



OFFICE OF THE CLERK OF THE CIRCUIT COURT OF COOK COUNTY

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**Cook County is the Largest Court System to “Go Green”
with E-Filing on May 11, 2009**

(Chicago) **The Honorable Dorothy Brown announced that the Office of the Clerk of the Circuit Court Cook County launched an Electronic Filing (E-Filing) pilot on Monday, May 11, 2009**, making Cook County the largest court system in the world to initiate this “Green Court” technology. Clerk Brown also announced that this system has been developed at **“no cost”** to taxpayers.

“This measure is a win-win-win for Cook County,” said Clerk Brown, explaining that E-Filing will save millions of dollars in saving time and tax dollars, as well as helping to preserve the environment.

“In these tough economic and budgetary times, public leaders have a responsibility to find innovative ways to save taxpayers’ money,” Clerk Brown said. “We developed this new initiative not because the private sector demanded it. We pushed ahead because it was a forward-looking way to better serve Cook County and better use the resources of this office. In short, it was the right thing to do.”

Clerk Brown has been preparing for the advent of E-Filing in Cook County since she and the Cook County Circuit Court Chief Judge, the Honorable Timothy C. Evans, received approval from the Supreme Court of Illinois in 2007. Cook County is the second most populous county in the U.S., larger than 36 states. The Cook County Circuit Court Clerk’s Office provides support to approximately 400 judges in 17 different locations throughout the county. In 2008, there were 1.7 million new cases filed in the Cook County Court Clerk’s Office, and 19.7 million case activities recorded. Cook County has almost one billion electronic court records.

At the press conference, Chief Judge Evans voiced his enthusiastic support of the E-Filing pilot project, stating, “Clerk Brown and I are eager to embrace technology that will help make court operations more efficient and user-friendly.”

Chief Judge Evans also said that as the E-Filing pilot rolls out, he will consider, as part of a future phase of the implementation, the judicial function of the E-Filing system that permits litigants to electronically file draft court orders for submission to judges, then allows judges to edit, sign and then electronically return the signed orders.

Clerk Brown thanked Chief Judge Evans for his support of the E-Filing project, noting, “Chief Judge Evans and I share the primary goal of finding the most effective ways to deliver swift and equal justice for the citizens of Cook County.”

The E-Filing pilot was rolled out in the Individual Commercial Calendar Section of the Law Division, and the goal is to eventually expand E-Filing to all court divisions. With the rolling out of this pilot, Cook County has become the largest court system in the United States to have an integrated E-Filing system.

E-Filing is the automated online process of creating a court file, paying associated filing fees and electronically file-stamping and storing court documents. The process increases efficiency for attorneys, self-represented litigants and court clerks. E-Filing also increases the proficiency of the Clerk's Office in accepting court documents and storing them, thus a cost savings to taxpayers.

"E-Filing will streamline the process for filing court documents, basically allowing filers to **move from in line at the Clerk's Office to online with the Clerk's Office**. The launching of this pilot will bring us another step closer to my vision of a fully integrated, electronic court system," said Clerk Brown.

She continued, "Under this pilot, attorneys and self-represented litigants may file documents in the Law Division's Individual Commercial Calendar Section cases by simply using the Internet. The system will allow them to file documents electronically, pay filing fees, receive a file-stamped copy of the documents, and serve the opposing party, all without ever leaving their homes or offices. The Clerk's Office has added a service whereby filers will have the option to have the Clerk's Office deliver the initial complaint to the Sheriff for service, after the filer has paid the relevant fees for that service through the E-Filing system."

Attorney Jeanette Foreman was in the Law Division of the Clerk's Office on the launch day of E-Filing. "Congratulations and kudos to Clerk Dorothy Brown," Foreman exclaimed. "What an excellent convenience for lawyers and for the legal system. Clearly it will make our work far easier and make the whole process flow more easily."

She continued, "The court system of Cook County has joined in the technology revolution and the citizens will all benefit greatly; with the exception of the (downtown) parking garages that will miss the \$25 (daily parking) fees."

The rollout of the electronic filing pilot project in the Individual Commercial Calendar Section of the Law Division required major coordination and the cooperation of several groups of stakeholders and end users, including the Clerk's Office's Management Information Systems (MIS) and Court Operations staff, the service provider OLIS (Online Information Systems), the Office of the Chief Judge, the Administrative Office of Illinois Courts (AOIC), the Cook County Board of Commissioners, the training company SmarTech Inc., hundreds of Cook County attorneys and self-represented litigants, as well as project committee advisors from bar associations and legal media.

Implementation of E-Filing in Cook County at "Zero" Cost to Taxpayers

"The Clerk's Office incurred no expense for the development, training or project management of this new technology in the Clerk's Office," informed Clerk Brown, who noted that the service provider, OLIS, and the training company, SmarTech, will both be paid through the vendor's electronic system usage fees.

Attorneys Save by E-Filing

However, even with an E-Filing fee attached, using the system is still a cost-savings for attorneys and self-represented litigants. Clerk Brown had a cost analysis conducted that compared using the traditional method of filing a new complaint, to the \$4.95 vendor's electronic system usage fee, and the electronic payment fee, that will be charged for E-Filing a new complaint. "Taking into account the attorney's time to travel to the court house, the time to stand in line, and the printing costs (paper and equipment), including the printing costs for serving opposing counsel with subsequent pleadings, it was determined that **attorneys can realize a savings as high as an estimated \$97.69 per filing, assuming a 10-page complaint filed electronically, and an estimated \$117.93 per filing for an assumed 10-page subsequent pleading filed electronically,**" said Clerk Brown.

There are also several FREE services within the Clerk's Office E-Filing system: Registration is FREE; Attaching an unlimited number of documents to a single filing is FREE; Serving the opposing party electronically is FREE; Viewing, saving, or printing the E-Filed document from the system, at the filer's home or office, is FREE.

E-Filing in Cook County is a Major Green Court Initiative

E-Filing is also a standout example of "going green," as the electronic system greatly reduces the use of paper as well as the energy costs of transportation. "Our hope is that E-Filing is the precursor to a totally paperless court system in Cook County," said Clerk Brown. "With more than 19 million case activities in Cook County per year that amounts to a significant impact on our environment in terms of use of paper and toner, not to mention the energy expense of document storage facilities. The use of E-Filing along with imaged document storage has the potential of greatly decreasing the Clerk's Office's carbon footprint on our environment."

Vendor Assesses the E-Filing Implementation

In reference to the Clerk's Office's strategy for preparing users for E-Filing, Neal Buchman, OLIS Chief Financial Officer, said, "Dorothy Brown has done one of the most fabulous jobs of leading a tightly defined and well-orchestrated roll out. The best we have seen."

Buchman added, "We are impressed by the things she has done, before the fact, such as: the level of training for internal and external parties, the amount of technology she's using, including the web-assisted training, and the number of meetings she has held to introduce the system to judges, lawyers and bar associations, as well as internal staff."

Training on System

Beginning the first of the year, Clerk Brown hosted several E-Filing presentations and demonstrations to acclimate attorneys and other users to the system. More than 1,200 attorneys and legal assistants attended a one-day demonstration held in March, indicating that demand is high for the new technology in Cook County.

The Clerk's Office has also conducted classroom-training sessions over a period of five weeks that attracted more than 500 attendees. The objective of the training was to provide sufficient information to enable an e-filer to comfortably utilize the system. Training evaluation forms expressed such comments as: "Very easy to follow. Well done presentation;" "Excellent trainers. This was a pleasure to attend;" "Very exciting. Hopefully you will expand (E-Filing) to include Civil, Municipal, and Chancery Divisions."

"Our goal was to remove any apprehension about using the new system," said Clerk Brown. "Through the demonstrations, the attorneys are learning that with E-Filing, the computer does the manual and menial tasks the law clerk once had to do. Coupled with the cost-savings, this makes using the new technology quite attractive."

"We introduced another new and innovative idea, not only for government but also for the private sector," Clerk Brown announced, as she unveiled an E-Filing "Webinar," developed by SmarTech, that will be available 24 hours a day on the Clerk's Office Web site at www.cookcountyclerkofcourt.org. and on the E-Filing system.

Cook County Court Clerk Dorothy Brown's E-Filing Roll-Out Strategy

January 8, 2009, the Clerk's Office hosts an introduction to the E-Filing system meeting for the legal community, judiciary, other circuit court clerks, and the legal media, during which an E-Filing Advisory/Leadership Committee is formed. The committee is comprised of representatives of several stakeholder groups, including attorneys, elected officials, legal services organizations, members of the judiciary, and the legal media.

January 29, 2009, the Clerk's Office hosts the first meeting of the E-Filing Advisory/Leadership Committee, demonstrates the system to the Committee in more detail and requests that the Committee members make suggestions for system improvements.

February 18, 2009, the Clerk's Office holds a system demonstration for the E-Filing Advisory/Leadership Committee.

February 25, 2009, the Clerk's Office holds an E-Filing Presentation and Demonstration for the Presidents and Officers of Bar Associations and the E-Filing Advisory/Leadership Committee, approximately 250 invited guests attend.

March 16, 2009, an E-Filing demonstration is presented to Cook County Chief Judge Timothy C. Evans and Cook County Circuit Court Judiciary.

March 23, 2009, more than 1,200 attorneys, legal assistants and other interested persons attend the Premiere E-Filing Presentation and Demonstration held at the Thompson Center and the First United Methodist Church in downtown Chicago. The E-Filing Advisory/Leadership Committee also attends this meeting.

March 31 – May 1, 2009, the Clerk's Office hosts daily E-Filing training classes for attorneys, paralegals and other interested persons. Attorneys who attend the electronic filing training class will receive 2.5 credit hours of CLE.

April 27, 2009, the Clerk's Office hosts a meeting with the E-Filing Advisory/Leadership Committee and volunteer attorneys for live user-testing and a hands-on walk through of the system.

May 4, 2009, the Clerk's Office holds a meeting with representatives from the Administrative Office of Illinois Courts (AOIC) and the Office of the Honorable Chief Judge Timothy Evans for a review of the system.

May 11, 2009, the Clerk's Office launches the E-Filing pilot project in the Individual Commercial Calendar Section of the Law Division.



MONDAY, MAY 11, 2009 (CHICAGO) Hon. Dorothy Brown (right), Clerk of the Circuit Court of Cook County, Illinois, joins Honorable Timothy Evans, Chief Judge of the Circuit Court of Cook County, at the Launch and Press Conference of an Electronic-Filing pilot in the Individual Commercial Calendar Section of the Law Division. The rollout of E-Filing, an automated system that allows the filing of court documents online, will save millions of dollars in time-savings and tax money savings as well as increase efficiency for Cook County attorneys and self-represented litigants. E-Filing is a “Green Court” initiative, developed at no cost to Cook County taxpayers.



MONDAY, MAY 11, 2009 (CHICAGO) Hon. Dorothy Brown (right), Clerk of the Circuit Court of Cook County, Illinois, and Honorable Timothy Evans, Chief Judge of the Circuit Court of Cook County, explain the features of the Electronic-Filing system that was launched today in the Individual Commercial Calendar Section of the Law Division. The rollout of E-Filing, an automated system that allows the filing of court documents online, will save millions of dollars in time-savings and tax money savings as well as increase efficiency for Cook County attorneys and self-represented litigants. E-Filing is a “Green Court” initiative, developed at no cost to Cook County taxpayers.



MONDAY, MAY 11, 2009 (CHICAGO) Hon. Dorothy Brown (center), poses with Attorney Kevin Posen of Teller & Levitt, who filed a case today with the newly launched Electronic Filing system installed in the Office of the Clerk of the Circuit Court of Cook County Law Division. Also pictured are the principals of Online Information System, the Alabama-based vendor that developed the system for Cook County, and Leticia Gomez (far left) of SmartTech, Inc. the partnering agency that provided classroom training and a 24-hour “Webinar” on E-Filing. The rollout of E-Filing, an automated system that allows the filing of court documents online, will save millions of dollars in time-savings and tax money savings as well as increase efficiency for Cook County attorneys and self-represented litigants. E-Filing is a “Green Court” initiative, developed at no cost to Cook County taxpayers.

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