To: Members of the Florida Courts E-Filing Authority Board

From: Bob Inzer, Clerk

Subject: Consistency in E-filing Presentation

Date: August 12, 2013

My purpose in writing this memo is to frame the issues and inform the discussion we will be having on achieving consistency on the portal, not to support or object to any specific solution. Let me see if I can first provide some background and then provide some information you may find helpful in your deliberations.

For the past two years the Florida Courts E-Filing Authority Board (Board) has discussed the need for a consistent "look and feel" for each county on the central portal. As a matter of fact, I raised this issue in the fall of 2011, when there were only 4 or 5 clerks on the central portal, and suggested at that time that we develop a consistent model for clerks to use. The Board referred this issue to the Best Practices Committee where a model was developed that has since been adopted.

As attorneys have migrated from paper to e-filing, they have routinely raised the concern about the lack of consistency. At the last Florida Court Clerks and Comptrollers (FCCC) meeting, this issue was raised by the Chief Justice as one of the concerns by the judiciary. It has been on our agenda for the past couple of meetings without resolution or informed discussion. We voted at our last meeting to support consistency, but without defining what that consistent look and feel would be. We also directed staff to agenda this for our next meeting and to provide us an overview of the differences among counties. Since most of us are not attorneys, we do not have the opportunity to see how the portal functions for other clerks and only know what the portal looks like in our county.

In making our decision, I believe we should have two objectives. First, we should endeavor to make the experience for our customers as convenient as possible. Second, we need to be mindful that every year for the past five years, clerks have operated with fewer and fewer staff resources, including this year. There is no reason to believe that this trend is ending and as stewards of the public's money, we need to strive for as much efficiency as we can achieve. At times, these two objectives may be in conflict

and our difficulty will be in achieving the right balance. A simple analogy may help frame our thoughts: Many remember when we moved to self-service gasoline stations. At first, stations offered both full-service and self-service, and customers overwhelmingly chose self-service. Eventually stations migrated to a total self-service model. In spite of dire predictions of problems, virtually everyone learned to cope and we have few problems today pumping our own fuel. E-filing may just behave the same way!

While I did not serve on the Best Practices Committee, it is my understanding that the committee developed its recommendations based upon ease of use for the filers, and tried to guide the filers in a logical decision-making process that would minimize the time and effort required to make their election. The easier we make the application to work for them the fewer errors they are likely to make.

The best practice breaks down the difficulty of identifying the type of document through a series of filters. For new cases, on the "case information" tab, filers first identify the division type, case type, case subtype, and then on the "documents tab" identify the document group and then the document type. For existing cases, filers identify the division type and case number on the "case information tab," and then follow the above steps on the "documents tab." This series of logically-tiered choices breaks down the process into steps that reduce the chance for errors. In each of these choices, filers may only make the next selection consistent with their prior decisions. For example, if filers select family law as the case type, only "correct" choices would be available for the document group and document type. The filer in this family law example would never have the option of choosing a petition for administration in a probate case.

Here is another example of the tiers recommended in the best practice. As the filer makes each choice, the choices in the next tier are narrowed down to only those which are appropriate. This design reduces the number of choices at each level, thus making the process easier and reducing errors.

NEW CASES				
Division Type	**Case Type**	**Case Subtype**	**Document Group**	**Document Type**
Domestic Relations	Name Change	Name Change – adult, minor, other	Petitions	Petition for Change of Name
Circuit Civil	Real Property/Mortgage Foreclosure	Mortgage Foreclosure – commercial, 250,000 or more	Complaints & Statements of Claim	Complaint for Mortgage Foreclosure – value of $250,000 or more

EXISTING CASES		
Division	**Document Group**	**Document Type**
County Civil (County Civil)	Motions	Motion to Dismiss
Probate (Mental Health)	Certificates	Physician's Certificate
Dependency	Notices	Parent's Notice of Reservation of Rights

We modified our information on the portal to conform the Leon County page to the best practice. Since we did, we have seen a significant reduction in the errors made by filers. By using a logical, tiered decision matrix as set forth in the best practice, filers are less confused and the low number of mistakes provides evidence. To quantify this statement, I had my employees keep track of the number and types of e-filing mistakes. The results are listed below.

**LEON COUNTY FILER ERROR RATE DATA COLLECTED
FOR THE TWO WEEK PERIOD
JULY 29 THROUGH AUGUST 9, 2013**

	New Cases	Existing Cases	Overall
# of documents	1,180	5,246	6,426
Overall Errors Actual/ Rate	25/2.1%	118/2.2%	143/2.2%
Docket Code Errors Actual Rate	8/0.7%	97/1.8%	105/1.6%
Case Type Errors Actual/Rate	5/0.4%	0/0%	5/0.1%
Case Number Errors Actual/Rate	0/0%	21/0.4%	21/0.3%
Parties Errors Actual/Rate	12/1%	0/0%	12/0.2%

As you can see the number of errors is very low and this has greatly improved both the filer accuracy and our efficiency. It is much more efficient for us to review and correct this low number of errors than it would be to perform all of the data entry. As to accuracy, I remember at the last meeting, there were clerks suggesting that they were experiencing a 50% error rate. There is no reason to believe that the attorneys in Leon County are smarter than other counties (other than we have a higher percentage of Seminoles). Therefore, a higher level of errors probably has more to do with how individual counties have set up their page on the portal and possibly the training provided to attorneys and their staffs.

I'm hopeful that this statistical information is helpful as we move through our deliberations.

cc: Mr. Ken Kent
      Ms. Beth Allman