

E-News



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One of the important goals of our professional association is to improve the standard of practice in our state by enhancing the ability of our members to practice law in a professional and efficient manner. To that end, the Board of Commissioners created the Electronic Filing Task Force, the first venture of its kind in the country. This is the joint effort of the Board of Commissioners' Member Services Committee, chaired by Secretary Scott Brinkmeyer and Lisa Allen-Kost, of the State Bar; the Membership Services Committee of the State Bar, chaired by Miriam Blanks-Smart; the Washtenaw County Bar Association; and the Washtenaw County Circuit Court under the leadership of Judge Donald Shelton and Chief Judge Timothy Conners.

The purpose of this important task force is to provide a pilot program in Washtenaw County for the development of a program for the safe, secure, and cost-effective electronic transfer of information from attor-

neys' offices to the courts, clients, and other attorneys. Washtenaw County has agreed to partner with the State Bar by being the test area for this effort. In this way, a system can be developed, tested, and debugged before it is rolled out statewide for use by all lawyers and judges.

The State Bar is also working with the State Court Administrator's Office to establish the technical, court rule, legal, and other aspects of this system to make it an integral and "official" part of our judicial system.

There is no question that the information age is here. The State Bar, on behalf of its 34,000 members, is in a leadership role in this important endeavor, so that all of our members and those we serve can reap the many advantages of secure document transfer.

We, in the State Bar leadership, strive to be market-driven to provide as much value to our members as possible. Our organization's obligation is to assure equal access for all citizens to our justice system. We also strive to assure that our services are being provided in the most efficient and highest possible professional level.

The Electronic Filing Task Force is an effort where both of these important goals are

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joined. On the one hand, our members will have the opportunity to "officially" use technical advantages available to practice in a more cost-effective and efficient manner by the electronic transfer of information such as pleadings, correspondence, and other documents. On the other hand, this should allow us to pass on these advantages to our clients through the economies gained and by using the time saved to improve even further our professional competency.

The plan is for this task force to be in existence for approximately six months. After that, we project that the various interests will have a completed package to present to the profession and be ready to take the next step.

Not to be outdone and in conjunction with the efforts of the State Bar, the Michigan Supreme Court, under the leadership of Chief Justice Maura Corrigan, has appointed Justice Robert Young as Technology Subcommittee chair of the Michigan Supreme Court. Scott Brinkmeyer, our secretary, is a member of that task force and will be coordinating the efforts in an attempt to work out the technology component of the Michigan court system.

It seems to me that the challenge of the information age has provided another opportunity for the courts, the organized Bar, and other constituent groups to work together in a common effort to attack a common problem, with the goal of making a more efficient justice system in our state.

In my opinion, these initiatives bode well for the future of our relationships, our profession, and our justice system. I am confident it will serve as a model well into the future for other such cooperative efforts. ♦

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