

NOTICE TO PRO SE LITIGANTS APPEARING BEFORE JUDGE NORMAN

Pro Se Litigants Must Read This Notice:

<https://www.txs.uscourts.gov/sites/txs/files/Pro%20Se%20Litigants%20Notice%20for%20Website.pdf>

Filing personal bankruptcy or litigating under Chapter 7, Chapter 13, or Chapter 11 takes careful preparation and understanding of legal issues. Misunderstandings of the law or making mistakes in the process can affect your rights. **Court employees and bankruptcy judges are prohibited by law from offering legal advice to you.** Should you contact this Court's staff for questions or advice, you will be directed to this document.

- You **must** file all of your schedules, statements, and pleadings at the Clerk's Office located at Federal Courthouse, 515 Rusk St. Suite 5300, Houston, Texas 77002. You may also mail your schedules, statements, and pleadings to that same address; however, mailing does not stop the running of any applicable time periods or any response deadlines. Therefore, filing by mail is discouraged. Time sensitive documents should always be filed in person at the Clerk's office. **You may not file documents with chambers staff and courtesy copies are not required.** Schedules, statements, pleadings, and hearing dates will appear on the Court's docket within two working days of the date your filings are date stamped at the Clerk's office.
- **The Court will set hearings on any application, motion, or objection you file as a *pro se* litigant; however, be aware that hearings may be canceled as set forth herein.** *Pro se* litigants are not able to set hearings due to their inability to access electronic case filing (ECF). These hearings will typically require (1) that you attend the hearing, and (2) that you give hearing notice to the parties designated by the order. You must read the order. Due to the mailing of orders to *pro se* litigants, reasonable delays in service of hearing notices with response deadlines are excused; however, you must comply with the order's terms or the motion/application/objection will be denied. Hearings are called in case order and hearing times will vary and are unpredictable depending on the Court's schedule. You may access the docket calendar on the Court's webpage. **If the Court can rule on a motion, application, or objection based on the responsive pleadings, the Court will do so and cancel the scheduled hearing. Should you fail to file a written response in opposition of a motion, application, or objection, it will usually be granted and your rights may be compromised.**
- The Court has a webpage with posted Courtroom Procedures. <https://www.txs.uscourts.gov/page/united-states-bankruptcy-judge-jeffrey-p-norman> With the exception of the setting of hearings, which the Court will set for you, all *pro se* litigants are required to comply with these Courtroom Procedures. The webpage also contains the Court's schedule. Matters scheduled for hearing are often ruled on prior to the hearing date. This may occur just before a scheduled hearing. If your hearing does not appear on the Court schedule, it is usually because the Court has ruled on the motion, application, or objection. You may inquire by email about the status of hearings that are **not** scheduled. Emails may be directed to mario_rios@txs.uscourts.gov and tracey_conrad@txs.uscourts.gov.

If you cannot attend a hearing, you must follow the Courtroom Procedures to continue a hearing. **You may not call the Court to reschedule hearings.**

- Pro Se litigants may appear by telephone and video (video is subject to the restrictions as noted on the Court's website). Video and telephone instructions are posted on the Court's website. All hearings are open to the public and may be listen to by telephone. Pro Se litigants may appear by telephone but may not present evidence or question witnesses by telephone. Pro Se litigants may present evidence and cross examine witnesses during video hearings if they appear by video. Telephone or video participation for show cause hearings is **not allowed**, except by order

The Court must also emphasize that a *pro se* filer's lack of knowledge of the Bankruptcy Code, Bankruptcy Rules, local rules, standing orders, or courtroom procedures does not preclude their application. **Again, this Court, including the Clerk of Court, courtroom staff may not provide *pro se* litigants with legal advice.** *Pro se* parties may represent themselves, but they are assured no additional rights than any other litigant. *Pro se* litigants should seriously consider hiring an attorney. ***Pro se* parties are warned that ignorance of the law or rules is not a defense or excuse.**

The following is a list of ways a lawyer can help you with your case:

- Advise you on whether to file a bankruptcy petition.
- Advise you under which chapter to file.
- Advise you on whether your debts can be discharged.
- Advise you on whether you will be able to keep your home, car, or other property after you file.
- Advise you of the tax consequences of filing.
- Advise you on whether you should continue to pay creditors.
- Explain bankruptcy law and procedures to you.
- Help you complete and file forms.
- Assist you with most aspects of your bankruptcy case.

Pro se litigants are expected to follow the rules and procedures for federal courts and should be familiar with the [United States Bankruptcy Code \(link is external\)](#), the [Federal Rules of Bankruptcy Procedure \(link is external\)](#), and the local rules of the court in which the case is filed. <https://www.txs.uscourts.gov/page/bankruptcy-local-federal-rules>

National [Bankruptcy Forms](#) are available to the public free of charge. Local Bankruptcy Forms are available at <https://www.txs.uscourts.gov/bankruptcy/bankruptcy-forms-filing-fees>. The Court does not provide any other forms.

- Use the forms that are numbered in the 100 series to file bankruptcy for individuals or married couples.

- Use the forms that are numbered in the 200 series if you are preparing a bankruptcy on behalf of a nonindividual, such as a corporation, partnership, or limited liability company (LLC).
- Sole proprietors must use the forms that are numbered in the 100 series.

Non-attorney Petition Preparers

If you file bankruptcy *pro se*, you may be offered services by non-attorney petition preparers. By law, preparers can only enter information into forms. They are prohibited from providing legal advice, explaining answers to legal questions, or assisting you in bankruptcy court. A petition preparer must sign all documents they prepare for you; they must print their name, address, and social security number on the documents; and, they must provide you with a copy of all documents. They cannot sign documents on your behalf or receive payment for court fees.

Attorney Representation

Issues regarding attorney representation may be resolved by the Court. Any requests shall be made in writing and filed with the Clerk of the Court. Requests should include a statement of the facts and the relief you request. These requests may be set for hearing and may be in the form of a motion and order. You must include your case number, as well as your full legal name, mailing address, and telephone number.