

Department of Justice

§ 50.9

who are not named as parties to the action to comment on the proposed judgment prior to its entry by the court.

(b) To effectuate this policy, each proposed judgment which is within the scope of paragraph (a) of this section shall be lodged with the court as early as feasible but at least 30 days before the judgment is entered by the court. Prior to entry of the judgment, or some earlier specified date, the Department of Justice will receive and consider, and file with the court, any written comments, views or allegations relating to the proposed judgment. The Department shall reserve the right (1) to withdraw or withhold its consent to the proposed judgment if the comments, views and allegations concerning the judgment disclose facts or considerations which indicate that the proposed judgment is inappropriate, improper or inadequate and (2) to oppose an attempt by any person to intervene in the action.

(c) The Assistant Attorney General in charge of the Land and Natural Resources Division may establish procedures for implementing this policy. Where it is clear that the public interest in the policy hereby established is not compromised, the Assistant Attorney General may permit an exception to this policy in a specific case where extraordinary circumstances require a period shorter than 30 days or a procedure other than stated herein.

[Order No. 529-73, 38 FR 19029, July 17, 1973]

§ 50.8 [Reserved]

§ 50.9 Policy with regard to open judicial proceedings.

Because of the vital public interest in open judicial proceedings, the Government has a general overriding affirmative duty to oppose their closure. There is, moreover, a strong presumption against closing proceedings or portions thereof, and the Department of Justice foresees very few cases in which closure would be warranted. The Government should take a position on any motion to close a judicial proceeding, and should ordinarily oppose closure; it should move for or consent to closed proceedings only when closure is plainly essential to the interests of justice. In furtherance of the Department's

concern for the right of the public to attend judicial proceedings and the Department's obligation to the fair administration of justice, the following guidelines shall be adhered to by all attorneys for the United States.

(a) These guidelines apply to all federal trials, pre- and post-trial evidentiary proceedings, arraignments, bond hearings, plea proceedings, sentencing proceedings, or portions thereof, except as indicated in paragraph (e) of this section.

(b) A Government attorney has a compelling duty to protect the societal interest in open proceedings.

(c) A Government attorney shall not move for or consent to closure of a proceeding covered by these guidelines unless:

(1) No reasonable alternative exists for protecting the interests at stake;

(2) Closure is clearly likely to prevent the harm sought to be avoided;

(3) The degree of closure is minimized to the greatest extent possible;

(4) The public is given adequate notice of the proposed closure; and, in addition, the motion for closure is made on the record, except where the disclosure of the details of the motion papers would clearly defeat the reason for closure specified under paragraph (c)(6) of this section;

(5) Transcripts of the closed proceedings will be unsealed as soon as the interests requiring closure no longer obtain; and

(6) Failure to close the proceedings will produce;

(i) A substantial likelihood of denial of the right of any person to a fair trial; or

(ii) A substantial likelihood of imminent danger to the safety of parties, witnesses, or other persons; or

(iii) A substantial likelihood that ongoing investigations will be seriously jeopardized.

(d) A government attorney shall not move for or consent to the closure of any proceeding, civil or criminal, except with the express authorization of:

(1) The Deputy Attorney General, or,

(2) The Associate Attorney General, if the Division seeking authorization is under the supervision of the Associate Attorney General.

(e) These guidelines do not apply to: