

**HONORABLE GONZALO P. CURIEL**  
**UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE**  
**CRIMINAL PRETRIAL & TRIAL PROCEDURES**

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**Please note:** The Court provides this information to counsel and parties for general guidance. Counsel must still strictly adhere to all court orders. The Court may vary these procedures as appropriate in any case.

**Communication with the Court or Chambers**

Counsel shall refrain from writing unauthorized letters to the Court or sending the Court copies of letters addressed to others. Authorized communications shall be formally submitted in compliance with the Local Rules, the Federal Rules of Criminal Procedure, and the Federal Rules of Evidence.

**Court Calendar**

Criminal matters are generally heard on Fridays at 8:30 a.m. and 10:30 a.m. unless otherwise scheduled by the Court.

**Pretrial Motions**

Magistrate judges will schedule the motion/trial setting hearing on the Friday calendar five to six weeks from the initial appearance before the magistrate judge. All motions, except motions in limine and those pertaining to sentencing matters, shall be filed at least **twenty-one calendar days** before the hearing date. Opposition briefs shall be filed at least **seven calendar days** before the hearing date.

Applications for an order shortening time are disfavored and must be supported by a non-conclusory affidavit signed by counsel setting forth facts establishing specific good cause.

**Disposition Hearings**

Rule 11 guilty pleas may be entered before a magistrate judge unless the parties anticipate immediate sentencing or if the case involves a mandatory minimum sentence. Counsel shall contact the courtroom deputy clerk for the magistrate judge assigned to the case or the duty magistrate judge to schedule the disposition hearing and immediately inform the courtroom deputy clerk for Judge Curiel of the disposition hearing. See Crim. Local Rule 11.2.

**Trial Procedures**

1. **Motions in Limine.** At the pretrial motions date, the Court will schedule a hearing date for motions in limine. Motions in limine are due two weeks before the hearing, with any opposition due one week before the hearing.

2. **Trial Briefs.** Pursuant to Criminal Local Rule 23.1, the parties may, no later than **five court days** before the date of trial, serve and file briefs on all significant disputed issues of law, including foreseeable procedural and evidentiary issues.
3. **Proposed Voir Dire Questions & Verdict Forms.** Counsel may serve and file proposed voir dire questions and verdict forms on the day set for motions in limine.
4. **Jury Instructions.** The parties should each submit proposed jury instructions to the Court on the first day of trial, unless otherwise ordered by the Court. Supplemental instructions must be filed and served as soon as the need for the instruction becomes apparent.

The Court prefers to use the most current Model Jury Instructions for the Ninth Circuit whenever possible. The Court will accept other proposed jury instructions, but counsel must cite the authority supporting the proposed instructions. Counsel must specifically identify any modification made to Ninth Circuit Model Instructions and provide authority supporting the modification.

Before the case is submitted to the jury, the Court will provide each party with the jury instructions the Court intends to use. It is each party's responsibility to carefully review the instructions and make suggestions to the Court if modifications appear necessary.

5. **Jury Selection.** The Court will conduct the initial voir dire. On a case-by-case basis, the Court may permit follow-up voir dire conducted by the attorneys. If attorney voir dire is permitted, ten minutes per side will generally be allowed in non-complex cases.
6. **Presentation of Evidence.** Counsel may not enter the well, except during voir dire, opening statements, and closing argument.

Counsel must examine all witnesses from the podium.

Counsel must seek permission from the Court before approaching witnesses. When permission is granted, counsel must keep his or her visit to the witness stand brief, i.e., by quickly orienting the witness to an exhibit and then returning to the podium.

When objecting, counsel may only state the legal ground for the objection, e.g., "Objection. Hearsay." Speaking objections are not permitted, unless the Court requests further information from counsel.

When a party has more than one lawyer, only one lawyer may conduct the examination of a given witness, and only that lawyer may make objections concerning that witness.

7. **Sidebar Conferences.** The Court strives to use the jurors' time efficiently by starting on time and otherwise avoiding unnecessary delays during trial. To that end, *sidebar conferences are discouraged and are rarely granted*. Where feasible, counsel shall raise issues that should be considered outside the jury's presence before the court session

begins, at the beginning of a recess, during the jury's lunch break, or at the end of the trial day.

8. **Exhibits.** Government counsel must provide a list of exhibits to the courtroom deputy clerk on the first day of trial. All exhibits must be pre-marked on the first day of trial. Exhibit stickers may be obtained from the Clerk's Office or the courtroom deputy clerk in advance of trial.
9. **Trial Schedule.** Generally, trials are scheduled from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Monday through Thursday. Jury deliberations proceed from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. The Court will notify the parties of deviations from this schedule and will attempt to accommodate jurors, witnesses, and counsel if a conflict arises.

### **Sentencing**

Sentencing procedures are set forth in Criminal Local Rule 32.1. If the parties request, the Court may elect to proceed with immediate sentencing in immigration cases, but only where the Court has sufficient information in the record to meaningfully exercise its sentencing authority.

A party seeking a continuance of a sentencing hearing must notify the courtroom deputy clerk at the earliest possible time, but in no event later than noon on the Tuesday prior to the Friday sentencing date.

Counsel shall file the completed sentencing summary charts required by Criminal Local Rule 32.1.a.9 in the record no later than **five court days** before the sentencing hearing.

### **Courtroom Staff**

Kimmi Ridgeway, Courtroom Deputy Clerk  
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