



CHAMBERS OF
MICHAEL P. MCCUSKEY
CHIEF JUDGE

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
CENTRAL DISTRICT OF ILLINOIS
318 U.S. COURTHOUSE
201 SOUTH VINE STREET
URBANA, ILLINOIS 61802

TELEPHONE 217-373-5837
FACSIMILE 217-373-5855

September 25, 2007

Administrative Office of the United States Courts
Court Administration Policy Staff
Attention: Privacy Comments
Suite 4-560
One Columbus Circle, N.E.
Washington, D.C. 20544

Re: Electronic Public Access to Plea Agreements

To Whom It May Concern:

On August 30, 2007, John R. Tunheim, Chair of the Committee on Court Administration and Case Management, issued a memo to all Chief Judges regarding consideration of a proposal by the Department of Justice to restrict public internet access to plea agreements to lessen the degree to which federal court case file documents showing cooperation of witnesses appear on websites such as www.whosarat.com.

This letter will now respond to the request for public comment from the judges of the Central District of Illinois.

Our Court has previously adopted a rule to restrict public internet users or pacer users from having access to plea agreements or other documents in criminal cases which identify a person who is or has cooperated with law enforcement investigations. As such, we have no disagreement with the Justice Department's request to restrict public internet access to these documents. However, our local rule does not limit public access to plea agreements and other documents which are not under seal at the various courthouses throughout the Central District of Illinois. These documents are available for public inspection at the various clerk's offices in the district.

If you have any questions or need additional comments, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in green ink that reads "Michael P. McCuskey". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Michael P. McCuskey
Chief U.S. District Judge

MPM:mb