

LAWYERS' COMMITTEE FOR

OF THE SAN FRANCISCO BAY AREA

January 8, 2010

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Honorable Phyllis Hamilton
 Chair of the Rules Committee
 United States Courthouse
 1301 Clay Street
 Oakland, California 94612

Honorable Vaughn Walker
 Chief Judge
 United States Courthouse
 450 Golden Gate Avenue
 San Francisco, California 94102

Re: Proposed Revision to Local Rule 77-3

Dear Honorable Judge Hamilton and Chief Judge Walker:

On behalf of the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights of the San Francisco Bay Area, I write this letter in support of the Court's effort to expand public access to court proceedings by amending Civil Local Rule 77-3.

Our organization is affiliated with the national Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law, which was formed in 1963 at the request of President John F. Kennedy to advance civil rights. Our organization's mission is to champion the legal rights of people of color, poor people, immigrants and refugees, with a special commitment to African-Americans.

Permitting public broadcasting of proceedings in the Northern District will help educate the public about the role of courts in our judicial system and raise the public's awareness of civil rights cases that are frequently litigated in this Court. The upcoming trial in *Perry v. Schwarzenegger* regarding the constitutionality of Proposition 8 is just one example of the type of case where the public would benefit from witnessing the proceedings, given the issues at stake and the impact that the case could have statewide and nationally.

We recognize and share some of the concerns that have been expressed about the public broadcasting of judicial proceedings. In particular, we work with vulnerable populations, including immigrant and refugee clients and survivors of human trafficking, who could be intimidated, in certain instances, by having proceedings videotaped. However, we believe that these concerns can be addressed by developing appropriate guidelines and safeguards regarding the broadcasting of proceedings, in consultation with interested members of the public and interested community groups.

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Neil Lawrence

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cc: Neil Lawrence, 415.774.1111

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We thank the Court for taking this important step to expand the public's access to court proceedings and for providing us with the opportunity to offer our feedback.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Lateefah Simon". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "L" and "S".

Lateefah Simon
Executive Director

cc: Honorable Alex Kozinski
Chief Judge, Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals