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U.S. Code > Title 28 > Part VI > Chapter 153 > § 2255

28 U.S. Code § 2255 - Federal custody; remedies on motion attacking sentence

(a) A prisoner in custody under sentence of a court established by Act of Congress claiming the right to be released upon the ground that the sentence was imposed in violation of the Constitution or laws of the United States, or that the court was without jurisdiction to impose such sentence, or that the sentence was in excess of the maximum authorized by law, or is otherwise subject to collateral attack, may move the court which imposed the sentence to vacate, set aside or correct the sentence.

(b) Unless the motion and the files and records of the case conclusively show that the prisoner is entitled to no relief, the court shall cause notice thereof to be served upon the United States attorney, grant a prompt hearing thereon, determine the issues and make findings of fact and conclusions of law with respect thereto. If the court finds that the judgment was rendered without jurisdiction, or that the sentence imposed was not authorized by law or otherwise open to collateral attack, or that there has been such a denial or infringement of the constitutional rights of the prisoner as to render the judgment vulnerable to collateral attack, the court shall vacate and set the judgment aside and shall discharge the prisoner or resentence him or grant a new trial or correct the sentence as may appear appropriate.

(c) A court may entertain and determine such motion without requiring the production of the prisoner at the hearing.

(d) An appeal may be taken to the court of appeals from the order entered on the motion as from a final judgment on application for a writ of habeas corpus.

(e) An application for a writ of habeas corpus in behalf of a prisoner who is authorized to apply for relief by motion pursuant to this section, shall not be entertained if it appears that the applicant has failed to apply for relief, by motion, to the court which sentenced him, or that such court has denied him relief, unless it also appears that the remedy by motion is inadequate or ineffective to test the legality of his detention.

(f) A 1-year period of limitation shall apply to a motion under this section. The limitation period shall run from the latest of—

(1) the date on which the judgment of conviction becomes final;

(2) the date on which the impediment to making a motion created by governmental action in violation of the Constitution or laws of the United States is removed, if the movant was prevented from making a motion by such governmental action;

(3) the date on which the right asserted was initially recognized by the Supreme Court, if that right has been newly recognized by the Supreme Court and made retroactively applicable to cases on collateral review; or

(4) the date on which the facts supporting the claim or claims presented could have been discovered through the exercise of due diligence.

(g) Except as provided in section 408 of the Controlled Substances Act, in all proceedings brought under this section, and any subsequent proceedings on review, the court may appoint counsel, except as provided by a rule promulgated by the Supreme Court pursuant to statutory authority. Appointment of counsel under this section shall be governed by section 3006A of title 18.

(h) A second or successive motion must be certified as provided in section 2244 by a panel of the appropriate court of appeals to contain—

(1) newly discovered evidence that, if proven and viewed in light of the evidence as a whole, would be sufficient to establish by clear and convincing evidence that no reasonable factfinder would have found the movant guilty of the offense; or

(2) a new rule of constitutional law, made retroactive to cases on collateral review by the Supreme Court, that was previously unavailable.

(June 25, 1948, ch. 646, 62 Stat. 967; May 24, 1949, ch. 139, § 114, 63 Stat. 105; Pub. L. 104–132, title I, § 105, Apr. 24, 1996, 110 Stat. 1220; Pub. L. 110–177, title V, § 511, Jan. 7, 2008, 121 Stat. 2545.)

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28 U.S. Code § 2255 - Federal custody; remedies on motion attacking sentence

HISTORICAL AND REVISION NOTES

1948 Act

This section restates, clarifies and simplifies the procedure in the nature of the ancient writ of error coram nobis. It provides an expeditious remedy for correcting erroneous sentences without resort to habeas corpus. It has the approval of the Judicial Conference of the United States. Its principal provisions are incorporated in H.R. 4233, Seventy-ninth Congress.

1949 Act

This amendment conforms language of section 2255 of title 28, U.S.C., with that of section 1651 of such title and makes it clear that the section is applicable in the district courts in the Territories and possessions.

REFERENCES IN TEXT

Section 408 of the Controlled Substances Act, referred to in subsec. (g), is classified to section 848 of Title 21, Food and Drugs.

AMENDMENTS

2008—Pub. L. 110–177 designated first through eighth undesignated pars. as subsecs. (a) to (h), respectively.

1996—Pub. L. 104–132 inserted at end three new undesignated paragraphs beginning “A 1-year period of limitation”, “Except as provided in section 408 of the Controlled Substances Act”, and “A second or successive motion must be certified” and struck out second and fifth undesignated pars. providing, respectively, that “A motion for such relief may be made at any time.” and “The sentencing court shall not be required to entertain a second or successive motion for similar relief on behalf of the same prisoner.”

1949—Act May 24, 1949, substituted “court established by Act of Congress” for “court of the United States” in first par.

APPROVAL AND EFFECTIVE DATE OF RULES GOVERNING SECTION 2254 CASES AND SECTION 2255 PROCEEDINGS FOR UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURTS

For approval and effective date of rules governing petitions under section 2254 and motions under section 2255 of this title filed on or after Feb. 1, 1977, see section 1 of Pub. L. 94–426, set out as a note under section 2074 of this title.

**POSTPONEMENT OF EFFECTIVE DATE OF PROPOSED RULES AND FORMS GOVERNING PROCEEDINGS UNDER SECTIONS 2254
AND 2255 OF THIS TITLE**

Rules and forms governing proceedings under sections 2254 and 2255 of this title proposed by Supreme Court order of Apr. 26, 1976, effective 30 days after adjournment sine die of 94th Congress, or until and to the extent approved by Act of Congress, whichever is earlier, see section 2 of Pub. L. 94–349, set out as a note under section 2074 of this title.

RULES GOVERNING SECTION 2255 PROCEEDINGS FOR THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURTS

(Effective Feb. 1, 1977, as amended to Jan. 3, 2017)

Rule	
1.	Scope.
2.	The Motion.
3.	Filing the Motion; Inmate Filing.
4.	Preliminary Review.
5.	The Answer and the Reply.
6.	Discovery.
7.	Expanding the Record.
8.	Evidentiary Hearing.
9.	Second or Successive Motions.
10.	Powers of a Magistrate Judge.
11.	Certificate of Appealability; Time to Appeal.
12.	Applicability of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure and the Federal Rules of Criminal Procedure.

APPENDIX OF FORMS

Motion Under 28 U.S.C. § 2255 to Vacate, Set Aside, or Correct Sentence By a Person in Federal Custody.

EFFECTIVE DATE OF RULES; EFFECTIVE DATE OF 1975 AMENDMENT

Rules, and the amendments thereto by Pub. L. 94–426, Sept. 28, 1976, 90 Stat. 1334, effective with respect to petitions under section 2254 of this title and motions under section 2255 of this title filed on or after Feb. 1, 1977, see section 1 of Pub. L. 94–426, set out as a note under section 2074 of this title.

Rule 1. Scope

These rules govern a motion filed in a United States district court under 28 U.S.C. § 2255 by:

(a) a person in custody under a judgment of that court who seeks a determination that:

- (1) the judgment violates the Constitution or laws of the United States;
- (2) the court lacked jurisdiction to enter the judgment;
- (3) the sentence exceeded the maximum allowed by law; or
- (4) the judgment or sentence is otherwise subject to collateral review; and

(b) a person in custody under a judgment of a state court or another federal court, and subject to future custody under a judgment of the district court, who seeks a determination that:

- (1) future custody under a judgment of the district court would violate the Constitution or laws of the United States;
- (2) the district court lacked jurisdiction to enter the judgment;
- (3) the district court's sentence exceeded the maximum allowed by law; or
- (4) the district court's judgment or sentence is otherwise subject to collateral review.

(As amended Apr. 26, 2004, eff. Dec. 1, 2004.)

ADVISORY COMMITTEE NOTE

The basic scope of this postconviction remedy is prescribed by 28 U.S.C. § 2255. Under these rules the person seeking relief from federal custody files a motion to vacate, set aside, or correct sentence, rather than a petition for habeas corpus. This is consistent with the terminology used in section 2255 and indicates the difference between this remedy and federal habeas for a state prisoner. Also, habeas corpus is available to the person in federal custody if his “remedy by motion is inadequate or ineffective to test the legality of his detention.”

Whereas sections 2241–2254 (dealing with federal habeas corpus for those in state custody) speak of the district court judge “issuing the writ” as the operative remedy, section 2255 provides that, if the judge finds the movant's assertions to be meritorious, he “shall discharge the prisoner or resentence him or grant a new trial or correct the sentence as may appear appropriate.” This is possible because a motion under § 2255 is a further step in the movant's criminal case and not a separate civil action, as appears from the legislative history of section 2 of S. 20, 80th Congress, the provisions of which were incorporated by the same Congress in title 28 U.S.C. as § 2255. In reporting S. 20 favorably the Senate Judiciary Committee said (Sen. Rep. 1526, 80th Cong. 2d Sess., p. 2):

The two main advantages of such motion remedy over the present habeas corpus are as follows:

First, habeas corpus is a separate civil action and not a further step in the criminal case in which petitioner is sentenced (*Ex parte Tom Tong*, 108 U.S. 556, 559 (1883)). It is not a determination of guilt or innocence of the charge upon which petitioner was sentenced. Where a prisoner sustains his right to discharge in habeas corpus, it is usually because some right—such as lack of counsel—has been denied which reflects no determination of his guilt or innocence but affects solely the fairness of his earlier criminal trial. Even under the broad power in the statute “to dispose of the party as law and justice require” (28 U.S.C.A., sec. 461), the court or judge is by no means in the same advantageous position in habeas corpus to do justice as would be so if the matter were determined in the criminal proceeding (see *Medley*, petitioner, 134 U.S. 160, 174 (1890)). For instance, the judge (by habeas corpus) cannot grant a new trial in the criminal case. Since the motion remedy is in the criminal proceeding, this section 2 affords the opportunity and expressly gives the broad powers to set aside the judgment and to “discharge the prisoner or resentence him or grant a new trial or correct the sentence as may appear appropriate.”

The fact that a motion under § 2255 is a further step in the movant’s criminal case rather than a separate civil action has significance at several points in these rules. See, e.g., advisory committee note to rule 3 (re no filing fee), advisory committee note to rule 4 (re availability of files, etc., relating to the judgment), advisory committee note to rule 6 (re availability of discovery under criminal procedure rules), advisory committee note to rule 11 (re no extension of time for appeal), and advisory committee note to rule 12 (re applicability of federal criminal rules). However, the fact that Congress has characterized the motion as a further step in the criminal proceedings does *not* mean that proceedings upon such a motion are of necessity governed by the legal principles which are applicable at a criminal trial regarding such matters as counsel, presence, confrontation, self-incrimination, and burden of proof.

The challenge of decisions such as the revocation of probation or parole are not appropriately dealt with under 28 U.S.C. § 2255, which is a continuation of the original criminal action. Other remedies, such as habeas corpus, are available in such situations.

Although rule 1 indicates that these rules apply to a motion for a determination that the judgment was imposed “in violation of the . . . laws of the United States,” the language of 28 U.S.C. § 2255, it is not the intent of these rules to define or limit what is encompassed within that phrase. See *Davis v. United States*, 417 U.S. 333 (1974), holding that it is not true “that every asserted error of law can be raised on a § 2255 motion,” and that the appropriate inquiry is “whether the claimed error of law was a fundamental defect which inherently results in a complete miscarriage of justice,’ and whether [i]t . . . present[s] exceptional circumstances where the need for the remedy afforded by the writ of habeas corpus is apparent.”

For a discussion of the “custody” requirement and the intended limited scope of this remedy, see advisory committee note to § 2254 rule 1.

COMMITTEE NOTES ON RULES—2004 AMENDMENT

The language of Rule 1 has been amended as part of general restyling of the rules to make them more easily understood and to make style and terminology consistent throughout the rules. These changes are intended to be stylistic and no substantive change is intended.

Changes Made After Publication and Comments. The Committee made no changes to Rule 1.

Rule 2. The Motion

(a) **APPLYING FOR RELIEF.** The application must be in the form of a motion to vacate, set aside, or correct the sentence.

(b) **FORM.** The motion must:

(1) specify all the grounds for relief available to the moving party;

(2) state the facts supporting each ground;

(3) state the relief requested;

(4) be printed, typewritten, or legibly handwritten; and

(5) be signed under penalty of perjury by the movant or by a person authorized to sign it for the movant.

(c) **STANDARD FORM.** The motion must substantially follow either the form appended to these rules or a form prescribed by a local district-court rule. The clerk must make forms available to moving parties without charge.

(d) **SEPARATE MOTIONS FOR SEPARATE JUDGMENTS.** A moving party who seeks relief from more than one judgment must file a separate motion covering each judgment.

(As amended Pub. L. 94–426, §2(3), (4), Sept. 28, 1976, 90 Stat. 1334; Apr. 28, 1982, eff. Aug. 1, 1982; Apr. 26, 2004, eff. Dec. 1, 2004.)

ADVISORY COMMITTEE NOTE

Under these rules the application for relief is in the form of a motion rather than a petition (see rule 1 and advisory committee note). Therefore, there is no requirement that the movant name a respondent. This is consistent with 28 U.S.C. § 2255. The United States Attorney for the district in which the judgment under attack was entered is the proper party to oppose the motion since the federal government is the movant's adversary of record.

If the movant is attacking a federal judgment which will subject him to future custody, he must be in present custody (see rule 1 and advisory committee note) as the result of a state or federal governmental action. He need not alter the nature of the motion by trying to include the government officer who presently has official custody of him as a pseudo-respondent, or third-party plaintiff, or other fabrication. The court hearing his motion attacking the future custody can exercise jurisdiction over those having him in present custody without the use of artificial pleading devices.

There is presently a split among the courts as to whether a person currently in state custody may use a § 2255 motion to obtain relief from a federal judgment under which he will be subjected to custody in the future. Negative, see *Newton v. United States*, 329 F.Supp. 90 (S.D. Texas 1971); affirmative, see *Desmond v. The United States Board of Parole*, 397 F.2d 386 (1st Cir. 1968), cert. denied, 393 U.S. 919 (1968); and *Paalino v. United States*, 314 F.Supp. 875 (C.D.Cal. 1970). It is intended that these rules settle the matter in favor of the prisoner's being able to file a § 2255 motion for relief under those circumstances. The proper district in which to file such a motion is the one in which is situated the court which rendered the sentence under attack.

Under rule 35, Federal Rules of Criminal Procedure, the court may correct an illegal sentence or a sentence imposed in an illegal manner, or may reduce the sentence. This remedy should be used, rather than a motion under these § 2255 rules, whenever applicable, but there is some overlap between the two proceedings which has caused the courts difficulty.

The movant should not be barred from an appropriate remedy because he has misstyped his motion. See *United States v. Morgan*, 346 U.S. 502, 505 (1954). The court should construe it as whichever one is proper under the circumstances and decide it on its merits. For a § 2255 motion construed as a rule 35 motion, see *Heflin v. United States*, 358 U.S. 415 (1959); and *United States v. Coke*, 404 F.2d 836 (2d Cir. 1968). For writ of error coram nobis treated as a rule 35 motion, see *Hawkins v. United States*, 324 F.Supp. 223 (E.D.Texas, Tyler Division 1971). For a rule 35 motion treated as a § 2255 motion, see *Moss v. United States*, 263 F.2d 615 (5th Cir. 1959); *Jones v. United States*, 400 F.2d 892 (8th Cir. 1968), cert. denied 394 U.S. 991 (1969); and *United States v. Brown*, 413 F.2d 878 (9th Cir. 1969), cert. denied, 397 U.S. 947 (1970).

One area of difference between § 2255 and rule 35 motions is that for the latter there is no requirement that the movant be "in custody." *Heflin v. United States*, 358 U.S. 415, 418, 422 (1959); *Duggins v. United States*, 240 F.2d 479, 483 (6th Cir. 1957). Compare with rule 1 and advisory committee note for § 2255 motions. The importance of this distinction has decreased since *Peyton v. Rowe*, 391 U.S. 54 (1968), but it might still make a difference in particular situations.

A rule 35 motion is used to attack the sentence imposed, not the basis for the sentence. The court in *Gilinsky v. United States*, 335 F.2d 914, 916 (9th Cir. 1964), stated, "a Rule 35 motion presupposes a valid conviction. * * * [C]ollateral attack on errors allegedly committed at trial is not permissible under Rule 35." By illustration the court noted at page 917: "a Rule 35 proceeding contemplates the correction of a sentence of a court having jurisdiction. * * * [J]urisdictional defects * * * involve a collateral attack, they must ordinarily be presented under 28 U.S.C. § 2255." In *United States v. Semet*, 295 F.Supp. 1084 (E.D. Okla. 1968), the prisoner moved under rule 35 and § 2255 to invalidate the sentence he was serving on the grounds of his failure to understand the charge to which he pleaded guilty. The court said:

As regards Defendant's Motion under Rule 35, said Motion must be denied as its presupposes a valid conviction of the offense with which he was charged and may be used only to attack the sentence. It may not be used to examine errors occurring prior to the imposition of sentence.

295 F.Supp. at 1085

See also: *Moss v. United States*, 263 F.2d at 616; *Duggins v. United States*, 240 F. 2d at 484; *Migdal v. United States*, 298 F.2d 513, 514 (9th Cir. 1961); *Jones v. United States*, 400 F.2d at 894; *United States v. Coke*, 404 F.2d at 847; and *United States v. Brown*, 413 F.2d at 879.

A major difficulty in deciding whether rule 35 or § 2255 is the proper remedy is the uncertainty as to what is meant by an "illegal sentence." The Supreme Court dealt with this issue in *Hill v. United States*, 368 U.S. 424 (1962). The prisoner brought a § 2255 motion to vacate sentence on the ground that he had not been given a Fed.R.Crim. P. 32(a) opportunity to make a statement in his own behalf at the time of sentencing. The majority held this was not an error subject to collateral attack under § 2255. The five-member majority considered the motion as one brought pursuant to rule 35, but denied relief, stating:

[T]he narrow function of Rule 35 is to permit correction at any time of an illegal *sentence*, not to re-examine errors occurring at the trial or other proceedings prior to the imposition of sentence. The sentence in this case was not illegal. The punishment meted out was not in excess of that prescribed by the relevant statutes, multiple terms were not imposed for the same offense, nor were the terms of the sentence itself legally or constitutionally invalid in any other respect.

368 U.S. at 430

The four dissenters felt the majority definition of "illegal" was too narrow.

[Rule 35] provides for the correction of an "illegal sentence" without regard to the reasons why that sentence is illegal and contains not a single word to support the Court's conclusion that only a sentence illegal by reason of the punishment it imposes is "illegal" within the meaning of the Rule. I would have thought that a sentence imposed in an illegal manner—whether the amount or form of the punishment meted out constitutes an additional violation of law or not—would be recognized as an "illegal sentence" under any normal reading of the English language.

368 U.S. at 431–432

The 1966 amendment of rule 35 added language permitting correction of a sentence imposed in an "illegal manner." However, there is a 120-day time limit on a motion to do this, and the added language does not clarify the intent of the rule or its relation to § 2255.

The courts have been flexible in considering motions under circumstances in which relief might appear to be precluded by *Hill v. United States*. In *Peterson v. United States*, 432 F.2d 545 (8th Cir. 1970), the court was confronted with a motion for reduction of sentence by a prisoner claiming to have received a harsher sentence than his codefendants because he stood trial rather than plead guilty. He alleged that this violated his constitutional right to a jury trial. The court ruled that, even though it was past the 120-day time period for a motion to reduce sentence, the claim was still cognizable under rule 35 as a motion to correct an illegal sentence.

The courts have made even greater use of § 2255 in these types of situations. In *United States v. Lewis*, 392 F.2d 440 (4th Cir. 1968), the prisoner moved under § 2255 and rule 35 for relief from a sentence he claimed was the result of the judge's misunderstanding of the relevant sentencing law. The court held that he could not get relief under rule 35 because it was past the 120 days for correction of a sentence imposed in an illegal manner and under *Hill v. United States* it was not an illegal sentence. However, § 2255 was applicable because of its "otherwise subject to collateral attack" language. The flaw was not a mere trial error relating to the finding of guilt, but a rare and unusual error which amounted to "exceptional circumstances" embraced in § 2255's words "collateral attack." See 368 U.S. at 444 for discussion of other cases allowing use of § 2255 to attack the sentence itself in similar circumstances, especially where the judge has sentenced out of a misapprehension of the law.

In *United States v. McCarthy*, 433 F.2d 591, 592 (1st Cir. 1970), the court allowed a prisoner who was past the time limit for a proper rule 35 motion to use § 2255 to attack the sentence which he received upon a plea of guilty on the ground that it was induced by an unfulfilled promise of the prosecutor to recommend leniency. The court specifically noted that under § 2255 this was a proper collateral attack on the sentence and there was no need to attack the conviction as well.

The court in *United States v. Malcolm*, 432 F.2d 809, 814, 818 (2d Cir. 1970), allowed a prisoner to challenge his sentence under § 2255 without attacking the conviction. It held rule 35 inapplicable because the sentence was not illegal on its face, but the manner in which the sentence was imposed raised a question of the denial of due process in the sentencing itself which was cognizable under § 2255.

The flexible approach taken by the courts in the above cases seems to be the reasonable way to handle these situations in which rule 35 and § 2255 appear to overlap. For a further discussion of this problem, see C. Wright, *Federal Practice and Procedure; Criminal* §§ 581–587 (1969, Supp. 1975).

See the advisory committee note to rule 2 of the § 2254 rules for further discussion of the purposes and intent of rule 2 of these § 2255 rules.

1982 Amendment

Subdivision (b). The amendment takes into account 28 U.S.C. § 1746, enacted after adoption of the § 2255 rules. Section 1746 provides that in lieu of an affidavit an unsworn statement may be given under penalty of perjury in substantially the following form if executed within the United States, its territories, possessions or commonwealths: "I declare (or certify, verify, or state) under penalty of perjury that the foregoing is true and correct. Executed on (date). (Signature)." The statute is "intended to encompass prisoner litigation," and the statutory alternative is especially appropriate in such cases because a notary might not be readily available. *Carter v. Clark*, 616 F.2d 228 (5th Cir. 1980). The § 2255 forms have been revised accordingly.

COMMITTEE NOTES ON RULES—2004 AMENDMENT

The language of Rule 2 has been amended as part of general restyling of the rules to make them more easily understood and to make style and terminology consistent throughout the rules. These changes are intended to be stylistic and no substantive change is intended, except as described below.

Revised Rule 2(b)(5) has been amended by removing the requirement that the motion be signed personally by the moving party. Thus, under the amended rule the motion may be signed by [the] movant personally or by someone acting on behalf of the movant, assuming that the person is authorized to do so, for example, an attorney for the movant. The Committee envisions that the courts would apply third-party, or “next-friend,” standing analysis in deciding whether the signer was actually authorized to sign the motion on behalf of the movant. See *generally Whitmore v. Arkansas*, 495 U.S. 149 (1990) (discussion of requisites for “next friend” standing in habeas petitions). See *also* 28 U.S.C. § 2242 (application for state habeas corpus relief may be filed by the person who is seeking relief, or by someone acting on behalf of that person).

The language in new Rule 2(c) has been changed to reflect that a moving party must substantially follow the standard form, which is appended to the rules, or a form provided by the court. The current rule, Rule 2(c), seems to indicate a preference for the standard “national” form. Under the amended rule, there is no stated preference. The Committee understood that the current practice in some courts is that if the moving party first files a motion using the national form, that courts may ask the moving party to supplement it with the local form.

Current Rule 2(d), which provided for returning an insufficient motion[,] has been deleted. The Committee believed that the approach in Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 5(e) was more appropriate for dealing with motions that do not conform to the form requirements of the rule. That Rule provides that the clerk may not refuse to accept a filing solely for the reason that it fails to comply with these rules or local rules. Before the adoption of a one-year statute of limitations in the Antiterrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act of 1996, 110 Stat. 1214, the moving party suffered no penalty, other than delay, if the motion was deemed insufficient. Now that a one-year statute of limitations applies to motions filed under § 2255, see 28 U.S.C. § 2244(d)(1), the court’s dismissal of a motion because it is not in proper form may pose a significant penalty for a moving party, who may not be able to file another motion within the one-year limitations period. Now, under revised Rule 3(b), the clerk is required to file a motion, even though it may otherwise fail to comply with the provisions in revised Rule 2(b). The Committee believed that the better procedure was to accept the defective motion and require the moving party to submit a corrected motion that conforms to Rule 2(b).

Changes Made After Publication and Comments. The Committee changed Rule 2(b)(2) to read “state the facts” rather than [sic] “briefly summarize the facts.” One commentator had written that the current language may actually mislead the petitioner and is also redundant.

Rule 2(b)(4) was also modified to reflect that some motions may be printed using a word processing program.

Finally, Rule 2(b)(5) was changed to emphasize that any person, other than the petitioner, who signs the petition must be authorized to do so.

AMENDMENTS

1976—Subd. (b). Pub. L. 94–426, § 2(3), inserted “substantially” after “The motion shall be in”, and struck out requirement that the motion follow the prescribed form.

Subd. (d). Pub. L. 94–426, § 2(4), inserted “substantially” after “district court does not”, and struck out provision which permitted the clerk to return a motion for noncompliance without a judge so directing.

Rule 3. Filing the Motion; Inmate Filing

(a) **WHERE TO FILE; COPIES.** An original and two copies of the motion must be filed with the clerk.

(b) **FILING AND SERVICE.** The clerk must file the motion and enter it on the criminal docket of the case in which the challenged judgment was entered. The clerk must then deliver or serve a copy of the motion on the United States attorney in that district, together with a notice of its filing.

(c) **TIME TO FILE.** The time for filing a motion is governed by 28 U.S.C. § 2255 para. 6.

(d) **INMATE FILING.** A paper filed by an inmate confined in an institution is timely if deposited in the institution's internal mailing system on or before the last day for filing. If an institution has a system designed for legal mail, the inmate must use that system to receive the benefit of this rule. Timely filing may be shown by a declaration in compliance with 28 U.S.C. § 1746 or by a notarized statement, either of which must set forth the date of deposit and state that first-class postage has been prepaid.

(As amended Apr. 26, 2004, eff. Dec. 1, 2004.)

ADVISORY COMMITTEE NOTE

There is no filing fee required of a movant under these rules. This is a change from the practice of charging \$15 and is done to recognize specifically the nature of a § 2255 motion as being a continuation of the criminal case whose judgment is under attack.

The long-standing practice of requiring a \$15 filing fee has followed from 28 U.S.C. § 1914(a) whereby “parties instituting any civil action * * * pay a filing fee of \$15, except that on an application for a writ of habeas corpus the filing fee shall be \$5.” This has been held to apply to a proceeding under § 2255 despite the rationale that such a proceeding is a motion and thus a continuation of the criminal action. (See note to rule 1.)

A motion under Section 2255 is a civil action and the clerk has no choice but to charge a \$15.00 filing fee unless by leave of court it is filed in forma pauperis.

McCune v. United States, 406 F.2d 417, 419 (6th Cir. 1969).

Although the motion has been considered to be a new civil action in the nature of habeas corpus for filing purposes, the reduced fee for habeas has been held not applicable. The Tenth Circuit considered the specific issue in *Martin v. United States*, 273 F.2d 775 (10th Cir. 1960), cert. denied, 365 U.S. 853 (1961), holding that the reduced fee was exclusive to habeas petitions.

Counsel for Martin insists that, if a docket fee must be paid, the amount is \$5 rather than \$15 and bases his contention on the exception contained in 28 U.S.C. §1914 that in habeas corpus the fee is \$5. This reads into §1914 language which is not there. While an application under §2255 may afford the same relief as that previously obtainable by habeas corpus, it is not a petition for a writ of habeas corpus. A change in §1914 must come from Congress.

273 F.2d at 778

Although for most situations §2255 is intended to provide to the federal prisoner a remedy equivalent to habeas corpus as used by state prisoners, there is a major distinction between the two. Calling a §2255 request for relief a motion rather than a petition militates toward charging no new filing fee, not an increased one. In the absence of convincing evidence to the contrary, there is no reason to suppose that Congress did not mean what it said in making a §2255 action a motion. Therefore, as in other motions filed in a criminal action, there is no requirement of a filing fee. It is appropriate that the present situation of docketing a §2255 motion as a new action and charging a \$15 filing fee be remedied by the rule when the whole question of §2255 motions is thoroughly thought through and organized.

Even though there is no need to have a forma pauperis affidavit to proceed with the action since there is no requirement of a fee for filing the motion the affidavit remains attached to the form to be supplied potential movants. Most such movants are indigent, and this is a convenient way of getting this into the official record so that the judge may appoint counsel, order the government to pay witness fees, allow docketing of an appeal, and grant any other rights to which an indigent is entitled in the course of a §2255 motion, when appropriate to the particular situation, without the need for an indigency petition and adjudication at such later point in the proceeding. This should result in a streamlining of the process to allow quicker disposition of these motions.

For further discussion of this rule, see the advisory committee note to rule 3 of the §2254 rules.

COMMITTEE NOTES ON RULES—2004 AMENDMENT

The language of Rule 3 has been amended as part of general restyling of the rules to make them more easily understood and to make style and terminology consistent throughout the rules. These changes are intended to be stylistic and no substantive change is intended, except as indicated below.

Revised Rule 3(b) is new and is intended to parallel Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 5(e), which provides that the clerk may not refuse to accept a filing solely for the reason that it fails to comply with these rules or local rules. Before the adoption of a one-year statute of limitations in the Antiterrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act of 1996, 110 Stat. 1214, the moving party suffered no penalty, other than delay, if the petition was deemed insufficient. That Act, however,

added a one-year statute of limitations to motions filed under §2255, see 28 U.S.C. §2244(d) (1). Thus, a court's dismissal of a defective motion may pose a significant penalty for a moving party who may not be able to file a corrected motion within the one-year limitation period. The Committee believed that the better procedure was to accept the defective motion and require the moving party to submit a corrected motion that conforms to Rule 2. Thus, revised Rule 3(b) requires the clerk to file a motion, even though it may otherwise fail to comply with Rule 2.

Revised Rule 3(c), which sets out a specific reference to 28 U.S.C. § 2255, paragraph 6, is new and has been added to put moving parties on notice that a one-year statute of limitations applies to motions filed under these Rules. Although the rule does not address the issue, every circuit that has addressed the issue has taken the position that equitable tolling of the statute of limitations is available in appropriate circumstances. See, e.g., *Dunlap v. United States*, 250 F.3d 1001, 1004–07 (6th Cir. 2001); *Moore v. United States*, 173 F.3d 1131, 1133–35 (8th Cir. 1999); *Sandvik v. United States*, 177 F.3d 1269, 1270–72 (11th Cir. 1999). The Supreme Court has not addressed the question directly. See *Duncan v. Walker*, 533 U.S. 167, 181 (2001) (“We . . . have no occasion to address the question that Justice Stevens raises concerning the availability of equitable tolling.”).

Rule 3(d) is new and provides guidance on determining whether a motion from an inmate is considered to have been filed in a timely fashion. The new provision parallels Federal Rule of Appellate Procedure 25(a)(2)(C).

Changes Made After Publication and Comments. The Committee modified the Committee Note to reflect that the clerk must file a motion, even in those instances where the necessary filing fee or in forma pauperis form is not attached. The Note also includes new language concerning the equitable tolling of the statute of limitations.

Rule 4. Preliminary Review

(a) **REFERRAL TO A JUDGE.** The clerk must promptly forward the motion to the judge who conducted the trial and imposed sentence or, if the judge who imposed sentence was not the trial judge, to the judge who conducted the proceedings being challenged. If the appropriate judge is not available, the clerk must forward the motion to a judge under the court's assignment procedure.

(b) **INITIAL CONSIDERATION BY THE JUDGE.** The judge who receives the motion must promptly examine it. If it plainly appears from the motion, any attached exhibits, and the record of prior proceedings that the moving party is not entitled to relief, the judge must dismiss the motion and direct the clerk to notify the moving party. If the motion is not dismissed, the judge must order the United States attorney to file an answer, motion, or other response within a fixed time, or to take other action the judge may order.

(As amended Apr. 26, 2004, eff. Dec. 1, 2004.)

ADVISORY COMMITTEE NOTE

Rule 4 outlines the procedure for assigning the motion to a specific judge of the district court and the options available to the judge and the government after the motion is properly filed.

The long-standing majority practice in assigning motions made pursuant to § 2255 has been for the trial judge to determine the merits of the motion. In cases where the § 2255 motion is directed against the sentence, the merits have traditionally been decided by the judge who imposed sentence. The reasoning for this was first noted in *Currell v. United States*, 173 F.2d 348, 348–349 (4th Cir. 1949):

Complaint is made that the judge who tried the case passed upon the motion. Not only was there no impropriety in this, but it is highly desirable in such cases that the motions be passed on by the judge who is familiar with the facts and circumstances surrounding the trial, and is consequently not likely to be misled by false allegations as to what occurred.

This case, and its reasoning, has been almost unanimously endorsed by other courts dealing with the issue.

Commentators have been critical of having the motion decided by the trial judge. See *Developments in the Law—Federal Habeas Corpus*, 83 Harv.L.Rev. 1038, 1206–1208 (1970).

[T]he trial judge may have become so involved with the decision that it will be difficult for him to review it objectively. Nothing in the legislative history suggests that “court” refers to a specific judge, and the procedural advantages of section 2255 are available whether or not the trial judge presides at the hearing.

The theory that Congress intended the trial judge to preside at a section 2255 hearing apparently originated in *Carvell v. United States*, 173 F.2d 348 (4th Cir. 1949) (per curiam), where the panel of judges included Chief Judge Parker of the Fourth Circuit, chairman of the Judicial Conference committee which drafted section 2255. But the legislative history does not indicate that Congress wanted the trial judge to preside. Indeed the advantages of section 2255 can all be achieved if the case is heard in the sentencing district, regardless of which judge hears it. According to the Senate committee report the purpose of the bill was to make the proceeding a part of the criminal action so the court could resentence the applicant, or grant him a new trial. (A judge presiding over a habeas corpus action does not have these powers.) In addition, Congress did not want the cases heard in the district of confinement because that tended to concentrate the burden on a few districts, and made it difficult for witnesses and records to be produced.

83 Harv.L.Rev. at 1207–1208

The Court of Appeals for the First Circuit has held that a judge other than the trial judge should rule on the 2255 motion. See *Halliday v. United States*, 380 F.2d 270 (1st Cir. 1967).

There is a procedure by which the movant can have a judge other than the trial judge decide his motion in courts adhering to the majority rule. He can file an affidavit alleging bias in order to disqualify the trial judge. And there are circumstances in which the trial judge will, on his own, disqualify himself. See, e.g., *Webster v. United States*, 330 F.Supp. 1080 (1972). However, there has been some questioning of the effectiveness of this procedure. See *Developments in the Law—Federal Habeas Corpus*, 83 Harv.L.Rev. 1038, 1200–1207 (1970).

Subdivision (a) adopts the majority rule and provides that the trial judge, or sentencing judge if different and appropriate for the particular motion, will decide the motion made pursuant to these rules, recognizing that, under some circumstances, he may want to disqualify himself. A movant is not without remedy if he feels this is unfair to him. He can file an affidavit of bias. And there is the right to appellate review if the trial judge refuses to grant his motion. Because the trial judge is thoroughly familiar with the case, there is obvious administrative advantage in giving him the first opportunity to decide whether there are grounds for granting the motion.

Since the motion is part of the criminal action in which was entered the judgment to which it is directed, the files, records, transcripts, and correspondence relating to that judgment are automatically available to the judge in his consideration of the motion. He no longer need order them incorporated for that purpose.

Rule 4 has its basis in § 2255 (rather than 28 U.S.C. § 2243 in the corresponding habeas corpus rule) which does not have a specific time limitation as to when the answer must be made. Also, under § 2255, the United States Attorney for the district is the party served with the notice and a copy of the motion and required to answer (when appropriate). Subdivision (b) continues this practice since there is no respondent involved in the motion (unlike habeas) and the United States Attorney, as prosecutor in the case in question, is the most appropriate one to defend the judgment and oppose the motion.

The judge has discretion to require an answer or other appropriate response from the United States Attorney. See advisory committee note to rule 4 of the § 2254 rules.

COMMITTEE NOTES ON RULES—2004 AMENDMENT

The language of Rule 4 has been amended as part of general restyling of the rules to make them more easily understood and to make style and terminology consistent throughout the rules. These changes are intended to be stylistic and no substantive change is intended.

The amended rule reflects that the response to a Section 2255 motion may be a motion to dismiss or some other response.

Changes Made After Publication and Comments. The Committee modified Rule 4 to reflect the view of some commentators that it is common practice in some districts for the government to file a pre-answer motion to dismiss the § 2255 motion. The Committee agreed with that recommendation and changed the word “pleading” in the rule to “response.” It also made several minor changes to the Committee Note.

Rule 5. The Answer and the Reply

(a) **WHEN REQUIRED.** The respondent is not required to answer the motion unless a judge so orders.

(b) **CONTENTS.** The answer must address the allegations in the motion. In addition, it must state whether the moving party has used any other federal remedies, including any prior post-conviction motions under these rules or any previous rules, and whether the moving party received an evidentiary hearing.

(c) **RECORDS OF PRIOR PROCEEDINGS.** If the answer refers to briefs or transcripts of the prior proceedings that are not available in the court's records, the judge must order the government to furnish them within a reasonable time that will not unduly delay the proceedings.

(d) **REPLY.** The moving party may submit a reply to the respondent's answer or other pleading within a time fixed by the judge.

(As amended Apr. 26, 2004, eff. Dec. 1, 2004.)

ADVISORY COMMITTEE NOTE

Unlike the habeas corpus statutes (see 28 U.S.C. §§ 2243, 2248) § 2255 does not specifically call for a return or answer by the United States Attorney or set any time limits as to when one must be submitted. The general practice, however, if the motion is not summarily dismissed, is for the government to file an answer to the motion as well as counter-affidavits, when appropriate. Rule 4 provides for an answer to the motion by the United States Attorney, and rule 5 indicates what its contents should be.

There is no requirement that the movant exhaust his remedies prior to seeking relief under § 2255. However, the courts have held that such a motion is inappropriate if the movant is simultaneously appealing the decision.

We are of the view that there is no jurisdictional bar to the District Court's entertaining a Section 2255 motion during the pendency of a direct appeal but that the orderly administration of criminal law precludes considering such a motion absent extraordinary circumstances.

***Womack v. United States*, 395 F.2d 630, 631 (D.C.Cir. 1968)**

Also see *Masters v. Eide*, 353 F.2d 517 (8th Cir. 1965). The answer may thus cut short consideration of the motion if it discloses the taking of an appeal which was omitted from the form motion filed by the movant.

There is nothing in § 2255 which corresponds to the § 2248 requirement of a traverse to the answer. Numerous cases have held that the government's answer and affidavits are not conclusive against the movant, and if they raise disputed issues of fact a hearing must be held. *Machibroda v. United States*, 368 U.S. 487, 494, 495 (1962); *United States v. Salerno*, 290 F.2d 105, 106 (2d Cir. 1961); *Romero v. United States*, 327 F.2d 711, 712 (5th Cir. 1964); *Scott v. United States*, 349 F.2d 641, 642, 643 (6th Cir. 1965); *Schiebelhut v. United States*, 357 F.2d 743, 745 (6th Cir. 1966); and *Del Piano v. United States*, 362 F.2d 931, 932, 933 (3d Cir. 1966). None of these cases make any mention of a traverse by the movant to the government's answer. As under rule 5 of the § 2254 rules, there is no intention here that such a traverse be required, except under special circumstances. See advisory committee note to rule 9.

Subdivision (b) provides for the government to supplement its answers with appropriate copies of transcripts or briefs if for some reason the judge does not already have them under his control. This is because the government will in all probability have easier access to such papers

than the movant, and it will conserve the court's time to have the government produce them rather than the movant, who would in most instances have to apply in forma pauperis for the government to supply them for him anyway.

For further discussion, see the advisory committee note to rule 5 of the § 2254 rules.

COMMITTEE NOTES ON RULES—2004 AMENDMENT

The language of Rule 5 has been amended as part of general restyling of the rules to make them more easily understood and to make style and terminology consistent throughout the rules. These changes are intended to be stylistic and no substantive change is intended.

Revised Rule 5(a), which provides that the respondent is not required to file an answer to the motion, unless a judge so orders, is taken from current Rule 3(b). The revised rule does not address the practice in some districts, where the respondent files a pre-answer motion to dismiss the motion. But revised Rule 4(b) contemplates that practice and has been changed to reflect the view that if the court does not dismiss the motion, it may require (or permit) the respondent to file a motion.

Finally, revised Rule 5(d) adopts the practice in some jurisdictions giving the movant an opportunity to file a reply to the respondent's answer. Rather than using terms such as "traverse," see 28 U.S.C. § 2248, to identify the movant's response to the answer, the rule uses the more general term "reply." The Rule prescribes that the court set the time for such responses, and in lieu of setting specific time limits in each case, the court may decide to include such time limits in its local rules.

Changes Made After Publication and Comments. Rule 5(a) was modified to read that the government is not required to "respond" to the motion unless the court so orders; the term "respond" was used because it leaves open the possibility that the government's first response (as it is in some districts) is in the form of a pre-answer motion to dismiss the petition. The Note has been changed to reflect the fact that although the rule itself does not reflect that particular motion, it is used in some districts and refers the reader to Rule 4.

Finally, the Committee changed the Note to address the use of the term "traverse," a point raised by one of the commentators on the proposed rule.

Rule 6. Discovery

(a) **LEAVE OF COURT REQUIRED.** A judge may, for good cause, authorize a party to conduct discovery under the Federal Rules of Criminal Procedure or Civil Procedure, or in accordance with the practices and principles of law. If necessary for effective discovery, the judge must appoint an attorney for a moving party who qualifies to have counsel appointed under 18 U.S.C. § 3006A.

(b) **REQUESTING DISCOVERY.** A party requesting discovery must provide reasons for the request. The request must also include any proposed interrogatories and requests for admission, and must specify any requested documents.

(c) **DEPOSITION EXPENSES.** If the government is granted leave to take a deposition, the judge may require the government to pay the travel expenses, subsistence expenses, and fees of the moving party's attorney to attend the deposition.

(As amended Apr. 26, 2004, eff. Dec. 1, 2004.)

ADVISORY COMMITTEE NOTE

This rule differs from the corresponding discovery rule under the § 2254 rules in that it includes the processes of discovery available under the Federal Rules of Criminal Procedure as well as the civil. This is because of the nature of a § 2255 motion as a continuing part of the criminal proceeding (see advisory committee note to rule 1) as well as a remedy analogous to habeas corpus by state prisoners.

See the advisory committee note to rule 6 of the § 2254 rules. The discussion there is fully applicable to discovery under these rules for § 2255 motions.

COMMITTEE NOTES ON RULES—2004 AMENDMENT

The language of Rule 6 has been amended as part of general restyling of the rules to make them more easily understood and to make style and terminology consistent throughout the rules. These changes are intended to be stylistic and no substantive change is intended, except as indicated below.

Although current Rule 6(b) contains no requirement that the parties provide reasons for the requested discovery, the revised rule does so and also includes a requirement that the request be accompanied by any proposed interrogatories and requests for admission, and must specify any requested documents. The Committee believes that the revised rule makes explicit what has been implicit in current practice.

Changes Made After Publication and Comments. The Committee modified Rule 6(b), to require that discovery requests be supported by reasons, to assist the court in deciding what, if any, discovery should take place. The Committee amended the Note to reflect the view that it believed that the change made explicit what has been implicit in current practice.

REFERENCES IN TEXT

The Federal Rules of Criminal Procedure, referred to in subd. (a), are set out in the Appendix to Title 18, Crimes and Criminal Procedure.

The Federal Rules of Civil Procedure, referred to in subd. (a), are set out in the Appendix to this title.

Rule 7. Expanding the Record

(a) **IN GENERAL.** If the motion is not dismissed, the judge may direct the parties to expand the record by submitting additional materials relating to the motion. The judge may require that these materials be authenticated.

(b) **TYPES OF MATERIALS.** The materials that may be required include letters predating the filing of the motion, documents, exhibits, and answers under oath to written interrogatories propounded by the judge. Affidavits also may be submitted and considered as part of the record.

(c) **REVIEW BY THE OPPOSING PARTY.** The judge must give the party against whom the additional materials are offered an opportunity to admit or deny their correctness.

(As amended Apr. 26, 2004, eff. Dec. 1, 2004.)

ADVISORY COMMITTEE NOTE

It is less likely that the court will feel the need to expand the record in a § 2255 proceeding than in a habeas corpus proceeding, because the trial (or sentencing) judge is the one hearing the motion (see rule 4) and should already have a complete file on the case in his possession. However, rule 7 provides a convenient method for supplementing his file if the case warrants it.

See the advisory committee note to rule 7 of the § 2254 rules for a full discussion of reasons and procedures for expanding the record.

COMMITTEE NOTES ON RULES—2004 AMENDMENT

The language of Rule 7 has been amended as part of general restyling of the rules to make them more easily understood and to make style and terminology consistent throughout the rules. These changes are intended to be stylistic and no substantive change is intended.

Revised Rule 7(a) is not intended to restrict the court's authority to expand the record through means other than requiring the parties themselves to provide the information.

The language in current Rule 7(d), which deals with authentication of materials in the expanded record, has been moved to revised Rule 7(a).

Changes Made After Publication and Comments. Rule 7(a) was changed by removing the reference to the “merits” of the motion. One commentator had stated that the court may wish to expand the record for purposes other than the merits of the case. The Committee agreed and also changed the rule to reflect that someone other than a party may authenticate the materials.

Rule 8. Evidentiary Hearing

(a) **DETERMINING WHETHER TO HOLD A HEARING.** If the motion is not dismissed, the judge must review the answer, any transcripts and records of prior proceedings, and any materials submitted under Rule 7 to determine whether an evidentiary hearing is warranted.

(b) **REFERENCE TO A MAGISTRATE JUDGE.** A judge may, under 28 U.S.C. § 636(b), refer the motion to a magistrate judge to conduct hearings and to file proposed findings of fact and recommendations for disposition. When they are filed, the clerk must promptly serve copies of the proposed findings and recommendations on all parties. Within 14 days after being served, a party may file objections as provided by local court rule. The judge must determine de novo any proposed finding or recommendation to which objection is made. The judge may accept, reject, or modify any proposed finding or recommendation.

(c) **APPOINTING COUNSEL; TIME OF HEARING.** If an evidentiary hearing is warranted, the judge must appoint an attorney to represent a moving party who qualifies to have counsel appointed under 18 U.S.C. § 3006A. The judge must conduct the hearing as soon as practicable after giving the attorneys adequate time to investigate and prepare. These rules do not limit the appointment of counsel under § 3006A at any stage of the proceeding.

(d) **PRODUCING A STATEMENT.** Federal Rule of Criminal Procedure 26.2(a)–(d) and (f) applies at a hearing under this rule. If a party does not comply with a Rule 26.2(a) order to produce a witness’s statement, the court must not consider that witness’s testimony.

(As amended Pub. L. 94–426, § 2(6), Sept. 28, 1976, 90 Stat. 1335; Pub. L. 94–577, § 2(a)(2), (b)(2), Oct. 21, 1976, 90 Stat. 2730, 2731; Apr. 22, 1993, eff. Dec. 1, 1993; Apr. 26, 2004, eff. Dec. 1, 2004; Mar. 26, 2009, eff. Dec. 1, 2009.)

ADVISORY COMMITTEE NOTE

The standards for § 2255 hearings are essentially the same as for evidentiary hearings under a habeas petition, except that the previous federal fact-finding proceeding is in issue rather than the state’s. Also § 2255 does not set specific time limits for holding the hearing, as does § 2243 for a habeas action. With these minor differences in mind, see the advisory committee note to rule 8 of § 2254 rules, which is applicable to rule 8 of these § 2255 rules.

1993 Amendment

The amendment to Rule 8 is one of a series of parallel amendments to Federal Rules of Criminal Procedure 32, 32.1, and 46 which extend the scope of Rule 26.2 (Production of Witness Statements) to proceedings other than the trial itself. The amendments are grounded on the compelling need for accurate and credible information in making decisions concerning the defendant’s liberty. See the Advisory Committee Note to Rule 26.2(g). A few courts have recognized the authority of a judicial officer to order production of prior statements by a witness at a Section 2255 hearing, see, e.g., *United States v. White*, 342 F.2d 379, 382, n.4 (4th Cir. 1959). The amendment to Rule 8 grants explicit authority to do so. The amendment is not intended to require production of a witness’s statement before the witness actually presents oral testimony.

COMMITTEE NOTES ON RULES—2004 AMENDMENT

The language of Rule 8 has been amended as part of general restyling of the rules to make them more easily understood and to make style and terminology consistent throughout the rules. These changes are intended to be stylistic and no substantive change is intended, except as described below.

The requirement in current Rule 8(b)(2) that a copy of the magistrate judge’s findings must be promptly mailed to all parties has been changed in revised Rule 8(b) to require that copies of those findings be served on all parties. As used in this rule, “service” means service consistent with Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 5(b), which allows mailing the copies.

Changes Made After Publication and Comments. The Committee made no changes to Rule 8, as published for public comment.

COMMITTEE NOTES ON RULES—2009 AMENDMENT

The time set in the former rule at 10 days has been revised to 14 days. See the Committee Note to Federal Rules of Criminal Procedure 45(a).

REFERENCES IN TEXT

The Federal Rules of Criminal Procedure, referred to in subd. (d), are set out in the Appendix to Title 18, Crimes and Criminal Procedure.

AMENDMENTS BY PUBLIC LAW

1976—Subd. (b). Pub. L. 94–577, § 2(a)(2), substituted provisions which authorized magistrates, when designated to do so in accordance with section 636(b) of this title, to conduct hearings, including evidentiary hearings, on the petition and to submit to a judge of the court proposed findings of fact and recommendations for disposition, which directed the magistrate to file proposed findings and recommendations with the court with copies furnished to all parties, which allowed parties thus served 10 days to file written objections thereto, and which directed a judge of the court to make de novo determinations of the objected-to portions and to accept, reject, or modify the findings or recommendations for provisions under which the magistrate had been empowered only to recommend to the district judge that an evidentiary hearing be held or that the petition be dismissed.

Subd. (c). Pub. L. 94–577, § 2(b)(2), substituted “and the hearing shall be conducted” for “and shall conduct the hearing.”

Pub. L. 94–426 provided that these rules not limit the appointment of counsel under section 3006A of title 18, if the interest of justice so require.

EFFECTIVE DATE OF 1976 AMENDMENT

Amendments made by Pub. L. 94–577 effective with respect to motions under section 2255 of this title filed on or after Feb. 1, 1977, see section 2(c) of Pub. L. 94–577, set out as a note under Rule 8 of the Rules Governing Cases Under Section 2254 of this title.

Rule 9. Second or Successive Motions

Before presenting a second or successive motion, the moving party must obtain an order from the appropriate court of appeals authorizing the district court to consider the motion, as required by 28 U.S.C. § 2255, para. 8.

(As amended Pub. L. 94–426, § 2(9), (10), Sept. 28, 1976, 90 Stat. 1335; Apr. 26, 2004, eff. Dec. 1, 2004.)

ADVISORY COMMITTEE NOTE

Unlike the statutory provisions on habeas corpus (28 U.S.C. §§ 2241–2254), § 2255 specifically provides that “a motion for such relief may be made *at any time*.” [Emphasis added.] Subdivision (a) provides that delayed motions may be barred from consideration if the government has been prejudiced in its ability to respond to the motion by the delay and the movant’s failure to seek relief earlier is not excusable within the terms of the rule. Case law, dealing with this issue, is in conflict.

Some courts have held that the literal language of §2255 precludes any possible time bar to a motion brought under it. In *Heflin v. United States*, 358 U.S. 415 (1959), the concurring opinion noted:

The statute [28 U.S.C. § 2255] further provides; “A motion * * * may be made at any time.” This * * * simply means that, as in habeas corpus, there is no statute of limitations, no *res judicata*, and that the doctrine of laches is inapplicable.

358 U.S. at 420

McKinney v. United States, 208 F.2d 844 (D.C.Cir. 1953) reversed the district court’s dismissal of a § 2255 motion for being too late, the court stating:

McKinney’s present application for relief comes late in the day: he has served some fifteen years in prison. But tardiness is irrelevant where a constitutional issue is raised and where the prisoner is still confined.

208 F.2d at 846, 847

In accord, see: *Juelich v. United States*, 300 F.2d 381, 383 (5th Cir. 1962); *Connors v. United States*, 431 F.2d 1207, 1208 (9th Cir. 1970); *Sturup v. United States*, 218 F.Supp. 279, 281 (E.D.N.Car. 1963); and *Banks v. United States*, 319 F.Supp. 649, 652 (S.D.N.Y. 1970).

It has also been held that delay in filing a § 2255 motion does not bar the movant because of lack of reasonable diligence in pressing the claim.

The statute [28 U.S.C. § 2255], when it states that the motion may be made at any time, excludes the addition of a showing of diligence in delayed filings. A number of courts have considered contentions similar to those made here and have concluded that there are no time limitations. This result excludes the requirement of diligence which is in reality a time limitation.

***Haier v. United States*, 334 F.2d 441, 442 (10th Cir. 1964)**

Other courts have recognized that delay may have a negative effect on the movant. In *Raines v. United States*, 423 F.2d 526 (4th Cir. 1970), the court stated:

[B]oth petitioners’ silence for extended periods, one for 28 months and the other for nine years, serves to render their allegations less believable. “Although a delay in filing a section 2255 motion is not a controlling element * * * it may merit some consideration * * *.”

423 F.2d at 531

In *Aiken v. United States*, 191 F.Supp. 43, 50 (M.D.N.Car. 1961), aff'd 296 F.2d 604 (4th Cir. 1961), the court said: "While motions under 28 U.S.C. § 2255 may be made at any time, the lapse of time affects the good faith and credibility of the moving party." For similar conclusions, see: *Parker v. United States*, 358 F.2d 50, 54 n. 4 (7th Cir. 1965), cert. denied, 386 U.S. 916 (1967); *Le Clair v. United States*, 241 F.Supp. 819, 824 (N.D. Ind. 1965); *Malone v. United States*, 299 F.2d 254, 256 (6th Cir. 1962), cert. denied, 371 U.S. 863 (1962); *Howell v. United States*, 442 F.2d 265, 274 (7th Cir. 1971); and *United States v. Wiggins*, 184 F. Supp. 673, 676 (D.C.Cir. 1960).

There have been holdings by some courts that a delay in filing a § 2255 motion operates to increase the burden of proof which the movant must meet to obtain relief. The reasons for this, as expressed in *United States v. Bostic*, 206 F.Supp. 855 (D.C.Cir. 1962), are equitable in nature.

Obviously, the burden of proof on a motion to vacate a sentence under 28 U.S.C. § 2255 is on the moving party. . . . The burden is particularly heavy if the issue is one of fact and a long time has elapsed since the trial of the case. While neither the statute of limitations nor laches can bar the assertion of a constitutional right, nevertheless, the passage of time may make it impracticable to retry a case if the motion is granted and a new trial is ordered. No doubt, at times such a motion is a product of an afterthought. Long delay may raise a question of good faith.

206 F.Supp. at 856–857

See also *United States v. Wiggins*, 184 F.Supp. at 676.

A requirement that the movant display reasonable diligence in filing a § 2255 motion has been adopted by some courts dealing with delayed motions. The court in *United States v. Moore*, 166 F.2d 102 (7th Cir. 1948), cert. denied, 334 U.S. 849 (1948), did this, again for equitable reasons.

[W]e agree with the District Court that the petitioner has too long slept upon his rights. * * * [A]pparently there is no limitation of time within which * * * a motion to vacate may be filed, except that an applicant must show reasonable diligence in presenting his claim. * * *

The reasons which support the rule requiring diligence seem obvious. * * * Law enforcement officials change, witnesses die, memories grow dim. The prosecuting tribunal is put to a disadvantage if an unexpected retrial should be necessary after long passage of time.

166 F.2d at 105

In accord see *Desmond v. United States*, 333 F.2d 378, 381 (1st Cir. 1964), on remand, 345 F.2d 225 (1st Cir. 1965).

One of the major arguments advanced by the courts which would penalize a movant who waits an unduly long time before filing a § 2255 motion is that such delay is highly prejudicial to the prosecution. In *Desmond v. United States*, writing of a § 2255 motion alleging denial of effective appeal because of deception by movant's own counsel, the court said:

[A]pplications for relief such as this must be made promptly. It will not do for a prisoner to wait until government witnesses have become unavailable as by death, serious illness or absence from the country, or until the memory of available government witnesses has faded. It will not even do for a prisoner to wait any longer than is reasonably necessary to prepare appropriate moving papers, however inartistic, after discovery of the deception practiced upon him by his attorney.

333 F.2d at 381

In a similar vein are *United States v. Moore* and *United States v. Bostic*, supra, and *United States v. Wiggins*, 184 F. Supp. at 676.

Subdivision (a) provides a flexible, equitable time limitation based on laches to prevent movants from withholding their claims so as to prejudice the government both in meeting the allegations of the motion and in any possible retrial. It includes a reasonable diligence requirement for ascertaining possible grounds for relief. If the delay is found to be excusable, or nonprejudicial to the government, the time bar is inoperative.

Subdivision (b) is consistent with the language of § 2255 and relevant case law.

The annexed form is intended to serve the same purpose as the comparable one included in the § 2254 rules.

For further discussion applicable to this rule, see the advisory committee note to rule 9 of the § 2254 rules.

COMMITTEE NOTES ON RULES—2004 AMENDMENT

The language of Rule 9 has been amended as part of general restyling of the rules to make them more easily understood and to make style and terminology consistent throughout the rules. These changes are intended to be stylistic and no substantive change is intended, except as indicated below.

First, current Rule 9(a) has been deleted as unnecessary in light of the applicable one-year statute of limitations for § 2255 motions, added as part of the Antiterrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act of 1996, 28 U.S.C. § 2255, para. 6.

Second, the remainder of revised Rule 9 reflects provisions in the Antiterrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act of 1996, 28 U.S.C. § 2255, parh. [sic] 8, which now require a moving party to obtain approval from the appropriate court of appeals before filing a second or successive motion.

Finally, the title of the rule has been changed to reflect the fact that the revised version addresses only the topic of second or successive motions.

Changes Made After Publication and Comments. The Committee made no changes to Rule 9, as published.

AMENDMENTS BY PUBLIC LAW

1976—Subd. (a). Pub. L. 94–426, § 2(9), struck out provision which established a rebuttable presumption of prejudice to government if the petition was filed more than five years after conviction.

Subd. (b). Pub. L. 94–426, § 2(10), substituted “constituted an abuse of the procedure governed by these rules” for “is not excusable”.

Rule 10. Powers of a Magistrate Judge

A magistrate judge may perform the duties of a district judge under these rules, as authorized by 28 U.S.C. § 636.

(As amended Pub. L. 94–426, § 2(12), Sept. 28, 1976, 90 Stat. 1335; Apr. 30, 1979, eff. Aug. 1, 1979; Apr. 26, 2004, eff. Dec. 1, 2004.)

ADVISORY COMMITTEE NOTE

See the advisory committee note to rule 10 of the § 2254 rules for a discussion fully applicable here as well.

1979 Amendment

This amendment conforms the rule to 18 U.S.C. § 636. See Advisory Committee Note to rule 10 of the Rules Governing Section 2254 Cases in the United States District Courts.

COMMITTEE NOTES ON RULES—2004 AMENDMENT

The language of Rule 10 has been amended as part of general restyling of the rules to make them more easily understood and to make style and terminology consistent throughout the rules. These changes are intended to be stylistic and no substantive change is intended.

Changes Made After Publication and Comments. The Committee restyled the proposed rule.

AMENDMENTS BY PUBLIC LAW

1976—Pub. L. 94–426 inserted “, and to the extent the district court has established standards and criteria for the performance of such duties,” after “rule of the district court”.

Rule 11. Certificate of Appealability; Time to Appeal

(a) **CERTIFICATE OF APPEALABILITY.** The district court must issue or deny a certificate of appealability when it enters a final order adverse to the applicant. Before entering the final order, the court may direct the parties to submit arguments on whether a certificate should issue. If the court issues a certificate, the court must state the specific issue or issues that satisfy the showing required by 28 U.S.C. § 2253(c)(2). If the court denies a certificate, a party may not appeal the denial but may seek a certificate from the court of appeals under Federal Rule of Appellate Procedure 22. A motion to reconsider a denial does not extend the time to appeal.

(b) **TIME TO APPEAL.** Federal Rule of Appellate Procedure 4(a) governs the time to appeal an order entered under these rules. A timely notice of appeal must be filed even if the district court issues a certificate of appealability. These rules do not extend the time to appeal the original

judgment of conviction.

(As amended Apr. 30, 1979, eff. Aug. 1, 1979; Apr. 26, 2004, eff. Dec. 1, 2004; Mar. 26, 2009, eff. Dec. 1, 2009.)

ADVISORY COMMITTEE NOTE

Rule 11 is intended to make clear that, although a §2255 action is a continuation of the criminal case, the bringing of a §2255 action does not extend the time.

1979 Amendment

Prior to the promulgation of the Rules Governing Section 2255 Proceedings, the courts consistently held that the time for appeal in a section 2255 case is as provided in Fed.R.App.P. 4(a), that is, 60 days when the government is a party, rather than as provided in appellate rule 4(b), which says that the time is 10 days in criminal cases. This result has often been explained on the ground that rule 4(a) has to do with civil cases and that “proceedings under section 2255 are civil in nature.” E.g., *Rothman v. United States*, 508 F.2d 648 (3d Cir. 1975). Because the new section 2255 rules are based upon the premise “that a motion under §2255 is a further step in the movant’s criminal case rather than a separate civil action,” see Advisory Committee Note to rule 1, the question has arisen whether the new rules have the effect of shortening the time for appeal to that provided in appellate rule 4(b). A sentence has been added to rule 11 in order to make it clear that this is not the case.

Even though section 2255 proceedings are a further step in the criminal case, the added sentence correctly states current law. In *United States v. Hayman*, 342 U.S. 205 (1952), the Supreme Court noted that such appeals “are governed by the civil rules applicable to appeals from final judgments in habeas corpus actions.” In support, the Court cited *Mercado v. United States*, 183 F.2d 486 (1st Cir. 1950), a case rejecting the argument that because §2255 proceedings are criminal in nature the time for appeal is only 10 days. The *Mercado* court concluded that the situation was governed by that part of 28 U.S.C. §2255 which reads: “An appeal may be taken to the court of appeals from the order entered on the motion as from a final judgment on application for a writ of habeas corpus.” Thus, because appellate rule 4(a) is applicable in habeas cases, it likewise governs in §2255 cases even though they are criminal in nature.

COMMITTEE NOTES ON RULES—2004 AMENDMENT

The language of Rule 11 has been amended as part of general restyling of the rules to make them more easily understood and to make style and terminology consistent throughout the rules. These changes are intended to be stylistic and no substantive change is intended.

Changes Made After Publication and Comments. The Committee made no changes to Rule 11, as published.

COMMITTEE NOTES ON RULES—2009 AMENDMENT

Subdivision (a). As provided in 28 U.S.C. § 2253(c), an applicant may not appeal to the court of appeals from a final order in a proceeding under § 2255 unless a judge issues a COA, identifying the specific issues for which the applicant has made a substantial showing of a denial of constitutional right. New Rule 11(a) makes the requirements concerning certificates of appealability more prominent by adding and consolidating them in the appropriate rule of the Rules Governing § 2255 Proceedings for the United States District Courts. Rule 11(a) also requires the district judge to grant or deny the certificate at the time a final order is issued. See 3d Cir. R. 22.2, 111.3. This will ensure prompt decision making when the issues are fresh, rather than postponing consideration of the certificate until after a notice of appeal is filed. These changes will expedite proceedings, avoid unnecessary remands, and help to inform the applicant's decision whether to file a notice of appeal.

Subdivision (b). The amendment is designed to make it clear that the district court's grant of a COA does not eliminate the need to file a notice of appeal.

Changes Made to Proposed Amendment Released for Public Comment. In response to public comments, a sentence was added stating that prior to the entry of the final order the district court may direct the parties to submit arguments on whether or not a certificate should issue. This allows a court in complex cases (such as death penalty cases with numerous claims) to solicit briefing that might narrow the issues for appeal. For purposes of clarification, two sentences were added at the end of subdivision (a) stating that (1) although the district court's denial of a certificate is not appealable, a certificate may be sought in the court of appeals, and (2) a motion for reconsideration of a denial of a certificate does not extend the time to appeal. Finally, a sentence indicating that notice of appeal must be filed even if a COA is issued was added to subdivision (b).

Minor changes were also made to conform to style conventions.

REFERENCES IN TEXT

The Federal Rules of Appellate Procedure, referred to in text, are set out in the Appendix to this title.

Rule 12. Applicability of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure and the Federal Rules of Criminal Procedure

The Federal Rules of Civil Procedure and the Federal Rules of Criminal Procedure, to the extent that they are not inconsistent with any statutory provisions or these rules, may be applied to a proceeding under these rules.

(As amended Apr. 26, 2004, eff. Dec. 1, 2004.)

ADVISORY COMMITTEE NOTE

This rule differs from rule 11 of the § 2254 rules in that it includes the Federal Rules of Criminal Procedure as well as the civil. This is because of the nature of a § 2255 motion as a continuing part of the criminal proceeding (see advisory committee note to rule 1) as well as a remedy analogous to habeas corpus by state prisoners.

Since § 2255 has been considered analogous to habeas as respects the restrictions in Fed.R.Civ.P. 81(a)(2) (see *Sullivan v. United States*, 198 F.Supp. 624 (S.D.N.Y. 1961)), rule 12 is needed. For discussion, see the advisory committee note to rule 11 of the § 2254 rules.

COMMITTEE NOTES ON RULES—2004 AMENDMENT

The language of Rule 12 has been amended as part of general restyling of the rules to make them more easily understood and to make style and terminology consistent throughout the rules. These changes are intended to be stylistic and no substantive change is intended.

Changes Made After Publication and Comments. The Committee made no changes to Rule 12.

REFERENCES IN TEXT

The Federal Rules of Civil Procedure, referred to in heading and text, are set out in the Appendix to this title.

The Federal Rules of Criminal Procedure, referred to in heading and text, are set out in the Appendix to Title 18, Crimes and Criminal Procedure.

APPENDIX OF FORMS

IN FORMA PAUPERIS DECLARATION

[Insert appropriate court]

United States

DECLARATION IN

SUPPORT

v.

OF REQUEST

TO PROCEED

(Movant)

IN FORMA

PAUPERIS

I, _____, declare that I am the movant in the above entitled case; that in support of my motion to proceed without being required to prepay fees, costs or give security therefor, I state that because of my poverty, I am unable to pay the costs of said proceeding or to give security therefor; that I believe I am entitled to relief.

1. Are you presently employed? Yes No

a. If the answer is "yes," state the amount of your salary or wages per month, and give the name and address of your employer.

b. If the answer is "no," state the date of last employment and the amount of the salary and wages per month which you received.

2. Have you received within the past twelve months any money from any of the following sources?

- a. Business, profession or form of self-employment? Yes No
- b. Rent payments, interest or dividends?
Yes No
- c. Pensions, annuities or life insurance payments? Yes No
- d. Gifts or inheritances? Yes No
- e. Any other sources? Yes No

If the answer to any of the above is "yes," describe each source of money and state the amount received from each during the past twelve months.

3. Do you own any cash, or do you have money in a checking or savings account?

Yes No (Include any funds in prison accounts)

If the answer is "yes," state the total value of the items owned.

4. Do you own real estate, stocks, bonds, notes, automobiles, or other valuable property (excluding ordinary household furnishings and clothing)?

Yes No

If the answer is "yes," describe the property and state its approximate value.

5. List the persons who are dependent upon you for support, state your relationship to those persons, and indicate how much you contribute toward their support.

I declare (or certify, verify, or state) under penalty of perjury that the foregoing is true and correct. Executed on _____.

(date)

Signature of Movant

CERTIFICATE

I hereby certify that the movant herein has the sum of \$_____ on account to his credit at the _____ institution where he is confined.

I further certify that movant likewise has the following securities to his credit according to the records of said _____ institution:

Authorized Officer of
Institution

(As amended Apr. 28, 1982, eff. Aug. 1, 1982; Apr. 26, 2004, eff. Dec. 1, 2004.)

MODEL FORM FOR USE IN 28 U.S.C. § 2255 CASES INVOLVING A RULE 9 ISSUE Form No. 9 [Omitted as obsolete]

Changes Made After Publication and Comments—Forms Accompanying Rules Governing §2254 and §2255 Proceedings. Responding to a number of comments from the public, the Committee deleted from both sets of official forms the list of possible grounds of relief. The Committee made additional minor style corrections to the forms.

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