

Electronic Filing Revolutionizes Service and Convenience in Wisconsin Courts

The Wisconsin Court System's eFiling system, the fee for which increased by \$15 on May 1, 2024, remains efficient, effective, and secure.

BY STEPHEN KELLEY

In the age of technological advancements in the legal sector, Wisconsin's Consolidated Court Automation Programs (CCAP) developed revolutionary case management and access systems for the state's justice system. As those systems continued to evolve, it became clear that a transition to electronic filing (eFiling) would improve delivery of services to attorneys and judicial stakeholders. CCAP led the way by building the capacity and infrastructure to support eFiling, a system that continues to facilitate state-of-the-art service and convenience for Wisconsin courts.

Efficiency and Convenience of eFiling

Roughly a decade ago, paper ruled in the Wisconsin judicial system. With the implementation of mandatory eFiling in 2016, gone are the days of cumbersome paperwork, added case management costs, and time-consuming courthouse visits. Now, with the eFiling system, attorneys can file case documents, serve other electronic parties, and access cases from anywhere, at any time. This stark contrast from the old system has significantly reduced the administrative burden on legal professionals, allowing them to focus more on the core aspects of their cases.

"Electronic filing has huge benefits to the legal profession," said Barron County Circuit Court Judge James Babler, who is a CCAP Steering Committee member. "Besides the immense savings on time and resources, it's allowed the judicial process to move faster because all parties have access to electronic files, and multiple court officials can work on a document at the same time."

Continued Growth and Support

With a user base of more than 20,000 individuals, CCAP provides comprehensive support to everyone navigating the system, from attorneys to court officials to the public, reflecting a commitment to ensuring the eFiling system can be leveraged effectively. Examples include step-by-step tutorials, videos, FAQ documentation, and access to dedicated customer service representatives. In 2023 alone, 8.9 million documents were filed through the eFiling system.

Judge Babler said CCAP's case management system stands out due to its exclusive design tailored specifically for Wisconsin law. This



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approach sets it apart from other state court systems, where different counties may have disparate systems. The ability to serve the unique needs of Wisconsin's legal community ensures a cohesive and streamlined experience for legal professionals and court officials.

"I'm not sure a lot of lawyers and even judges understand that what we have is so very different than other states, where they might have a different case management system in each county," Judge Babler added. "It's a system of which we can be proud because it is specifically designed for Wisconsin law."

Combatting Growing Cybersecurity Risks

One of the important aspects of eFiling is the robust cybersecurity CCAP has put in place to safeguard the integrity of the Wisconsin Court System and the sensitive legal information within. Recent cybersecurity issues in other states, such as Georgia, Alaska, and Kansas, underscore the critical necessity of maintaining robust security protocols.

In 2021, CCAP introduced a fraud detection service to safeguard public web services offered by the Wisconsin Court System from prevalent cyber threats. These services include the Wisconsin Circuit Court eFiling site, the Wisconsin Circuit Court Access (WCCA) web application, and eCourts, the court application authentication system.

This proactive approach has been instrumental in preventing unauthorized access to user accounts, web "scraping,"

and denial-of-service attacks, which pose risks to the data, security, and accessibility of court applications. When the service identifies a potential threat or malicious activity, it prompts an authentication challenge or blocks access, while streamlining the login process for standard users accessing eFiling or viewing case information on WCCA.

"CCAP is always cognizant of the danger that exists, because threats keep evolving," said Waukesha County Circuit Court Judge Ralph Ramirez, who is also a member of the CCAP Steering Committee. "The next threat could be developed in the next five months or the next five minutes – and that's not theoretical. It's happening. And our system is constantly changing to address these real threats."

The proof is in the numbers. During a 10-day period in March 2024, service analytics across all court web services showed that 22% of the traffic exhibited suspicious behavior. Tools and services like this are critical in enabling CCAP to reinforce the court system, safeguard court data, and address evolving cyber threats.

Upholding Efficiency and Security

The implementation of mandatory eFiling marked a pivotal moment in the state's commitment to modernizing its court system. It also marks the last time the eFiling fees were increased. Recognizing that the initial fee could not anticipate the costs of combatting emergent security threats, the CCAP Steering Committee recently supported an eFiling fee increase of \$15, effective May 1, 2024. The Director of State Courts, in consultation with the Supreme Court Administrative Committee, determined raising the eFiling fee is imperative to sustain the high level of service, cybersecurity, and support provided by CCAP, ensuring that the judicial process remains as streamlined as possible. It is also important to note that eFiling for Wisconsin Court of Appeals and Wisconsin Supreme Court cases is free,

reflecting the Wisconsin Court System's dedication to making access to the legal system affordable and accessible.

Judge Ramirez added that the eFiling fee increase is not merely a financial adjustment but a strategic step to ensure the efficiency, security, and accessibility of the Wisconsin Court System. "It's not a profit-making venture, but it is a venture that has costs, and unfortunately, costs are going up. But the fees are not exorbitant. It comes with big benefits because it affords us extreme convenience. CCAP gives us the organization, the access, and ease of filing necessary for smooth court operation."

Judge Ramirez praised CCAP's proactive approach to mitigating evolving cybersecurity threats and ensuring that attorneys can navigate the legal landscape with ease and confidence. The fee increase will fortify CCAP's ability to support legal professionals and reinforce Wisconsin's position as a pioneer in case management systems designed to meet the unique needs of its legal community.

Reflecting on the Progress

Looking back at the evolution of eFiling in Wisconsin, significant strides have been made to embrace technological advancements and enhance the judicial process. The adoption of eFiling in Wisconsin courts represents a transformative shift that has redefined service delivery and convenience for legal professionals and court users alike. The continued expansion of eFiling services, the commitment to cybersecurity, and the careful maintenance of the mandatory eFiling system underscores Wisconsin's dedication to fostering a modern, efficient, and accessible court system.

For more information about Wisconsin's eFiling system, including tools such as tutorials, videos, FAQ documentation, and access to customer service representatives, visit <https://www.wicourts.gov/ecourts/efilecircuit/index.jsp>. **WL**

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