



PRESS RELEASE

Administrative Office of the Courts

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

First E-filing in 13th Judicial Circuit: Changes Complex Business Litigation Division

Business in the Complex Business Litigation Division will change on August 17, 2009, when the first cases are e-filed in this division – and in the Thirteenth Judicial Circuit! The Florida Supreme Court approved e-filing for this division based upon a local request. Pat Frank, Hillsborough County Clerk of the Court, announced, “This is a joint project undertaken by the Judiciary and the Clerk. Much care has been given to a smooth transition for all users and to the creation of a system which is comparable with other e-filing procedures which will be utilized throughout the state.” The e-filing project did not spring up recently; in fact, there has been preparation for several years but both organizations are excited to bring good news to the bar associations and the business community, in light of the current fiscal climate. “Even in these tough fiscal times, we remain focused on the effective administration of justice,” Chief Judge Manuel Menendez explained, “and e-filing in the Complex Business Litigation division was the ideal place to start this practice as it will reduce time and expense normally associated with these cases.”

The Clerk of the Court has scanned almost 58,000 documents since April 2007 in preparation the launch of the e-filing. The procedures for e-filing are located on the clerk’s website at www.hillsclerk.org. The goal is obviously to reduce paperwork, as e-filing reduces the use of paper as well as the energy costs of transportation so that walking downtown to the courthouse won’t be necessary to file pleadings in the future.

This is a courtroom in which there is a high volume of paper; in fact, the litigation occurs primarily in briefs rather than oral arguments. The Honorable Richard Nielsen is the judge who presides over this division so he knows what changes are in store for litigants who appear before him. “Most of the cases in the complex business division involve sophisticated businesses and their attorneys who are accustomed to the use of computer technology to increase efficiency and speed in their work. The move to e-filing will bring that same efficiency and speed to the clerk’s operations. When attorneys upload pleadings via e-filing they will automatically be placed in the official court file and

a docket entry will automatically be made in the official clerk's records. One of the biggest benefits to the practicing attorneys is that they will be able review the electronic court file from their office and not have to travel to the courthouse to do so, "Judge Richard Nielsen described. What will remain the same is that attorneys will continue on a parallel track of using the court's website, www.fljud13.org to schedule case management hearings, which according to last year's data, attorneys logged on to this section of the judge's webpage 1,200 times. Judge Nielsen has also revised procedures for this division, which can be found on the court's website, judicial directory and his name.

Chief Judge Menendez added that scheduling of court hearings on the court's website is, indeed, a parallel track to the e-filing but is a precursor to the e-filing and what is to come. "This is all a step toward efficiency in the entire civil division, as we had a 65% increase in 2007, which is unfortunately a direct reflection of the economy as mortgage foreclosures," Menendez explained. Data shows that attorneys logged on the court's website to schedule 30,600 hearings in 2007 as opposed to 18,400 in 2006. Menendez pointed out that the other divisions have not yet been approved for e-filing by the Supreme Court but they are using the Internet to schedule hearings, just as the Complex Litigation Business Division, which was the precursor to e-filing. "The amount of paperwork filed in this division was ripe, if you will, to be the test bed for e-filing in our circuit and it will have a direct impact on the other civil divisions," the chief judge added.