



**MINNESOTA
JUDICIAL
BRANCH**

First Judicial District

Mission: To provide justice through a system that assures equal access for the fair and timely resolution of cases and controversies.

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The First Judicial District has 36 judges and more than 250 staff that handle nearly 120,000 cases annually in the counties of Carver, Dakota, Goodhue, Le Sueur, McLeod, Scott and Sibley.

The First Edition

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eFiling to Rollout Statewide in Minnesota District Courts

Court users will be able to electronically file and serve documents in all 87 Minnesota district courts by the end of 2015, under a plan detailed by the Minnesota Judicial Branch.

The move to electronic filing and service of case documents – known as eFiling and eService – is part of the Minnesota Judicial Branch’s eCourtMN initiative, which is transforming the state’s court system by replacing paper-based court files with an electronic information environment. The goal of the eCourtMN initiative – which received a 2014 State Government Innovation Award from the University of Minnesota’s Humphrey School of Public Affairs – is to make the state’s court system more accessible, more efficient, and more convenient for court customers.

One of the key elements of the eCourtMN initiative is the establishment of eFiling and eService – giving case participants the ability to submit documents to the court and serve documents to opposing parties electronically, through an online portal. This allows court customers to file documents without traveling to the courthouse or paying for postage or courier costs, allows filers to submit documents immediately and outside of courthouse business hours, and allows court documents to be sent to filers electronically.

“The eCourtMN Initiative is the largest transformation in the 150-year history of Minnesota’s Judicial Branch,” said Minnesota Supreme Court Chief Justice Lorie S. Gildea. “This initiative will produce new efficiencies in our justice system and increase on-demand access to information for the public and our justice partners. The statewide rollout of eFiling and eService is a major milestone for the eCourtMN

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eFiling Statewide Rollout (continued from page 1)

initiative, and will bring the benefits of this incredible transformation to court users across the state.”

Currently, eFiling and eService is available in 11 counties across the state (Cass, Clay, Cook, Dakota, Faribault, Hennepin, Kandiyohi, Lake, Morrison, Ramsey, and Washington). These counties were part of a multi-year pilot project aimed at testing and refining the eFiling process and related policies. Based on the success of that pilot, electronic filing and service became mandatory for attorneys, government agencies, guardians ad litem, and sheriffs filing documents in those 11 pilot counties on July 1, 2015.

Throughout the rest of 2015, the Minnesota Judicial Branch will begin allowing filers in the other 76 counties in the state to use the eFiling and eService system. The Minnesota Judicial Branch has laid out a tentative rollout schedule, which can be viewed on the Judicial Branch’s website at <http://www.mncourts.gov/efsrollout>. Visitors to the site have the ability to find out when each county plans to begin allowing filers to use the eFiling and eService system, and sort these dates by county, judicial district, and tentative eFile and eService implementation date. The rollout schedule is subject to

change, and site visitors can subscribe to receive e-mail updates to the rollout schedule.

Upon implementation, eFiling and eService will be voluntary for filers in the 76 non-pilot counties, meaning filers will still be able to file documents using the traditional, paper-based method. Electronic filing and service in these counties will continue to be voluntary until July 1, 2016. Under [recent amendments](#) to Minnesota’s Rules of Court, use of the eFiling and eService system to file court documents will become mandatory for attorneys, government agencies, guardians ad litem, and sheriffs in all district courts statewide on July 1, 2016. Use of the eFiling and eService system will remain voluntary for other filers, such as self-represented litigants.

In addition to electronic filing and service of court documents, the eCourtMN initiative includes a wide array of various projects that are utilizing new technologies to increase efficiency and expand access to information throughout Minnesota’s justice system. This includes:

- Providing judges and court staff with new electronic tools to more efficiently review and process court documents within the courthouse;
- Creating an electronic portal for government partners – such as law enforcement, prosecutors, and public defenders – to more efficiently access court documents and records;
- Making it easier and more convenient for the public to view electronic court records from across the state at their local courthouse;
- Partnering with the Bureau of Criminal Apprehension to expand use of electronic citations (eCitations) and other charging documents (eCharging). These tools allow law enforcement and prosecutors to file citations and complaints electronically, from their office or squad car, with the data automatically transferred to court and law enforcement databases. Use of eCharging and eCitations [will become mandatory](#) for adult complaints and adult citations statewide on July 1, 2016.

“Throughout the Judicial Branch, we are implementing an ambitious redesign agenda that is utilizing new technologies to improve our service to the public, increase information sharing and efficiency within the justice system, and make it more convenient for our

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eFiling Statewide Rollout (continued from page 2)

customers to interact with the courts,” said State Court Administrator Jeff Shorba. “The eCourtMN initiative is the centerpiece of these efforts, and we are eager to bring one of the most important elements of this

transformation – eFiling and eService – to district courts across the state.”

The Minnesota Judicial Branch has posted informational resources, training materials, and a three-step guide to starting eFiling and

eService at www.mncourts.gov/eFile. The Minnesota Judicial Branch also operates an [eFile Support Center](#) for filers with questions about the eFile and eServe system.

Dakota County Northern Service Center Implements Weapons Screening in District Court

by Becky Schneider, Northern Services Center Court Operations Manager and Heidi Carstensen, Court Administrator

Dakota County recently installed weapons screening at the Northern Service Center in West St Paul in an effort to provide enhanced security for court litigants. Numerous incidents of violence in our nation’s courts over the last decade have been the impetus to the implementation of the increased security at a number of Minnesota courts, including the Northern Service Center.



Northern Service Center Weapons Screening

On August 3, 2015, a temporary screening station staffed by Dakota County Sheriff’s deputies, including a walk-through magnetometer and hand held metal detector, was installed at the entrance to the courts lobby. A large sign outside of the lobby alerts litigants that they are subject to weapons screening prior to being admitted into the courts

area. This gives them the opportunity to return any restricted items to their vehicle before entering. An ‘amnesty’ box is located just inside the lobby doors, which allows visitors to voluntarily discard restricted items if they prefer. Anyone setting off the magnetometer alert is subject to the hand-held wand. Overall, the reaction of court staff, justice partners, and the public to the screening has been positive. Court employees are pleased with the additional security, and have noticed that the presence of the screening deputies seems to maintain order in the lobby and service counter even during stressful interactions.

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*Dakota County NSC Weapons Screening
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Screening deputies report that there has been minimal opposition from the public to the screening, and that the vast majority of visitors are very cooperative, understanding, and even appreciative of these additional safety measures. Fortunately, the individual screening has not caused any substantial back-ups or long lines of people awaiting entry, even during the busiest times of day.

County Administration is considering

options for a permanent screening station that will likely involve relocation of the entrance to the courts lobby, and involve construction of additional meeting/interview rooms, and possibly installation of restrooms inside the secure lobby area. In addition, installation of weapons screening equipment inside the District Court lobby at the Dakota County Western Service Center in Apple Valley is anticipated by

the end of this year.

The installation of the weapons screening equipment is a result of the combined efforts of the Dakota County Commissioners, Dakota County Administration and Risk Management, the Dakota County Sheriff's Office, and the Dakota County Judges and Court Administration.

Supreme Court Chief Justice Gildea Visits Sibley County

by Karen Messner, Court Administrator for McLeod and Sibley Counties



L to R: First District Judge Timothy Looby; Minnesota Supreme Court Chief Justice Lorie Gildea; Karen Messner, Court Administrator for McLeod and Sibley Counties; and Carolyn Renn, First District Assistant Administrator

On August 6, 2015, Minnesota Supreme Court Chief Justice Lorie S. Gildea made a visit to the Sibley County Courthouse. She was extended an invitation by Judge Timothy Looby when he went to new judge orientation last year, and Justice Gildea graciously accepted.

Justice Gildea, who has served on the Supreme Court since 2006 and the past five years as Chief Justice, stated one part of her job she enjoys is getting out of St. Paul to meet with local court staff to learn about the challenges and successes they are having.

As she stated, "I am happy to be here!"

Justice Gildea commented on the beauty of the Sibley County Courthouse. "The beautiful older buildings have a sense of history."

Justice Gildea also asked questions and learned how technology has changed the work for the court. "It is helpful to hear from people who are doing the work every day," she said. She indicated that she appreciates the willingness of the staff and judges to embrace technology. It is nice to be able to take advantage of the technology and be more efficient. The state is moving into an all-

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Chief Justice Gildea (continued from page 4)



Chief Justice Lorie Gildea (center) with Sibley County Court Administration Staff

electronic case environment, with staff working on files pending in different parts of the state.

Judge Looby added, "The Chief Justice disarmed all of us with her charm during her visit." We had a wonderful discussion during our lunch together. And that charm didn't end

at the conclusion of her visit, when she told us, "My thanks to everybody for your kindness during my visit. I learned a great deal from all of you. We are lucky to have you working with us and you are lucky to be working in such a beautiful place."

It was a pleasure to have Chief Justice Gildea visit Sibley County and join us for lunch. It is her goal to visit all of the courthouses in Minnesota.

Scott County Court Administrator Receives Distinguished Service Award from Minnesota Association for Court Management



Vicky Carlson

The Minnesota Association for Court Management (MACM) announced the recipients of its 2015 awards at its annual meeting in September 2015. Vicky Carlson, Scott County Court Administrator, received the association's Distinguished Service Award as a result of her 29 years in the court system, as well as her leadership roles in the National Association for Court Management (NACM) and MACM. The

award is presented annually to a member who has a distinguished record of service to the profession and demonstrated leadership in improving the administration of justice.

Vicky currently serves as the Scott County Court Administrator where she manages the day-to-day operations of the court. Prior to serving in Scott

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Vicky Carlson (continued from page 5)

County, she was the Carver County Court Administrator and a Court Administrative Manager in Dakota County District Court, where she managed the collections and accounting divisions as well as special projects and technology implementations.

Vicky is also serving as the Vice President in NACM, which is the largest organization of court management professionals in the world with members from all levels and types of courts. She was previously the Secretary/Treasurer and General Jurisdiction Director, having served on the Board of Directors since 2011. On a state level, she is currently

serving as the MACM Past President and was the President from 2012-2014.

Vicky attended Metro State University and holds a Bachelor’s Degree in Public Administration. She is a Fellow of the National Center for State Courts, Institute for Court Management (2011) where she completed a research paper on Remote Language Interpreting in the Minnesota Trial Courts.

“We are very pleased that Vicky is being recognized for her dedication and commitment to our court system and the public we serve”, said Brian Jones, First District Administrator. “Her involvement

extends beyond Minnesota to a national level where her experience and leadership has an influence on other courts and management practices across the country.”

The Minnesota Association for Court Management has over 325 members throughout the Minnesota Judicial Branch. MACM is committed to the enrichment of its members through professional growth and development opportunities, promoting advancements and innovation in court administration, and partnering with other professionals working to improve the justice system in Minnesota.

Appellate Court Case Documents Now Viewable on Courthouse Terminals

Members of the public are now able to view documents filed by parties in appellate cases on public access terminals in all Minnesota state courthouses. Documents filed on or after December 1, 2013, in appeals before both the Minnesota Court of Appeals and the

Minnesota Supreme Court are available.

“Today’s announcement is the culmination of over two years of efforts to design and implement the technology and document security necessary to make this service available. The appellate courts recognize that

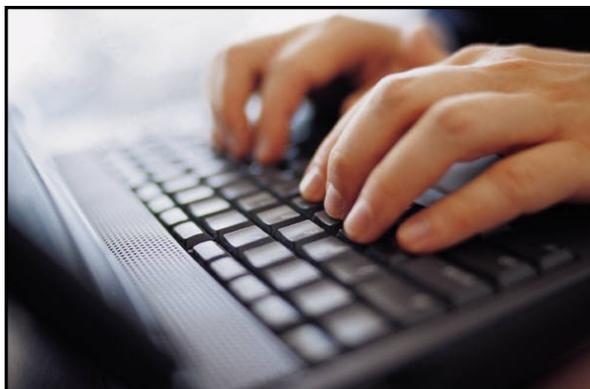
statewide access to electronic appellate court documents will provide a significant benefit to both the legal community and self-represented litigants, specifically the savings to parties who will no longer have to travel to the Minnesota Judicial Center in St. Paul to

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Appellate Case Records (continued from page 6)

view and copy appellate court documents. In addition, the availability of electronic appellate court documents, at county courthouses statewide, will advance public access to appellate case records,” said AnnMarie S. O’Neill, Clerk of the Appellate Courts.



Since March 3, 2003, the general public has had online access to appellate case records through the public view of the Minnesota Appellate Courts Case Management System (P-MACS). P-MACS provides the following

information about cases: case title, case number, parties, attorneys, a list of docket entries, and links to orders and opinions issued by the courts. The Clerk of the Appellate Courts’ Office is imaging all documents filed by parties (not just those issued by the appellate courts) in all active cases. In addition, attorneys and court reporters have been eFiling documents, on a voluntary basis, in appellate cases since March 1, 2015. The

document images generated by scanning and eFiling are stored in the Minnesota Appellate Courts Case Management System, which is now accessible through the courthouse terminals as “MACS Courthouse View.” Confidential and sealed case documents are not available through this new service. The effort is part of the Judicial Branch’s eCourtMN Initiative. Viewing access to appellate court documents is available at terminals placed in all 87 Minnesota county courthouses, as well as at the State Law Library in St. Paul, MN. The cost to obtain a printed copy of an electronic appellate court document from the public counters at each courthouse and at the Law Library is \$10 per document.

Minnesota’s Conservator Auditing Program Earns National and State Awards

A new program launched by the Minnesota Judicial Branch to better protect elderly and vulnerable adults from financial abuse has received the 2015 Justice Achievement Award from the National Association for

Court Management and the 2015 State Government Innovation Award from the University of Minnesota’s Humphrey School of Public Affairs. The Conservator Account Auditing Program (CAAP) is a nation-leading

initiative to protect the assets of vulnerable individuals – persons with developmental disabilities, Alzheimer’s disease, dementia, or traumatic brain injuries – for whom the court has appointed a conservator to manage

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Conservator Auditing (continued from page 7)



State Court Administrator, Jeff Shorba (right), accepts a State Government Innovation Award for the Minnesota Judicial Branch Conservator Account Auditing Program (CAAP). The award was presented by Jay Kiedrowski (left), Senior Fellow in the Public and Nonprofit Leadership Center.

the individual’s financial affairs. “Today in Minnesota, thousands of elderly and vulnerable adults rely on a conservator to responsibly manage their financial affairs,” said Minnesota Supreme Court Chief Justice Lorie S. Gildea. “While we know the vast majority of conservators strive to always work in the best interests of those they serve, we also know that conservators acting unethically, illegally, or negligently can severely harm the quality of life and financial security of a vulnerable individual and his or her family. Through the Conservator Account Auditing Program, Minnesota has put in place one of the strongest safeguards in the nation to protect vulnerable individuals from

fraud and mismanagement by conservators.” Through CAAP, the Minnesota Judicial Branch has modernized and improved the way the state oversees the work of conservators. Before the implementation of CAAP, conservator records were submitted to the court on paper, frequently accompanied by boxes of receipts and other documentation. This unwieldy process put a heavy burden on local district court staff

responsible for overseeing the work of conservators. The CAAP program changed this process in two fundamental ways:

- Conservators now submit transactions through an intuitive, online reporting system that has the look and feel of many popular financial applications. This system, called MyMNConservator, is the first and only online mandatory reporting tool for conservators in the country. It provides text and video support for conservators, automatically performs calculations, and provides ready access to expense and receipt details. Most importantly, the system

contains built-in “red flag” logic that automatically reviews filed accounts and alerts auditors to possible errors, inconsistencies, or transactions that require further review.

- The program also established a centralized conservator account auditing center, staffed by a team of trained experts who conduct compliance audits on conservator accounts from across the state. By centralizing this important auditing work, CAAP has led to stronger oversight of conservatorship accounts, while freeing up significant staff resources at the district court level.

Today, CAAP is monitoring the assets of 4,600 vulnerable individuals in Minnesota, with assets totaling more than \$720 million. The stronger oversight of conservator accounts provided by CAAP is already resulting in better protection of elderly and vulnerable adults. In nearly 14 percent of cases audited under the program, auditors have found concerns of loss, inappropriate loans or expenditures, or commingling of funds. Audit letters have frequently prompted repayment of funds from conservators. Hearings held on these audits have resulted in discharge of conservators, judgments and orders for repayment, and criminal

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Conservator Auditing (continued from page 8)

prosecution and conviction.

This enhanced oversight of conservators is especially important considering recent statistics highlighting the growing amount of money lost through exploitation of elders in the United States. A [2011 Met Life Study](#) estimated the national annual financial loss at \$2.9 billion dollars – an increase of 12 percent over their findings in 2008. More recently, the [2015 True Link Report on Elder Financial Abuse](#) estimated that seniors lose \$36.48 billion each year to elder financial abuse.

As other states respond to the troubling increase in elder financial abuse, CAAP has quickly become one of the most effective and celebrated conservator auditing programs in

the country. The National Center for State Courts is coordinating a plan to share the MyMNConservator online reporting system, along with other program elements, with states across the country. Staff from the CAAP program have been asked to give presentations about the program to court leaders in other states and other countries, including the Netherlands and Finland.

“In just a year of full implementation, CAAP has already provided significant benefits to conservators, the court system, and, most importantly, the vulnerable individuals who depend on conservators to protect their financial assets,” said Chief Justice Gildea. “We are honored to receive this national recognition for the CAAP program, and are

pleased to see the real impact this program is having on the lives of those who rely on conservators for their financial well-being.”

According to the National Association for Court Management, the [Justice Achievement Award](#) was established to “publicly recognize courts and related organizations for meritorious projects and exemplary accomplishments that enhance the administration of justice.”

The Minnesota State Government Innovation Awards are designed to recognize the great work of state government entities and encourage an environment of experimentation and innovation in Minnesota. More information about the award can be found at <http://sgia.umn.edu/>.

Minnesota Supreme Court Orders Pilot for Audio, Video, and Still Camera Coverage of Criminal Cases

The Minnesota Supreme Court issued an [order](#) on August 12, 2015, announcing that



a pilot project should proceed, effective November 10, 2015, permitting electronic coverage of district court proceedings held after a guilty verdict has been returned or a guilty plea has been accepted.

The media shall provide written notice of their intent to cover authorized district court

proceedings by either audio or video means to the trial judge, all counsel of record, and any parties appearing without counsel at least 10 days before the commencement of the hearing or trial. A copy of the written notice shall also be

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Minnesota Supreme Court Order
(continued from page #)

provided to the [Court Information Office](#)
and the respective [media coordinator](#).

In all other instances, the presiding judge
may for good cause limit or exclude media

requests for
electronic
courtroom
coverage based
on the privacy and
safety concerns of
the participants to
the proceedings or
other interested
persons, the
decorum and

dignity of the proceedings, the physical
court facilities, and the impartial
administration of justice.

On or before January 1, 2018, the Advisory
Committee on the Rules of Criminal
Procedure shall file a status report on the
pilot project, with recommendations for any
further rule amendments; and,
recommendations for continuation,
abandonment, or modification of the pilot
project, or for permanent codification of the
rules for the pilot project.

- No electronic coverage is permitted of any proceeding held without a jury present.
- No coverage is permitted in any proceeding held in Minnesota’s problem solving courts, including drug courts, mental health courts, veterans courts, and DWI courts.
- No coverage is permitted in cases involving crimes of criminal sexual conduct and/or family or domestic violence.
- No coverage of any testifying victim is permitted unless that victim, before testifying, affirmatively acknowledges and agrees in writing to the proposed coverage.



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