

Announcement and Request for Comment

Southern Region of the United States Courts for the District of Utah

To better serve the citizens of Southern Utah, the [United States District Court for the District of Utah](#) has formed a Southern Region within its Central Division. Please see the [Southern Region page](#) on the court website for more information. Send comments on the Southern Region to southernutahplan@utd.uscourts.gov.



Purpose of Creating Southern Region: The Federal Court has created a Southern Region of its Central Division to better serve the citizens who live in Southern Utah to:

- Provide all Utah citizens equal access to the federal judiciary to resolve disputes;
- Address the growing need for services due to increased population and business activity;
- Reduce inconvenience, time, and expense for residents of Southern Utah who are involved in federal court proceedings; and
- Accommodate community and cultural differences within the varied populations of the District of Utah.

Federal Court Divisions and Regions in Utah: Federal law currently divides the District of Utah into two divisions, the Northern Division and the Central Division. The Court has created a Southern Region within the Central Division. Public comment may result in changes to the counties assigned to the Southern Region.

Divisions and Region	Counties	Current Places of Holding Court
Northern	Box Elder, Cache, Davis, Morgan, Rich, and Weber.	Salt Lake
Central	Carbon, Daggett, Duchesne, Juab, Salt Lake, Summit, Tooele, Uintah, Utah, and Wasatch.	Salt Lake St. George
Southern Region	Beaver, Emery, Garfield, Grand, Iron, Kane, Millard, Piute, San Juan, Sanpete, Sevier, Washington, and Wayne.	Salt Lake St. George

Judicial Staffing: Currently, one **district judge** in Salt Lake City will have principal responsibility for cases arising in the Southern Region. Other district judges may on occasion take case assignments. Eventually, a district judge may reside in St. George. The **current magistrate judge**, who is based in St. George, will continue to handle misdemeanor matters and pretrial matters in felony cases until mid-2019. After that time, another magistrate judge based in St. George will assume those duties and will also handle civil pretrial matters and civil cases on consent of the parties. A **bankruptcy judge** based in Salt Lake City will continue to hold regular hearings in St. George, using video conferencing when needed.

Hearings and Trials in Southern Utah: With these changes, parties, witnesses, and counsel in most Southern Region civil, criminal, and bankruptcy cases will be able to appear in St. George. Juries will be called from the Southern Region. Cases arising in the Southern Region will usually be heard in St. George but may be heard in Salt Lake on motion, for the convenience of parties. Video conferencing is available for many matters.

Other Federal Court Services: For the foreseeable future, St. George will not have a full-service clerk’s office. A courtroom deputy will support civil, criminal, and bankruptcy hearings and trials. Paper filings by pro se litigants and by counsel in sealed cases, mail, passport surrender, and payments must be handled in Salt Lake City. Probation Officers and Deputy U.S. Marshals will continue to support the Court in St. George. These services complement the existing federal law-enforcement services in St. George provided by Immigration and Customs Enforcement, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Drug Enforcement Agency, and others.

Frequently Asked Questions Southern Region of the Central Division of the U.S. Courts for the District of Utah

How were the boundaries of the Southern Region selected? Considerations in determining the proposed boundaries include distance from Salt Lake City; boundaries of state court districts; rural vs. urban composition; and current practices of the Court, U.S. Attorney and other federal entities in handling Southern Utah case. The boundaries of the Southern Region may be changed after comment and experience.

If the Court has no courthouse in the Northern Division, why does the division exist? Court divisions develop statistical information for planning purposes. Due to space reduction initiatives, the Court ended its lease of space in Ogden a few years ago. But even though Northern Division cases are heard in Salt Lake City and randomly assigned to all judges, separate statistics assist the Court and the Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts. The development of the Southern Region will permit development of statistics for Southern Utah.

If most of Utah's population is along the Wasatch Front, why have a Southern Region? Southern Utah residents who may be parties to cases, jurors, witnesses, victims, defendants, or families of any of these individuals are inconvenienced by the time and expense of travel to Salt Lake City for federal court services. Attorneys in Southern Utah are sometimes unable, due to distance and expense, to file civil cases in federal court. The Court and federal agencies expend considerable funds for travel between Southern Utah and Salt Lake City. Also, Utah is one of the few federal court districts to have only one courthouse. A second courthouse could also help continuity of operations in the event of a disaster in Salt Lake City.

When will we be able to file federal court documents in St. George? Paper document filing is increasingly rare in the District of Utah since electronic filing was introduced in 2005. Attorneys are required to file electronically. And now that attorneys can file most sealed documents electronically, paper filing is even less common. Until experience supports additional staffing, St. George will not have a full-service clerk's office. Paper filings by pro se litigants and by counsel in sealed cases, mail, passport surrender, and payments must still be handled in Salt Lake City.

When will the Court have resident judges in St. George? A half-time magistrate judge has been based in St. George since 1995. Most preliminary felony and all misdemeanor matters are handled by this judge, and after May 2019, all preliminary civil matters and even civil trials (on parties' consent) will be handled by a newly appointed magistrate judge based in St. George. Assignment of one district judge to Southern Region cases may eventually result in a district judge residing in St. George

Where will court proceedings be held after 2024 when the federal court lease for the courtroom and associated offices at the Fifth District State Courthouse expires? In 2024, the State Court will need the space now leased by the Federal Court in St. George. The Court is actively working on a plan for replacement space in St. George but needs statistical evidence that will be developed through the creation of the Southern Region.

How long are comments accepted? Comments on the plan and court operations are always welcome.

More information on these topics is on the [Southern Region page](#) on the court website. Please submit comments and questions to southernutahplan@utd.uscourts.gov.