

FROM THE CHIEF

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Chief Justice
The West Virginia Supreme Court



E-FILING AND CASE MANAGEMENT NOW AVAILABLE IN CIRCUIT COURTS

This past July, WV CourtPLUS/E-File went live in Monongalia County, the final county completing the statewide rollout of the electronic filing and case management system for circuit and family courts in West Virginia. This accomplishment is the culmination of more than a decade of work by hundreds of judicial employees.

As the system expanded county by county, the Supreme Court's Information Technology employees worked with clerks to improve it. Now, West Virginia is one of a handful of states that maintain a standardized statewide case management system for lower courts, and we will complete the appellate courts project in mid-2025.

WV E-File increases timeliness and efficiency and reduces stress for attorneys and staff who can electronically file a document at any time on or before the deadline

and not have to worry about the courthouse doors closing.¹ It is faster and more accurate; and it reduces paper, labor and transportation costs. Service is completed automatically with the assurance that the court and parties are promptly provided filings. Documents can be filed after business hours, and, in emergencies, judicial officers can act on them at any hour from locations outside of the courthouse. Probation officers also benefit from WV CourtPLUS/E-File because they receive copies of orders within seconds of when they are filed.

CourtPLUS is used by judges and their staff, circuit clerks and their deputies and other approved users to review and act on court documents. Having this system available in all 55 counties makes the state judiciary more efficient, increases transparency and provides uniformity and better communication between counties.

This is especially beneficial for judges who serve a multi-county circuit.

CourtPLUS/E-File has significantly changed the way circuit clerks' offices operate, allowing them to be more efficient. Most importantly, the system ensures that all offices operate in a consistent way, improving fairness and access to the courts.

In clerks' offices throughout West Virginia, the work has changed from filing and stamping papers to ensuring digital entries are accurate and current. In addition to saving staff time, e-filing reduces the need for physical storage space. Circuit clerk offices scan documents in paper court files so public records are available through terminals in every circuit clerk's office.

Circuit clerks now also get notices automatically when something needs their personal attention, like requests for subpoenas and letters, to improve quality control. These

items go into a special circuit clerk's queue. Monthly statistical and financial reports that once took hours or days to compile are generated electronically. People who pay court fees and fines get automatic receipts, and, because fees and fines are deposited online, agencies that rely on those funds get them faster.

As WV CourtPLUS/E-File was being developed for circuit and family courts, the Administrative Office of the Court's Division of Technology Services has completed several other projects to make courts more transparent and efficient:

- In 2016, the Unified Judicial Application case management system for magistrate courts began operating statewide.
- The Supreme Court's Office of the Clerk launched e-filing in the Supreme Court and Intermediate Court of Appeals on July 1, 2022.
- The Magistrate Case Record Search system, which went live early in 2024, allows the public to virtually access docket information about public cases filed in West Virginia magistrate courts. See <https://MCRSearch.courtswwv.gov>.

Justice John Hutchison has worked as the Supreme Court's point person to oversee the completion of the project, with the guidance and expertise of a multidisciplinary executive oversight committee. Technology Services Director Pat Moats and her team of dedicated IT staff have spent years developing and installing software and equipment around the state. They have worked with the state treasurer, secretary of state and other state agencies to ensure that money and information flow securely among all entities. I would also like to commend circuit

clerks and their staff for their hard work, cooperation and adaptability in implementing the new technology and processes.

These accomplishments are all steps toward the Supreme Court's ultimate goal — to increase access, transparency and accountability by placing records from lower courts in West Virginia in one system that is easily accessible by the legal community, media and the public. In 2023,

the Supreme Court released a request for proposals for an electronic court case management solution that will combine case, document and e-file management for circuit, family and magistrate courts into one system. We are carefully reviewing bids to ensure that we use the taxpayers' resources wisely and efficiently as we proceed with this important project.




Meanwhile, the statewide implementation of WV CourtPLUS/E-File means that, until that next project begins, we have a system in place that provides better access to records in each of our 55 counties. As I discussed with the Legislature in January 2024, keeping up with technological advancements is expensive but necessary. It is a critical part of our commitment to West Virginians to keep the courts accessible, transparent and fair.

We recognize that our courts are here to serve the citizens of our state. As we celebrate this important CourtPLUS/E-filing milestone, your West Virginia Supreme Court of Appeals will continue to explore new ways to make accessing court-related documents more user-friendly and more open and accessible to the citizens our court system is here to serve. **WVLC**

Endnote

1. Self-represented litigants may still paper file with the circuit clerk.

Navigating West Virginia's CourtPLUS/E-filing System

<p style="text-align: center; font-weight: bold;">Court Rule</p> <p>Trial Court Rule 15A governs electronic filing in the circuit courts and family courts of West Virginia.</p>  <p style="text-align: center; font-size: small;"> https://www.courtswwv.gov/legal-community/court-rules/vw-trial-court-rules-contents/rule15A </p>	<p style="text-align: center; font-weight: bold;">Training</p> <p>Training on CourtPLUS/E-File is available on the Supreme Court website:</p>  <p style="text-align: center; font-size: small;"> https://www.courtswwv.gov/legal-community/e-filing/circuit-family-courts/about </p> <p>Training is also available on the West Virginia State Bar website:</p>  <p style="text-align: center; font-size: small;"> https://wvbar.org/the-supreme-court-of-appeals-of-west-virginia-courtplus-electronic-filing-system-training </p>	<p style="text-align: center; font-weight: bold;">Technical Support</p> <p>For general support questions email servicedesk@courtswwv.gov.</p> <p>Procedural questions should be directed to the judge or circuit clerk of the relevant county.</p> <p>Questions regarding e-file notifications, fees, clerical errors, case information, attorney, and party information should be directed to the circuit clerk's office of the relevant county.</p>
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