

ADVISORY



UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF WEST VIRGINIA

To: The Members of the West Virginia State Bar

From: Robert C. Chambers, Chief Judge

Date: November 19, 2013

Content: Closure of United States District Court Courthouse Facilities at Parkersburg, West Virginia

The United States District Court for the Southern District of West Virginia announces the closure of the courthouse facilities at the Parkersburg Division. The General Services Administration (GSA) has advised the Court that it intends to close the building, which houses the United States District Court at 425 Juliana Street at Parkersburg. GSA has performed a closure study, finding that the building is in need of extensive repairs and alterations and that there is a large amount of vacancy with no serious potential for backfill. GSA has also informed the Court that the building's main tenant, the United States Post Office, has signed a letter of intent to vacate effective August 2014.

The Court regrets the loss of its courtroom at Parkersburg, but it cannot justify the expense of approximately \$1 million to \$1.5 million to taxpayers for build out costs of similar space in another location. There has not been a full-time district, magistrate, bankruptcy, or circuit judge in residence at this facility since the Honorable Charles H. Haden II, United States District Judge, relocated his office from Parkersburg to Charleston on July 1, 1992. The civil and criminal caseloads at Parkersburg since that time have continued to spiral downward, and the courtroom in the facility is a "functionally difficult courtroom" for modern trials that employ today's computer technology. In addition to the day-to-day operational costs, the annual rent for the entire court space at Parkersburg is \$132,888.48 for 11,917 square feet of space. The only District Court employee who works at the Parkersburg building has announced her retirement. All of these factors, in addition to the current fiscal climate and the sequestration under which the Judiciary is operating, have brought the Court to this cost-saving decision. Cost-saving measures, such as the relinquishment of underused courthouse space, are necessary, according to Chief Judge John G. Roberts's annual report on behalf of the federal Judiciary.

The Parkersburg Division currently serves the population of Wirt and Wood Counties. Those counties will become part of the Charleston Division of the United States District Court for the Southern District of West Virginia. The last day for full business operations available to the public at the Parkersburg District Clerk's Office is November 22, 2013. Effective November 25, 2013, all concerns relating to the Parkersburg docket should be directed to Teresa L. Deppner, Clerk, United States District Court, 2400 Robert C. Byrd United States Courthouse, 300 Virginia Street, East, Charleston, WV 25301, Telephone 304/347-3000.