



Judge Judith L. Kreeger, Chair
Florida Courts Technology Commission
c/o Office of the State Courts Administrator
500 S. Duval Street, Tallahassee, Florida 32399-1900

July 15, 2010

The Honorable Robert Germaine
Highlands County Clerk of Court
590 South Commerce Avenue
Sebring, Florida 33870

RE: request for implementation of electronic filings in the Probate Division in Highlands County, Tenth Judicial Circuit

Dear Mr. Germaine:

Supreme Court Opinion No. SC10-241, In re: Amendments to the Florida Rules of Judicial Administration – Rule 2.236 (July 1, 2010) provides that the Florida Courts Technology Commission “evaluate all such applications to determine whether they comply with the technology policies established by the supreme court and the procedures and standards created pursuant to this rule, and approve those applications deemed to be effective and found to be in compliance.”

The purpose of this letter is to inform you that on July 13, 2010 the Electronic Filing Committee (EFC) reviewed and recommended approval of your request to implement electronic filing in Highlands County in the Probate Division.

As Chair of the Florida Courts Technology Commission I hereby approve your request to implement electronic filing in the Probate Division in Highlands County.

Approval of this electronic initiative is contingent upon compliance with the policy considerations and directives regarding the development and application of new technological standardization and enhancements as set forth by the Supreme Court and is subject to the following terms and conditions. Violation of any of the following conditions shall constitute grounds for revocation of the approval to implement electronic filing in the respective county.

- a. The Highlands County Clerk of Court may implement the aforementioned technology procedures in accordance with the approved plan effective on the date of this letter and

must adhere to the statewide standards for electronic access to the courts as outlined in In re: Statewide Standards for Electronic Access to the Courts, AOSC09-30 (Fla. July 1, 2009).

- b. The Highlands County Clerk of Court shall ensure that there is no possibility for vendors to release or distribute court data to third parties and that the clerk of court retains the designation as custodian of the court records.
- c. The Highlands County Clerk of Court shall ensure that contract provisions prohibit any vendor from extracting, data mining, or engaging in similar activities with regard to information from original court filings and other court records or any associated databases containing court records in the circuit for commercial or other non-court related uses.
- d. The Highlands County Clerk of Court shall ensure that no fees other than statutorily required fees are assessed or collected by the clerk of court.
- e. The Highlands County Clerk of Court shall ensure that the data is backed up and is recoverable. The clerk of court will ensure that remote data backups are stored in a protected environment a minimum of 50 miles from the primary production location of the court record or at a certified hardened facility, and that the circuit complies with established data backup standards as they are revised and updated.
- f. This approval does not constitute an approval of any electronic forms that may be used in this process.
- g. The Highlands County Clerk of Court shall submit monthly progress reports to the court system during the 90-day pilot test. Copies of the monthly progress reports shall be provided to the Chief Judge of the Tenth Judicial Circuit and the State Courts Technology Officer in the Office of the State Courts Administrator.
- h. Any attorney, party, or other person who files a document by electronic transmission with the Highlands County Clerk of Court shall immediately thereafter file the identical document in paper form with an original signature of the attorney, party, or other person if a signature is otherwise required by the Rules of Judicial Administration (hereinafter referred to as the follow-up filing). The follow-up filing of any document that has been previously filed by electronic transmission may be discontinued if, after a 90-day period of accepting electronically filed documents, the Highlands County Clerk of Court and chief judge certify to the Florida Courts Technology Commission that the electronic filing system is efficient, reliable, and meets the demands of all parties and this Commission has authorized the elimination of the follow-up filing.
- i. The Highlands County Clerk of Court shall abide by In re: Revised Interim Policy on Electronic Release of Court Records, AOSC07-49 (Fla. Sept. 7, 2007).
- j. The Supreme Court anticipates the approval of a statewide e-filing "portal" to ensure equal access to electronic filing across the state and has directed that the Florida Courts

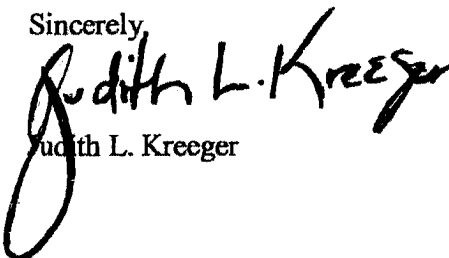
Technology Commission make implementation of such a system a priority of the judicial branch. All local electronic filing systems must be compatible with the statewide electronic filing portal and approval of each of the above electronic filing systems is contingent on the system's compatibility with the statewide portal when the portal is approved.

- k. At the present time, the Supreme Court is considering enhancements to current electronic filing practices throughout the State. There is a possibility that these enhancements may include the development and application of new business practices and technology standardization. Because these enhancements may occur in the near future, it will be the responsibility of the clerk of court for the respective county to ensure that functionality of the proposed system related to electronic court records will also be made compliant with these new technological enhancements.
- l. The Highlands County Clerk of Court must continue to provide paper to the judiciary until the chief judge authorizes the elimination of paper files. At such time, the Highlands County Clerk of Court must convert all documents to searchable PDFs.
- m. The Highlands County Clerk of Court shall continue to accept paper filings at no charge, other than statutorily required fees.

In addition to the foregoing enumerated terms and conditions, the chief judge may, pursuant to the chief judge's constitutional and statutory responsibility for administrative supervision of the courts within the circuit, impose electronic filing system or related requirements by local administrative order that are consistent with the terms and conditions of this approval letter.

Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact my office.

Sincerely,



Judith L. Kreeger

JLK: js

cc: The Honorable Manuel Menendez, Jr., Chair, Electronic Filing Committee
The Honorable J. David Langford, Chief Judge, Tenth Judicial Circuit
Nick Sudzina, Trial Court Administrator, Tenth Judicial Circuit
Jannet Lewis, Court Technology Officer, Tenth Judicial Circuit
Christina Blakeslee, Office of the State Courts Administrator