

Press Release

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Summit County Court of Common Pleas, General Division encourages attorneys with pending civil lawsuits to participate in Settlement Week 2023

According to 2022 data released by the Ohio Supreme Court, the 10 judges operating within the Summit County Court of Common Pleas, General Division have nearly twice the criminal caseload (707 per judge) as the state average (354 per judge).

In addition to their high criminal caseload, judges are also responsible for managing civil (non-criminal) caseloads. To ensure that justice is served in a timely manner for all cases brought before the court, the Summit County Court of Common Pleas, General Division has revived a mediation strategy that encourages case settlement: Settlement Week!

Settlement Week will be held Monday, October 30th through Friday, November 3rd, 2023, at the Summit County Court of Common Pleas, General Division, located at 209 South High Street in downtown Akron. Offered at no cost, the weeklong event brings civil litigants and highly-trained volunteer mediators into the courthouse to resolve civil disputes. Only civil cases that are currently pending in the Summit County Court of Common Pleas, General Division are eligible to participate.

"We are very excited to once again host Settlement Week activities in Summit County," said Summit County Court of Common Pleas, General Division Chief Magistrate and Mediation Supervisor Kandi O'Connor. "Settlement Week allows civil litigants to have their cases mediated by experienced civil trial lawyers who specialize in subject matter case law, such as: contract disputes, personal injury, property disputes, and workers compensation cases."

Mediation is any process in which a mediator, a neutral third-party, facilitates communication and negotiation between parties to help them reach a voluntary agreement regarding a dispute. The mediator provides a forum that allows parties (and their attorneys or support individuals, if present) to discuss their dispute and any other issues that may concern them. Their discussions may include everyone in the same room, or the mediator may speak with each party separately, including the attorneys, without their clients being present. The mediator also will make sure parties provide all documents, forms, or other materials needed to reach an agreement.

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In addition to the mediation services being offered, in 2023, the Summit County Court of Common Pleas, General Division established the Office of Backlog Reduction with American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) grant funding for the purpose of reducing the backlog of pending civil proceedings.

"I am honored to serve as the director of the Office of Backlog Reduction," said retired Judge Richard Reinbold. "I understand the problems Summit County Court of Common Pleas, General Division judges are experiencing and I am proud to be a part of the solution."

"Settlement Week complements the work being performed by the Summit County Court of Common Pleas, General Division Mediation Program and Office of Backlog Reduction," said Summit County Court of Common Pleas, General Division Court Executive Officer Robert Gainer. "The more civil cases that can be settled through these combined dispute-resolution efforts, the more time judges will have to meet the demands of their ever-increasing criminal caseloads."

"The filing of a lawsuit naturally creates an adversarial approach where each party is focused on presenting their best case to win. This approach can make it difficult to create a cooperative atmosphere that encourages an open dialogue to work toward the resolution of the case. Settlement Week provides litigants with an opportunity to use alternative dispute resolution to keep the lines of communication open between the parties," added O'Connor. "By creating a collaborative environment, instead of adversarial, the mediator can help the parties find common ground to work towards a mutually satisfactory resolution. Settling a civil case through mediation is quicker, more efficient, less expensive, and less stressful than a trial."

To learn more about resolving disputes through case mediation, visit <https://www.supremecourt.ohio.gov/opinions-cases/clerk-of-court/case-mediation/>.

Experienced civil trial attorneys who are interested in volunteering as mediators for this in-person event are to complete and submit the [Settlement Week 2023 Volunteer Mediator Form](#) by Wednesday, August 30, 2023.

Civil trial attorneys who would like to have their civil cases assigned to the Settlement Week 2023 roster are to complete and submit the [Settlement Week 2023 Case Request Form](#) by September 1, 2023.

For more information about Settlement Week 2023, scan the QR code or click on <https://www.summitpcourt.net/settlementweek/>



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