

# MONTANA STATEWIDE E-FILING

OFFICE OF THE COURT ADMINISTRATOR

## E-FILING NOW LIVE AT SUPREME COURT

### First Big Step of Many to Come

On November 25<sup>th</sup>, 2014, Montana's first electronically filed document was submitted to the Supreme Court. The submission consisted of a Notice of Appeal filed by the Appellate Defender's Office. Rex Renk, Deputy Clerk of the Supreme Court was standing by and received the submission in the clerk's "review queue." He viewed the document and the attached information related to the appellant and appellee, and approved the filing. A

case was automatically created in the Supreme Court's case management system, a case number

was assigned, the parties and their counsel were established and the document became the *first official electronically filed record*. Because the Attorney General's office had already registered with the system, they received "eService," receiving notice of

the filing via email automatically sent by the E-Filing system.

More electronic filings followed. By the end of January 2015, more than 488 electronic filings had flowed through the system, consisting of 706 documents:

- 22 Appendix
- 39 Briefs
- 43 Extensions
- 203 Motions
- 62 Notices
- 136 Orders
- 1 Petition – Rehearing
- 197 Proposed Orders
- 3 Response/Objection

AS OF 1/31/2015:  
37 REGISTERED JUSTICES,  
ATTORNEYS, PROSECUTORS  
AND CLERK OF THE SUPREME  
COURT;  
32 REGISTERED SUPPORT STAFF

Starting the E-Filing project with filings at the Supreme Court allowed the system to debut to a fairly limited

audience, one that has been willing to test the system's operations and report when something seems amiss.

The "Go-Live Response Team" is able to quickly respond to assess any issue and provide operational guidance and address the

## GET REGISTERED FOR E-FILING!

While court e-filing is currently available only for appeals of "prosecutor-initiated" cases at the Supreme Court, registration can be accomplished by others in the court community. We are encouraging County Attorneys and Clerks of District Court, along with their authorized staff, to register so that they may be electronically served when notices of appeal are e-filed at the Supreme Court.

Registration instructions in Word are found at <http://courts.mt.gov/content/efile/instruction/s/registration>.

Call Rex Renk, Deputy Clerk of the Supreme Court at 444-3858 or Lois Schlyer at 841-2962 for assistance.

issue. As soon as an issue is positively identified, the vendor's development team produces scripts or other coding elements to modify the system. The "hotfix" is tested first by their QA team and then deployed to a test system allowing court personnel to test extensively, and finally the

hotfix is applied to the live, in use system.

The experience of the participants has been very positive. Those at the Appellate Defender's office are avid users of the E-Filing system, noting that it's easy now that they have a bit of experience working with the

system. They comment that it is fast and saves time and trips to the court, and if there is a problem with a submission, they get a timely response back from the Clerk's Office.

Future newsletters will have more commentary from others who use the system on a daily basis.

## EXPANSION TO OTHER COURTS

### Development progressing

While Montana's Supreme Court was the first to pilot the E-Filing system, getting the system ready for trial courts has been ongoing behind the scenes and is now taking center stage in daily activities and planning.

### Increased Complexity

This second step adds technical complexity due to the expanded variety of case types and court levels, as well as having to integrate with an entirely different court case management system.

New facets requiring attention include judges in single and multiple judge judicial districts, single and multi-county judicial districts, judges needing quick and easy access to electronic case files on the bench, and a much larger number of filings overall.

In mid-December the E-Filing vendor (Thomson Reuters)

delivered a "beta" version of the system integrated with the trial court case management system, FullCourt. This allowed us to track progress and to observe the preliminary interactions or "messaging" that takes place as the E-Filing system displays and sends information back and forth to FullCourt.

### Ongoing Workshops

Office of the Court Administrator staff usually work twice per week with the vendor to discuss Montana-specific functionality and a multitude of details related to exactly how the screens will look and how the users will interact with the system. The result is a framework that will eventually support all case levels and all case types throughout the state.

The framework is then subject to review by clerks and judges at each of the trial court levels. For

the last several months we have worked with district court personnel including clerks of court from the District Court Automation Committee, as well as occasionally having participation from several district court judges.

Over the next months we will be working with individuals representing justice, city and municipal courts.

### Next: 4th Judicial District

Concurrent with the technical aspects of a tested, useable system are preparation activities in the courts of the Fourth Judicial District, which will be the first pilot of the E-Filing system at the trial court level. A "working group" was established last year but has been mostly inactive during the Supreme Court rollout. Planning meetings with this group will soon commence to prepare for their upcoming startup.