

**FLORIDA COURTS
E-FILING AUTHORITY**

Annual Report
2019 - 2020



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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

2019-2020 E-FILING AUTHORITY BOARD OF DIRECTORS



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PUTNAM COUNTY CLERK AND COMPTROLLER



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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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Beginning the 10th Year

THE FLORIDA COURTS E-FILING AUTHORITY BEGINS 10TH YEAR OF SERVICE

Working collaboratively with the Chief Justice of the Florida Supreme Court, Florida's Clerks of the Circuit and County Courts responded to a 2010 Legislative mandate to implement e-filing in Florida with the creation of a public body to manage the design, development, implementation, operation, upgrade, support and maintenance of a portal for the receipt of electronically filed court records. The Florida Courts E-Filing Authority was established in June 2010 as a public agency created pursuant to chapter 163, Florida Statutes, comprised of the Clerks of the Circuit Court and the Clerk of the Supreme Court, as designee of the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court on behalf of all the state appellate courts.

Since those first meetings, usage of the E-Filing Portal has only grown, and grown successfully. **Today, almost 300,000 registered filers use the system, sending over 25 million documents to the Florida's Court System annually.**

The newly formed Authority Board of Directors first met in September of 2010. As dictated by the original Interlocal Agreement, eight trial court clerks, along with the Clerk of the Florida Supreme Court, head up the agency that manages every aspect of Florida's E-Filing Portal.

The Authority was created without a dedicated funding source, yet each of the system partners, the Florida Court Clerks & Comptrollers, The Florida Bar Board of Governors and the Florida Supreme Court, donated funds to help cover expenses. Today, the Board's budget covers the costs of operating the Portal, the Service Desk and the administrative expenses associated with operating an interlocal agency.

The first Authority Board of Directors debated issues on how the system should work and who, other than attorneys, should be allowed to use it; whether to manage escrow accounts, or not; and how to be built to best reflect the flow of paper filings to the court.

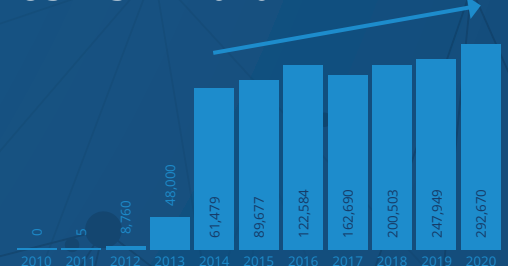
The decisions and debates of the initial Authority Board of Directors formed the policy and foundation for the successful operation in place today. The 2019-2020 Annual Report documents this milestone-- the beginning of the 10th year of the Florida Courts E-Filing Authority and the creation of the Florida Courts E-Filing Portal.

THE FLORIDA COURTS E-FILING PORTAL HAS SEEN TREMENDOUS ACCEPTANCE

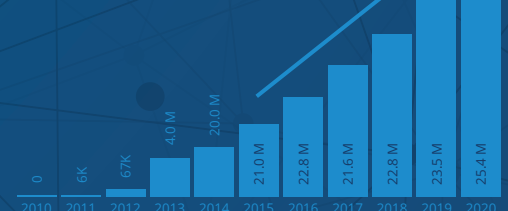
As required by the Interlocal Agreement, the Florida Courts E-Filing Portal was opened to accept filings in January 2011. The Board chose to begin slowly, with a phased-in approach, allowing several "pilot" attorneys to test out the new system.

In January 2011, 229 documents were e-filed by those attorneys in five "first phase" counties.

292,670
USERS IN 2020



25+ MILLION
DOCUMENTS
FILED IN 2020



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.

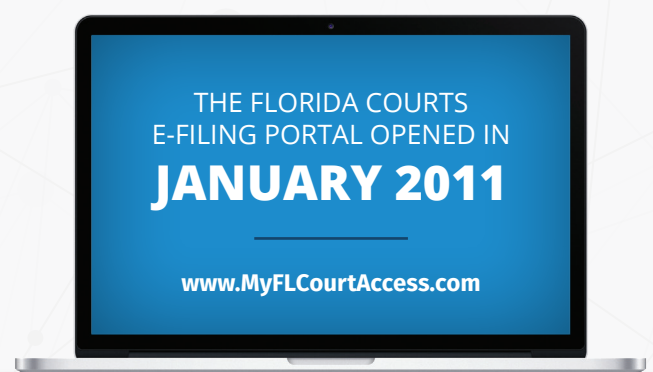
The Authority contracted with the FCCC to design, develop, implement, operate, upgrade, support, and maintain the portal. The portal incorporates the following features.

- 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

Overview

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 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 the Florida’s Governor’s 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 integrated with Florida Department of Revenue for filing child support documentation.

Annual Statistics

(July 1, 2019-June 30, 2020)

The Florida Courts E-Filing 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, which 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.



17,400,066
SUBMISSIONS



25,467,924
DOCUMENTS



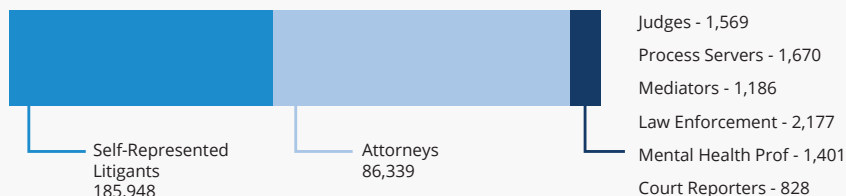
126,900,745
PAGES



292,670
TOTAL FILER ACCOUNTS



40,771
HELP DESK CALLS



Enhancements



EFFICIENCIES FOR USERS

- Worked to integrate a variety of judicial filings using the judicial viewers with the Portal
- Provided a State Attorney and Public Defender web service for e-service emails
- Increased the file size for transmitting the record on appeal



PARTNERING WITH STATE AGENCIES

- Developed process to send driver school completions to the Clerks' offices. Developed a look-up feature for driver school and students
- Worked with the Florida Department of Revenue to begin automating administrative child support documentation for Clerks



UPDATED SECURITY FEATURES

- Updated and improved Portal security based on new Security Policy and industry standards

**E-SERVICE NOTICES SAVED
FILERS APPROXIMATELY
\$38,837,113
IN POSTAGE COSTS
FROM 2014-2020**

Financials

The approved 2019-2020 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.

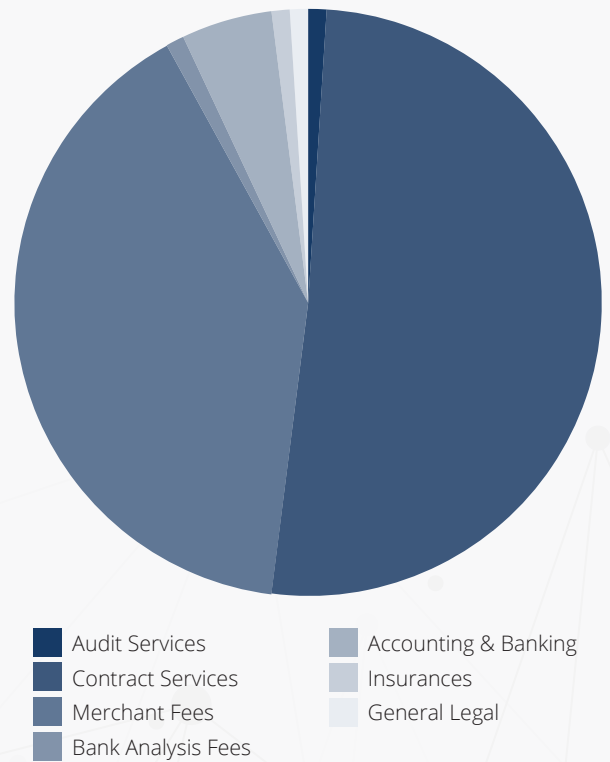
Mandated audits of the Authority financial statements and an SSAE 16 Operational Audit is performed annually and has resulted in an unqualified, or "clean" audit to date.

REVENUES	2019-20 BUDGET
Interest Income	\$60,000
Statutory Convenience Fees	\$8,077,882
Batch Application Fees	\$2,000
Third Party Batch Filing Fees	\$10,000
TOTAL REVENUE	\$8,149,882

EXPENSES	2019-20 BUDGET
Audit Services	\$35,000
Contract Services	\$3,811,580
Merchant Fees	\$2,959,779
Bank Analysis Fees	\$78,000
Accounting & Banking	\$353,088
Insurances	\$900
General Legal	\$60,000
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$7,421,740

\$1,084,105

EXPENSES



FILE YOUR CASES...



ANYWHERE!



ANYTIME!



IN BATCHES!

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