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Bar News - August 20, 2014

Court News: NH e-Court Update: So Far, So Good

By: Kristen Senz

Twenty-four small claims cases had been filed in Concord and Plymouth Circuit Courts using one of two online e-filing portals as of Tuesday, Aug. 12, according to Senior NH Circuit Court Administrator Gina Apicelli.

The cases, four of which were submitted by attorneys, populated the online system smoothly, and filers received the proper email notifications. The only glitch occurred when a filer wanted to pay a filing fee in cash at the courthouse.

"It took 45 minutes, but we found a way to take the money and marry it up with the case, and we fixed the glitch," Apicelli said.

After the two systems went live at 8 a.m. Wednesday, July 30, it was a nail-biting seven hours before the first filing was submitted by an attorney at 3:18 p.m. Apicelli sent out "what felt like a birth announcement" to the chief justice of the NH Supreme Court and other judicial branch staff that have worked for more than two years on the new online-only system.

"Honestly, it's just a huge sigh of relief, because you work so hard to create this, but until a filing comes in and it works, you don't believe it," Apicelli said. "Now we can exhale."

By 9 a.m. on the second day, a pro se litigant had filed a case online without incident.

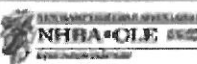
Respondents in small claims cases have up to 30 days to file an answer, the first of which was filed online in mid-August. "I'll feel better once we get 10 responses and they all populate onto the right cases and everybody gets their email messages," said Apicelli.

The NH Judicial Branch remains on target to roll out the online case-filing system for small claims cases to the other 30 circuit courts in the state by the end of 2014.

Apicelli said guardianship cases involving minors and adults, as well as NH State Police plea-by-mail motor vehicle tickets, will be added to the web-based platform in late winter or early spring 2015.

Plans are in the works for an NHBA•CLE in November about the new e-filing system. Meanwhile, about 20 attorneys have already taken one of the free weekly online webinars available at www.tylertech.com.

A transaction fee associated with e-filing court cases in New Hampshire will be taxable for trust accounting purposes, according to Donald Goodnow, director of the NH Administrative Office of the Courts. At information sessions leading up to the launch of the pilot project, some attorneys had raised concerns over whether the transaction fee would be considered a taxable cost.



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