Administrative Office of the Courts

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Contact: Barry Massey, public information officer
bmassey@nmcourts.gov
505-470-3436

Electronic filing in civil cases available in magistrate courts statewide

SANTA FE – Attorneys can now electronically file civil lawsuits in magistrate courts across New Mexico.

"Electronic filing benefits all New Mexicans because it improves the efficiency of our courts," said Chief Justice Michael E. Vigil.

E-filing allows litigants to submit digital documents instead of paper and, if they choose, to electronically deliver copies to other parties in the case. Attorneys are able to conveniently initiate civil lawsuits and file subsequent documents in cases without traveling to a magistrate court. This saves time for attorneys and their staff. E-filing streamlines court operations because staff no longer must convert paper documents from attorneys into a digital format for the computerized case management system used to docket and process cases.

The final phase of a statewide implementation of e-filing in magistrate courts was completed when the service became available Monday, July 26, in a dozen courts in the:

- Fourth Judicial District of San Miguel, Guadalupe and Mora counties.
- Seventh Judicial District of Socorro, Sierra, Torrance counties.
- Eighth Judicial District of Taos, Colfax and Union counties.

E-filing in magistrate courts is voluntary for attorneys until Sept. 9, when it becomes mandatory.

The Judiciary launched electronic filing in 18 magistrate courts in January and expanded the service to an additional 16 courts in April. There have been about 3,900 electronic filings in civil cases so far in those courts.

With the statewide implementation of e-filing in magistrate courts, all state courts – appellate, district, magistrate and metropolitan courts – accept electronically filed documents.

E-filing and service of documents occurs through the online File & Serve system, which is used by attorneys for civil and criminal cases in district courts, civil cases in the Bernalillo County

Metropolitan Court, all case types in the Court of Appeals and nearly all case types in the state Supreme Court.

Courts continue to accept paper documents filed by people who represent themselves in court without the assistance of an attorney. During the COVID-19 pandemic, self-represented litigants have been allowed to email documents to magistrate courts to help reduce the number of people needing to enter courthouses. The Supreme Court's order allowing non-attorneys to file by email remains in effect for now, but the process is not the same as e-filing because it requires court employees to enter the documents into the case file.

"The experience magistrate courts gain from e-filing by attorneys in civil cases will help the Judiciary achieve a long-term goal of permitting self-represented litigants to electronically file documents in civil cases," said Chief Justice Vigil.

New Mexico's 46 magistrate courts have limited jurisdiction and handle civil actions up to $10,000. They also adjudicate misdemeanors, DWI cases, traffic violations and hold preliminary hearings to determine probable cause on felony charges.

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Chief Justice Michael Vigil (Photo courtesy of the NM Supreme Court)