

Clerk of Courts Electronically Filing Superior and State Court Civil Cases and Deeds, Liens, and Plats

July 1 was a historic day for the Office of the Clerk of Courts of Liberty County when it began accepting electronically filed civil cases for superior and state court.

“The first electronically filed (e-filed) state court civil case was submitted to this office this morning. While this may not be of great consequence to world events, it was a historic event for this office because, for the first time in the office’s 238-year history, a civil case was delivered to this office by an attorney on behalf of his client through cyberspace for filing on the official dockets of a court of record. Now, and in perpetuity, any lawyer in the nation can file around the clock and without having to bring or mail paper documents to this office a civil action or pleadings relating thereto for both these two court,” said F. Barry Wilkes, Clerk of the Courts of Liberty County.

The new e-filing system was created through a partnership between the Council of Superior Court Clerks of Georgia, PeachCourt, a Georgia-based technology company, and IronData, the software company that provides all court, accounting, and real estate management software to the local court clerk’s office. Wilkes, who helped engineer the new system, said, “What makes it even more special is that (the e-filing system) was created without cost to taxpayers but, instead, through collaboration and sweat equity of clerks of superior court, our Council and private companies that have a genuine interest in improving service delivery in Georgia’s courts. On-going costs for the system are paid by users, meaning that taxpayers will never have to foot the bill for electronic filing in the superior and state courts of the state.”

The Council of Superior Court Clerks and PeachCourt, he explained, plans to expand services to attorneys in the future, enabling online access to all documents filed in any case in which an attorney represents either the plaintiff or defendant. The new system already facilitates “e-service”—allowing an attorney to electronically service all legally required notices to opposing counsel. Attorneys, Wilkes said, “should love the new system because, when they have to file a civil action or an answer thereto, they won’t have to hunt me late at night and arrange to meet them so they can file a case or pleadings before the deadline. Now, they can file anytime right from their desktop computer.”

Wilkes implemented electronic filing for magistrate court in 1999 and, three years ago, began accepting electronically filed child support cases from the Atlantic Judicial Circuit’s Division of Child Support Services. Like the e-filing system for superior and state court, the magistrate e-filing system was vendor-based, paid for by users and incurred no costs to taxpayers; however, the system did not facilitate electronic integration of data into the office’s computer-based case management system but required clerk’s office staff to manually scan e-filed documents for inclusion in the official records of the court.

Electronic filing of child support cases mirrors the PeachCourt e-filing system state courts but, Wilkes explicated, “the difference is that child support e-filing was between two government agencies and was much simpler to facilitate. The new civil case e-filing system not only facilitates e-filing from any computer in the world but, once this office receives an electronically filed case or any subsequent e-filed pleadings, nominal work is required by staff

to import images and make required docket entries. Thus, there will hopefully be tremendous cost-savings to taxpayers since required repetitive and duplicative clerical procedures should be reduced drastically.”

Also, on July 1, the Clerk’s Office began e-filing land records (deeds, liens, and plats) filed by attorneys on an e-filing portal provided by the Georgia Superior Court Clerks’ Cooperative Authority.

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