

E-filing begins July 1 for Supreme Court, Court of Appeals

June 6, 2013

The Mississippi Supreme Court and Court of Appeals will begin accepting electronic filing of briefs and motions July 1.

The Supreme Court authorized implementation of e-filing in an order filed June 6.

Chief Justice Bill Waller Jr. said in a statement, "This is a milestone for the judiciary. E-filing will be more efficient. It will save time and money for lawyers, litigants and the courts. The public will benefit from easier access to court records."

Supreme Court Clerk Kathy Gillis said, "I am really excited. I believe that it's going to be helpful. I'm looking forward to it because we will be more efficient. It will help with the work load."

There are between 1,650 and 1,700 cases pending in some stage before the Supreme Court and Court of Appeals at any given time. During the year 2012, the clerk's office filed 911 notices of appeal, 2,014 briefs and 5,819 motions. The clerk's office processed 7,058 orders and notices.

Appellate e-filing will be implemented in stages. E-filing will be voluntary for lawyers filing briefs and motions before the Supreme Court and Court of Appeals starting July 1. E-filing will become mandatory for briefs and motions on Jan. 1, 2014.

The notice of appeal which initiates a case before the Supreme Court will continue to be filed in paper format. Trial court records submitted with appeals – dockets, motions, briefs, orders, exhibits and other documents – remain in paper format at this time.

Notices sent by the clerk's office to attorneys also remain in paper format at this time. Electronic processing of orders and notices will begin in a second phase of appellate e-filing. When that happens, "We should see savings in postage and paper costs, plus faster notification," Gillis said.

Appellate e-filing will complement trial court e-filing. Fifteen trial courts in nine counties around the state currently use e-filing through Mississippi Electronic Courts. MEC is the e-filing system authorized by the Supreme Court.

E-filing court jurisdictions include Chancery Courts in Desoto, Grenada, Hinds, Holmes, Rankin and Yazoo counties. In Madison, Harrison and Warren counties, all trial courts – Chancery, Circuit and County Courts – use e-filing. Chancery Courts in Lowndes and Webster counties and the Clay County Circuit Court are working toward implementation of e-filing systems utilizing MEC. No dates have been set yet for those courts to begin accepting e-filing from attorneys.

E-filing is currently utilized only in civil cases in the state trial courts. Madison County Circuit Court will be the first to use e-filing for criminal cases. Dates have yet to be set to begin voluntary and mandatory e-filing in criminal cases.

The MEC e-filing system allows attorneys to file documents or read court records via the Internet 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The MEC e-filing system is modeled on the one used in the federal courts.

Public access to e-filed documents at the Supreme Court and Court of Appeals is free at this time on the Mississippi Judiciary website, www.courts.ms.gov. Documents will be attached to the court docket, which is accessible on the website. Cases may be found on the General Docket feature on the court's website at http://courts.ms.gov/appellate_courts/generaldocket.html.

Attorneys who wish to file documents electronically at the appellate courts must register with MEC and pay a \$10 annual fee.

Fees are charged for public access to electronically filed records in the trial courts. Public access to the MEC trial court records component requires a \$10 annual subscriber fee. There is a charge of 20 cents per page to view electronic court records in the trial courts. Online registration is available at this link: www.pamecapps.mec.ms.gov/onlinereg/.

More than 3,500 attorneys and more than 1,300 non-attorneys are registered to use MEC.

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