Reeves, 31% of the cases assigned to Judge Bramlette, and 8% of the cases assigned to Judge Lee.
  3. **Magistrate Judge Parker** is assigned all civil cases assigned to Judge Johnson, all Eastern Division cases assigned to Judge Starrett, and 42% of the cases assigned to Judge Lee.
  4. **Magistrate Judge Myers** is assigned all civil cases assigned to Judge McNeel, 55% of the cases assigned to Judge Guirola, and 42% of the cases assigned to Judge Lee.
  5. **Magistrate Judge Rath** is assigned all civil cases assigned to Judge Ozerden, 45% of the cases assigned to Judge Guirola, and 38% of the cases assigned to Judge Bramlette and all Western Division cases assigned to Judge Starrett.
- B.** Cases arising under the Social Security Act including appeals thereof shall be assigned a magistrate judge utilizing the sequence: RPM, MTP, LGI, ASH, and BWR, regardless of the assigned district judge.
- C.** Cases filed by pro se prisoners seeking habeas relief under 28 U. S. C. § 2254 shall be assigned a magistrate judge utilizing the sequence: BWR, ASH, LGI, MTP, RPM regardless of the assigned district judge.

**IX. ASSIGNMENT OF CRIMINAL MATTERS TO MAGISTRATE JUDGES.**

**A.** All misdemeanor criminal cases will be assigned, upon the filing of an information, complaint or violation notice, or the return of an indictment, to a magistrate judge, who will proceed in accordance with the provisions of 18 U.S.C. §§ 3401-02 and FED. R. CRIM. P. 58.

**(1) NORTHERN AND WESTERN DIVISIONS –**

(a) All criminal “CR” cases will be assigned randomly and without regard to grand jury schedules as follows:

Judge Isaac – 50%

Judge Harris – 50%.

(b) The Petty Offense Docket will rotate on a yearly basis among Judges Harris, Isaac and Parker.

(c) “MJ” cases will be assigned in chambers by month as follows:

January, March, May, July, September, November  
– Judge Harris;

February, April, June, August, October, December  
– Judge Isaac.

**(2) SOUTHERN DIVISION** -All criminal matters will be shared equally between Magistrate Judge Rath and Magistrate Judge Myers. Indictments and informations will be assigned 1/2 to Judge Rath and 1/2 to Judge Myers. The Petty Offense Docket will rotate between Judges Rath and Myers.

**(3) EASTERN DIVISION** - All criminal matters are assigned to Magistrate Judge Parker.

- B.** All pretrial criminal motions are hereby referred to a magistrate judge for hearing and determination, with the exception of motions to dismiss or quash an indictment or information made by the defendant, motions to suppress evidence, motions *in limine* regarding evidentiary matters, motions for extensions of time with regard to matters pending before a district judge, motions for continuances and motions for severance.
- C.** All other criminal matters authorized to be handled by a magistrate judge by statute, Federal Rules of Criminal Procedure, Local Uniform Rules, or Order, including the Plan to implement the Magistrate's Act, are hereby assigned to magistrate judges for appropriate action.
- D.** Individual case exceptions to the foregoing assignment method may be directed by the Chief Judge in order to more expeditiously address particular case situations.

## **X. RECUSAL**

- A.** When the presiding district judge must recuse himself or herself from a case, the Clerk of Court will return that case to the applicable divisional draw described in Sections I and II above for automatic, random reassignment. However, any Western Division criminal case from which Judge Bramlette is recused will be returned to the Northern Division



criminal draw described in Section II A for automatic, random reassignment. Such case will remain a Western Division case.

**B.** When the assigned magistrate judge must recuse himself or herself from a case, the reassignment will be conducted in the following sequence:

**Eastern, Western and Northern Division cases:**

Isaac	→	Harris	→	Myers
Harris	→	Isaac	→	Rath
Myers	→	Harris	→	Isaac
Rath	→	Isaac	→	Harris
Parker	→	Rath	→	Myers

**Southern Division cases:**

Rath	→	Myers	→	Parker
Myers	→	Rath	→	Parker

If a case cannot be reassigned using the methodologies described above, the Chief Judge may assign the case to a judge outside thereof.

When a district judge is recused from a case and a new district judge is assigned, the magistrate judge originally assigned to the case shall remain so assigned unless otherwise ordered by the Chief Judge.

**XI. ASSIGNMENT OF BANKRUPTCY CASES TO BANKRUPTCY JUDGES.**

Pursuant to 28 U. S. C. § 157, the District Court hereby ORDERS *nunc pro tunc* that any and all cases arising under Title 11 of the United States Code and any

and all proceedings arising under Title 11 or arising in or related to a case under Title 11 shall be referred to the bankruptcy judges for the Southern District of Mississippi for consideration and resolution consistent with the law.

**XII. ASSIGNMENT OF CASES UPON SELECTION OF SUCCESSOR MAGISTRATE JUDGE.**

Upon the death or retirement of a magistrate judge, the Clerk of Court is directed to substitute the name and initials of the successor judge in place of the retiring or deceased judge in paragraphs I, II, III, VIII, IX, and X above unless otherwise directed by the Court.

**XIII. EFFECTIVE DATES.**

This order is effective March 26, 2025, and supplants all prior court case assignment orders and rules. However, the provisions of Section XI of this Order shall be effective *nunc pro tunc* to December 7, 2011.

**SO ORDERED AND ADJUDGED** this the 25<sup>th</sup> day of March 2025.

*s/ Halil Suleyman Ozerden*

HALIL SULEYMAN OZERDEN  
CHIEF UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE