The Frequent Filer

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Autumn 2013

This October marks our one year anniversary in the new Cedar Rapids courthouse. If you haven't yet had an opportunity to visit our new home, we encourage you to take a tour as soon as your schedule allows. It's a beautiful building, and we'd love to show it to you! One of the greatest features of our new home is the technological options available in the courtroom. This edition of The Frequent Filer spotlights the state of the art technology you'll find at your fingertips in the courtrooms, along with suggestions on when you might use it. We'll also discuss some filing errors we've seen recently and how to correct those, and will pass along some more of our handy tips and tricks to make your filing experience as successful as possible. Good luck, and as always, be careful out there!

Matrix Requirements

If you haven't reviewed the Matrix Requirements on our website recently, please take a moment to do so (you can access the requirements here). Addresses are updated annually the first of every year, and any time the Clerk's Office is notified of a change thereafter. Clerk's Office staff have seen several outdated addresses appearing on matrices lately, and we've also been contacted by some entities asking for assistance in getting our filing community to use the correct address. To ensure that required parties receive timely notice of your case information, please ensure that you check the Matrix Requirements regularly and update your records accordingly.

Questions or comments about this issue of The Filer? Contact us via email (training@ianb.uscourts.gov) or by phone at 319-286-2200.

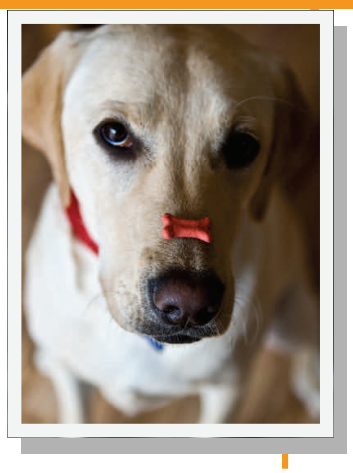
COURTROOM TECHNOLOGY

IOWA NORTHERN'S SPOTLIGHT SERIES

If you've had the pleasure of attending a court proceeding in the new federal courthouse, you have likely noticed that our new courtroom is a substantial upgrade from our old space at Plaza 425. We now have several technology-related options available for use, including:

- **Projector and ceiling mounted screen:** Used to display video and images from many sources
- **Two Digital Document Cameras:** Allow for easy projection of images onto the large projection screen and all courtroom monitors. When might you use this? Consider putting a page from one of your large exhibit binders on the document camera to allow all parties in the courtroom to easily see the document in question.
- **Evidence presentation monitors:** Located on the bench, the witness stand, and both attorney tables, these monitors allow for easy viewing of any evidence presented. They also have an annotation feature which allows an individual to draw, point and highlight any document that appears on the monitors and screen. These markups and comments can be saved and recalled for future use, if necessary.
- **HDMI and VGA Video Connections:** Located on both attorney tables, laptops can be connected to these cables for easy projection of evidence. Got an iPad? You can connect that, too - just give us a call first, as you'll need to provide the proper dongle.
- **Wireless Headsets:** Available for use by hearing impaired individuals and interpreters.
- **Telephonic Interpreter System:** Used to connect a telephonic interpreter to the defendant/witness and the court audio system during court proceedings.
- **Lavaliere Wireless Microphones:** For use by attorneys during proceedings, giving you freedom of movement in the courtroom (**Handy Tip #1:** If you're wearing a lavaliere mic and you lean over and whisper to your client, we can still hear you. **Handy Tip #2:** Make sure you remove your lavaliere mic before heading to the restroom….'nuff said!).
- **Teleconference System:** Calls can be placed to/from the courtroom; used for remote witnesses, telephonic interpreters and attorney conferences (requires a special motion to the court).
- **Video conference System:** Used to connect the courtroom to other sites with video and audio. Can be used for conducting court hearings, as well as allowing witnesses to appear via video (requires a special motion to the court).

If you're interested in using any of the technology mentioned above, contact the Clerk's Office and ask to speak to Becky. She'll answer any questions you may have about the equipment, and can also arrange to meet with you prior to a court matter to test your equipment and advise you of any special requirements that may apply to your presentation.



Deconsolidate and Wait:

The Value of Patience

For those rare occasions when you need to file a deconsolidation of a joint case for the purpose of converting one debtor to another chapter, please note that this should be done in a **three step process:**

1) File your Motion for Deconsolidation (a.k.a. bifurcation), pay the fee (if appropriate) and submit your proposed order

2) Wait for the court to grant your motion and deconsolidate the case

3) File the Conversion in the appropriate case and pay the conversion fee (if appropriate)

Some attorneys file a Motion to Deconsolidate and then (in an impressive burst of efficiency!) immediately file a Notice of Conversion, before the Court has had an opportunity to review and rule on the Motion to Deconsolidate. When a Notice of Voluntary Conversion is filed *prior* to the Court ruling on the deconsolidation motion, the case automatically converts. This complicates matters behind the scenes in CM/ECF because cases appear as the wrong chapter, filing fees get paid in the wrong case, and a large amount of background cleanup is required. This is especially true when the converting debtor is going to be assigned a new case number.

Filing your deconsolidation and then waiting for the Court to rule on your motion before filing a conversion ensures a smoother and cleaner transition. We certainly respect efficiency, but appreciate your patience when it comes to bifurcations. Remember: Deconsolidate, then Wait!

TOP 5 FILING ERRORS

AND HOW TO FIX 'EM!

Over 2000 filings are docketed into the Northern District of Iowa Bankruptcy Court's CM/ECF system by attorneys every month (that's a lot!). To ensure the integrity of these filings, each and every document is carefully quality controlled by Clerk's Office staff. When errors are found, the Clerk's Office contacts the attorney (maybe you've gotten one of these calls?), to advise of the error and any corrective actions that must be taken. To help you avoid future errors - and those dreaded calls - we've compiled a list of the Top Five Filing Errors, along with tips on what you can do to prevent them from happening in future filings.

1. Incorrect Docket Event Selected

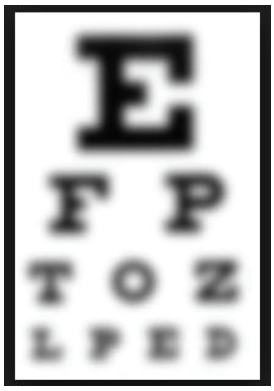
We get it...this one happens to the best of us. Sometimes it happens because you're in a hurry and you accidentally select the wrong event, other times it happens because it's an unusual document and you have no idea which event you should select, so you just pick one and hope for the best. Problem is, choosing the wrong event can cause "behind the CM/ECF scenes" problems for your case. It can set deadlines and flags that shouldn't be set, and create associations that shouldn't be in your case. To help minimize this issue, we recommend double checking to make sure that you have chosen the correct event before filing your document. Along those same lines, please do not use the Generic Motion/ Application event if there is another, more appropriate docket event available. If you feel like you've tried everything and are still unsure about the best docket event to use for a particular filing, please do not hesitate to call the Clerk's Office for assistance before you file. We're open Monday through Friday from 8 AM - 4:30 PM and are happy to assist with any filing questions you may have. You can reach our Cedar Rapids office at 319-286-2200 and our Sioux City office at 712-233-3939.

You can also use the Search Feature in CM/ECF to help you find the proper docket event for your filing. Not familiar with our Search Feature? Check out the August 12th, 2012 Edition of The Frequent Filer for the full details on this useful option.

2. Wrong Document Uploaded

This is an easy mistake to make, and we've all done it....you're in a hurry, trying to finish up a filing before the end of the day, and you attach the wrong .PDF to a docket event. The best way to minimize the chances of this happening? When browsing for your document, take the time to always right click and open the document to be assured you are attaching the correct document. Taking the extra few seconds to do this will save you several minutes of headache (and a call from the Clerk's Office) down the road. And hey! As long as we're on the subject of documents...

3. Poor Document Quality



When scanning documents to be electronically filed, make sure that the document is positioned to allow your scanner to capture an image of the printed side of the document (not the blank side), and that the final scanned image is *clear, legible and right side up.* We've seen a large number of documents lately where the image quality was so poor that we deemed them not legible. In these cases, the attorney's office is contacted and a new, clearer image is requested. To minimize this problem, please be certain that you verify the quality of your scanned images before uploading them into CM/ECF. Take a look at your scanned document: can **you** read it easily? Keep this in mind: if you have to squint to see it, if you have to rotate it to see it, or enlarge it to 400% because your scanner somehow shrunk it, or if you just generally can't make heads or tails of the document, it's NOT legible and shouldn't be filed.

A couple of other handy tips regarding document quality: the ideal setting for your scanner is **300 pixels per inch (ppi)**. This setting meets the requirements set forth by the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), as it best supports archival preservation. In addition, the maximum file size setting for CM/ECF is **3 MB**. Documents larger than 3 MB will be rejected by CM/ECF. If this happens to you, simply split your .pdf into smaller segments.

4. A.K.A.'s and DBA's Not Added at Case Opening

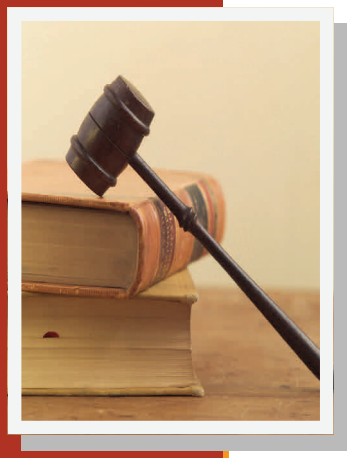
Although you may have taken care to ensure that the a.k.a./dbas were listed on the petition, you still need to enter them into CM/ECF when opening a new case to ensure that they appear on the docket. If you use the "Open a BK Case" event, you'll need to manually enter the A.K.A./DBA's by clicking the "Alias" button on the party information screen. If you use Case Upload, your software should automatically enter the A.K.A./DBA's for you (assuming initial data input into your software). If your software is supposed to upload the A.K.A./DBA's for you and isn't, please contact your software provider.

5. Using Another Attorney's Login

We can't stress this one enough here in the Clerk's Office! Although we understand the temptation to use your partner's login (we know what you're thinking... "It's so easy, and come on, it can't be that much of a big deal, can it?" Trust us...it IS a big deal. Really big.). Attorney logins are assigned to individuals, and your login constitutes your signature in the world of electronic filing. You wouldn't put your partner's signature above your personal signature block, and you should never use their login for cases that are assigned to you. ECF logins are not interchangeable and should not be treated as such.

In addition, using another attorney's login creates association problems in the background of CM/ECF, as attorneys become incorrectly associated with parties and cases. **Always, always, always use your own login and password.** Sharing is great, and we're all for it here at the Clerk's Office, just not when it comes to your ECF logins. If you can't find your ECF password, drop an email to the court's training inbox (training@ianb.uscourt.gov), share your pain, and we'll issue you a new one, no questions asked....not even "So, you doing anything fun this weekend?"

Chambers Chatter



When submitting proposed orders to the Clerk's Office, please ensure that the language "Dated and Entered:" appears on your proposed order, above the signature line. Although there are many variations on this wording (And it is so ordered, Ordered and Entered, Dated, etc.), both Chief Judge Collins and Judge Kilburg's chambers prefer that all orders state "Dated and Entered:" as shown below (don't forget to leave enough space for the appropriate judge's signature):

Dated and Entered: _____

_____

Thad J. Collins, Chief Bankruptcy Judge

Paul J. Kilburg, Bankruptcy Judge

(Choose appropriate judge for your case; do NOT list both names)

We thank you in advance for your assistance with this matter. If you have any questions about this process, please contact the Clerk's Office at 319-286-2200 or 712-233-3939.

What'd We Miss?

If you have topics or questions you'd like to see covered in future editions of The Frequent Filer, we'd love to hear from you! Email us at the address shown below and we'll do our best to address your topic in a future edition of The Filer.

Have a spooktacular October!

TRAINING@IANB.USCOURTS.GOV