Administrative Office of the Courts

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Online System Expanded Statewide for Resolving Debt and Money Due Lawsuits without a Court Hearing

SANTA FE – An easy-to-use online service for resolving debt collection lawsuits will be implemented statewide by New Mexico Courts starting next week.

Online Dispute Resolution (ODR) is a free service that allows both sides in a lawsuit to negotiate an agreement at their convenience through private online messages from a home, business or any location with internet access. The system works on computers, smartphones and other mobile devices, and is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

"Online Dispute Resolution is convenient, cost effective and user friendly," said First Judicial District Court Chief Judge Mary Marlowe Sommer. "With technology like ODR, courts can accommodate and assist people who might otherwise ignore a civil lawsuit because they are unable to take time off from work to go to court or they find the legal system too confusing. Online Dispute Resolution offers both sides in a lawsuit an opportunity for a speedier resolution of a consumer debt dispute."

Debt money due cases include lawsuits in which a bank sues a person over credit card debt or a hospital seeks payment for unpaid medical bills. About 31,000 debt and money due lawsuits were filed statewide from April 2018 through April 2019.

ODR has been piloted since June in courts in three judicial districts covering Bernalillo, Curry, Roosevelt, Grant, Luna and Hidalgo counties. The service will be expanded on Sept. 1 to all district and magistrate courts in New Mexico.

The online system asks questions of each party about what they want to potentially resolve the lawsuit, and offers are exchanged. The online system will automatically prepare a settlement document and electronically file it in court if an agreement is reached through ODR. During the first two weeks of negotiation, both sides involved in a dispute may ask for the help of a trained online mediator. If no agreement is reached after 30 days, the online negotiation ends and the case moves forward in court.

“Using Online Dispute Resolution to settle a lawsuit over unpaid bills eliminates the need to appear at a court hearing. This convenient service can particularly benefit people in rural areas who otherwise may need to travel long distances to a courthouse and take time off from work to deal with a legal matter,” said Twelfth Judicial District Court Chief Judge Angie K. Schneider.

Click here to view a video about Online Dispute Resolution. To learn more about the free online service, visits the ODR website of New Mexico Courts.

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First Judicial District Court Chief Judge Mary Marlowe Sommer
(Photo courtesy of the First Judicial District Court)

Twelfth Judicial District Court Chief Judge Angie K. Schneider
(Photo courtesy of the Twelfth Judicial District Court)