



# FLORIDA COURTS E-FILING AUTHORITY

*In governance of Florida Courts E-Filing Portal, the statewide access point for electronic transmission of court records, [www.myflcourtagency.com](http://www.myflcourtagency.com).*



## 2016-17 ANNUAL REPORT

# CHAIRMAN'S LETTER

TIM SMITH, E-FILING AUTHORITY CHAIRMAN

As Chairman of the Florida Courts E-Filing Authority, I am privileged to once again provide this year's annual report in summarization of the services and improvements we have successfully implemented throughout the fiscal year spanning from July 1, 2016 to June 30, 2017.

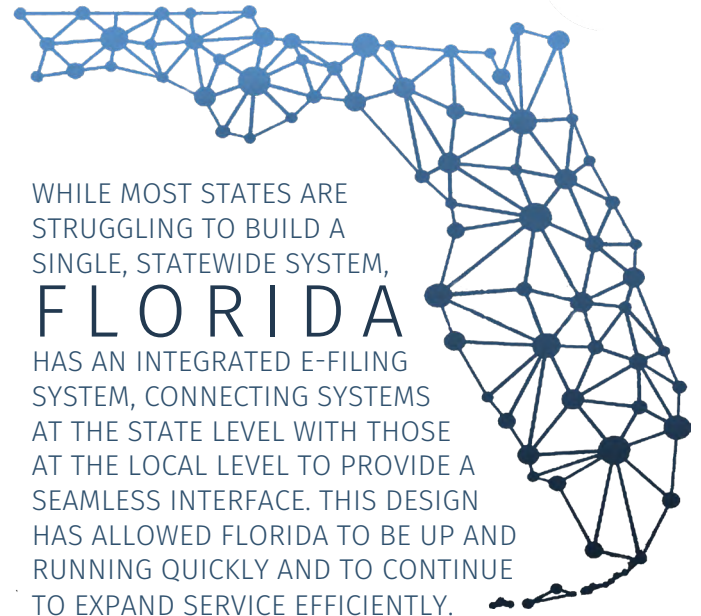
The E-Filing Portal remains an industry pacesetter and continues to provide a simple and secure digital solution for Florida court system users while saving filers thousands of dollars in related expenses.

Thanks to our talented staff and dedicated board of directors, 46,000 registered portal users were added this fiscal year - growing from 116,000 to more than 162,000. Attorneys lead with 75,414 registered user accounts with self-represented litigants closely following with 75,156. Judges, process servers, mediators, law enforcement, mental health professionals, and court reporters all also increased in users.

To ensure the needs of portal filers continued to be met, service enhancements to a variety of functions were created or expanded.

Project highlights include:

- Implementing a process to provide law firms and approved vendors the ability to transmit multiple civil filings in a single session.
- Enhancing security standards to ensure proper use of portal data.
- Adding state agency functionality to allow for greater securities and efficiencies for both the Clerk and the agencies.
- Increasing e-service functionality available to state attorneys and public defenders.



WHILE MOST STATES ARE STRUGGLING TO BUILD A SINGLE, STATEWIDE SYSTEM, **FLORIDA** HAS AN INTEGRATED E-FILING SYSTEM, CONNECTING SYSTEMS AT THE STATE LEVEL WITH THOSE AT THE LOCAL LEVEL TO PROVIDE A SEAMLESS INTERFACE. THIS DESIGN HAS ALLOWED FLORIDA TO BE UP AND RUNNING QUICKLY AND TO CONTINUE TO EXPAND SERVICE EFFICIENTLY.

The Authority is committed to customer service and depends on Clerks' attorneys to offer advice and guidance on portal-related matters through their service on The Florida Bar Rules Committees.

Thanks to the support of the State of Florida, Florida Court Clerks & Comptrollers, the Florida Courts system, and Authority board members, the Florida Courts E-Filing Portal has become nationally recognized as the premier e-filing system. The Authority is exploring additional opportunities in which the portal could be used to provide more efficient processes throughout state and local government.

## 2016-17 E-FILING AUTHORITY BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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, 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.

### THE HONORABLE TIM SMITH

CHAIRMAN  
PUTNAM COUNTY CLERK AND COMPTROLLER

### THE HONORABLE JEFFREY R. SMITH, CPA

VICE CHAIR/DISTRICT V  
INDIAN RIVER COUNTY CLERK AND COMPTROLLER

### THE HONORABLE TARA S. GREEN

SECRETARY / TREASURER - DISTRICT III  
CLAY COUNTY CLERK

### THE HONORABLE JOHN A. TOMASINO

CLERK OF THE SUPREME COURT

### THE HONORABLE JD PEACOCK II

DISTRICT I  
OKALOOSA COUNTY CLERK AND COMPTROLLER

### THE HONORABLE KATHLEEN E. BROWN

DISTRICT II  
LIBERTY COUNTY CLERK AND COMPTROLLER

### THE HONORABLE TODD NEWTON

DISTRICT IV  
GILCHRIST COUNTY CLERK AND COMPTROLLER

### THE HONORABLE KAREN E. RUSHING

DISTRICT VI  
SARASOTA COUNTY CLERK AND COMPTROLLER

### THE HONORABLE SHARON R. BOCK, ESQ.

DISTRICT VII  
PALM BEACH COUNTY CLERK AND COMPTROLLER

# 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 and the Clerk of the Supreme Court, as designee of the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court on behalf of all the state courts.

The Florida Courts E-Filing Authority contracted with the Florida Court Clerks & Comptrollers to design, develop, implement, operate, upgrade, support, and maintain the portal incorporating 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 Florida Courts E-Filing 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 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.

2012

The Supreme Court issued opinions approving recommendations to require e-filing and e-service by attorneys, through a phased-in 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, all 67 Clerks' Offices 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.

# THE FLORIDA COURTS E-FILING PORTAL

Providing Secure Digital Solutions to Florida's Court Users

**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 of the Florida Supreme Court 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 agreed to a Supplemental Agreement as an amendment to the Development Agreement to establish Help Desk services, a service that had been out of the original scope of services. The Authority adopted the policies and procedures November 1, 2013 and the Association implemented and began fully operating the Help Desk 90 days thereafter. The Help Desk was fully staffed by early 2014 to manage technical calls for Clerk's Office support and customer service from filers.

The Authority also embraced the challenge of "standardization" which was somewhat undefined at that point. While the primary activity during the year was to complete programming and connectivity with the counties for the acceptance of the civil and criminal case types, the Authority began in earnest to undertake a long-term study of standardization of the drop-down menus for civil case types in 2014-2015.

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 Clerks' Association 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 4th 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.

# NUMBERS

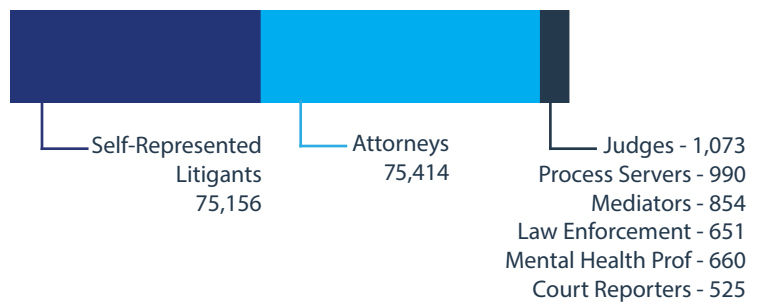
(JULY 1, 2016 - JUNE 30, 2017)

14,893,529  
SUBMISSIONS

21,862,339  
DOCUMENTS

98,185,419  
PAGES

162,690 TOTAL FILER  
ACCOUNTS



72,037 HELP DESK CALLS

## ENHANCEMENTS



### STATE AGENCY INTEGRATION

Providing timely case data to State of Florida agencies including the Department of Health Bureau of Vital Statistics & the Department of Corrections.



### SECURITY STANDARDS

Enhanced security standards to ensure proper use of portal data.



### THIRD-PARTY VENDOR INTERFACE

Created processes to provide vendors ability to transmit multiple civil filings in a single session.

E-Service Notices  
saved filers  
an estimated

**\$15,986,244**

in postage costs  
from 2014-2016.

# FINANCIALS

The 2016-17 E-Filing Authority budget is composed of in-kind funds from the Florida Association of Court Clerks Services Group, LLC, and revenue generated from credit and debit card and ACH transaction convenience fees. Funds are used to support the Authority's mandated business activities including board legal counsel, insurance policy premiums, audit fees and related service desk, and portal education components.

A mandated annual audit of the Authority's financial statements and an SSAE 16 operational audit of all operational and technical systems, was performed by Lanigan & Associates, in which the Authority received an unqualified, or "clean" audit.

|   | <b>2016-17 Approved Budget</b> |                       |
|---|--------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Revenue Fees                              | \$                             | 5,873,543.00          |
| Revenue Carryforward                      |                                | -                     |
| In-Kind Contribution - FCCC               | \$                             | 671,070.00            |
| <b>REVENUE TOTAL</b>                      | <b>\$</b>                      | <b>6,544,613.00</b>   |
| Contract Services- FCCC SOW               | \$                             | 671,070.00            |
| Contract Services-Expansion Beyond SOW    | \$                             | 1,186,594.00          |
| Contract Services- Education/Service Desk | \$                             | 1,064,522.00          |
| Merchant Fees & Bad Debt*                 | \$                             | 2,264,502.00          |
| Bank Analysis                             | \$                             | 78,000.00             |
| Payment controls                          | \$                             | 2,500.00              |
| Accounting and Banking                    | \$                             | 663,364.00            |
| Legal                                     | \$                             | 60,000.00             |
| DO Liability Insurance                    | \$                             | 900.00                |
| <b>EXPENSE TOTAL</b>                      | <b>\$</b>                      | <b>6,021,452.00</b>   |
| <br><b>BALANCE</b>                        | <br><b>\$</b>                  | <br><b>523,161.00</b> |

TO VIEW ALL DOCUMENTS AND MATERIALS ASSOCIATED WITH THE FLORIDA COURTS E-FILING AUTHORITY INCLUDING THE INTERLOCAL AGREEMENT, BOARD MEETING DOCUMENTS, AND ADDITIONAL MATERIALS, VISIT [MYFLCOURTACCESS.COM](http://MYFLCOURTACCESS.COM).