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Fractured Procedure: The Civil Justice Reform Act of 1990

Lauren Robel*

Federal district courts have viewed the Civil Justice Reform Act of 1990 as a mandate to adopt procedural rules inconsistent with existing law. But in this article, Professor Robel argues that the Act neither compels nor authorizes such local deviations. Citing examples from reforms underway in district courts nationwide, Professor Robel contends that courts' assertions of broad rulemaking authority rest on a misreading of the Act and of the compromise between Congress and the judiciary that led to its passage. Professor Robel cautions that the goal of national uniformity underlying the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure should not be compromised lightly. However, she argues that, while probably unwise, the Civil Justice Reform Act was within Congress' constitutional power to enact. She concludes by urging rulemakers to more carefully consider the costs and benefits of local rules.

For more than half a century, the normative vision animating federal civil procedure has been national uniformity and regularity in procedural rules. From the 1938 promulgation of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure through the 1988 amendments to the Rules Enabling Act, Congress has remained committed to a single set of national procedural rules for federal civil litigation.

In 1990, Congress passed the Civil Justice Reform Act (CJRA), making the federal trial courts responsible for the reduction of costs and delay. Many

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3. While Congress has appeared committed to the ideal of uniformity, that ideal has often been honored in the breach in practice in the federal trial districts. See text accompanying notes 132-139 infra.

courts have begun to implement the legislation under the misconception that it marks a major congressional departure from the conviction that federal civil procedure should be uniform across the nation. These courts believe that the CJRA launched an enormous experiment in civil procedure that promises far-reaching and unpredictable effects on federal practice.

As courts begin to wrestle with the CJRA’s requirements, the range of interpretations of the legislation has become apparent. Some courts view the Act as a grant of broad authority to adopt procedures inconsistent with the Federal Rules and with other statutory mandates. Acting under color of the CJRA, districts have ordered attorneys to disclose information to their opposition without waiting for discovery requests, required participation in alternative dispute resolution as a prerequisite to trial, and even—in the most extreme case—imposed across-the-board caps on attorney fees.\(^5\) Responses to the Act’s mandate diverge so widely that a journalist recently compared them to snowflakes.\(^6\) If these courts have won the power they believe the CJRA granted them, the uniformity and simplicity that distinguish federal practice under the national procedural rules are threatened more seriously than at any time since the 1938 enactment of the Federal Rules.\(^7\)

I argue that these courts are wrong. The CJRA neither compels nor authorizes local deviations from the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure or other statutory law.\(^8\) While the CJRA encourages a search for local solutions to the

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6. Don J. DeBenedictis, An Experiment in Reform, A.B.A. J., Aug. 1992, at 16, 16. DeBenedictis further noted that “[t]he differences are great enough that a fat report on the early plans from a special task force of the ABA Litigation Section is largely made up of charts giving side-by-side comparisons of the courts’ approaches to assorted topics.” Id.

Not only the ABA finds interpreting the broad range of courts’ responses awkward. A recent Judicial Conference Report to Congress was largely reduced to descriptions and charts tracking each district’s developments. Judicial Conference Report, supra note 5.


[b]y 1896, the ABA’s Committee on Uniformity of Procedure and Comparative Law complained that all but a few specialists in federal practice felt the need to rely on the clerk of court for guidance, and that a federal practitioner “even in his own state, felt no more certainty as to the proper procedure than if he were before a tribunal of a foreign country.” Id. at 1041 (quoting Report of A.B.A. Committee on Uniformity of Procedure and Comparative Law, 19 A.B.A. Rep. 411, 420 (1896) (alteration in Burbank)). The lack of uniformity impeded the development of interstate practice. Id. at 1042. Burbank cites “a common view of federal practice” in the pre-Rules days: “‘To the average lawyer it is Sanskrit; to the experienced federal practitioner it is monopoly; to the author of text books on federal practice it is a golden harvest.’” Id. (quoting Report of the Committee on Uniform Judicial Procedure, 46 A.B.A. Rep. 461, 466 (1921)).

problems of cost and delay, it is not a broad warrant to experiment with any procedural innovations that a district deems possibly helpful in reducing cost and delay.

Part I of this article examines the federal civil justice reform process outlined in the CJRA. Part II describes various measures adopted in implementing the statute by the first thirty-four federal trial districts to do so. It focuses on the more egregious examples of districts overreading their statutory authority to effect procedural change most broadly.

Part III examines the nature of the authority the statute actually grants. It offers, and rejects, the strongest textual argument for broad local rulemaking authority through an examination of its statutory and legislative context. Part III concludes that the CJRA was never intended to permit the range of procedural innovation it has spawned. Rather, misconceptions about the scope and intent of the legislation reflect misunderstandings about the nature of the compromise reached between the judiciary and the Congress which allowed the passage of the Act. Indeed, inattention to the statute's text has contributed to the misinterpretation of the Act.

In Part IV I evaluate and reject the recent claim that the Civil Justice Reform Act is constitutionally infirm as a violation of the separation of powers. This claim takes the procedural Babel the CJRA spawned as important evidence of Congress' incompetence in the area of judicial rulemaking. While persuasive arguments exist against the wisdom of the CJRA, Congress clearly did not exceed its power by enacting it.

Part V evaluates the impulse for local procedural innovation. Our commitment to federal civil procedural uniformity has always been incomplete: Local courts regularly operate in ways that are in tension with national norms. Should this impulse for localized procedure be respected, or even nurtured? The arguments for uniformity are strong and obvious—and carried the day in 1938, when the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure were enacted. The substantial attraction of federal litigation is in some measure due to the simplicity and coherence of the Federal Rules. I argue that while some of the reasons offered for local procedure are defensible, many are not. Before we further compromise our commitment to national procedure, we need to evaluate the situations warranting local answers to procedural problems, as well as the nature and identity of the local proceduremakers to whom we would commit these


decisions.\textsuperscript{11}

\section{I. The Civil Justice Reform Act}

In 1989, the Brookings Institution, at the suggestion of Senator Joseph Biden, chair of the Senate Judiciary Committee, convened a task force to study delay and cost in federal civil litigation.\textsuperscript{12} The task force recommended a series of case-management strategies designed to streamline the process and to attack discovery abuse.\textsuperscript{13} Senator Biden incorporated these case-management recommendations into the legislation he introduced as the Civil Justice Reform Act of 1990.\textsuperscript{14}

As first introduced, the bill would have required courts to adopt a broad range of detailed case-management procedures.\textsuperscript{15} The legislation assumed both that federal civil cases took too long and that the delay—and consequent cost—was attributable largely to lawyer avarice and judicial neglect. This implied criticism of the judiciary attracted strong opposition from federal judges.\textsuperscript{16} Through the Judicial Conference, judges voiced a series of concerns. Many felt the legislation unwisely preempted the established judicial rulemaking process. They further argued that the statute did not account for existing statutory demands on the federal courts, such as the Speedy Trial Act.\textsuperscript{17} Moreover, judges found the statute insensitive to the variety of local conditions, ranging from crowded urban dockets to relatively uncongested courts.\textsuperscript{18} In response to the judicial resistance, Senator Biden substantially restructured elements of the legislation. Most importantly, he eliminated the requirement that each district adopt identical, statutorily detailed case-management procedures.

As adopted, the CJRA requires each federal district court to implement a "civil justice expense and delay reduction plan" intended "to facilitate deliberate adjudication of civil cases on the merits, monitor discovery, improve litigation management, and ensure just, speedy, and inexpensive resolutions of civil disputes."\textsuperscript{19} Each plan is to be the product of cooperation between judges and those who use the courts. Therefore, courts must convene civil justice reform

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{11} See \textit{Proposed Amendments}, supra note 9, at 152 (Proposed Rule 83).
\bibitem{13} \textit{Brookings Report}, supra note 12, at 3.
\bibitem{15} \textit{See}, e.g., S. 2027, supra note 14, § 471(b)(2)(A) (requiring courts to adopt a case-tracking system classifying cases on intake, and specifying the provisions of an "expanded civil cover sheet" for future use in making track assignments).
\bibitem{16} \textit{See} Robel, supra note 12, at 117.
\bibitem{17} 18 U.S.C. §§ 3161-3174 (1988).
\bibitem{18} \textit{See} notes 118-120 infra and accompanying text.
\end{thebibliography}
advisory groups composed of lawyers, litigants, and the local United States Attorney or his or her designee. Each advisory group is charged with assessing the docket in order to identify trends in the demands on court resources and causes of excessive cost and delay.

The Act, however, provides no guidance on how to identify and evaluate cost and delay, nor does it tell advisory groups how to assess whether cost and delay are actually excessive. Moreover, excessive cost and delay could have any number of sources beyond the group’s reach, including lawyers’ case-management habits, the court’s managerial skills or values, clients’ expectations, congressional legislation, and decisions by the executive branch. Finally, the legislation fails to suggest how to proceed in “assessing the state of the docket.”

Despite the lack of legislative guidance, the completion of the docket-assessment process by some districts has supplied a wealth of information about the federal district courts. Most districts employed statistical data collected by the Administrative Office of the United States Courts. Many courts surveyed or interviewed lawyers and—less successfully—litigants about their litigation experiences. Most also interviewed or surveyed the judicial officers in the district.

Once its evaluation is complete, the advisory group must prepare a report for the court, assessing the extent of excessive costs and delays, recommending

20. Id. § 478(b), (d).

21. In developing its recommendations, the advisory group . . . shall promptly complete a thorough assessment of the state of the court’s civil and criminal dockets. In performing the assessment for a district court, the advisory group shall—

(A) determine the condition of the civil and criminal dockets;

(B) identify trends in case filings and in the demands being placed on the court’s resources;

(C) identify the principal causes of cost and delay in civil litigation, giving consideration to such potential causes as court procedures and the ways in which litigants and their attorneys approach and conduct litigation; and

(D) examine the extent to which costs and delays could be reduced by a better assessment of the impact of new legislation on the courts.

Id. § 472(c)(1).

22. See Patrick Johnston, Civil Justice Reform: Juggling Between Politics and Perfection, 62 Fordham L. Rev. 833, 850, 861-80 (1994) (discussing the underlying assumptions and analytical complexities of the “delay problem”); Robel, supra note 12, at 119-22 (arguing that we have few answers to the normative question of how long a case “should” take).


26. See Judicial Conference Report, supra note 5, ex. A.
remedial measures the court should adopt to reduce cost and delay, and suggesting the court either develop a plan or select a model one.\textsuperscript{27} In making its recommendations, the advisory group must consider six "principles and guidelines of litigation management and cost and delay reduction" and six "litigation management and cost and delay reduction techniques."\textsuperscript{28} These techniques, guidelines, and principles—discussed in more detail below—need only be considered; they do not have to be adopted.

The court must then consider the report and adopt a plan.\textsuperscript{29} With the exception of a limited number of demonstration and pilot courts,\textsuperscript{30} the CJRA leaves ultimate control over the content of the adopted plan in the hands of the judiciary, not the advisory group.\textsuperscript{31} The CJRA directed all districts to complete this process by the end of 1993, although many, known as early implementation districts, chose to implement plans much more quickly.\textsuperscript{32}

\section{II. The CJRA Plans}

There are ninety-four federal trial districts.\textsuperscript{33} The "bottom-up"\textsuperscript{34} approach to civil justice reform adopted by the CJRA thus created ninety-four groups of practitioners, litigants, court clerks, and judges with diverse ideas on how to improve the process of litigation.

A number of these ideas clash with the existing Federal Rules of Civil Procedure. One of the more egregious examples of local rulemaking contrary to the Federal Rules and under the auspices of the CJRA involved discovery requests. At the time the early implementation districts (EIDs) adopted their plans, the Standing Committee on Civil Rules had recommended amending Federal Rule of Civil Procedure \textsection{26} to require that parties disclose information without waiting for a discovery request.\textsuperscript{35} While this proposal had a rocky history, it ultimately succeeded in December 1993—a full year after the EIDs

\begin{thebibliography}{35}
\bibitem{27} 28 U.S.C. \textsection{472}(b) (Supp. IV 1992).
\bibitem{28} \textit{Id.} \textsection{473}(a)-(b). These sections require that the district courts consider the techniques, principles, and guidelines in their evaluations.
\bibitem{29} \textit{Id.} \textsection{471}.
\bibitem{30} \textit{See} note 32 \textit{infra}.
\bibitem{31} \textit{See}, e.g., 28 U.S.C. \textsection{472} (Supp. IV 1992) (requiring that district judges implement the plans); \textit{id.} \textsection{474}(a) (stipulating that judicial circuit committees review the plans); \textit{id.} \textsection{474}(b) (mandating that the Judicial Conference review the plans).
\bibitem{32} \textit{Id.} \textsection{471} note (reproducing Pub. L. No. 101-650, §§ 103-105, 104 Stat. 5039, 5090-97 (1990) (amended 1992)). Districts completing the process by the end of 1991 are labeled "Early Implementation Districts" and received certain funding benefits. In addition, certain courts were designated "Demonstration Program Districts." The Act requires these districts to adopt specific case-management programs. For example, while the Western District of Michigan and the Northern District of Ohio must experiment with case-tracking systems, other districts have to adopt some of the case-management techniques outlined in \textsection{473}(a)-(b). Finally, the Judicial Conference must designate "Pilot Program" districts, whose plans must remain in effect without changes for three years. \textit{Id}.
\bibitem{33} \textit{Judicial Conference Report, supra} note 5, at 2 (describing the civil justice expense and delay reduction plans that were adopted in the first 34 districts to complete the CJRA process).
\bibitem{35} \textit{Proposed Amendments, supra} note 9, at 87 (Proposed Rule 26) (requiring automatic disclosure of specified core information).
\end{thebibliography}
adopted their plans. Despite their passage, at the time twenty-one EID courts implemented plans requiring mandatory disclosure, the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure clearly did not sanction these rules. Moreover, these EIDs remained indifferent to the fact that mandatory disclosure conflicted with the existing structure of discovery, which required that attorneys identify and request relevant materials from their opponents before such information would be supplied.

The Eastern District of Texas offers a second example of infidelity to national rules. It set up a case-tracking scheme that assigns some cases to tracks prohibiting discovery altogether or limiting it to mandatory disclosure items. It also adopted an offer of judgment rule inconsistent with Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 68. Moreover, the East Texas plan states that "to the extent that

36. The new disclosure rules’ ultimate fate, however, remains subject to controversy. The Supreme Court transmitted the proposed new Federal Rules of Civil Procedure, including Rule 26, to Congress on April 22, 1993, over a remarkable dissent by Justice Scalia (joined by Justices Souter and Thomas). See Amendments to the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure and Forms, 113 S. Ct. 479 (1993). For a history of the controversy, see Randall Samborn, U.S. Civil Procedure Revisited: Committee debates further amendments, NAT'L L.J., May 4, 1992, at 1. The Advisory Committee first recommended mandatory disclosure, but it backed down in the face of negative comments, only to again reverse course and recommend the proposal in its final evaluation. Detractors argue that the exchange requirements both imperil the attorney-client privilege and require a large effort that could prove wasteful if the case is later settled or decided on motions. For discussions of the arguments on both sides, see Griffin B. Bell, Hugh Q. Gotschalk & Chilton Davis Varner, Automatic Disclosure in Discovery—The Rush to Reform, 27 GA. L. REV. 1 (1992); Linda S. Mullenix, Hope Over Experience: Mandatory Informal Discovery and the Politics of Rulemaking, 69 N.C. L. REV. 795, 822-28 (1991); Carl Tobias, Collision Course in Federal Civil Discovery, 145 F.R.D. 139 (1993).

37. Judicial Conference Report, supra note 5, ex. D (detailing the mandatory disclosure plans). Most mandatory disclosure plans call for the exchange of “core case information.” Generally, “core case information” includes:

(1) The name, address, and telephone numbers of each individual likely to have information that bears significantly on any claim or defense;
(2) A copy of, or description by category and location of, all documents and tangible things in the possession or control of the party that are likely to bear significantly on any claim or defense;
(3) A computation of damages; and
(4) Insurance agreements that may be used to satisfy all or part of the judgment.

Id.

Provisions vary substantially among districts. The District of Delaware, for instance, requires mandatory disclosure in civil RICO, personal injury, medical malpractice, and employment discrimination actions. In addition, parties must provide “core information” with their pleading and identify expert witnesses. In contrast, the Eastern District of New York requires exchange of “core information,” documents relied on in drafting the pleading, and expert witness testimony. The District of Idaho requires the exchange of expert witness information, data upon which the expert relies, exhibits to be used, and lists of the expert’s previous testimony. Id.

Thus, few districts adopted provisions parallel to the version of Federal Rules of Civil Procedure 26 that was ultimately adopted. Fed. R. Civ. P. 26; see Tobias, supra note 36, at 144 (noting that many plans’ disclosure schemes differed from the proposed Rule 26). The courts’ reliance on the proposed amendment, rather than the one passed on to the Supreme Court, caused the divergence. Tobias, supra note 36, at 144.


40. Id. at 10; see Carl Tobias, Civil Justice Reform and the Balkanization of Federal Civil Procedure, 24 ARIZ. ST. L.J. 1393, 1416-18 (1992) (discussing conflicts between adopted plans and other authority).
the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure are inconsistent with this Plan, the Plan has precedence and is controlling.\footnote{41}

Third, potential conflicts arise between the plans and other statutory requirements. For instance, many of the districts have implemented forms of alternative dispute resolution (ADR), while some others require litigants to participate in ADR before continuing in federal court.\footnote{42} In 1988, Congress gave twenty district courts limited statutory authorization to experiment with mandatory reference to arbitration.\footnote{43} Courts have since wrestled with whether they can order parties to arbitrate—or to participate in other forms of ADR—in districts not designated by Congress for ADR use. Some of the early CJRA plans assume that the Civil Justice Reform Act not only authorizes mandatory referral to ADR, but also permits courts to adopt any form of ADR they choose. The District of Montana’s plan, which sends half of all civil cases filed directly to magistrate judges without asking the litigants’ prior consent as required by 28 U.S.C. § 636, offers a fourth example of possible conflicts with other federal statutory requirements.\footnote{44}

Finally, certain plan provisions, such as the Eastern District of Texas’ cap on contingency fees—if it is in fact authorized by the Act—raise the possibility that the CJRA dramatically expanded the power of local courts to effect substantive policies.\footnote{45}

In sum, while implementing plans under the CJRA, some districts have adopted procedures clearly inconsistent with the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure. Plan provisions in other districts conflict with federal statutes other than the Federal Rules. Still other provisions sweep broadly in their regulation of attorney conduct\footnote{46} and fees, raising questions about whether the CJRA dramatically altered or expanded local courts’ powers. All of these provisions starkly call into question the nature of the authority conferred upon local courts by the CJRA.

\footnote{41}{\textit{Texas Plan, supra} note 39, at 9.}
\footnote{42}{For a description of alternative dispute resolution programs under the CJRA, see Judicial Conference Report, \textit{supra} note 5, ex. C.}
\footnote{43}{28 U.S.C. §§ 651-658 (1988); see notes 105-111 infra and accompanying text.}
\footnote{44}{While litigants can request an Article III judge, they must do so within a certain time limit or waive their rights. See Tobias, \textit{supra} note 40, at 1417.}
\footnote{45}{\textit{Texas Plan, supra} note 39, at 7-8. Montana’s Attorney Conduct Committee, created to supervise litigation conduct, also raises this possibility. See Tobias, \textit{supra} note 40, at 1421.}
\footnote{46}{For example, as part of its plan, [t]he Montana District is establishing a peer review committee, composed of federal court practitioners “appointed by majority vote of the article III Judges of the district in active service,” which will review the litigation conduct and discovery practices of lawyers who practice in the court. The committee will analyze litigation behavior or discovery practices at the request of any judicial officer, who will provide it with a statement describing the questionable activity. Tobias, \textit{supra} note 40, at 1421 (quoting U.S. District Court for the District of Montana, Civil Justice Expense and Delay Reduction Plan 17 (1991)). The committee then must deliver the judge an advisory opinion on the validity of the litigant’s questioned practices. \textit{Id.} Professor Tobias notes, however, that the Montana Plan “affords few procedural prescriptions, particularly in terms of due process.” \textit{Id.}}
III. Authority Conferred by the CJRA

An analysis of the authority the CJRA confers upon local courts must consider two questions: first, to what extent Congress expressly adopted provisions conflicting with preexisting statutes or rules; and second, to what extent Congress delegated to local courts the power to create and adopt provisions conflicting with such statutes or rules. For the reasons explained in Part III.B below, I conclude that while the CJRA contains several minor provisions that explicitly change preexisting law, Congress did not radically revise the process of rulemaking through the CJRA. Therefore, the Act does not empower local courts to make independent procedural decisions that conflict with national rules or statutes. Given my conclusion with respect to the latter question, I have resolved tensions between explicit CJRA grants of authority and preexisting authority in favor of textual interpretations that harmonize the CJRA with preexisting legislation and rules whenever possible without straining the sense of the text. 47

The CJRA represents a cautious approach to new trial court procedures. For the most part, its provisions are detailed descriptions of case-management tools already available to trial judges. In some cases, the CJRA expands those tools in limited ways, or suggests new approaches. In other cases, it authorizes more expansive use of ADR. Surprisingly, few of the adopted plans contain much discussion of the Act's authorizing provision, which I examine in detail below.

A. What Does the CJRA Authorize?

Generally, the CJRA requires districts to implement a civil justice expense and delay reduction plan.48 More specifically, the Act details the provisions that the plans "may include."49 The language of the Act is permissive: Only a limited number of designated districts50 are required to include any of the listed

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47. Since Congress did not explicitly state an intent to repeal any Federal Rules or statutes by passing the CJRA, it is tempting to cite the available statutory canon that supports the reading of the text that implies a repeal of previous statutes. But applying this canon to the CJRA is problematic. With few exceptions—most notably the pilot and demonstration districts mentioned above—federal courts need not adopt any of the CJRA provisions. I am convinced, however, that the Act should be read in a manner that harmonizes with preexisting rules and statutes because Congress neither authorized local procedural innovation conflicting with the Federal Rules, nor attempted to avoid the restrictions 28 U.S.C. § 2071 places on local rulemaking. See notes 135-139 infra and accompanying text.


49. Id. § 473(a)(b).

50. The CJRA designates certain "demonstration" and "pilot" courts. For example, courts in the Western District of Michigan and the Northern District of Ohio received mandates to demonstrate systems of differentiated case management. Moreover, the Act commissioned the Northern District of California, the Northern District of West Virginia, and the Western District of Missouri to develop various other methods of reducing cost and delay. See id. § 471 note (reproducing Pub. L. No. 101-650, §§ 104-105, 104 Stat. 5089, 5097-98 (1990) (amended 1992)). The Act further requested the Judicial Conference to designate 10 "pilot districts" required to include the § 473(a) provisions in their plans. Id. The Judicial Conference named the Southern District of California, the District of Delaware, the Northern District of Georgia, the Southern District of New York, the Western District of Oklahoma, the Eastern District of Pennsylvania, the Western District of
"principles and guidelines" or "techniques."

The Act contains three types of specific provisions. First, a number of case-management provisions merely duplicate or elaborate on powers already existing under the Federal Rules. Second, other provisions encourage ADR. Third, the Act includes a catch-all provision that allows courts to adopt "such other features as the district court considers appropriate after considering the recommendations of the advisory group."


The CJRA contains a number of provisions that duplicate powers granted under existing rules. First, several of the Act's provisions encourage judicial officers to exert early control over their cases. For example, section 473(a)(2) suggests "early, ongoing control of the pretrial process through involvement of a judicial officer in ... assessing and planning the process of a case." This planning can include controlling the extent and timing of discovery, setting deadlines for filing motions, and setting "early, firm trial dates."

But the CJRA provisions for early and ongoing judicial management of cases duplicate powers already available to federal trial judges through Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 16. That Rule instructs judges to enter scheduling orders to control the course of the litigation and provides for pretrial and scheduling conferences to "establish[ ] early and continuing control so that the case will not be protracted because of lack of management." Judges routinely used this authority for scheduling orders that "limit[ ] the time to file and hear motions," "complete discovery," and control "any other matters appropriate in the circumstances of the case." The Advisory Committee noted in 1983, when Rule 16 was amended, that the rule "[shifts] the emphasis away from a conference focused solely on the trial and toward a process of judicial management that embraces the entire pretrial phase."

Second, the CJRA provides a number of suggestions for management of the discovery process. These suggestions include preparing discovery schedules

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Tennessee, the Southern District of Texas, the District of Utah, and the Eastern District of Wisconsin. Judicial Conference Report, supra note 5, at 1.

52. Id. § 473(b).
53. Id. § 473(b)(6) (explaining that this section's objective is referred to in § 472(a)).
54. See, e.g., id. § 473(a)(1) (discussing "systematic, differential treatment of civil cases that tailors the level of individualized and case specific management to [specific criteria]"); id. § 473(a)(2)(B) (mandating "early and ongoing control of the pre-trial process" through improved planning and scheduling to assure "that the trial is scheduled to occur within eighteen months after the filing of the complaint"); id. § 473(b)(1) (requiring "that counsel . . . present a discovery-case management plan . . . at the initial pre-trial conference").
55. Id. § 473(a)(2). The provision requiring systematic differential treatment of cases also duplicates existing authority. Id. § 473(a)(1).
and holding discovery conferences in complex litigation, \textsuperscript{59} controlling the extent and timing of discovery generally, \textsuperscript{60} requiring attorneys to present discovery case-management plans, \textsuperscript{61} and "encourag[ing] cost-effective discovery through voluntary exchange of information among litigants and their attorneys and through the use of cooperative discovery devices." \textsuperscript{62} These recommendations again duplicate authority already available to judges through established case law \textsuperscript{63} or Federal Rules of Civil Procedure 16 and 26(f). Both of these rules authorize courts to hold conferences to schedule and phase discovery, as well as to impose sanctions for the failure to participate in good faith in framing a discovery plan. \textsuperscript{64}

Under color of the CJRA, many courts have enacted mandatory information exchange provisions that require litigants to provide their opponents with specified types of information—even in the absence of specific discovery requests. The sole statutory authority for these provisions rests in section 473(a)(4), which, as noted, refers to "encouragement of cost-effective discovery" by means of "voluntary" information exchange. Interpreting this section as granting courts the authority to require the exchange of information strains the text.

Similarly, the Act speaks of "the use of" cooperative discovery devices, not the creation of such devices. Reading the statutory language in harmony with then-existing procedure would have courts encourage litigants to make use of Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 29, which allows litigants to stipulate to modifications of discovery procedures, and thereby to agree to cooperate in discovery. Any reading of section 473(a)(4) as authorizing courts to adopt mandatory disclosure rules conflicts with the statute's reliance on "voluntary exchange" of information, as well as with its statement that such an exchange should be encouraged, not mandated. \textsuperscript{65}

\textsuperscript{60} Id. § 473(a)(2)(C).
\textsuperscript{61} Id. § 473(b)(1).
\textsuperscript{62} Id. § 473(a)(4).
\textsuperscript{63} See, e.g., CHARLES ALAN WRIGHT & ARTHUR R. MILLER, FEDERAL PRACTICE AND PROCEDURE § 2036 n.30 (1970) (discussing and collecting cases).
\textsuperscript{64} See Fed. R. Civ. P. 37(g). The Senate Report on the CJRA explains:

The authority provided in [28 U.S.C. § 473(a)(2)(C)] is intended to supplement the authority to limit discovery currently provided for in the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure, principally in Rule 26(b)(1). The 1983 amendments to this rule were clearly a step in the right direction in the effort to control discovery. But the problems of excessive and abusive discovery remain substantial, and additional measures are necessary.

S. REP. No. 416, 101st Cong., 2d Sess. 55 (1990). The following text reveals that the Senate was unaware of the full extent of trial judges' current powers.

As a result, subsection (a)(2)(C) gives judges and magistrates the additional authority to control discovery. The tools they might use include phasing discovery into several stages and phasing the use of interrogatories. With this clear statutory mandate, it is hoped that judges and magistrates will no longer be unsure about the degree to which they can act to reduce discovery expenses.

\textit{Id.} Interestingly, a Second Circuit report the Senate Report both quotes and relies on specifically recommends that district judges both implement phased discovery and limit the use of interrogatories, while pointing out that both devices are authorized under the existing Rule 16. \textit{Final Report of the Committee on the Pretrial Phase of Civil Cases}, 115 F.R.D. 349, 454 (1986), cited in S. REP. No. 416, supra, at 55.

\textsuperscript{65} Given the controversy over mandatory disclosure provisions described in note 36 supra, one would expect a discussion of mandatory disclosure somewhere in the legislative history if it were, in
Two certification requirements suggested by the CJRA exemplify the modest expansions of trial court authority actually conferred by the Act. The first requires attorneys filing discovery motions to certify that they have made a good faith effort to resolve the conflict before filing.66 This statutory requirement explicitly goes beyond anything then mandated by the Federal Rules.67 The second—a requirement that all requests for extensions of discovery or trial deadlines be signed by both the attorney and the party—modestly expands the signature requirements of Federal Rules of Civil Procedure 11 and 26(g).68

By authorizing judges to explore settlement in complex cases69 and requiring parties to have attorneys with settlement authority present at conferences,70 the CJRA also duplicates existing provisions of Rule 16, which makes discussion of settlement appropriate at all pretrial conferences.71 Several courts interpret Rule 16 as allowing a judge to compel a party—or someone else with settlement authority—to appear at a pretrial conference in order to facilitate settlement.72

The Act also authorizes the “systematic, differential treatment of civil cases that tailors the level of individualized and case specific management” to factors including “case complexity, the amount of time reasonably needed to prepare

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67. Id. § 473(a)(4) ("self-explanatory,") stating blandly in explanation that "the more voluntary and cooperative the discovery process can be made to be, the fewer costs will be incurred by all parties." S. Rep. No. 416, supra note 64, at 56-57.
68. 28 U.S.C. § 473(b)(3) (Supp. IV 1992). The purpose of the proposed signature rule is to require notification of the client whenever an attorney seeks to delay discovery or trial.
69. Id. § 473(a)(3)(A).
70. Id. § 473(b)(5).
the case for trial, and the judicial and other resources required and available for
the preparation and disposition of the case.”

In other words, the legislation suggests courts should systematically differentiate among cases on the basis of each case’s need for individualized and case-specific treatment, an apparently nonsensical instruction.

The Senate Report suggests case tracking as one way to provide such “systematic, differential treatment.” Both formal and informal case-tracking procedures predate the CJRA, however. For instance, Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 16(b) allows district courts to exempt certain categories of cases from the scheduling order requirement. All district courts have used local rules to exempt such classes of cases, usually on the theory that uncomplicated cases would not benefit from even the minimal level of management a scheduling order imposes. In contrast, the Manual for Complex Litigation stresses early identification of cases likely to be complex and time-consuming, so that they may be targeted for special management efforts.

The task force report that the CJRA’s sponsors relied upon suggested case-tracking schemes that assigned cases to one of up to three tracks, each with different deadlines for motions and discovery. The earliest version of the CJRA took the same approach: Upon filing, each district would have assigned cases to “appropriate processing tracks that operate under distinct and explicit rules, procedures and timeframes for the completion of discovery and for trial.” Although in practice such schemes could clash with provisions of the Federal Rules, a close reading of the early proposal reveals that even its sponsors did not contemplate that track provisions might conflict with existing Federal Rules. To avoid conflict between the Act’s language and the Federal

74. The Report notes that this is not the only implementation method possible. S. Rep. No. 416, supra note 64, at 53.
75. Fed. R. Civ. P. 16(b) (requiring scheduling orders “[e]xcept in categories of actions exempted by the district court rule as inappropriate”).
76. For example, Social Security appeals are often exempted from these requirements. Some courts even exempt complex cases from Rule 16. See Nancy Weeks, District Court Implementation of Amended Federal Civil Rule 16: A Report on New Local Rules 8-10 (1984).
77. Manual for Complex Litigation Second § 20.11 (1985). The Manual suggests a number of management strategies for such cases, including agenda items for initial conferences and discovery-control checklists. Id. § 40.1-2.
79. S. 2027, supra note 14, § 471(b)(1)(B). The bill also contained a mechanism for resolving disputes over track assignments, id. § 471(b)(2)(C), and a special set of mandatory procedures for complex cases. Id. § 471(b)(3)(I).
80. For instance, imagine a track that grants priority to defendants in taking depositions on the theory that certain classes of cases will therefore be resolved more quickly. This hypothetical rule would be inconsistent with Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 26(d), which states that generally “methods of discovery may be used in any sequence and the fact that a party is conducting discovery, whether by deposition or otherwise, shall not operate to delay any other party’s discovery.” The Advisory Committee notes that while a district court may upon motion and in the interest of justice grant exceptions, “a local court rule purporting to confer priority in certain classes of cases would be inconsistent with this subdivision and thus void.” Fed. R. Civ. P. 26 advisory committee’s note (1970 amendments).
81. Most tracking provisions dealt with enforcing deadlines. See, e.g., S. 2027, supra note 14, § 471(b)(3) (establishing a mandatory discovery conference in the first 45 days after the filing of a responsive pleading); id. § 471(b)(6)(A) (setting presumptive time limits on discovery).
Rules, the current statute simply requires that case-tracking schemes work within the confines of the Rules. As the earlier legislation demonstrates, this is easily accomplished.\textsuperscript{82}

The obvious question is why Congress passed legislation duplicating the existing Federal Rules. The answer, in part, lies in the report upon which the original version of the Act was based.\textsuperscript{83} This document argues that the 1983 amendments to the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure, although focused on increasing judicial powers to manage cases aggressively,\textsuperscript{84} failed to change judges’ behavior.\textsuperscript{85} In its findings, the CJRA echoes the report’s view, noting that plans “should also recognize that there has not been adequate utilization of available and existing tools to respond to this substantially changed civil litigation system, to control cost and delays.”\textsuperscript{86} Thus the legislation was premised on the principles and goals of the 1983 amendments and was meant to encourage their use by judges.\textsuperscript{87} The more directive and radical approach to case management Congress originally preferred was precluded, as I explain below, by the bargain struck with judges during the Act’s passage. Instead, the final legislation contains many provisions that are both precatory and redundant.\textsuperscript{88}

2. Provisions for alternative dispute resolution.

Another category of CJRA provisions involves alternative dispute resolution (ADR). Many federal trial courts have experimented with a variety of ADR devices, and Rule 16 includes “the possibility of . . . the use of extrajudicial procedures to resolve the dispute” as a pretrial conference subject.\textsuperscript{89} The

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{82} As demonstrated in the text accompanying notes 113-152 \textit{infra}, nothing in the legislative history suggests that the change in language was intended to give localities greater freedom to deviate from preexisting statutory requirements.
\item \textsuperscript{83} \textit{Brookings Report}, supra note 12, at 8-11. Reed Dickerson argues that legislative history—to count as context of a statute’s enactment—“must be (1) relevant; (2) reliable and reliably revealed; (3) reasonably available to the audience (that is, shared by author and audience); (4) taken into account (that is, relied on), as constituting part of the communication, by both author and audience.” Reed Dickerson, \textit{Statutory Interpretation: Dipping Into Legislative History}, 11 Hofstra L. Rev. 1125, 1128 (1983). Dickerson found study group reports, on which legislation is subsequently based, the most reliable form of nontextual legislative material; committee reports came in second. \textit{Id.} at 1130-31. The Brookings Report is especially reliable in this context because the task force was “convened . . . at the behest of Senator Joseph Biden, Chair of the Senate Judiciary Committee, to address delay and cost in the federal trial courts.” Robel, supra note 12, at 117. Furthermore, both the report’s definition of the problems of cost and delay and its suggestions of the causes underlying these problems were incorporated into Senate Bill 2027 by Senator Biden. \textit{Id.} at 128.
\item \textsuperscript{85} \textit{Brookings Report}, supra note 12, at 8-9.
\item \textsuperscript{86} S. 2027, supra note 14, § 2(15).
\item \textsuperscript{87} The task force report is stronger, agreeing with the criticism that the 1983 amendments were too piecemeal to cause real change in judges’ behavior. \textit{See Brookings Report}, supra note 12, at 8 (citing Maurice Rosenberg, \textit{The Federal Civil Rules After Half a Century}, 36 Maine L. Rev. 241, 242-51 (1984)). The political bargain struck with the judges, discussed below, precluded a more radical approach to case management, whereas earlier versions of the legislation would simply have mandated “fundamental changes that would dramatically improve the system.” \textit{Id.}
\item \textsuperscript{88} See notes 151-152 \textit{infra} and accompanying text.
\item \textsuperscript{89} \textit{Fed. R. Civ. P.} 16(c)(7); see Kim Dayton, \textit{The Myth of Alternative Dispute Resolution in the
CJRA explicitly gives courts "authorization to refer appropriate cases to alternative dispute resolution programs that... have been designated for use in a district court; or... that the court may make available, including mediation, minitrial, and summary jury trial."90 It also grants courts the power to establish early neutral evaluation procedures.91

While these sections clarify the trial courts' power to adopt and use alternative dispute resolution, they leave more difficult questions unanswered. First, although the legislation authorizes courts to adopt the listed forms of ADR, it is unclear whether courts may require parties to participate before allowing them to proceed to trial.92 Before the CJRA, the question of courts' authority to order mandatory reference to ADR received inconsistent answers.93 Unfortunately, the CJRA's text does not explicitly resolve the question. The legislative history provides no clear guidance either.94 Congress previously manifested


91. The CJRA allows a court to include in its plan "a neutral evaluation program for the presentation of the legal and factual basis of a case to a neutral court representative selected by the court at a nonbinding conference conducted early in the litigation." Id. § 473(b)(4). For a description of these procedures, see Robel, supra note 89, at 23-28.

92. Several courts have adopted mandatory ADR programs through their CJRA plans. For example, the Eastern District of Texas requires mandatory mediation in most cases, as does the Southern District of West Virginia. JUDICIAL CONFERENCE REPORT, supra note 5, ex. C at 6-7. The Southern District of California implemented a requirement that "a non-binding mini-trial or summary jury trial shall be ordered in all cases where the potential judgment does not exceed $250,000 and the use of this procedure will probably resolve the case." Id. pt. I at 27. This requirement also provides "[n]on-binding arbitration/mediation" in "all even numbered simple contract and tort cases (excluding FTCA) where the potential judgment does not exceed $100,000 and in every even numbered trademark and copyright case."


94. The analysis of legislative history with respect to ADR is particularly unclear because the CJRA passed as part of broader legislation including other titles; some of these included provisions on ADR. Early versions of the CJRA, such as Senate Bill 2027, included broader powers to adopt ADR. But Congress ultimately narrowed these powers. See S. 2648, supra note 14 (making the CJRA Title I of the Judicial Improvements Act of 1990). Earlier versions of Title III of the Judicial Improvements Act, such as the Federal Courts Study Committee Implementation Act of 1990, also contained provisions relating to ADR. For an analysis of this history, see Dayton, supra note 89, at 949-50. However, when Congress decided only to implement the "noncontroversial" recommendations of the Federal Courts Study Committee, lawmakers deleted the Title III provisions concerning ADR. H.R. REP. No. 734, 101st Cong., 2d Sess. 16 (1990). No evidence in the legislative history supports the assertion that
extreme caution in authorizing mandatory referrals to ADR in the federal courts, due to concerns about the effects of additional costs on litigants and about the potential effect on the exercise of the Seventh Amendment right to a jury trial in civil actions.95 Nevertheless, the authorization given in the text to "refer" appropriate cases to ADR forms a stronger basis for a claim for such authority than does Rule 16(c)(7), which simply suggests discussing "the possibility of settlement or the use of extrajudicial procedures to resolve the dispute, at least with respect to the ADR procedures listed in the statute."96

A second question is whether the CJRA permits courts to adopt arbitration programs.97 This issue requires consideration of both the statutory text and the CJRA's interaction with previous legislation. First, the Act allows courts to include "authorization to refer appropriate cases to alternative dispute resolution programs that—(A) have been designated for use in a district court; or (B) the court may make available, including mediation, minitrial, and summary jury trial."98 It does not mention arbitration as one of the ADR techniques that a court "may make available."99 An earlier version of the Act provided much broader authority for ADR and included arbitration as one of the forms of ADR a court could "make available."100 This earlier version differs importantly from deleting the ADR provisions from the Federal Courts Study Committee bill affected the language of the CJRA.

The evidence on the issue of mandatory reference is ambiguous. Both the Senate and the House Reports cite Hume v. M&C Mgmt., 129 F.R.D. 506, 509-10 (N.D. Ohio 1990) (holding that federal district judges lack authority to summon persons to serve as summary jurors), and state that the CJRA would "eliminate any doubt [about the authority to conduct summary jury trials] that might exist in some courts." S. REP. No. 416, supra note 64, at 57; H.R. REP. No. 732, supra note 72, at 15. But see Dayton, supra note 89, at 930 (noting that Hume involved a voluntary summary jury trial requested by the parties, and cannot, therefore, answer clearly whether courts can require participation in the listed ADR devices).


96. FED. R. CIV. P. 16(c)(7). Professor Dayton argues that Rule 16 is extremely weak authority for the proposition that districts can adopt court-annexed ADR procedures on a district wide basis, since the rule refers only to discussing the use of "extrajudicial" procedures. Dayton, supra note 89, at 934. Dayton also points out that courts have looked to Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 83—allowing local rules not inconsistent with national rules—for authority to institute such procedures. Id. at 938-43 (rejecting this interpretation of Rule 83); see also David M. Roberts, The Myth of Uniformity in Federal Civil Procedure: Federal Civil Rule 83 and District Court Rulemaking Powers, 8 U. PUGET SOUND L. REV. 537, 544-45 (1985) (describing local rules authorizing mandatory ADR as "violently at odds" with the entire structure of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure).

97. Several courts which previously had not utilized arbitration programs have created them in their plans. JUDICIAL CONFERENCE REPORT, supra note 5, ex. C (reporting that the Southern District of California implemented mandatory ADR, including arbitration, for certain cases while the Northern District of Georgia and the Northern District of Ohio implemented mandatory and voluntary nonbinding arbitration, respectively). 28 U.S.C. § 658(1) did not designate any of these courts among those permitted to employ mandatory arbitration procedures.


99. Id.

100. Senate Bill 2027 required that each plan have
[a] comprehensive program providing for adjudication and, in appropriate cases, alternative dispute resolution, which would make available to the parties and their counsel the full range of alternative dispute resolution mechanisms, including mediation, arbitration, minitrial, and summary jury trial. If such program includes the mandatory reference of certain cases to an
what appears in the final Act: Not only has arbitration been removed from the list of authorized ADR programs, but the enacted legislation adds a reference to ADR programs “designated for use” in a particular court. While the two sections potentially overlap—a court could “designate for use” a form of ADR not listed as one it could “make available”—the more plausible reading of this language requires resort to a broader statutory framework.

There are two possible readings. First, the CJRA itself designates certain courts as “demonstration districts,” requiring them to implement some of the principles, techniques, and guidelines mentioned in section 473(a) and (b). Three of the demonstration districts must “experiment with various methods of reducing cost and delay in civil litigation, including alternative dispute resolution, that such district courts and the Judicial Conference of the United States shall select.” The “designation” in section 473(a)(6)(A) could, therefore, refer to this section of the Act. Since the courts and the Judicial Conference are not directed to any particular ADR programs, it is plausible to read the section as allowing broad experimentation with all forms of ADR, including arbitration, but only in three districts.

The second possibility requires a broader statutory inquiry. In 1988, Congress enacted legislation authorizing a limited experiment in arbitration in twenty trial courts. That legislation designated those courts to refer certain cases to arbitration programs they themselves conducted as a prerequisite to trial. Thus, “designation” as used in the CJRA might refer to courts selected under this earlier legislation to experiment with arbitration. If so, the Act does not expand the use of arbitration beyond the experimental districts designated in the earlier statute.

The 1988 legislation is explicitly experimental. Authorization for the arbitration program remained subject to repeal in 1993 and achieved only provisional renewal. Only ten of the twenty courts authorized to operate

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alternative dispute resolution mechanism, provision shall be made for motions to exempt a case from the mandated procedure.
S. 2027, supra note 14, § 471(b)(10).
104. See 28 U.S.C. §§ 651-658 (1988). The statute limits the kinds of cases that may be referred to arbitration without the consent of the parties. Id. § 652(b) (explaining that courts may refer civil cases only where money damages not in excess of $100,000 are sought).
105. The 1988 Act lists the courts authorized to use arbitration. Id. § 658.
106. The 1988 Act lists the courts authorized to use arbitration. Id. § 658.
107. The 1988 legislation required that the arbitration program expire “5 years after the date of enactment of this Act.” Judicial Improvements and Access to Justice Act of 1988, Pub. L. No. 100-702,
arbitration programs can require parties to participate.\textsuperscript{108} The cases for referral also remain limited: The statute exempted cases involving complex or novel legal issues, or in which legal issues predominated.\textsuperscript{109} The legislation also protects claims based on violations of federal rights from mandatory arbitration\textsuperscript{110} and carefully details the right to seek trial de novo after an arbitration award—the latter since the ultimate passage of the legislation hinged, in part, on preservation of litigants’ Seventh Amendment right to a jury trial.\textsuperscript{111} Finally, the Federal Judicial Center continually evaluates the statutory arbitration programs.\textsuperscript{112}

The CJRA should be read with the 1988 legislation in mind, and arbitration authority should be limited (if it is found to exist at all) to the three demonstration districts the CJRA authorized to experiment with ADR. Nothing in the text warrants a broader reading, and the legislative history, with its express deletion of arbitration authority, offers no additional support.


None of the principles, techniques, or guidelines discussed so far authorize broad procedural innovation in the mandated expense and delay reduction plans. Instead, the CJRA pairs encouragement of judges to use case-management tools already available with a modest and self-conscious expansion of those tools. The Act also clarifies the courts’ power to adopt certain kinds of ADR techniques.

B. The Argument for Broad Rulemaking Power

There are two arguments in support of viewing the CJRA as a broad delegation of rulemaking authority to local courts. First, it could be argued that by styling the statutory case-management procedures as “principles” or “guidelines,” Congress revealed a desire to view these procedures as exemplars for further innovation. However, the specificity of the directions in the Act and the history of the legislation discussed below weaken this position.

A stronger argument emerges from the text of section 473(b). After outlining five “techniques” that might be adopted by trial courts, section 473(b)(6)
states that the trial court plan may include “such other features as the district court considers appropriate after considering the recommendations of the advisory group.” Nonetheless, this provision’s history reveals that Congress did not intend to confer broad authority to experiment with procedures believed helpful in reducing cost and delay without regard for their consistency with the Federal Rules.

The earliest version of the CJRA, Senate Bill 2027, did not provide for any local control over the content of expense and delay reduction plans. As explained above, the legislation was based on a task force report critical of federal judges’ reluctance to use the case-management tools provided by the 1983 amendments to the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure. Had this first version of the Act passed, each district would have been required to adopt a number of detailed case-management measures, including an elaborate case-tracking system. Hence, while the bill contained a statement about local court flexibility in its findings, it cautioned that flexibility had to be exercised “within certain well-defined and uniformly applied parameters.” In truth, there was very little room for local flexibility in Senate Bill 2027, a fact that was cited as a virtue by one of its chief supporters.

The Judicial Conference voiced its opposition to the proposed legislation. First, judges questioned the wisdom of imposing such detailed case-management requirements on courts across the country irrespective of the nature of their caseloads or the speed of their docket. In fact, most of the opposition from the Judicial Conference and various bar groups concerned the mandatory case-management requirements. Thus, the focus of their lobbying was on allowing trial judges greater discretion under the Act.

114. S. 2027, supra note 14.
115. BROOKINGS REPORT, supra note 12, at 8. This criticism is repeated in the findings accompanying the bill. See S. 2027, supra note 14, § 2(15).
116. For instance, Senate Bill 2027 would have required every trial district to adopt a “differentiated system of case management” that would “assign cases . . . to appropriate processing tracks that operate under distinct and explicit rules, procedures and timeframes for the completion of discovery and for trial.” S. 2027, supra note 14, § 471(b)(1)(B). This case-tracking system was to be implemented through a system of classification at intake: “[C]ases shall be classified on intake through an expanded civil cover sheet, which the clerk of each district court, designated track coordinator or other person to whom track assignment responsibilities have been delegated would use in making the initial track assignment.” Id. § 471(b)(2)(B). The system would be coupled with an elaborate set of mechanisms to resolve disputes over track assignments. Id. § 471(b)(2)(C). The procedures for cases on the complex track were outlined in detail in the bill. Id. § 471(b)(3).
117. S. 2027, supra note 14, § 2(12); cf. BROOKINGS REPORT, supra note 12, at 10-11.
118. The fact that Senate Bill 2027 would have increased uniformity among district courts was central to the argument in its favor presented by Patrick Head, Vice-President and General Counsel of FMC Corporation and one of four nonjudge witnesses testifying in its favor. Head’s prepared statement noted that a significant cost associated with having a national practice is the need to “identify and comply with diverse local court rules . . . . Consequently, any procedural reform that would increase procedural uniformity among federal courts would represent a direct savings to us.” Hearings, supra note 34, at 22, 23 (statement of Patrick Head).
119. See id. at 333-34 (statement of Judge Robert F. Peckham); see also Robel, supra note 12, at 128-29 (detailing the opposition to the bill).
120. See Hearings, supra note 34, at 212 (testimony of Judge Aubrey E. Robinson, Jr.); id. at 335-43 (statement of Judge Peckham); Diana E. Murphy, S. 2648, The Judicial Improvements Act of 1990;
In addition, judges believed that the CJRA represented a dangerous deviation from the rulemaking process envisioned in the Rules Enabling Act (REA). The REA contemplates that committees of the Judicial Conference will propose rule changes to the Conference, and that these proposals will be transmitted to the Supreme Court and then, if approved, to Congress. Moreover, pursuant to two provisions added in 1988 with the intent to open the rulemaking process to public scrutiny, the REA requires committees charged with rulemaking responsibility to hold their meetings in public—after public notice—to ensure that proposed rules are subject to comment before this transmission. Judges expressed particular concern over promulgating national procedural norms without the careful deliberation, notice, and period for comment that characterize rulemaking under the REA but which did not precede the introduction of the CJRA.

The first attempt to meet judicial concerns was in Senate Bill 2648, a modified version of Senate Bill 2027. Senate Bill 2648 represented a compromise requiring courts to adopt the procedures listed in what is now section 473(a), while leaving them free to reject what is now section 473(b). The language allowing district courts to adopt “such other features as [they] con-
sider[,] appropriate after considering the recommendations of the advisory group," first appears in Senate Bill 2648, but there is little mention and no discussion of it in either the Senate or the House Reports accompanying the Act.

But the fact that the entire legislative history lacks discussion of the language argues against concluding that Congress intended to confer broad authority to alter or ignore the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure. Granting such authority would not have responded to judicial concerns and would have resulted in an even more serious deviation from the rulemaking process than the CJRA already represented. Instead, the timing of the language's appearance suggests that its insertion was an attempt to assuage judges' concerns about congressional "micromanagement" of the work of trial judges.

Section 473(b)(3) was not intended to confer broad authority to develop local procedures inconsistent with the Federal Rules. If it had, it would represent a dramatic departure from the ordinary rulemaking process—a departure Congress had recently rejected. The continuing controversy over the use of local rules under Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 83 and the congressional response to that controversy in 1988 reveals how dramatic a departure this reading constitutes.

Under Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 83, district courts may promulgate local rules "not inconsistent" with the Federal Rules. The proliferation of local rules, with their corresponding inconstancy to the text and spirit of the Federal Rules, came under the scrutiny of both the Judicial Conference and the Congress. While the Judicial Conference's Local Rules Project engaged in


129. Moreover, language in the reports accompanying Senate Bill 2648 argues strongly against a conclusion that the Senate precipitously changed direction from its earlier bill. The Senate Report that accompanied the final, amended version of the bill argues that the legislation is necessary to provide justice to all citizens through a "minimal level of efficiency and economy" that would allow judges "sufficient time for . . . thoughtful and deliberate adjudication." S. Rep. No. 416, supra note 64, at 2.

130. See Hearings, supra note 34, at 349 (comments of Senator Biden); see also Ann Pelham, Biden, Judges Negotiate Civil Reform, LEGAL TIMES, May 14, 1990, at 7.

131. It is a truism of statutory construction that the law does not dramatically change unless Congress says so explicitly. See, e.g., Chisom v. Roemer, 501 U.S. 380, 395-96 403-04 (1991). There is nothing either in the explicit statutory text or the legislative history to suggest that Congress believed it was altering the result of the 1988 legislation.

132. FED. R. CIV. P. 83. The Rule also empowers magistrates and judges to regulate practice "in any manner not inconsistent with these rules or those of the district in which they act," thus allowing for even more localization of practice, all within the context of a set of national norms. Id.

133. In 1984, the Judicial Conference authorized its Committee on Rules of Practice and Procedure to study and treat the problems that the local proliferation of rules causes. The following year, the Conference empowered the Reporter of the Committee to collect and organize all the district court rules, as well as other judicial commands that operate like rules, into one source. The Reporter was also instructed to design a project to study the growing number of divergent local rules. This "Local Rules Project" discovered that the 94 federal court districts had an aggregate of almost 5000 local rules, "not including many 'sub-rules,' standing orders and standard operating procedures." COMMITTEE ON RULES OF PRACTICE AND PROCEDURE, JUDICIAL CONFERENCE OF THE U.S., REPORT OF THE LOCAL RULES PROJECT: LOCAL RULES ON CIVIL PRACTICE 1 (1989).
studying and cataloging the variety of local rules, lawmakers introduced amendments to the statutory rulemaking power in Congress.134

The legislation, which passed in 1988, was intended to provide a significant check on local rulemaking.135 First, it requires "appropriate public notice and an opportunity for comment" to precede the adoption of local rules.136 Second, it formalizes a system of review of local district court rules by judicial councils within a circuit, and authorizes those councils to abrogate local rules inconsistent with the Federal Rules.137 Third, the statute states that it is the exclusive avenue for prescribing local rules, thereby attempting to avoid the promulgation of the equivalent of local rules under various other rubrics, such as "standing orders."138

The other changes the 1988 legislation imposed repeated the emphasis on openness and accountability in the rulemaking process. Congress repealed the old REA and replaced it with separate sections designed to open national rulemaking to public scrutiny, and to give Congress a longer time period during which it could interrupt the rule-establishing process.139

Thus, prior to the CJRA, Congress' most recent venture into the realm of judicial rulemaking was to impose greater controls and more accountability on rulemaking at every level of the federal courts. Against this background, it is hardly plausible that the CJRA, which began its life as a bill giving no rulemaking authority to local courts, could have been transformed into a charter for local court independence, allowing courts to implement local procedures without regard for either national norms or the notice and comment requirements so recently enacted by Congress.140

Reading the CJRA to allow local procedural change in derogation of the


137. Id. § 2071(c)(1). A subsequent and coordinate amendment to 28 U.S.C. § 332 requires that the judicial councils perform a substantive review of these rules. Id. § 332(d)(4) (Supp. IV 1992).

138. Id. § 2071(f) (1988).

139. Id. §§ 2072-2074.

140. The CJRA does not require notice and comment before implementation of a plan. Instead, it requires that the advisory group report be "made available to the public." Id. § 472(b) (Supp. IV 1992). Unlike the substantive review of local rules now required by § 332, the CJRA contains an extensive review process but no obvious authority for the reviewers to do anything other than to make suggestions. See id. § 474(a)(1) (providing that the chief judge of each district court and the chief judge of the court of appeals for that circuit shall together "review each plan . . . and make suggestions for additional actions"); id. § 474(b)(2) (mandating that the Judicial Conference shall review each plan and "may request the district court to take additional action if the Judicial Conference determines that such court has not adequately responded to [relevant local conditions]").

The CJRA's legislative history contains an extensive discussion of the REA in response to the Judicial Conference's concern that the CJRA represented an unwarranted congressional venture into rulemaking, derogating the REA procedure. See S. Rep. No. 416, supra note 64, at 10-12. While the Report contains a strong statement of congressional power to engage in rulemaking, there is no suggestion that unabridged local rulemaking—a recent concern of Congress—is being instated.
Federal Rules would also place the Act in tension with the recently revised 28 U.S.C. § 2071. As noted above, the purpose of section 2071 was to assure that all local rulemaking—by whatever name—remain consistent with the Federal Rules and other congressional enactments. Although it is possible to harmonize the CJRA and section 2071 by assuming that plan provisions containing directions to lawyers should be implemented through local rules, this reading would not, of course, aid those seeking expanded rulemaking authority. Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 83, which authorizes local rules, and section 2071 both require that local rules not conflict with either the Federal Rules or other federal laws.

To be sure, the legislative reports contain somewhat ambiguous discussions of "building reform that proceeds from 'the bottom up.'" Indeed, some Senate Report statements might be read as encouraging local procedural innovation. The Report quotes approvingly from the testimony of Judge Robert Peckham that "'[s]ome of the most important reforms that have happened in the federal judicial system have been locally created and have been spread throughout and later adopted.'" The Report continues: "That notion, quite simply, lies at the heart of [the CJRA]."

While it is possible that these remarks reveal that Congress embraced local proceduralism, such a conclusion is unlikely. Rather, the Report notes Judge Peckham's complaint that locally created innovations experience ineffective dissemination. The report then states that the CJRA, by assuring a "systemwide approach," overcomes this problem. Further, the Report's lengthy discussion of the case-management techniques the Act actually contained suggests that the sponsors believed the CJRA embodied and codified the best of the local reforms to which Judge Peckham referred.

Moreover, statements that appear to support local procedural innovation must be viewed in the context of the whole report, which emphasizes the CJRA's necessity on the basis that it represents a national strategy, premised on "general and widely accepted principles of litigation management and cost reduction." The congressional belief that local courts should exert a degree of control over whether to implement the techniques the Act suggested does not

141. The CJRA does not define "implementation." Thus, a requirement that such provisions go through the ordinary process for local rulemaking would not offend the legislation.

142. It is clear that Congress envisioned factfinding as the primary local role. For instance, the purpose of the advisory groups is to assure that local problems are thoroughly identified. S. REP. No. 416, supra note 64, at 14-15 (indicating that "legislation allows for a 'determination of problems in local areas to be made at the local level ... as opposed to a broad-based national level'" (quoting Hearings, supra note 34, at 27 (statement of Bill Wagner)). Congress also hoped that the advisory groups' participation would encourage local support for the plans. Id. at 15-16; see also Lauren K. Robel, Grass Roots Procedure: Local Advisory Groups and the Civil Justice Reform Act of 1990, 60 BROOKLYN L. REV. 879 (1994) (describing the evolving conception of the advisory groups' role under the CJRA).


144. Id. at 15 (quoting Hearings, supra note 34, at 315 (testimony of Judge Peckham)).

145. Id. at 16.

146. Id. at 16-30.

147. Id. at 30. In an attempt to forestall the proposed legislation, the Judicial Conference adopted a "Fourteen Point Program" of case management. The program, however, failed to obviate the need for
support the larger proposition that Congress approved the adoption of plans inconsistent with other federal laws. The legislative record does not mention the need for, or the authorization of, such power.

What, then, was intended by section 473(b)(6)? One can begin to give it content by recognizing that the primary concern motivating judges opposed to earlier bills was the desire to maintain flexibility in managing their dockets. Many management strategies are not obvious subjects for rulemaking. Courts, for example, might adopt internal operating procedures specifying how to assign cases if one judge develops a backlog of motions. A court could similarly decide to assign visiting judges solely to criminal cases so as to expedite civil cases. Moreover, the required advisory group assessment might recommend that a court struggling with timely decision of motions prioritize them or adopt a policy of rescheduling trial dates when the court fails to decide motions within twenty days of trial. An advisory group might also suggest new trial-scheduling strategies.

The point is that a huge layer of case management has never been thought a rulemakers' concern. This is the aspect of trial court management that judges worried about protecting, in part because it is probably the most sensitive to local conditions. Senate Bill 2027 provoked controversy not because it contained amendments to the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure; it didn't. Instead, it included instructions to federal trial judges directed at exactly this docket-management layer of procedure—requirements that judges create case tracks or schedule trials in a certain way. These innovations in docket-management procedure embodied the "micromanagement" about which judges complained. They knew from experience that case tracking did not make sense in rural districts and that a statutory command to schedule all civil trials within eighteen months, for instance, could wreak havoc with the docket of a court burdened with drug prosecutions.

Section 473(b)(6) thus embodies a workable compromise. It allows judicial discretion in the areas where it has traditionally existed, but gives the courts the benefit of an "outside look," by advisory groups, at their internal procedures. It is not, nor was it intended to be, a charter for local rulemaking.

legislation—indeed, the Senate Report states that the program itself demonstrates "why a legislative approach is needed." Id. 148. See note 121 supra. 149. See JUDICIAL CONFERENCE REPORT, supra note 5, at 13-14. 150. See U.S. DISTRICT COURT FOR THE SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF INDIANA, REPORT OF THE CIVIL JUSTICE ADVISORY GROUP 48-50 (1991) [hereinafter INDIANA PLAN] (recommending prioritization of motions and rescheduling trial dates). 151. The 1983 amendments to the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure—especially the amendments to Rule 16—were intended to prod judges into active case management at an earlier point in the litigation. See MILLER, supra note 84, at 21 (revealing that an informal survey indicated that one- to two-thirds of federal trial judges already participated in active case management prior to the amendments). But like most rulemaking, these amendments exist not only to strengthen judges' powers, but also to clarify lawyers' duties, from preparation to discuss settlement to participation in a case management plan discussion. In contrast, court procedures concerning trial settings, case-assignment practices, or motions priorities all affect lawyers, but do not impose duties upon them. 152. See Murphy, supra note 120, at 112, 114; see also Hearings, supra note 34, at 360-61 (testimony of Judge Diana E. Murphy).
C. Beyond the Federal Rules: Substance in the Plans

While concern about deviations from the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure remains acute, there are perhaps more serious questions to address. The plan adopted by the Eastern District of Texas, for instance, caps contingency fees and limits expenses chargeable to clients,\(^{153}\) despite the Supreme Court's pronouncements that matters of cost and fee allocation are "for the legislature, not the courts."\(^{154}\) Other plans contain similarly substantive provisions.\(^{155}\)

The distinction between "substance" and "procedure," though central to the REA, is an elusive\(^{156}\) yet functional concept.\(^{157}\) The Eastern District of Texas announced its goal in capping attorneys' fees—and it is the same substantive goal announced by the Congress in the CJRA: cutting the costs of civil litigation.\(^{158}\) That goal involves—or should involve—weighing a number of substantive policies, including access to attorneys for those unable to pay standard rates as well as the cap's effect on the availability of legal services. The Texas court argues that the CJRA assumes that a reduction in legal activity during discovery will reduce costs, but notes that this will not benefit contingency fee

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153. Article V of the Texas Plan bases the caps on the underlying assumption of the CJRA that reducing legal activity during discovery through a plan will reduce the cost to litigants who pay for legal services on an hourly basis.

Whether such presumed reductions become a reality remains to be seen. . . . However, no such reduction from these measures will inure to the benefit of litigants who retain counsel on a contingency fee basis. The court, therefore, adopts the following maximum fee schedule for contingency fee cases (whether filed originally in this court or removed from state court):

1. **Contingent fees in non-statutory cases:**
   - A fee of 33-1/3% of the total award or settlement.

2. **Expenses:**
   - Expenses incurred by attorneys that are directly related to the costs of litigation of individual cases shall be deducted from the award or settlement before any calculation or distribution is made for attorneys' fees. No deduction is permitted for general office overhead expenses. Moreover, attorneys are prohibited from charging interest on any money advanced for expenses.

TEXAS PLAN, supra note 39, at 7-8.

154. Kaiser Aluminum & Chem. Corp. v. Bonjorno, 494 U.S. 827, 835 (1990) (rejecting a postjudgment interest rule that would date interest from the verdict, rather than the judgment, and noting that "the allocation of the costs accruing from litigation is a matter for the legislature, not the courts"); see also Alyeska Pipeline Serv. Co. v. Wilderness Soc., 421 U.S. 240, 247 (1975) (holding that only Congress can make an exception to the "American rule" for fee allocation and that "it would be inappropriate for the Judiciary, without legislative guidance, to reallocate the burdens of litigation in [this way]").

155. See, e.g., Tobias, supra note 40, at 1421 (noting Montana's plan to establish an attorney review committee).

156. See, e.g., Hanna v. Plumer, 380 U.S. 460, 472 (1965) (arguing that the Constitution's creation of the federal courts "carries with it congressional power to make rules governing the practice and pleading in those courts, which in turn includes a power to regulate matters which, though falling within the uncertain area between substance and procedure, are rationally capable of classification as either"); Paul D. Carrington, "Substance" and "Procedure" in the Rules Enabling Act, 1989 DUKE L.J. 281 (exploring the meanings of "substance" and "procedure"). John Hart Ely noted some time ago that "procedural" rules can affect "substantive rights." John Hart Ely, The Irrepressible Myth of Erie, 87 HARV. L. REV. 693, 724 (1974).

157. See, e.g., Burbank, supra note 7, at 1190 ("[I]f lawmaking in an area necessarily involves the consideration of public policy—policies extrinsic to the process of litigation—the choices in that area are for Congress.") (footnote omitted).

158. TEXAS PLAN, supra note 39, at 7.
While the court is correct in its assumptions, the Act by its terms does not affect the Texas court policy. Nor is it obvious that it empowers the Texas court to do so.160

The statutory tasks allotted to the civil justice advisory groups, as well as the groups' composition, do not suggest that Congress viewed them as competent to weigh sensitive policy.161 As noted above, their charge is to assess the docket and to recommend measures to the courts. Detailed statutory language limits their discretion in making recommendations. While the groups should reflect the various constituencies who use the courts, there is no requirement that they do so.162 Nothing suggests that advisory group functions should include choosing between competing, and compelling, public values.

The CJRA's dual goals of reducing cost and delay in civil litigation while increasing access to justice require difficult and controversial weighing of competing policies. Congressional rulemaking control has always been premised on concerns about the allocation of federal powers, and, in particular, on a concern that the legislature, not the courts, engage in "policy choices with a predictable and identifiable impact on rights claimed under substantive law."163 Despite its ambitious title, the relatively modest provisions of the CJRA do not arrogate to local federal judges—with or without advisory groups—the power to effect substantive reforms of this nature. From its conception through its enactment, the CJRA was much too suspicious of federal judges to accommodate such a reading.

IV. THE CONSTITUTIONALITY OF CONGRESSIONAL RULEMAKING

Of course, a close reading of the statutory text is unnecessary if the CJRA was beyond Congress' power to enact in the first place. In a recent article, Professor Linda Mullenix argues exactly that. She asserts that in enacting the CJRA, Congress violated constitutional separation of powers norms, arguing that the CJRA has "effectively repealed the Rules Enabling Act . . . [and] has by fiat stripped the judicial branch of a power that uniquely bears on the federal judicial function: the power to prescribe internal rules of procedure for the

159. Id.

160. Interestingly, Judge Robert Parker, the former Chief Judge of the Eastern District of Texas, also chairs the Judicial Conference's Committee on Court Administration and Case Management, the body charged with overseeing the CJRA's implementation.

161. See Robel, supra note 142, at 896-904 (describing the actual composition of advisory groups appointed under the CJRA and arguing that the groups' makeup does not ensure consideration of diverse viewpoints).

162. 28 U.S.C. § 478 (Supp. IV 1992) (describing the appointment process for members); see Robel, supra note 142, at 893-96 (describing a nationwide survey of advisory group members and concluding that the groups do not effectively represent all constituencies of the federal courts).

163. Stephen B. Burbank, Hold the Corks: A Comment on Paul Carrington's "Substance" and "Procedure" in the Rules Enabling Act, 1989 DUKE L.J. 1012, 1019-20. I agree with Burbank's argument that "when the Supreme Court makes law through supervisory court rules, it is engaged in an enterprise that, both practically and normatively, is different in important respects from the enterprise in which the Court, or any federal court, is engaged when it makes federal common law." Id. at 1021. Professor Burbank elaborates upon his reading of the REA in Stephen B. Burbank, Of Rules and Discretion: The Supreme Court, Federal Rules and Common Law, 63 NOTRE DAME L. REV. 693, 700-10 (1988).
federal courts.”164 In her view, the CJRA took “procedural rulemaking power away from judges and their expert advisers and delegated it to local lawyers.”165 In addition, Professor Mullenix posits that the REA creates a statutory limitation on Congress’ rulemaking power that Congress cannot ignore.166 However, neither the Constitution nor the REA place the type of constraints Professor Mullenix suggests on Congress’ involvement in rulemaking.

A. Does the CJRA Violate Separation of Powers?

Professor Mullenix states: “My thesis is simple: the Civil Justice Reform Act revokes the Rules Enabling Act and authorizes unconstitutional rulemaking. The Act violates the separation of powers doctrine and substantially impairs the ability of the federal courts to control their internal processes and the conduct of civil litigation.”167 Implicit in this argument are two controversial assertions: (1) that the Constitution requires the current REA division of labor between the judiciary and the legislative branch; and (2) that the Constitution mandates that the federal courts control their “internal processes” free of congressional supervision. I disagree with both assertions. Moreover, the CJRA does not violate Professor Mullenix’s interpretation of the separation of powers doctrine, even if it were justified, because the Act leaves the judiciary holding ultimate control over the content of the civil justice reform plans.

By statute, federal procedural rules are initiated by the judicial branch168 subject to congressional approval.169 The familiar statutory allocation of power between Congress and the courts relies on the distinction between substance and procedure: As has been the case since the first REA was passed in 1934,170 the Supreme Court is free to “prescribe general rules of practice and procedure” so long as those rules do “not abridge, enlarge, or modify any substantive right.”171

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164. Mullenix, Counter-Reformation, supra note 8, at 379.
165. Id.
166. Id. at 424. The Senate described Congress’ rulemaking authority as both plenary and exclusive, a position that need not be accepted in order to accept the CJRA. Id. (citing S. Rep. No. 416, supra note 64, at 10). Professor Mullenix states that the Senate’s argument on the rulemaking allocation issue “fails to recognize that the Rules Enabling Act has clearly assigned substantive rulemaking power to Congress and procedural rulemaking power to the federal courts. In essence, then, the Rules Enabling Act governs and limits congressional rulemaking power.” Id. at 427.
167. Id. at 382.
169. Id. § 2074. “Congressional approval” may misdescribe the process. Since the 1988 Rules Enabling Act amendments, rules proposed by the Court under § 2072 or § 2073 go into effect unless Congress acts to prevent their implementation within seven months after the Chief Justice reports the proposed rules to Congress. Id. § 2074(a).
171. 28 U.S.C. § 2071(a)-(b) (1988). Professor Burbank explains:
   The historical evidence compels the view that the limitations imposed by the famous first two sentences of the [Rules Enabling] Act
   [T]he Supreme Court of the United States shall have the power to prescribe by general rules . . . the forms of process, writs, pleading, and motions, and the practice and procedure in civil actions at law. Said rules shall neither abridge, enlarge, or modify the substantive rights of any litigant.
In order to assess this arrangement's constitutionality, one must ascertain the constitutional source of the power to make procedural rules. The Supreme Court recognizes three general sources of judicial power. First, Article III defines the exercise of judicial power as primarily confined to deciding "cases" and "controversies." Second, the Court recognizes that Article I gives Congress limited power to delegate to the judiciary powers beyond the Article III powers, so long as the delegation does not threaten "an independent and impartial adjudication by the federal judiciary of matters within the judicial power of the United States." Assign "tasks that are more properly accomplished by [other] branches," or otherwise "impermissibly threaten[] the institutional integrity of the Judicial Branch." Third, the Court maintains that federal courts have "inherent" authority to exercise certain nonadjudicatory powers.

The Supreme Court, then, has identified two specific sources of judicial rulemaking power. It primarily describes its ability to promulgate general rules of procedure as congressionally delegated. Article III offers a second, independent, albeit limited, source of rulemaking power. Congress' authority to adopt the CJRA, then, depends on the extent the Constitution requires judicial participation in rulemaking. In turn, what the Constitution requires depends on the relationship between the power the Court views as delegated and the power it describes as either explicit in Article III or inherent.

were intended to allocate power between the Supreme Court as rulemaker and Congress and thus to circumscribe the delegation of legislative power . . . .
Burbank, supra note 7, at 1025 (quoting 48 Stat. at 1064).
172. The Supreme Court has explained:

Article III of the Constitution confines the federal courts to adjudicating actual "cases" and "controversies." . . . [T]he "case or controversy" requirement defines with respect to the Judicial Branch the idea of separation of powers on which the Federal Government is founded . . . . The case-or-controversy doctrines state fundamental limits on federal judicial power in our system of government.
176. See, e.g., Chambers v. NASCO, Inc., 501 U.S. 32, 46-49 (1991) (discussing the inherent power to sanction litigants for bad faith conduct); Young v. United States ex rel. Vuitton et Fils S.A., 481 U.S. 787, 793 (1987) (discussing the inherent power to initiate contempt proceedings and to appoint counsel to prosecute them); In re Snyder, 472 U.S. 634, 643 (1985) (explaining the inherent power to suspend or disbar attorneys). For the most part, this asserted inherent authority is consistent with a vision of separated powers that recognizes the courts' need to be able to protect the integrity of their processes without undue reliance on the political branches. See, e.g., Young, 481 U.S. at 796 ("The ability to punish disobedience to judicial orders is regarded as essential to ensuring that the Judiciary has a means to vindicate its own authority without complete dependence on other Branches.").
Article III's "case or controversy" requirement is not an obvious source for a general judicial rulemaking power—at least not as interpreted by the Supreme Court. The Court might have viewed Article III's command that the federal courts adjudicate cases as implicitly granting courts the power to create rules of general application in order to govern that adjudication. The Court has not done so. Instead, it describes Article III's requirements in terms of the quality of the dispute presented for adjudication and the relationship of the litigants to that dispute.177

The Court describes its ability to make rules of general application as a delegated power.178 Chief Justice Marshall first identified the Necessary and Proper Clause179 as the source of this power, stating that "Congress may certainly delegate to others, powers which the legislature may rightfully exercise itself."180 Chief Justice Marshall was convinced that it was within Congress' power to make rules of procedure "without the intervention of the Courts."181 Thus, it was clear that Congress could "delegate to the courts the power of altering the modes . . . of proceedings in suits."182

In fact, for most of our early history, "Congress, rather than the Supreme Court, played the leading role in determining what procedural rules the

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177. See note 172 supra.
178. To the extent that rulemaking is not described as a delegated power, it is discussed as an aspect of inherent authority (or "supervisory power"). See, e.g., Thiel v. Southern Pac. Co., 328 U.S. 217, 225 (1946) (forbidding discriminatory jury selection processes under the Court's "power of supervision over the administration of justice in the federal courts").
179. U.S. Const. art. I, § 8, cl. 18. This clause gives Congress the power "[t]o make all Laws which shall be necessary and proper for carrying into Execution the foregoing Powers, and all other Powers vested by this Constitution in the Government of the United States, or in any Department or Officer thereof." Id.
181. Id. at 143. In evaluating the constitutionality of a 1793 act granting courts the power to draw up rules in order to conduct their business, Chief Justice Marshall concluded:
   It will certainly not be contended, that this might not be done by congress. The courts, for example, may make rules, directing the returning of writs and processes, the filing of declarations and other pleading, and other things of the same description. It will not be contended, that these things might not be done by the legislature, without the intervention of the Courts; yet it is not alleged, that the power may not be conferred on the judicial department.
   Id. (emphasis added).
182. Id.; see also Livingston v. Story, 34 U.S. (9 Pet.) 632, 656 (1835) (holding that in authorizing Congress to create the lower federal courts, Article III also authorized Congress to create modes of procedure for those courts).
federal courts would follow.' In addition to enacting the Judiciary Act, beginning in 1789, Congress directed the federal courts to borrow state procedures through the various Conformity Acts and adopted acts authorizing the Supreme Court to promulgate rules in equity and admiralty. In the absence of statutes on point, "the Supreme Court tended to construe the federal courts' authority narrowly, concluding that Congress must have intended the federal courts to follow the local procedural rules when it had not provided otherwise."  

Reiterating its holding that Congress may confer rulemaking authority on the judiciary, the Court in Mistretta v. United States traced the history of judicial rulemaking under the REA, quoting its earlier language from Sibbach v. Wilson: "Congress has undoubted power to regulate the practice and procedure of federal courts, and may exercise that power by delegating to this or other federal courts authority to make rules not inconsistent with the statutes or constitution of the United States." The Court has recognized that it is exercising a delegated power not only when it makes rules of general application under the various enabling acts, but also when exercising administrative power through the judicial councils and the Administrative Office of the United States

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185. Act of Sept. 29, 1789, ch. 21, 1 Stat. 93, 93-94 (directing federal courts to follow the procedures used in state courts in their geographic areas); Act of May 19, 1828, ch. 35, 4 Stat. 275 (extending the 1789 Conformity Act to newly admitted states).

186. Act of May 8, 1792, ch. 36, § 2, 1 Stat. 275, 276 (extending the Conformity Act to equity cases); Act of Aug. 23, 1842, ch. 188, §§ 6, 5 Stat. 516, 518 (authorizing the Supreme Court to promulgate rules for admiralty cases); see Burbank, supra note 7, at 1037 n.90.

187. Beale, supra note 183, at 1438. Thus, Professor Mullenix's claims that Congress has not participated in procedural rulemaking and that the Supreme Court's recognition of congressional rulemaking power appears only in "dicta in two Supreme Court cases construing the Rules Enabling Act" are incorrect. Mullenix, Unconstitutional Rulemaking, supra note 8, at 1327.


189. Id. at 387 (quoting Sibbach v. Wilson & Co., 312 U.S. 1, 9-10 (1941) (finding that plaintiff must submit to a court-ordered physical examination)); see also id. at 386 n.14 (stating that "rulemaking power originates in the Legislative Branch and becomes an executive function only when delegated by the Legislature to the Executive Branch").
Courts.190 These powers, while not defined in Article III, may be delegated to the courts because they "do not trench upon the prerogatives of another Branch and . . . are appropriate to the central mission of the Judiciary."191

From our earliest history, then, and despite the protestations of a celebrated scholar,192 the Court has described its rulemaking power as delegated.193 In fact, both scholars and justices194 have questioned whether the courts should have accepted the delegation: Rulemaking is neither “part of the case adjudication process” nor “ancillary” to that process195 and therefore exposes the judiciary to involvement in essentially political decisions—at a cost to the protection from politics a strict interpretation of Article III provides the judiciary.

More than history, however, supports the Court’s position that Congress has “undoubted power”196 to regulate federal court procedures. Judicial procedures

190. Id. at 388–89.
191. Id. at 388.
193. Professor Beale notes that “[a]lthough the records of the Constitutional Convention and the debates on ratification shed little light on the question whether the grant of judicial power conferred the exclusive authority to formulate procedural rules, both Congress and the Supreme Court have consistently viewed congressional regulation of judicial procedural matters as appropriate.” Beale, supra note 183, at 1466 (footnote omitted). Beale notes the argument that “the framers felt no need to define ‘the judicial Power’ because they accepted as their general model the English and colonial courts, which formulated their own rules of procedure and evidence.” Id. at 1466 n.217. However, she rejects that argument because “the overall structure of the Constitution implies certain limits on the federal courts which did not limit the powers that were exercised by the English and colonial courts,” such as the restriction against recognizing federal common law crimes. Id.
194. In a famous statement, Justices Black and Douglas voiced their opposition to the Court’s promulgation of amendments to the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure, “many [of which] determine matters so substantially affecting the rights of litigants in lawsuits that in practical effect they are the equivalent of new legislation which . . . the Constitution requires to be initiated in and enacted by the Congress and approved by the President.” Amendments to Rules of Civil Procedure for the United States District Courts, 374 U.S. 861, 865-66 (1963) (dissenting statement of Black & Douglas, JJ.) (footnotes omitted).
195. MARTIN H. REDISH, FEDERAL JURISDICTION: TENSIONS IN THE ALLOCATION OF JUDICIAL POWER 21 (2d ed. 1990). After showing that Article III does not justify the power to promulgate federal rules, Professor Redish notes that such rules operate on all litigants, with the binding effect of law. The Court’s function in the process of promulgation of the Rules today virtually amounts to the adoption of legislation. Thus, in promulgating the Rules for congressional approval, the Court is inherently intertwined in the legislative process. One could reasonably ask, what activity could represent a more striking departure from the tradition judicial function of case adjudication than a direct and immediate role in the enactment of legislation?
influence the determination of substantive rights. The indeterminate division between substantive and adjective law argues for a strong congressional role in rulemaking, both because Congress is a democratically elected, policymaking branch, and because the Supreme Court’s decision to accept or reject procedural revisions is final.

The cases accepting congressional power to engage in procedural rulemaking have long coexisted with cases authorizing certain acts on the basis of "inherent" judicial power. The courts generally claim this power in two areas. First, since 1943 the Court has asserted a "supervisory authority over the administration of criminal justice in the federal courts." Since declaring this power, the Court has "announced general rules of procedure and evidence for federal criminal proceedings" in numerous cases. A similar assertion of power in civil cases is rare. Thiel v. Southern Pacific Co. is the most frequently cited example. The Court justifies its exercise of supervisory power in these cases with its concern for the integrity of the federal courts’ processes and its reluctance to condone inequitable executive practices.

Congress occasionally responds to these decisions announcing procedural rules with legislation. Moreover, the Court has upheld congressional reversal of its supervisory opinions, explaining that the judiciary’s power to issue rules of general procedure “exists only in the absence of a relevant Act of Congress.”

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197. See Jack B. Weinstein, Reform of Court Rule-Making Procedures 92 (1977) (“The traditional vision of tripartite government, at least as formulated by the framers of the Constitution, reveals Congress as the source of policy-making power.”).

198. McNabb v. United States, 318 U.S. 332, 341 (1943) (discussing the admissibility of evidence in a federal murder trial). The Court argued that “[j]udicial supervision of the administration of criminal justice in the federal courts implies the duty of establishing and maintaining civilized standards of procedure and evidence” and therefore excluded the defendant’s confession because it resulted from illegal coercion. Id. at 340.


200. 328 U.S. 217 (1946) (holding that federal juries should be chosen from a cross-section of the community). In Peters v. Kiff, 407 U.S. 493, 500 n.9 (1972), a plurality of the Court described Thiel as a supervisory power case.

201. Justice Brandeis first articulated this view in Casey v. United States, 276 U.S. 413, 425 (1928) (Brandeis, J., dissenting). The Court later adopted this view in McNabb, 318 U.S. at 347.


203. Palermo v. United States, 360 U.S. 343, 353 n.11 (1959); see also Thomas v. Arn, 474 U.S. 140, 148 (1985) ("Even a sensible and efficient use of the supervisory power . . . is invalid if it conflicts with constitutional or statutory provisions. A contrary result ‘would confer on the judiciary discretionary power to disregard the considered limitations of the law it is charged with enforcing.’") (quoting United States v. Payner, 447 U.S. 727, 737 (1980))).
The Court has advanced, primarily in contempt and disciplinary cases, an Article III-based vision of inherent authority that responds to separation of powers concerns and offers a second source of rulemaking authority. These cases suggest that the federal courts have inherent power to the extent necessary to exercise their adjudicative function. For instance, the power to sanction contempt is "inherent in all courts" because "its existence is essential to the preservation of order in judicial proceedings, and to the enforcement of judgments." To avoid reliance on the other branches in vindicating their authority, courts claim the inherent power to appoint an attorney to prosecute contempt, to sanction bad faith conduct, or even to suspend attorneys from practice before the court. The Supreme Court has nonetheless held since its earliest cases that Congress can regulate the contempt power, so long as it does not render it inoperative.

The Court has deferred to Congress' assessment of the inherent authority

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204. In a recent dissent, Justice Scalia explicitly identified Article III as the constitutional source of the Court's power to protect "the integrity of its proceedings." Chambers v. NASCO, Inc., 501 U.S. 32, 38 (1991) (Scalia, J. dissenting).

205. Ex Parte Robinson, 86 U.S. (19 Wall.) 505, 510 (1873). A half-century later, the Court elaborated:

That the power to punish for contempts is inherent in all courts, has been many times decided and may be regarded as settled law. It is essential to the administration of justice. The courts of the United States, when called into existence and vested with jurisdiction over any subject, at once become possessed of the power.

Michaelson v. United States ex rel. Chicago, St. P., M. & O. Ry., 266 U.S. 42, 65-66 (1924); see also Gompers v. Bucks Stove & Range Co., 221 U.S. 418, 450 (1911) (explaining that "the power of courts to punish for contempts is a necessary and integral part of the independence of the judiciary, and is absolutely essential to the performance of the duties imposed on them by law").

206. The Court in Young v. United States ex rel. Vuitton et fils S.A., 481 U.S. 787 (1987), argued that the courts' "long settled" authority to begin contempt proceedings necessitates the authority to appoint private counsel. Thus, Federal Rule of Criminal Procedure 42(b)'s "assumption that private attorneys may be used to prosecute contempt actions reflects the longstanding acknowledgement that the initiation of contempt proceedings to punish disobedience to court orders is part of the judicial function." Id. at 793-95. The Court further described its inherent authority as "essential to ensuring that the Judiciary has a means to vindicate its own authority without complete dependence on other Branches." Id. at 796.

207. See Chambers, 501 U.S. at 46-51 (holding that a district court could invoke its inherent power to sanction bad faith conduct by assessing attorneys' fees); cf. Link v. Wabash Ry., 370 U.S. 626, 629-33 (1962) (discussing federal trial courts' inherent power to dismiss a plaintiff's action sua sponte for failure to prosecute).

208. See In re Snyder, 472 U.S. 634, 643 (1985) (explaining that the inherent authority to suspend lawyers derives from the lawyer's role as an officer of the court); Ex parte Burr, 22 U.S. (9 Wheat.) 529, 530 (1824) (noting the inherent power to control admission to the bar and to discipline attorneys).

209. See United States v. Hudson, 11 U.S. (7 Cranch) 32, 33 (1812) (construing the implied power to punish for contempt narrowly, so that any further reach needs congressional authorization). Rejecting a challenge to congressional power to require a trial by jury in Clayton Act contempt cases, the Supreme Court stated:

So far as the inferior federal courts are concerned, however, it is not beyond the authority of Congress to regulate [the contempt power]; but the attributes which inhere in that power and are inseparable from it can neither be abrogated nor rendered practically inoperative. That it may be regulated within limits not precisely defined may not be doubted.

Michaelson, 266 U.S. at 66 (1924) (citations omitted); see also Felix Frankfurter & James M. Landis, Power of Congress over Procedure in Criminal Contempts in "Inferior" Federal Courts-A Study in Separation of Powers, 37 Harv. L. Rev. 1010, 1022 (1924) (explaining that "[a]n incident to their being, courts must have the authority 'necessary in a strict sense' to enable them to go on with their work" (quoting Craig v. Hecht, 263 U.S. 255, 280-81 (1923) (Holmes, J.))).
and supervisory powers, generally accepting its regulation of subjects or rules announced in inherent authority cases. This deference is in keeping with the strongest view of the Court's power to make procedural rules, which grounds the power in Article III. This argument suggests that the power is ancillary, analogous to the ancillary powers of the President under Article II. Thus the Court's implied rulemaking authority, although generally recognized, should be subservient to Congress' except where the Court exercises its power in defense of judicial authority or integrity. By and large, this is how the Court has treated it.

However, acceptance of neither the Court's nor Congress' strongest statements about Congress' rulemaking authority is necessary to recognize the CJRA as constitutionally benign. Even if we assume—as do most commentators—that the power to enact procedural rules is best shared between the Congress and the judiciary, the CJRA leaves ultimate control over its implementation to the judiciary, with few exceptions. While the Act requires each

210. See Beale, supra note 183, at 1470-73 (elaborating on this analogy).
211. Professor Beale takes a contrasting view, allocating Congress more power: A generous interpretation of the courts' ancillary authority under article III is fully consistent with the Court's recognition that Congress may establish comprehensive rules of procedure and may alter judicially fashioned procedural rules. The necessary and proper clause expressly empowers Congress to legislate to give effect to the powers of the other branches. If the implied ancillary authority of the executive and the judiciary under articles II and III is given a generous interpretation, it will overlap with the legislative authority under the necessary and proper clause. This does not pose a substantial problem, however. In the case of a conflict, the text of the necessary and proper clause reflects the expectation that Congress would enact laws to govern the other branches of government. Id. at 1472 (footnotes omitted).
212. But see Anderson v. Dunn, 19 U.S. (6 Wheat.) 204, 231 (1821) (holding that Congress' inherent power to try contempts committed in its presence was only "the least possible power adequate to the ends proposed"). Professor Van Alstyne has commented that in ancillary powers cases, the judiciary has ordinarily been awkward and uncomfortable in passing upon executive (and judicial) claims of ancillary authority unsupported by Acts of Congress. It has been rightly "awkward," not because such claims cannot affect the President's business or the judiciary's business, for clearly they can, but rather because the elements of judgment and compromise entailed in those claims are the very essence of political judgment—the natural preserve of legislative determination.

William Van Alstyne, The Role of Congress in Determining Incidental Powers of the President and of the Federal Courts: A Comment on the Horizontal Effect of "The Sweeping Clause," 36 Ohio St. L.J. 788, 805 (1975). Thus, Professor Mullenix's claim that "[p]rocedural rulemaking is an inherent power of the courts," is much too broad a statement of the nature of this inherent authority. Mullenix, Unconstitutional Rulemaking, supra note 8, at 1297.

213. Professor Mullenix focuses on the Senate Report's response to the separation of powers arguments federal judges advanced in the CJRA hearings. The Senate Report argued that Congress' rulemaking authority was superior to the judiciary's. See Mullenix, Counter-Reformation, supra note 8, at 428-32 (citing S. Rep. No. 416, supra note 128, at 9-10); Mullenix, Unconstitutional Rulemaking, supra note 8, at 1289 (same).
214. See, e.g., Weinstein, supra note 197, at 77 (pointing out that "[t]here have been serious suggestions, however, that the legislature can have no role in rule-making. Generally this claim has been ignored by those charged with the practical task of running government."); A. Leo Levin & Anthony G. Amsterdam, Legislative Control over Judicial Rule-Making: A Problem in Constitutional Revision, 107 U. Pa. L. Rev. 1, 42 (1958) (arguing that the balance of powers is designed to allow courts to "maintain an effective, flexible and thorough-going control over their . . . procedure, with the possibility of ultimate legislative review in cases where important decisions of public policy are necessarily involved").
215. Ten federal districts are designated as "pilot" districts and are required to implement six of
district court to implement a civil justice expense and delay reduction plan "after consideration of the recommendations of an advisory group," it does not require that the district courts adopt any of the advisory groups' recommendations. In fact, many courts rejected some of the offered recommendations.

The Act also mandates that a committee comprised of the chief judges of each district court in the circuit, the chief judge of the circuit's court of appeals, and the Judicial Conference of the United States review the plans. While Congress asked for periodic reports from the Judicial Conference and the Administrative Office of the United States Courts, it has not retained any direct control over the plans' content. Professor Mullenix's concern that "Congress has taken procedural rulemaking power away from judges and their expert advisors and delegated it to local lawyers" therefore overstates the CJRA's impact.

Moreover, the CJRA's provisions do not impair judicial authority. The Act neither strips the judiciary of its power to decide cases nor sets up serious impediments to the adjudication of cases. For the most part, CJRA provi-
sions simply suggest that case-management practices need both scrutiny and enhancement. The legislation implements Congress’ judgment that the problems of cost and delay in the federal courts require comprehensive attention. It is not beyond congressional power to diagnose a problem of national scope which affects access to justice and then to contemplate measures to address that problem. Congress’ view is probably empirically flawed, and its execution less than elegant.222 But the Constitution does not place the subject of this legislation beyond the scope of Congress’ power.

B. Does the CJRA Violate Statutory Limits on Congressional Rulemaking?

As previously discussed, the Rules Enabling Act divides the responsibility for promulgating rules between the courts and Congress. The REA, however, leaves Congress the ultimate responsibility to approve civil procedural rules: The Court must submit proposed rules of general application to Congress and give that body sufficient time—seven months—to consider them and to disapprove them if it wishes.223 Nevertheless, Professor Mullenix argues that the CJRA violates this statutory division of responsibility by arrogating to Congress the power to make purely procedural rules.224 But it is unusual to speak of Congress as bound by the terms of previous legislation, unless the legislative division of authority is necessary in aid of the bankruptcy court’s expanded jurisdiction; and to issue any order, process, or judgment that is necessary or appropriate to carry out the provisions of [the Bankruptcy Act].


The legislation violated basic Article III principles, which, the Court noted, command that “[t]he judicial power of the United States must be exercised by courts having the attributes prescribed in Art. III.” Id. at 58-59. The Act assigned bankruptcy judges most of the jurisdiction of an Article III judge, while withholding the Article III protections of life tenure and protected compensation. Id. at 60.

In Northern Pipeline, the Act’s supporters argued that since Article I empowered Congress to create legislative courts, it could have thus “constituted” the bankruptcy courts as their equivalents. Id. at 63. The Court, however, rejected this assertion. It viewed situations allowing Article III creation of legislative courts as “exceptional” and grounded in constitutional text or in historical consensus. Id. at 68-70.

At a minimum, then, a challenge to the CJRA that relies on Northern Pipeline must assert that the legislation delegates Article III “judicial power” to a body constituted without Article III protections. The Court has never considered rulemaking authority per se to be an attribute of the judicial power under Article III. See text accompanying notes 177-180 supra. Even if it were, the assertion that local advisory groups have been “delegated” that power is unconvincing, since the judiciary controls the content of the plans. Much of Professor Mullenix’s argument hinges on accepting her debatable characterization of procedural rulemaking as a core Article III function on a par with adjudication, and of the advisory groups as being “vested” with that authority. See Mullenix, Unconstitutional Rulemaking, supra note 8, at 1313-14.


224. Discussing the Senate’s claim that it had exclusive rulemaking authority, for instance, Professor Mullenix remarks that the Senate’s argument is flawed because it establishes a principle of rulemaking allocation without reference to rulemaking content. Thus, the Senate’s position fails to recognize that the Rules Enabling Act has clearly assigned substantive rulemaking power to Congress and procedural rulemaking power to the federal courts. In essence, then, the Rules Enabling Act governs and limits congressional rulemaking power.

Mullenix, Counter-Reformation, supra note 8, at 427 (citing S. REP. No. 416, supra note 64, at 10).
constititionally required. I have argued it is not.\textsuperscript{225} A delegation neen not, therefore, impair the ability of the delegator to exercise concurrently the power it has delegated.\textsuperscript{226}

V. A CAUTIONARY NOTE ON LOCAL PROCEDURE

Many courts have erroneously viewed the Civil Justice Reform Act as a charter for local court procedural independence. However, I began this article by noting that localism has always been the rebellious stepchild of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure.\textsuperscript{227} For example, as of 1988 there were approximately 5000 local rules promulgated under the authority of Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 83, so many that a Judicial Conference Committee proposed an amendment to Rule 83 to authorize controlled experimentation with inconsistent local rules.\textsuperscript{228}

Commentators widely agree that national uniformity in federal procedural rules is a good idea. Uniformity reduces costs and—although this is less empirically verifiable—increases professionalism. It also improves access to federal courts by allowing attorneys to master a single body of procedural law. Finally, uniformity reduces surprise and works toward the goal of deciding cases on the merits. Why, then, is the impulse for local variation so persistent? What accounts for the strength of the urge to view the CJRA as a font of local procedural authority? Does the strength of this urge indicate that Congress should consider granting courts this power in reality?

There are both laudable and lamentable motivations for local variation, but the former rarely result in procedural rules. The spectrum of local conditions, ranging from congested and overworked urban courts to the relative quiet of

\textsuperscript{225} Were the power to control case-management practices essential to the judicial power, then the CJRA might be open to challenge under Myers v. United States, 272 U.S. 52 (1926). In Myers, the Court struck down a statute that required senatorial approval of an inferior executive officer’s removal, finding the power to remove such officers at will necessary to the power of appointment. \textit{Id.} at 121-22. More recent Court precedent questions the utility of identifying “core functions.” \textit{Morrison}, 487 U.S. at 688-90 (limiting the application of \textit{Myers}).

\textsuperscript{226} \textit{See In re Chapman}, 166 U.S. 661, 671-72 (1897) (upholding a congressional grant of concurrent power that enables both the District of Columbia and Congress to punish contempt of Congress).

\textsuperscript{227} \textit{See notes} 9-11 \textit{supra} and accompanying text.

\textsuperscript{228} \textit{PROPOSED AMENDMENTS}, \textit{supra} note 9, at 152-53. The proposed amendment would have authorized district courts to adopt an “experimental local rule inconsistent with [the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure] if it [was] consistent with the provisions of Title 28 of the United States Code and [was] limited in its period of effectiveness to five years or less.” \textit{Id.} at 153. Some commentators have also recommended experimentation with inconsistent local rules. \textit{See, e.g., Levin, supra note} 9, at 1584-85 (arguing in favor of a provision similar to Proposed Rule 83). Other commentators have strongly opposed this position. \textit{See e.g., Roberts, supra note} 96, at 537, 549-55.

Unfortunately, the CJRA appears to have discouraged the Standing Committee on Civil Rules from pursuing a proposed amendment to Rule 83 that would have allowed controlled experimentation with local procedures. If we can learn anything from recent experience, it is that these local impulses need desperately to be informed by an accountability to national norms; and the proposed amendment insists on accountability both by limiting the duration of any local rule inconsistent with national rules, and by requiring Judicial Council approval for such experimentation. However, the proposed rule is itself inconsistent with the 1988 amendments to the Rules Enabling Act prohibiting local rules that are inconsistent with Federal Rules or other federal legislation. 28 U.S.C. § 2071(f) (1988). If we are to engage in local procedural experimentation, then, Congress will have to amend the REA to make it possible.
rural courts, offers the most defensible reason for local variation. Variation in local conditions, however, has little to do with the concerns that result in procedural rulemaking. Rather, it is the stuff of docket management—how to move cases smoothly from filing to disposition, to schedule trials, and to monitor service under chaotic or calm conditions.

Another defensible reason for local rulemaking lies in the persistence of local legal cultural norms governing such practices as the speed with which a case proceeds to trial or how aggressively discovery is conducted. Indeed, it may be that our national obsession with discovery control ought to focus primarily on the relatively few jurisdictions where discovery abuse has proved a problem.

But it is difficult to argue that the needs of litigants and attorneys within an individual case vary substantially from Georgia to New York, that Georgia litigants need only a third of the discovery devices New York litigants do, or that attorneys in Kansas somehow demand a different summary judgment system. Local court tinkering with the Federal Rules is rarely inspired by the disutility of a Rule under local conditions. Rather, it is inspired by a belief that the rulemakers got it wrong. This position should be viewed with suspicion, both because there is a method of securing rule changes that respects national concerns and because deviations from that method are notoriously difficult to challenge.

Moreover, without disparaging the work of the attorneys who sit on advisory groups, it should be noted that there are incentives for local attorneys to enact local procedures: Local procedures typically favor local bars.


230. Our endless tinkering with discovery and sanctions rules, the most recent examples of which are illustrated by the December 1993 amendments to Federal Rules of Civil Procedure 26 and 11, might actually be attempts to use national rules to solve problems that vary strongly by locality.

231. See Brown v. Crawford County, 960 F.2d 1002, 1008-09 (11th Cir. 1992) (invalidating a local procedure used by the Middle District of Georgia that effectively precluded parties from filing summary judgment motions).


233. Challenging local rules presents difficulties on two fronts. First, the standard against which such rules are judged—consistency with national rules—is itself difficult to apply. See Levin, supra note 9, at 1573-76 (tracing the roots and inconsistencies of this ambiguous standard); Roberts, supra note 96, at 539 & n.8 (tracking the application of the standard in the case law). Second, the litigants are unlikely to challenge local rules with the mechanisms presently available. See Levin, supra note 9, at 1576 (arguing that the traditional mechanisms are “inadequate”); Roberts, supra note 96, at 54-47, 553 (“The impact of the rules on individual litigants is usually too glancing to warrant appeal, and so they remain unchallenged.”).

234. Even if we are convinced that local regulation of certain procedural matters is defensible, we should still be concerned about the identity of the rulemakers. We have not really had to face this issue under the regime of Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 83 and the 1988 amendments to the REA, both of which require fidelity to national rules. We will certainly have to face questions of this nature in the world of new Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 26, which allows local variation. See Fed. R. Ctv. P. 26 passim.
If we are to learn anything from recent experience under the CJRA and the Local Rules Project, it is the strength of the urge to institute an improved, local way of doing things. Before we abandon our longstanding commitment to a uniform national procedure, however, we need to better understand the situations in which local procedures are more desirable than national ones—and we need to take a more cautious approach to local decisionmaking than the Civil Justice Reform Act offers.

VI. CONCLUSION

As it moved through Congress, the CJRA generated an enormous amount of controversy and ill will between the judiciary and the Act's Senate sponsor. In retrospect, the process would have been less fractious if the federal judiciary had been more intimately involved in the legislation's conception. Disliking the Act Congress gave them, some federal districts have extended the legislation in ways likely to destroy important procedural values. I hope this article helps focus the debate on the Act's terms, rather than on the interbranch disagreements about the wisdom or constitutionality of the legislation. Careful analysis of the CJRA teaches that the congressional mandate to reform civil justice does not require ignoring values that have served federal procedure well. Courts should remain sensitive to the costs they impose by straying from national norms. While the Civil Justice Reform Act makes differences in case-management practices among districts inevitable, it does not authorize, nor should it result in, the abandonment of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure.