



# **PLAN FOR PROMPT DISPOSITION OF CRIMINAL CASES**

**January 27, 2012**

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## **Preface.**

Pursuant to the requirements of Rule 50 of the Federal Rules of Criminal Procedure, the Speedy Trial Act of 1974 (18 U.S.C. § 3161, *et seq.*), the Speedy Trial Act Amendments Act of 1979 (Pub. L. 96-43, 93 Stat. 327), and the Federal Juvenile Delinquency Act (18 U.S.C. §§ 5036, 5037), the United States District Court for the District of Vermont adopts the following plan to minimize undue delay and to further the prompt disposition of criminal cases and certain juvenile proceedings.

This is a revision of the Speedy Trial Plan adopted on July 1, 1980. Copies of the plan are public and available for inspection at the Office of the Clerk, U.S. District Court at Burlington, and may be found on the court's web page at [www.vtd.uscourts.gov](http://www.vtd.uscourts.gov). (18 U.S.C. § 3165(f)).

## **1. Applicability.**

### **(a) Offenses.**

The time limits set forth herein are applicable to all criminal cases triable in this court, including cases triable by a United States magistrate judge, except for petty offenses as defined in 18 U.S.C. § 19 and Rule 58(a) of the Federal Rules of Criminal Procedure.

They are not applicable to proceedings under the Federal Juvenile Delinquency Act except as specifically provided.

### **(b) Persons.**

The time limits are applicable to persons accused who have not been indicted or charged by information, as well as those who have, and the word “defendant” includes such persons unless the context indicates otherwise.

## **2. Priorities in Scheduling Criminal Cases.**

Preference in scheduling shall be given to criminal proceedings as far as practicable as required by Rule 50 of the Federal Rules of Criminal Procedure. The trial of defendants in custody solely because they are awaiting trial and of high-risk defendants as defined in Section 5 of this plan shall be given preference over other criminal cases. 18 U.S.C. § 3164(a).

## **3. Time Within Which an Indictment or Information Must Be Filed.**

### **(a) Time Limits.**

If an individual is arrested or served with a summons, and the complaint charges an offense to be prosecuted in this district, any indictment or information subsequently filed in connection with such charge shall be filed within thirty days of the arrest or the service of summons. 18 U.S.C. § 3161(b).

### **(b) Grand Jury Not in Session.**

If the defendant is charged with a felony to be prosecuted in this district, and no grand jury in the district has been in session during the thirty day period prescribed in subsection (a), such period shall be extended an additional thirty days. 18 U.S.C. § 3161(b).

**(c) Measurement of Time Periods.**

If a person has not been arrested or served with a summons on a federal charge, an arrest will be deemed to have been made at such time as the person:

- (1) is held in custody solely for the purpose of responding to a federal charge;
- (2) is delivered to the custody of a federal official in connection with a federal charge; or
- (3) appears before a judicial officer in connection with a federal charge.

**(d) Related Procedures.**

- (1) At the time of the earliest appearance before a judicial officer of a person who has been arrested for an offense not charged in an indictment or information, the judicial officer shall establish for the record the date on which the arrest took place.
- (2) In the absence of a showing to the contrary, a summons shall be considered to have been served on the date of service shown on the return thereof.

**4. Time Within Which Trial Must Commence<sup>1</sup>.**

**(a) Time Limits.**

The trial of a defendant shall commence not later than seventy days after the last to occur of the following dates:

- (1) the date on which an indictment or information is filed in this district;
- (2) the date on which a sealed indictment or information is unsealed; or
- (3) the date of the defendant's first appearance before a judicial officer of this district.

18 U.S.C. § 3161(c)(1).

**(b) Retrial; Trial After Reinstatement of an Indictment or Information.**

The retrial of a defendant shall commence within seventy days from the date the order occasioning the retrial becomes final, as shall the trial of a defendant upon an indictment or information dismissed by a trial court and reinstated following an appeal. If the retrial or trial follows an appeal or collateral attack, the court may extend the period if

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<sup>1</sup> If a defendant's presence has been obtained through the filing of a detainer with state authorities, the Interstate Agreement on Detainers, 18 U.S.C., Appendix 2, may require that trial commence before the deadline established by the Speedy Trial Act, whichever date is more stringent. *See U.S. v. Mauro*, 436 U.S. 340, 356-57 n.24 (1978).

unavailability of witnesses or other factors resulting from passage of time make trial within seventy days impractical. The extended period shall not exceed 180 days. 18 U.S.C. § 3161(d)(2), (e).

**(c) Withdrawal of Plea.**

If a defendant enters a plea of guilty or *nolo contendere* to any or all charges in an indictment or information and is subsequently permitted to withdraw it, the time limit shall be determined for all counts as if the indictment or information were filed on the day the order permitting withdrawal of the plea became final. 18 U.S.C. § 3161(I).

**(d) Superseding Charges.**

If, after an indictment or information has been filed, a complaint, indictment, or information is filed which charges the defendant with the same offense or with an offense required to be joined with that offense, the time limit applicable to the subsequent charge will be determined as follows:

- (1) If the original indictment or information was dismissed on motion of the defendant before the filing of the subsequent charge, the time limit shall be determined without regard to the existence of the original charge. 18 U.S.C. § 3161(d)(1).
- (2) If the original indictment or information was dismissed on motion of the United States Attorney before the filing of the subsequent charge, the trial shall commence within the time limit for commencement of trial on the original indictment or information, but the period between the dismissal of the original indictment or information and the date the time would have commenced to run on the subsequent charge, had there been no previous charge, shall be excluded from the computation. 18 U.S.C. § 3161(h)(5).
- (3) If the original indictment or information is pending at the time the subsequent charge is filed, the trial shall commence within the time limit for commencement of trial on the original indictment or information.
- (4) If the subsequent charge is by complaint, the formal time limit within which an indictment or information must be obtained on the charge (18 U.S.C. § 3161(b)) shall run from the date of the subsequent charge, without regard to the existence of the original indictment or information. Because the time limit for the commencement of

trial runs from the date of the original indictment or information, the subsequent indictment or information may have to be returned sooner than allowed in 18 U.S.C. § 3161(b) in order to comply with the time limit for commencement of trial. 18 U.S.C. § 3161(d)(1).

**(e) Measurement of Time Periods.**

For the purpose of this section:

- (1) If a defendant signs a written consent to be tried before a magistrate judge and no indictment or information charging the offense has been filed, the time limit shall run from the date of such consent.
- (2) In the event of a transfer to this district under Rule 20 of the Federal Rules of Criminal Procedure, the indictment or information shall be deemed filed in this district when the papers in the proceeding are received electronically or certified copies thereof are received and filed by the clerk.
- (3) A trial in a jury case shall be deemed to commence at the beginning of voir dire.
- (4) A trial in a non-jury case shall be deemed to commence on the day the case is called, provided that some step in the trial procedure immediately follows.

**(f) Related Procedures.**

- (1) At the time of the defendant's earliest appearance before a judicial officer of this district, the officer will take appropriate steps to assure that the defendant is represented by counsel and shall appoint counsel where appropriate under the Criminal Justice Act, Rule 44 of the Federal Rules of Criminal Procedure, and the court's Criminal Justice Act Plan.
- (2) The court shall have sole responsibility for setting cases for trial after consultation with counsel. At the time of arraignment or as soon thereafter as is practicable, each case will be set for trial on a day certain or listed for trial on a weekly or other short-term calendar. 18 U.S.C. § 3161(a).
- (3) Individual calendars shall be managed so that it will be reasonably anticipated that every criminal case set for trial will be reached during the week of original setting. Scheduling conflicts of the parties are not by themselves grounds for a continuance or



delay unless the court has made findings that the ends of justice are served by the delay or another exclusion applies.

## **5. Defendants in Custody and High-Risk Defendants.**

### **(a) Time Limits.**

In accordance with 18 U.S.C. § 3164(b), excluding the periods of delay enumerated in section 3161(h), the following time limits will also be applicable to defendants in custody and high-risk defendants as herein defined:

- (1) The trial of a high-risk defendant held in custody solely for the purpose of trial on a federal charge shall commence within ninety days following the beginning of continuous custody; and
- (2) The trial of a high-risk defendant shall commence within ninety days of the designation as high-risk. 18 U.S.C. § 3164(b).

### **(b) Definition of “High-Risk Defendant.”**

A high-risk defendant is one reasonably designated by the United States Attorney as posing a danger to himself or any other person or to the community.

### **(c) Measurement of Time Periods.**

For the purposes of this section:

- (1) A defendant is deemed to be in detention awaiting trial when he is arrested on a federal charge or otherwise held for the purpose of responding to a federal charge. Detention is deemed to be solely because the defendant is awaiting trial unless the person exercising custodial authority has an independent basis (not including a detainer) for continuing to hold the defendant.
- (2) If a case is transferred pursuant to Rule 20 of the Federal Rules of Criminal Procedure and the defendant subsequently rejects disposition under Rule 20 or the court declines to accept the plea, a new period of continuous detention awaiting trial will begin at that time.
- (3) A trial shall be deemed to commence as provided in sections 4(e) (3) and 4(e)(4).

(4) If a defendant's presence has been obtained through the filing of a detainer with state authorities, the Interstate Agreement on Detainers, 18 U.S.C. App. 2 § 1 *et seq.*, may require that trial commence before the deadline established by the Speedy Trial Act.

**(d) Related Procedures.**

(1) If a defendant is being held in custody solely for the purpose of awaiting trial, the United States Attorney shall advise the court at the earliest practicable time of the date such custody began.

(2) The United States Attorney shall advise the court at the earliest practicable time (usually at the hearing with respect to bail) if the defendant is considered by the government to be high risk.

(3) If the court finds that the filing of a "high-risk" designation as a public record may result in prejudice to the defendant, it may order the designation sealed for such period as is necessary to protect the defendant's right to a fair trial, but not beyond the time that the court's judgment in the case becomes final. During the time the designation is under seal, it shall be made known to the defendant and defendant's counsel, but shall not be made known to other persons without the permission of the court.

**6. Exclusion of Time from Computations.**

**(a) Applicability.**

In computing time limits under this plan, the periods of delay set forth in 18 U.S.C. § 3161(h) shall be excluded. Parties seeking a continuance and exclusion under 18 U.S.C. § 3161(h)(7) may do so by motion or stipulation including information sufficient to justify and support a finding that the ends of justice served by the continuance and exclusion outweigh the best interest of the public and the defendant in a speedy trial. Oral and written orders granting a delay and exclusion under 18 U.S.C. § 3161(h)(7) shall include a finding that the ends of justice served by the continuance and exclusion outweigh the best interest of the public and the defendant in a speedy trial and the reasons for such finding.

**(b) Records of Excludable Time.**

The clerk of the court shall enter on the docket, in the form prescribed by the Administrative Office of the United States Courts, information with respect to excludable periods of time for each criminal defendant. With respect to proceedings prior to the filing of an indictment or information, excludable time shall be reported to the clerk by the United States Attorney.

**(c) Stipulations.**

- (1) The attorney for the government and the attorney for the defendant may at any time enter into stipulations with respect to the accuracy of the docket entries recording excludable time.
- (2) The court will ordinarily approve stipulations regarding the accuracy of docket entries on the recording of excludable time so long as there is a basis for such stipulations in law or fact.
- (3) Any court-approved stipulation shall apply to any non-severed defendant for the limited purpose of determining whether time has run under the Speedy Trial Act.

**(d) Pre-Indictment Procedures.**

- (1) In the event that the United States Attorney anticipates that an indictment or information will not be filed within the time limit set forth in section 3 of this plan, he or she may file a written motion with the court for a determination of excludable time. In the event that the United States Attorney seeks a continuance under 18 U.S.C. § 3161(h)(7), he or she shall file a written motion with the court requesting such a continuance.
- (2) The motion of the United States Attorney shall state: (i) the period of time proposed for exclusion, and (ii) the basis of the proposed exclusion. If the motion is for a continuance under 18 U.S.C. § 3161(h)(7), it shall also state whether or not the defendant is being held in custody on the basis of the complaint. In appropriate circumstances, the motion may include a request that some or all of the supporting material be considered *ex parte* and *in camera*.

(3) The court may grant a continuance under 18 U.S.C. § 3161(h)(7) for either a specific period of time or a period to be determined by reference to an event (such as recovery from illness) not within the control of the government. If the continuance is to a date not certain, the court shall require one or both parties to inform the court promptly when and if the circumstances that justify the continuance no longer exist. In addition, the court shall require one or both parties to file periodic reports bearing on the continued existence of such circumstances. The court shall determine the frequency of such reports in light of the facts of the particular case.

**(e) Post-Indictment Procedures.**

(1) In the event that the court extends the time limits set forth in sections 3 or 4 of this plan, the court shall determine whether the limit may be recomputed by excluding time pursuant to 18 U.S.C. § 3161(h).

(2) If it is determined that a continuance is justified, the court shall set forth its findings in the record, either orally or in writing. If the continuance is granted under 18 U.S.C. § 3161(h)(7), the court shall also set forth its reasons for finding that the ends of justice served by granting the continuance outweigh the best interests of the public and the defendant in a speedy trial. If the continuance is to a date not certain, the court shall require one or both parties to inform the court promptly when and if the circumstances that justify the continuance no longer exist. In addition, the court shall require one or both parties to file periodic reports bearing on the continued existence of such circumstances. The court shall determine the frequency of such reports in light of the facts of the particular case. The court must then make findings that the delays served the interest of justice.

**7. Minimum Period for Defense Preparation.**

Unless the defendant consents in writing to the contrary, the trial shall not commence earlier than thirty days from the date on which the defendant first appears through counsel or expressly waives counsel and elects to proceed *pro se*. In circumstances in which the seventy-day time limit for commencing trial on a charge in an indictment or information is determined

by reference to an earlier indictment or information pursuant to section 4(d) of this plan, the thirty-day minimum period shall also be determined by reference to the earlier indictment or information. When prosecution is resumed on an original indictment or information following a mistrial, appeal, or withdrawal of a guilty plea, a new thirty-day minimum period will not begin to run. The court will in all cases schedule trials so as to permit defense counsel adequate preparation time in light of all the circumstances. 18 U.S.C. § 3161(c)(2).

## **8. Time Within Which Defendant Should Be Sentenced.**

### **(a) Time Limit.**

Sentencing proceedings shall be scheduled no earlier than seventy five days following the entry of a verdict of guilty or a plea of guilty or *nolo contendere* unless all parties agree that, in the interest of justice, an earlier date should be set.

### **(b) Related Procedures.**

Presentence investigations and reports shall be prepared in accordance with Rule 32 of the Federal Rules of Criminal Procedure and Rule 32 of the Local Rules of Criminal Procedure. If the defendant and defense counsel consent thereto, a presentence investigation may be commenced prior to a plea of guilty or *nolo contendere* or a conviction.

## **9. Juvenile Proceedings.**

### **(a) Time within Which Trial Must Commence.**

An alleged delinquent who is in detention pending trial shall be brought to trial within thirty days of the date on which such detention commenced, as provided in 18 U.S.C. § 5036.

### **(b) Time of Dispositional Hearing.**

If a juvenile is adjudicated delinquent, a separate dispositional hearing shall be held no later than twenty court days after trial, unless the court has ordered further study of the juvenile in accordance with 18 U.S.C. § 5037(e).

## **10. Sanctions.**

### **(a) Dismissal or Release from Custody.**

Failure to comply with the requirements of the Speedy Trial Act may entitle the defendant to dismissal of the charges against him or her or to release from pretrial custody. Nothing in this plan shall be construed to require that a case be dismissed or a defendant be released from custody in circumstances in which such action would not be required by 18 U.S.C. §§ 3162 and 3164.<sup>2</sup>

### **(b) High-Risk Defendants.**

A high-risk defendant whose trial has not commenced within the time limit set forth in 18 U.S.C. § 3164(b) shall, if the failure to commence trial was through no fault of the attorney for the government, have his or her release conditions automatically reviewed. A designated releasee, as specified in 18 U.S.C. § 3164(b), who is found by the court to have intentionally delayed the trial of his or her case shall be subject to an order of the court modifying his or her nonfinancial conditions of release to ensure that he or she shall appear at trial as required. 18 U.S.C. § 3164(c).

### **(c) Discipline of Attorneys.**

In a case in which counsel (1) knowingly allows the case to be set for trial without disclosing the fact that a necessary witness would be unavailable for trial, (2) files a motion solely for the purpose of delay which counsel knows is frivolous and without merit, (3) makes a statement for the purpose of obtaining a continuance which counsel knows to be false and which is material to the granting of the continuance, or (4) otherwise willfully fails to proceed to trial without justification consistent with 18 U.S.C. § 3161, the court may sanction such counsel as provided in 18 U.S.C. § 3162(b), (c).

### **(d) Alleged Juvenile Delinquents.**

An alleged delinquent in custody whose trial has not commenced within the time limit set forth in 18 U.S.C. § 5036 shall be entitled to dismissal of his or her case pursuant to that

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<sup>2</sup> Dismissal may also be required in some cases under the Interstate Agreement on Detainers, 18 U.S.C., Appendix 2.

section unless the Attorney General shows that the delay was consented to or caused by the juvenile or his or her counsel, or would be in the interest of justice in the particular case.

### **11. Persons Serving Terms of Imprisonment.**

If the United States Attorney knows that a person charged with an offense is serving a term of imprisonment in any penal institution, he or she shall promptly seek to obtain the presence of the prisoner for trial, or cause a detainer to be filed, in accordance with the provisions of 18 U.S.C. § 3161(j).

### **12. Approval.**

This revision to the district's plan was approved by the court on the 27th day of January, 2012, and shall become effective upon the approval of the reviewing panel in accordance with 18 U.S.C. § 3165(d).