



MICHIGAN COURTS NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Report Urges Action on Statewide E-filing to Improve Customer Service and Increase Efficiency

LANSING, MI, August 21, 2014 – The State Court Administrative Office (SCAO) released a report today from the National Center for State Courts (NCSC), recommending that Michigan move ahead with a user-funded statewide e-filing system that would improve service and increase efficiency. This initiative is the next step in technological advancement for Michigan courts and may someday result in an entirely paperless court system – providing Michigan residents with faster and better service.

With the system recommended by the NCSC, court customers could file anytime, anywhere with a single username and password. Court operations would become more efficient because of reductions in resources needed to receive and manage paper files. In the report, e-filing experts urge that the state provide the basic framework—the brain and spine—of the e-filing system, including a no-cost, basic e-filing application. More sophisticated, value-added applications would be available from private vendors for a fee. This approach creates a competitive incentive for providers to develop additional features that result in improved service to their customers.

In making their recommendation, the NCSC experts analyzed several alternative approaches and how they fit with the states' judicial system. Of those alternatives, for example, they found that Michigan's complicated system of 244 local trial courts, 165 different funding sources, and differing computer systems makes a centralized e-filing system like the federal judiciary virtually impossible. Of particular concern was the fact that imposing a single system would be prohibitively expensive and could delay the benefits of e-filing.

To both develop and fund the e-filing system on an ongoing basis, the NCSC recommended an increase in the filing fees paid by court users when initiating civil cases. The benefit of this approach is that it fairly spreads the cost of e-filing across all court users who file civil cases with exceptions for the indigent and governmental agencies, who will continue to file free of charge. Moreover, the revenue generated by this approach is directly related to the actual cost of building and maintaining the system.

Going forward, SCAO will be working with the Michigan Legislature on specific measures to authorize and fund the statewide e-filing system so implementation could begin in 2015.

The NCSC report reflects input from more than 60 stakeholders who attended a workshop at the Hall of Justice in Lansing in April and the comments from more than 1,000 interested parties who replied to an internet-based survey. The report also includes an extensive review of the experiences of other states in developing or implementing e-filing systems.

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Editor's Note: The NCSC report is available [here](#).
A detailed question and answer document is available [here](#).