

## **Rule 21. Writs of Mandamus and Prohibition, and Other Extraordinary Writs**

### **(a) Mandamus or Prohibition to a Court: Petition, Filing, Service, and Docketing.**

- (1) A party petitioning for a writ of mandamus or prohibition directed to a court must file the petition with the circuit clerk and serve it on all parties to the proceeding in the trial court. The party must also provide a copy to the trial-court judge. All parties to the proceeding in the trial court other than the petitioner are respondents for all purposes.
- (2) (A) The petition must be titled "In re [name of petitioner]."
  - (B) The petition must state:
    - (i) the relief sought;
    - (ii) the issues presented;
    - (iii) the facts necessary to understand the issue presented by the petition; and
    - (iv) the reasons why the writ should issue.
  - (C) The petition must include a copy of any order or opinion or parts of the record that may be essential to understand the matters set forth in the petition.
- (3) Upon receiving the prescribed docket fee, the clerk must docket the petition and submit it to the court.

### **(b) Denial; Order Directing Answer; Briefs; Precedence.**

- (1) The court may deny the petition without an answer. Otherwise, it must order the respondent, if any, to answer within a fixed time.
- (2) The clerk must serve the order to respond on all persons directed to respond.
- (3) Two or more respondents may answer jointly.
- (4) The court of appeals may invite or order the trial-court judge to address the petition or may invite an amicus curiae to do so. The trial-court judge may request permission to address the petition but may not do so unless invited or ordered to do so by the court of appeals.
- (5) If briefing or oral argument is required, the clerk must advise the parties, and when appropriate, the trial-court judge or amicus curiae.
- (6) The proceeding must be given preference over ordinary civil cases.
- (7) The circuit clerk must send a copy of the final disposition to the trial-court judge.

**(c) Other Extraordinary Writs.** An application for an extraordinary writ other than one provided for in Rule 21(a) must be made by filing a petition with the circuit clerk and serving it on the respondents. Proceedings on the application must conform, so far as is practicable, to the procedures prescribed in Rule 21(a) and (b).

**(d) Form of Papers; Number of Copies; Length Limits.** All papers must conform to Rule 32(c)(2). An original and 3 copies must be filed unless the court requires the filing of a different number by local rule or by order in a particular case. Except by the court's permission, and excluding the accompanying documents required by Rule 21(a)(2)(C):

(1) a paper produced using a computer must not exceed 7,800 words; and

(2) a handwritten or typewritten paper must not exceed 30 pages.

***Local Rule 21(a). Case Captions for Extraordinary Writs.***

*A petition for a writ of mandamus or writ of prohibition shall not bear the name of the district judge, but shall be entitled simply "In re \_\_\_\_\_, Petitioner." To the extent that relief is requested of a particular judge, unless otherwise ordered, the judge shall be represented pro forma by counsel for the party opposing the relief, who shall appear in the name of the party and not that of the judge.*

***Local Rule 21(b). Petitions for Mandamus or Prohibition.***

*Strict compliance with the requirements of FRAP 21 is required of all petitioners, even pro se litigants. Petitioner must pay the prescribed docket fee of \$600, payable to the Clerk, U.S. Court of Appeals; submit the forms required by Local Rule 21(c)(1) for cases subject to that Local Rule; or submit a properly executed application for leave to proceed in forma pauperis. The parties are required to submit Disclosure of Corporate Affiliations statements with the petition and answer. See FRAP 26.1 and Local Rule 26.1.*

*After docketing, the clerk shall submit the application to a three-judge panel. A motion for emergency relief pending determination of the petition may be filed and will be assigned in accordance with Local Rule 27(e).*

*If the Court believes the writ should not be granted, it will deny the petition without requesting an answer. Otherwise the Court will direct the clerk to obtain an answer. After an answer has been filed, the Court ordinarily will decide the merits of the petition on the materials submitted without oral argument. Occasionally, however, briefs may be requested and the matter set for oral argument.*

***Local Rule 21(c). Fees and Costs for Prisoner Petitions for Mandamus, Prohibition, or other Extraordinary Relief.***

**(1) Proceedings Arising out of Civil Matters.** *A prisoner filing a petition for writ of mandamus, prohibition, or other extraordinary relief in a matter arising out of a civil case must pay the full \$600 docket fee. A prisoner who is unable to prepay this fee may apply to pay the fee in installments by filing with the Court of Appeals (1) an application to proceed without prepayment of fees; (2) a certified copy of the prisoner's trust fund account statement for the six-month period immediately preceding the filing of the notice of appeal, obtained from the appropriate official of each prison at which the prisoner is or was confined; and (3) a form consenting to the collection of fees from the prisoner's trust account*

The Court of Appeals will assess an initial partial filing fee of 20% of the greater of:  
(a) the average monthly deposits to the prisoner's account for the six-month period immediately preceding the filing of the petition; or  
(b) the average monthly balance in the prisoner's account for the six-month period immediately preceding the filing of the petition.

The Court will direct the agency having custody of the prisoner to collect this initial partial fee from the prisoner's trust account, and to collect the remainder of the \$600 fee, as well as any other fees, costs, or sanctions imposed by the Court, in monthly installments of 20% of the preceding month's deposits credited to the prisoner's account. The agency having custody of the prisoner shall forward payments from the prisoner's account to the Clerk, U.S. Court of Appeals, each time the amount in the account exceeds \$10 until all fees, costs, and sanctions are paid for the petition.

If a prisoner proceeding under this rule fails to file the forms or make the payments required by the Court, the appeal will be dismissed pursuant to Local Rule 45.

- (2) **Effect of Prior Actions and Appeals on Proceedings Arising out of Civil Matters.** A prisoner who has, on three or more prior occasions, while incarcerated or detained in any facility, brought an action or appeal in a court of the United States that was dismissed on the grounds that it was frivolous, malicious, or failed to state a claim upon which relief could be granted, may not proceed in a matter arising out of a civil case without prepayment of fees unless the prisoner is under imminent danger of serious physical injury.
- (3) **Proceedings Arising out of Criminal Matters.** A prisoner who is unable to prepay the full \$600 docket fee for a petition for writ of mandamus, prohibition, or other extraordinary relief arising out of a criminal case may apply to proceed without the prepayment of fees by filing an application for leave to proceed in forma pauperis.

**Local Rule 21(d). Petitions for Writ of Mandamus Pursuant to 18 U.S.C. § 3771, Crime Victims' Rights.**

A petition for writ of mandamus asserting the rights of a crime victim pursuant to 18 U.S.C. § 3771(d)(3) shall bear the caption "PETITION FOR WRIT OF MANDAMUS PURSUANT TO 18 U.S.C. § 3771, CRIME VICTIMS' RIGHTS." Before filing such a petition, the petitioner must notify the Court of Appeals that such a petition will be filed and must arrange for immediate service of the petition on the relevant parties. Such notification must be by telephone call to the Office of the Clerk during normal office hours (804-916-2700).

A failure to comply with these requirements will adversely affect the Court's ability to decide the petition within 72 hours as required by 18 U.S.C. § 3771(d)(3).

*Former Local Rule 21 redesignated Local Rule 21(a) December 1, 1995.*

*Local Rule 21(b) amended September 25, 1996, February 1, 2001, November 1, 2003, April 27, 2006, December 1, 2009, December 1, 2013, and December 1, 2023.*

*Local Rule 21(c) adopted September 25, 1996; amended November 1, 2003, April 27, 2006, December 1, 2013, and December 1, 2023.*

*Local Rule 21(d) adopted August 1, 2006.*

*Former I.O.P.-21.1 redesignated Local Rule 21(b) December 1, 1995.*