

## Know the Participants

### **The Judge**

In the courtroom, the judge presides over the trial and pre-trial proceedings from an elevated desk, called the bench. During the hearing, the Judge has three main responsibilities:

- to maintain order;
- to determine if the evidence offered is illegal or inadmissible;
- to determine the facts and make a decision.

### **The Lawyers**

The lawyers for each party will either be sitting at the counsel tables facing the bench or will be standing at the podium speaking to the judge or witness. Each lawyer's task is to bring out the facts that put his or her client's case in the most favorable light, but do so using approved legal procedures.

### **The Parties**

The parties may or may not be present at the counsel tables with their lawyers. As a Pro Se litigant, you will be one of the parties (either debtor, creditor, plaintiff, or defendant). The type of party you are will be dependant upon the matter being heard and the structure of the case itself.

### **The Witnesses**

Witnesses give testimony about the facts in the case that are in dispute. During their testimony, they sit on the witness stand, facing the courtroom. Because the witnesses are asked to testify by one party or the other, they are often referred to as plaintiff's witnesses, government's witnesses, or defense witnesses.

### **The Courtroom Deputy**

The courtroom deputy, who is usually seated near the judge, administers the oaths to the witnesses, marks the exhibits, produces the electronic recording of the proceeding and generally helps the judge keep the trial running smoothly.

### **The Court Security Officer**

A Court Security Officer (CSO) is always present when court is in session. The officer's job is to ensure orderliness among the spectators and to carry out any special duties requested by the judge.