



NEW HAMPSHIRE  
JUDICIAL BRANCH



# NH e-Court

Capital Budget Presentation

June 22, 2020



# Overview

*Nationwide narrative on e-Filing: "It's about Access to Justice."*

- NH **leads the nation** in mandatory "End-to-end" electronic filing for attorneys and self-represented litigants
- The NH e-Court Program is **nationally recognized** by:
  - National Center for State Courts
  - National Association of Court Administrators
  - Conference of State Court Administrators
  - Institute for the Advancement of the American Legal System
  - Self-represented Litigation Network
- MA, ME, VT, HI, MI and other jurisdictions have reached out to the NHJB for information on **how to successfully implement e-filing.**



## NH e-Court: Steady Progress/Consistent Success

- Statewide Mandatory e-Filing for Attorneys and Self-represented Litigants:
  - Small Claims – **July 2014**
  - Guardianship – **June 2015**
  - Estates – **May 2017**
- Remote Case Access Portal – **December 2017**
- NH Supreme Court - Mandatory Attorney e-filing – **August 2018**
- NH Superior Court - Mandatory e-filing for all Attorney and Self-represented Litigant civil cases – **September 2018**
- NH Superior Court – Mandatory e-filing for attorneys criminal cases – **September 2019**
- NH Supreme Court: Mandatory Self-represented litigant, non-inmate e-filing – **January 2020**
- NH Circuit Court – Mandatory e-filing for attorneys and self-represented litigants – selected civil case types – **February 2020**



# Re-tooling the Environment for the Future

<b>Public Wi-Fi Internet Migration</b>	Migrating from Comcast to FirstLight for Public Wi-Fi to increase bandwidth available for the public/guest Wi-Fi
<b>SSL Tracking System</b>	SSL Certificate Renewal management system, security verification of all SSL certificates passing through Internet
<b>Network Performance Monitoring</b>	Network performance, increased detection and response times for outages
<b>OCR Level One</b>	Optical Character Recognition for Odyssey e-filed documents
<b>FirstLight VOIP</b>	Upgrading to FirstLight VOIP, replaced Consolidated VOIP services
<b>VCS and VCSE Migration to Virtual Appliance</b>	Replaced Cisco Video Conferencing Server with virtual appliance
<b>Barracuda VPN Migration</b>	Replaced unsupported VPN appliance with new Cisco VPN firewalls
<b>ForcePoint Web Tuning/SSL Decryption</b>	Web filtering and SSL packet inspection for malicious code and URLs
<b>Odyssey Portal Rollback Plan</b>	Odyssey Portal recovery and restore procedures for business continuity planning
<b>Network Refresh</b>	Replacement of all network equipment across the Judicial Branch. 100% vendor supported and current systems. Included enhanced security features and improved Wi-Fi coverage in court buildings.
<b>Cyber Security Manager Position</b>	FTE dedicated to Cyber Security and IT Compliance
<b>WebEx for Courts</b>	Upgraded video conferencing units to latest supported operating systems and integrated WebEx capabilities across the Judicial Branch



## Electronic Case Volume Continues to Grow

- Circuit Court – e-Filing volume since 2014:
  - 100,528
- Superior Court Civil e-Filing volume since September, 2018:
  - 11,245
- Superior Court Criminal e-Filing volume since September, 2019:
  - 6,076

(total cases filed as of 6/16/20)



## NH e-Court by the Numbers: The Impact of e-Court

- One Example: NH Supreme Court
  - Attorney e-Filing: Launched on August 6, 2018; Expanded to include self-represented parties on January 1, 2020.
  - Since Launch:
    - Over 10,800 e-filings processed
    - With only attorney e-filing in 2019, 50% of 2019 appeals were completely e-filed cases;
    - 36% had at least one e-filer and one paper filer; and
    - 14% were completely paper filed.
  - In 2019, when the number of new appeals increased by 7%, the partial transition to e-filing was accompanied by a 6% reduction in the time from appeal filing to appeal closing.
  - In 2020, with the inclusion of self-represented parties, but with COVID restrictions on use of public libraries and computer kiosks, we have only a 4% excusal/exemption rate.



## NH e-Court Impacts People Too

I'd like to provide my experience and feedback using New Hampshire's Electronic Case Filing. My firm handles a high volume of creditor side litigation throughout New England and Pennsylvania. I manage the firm's litigation in three states with e-file capabilities: New Hampshire, Massachusetts and Vermont.

New Hampshire's user-friendly system, with uncomplicated template forms and readily available user assistance, is the gold-standard for a state's conversion to e-filing at all court levels. The operational advantages to my firm when using electronic filing include:

- cost savings (paralegal efficiency, file storage, postage, paper and ink);
- ease of tracking and accessing my case dockets;
- almost instant access to new filings and no "lost filings"; and
- quick response time to a client's request for case update.

**Additionally, I see a higher rate of pro se party participation with New Hampshire's electronic filing system as compared to Massachusetts and Vermont. I believe this is a result of New Hampshire's ease of access to pleading templates, user assistance and lack of e-file usage fee. I also believe pro se litigants have less anxiety when able to electronically respond to lawsuits versus walking into a courthouse. As a result, I'm able to work directly with pro se litigants to resolve a large number of cases by way of settlement.**

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this feedback. My practice has benefited greatly from New Hampshire's Electronic Case Filing System.

Sincerely,

Erin M. Reczek, Esq.

Ratchford Law Group, P.C.



# NH e-Court Supports Business Efficiency

*I am writing in support of the e-filing system used in the NH Superior court. In my opinion, **this has been a significant improvement in the way we practice law at my firm. It is cost effective and saves time.** It is user friendly and our staff appreciate the rapid response from the court staff if the filing is incomplete or deficient for some reason. **Although the recent court closures due to COVID 19 have slowed down many areas of my practice, we are still able to file pleadings and get prompt feedback from the court.** I anticipate that once things get back to “normal” we will see a significant increase in our use of e-filing. Thank you for your attention to this matter.*

*Sincerely,*

*Michael P. Rainboth*





## *The transition had begun...*

- In 2018, NHJB recognized:
  - We must pro-actively move from focusing strictly on e-filing alone to building a complete **online business model** that NH citizens expect from their government and other business entities
  - This paradigm shift presents **significant challenges** that impact the operations, staffing, budgets, and infrastructure of the NHJB



## *...and it continues today!*

- During this time of the **Coronavirus pandemic**, the need for “progressive technology solutions” has never been more apparent.
- Without NH e-Court, NHJB ***would have struggled to continue operations as an essential service*** when emergency orders were issued.
- The public’s **legal needs will increase** substantially as a result of the pandemic’s impact on families, finances, housing, healthcare, and more.



# Next Generation NH e-Court

- NH e-Court 2.0
  - Maintain Critical Systems: Update systems for stability and security
  - Innovate: Solve critical problems for people receiving court services using proven technology solutions:
    - Requesting a lawyer
    - Accessing case information
    - Paying fines
    - Receiving user-friendly customer service and support
  - Strategize: Provide robust solutions for security and confidentiality of online case information required by complex case types as they move to the online world.
    - Filing electronically with ease: Family/Marital, Landlord-Tenant, etc.)



## Update: Savings in the Operating Budget

- NH e-Court has achieved planned savings in terms of operating budget dollars for positions in the Circuit Court
  - Through FY2020, there have been 17.27 FTE position reductions as a result of NH e-Court efficiencies
  - This has resulted in cumulative avoided costs in excess of \$3.23 MM
  - Additional savings are expected from cost avoidance:
    - Eliminate additional document storage costs, fees to digitize paper records, printing, and reduce costs for paper and postage



## Update: Savings in the Operating Budget

- Current analysis reveals ***TRANSITION has a direct operating budget cost impact:***
  - Increased overhead while both paper-based and electronic cases must be processed;
  - Electronic filing requires more complex systems that are created and managed by technically oriented subject matter experts:
    - Increasing staffing costs for technical resources: IT has held its positions (head count) to support NH e-Court at a constant level and has absorbed the impact that an expanding e-Court Program has had on the department.



## Update: Savings in the Operating Budget

- Current analysis reveals *TRANSITION has a direct operating budget cost impact (continued)*:
  - Increasing vendor costs – for product licenses and technical support -- Tyler has announced it will increase its rates by 3% effective July 1, 2020
  - Specialized resources required: Cyber-security experts, database administrators, etc. -- IT has hired a Cybersecurity Manager as of 1/31/20; due to current economic conditions there are no immediate plans to hire a database administrator



## NHJB Capital Appropriation Request – FY22/23

- Seeking \$1.4 million in capital funding for the following NH e-Court projects:
  - Online payment portal
  - Request for a lawyer web application
  - Chat Bots (24 x 7 Customer Service)
  - Enterprise Review Queue (automated case processing workflow)
  - Identity Management/Single Sign On
  - Implementing confidentiality and security solutions
  - e-Filing for additional case types, for example: Divorce, juvenile, landlord/tenant, etc.