

STATE OF ILLINOIS  
IN CIRCUIT COURT OF THE FIRST JUDICIAL CIRCUIT  
ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER 17-1-20

IN RE THE MATTER OF MANDATING  
ELECTRONIC FILING IN CIVIL CASES

FILED

JAN 30 2017

*Quinn E. Kochan*  
CLERK OF THE CIRCUIT COURT

**AUTHORITY**

On January 22, 2016, the Supreme Court amended M.R. 18368, mandating electronic filing in civil case types effective January 1, 2018 through the utilization of a centralized electronic filing manager (EFM) authorized by the Supreme Court. Until the Order becomes effective, some counties within the First Judicial Circuit will permissively accept the electronic filing of documents in civil cases effective January 3, 2017, through the use of the Supreme Court's EFM.

**EFFECTIVE DATE**

*This order* shall become effective on *January 3, 2017*, and remain in effect until further order of this Court, or until the effective date of Illinois Supreme Court Order M.R. 18368 filed January 22, 2016.

**DESIGNATION OF ELECTRONIC FILING**

- (a) This Court hereby authorizes electronic filing in all civil case types as authorized by the Supreme Court's *Electronic Filing Standards*. The Circuit Court Clerk, with the concurrence of the Chief Circuit Judge, shall direct the phasing in of case types during implementation of permissive electronic filing through the EFM.
- (b) Wills or other testamentary documents shall not be accepted for filing electronically. Any unapproved case or document type filed electronically by a filer may be rejected by the Clerk of the Court.
- (c) Persons whom are incarcerated at such time as need arises to file a document in a civil case, are the only persons exempt from being required to electronically file. These individuals may file by conventional paper means. Once the conventional filing has been submitted, The Circuit Court Clerk will cause said paper filing to be filed electronically by means of the State of Illinois' EFM. If the individual has means available to e-file, they may. If the individual is represented by an Attorney, said Attorney must file electronically. The Circuit Court Clerk will not cause service to occur.

**DEFINITIONS**

The following terms in these rules are defined as follows:

- (a) *Conventional Filing* – The filing of paper documents or information with the Clerk of the Circuit Court.
- (b) *Electronic Document (E-document)* – An electronic file containing informational text.
- (c) *Electronic Filing (E-filing)* – An electronic transmission of information or documents between the Clerk of the Circuit Court and an EFSP for the purposes of case processing.
- (d) *Electronic Filing Manager (EFM)* - The service approved by the Supreme Court and used by

circuit courts to manage the flow of documents and data among registered filers, court clerks & personnel, and the judiciary. (<http://efile.illinoiscourts.gov>)

- (e) *Electronic Filing Service Provider (EFSP)* - Web portals operated by independent companies that collect filings from filers and transmit them to the EFM.
- (f) *Electronic Image (E-image)* – An electronic representation of a document or information that has been transformed to a graphical or image format.
- (g) *Electronic Service (E-service)* – An electronic transmission of documents to a party, attorney or representative in a case. However, E-service is not capable of conferring jurisdiction under circumstances where personal service is required as a matter of law.
- (h) *Electronic Signature (E-signature)* - Symbols or other data form attached to an electronically transmitted document as authentication of the sender's intent to sign the document.
- (i) *Filer* – An individual who has registered a username and password with the Electronic Filing Manager.
- (j) *Portable Document Format (PDF)* - A file format that preserves all fonts, formatting, colors, and graphics of any source document regardless of the application platform used.
- (k) *Rejection* - The court clerk may reject any electronic filing for any procedural or technical nonconformance and will notify the filer as to the deficiency to be corrected.

#### **AUTHORIZED USERS**

- (a) All filers shall register with the EFM through an authorized EFSP, prior to filing any document electronically.
- (b) To facilitate electronic filing, the Clerk of the Circuit Court shall provide a computer workstation for use for any filer to register and file electronic documents.

#### **METHOD OF FILING**

- (a) The Circuit Court hereby encourages electronic filing, although conventional filings in these case types will continue to be accepted until January 1, 2018. Each county within The First Circuit may schedule their own mandatory date for all conditional civil filings to cease. Notice of such decision should be given or posted by said county.
- (b) The method of filing shall not affect the right of access to court documents. The Clerk shall maintain public access viewing terminals to allow electronic records and electronic documents to be displayed to the public. Electronic access and dissemination of court records shall be in accordance with the *Electronic Access Policy for Circuit Court Records of the Illinois Courts*.

#### **FILING OF EXHIBITS**

Physical items for which a photograph may be substituted may be electronically imaged and E-filed. Items not conducive to electronic filing, such as physical exhibits for which an image will not suffice shall be filed in their physical form at the Clerk's office or in the courtroom, as directed by order of court and in conformity with Supreme Court's *Electronic Filing Standards*. The Motion, Notice of Motion and Proposed Order for permission to file any of these physical items must be done electronically.

## **MAINTENANCE OF ORIGINAL DOCUMENTS**

- (a) Anyone filing an electronic document that requires an original signature certifies by so filing, that the original signed document exists in the filing person's possession. Unless otherwise ordered by the Court, the filing party shall maintain and preserve all documents containing original signatures that are filed electronically. The filing party shall make those signed originals available for inspection by the Court, the Clerk of the Court or by other counsel in the case, upon reasonable notice or by such date as the Court instructs. At any time, the Clerk of the Court may request from the filing party a hard copy of an electronically filed document, which shall be provided within reasonable notice or by such date as the Court instructs.
- (b) All documents that are required to be maintained and preserved must be kept for one year after the appellate process period has been completed.

## **PRIVACY ISSUES**

It is the responsibility of the filing party or counsel to insure that documents or exhibits filed electronically do not disclose previously or statutorily impounded or sealed information or private information as defined in Supreme Court Rules 15 and 138. The Clerk is not responsible for the content of filed documents and has no obligation to review, redact or screen any expunged, sealed or impounded information.

## **FORMAT OF DOCUMENTS**

- (a) All electronically filed pleadings shall, to the extent practicable, be in PDF format in accordance with the requirements set by the EFM. Any other formats must be converted, either through your EFSP if available or via the filer's own software, prior to submission.
- (b) If an e-document exceeds the maximum size allowed, the filer will file multiple e-documents, each under the maximum file size. In such case, the filer will be responsible for dividing the e-document into appropriately sized parts. Currently the maximum file size allowed for each e-document is 25MB, with a total maximum size of all documents filed in one transaction at 35MB. Maximum file size allowances may increase as technology advances allow.
- (c) Documents filed by attorneys that do not comply with the format specified by the applicable order, statute, or rule may be rejected. Documents filed by pro se parties that do not comply with the format specified by the applicable order, statute, or rule shall be reviewed for acceptance by the court prior to rejection.

## **SIGNATURES AND AUTHENTICATION**

Any document electronically signed pursuant to the Electronic Filing Standards, Rule or Order satisfies Supreme Court Rules and statutes regarding original signatures on court documents.

## **TIME OF FILING, ACCEPTANCE BY THE CLERK AND ELECTRONIC FILING STAMP**

- (a) Any document filed electronically shall be considered as filed with the Clerk of the Circuit Court upon review and acceptance, and the transmission has been completed with the Clerk's electronic filing stamp.
- (b) The transmission date and time of transfer shall govern the electronic filing mark. Pleadings

received by the Clerk before midnight on a day the Circuit Clerk's office is open shall be deemed filed that day. If filed on a day the Circuit Clerk's office is not open for business, the e-document will be deemed filed the next business day.

- (c) The EFM shall provide notification of a receipt, acceptance, or rejection of electronically filed documents.
- (d) Upon acceptance by the clerk, the EFM shall apply the file stamp to the electronic document. Filings so endorsed shall have the same force and effect as documents file stamped in the conventional manner.

#### **ELECTRONIC SERVICE AND FILING PROOF OF SERVICE**

- (a) Electronic service is not capable of conferring jurisdiction. Therefore regarding electronically filed cases, documents that require personal service to confer jurisdiction as a matter of law may not be served electronically, but must be served in the conventional manner.
- (b) E-service shall be made in accordance with Supreme Court Rule 12, and shall be deemed complete at the posted date and time of transmission listed by the E-service vendor. The electronic service of a pleading or other e-document shall be considered as valid and effective service on all parties and shall have the same legal effect as personal service of an original paper document.
- (c) All filers must immediately notify other parties, the Clerk and the EFM of any change of name, address, phone or fax number, or E-mail address.
- (d) Courtesy copies of documents customarily required to be provided to the Court shall continue to be required in E-file cases, absent a specific court order to the contrary.
- (e) Service of documents on parties not registered as an E-filing or E-service participant shall be made as otherwise provided by order, rule, or statute.

#### **COLLECTION OF FEES**

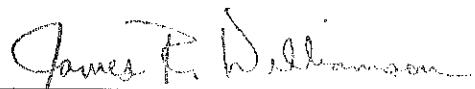
- (a) The payment of statutory filing fees to the Clerk of the Court in order to achieve valid filing status, unless otherwise waived, shall be as authorized through the EFM. Filers may establish a pre-paid draw down account with The Clerk of the Court for the payment of statutory filing fees, if such service is available in the county they are e-filing.
- (b) When the electronic filing includes a request for waiver of court fees pursuant to Supreme Court Rule 298, payment of the requisite fees shall be stayed until the court rules on the petition.

#### **SYSTEM OR USER ERRORS**

In the case of an e-filing error, absent extraordinary circumstances, anyone prejudiced by the court's order to accept a subsequent e-filing effective as of the date filing was first attempted, shall be entitled to an order extending the date for any response, or the period within which any right, duty or other act must be performed.

DATED this 30<sup>th</sup> day of January, 2017.

ENTERED: \_\_\_\_\_



**James R. Williamson**  
**Chief Judge of the Circuit**  
**First Judicial Circuit of Illinois**