



FLORIDA COURTS
E-FILING AUTHORITY

2020-2021 **ANNUAL REPORT**

✉ P.O. Box 16428 | Tallahassee, FL 32317  [MyFLCourtAccess.com](https://www.MyFLCourtAccess.com)

The Florida Courts E-Filing Authority: In Governance of Florida Courts E-Filing Portal, the Statewide Access Point for Electronic Transmission of Court Records. www.MyFLCourtAccess.com

ABOUT THE AUTHORITY

MEET THE BOARD

2020-2021 E-FILING AUTHORITY BOARD OF DIRECTORS



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SARASOTA COUNTY CLERK AND
COMPTROLLER



THE HONORABLE

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DISTRICT VI



THE HONORABLE

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COMPTROLLER

DISTRICT VII

ABOUT

The Authority is governed by a nine-member Board of Directors consisting of eight Clerks of the Circuit Court and the Clerk of the Supreme Court, who serves as the Chief Justice's designee on behalf of the state and appellate courts. The Board is responsible for leading the public agency tasked with providing a statewide access point for the electronic access and transmission of court records to and from the courts.

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BENEFITS OF THE PORTAL

WHY USE THE E-FILING PORTAL?



Allows users to file their cases anytime. The Portal is available to registered users 24/7.



Allows users to file their cases in batches, helping attorneys and self-represented litigants save time while filing many court documents.



Allows users to file their cases from anywhere. Using the Portal, filers can upload documents from the convenience of their own home or office without stepping foot in a courthouse.



Connects thousands involved in Florida's justice system including more than 260,000+ self-represented litigants, 84,000 attorneys, 1,400 judges, and more.



Provides a free to use service that allows users to file documents while paying the required court fees, as well as minimal payment processing fees.



Has saved filers an estimated \$38 million in postage by providing a method to transfer documents without having to mail, ship, or use a courier service.

ABOUT THE E-FILING PORTAL

Filers who use the Florida Courts E-Filing Portal (E-Filing Portal) to transmit their documents to Florida's court system recognize the importance of services being made available in a uniform way and appreciate the Authority keeping that foremost in guiding the E-Filing Portal.

The E-Filing Portal revolutionized the filing of court documents. Electronic recordkeeping has opened up access to an infinite number of people, from anywhere in the world, at any time of the day or night. Not that long ago, clerks received only paper documents and files were kept in numbered folders.

The success of E-Filing Portal has brought efficiencies to the court, attorneys and other justice partners. That said, our work is not done. Innovation, and new and improved ideas will always pave the way for more work that needs to be done to continue to serve the court, The Florida Bar and others who use Florida Court System.

RESOURCES

The Florida Courts E-Filing Authority provides several useful resources for learning more about the E-Filing Portal including:

- ▶ A Help Desk Available for All Users on Weekdays from 8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.
- ▶ FAQs
- ▶ Training Videos
- ▶ Training Materials and Manuals
- ▶ Helpful Links



OVERVIEW

2009 In accordance with direction by the Florida Legislature and the Florida Supreme Court, the need for the development and implementation of a system for statewide electronic filing of Florida’s county, circuit, and appellate court records was recognized in 2009.

2010 In conjunction with the Chief Justice and the Supreme Court, the Florida Courts E-Filing Authority was established in June 2010 by interlocal agreement, creating a public agency pursuant to chapter 163, Florida Statutes. The agency is composed of the Clerks of the Circuit Court who join the Authority on behalf of all the state trial courts, and the Clerk of the Supreme Court, representing all the appellate courts and as designee of the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court.

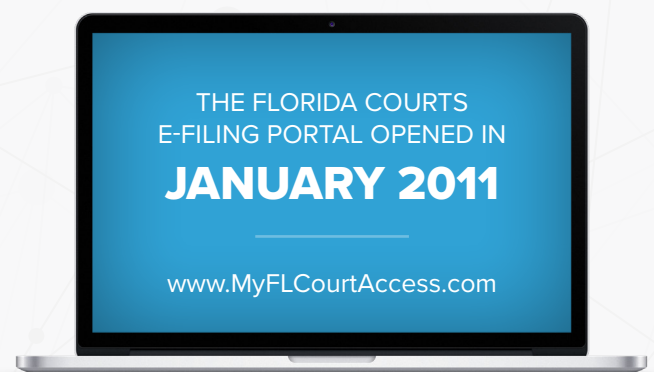
The Authority contracted with the FCCC to design, develop, implement, operate, upgrade, support, and maintain the portal. The portal incorporates the following features.

- ▶ A single statewide access point log-in.
- ▶ A single internet access to court records by authorized users.
- ▶ Transmissions to and from the appropriate courts.
- ▶ The ability to provide electronic service of notification receipt of an electronic filing and confirmation of filing in the appropriate court file.
- ▶ Open standards-based integration ability with existing statewide information systems and county e-filing applications.
- ▶ Compliance with the Electronic Court Filing Standard 4.0, the Global Justice Extensible Markup Language, and Oasis Legal Markup Language.

To ensure that the statewide portal was developed in accordance to court system standards and rules, the Authority established a relationship to work in close coordination with the Florida Courts Technology Commission (FCTC).

In 2010, Legislative Appropriations proviso language in HB 5401 mandated the courts system to implement electronic filing requirements in five of the 10 trial court divisions by January 1, 2011, and identified the 10 court divisions as: Circuit Criminal; County Criminal; Juvenile Delinquency; Criminal Traffic; Circuit Civil; County Civil; Civil Traffic; Probate; Family; and Juvenile Dependency. With input from the FCTC, the Authority began work on the divisions of Circuit Civil; County Civil; Probate; Family; and Juvenile Dependency.

2011 The Florida Courts E-Filing Portal opened in January 2011 and during the first months of operation 229 documents were electronically filed. That same year, follow-up bill SB 2000 required that Clerks implement the electronic filing requirements for all 10 trial court divisions, pursuant to section 28.36(3), Florida Statutes. The mandate established the Authority’s direction for the next six months: to develop the portal to include the remaining five court divisions.



OVERVIEW

2012 The Supreme Court issued opinions approving recommendations to require e-filing and e-service by attorneys through a phased implementation.

The main document, AOSC11-399 revised opinion, as amended October 18, 2012, stated that the new rules and amendments to existing rules in the case would require attorneys to file documents with the trial and appellate courts by electronic transmission, and made mandatory email service requirements for pleadings and documents. The court encouraged attorneys and Clerks throughout Florida to take notice of the new electronic filing requirements and to begin the process of updating their current practices to conform to these requirements.

By mid-2012, 51 counties were connected to the portal for the acceptance of civil case documents in various civil divisions. By April 1, 2013, the offices of all 67 of Florida's county Clerks were connected for the acceptance and processing of civil cases in all five civil divisions: Circuit Civil, County Civil, Probate, Small Claims, and Family Law.

2013 Throughout 2013 and 2014, Clerks' offices worked on accepting batch-filed documents on existing criminal cases, while all counties were working on general criminal readiness. Today, all 67 counties accept and process all trial court case types.

The Florida Supreme Court came online in February 2013 with limited case filings as part of a live system test. Encountering no serious issues, the Supreme Court began accepting live filings on April 1, 2013. Later that year, Chief Justice Ricky Polston outlined four improvements to be considered for e-filing in Florida's

Courts, including increased Help Desk services; the addition of standardized drop-down menus for filers' two-way portal capabilities; and allowing case documents to be viewed by the filer.

2014 In late 2013, the Florida Courts E-Filing Authority instituted a help desk service in order to address technical and customer service calls.

In early to mid-2014, various technical alternatives were examined in order to create more standardized log-in and landing screens. A map feature was adopted to create a more uniform method, allowing filers to see and select the county to which they are filing.

Due to the way criminal case initiation was implemented through a technical level solution for state attorneys, standardized criminal docket descriptions were adopted as criminal case initiation was implemented. "Sameness" in filing choices in the other case types varied from county to county, in drop-down menus showing court divisions offered, and names of document types. This is what all filers of non-criminal cases viewed when filing.

2015 Beginning in earnest the spring of 2015, the Florida Courts E-Filing Authority worked with the FCCC Best Practices Committee to develop standardized names for the court divisions, case types and sub-types in each division.

The portal technical team provided on-site training and assistance in a pilot phase to implement the standard nomenclature in the Fourth Judicial Circuit and proposed to use the model statewide. The Authority chairman, the Honorable Tim Smith, Clerk of Putnam County, sent a letter to all Clerks of Court asking them

OVERVIEW

to undertake the exercise and have it completed by September 2015.

2016 In 2016, the Authority partnered with the Supreme Court to increase the filing and e-service size available to users and implemented a third-party batch process allowing law firms and approved vendors the ability to transmit multiple civil filings in a single session. Additional enhancements included judges filing proposed orders in certain counties and specialized services for pro se litigants.

2017 With more than 160,000 users and 14 million submissions during FY2016-17, the portal added state agency integration with the transfer of timely case data to the Department of Health Bureau of Vital Statistics and the Department of Corrections.

2018 The number of filings submitted by third party vendors continue to increase this year. A pilot project for Clerks to send the full commitment packet to Florida Sheriffs and on to the Department of Corrections began and is well underway.

2019 During this fiscal year, 2018-2019, the Florida Courts E-Filing Portal continued to see increases in the volume of filings, the number of registered users and the number of documents submitted through the third party interface. The E-Portal Service Desk initiated a “live answer” feature for users needing filing assistance and a Portal upgrade was implemented in late 2018 allowing both State Attorneys and Public Defenders to accept e-service. For the first time since inception, all five District Courts of Appeal were connected to the Portal.

2020 The 2019-2020 fiscal year was unique. By March of 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic hit and Florida’s Governor ordered citizens to “shelter in place.” The legal community was impacted as courthouses were closed to all but essential personnel, putting a stop to almost all court proceedings. That resulted in a significant downturn in case filings for the finish of the fiscal year. However, filers were still using the E-Filing Portal, Clerks were able to work from home and process documents, and the court was also able to access the official court file and file documents through the Portal from home.

Portal enhancements during this fiscal year included updating the auto-generated Civil Cover Sheet to reflect the new jurisdictional limits, providing a method for students to check driver school completion certificates and integration with Florida Department of Revenue for filing child support documentation.

2021 The Covid-19 pandemic continued throughout the 2020-2021 fiscal year. However, by the spring of 2021, the courts began a slow return to operations as public facilities, including courthouses, were cleaned and retrofitted with protective plexiglass panels and seating spaced at safe distances. Limited numbers of the public began to be allowed to enter the courthouses and participate in court proceedings. Trials moved from Zoom platforms to some in-person hearings, although the option for remote access is thought to stay for some time.

ANNUAL STATISTICS

(JULY 1, 2020 – JUNE 30, 2021)

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18,863,966
SUBMISSIONS



27,933,107
DOCUMENTS



136,847,803
PAGES



383,475
TOTAL FILER ACCOUNTS



20,177,130
E-SERVICE EMAILS

262,919
Self-Represented
Litigants

84,307
Attorneys

1,407
Judges

2,330
Law Enforcement

2,035
Process Servers

941
Court Reporters

1,453
Mediators

1,644
Mental Health
Professionals

ENHANCEMENTS



USER EFFICIENCIES

- ▶ Filing path for proposed orders expanded to accept all documents with Judicial Circuit approval
- ▶ Continued to add third party vendors to assist filers
- ▶ Continued integration with judicial viewers
- ▶ Continued education on PDF/A formatting



PROVIDES FILERS

- ▶ Additional DIY Interviews for Self-Represented Litigants to add more of the most commonly used forms, such as injunctions and domestic relations
- ▶ Increased filing path size to 500MB for the records filed on appeal to accommodate the larger documents



STATE AGENCY INTEGRATION AND SECURE TRANSMISSION

- ▶ Continued Florida Department of Revenue integration with the Portal using third party vendor filing path for bulk submissions
- ▶ Continued work with Florida Department of Corrections, Sheriffs' and Clerks' offices to increase the number of commitment packets being transmitted through the portal

E-SERVICE NOTICES SAVED
FILERS APPROXIMATELY
\$38,837,113
IN POSTAGE COSTS
FROM 2014-2021

FINANCIALS

The approved 2020-2021 Florida Courts E-Filing Budget is comprised of revenue generated from credit card, debit card, and ACH transaction convenience fees. Funds are used to support the Authority’s mandated business activities including legal counsel for the Board of Directors, insurance policy premiums, audit fees and related service desk activities, portal upgrades and education.

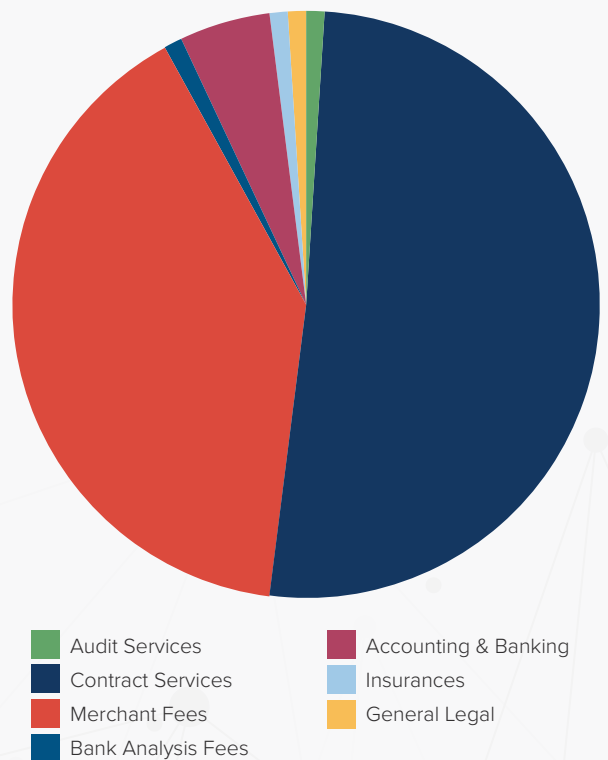
Mandated audits of the Authority financial statements and an SSAE 16 Operational Audit are performed annually and have resulted in unqualified, or “clean” audits to date.

REVENUE	2020-21 BUDGET
Interest Income	\$10,000
Statutory Convenience Fees	\$7,166,233
Batch Application Fees	\$2,000
Third Party Batch Filing Fees	\$10,000
TOTAL REVENUE	\$7,188,233

EXPENSES	2020-21 BUDGET
Audit Services	\$27,000
Contract Services	\$3,609,381
Merchant Fees	\$3,031,566
Bank Analysis Fees	\$70,000
Accounting & Banking	\$276,309
Insurances	\$1,100
General Legal	\$60,000
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$7,075,356

\$112,877

EXPENSES





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ANYTIME



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