



JUDGE SUNIL R. HARJANI
219 South Dearborn Street
Courtroom 1925
Chambers 1956
Chicago, IL 60604
(312) 435-3000

PREPARATION OF FINAL PRETRIAL ORDER FOR CIVIL CASES

The parties shall jointly prepare and submit a Final Pretrial Order on the date set containing the following components, unless otherwise ordered by the Court. **An original and two (2) copies of the Final Proposed Pretrial Order shall be delivered to chambers.**

Contents of the Pretrial Order

The subjects discussed below should be addressed in separate, tabbed and numbered sections of the Pretrial Order. The Pretrial Order either should be placed in a three-hole binder or spiral bound on the left side of the document, with tabs on the right side.

1. **Jurisdiction.** A concise statement of the basis for federal subject matter jurisdiction, and if jurisdiction is disputed, the nature and basis of the dispute.
2. **Trial Attorneys.** A list of the attorneys trying the case that includes their business and cell phone numbers and email addresses.
3. **Case Statement.** A concise joint statement of the case that includes the nature of the case; the claims, counterclaims and cross-claims; and the defenses raised to those claims. In a jury case, this statement will be read to the jury during *voir dire*.
4. **Relief Sought.** An itemization of the damages and other relief sought.
5. **Contested Issues.** A concise, numbered list of the contested issues of fact and/or law.

6. **Witnesses.** A list of names and addresses of all witnesses, including experts: (a) who will be called; (b) who may be called; and (c) whose testimony will be presented by deposition or other prior testimony (indicating whether the presentation will be by transcript or video). A very brief description of the witness's role in the case shall also be included. In a jury trial, this list will be read to the jury during *voir dire*. Any witness not listed in the Pretrial Order will be precluded from testifying absent a showing of good cause, except that each party reserves the right to call such rebuttal witnesses (who are not presently identifiable as rebuttal witnesses) as may be necessary.
 - a. **Objections.** A statement of any objections to the calling of any witness, including expert witnesses. Objections not made in the Pretrial Order will be deemed waived absent a showing of good cause. If the objection is the subject of a motion *in limine*, the Pretrial Order may simply refer to the motion and need not repeat the grounds stated in the motion.
 - b. **Depositions and Other Prior Testimony.** For witnesses who will be presented by deposition or other prior testimony, the Pretrial Order must include for each such witness a chart containing the following information: (a) the testimony that each side seeks to present, by page and line number; (b) a concise statement of objections to any testimony and the basis for the objections with appropriate citations to evidentiary rules or case law; and (c) a concise statement of the asserted basis of admissibility with appropriate citations to evidentiary rules or case law. Objections not made in the Pretrial Order will be deemed waived absent a showing of good cause. *If the Court will be called upon to rule upon objections, a copy of the deposition is to be provided with the Pretrial Order.*
7. **Exhibits.** A list of all exhibits a party may introduce at trial, as well as any demonstrative exhibits or evidence, identified by trial exhibit number, and a section that provides a brief description of each exhibit. Joint exhibits should be denominated "JX," plaintiff's exhibits, "PX," and defendant's exhibits, "DX." Any exhibit not listed in the Pretrial Order will be excluded from evidence absent a showing of good cause.
 - a. **Objections.** A statement of any objections to each exhibit. Objections not made in the Pretrial Order will be deemed waived absent a showing of good cause. The parties should follow a similar format for objections and asserted bases of admissibility to that outlined above for deposition or other prior testimony designations. The parties must provide the Court with two exhibit binders containing the objected-to deposition testimony and exhibits.

- b. **Exhibits to Be Displayed to Jury.** If an exhibit is to be displayed to the jury, the party intending to display the exhibit must make sufficient copies for all jurors or must use an enlargement or projection of the exhibit. If you need assistance with understanding how to operate the courtroom display technology equipment, counsel must contact the Systems Department within the Clerk's Office at least 2 weeks before trial.
 - c. **Final Exhibits for Trial.** Two bench books of each party's exhibits are to be delivered to the Court at or before the start of trial.
8. **Type and Length of Trial.** A statement of whether the trial will be a bench trial or jury trial, and a realistic estimate of the length of the trial. The Court holds "long trial days" that run from 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. and the attorneys will have a minimum of six hours on-the-record trial days.
9. **Proposed Findings and Conclusions.** For a bench trial, proposed findings of fact and conclusions of law. Ordinarily, Judge Harjani will direct the parties to file their proposed findings of fact with citations to the trial transcript and conclusions of law after the bench trial. However, Judge Harjani may request proposed findings of fact and conclusions of law prior to the conclusion of the bench trial. The parties shall confer about proposed findings of fact and conclusions of law as to which they agree and submit those to the Court. Each party also shall submit its separate proposed findings of fact and conclusions of law. Proposed findings of fact and conclusions of law should be filed on the docket and emailed to the Proposed Order Box as a Word version.
10. **Proposed Voir Dire Questions.** For a jury trial, the parties should propose any unique *voir dire* questions for the questionnaire. Judge Harjani often uses a written questionnaire as the initial basis for *voir dire*, which has the standard questions that most district judges use. Counsel will be given copies of the completed questionnaires before jury selection begins. Judge Harjani will also pose additional *voir dire* questions in open court that are not suitable for the questionnaire. The parties should assume that the "general" questions typically asked by judges during jury selection will be asked and should not duplicate them in the Final Pretrial Order. Rather, the parties should focus their attention on areas of questioning that are specific to the case. The parties should include any particular *voir dire* questions they want asked in the Pretrial Order. If any question proposed by an opposing party is objected to, the objection should be noted in the Pretrial Order.
11. **Proposed Jury Instructions / Verdict Form.** For a jury trial, proposed jury instructions are to be in Word and included both in the written Pretrial Order

and emailed to the Proposed Order Box. When there is a Seventh Circuit pattern jury instruction on point, that instruction should be used absent a good reason for not doing so.

- a. **Agreed Instructions.** The parties are directed to confer and agree upon jury instructions to the extent possible prior to the submission of the jury instructions to the Court. Agreed proposed instructions should be marked as such and shall be numbered consecutively.
 - b. **Disputed Instructions.** Proposed instructions that are not agreed shall be numbered, shall identify the proponent of the instruction, and shall include supporting authority. Objections to any proposed instructions must be set forth in writing and shall include supporting authority.
12. **Stipulations.** A listing of any stipulations agreed to by the parties, including stipulations regarding the presentation or admissibility of evidence.
 13. **Settlement Status.** A statement summarizing the current status of settlement negotiations and whether the parties believe a pretrial settlement conference would be productive.
 14. **Trial Briefs.** Trial briefs are required as part of the Pretrial Order in jury and bench trials. Any trial briefs shall be limited to 10 pages without leave of court. Trial briefs are intended to provide full and complete disclosure of the parties' respective theories of the case. Accordingly, each trial brief shall include the party's theory of liability or defense, the party's theory of damages or other relief in the event liability is established, and the party's theory of any anticipated motion for judgment as a matter of law. The brief shall also include citations to authorities in support of each theory stated in the brief.

Motions In Limine

The Court will set a schedule for the filing of motions *in limine* when it sets dates for the filing of the Pretrial Order. These motions and responses *should not* be bound with the Pretrial Order. They should be filed separately on the docket. Two (2) courtesy copies of any motions *in limine* shall be delivered to chambers in accordance with the Local Rules.

Judge Harjani discourages the filing of "boilerplate" motions *in limine* or motions that address matters not in dispute. Any motion *in limine* filed by a party must be accompanied by a statement that the party has conferred with the opposing party and has determined that the matter upon which a ruling is sought is actually in dispute. If the meet-and-confer process results in agreement that certain matters are inadmissible or admissible, that agreement should be memorialized in a stipulation to be provided to Judge Harjani in the Pretrial Order (*see* paragraph 12 above) or at the final pretrial conference.

Daily/Expedited Transcript and Real-Time Reporting

Any requests for daily or other expedited transcripts and real-time reporting must be made at least seven (7) days prior to trial.

Instructions for Compiling Final Pretrial Order

Plaintiff's counsel has the responsibility to prepare the initial draft of the Pretrial Order and must provide a draft to defendant's counsel no later than twenty-one (21) days before the date the Pretrial Order is due. Defendant's counsel must respond in writing to plaintiff's draft by no later than fourteen (14) days before the Pretrial Order is due, including any objections, changes, and additions to plaintiff's draft, as well as defendant's portions of the draft Pretrial Order (*e.g.*, defendant's witness list, exhibit list, and objections to exhibits and deposition or other prior testimony listed by plaintiff). The parties must meet and confer by no later than seven (7) days before the Pretrial Order is due to discuss their respective drafts and to reach agreement to the extent possible. ***These dates may be varied only by written agreement of the parties or by order of the Court.***

Following the meet-and-confer process, it is the responsibility of plaintiff's counsel, with full cooperation from defendant's counsel, to assemble the Pretrial Order for submission. The Pretrial Order should be filed on the CM/ECF system with a cover page with the case caption and the title FINAL PRETRIAL ORDER. The cover document must: (a) recite that each of the foregoing categories of materials is included, (b) state that "This Order will control the course of trial and may not be amended except by consent of the parties, or by order of the Court to prevent manifest injustice," and (c) provide spaces for the signature of counsel for each of the parties and the Court.

Pretrial Conferences

The Court will set a date for the final pretrial conference at least three weeks before trial. The purpose of this conference is to avoid surprises and to simplify the trial. At the conference, Judge Harjani will address pending motions *in limine*, objections to witnesses and exhibits, and contested jury instructions, and will discuss trial procedures and scheduling. Lead trial counsel fully prepared and with authority to discuss all aspects of the case must attend. The parties need not attend the pretrial conference unless settlement will be discussed at the conference. The parties, however, are welcome to attend the pretrial conference with their attorneys, if they wish to do so.

Jury Selection

The entire venire will enter the courtroom and be sworn in. Jurors will be seated in the jury box and in the gallery according to the random-order list. The Court, not the parties, will ask certain background questions of all jurors. Then the Court will ask follow-up questions

based on their completed juror questionnaires. After the Court's questioning, the parties will have an opportunity to question jurors about their completed questionnaires. The Court will then go to sidebar to hear challenges for cause and rule on those challenges. The parties will next submit preemptory challenges in writing simultaneously (overlapping preemptory challenges count against both sides).

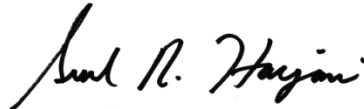
Instructions for Trial Counsel

Your compliance with the following requests will be appreciated:

- (i) Please be on time for each court session. Trial engagements take precedence over any other business. If you have matters in other courtrooms, arrange in advance to have them continued or have a colleague handle them for you.
- (ii) Contact the Systems Department within the Clerk's Office at least two weeks before trial if you need assistance with understanding how to operate the courtroom display technology equipment.
- (iii) Court time may not be used for marking exhibits. This must be done in advance of the court session.
- (iv) Please stand whenever you address the court. This includes the making of objections. (Counsel with physical disabilities will be excused from this requirement.)
- (v) Please speak into the microphone whenever speaking on the record in court. You may move away during opening and closing arguments but you must speak loudly or use a portable microphone.
- (vi) Please stand when you question witnesses. (Counsel with physical disabilities will be excused from this requirement.)
- (vii) On direct examination, if you intend to question a witness about a group of documents, avoid delays by having all the documents given to the witness when you start the examination.
- (viii) When you object in the presence of the jury, make your objection short and to the point. Do not argue the objection in the presence of the jury, and do not argue with the ruling of the court in the presence of the jury. If the matter is important and anticipated, raise the issue in the morning prior to the start of the trial.
- (ix) Do not ask the court in the presence of the jury to declare that a witness is qualified as an expert or qualified to express an expert opinion.

- (x) You must request leave of court to approach a witness to show the witness an exhibit.
- (xi) Do not ask for a recess before cross-examination. If the direct examination should end at about the time the court would recess anyway, *e.g.*, lunch time, a recess will be taken. Otherwise, be prepared to commence cross-examination immediately upon conclusion of the direct.
- (xii) Counsel are not permitted to contact jurors after trial without permission of the Court.

SO ORDERED.



Sunil R. Harjani
United States District Judge

Dated: February 17, 2026