

## **SENATE COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY**

Hon. Thomas (Tim) Owens, Chairman  
Hon. Jeff King, Vice Chairman  
Hon. David Haley, R.M. Member

February 16<sup>th</sup>, 2012  
9:30 a.m.  
Room 548-S

Chief Judge Thomas E. Foster  
Tenth Judicial District  
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### **TESTIMONY** **IN SUPPORT OF SB 425**

Thank you, Mr. Chairman and this honorable committee for extending the opportunity to present written testimony in support of SB 425. I am Thomas E. Foster, Chief Judge of the Tenth Judicial District. I urge this Committee to support the Judicial Branch budget request and I specifically urge special funding for the establishment of a statewide electronic file system and a statewide electronic filing system. E-filing court documents and storing court files electronically is the most economic and efficient way to manage court information. E-files and e-filing will result in dramatic savings for both the state court budget and for local county court

budgets. In the Tenth District we have been using e-files exclusively since 2006. My predecessor, Chief Judge Steve Tatum, convinced our Johnson County judges to forgo 'paper files' in 2006. At that time we began scanning the paper pleadings into the electronic court file and shredded the paper. The savings by going paperless became evident immediately. I will describe the immediate savings related to this below.

During 2011, we started 'optional' e-filing in civil cases and we will begin e-filing for criminal and juvenile cases soon. We expect e-filing to become mandatory. With the advent of e-filing we are starting to recognize another significant level of savings.

**Savings from going paperless.** The County no longer needs to buy 50,000 file folders @ .80 each (\$42,000.00 per year), 500 storage boxes (\$2,000), microfilm machines (\$2,000), and file cabinets systems (\$5,000). The County no longer needs to pay \$25,000 per year for file storage rental space and file retrieval. We are currently trying to quantify the personnel (state) savings related to eliminating the need to physically file and move paper documents and files throughout the court system. I am confident that the savings in personnel time by using e-files is more than \$170,000.00 per year. This is a \$250,000 savings per year related to Johnson County cases alone. A statewide e-file system will also save substantial amounts throughout the rest of the state each year.

**Savings from going to e-filing.** Adding the e-filing component to the e-file system will result in another layer of savings which we are currently trying to quantify. I believe that our court clerks will be at least 25% more efficient. Implementing statewide e-filing will mean similar additional efficiencies statewide each year. There are additional savings that district attorneys, lawyers, police departments, sheriffs, the public and other court related agencies can recognize as well. They will save on gas, time, parking, and courthouse space. The progress of cases and court dates and other case activities can be followed without calling the court clerk or DA's receptionists.

The sooner the state court adopts an electronic system, the sooner the state and local court budgets will realize long term savings which compound each year. The upfront costs will lead to significant savings down the road. I encourage you to provide immediate funding for a statewide e-file and e-filing system that will pay for itself many times over.

Sincerely,

*Thomas E Foster*

**Thomas E. Foster**

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