

**Electronic Public Access Public User Group Meeting
July 15, 2025**

Electronic Public Access Public User Group Members Present:

George Basharis; Business Analyst (Attorney Advisor), Stretto; Evanston, IL
Lillian Leona Frank; State Government (Bankruptcy) Attorney; Indianapolis, IN
John Hawkinson; Freelance Journalist, Cambridge Day; Cambridge, MA
Debbie Laskin Oppermann; Senior Paralegal/Bankruptcy Technology Specialist, Young
Conaway Stargatt & Taylor, LLP; Wilmington, DE
Christopher Mayfield; Product Manager, Fitch Solutions – PacerMonitor; New York, NY
Brian Nicholas; Senior Director of Infrastructure & Cybersecurity, McCalla Raymer Leibert
Piere, LLC; Iselin, NJ
Damien Riehl; Vice President/Solutions Champion, vLEX Group; Saint Paul, MN
Anna Russell; Law Library Deputy Director, Cornell University; Ithaca, NY
Albert Russo; Standing Chapter 13 Trustee/Designee of the National Association of Chapter
Thirteen Trustees; Trenton, NJ*
Karla Westjohn; Attorney in Private Practice; Champaign, IL
Ian Wildman; Associate Managing Clerk, Weil, Gotshal & Manges LLP; New York, NY*
Michael Zuckerman; Mediator, Arbitrator, and Neutral Evaluator, JAMS; Chicago, IL

**Attended virtually*

Administrative Office of the United States Courts:

Lucien Adam	Group Chair and Chief, Programs Division, Court Services Office
Linda Melchor	Program Analyst, EPA Section, Court Services Office
Anna Marie Garcia	Chief, PACER Support Branch, Enterprise Operations Center
James Cartwright	Chief, PACER Development Branch, Case Management Systems Office
Viju Balasubramanian	Chief, Case Management Systems Office
Randall Luttenberg	Communications Specialist, Operations Division, Court Services Office
Erin Lane	Management Analyst, Office of Compliance and Risk
James Vilt	Clerk of Court, U.S. District Court for the Western District of Kentucky
Roger Jacobson	Chief, National Programs Branch, Court Services Office
Kristin Baczynski	Attorney Advisor, EPA Section, Court Services Office
Clarissa Prince	Budget Analyst, EPA Section, Court Services Office
Michael Djan	Management Analyst, EPA Section, Court Services Office

Meeting Summary

Lucien Adam, Electronic Public Access (EPA) Public User Group Chair and Division Chief within the Court Services Office, welcomed the Group members and called the kickoff meeting to order. The goal of this meeting was to provide the new members with an overview of the Judiciary's policy-making process to help them understand the framework within which the Group will operate.

EPA Public User Group and Administrative Office Overview

Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts (AO) staff and Group members reviewed the Group's [mission and scope](#): to give advice and feedback on enhancing electronic public access services (including the Case Management Modernization (CMM) effort, Case Management/Electronic Case Files (CM/ECF) system, the Public Access to Court Electronic Records (PACER) service, and the PACER Case Locator). The AO emphasized that the Judiciary is committed to seeking and implementing, where feasible, the Group's recommendations. In turn, the Group members are expected to obtain feedback from others in the user sectors they each represent.

The AO is an agency within the federal judicial branch that provides a broad range of program support services to federal courts in legislative, legal, financial, technology, management, and administrative matters. The AO provides staff support and counsel to the Judicial Conference of the United States (Judicial Conference) and its committees as they consider changes to existing policies (e.g., making search free for noncommercial users in the new case management system) as well as executing the Judicial Conference's policies (e.g., increasing the automatic PACER fee waiver from \$15 to \$30).

Judiciary Governance Overview

The AO provided an overview of the Judiciary's organization and decision-making process as well as relevant statutes, rules, and policies. The role of the Judicial Conference and its committees, the circuit judicial council and local court governance, and the AO's responsibilities were also described in detail. The Judicial Conference is the national policy-making body for the federal courts and operates through a network of committees. At a regional level, the federal court system consists of twelve geographic circuits, each being overseen by a circuit judicial council. At the local level, each federal court has day-to-day responsibility for its own judicial administration.

Federal cases are managed locally by the federal court in which the case is brought. The case is entered into the CM/ECF system, which operates in each court according to not only the Judiciary's national rules of procedure, but any applicable local rules. The management of the cases are governed by the rules and procedures that Congress and the Judiciary adopt. Through the Rules Enabling Act (28 U.S.C. §§ 2071-2077), Congress authorizes the Supreme Court to prescribe general rules of practice and procedure and rules of evidence for the federal courts.

Because the impact of rules on the practice of law in courts is so critical, any change requires meticulous analysis – at least seven stages of formal comment and review (including public commenting) – and usually takes about three years to enact. Ultimately, individual federal courts often prescribe local rules governing practice and procedure that are consistent with statute and the Federal Rules of Practice and Procedure and after notice and an opportunity for public commenting has been allowed. The need for such rules arises from the fact that courts have different case management needs based on the number and types of cases on their dockets, and the judges of each court have the discretion to manage those cases in the way they find most appropriate. As a result, there will be differences between court filings in various courts as well as the systems supporting case management.

A member asked if the EPA program engaged directly with Congress. The AO responded that the Office of Legislative Affairs is the office responsible for engaging with Congress on behalf of the AO.

EPA Program

The AO briefed the Group on the EPA program’s history and budget. The EPA program was established by the Judicial Conference in 1988 and is charged with providing public access to court information through electronic means in accordance with federal statutes, congressional directives, judiciary policies, and user needs. The program is governed by a number of legal authorities, policy-making bodies, advisory groups, and organizational imperatives. The two most important federal statutes governing the program are 28 U.S.C. § 1913 note,¹ which authorizes the Judicial Conference to charge user fees to access court information electronically, and the E-Government Act of 2002.

The EPA program offers various public access services that include but are not limited to the PACER service (includes access to CM/ECF), PACER Case Locator, courthouse public access terminals, RSS feeds, court opinions on the Government Publishing Office’s (GPO) GovInfo website, and the Multi-court Voice Case Information System (McVCIS). One of the primary missions of the program is to improve electronic public access. As part of that effort, the AO seeks continuous input from public users. It has obtained such input through three user assessments (2009, [2012](#), and [2021](#)), other surveys, and the creation of this Group. Based on the feedback received, the AO has made improvements to various of its electronic public access services.

¹ The EPA fee-authorizing statute is in the note appended to 28 U.S.C. § 1913. Thus, the statute is generally referred to as “28 U.S.C. § 1913 note.”

The EPA program relies exclusively on PACER fee revenue to fund its services.² The AO explained to the Group that, in the Judiciary's most recent budget submission to Congress, expected PACER revenue will be approximately \$142 million. Due to fee waivers and exemptions, less than two percent of PACER accounts generate more than 88 percent of the revenue. In fiscal year (FY) 2024, 84.4 percent of the active accounts had some or all their fees waived, and an additional 6.1 percent of the active accounts had exempt usage.

A member suggested that it would be helpful if the revenue information was broken down by ranges (e.g., \$0-30, \$30-\$50, \$50-\$100) and displayed using a histogram. Members asked about discussing making PACER access free or exploring the use of third-party services to provide a better search interface for free. The Group was informed that discussing the EPA Fee Schedule was not within the scope the Group's work and that the budget information was provided for informational purposes only.

Systems and Services Overview

The AO provided the Group with overviews of some of the electronic public access services the Judiciary offers to the public as follows:

- PACER website – provides general information about PACER and CM/ECF to the public, including Frequently Asked Questions, links to all the courts' CM/ECF systems, and learning aids
- PACER Account Registration and Management – allows users to register for a PACER account, manage their account, register for e-filing, manage online payment information, make PACER payments, and check PACER usage/invoices
- PACER Authentication – authenticates PACER users, including those with filing access to CM/ECF
- [PACER Case Locator \(PCL\)](#) – a national tool enabling case searches across all federal courts and provides hyperlinks to case records in the respective court's CM/ECF system
- Authentication and PCL Application Programming Interfaces (APIs) – provides a standard way to authenticate automatically and an easier way to automate PCL searches
- McVCIS – a telephone interactive voice response system that provides free general case information for all bankruptcy and some district court cases in English and Spanish via a toll-free number, (866) 222-8029
- Real Simple Syndication (RSS) feeds – a feature in CM/ECF that provides notifications of newly docketed events (either of all public documents or specific types of documents as determined by each court) that many courts have made available

² Congress directed the Judiciary to fund electronic public access services through the collection of user fees (Judiciary Appropriations Act, 1991, Pub. L. No. 101-515, Title IV, § 404, 104 Stat. 2102, and Judiciary Appropriations Act, 1992, Pub. L. No. 102-140, Title III, § 303, 105 Stat. 782).

- Opinions on the GPO’s GovInfo website – provides free access to judicial opinions from participating courts via [GovInfo.gov](https://www.govinfo.gov)
- PACER Service Center (PSC) – customer support center serving all PACER users by telephone and email with search questions, account help, and registration assistance at (800) 676-6856 or pacer@psc.uscourts.gov

A member expressed concern that there appears to be a disconnect between the courts and the PSC as sometimes they are bounced back and forth. The AO agreed to investigate and see what could be done. Another member asked if the AO tracked trends for calls. The AO responded that it did by categorizing calls.

NextGen CM/ECF Update

The AO provided the Group with an update on recent and future releases of NextGen CM/ECF. An overview of CM/ECF and general statistics was also presented. Currently, NextGen CM/ECF development is limited only to complying with law and policy changes, resolving bugs, addressing technical debt, and applying security upgrades, ensuring that resources are concentrated on the CMM effort. NextGen CM/ECF version 1.8 was released to appellate and bankruptcy courts in May 2024 and district courts in June 2024. NextGen CM/ECF version 1.9 is targeted for release in late 2025.

A member asked if case statistics broken down by state are available. The AO responded that case statistics data is available on the [Federal Judicial Caseload Statistics](https://www.uscourts.gov/federal-judicial-caseload-statistics) page of [uscourts.gov](https://www.uscourts.gov). Another member asked when will access to CM/ECF test servers be restored. The AO responded that it hopes to make national test servers for the update to NextGen CM/ECF version 1.9 available sometime in FY 2026. A member also asked if it was possible to improve updating release notes for CM/ECF. The AO agreed to work on posting release notes in a timelier manner.

Case Management Modernization Update

The AO briefed the Group on the Judiciary’s CMM effort. The goal of this effort is to develop a new case management system that is accessible, secure, and based on modern technological platforms, such as the cloud, to provide the accuracy, timeliness, and efficiency demanded by the courts and public users.

The AO is committed to delivering the new system by integrating Agile methodology with user-centered design. This process entails engaging internal and external “hands-on-keyboard” users of every type, including public users represented by this Group, to understand requirements, identify pain points, and validate business needs. The process also includes user interviews, observations, journey mapping, and the creation of low and high-fidelity mockups to get feedback from users continuously. So far, workflows have been thoroughly documented for all business processes required by each court type to manage all the varied cases that come through their courtrooms.

The proof of concept and prototyping phase focused on developing, testing, and validating potential solutions to help guide the development of the Minimum Viable Product (MVP). The pilot phase will involve the development of an MVP that is initially released only to pilot courts for specific case types. Users will continue to use NextGen CM/ECF for all other case types. More case types will be added in future incremental releases. Additionally, as the new case management system is developed, the AO will seek to adopt a layered approach that will allow the system to be adapted for local needs while maintaining judiciary-wide data standards.

The AO also informed the Group that a decision was recently made not to continue with the Unified Search project solicitation for a new PACER interface but rather to develop the new search interface within the CMM product from the beginning as part of the MVP release.³ The new approach will deliver search improvements and new features for the public in small iterations that line up with CMM MVP delivery and will benefit from the security architecture to be implemented for the CMM product. The new approach is still being discussed, so more information will be shared as it becomes available.

Members had several questions regarding what is being considered for the new case management system. Members were interested in how the Nature of Suit codes would be handled (e.g., when searching or filing will users be able to select more than one, will it be possible to change them throughout the lifecycle of a case). Other members asked if case numbers would be unique (currently, they are not) or if perhaps some kind of national unique case identification number can be adopted. Members expressed interest in seeing prototypes. The AO captured the feedback received and will share with the development teams. A member asked if there was a timeline for rollout available. The AO responded that there was not, but that it was targeting a release to pilot courts in a two-year time frame.

Upcoming PACER Releases and Initiatives

The AO provided the Group with information on the enforcement of multifactor authentication (MFA) for filers and additional upcoming security requirements aimed at strengthening system security from unauthorized access. The AO reviewed the updated password standards, which state that passwords must:

- Be 14-45 characters in length;
- Contain at least one lowercase letter, one uppercase letter, and one special character;
- Not contain any part of a user's first name, last name, username, or email address; and
- Be updated every 180 days.

³ The goal of the Unified Search project was to provide a modern, intuitive, user-friendly search interface that would replace the PACER Case Locator and CM/ECF Query and Reports functionality.

The AO will be enforcing the updated password standards on all existing PACER accounts on August 25, 2025.⁴

The AO provided the Group with some background information regarding MFA. In March 2022, the Judicial Conference reported that the Committee on Information Technology endorsed the Judiciary IT Security Task Force's recommendation to expand the use of MFA across the Judiciary. The expansion includes external facing applications such as PACER. MFA will provide an added layer of security that will help protect from cyberattacks that steal passwords, and is something many organizations have already implemented. The AO is making MFA mandatory for filers and users who have CM/ECF-level privileges (e.g., interested parties) but optional for all other PACER users (those users that have view-only access).

The AO briefed the Group on the MFA implementation plan. On May 11, MFA was soft launched, which means that MFA became available to all users. Any users interested in using MFA could begin to enroll at that time; no one was required to enroll. On August 11, the AO started a phased enforcement of MFA on all filers and users with CM/ECF-level access, randomly selecting such users to enroll in MFA if they had not already done so. While PACER-only users are not required to use MFA, they have the option to do so. The goal is to complete enforcement of MFA for all users with CM/ECF-level access by the end of 2025.⁵

Members had several questions regarding the updated password standards, particularly questioning the need to update passwords every 180 days, which is contrary to the most recent recommendations from the National Institute of Standards and Technology. Members requested that the AO provide justification for requiring users to update their password every 180 days. The AO agreed to obtain response from its Information Technology Security Office (ITSO).

Members also had many questions about MFA. They asked if the deadline for MFA was firm. The AO responded that the deadline was firm.⁶ A member asked if the AO was aware if MFA was causing issues with Pay.gov. The AO is not aware of any issues, nor do they expect any issues between MFA and Pay.gov. A member also requested if it would be possible to consider allowing a secondary email address to which one-time security codes can be sent, which will be helpful with assisting users who forget to update their email address when they change firms (users would not have access to their previous firm's email system). The AO will explore the feasibility of allowing the use of a secondary email address and, if feasible, it will be considered for a future release. A member asked if the AO would be sending an email notification warning a user of the MFA enrollment requirement. The AO is not planning on sending such notifications. Users will be notified of the MFA enrollment requirement via a prompt at the time of logging in when their account is randomly selected. A member also suggested adding links to the learning

⁴ Due to support challenges experienced because of the ongoing MFA implementation and enforcement and limited resources, the enforcement of the updated password standards on existing accounts has been temporarily delayed.

⁵ At the time of the meeting, the deadline for the completion of the MFA implementation was firm, but due to the support challenges experienced, the deadline was pushed back to sometime in the first quarter of calendar year 2026.

⁶ See footnote 4.

aids on the MFA enrollment screens. The AO agreed with the suggestion and will look to include it in a future release.

Review of Previous Group's Work

The AO reviewed the work of the previous Group, which focused on refining requirements for Case Preview, which is a new feature the AO hopes to make available in the new system. Case Preview will provide a snapshot of a case in the new search interface that will provide key case information and the most recent activity in the case without viewing the full docket report. It will help users determine if the desired case match was found, and provide a less expensive alternative to viewing the full docket report (but does not replace the existing docket report). The previous Group spent several sessions determining what data elements should be considered for the case preview for appellate (21 data elements), bankruptcy (29 data elements), adversary proceedings (25 data elements), district civil (25 data elements), and district criminal (22 data elements). Given the change in the approach for improving search, at this time the AO does not know when development for Case Preview will begin. The AO plans to engage the new Group members to assist with validating and refreshing the requirements at a later time.

The previous Group also brainstormed a preliminary list of requirements for Case Alerts. Case Alerts will allow a user to subscribe to a case and receive an alert of docket activity in the case, i.e., that a new publicly available docket entry was made. Currently, users who are not active participants in a case do not receive notice when filings are made and must monitor docket sheets or perform extra searches incurring extra charges to track activity in a case of interest.

A member asked how case preview was different from what Appellate CM/ECF provides today. The AO responded that the concept was not different, but the goal is to extend it to District and Bankruptcy courts. It was also asked why only the five most recent docket entries would be displayed since in the Appellate version the 10 most recent docket entries are displayed. The AO responded that it wants to keep cost to \$0.10. Another member stated that they would prefer to see the full docket report. The AO responded that Case Preview is not replacing the docket report but is instead providing users with a cheaper alternative. A member also suggested adding the magistrate judge to the civil case preview. A member also wondered why there is a need for Case Alerts if that is something that is currently available. The AO responded that not all courts allow all users to receive notices. The AO also hopes to provide alerts at a national level to all users. The AO asked the members if they would be interested in receiving alerts via text messages (the previous Group had no interest). Members did not express any interest.

Brainstorming Session

The Group was asked to reflect on three things that could be improved in PACER and other electronic public access services. Members came up with a total of 33 suggestions. The Group

discussed their suggestions and then each member prioritized them. Below are the top 10 suggestions as prioritized by the Group.

1. Fixing accessibility issues with PACER (8 votes)
2. Standardized national case number (7 votes)
3. Adoption of legal data standards (e.g., SALI, FOLIO) (7 votes)
4. Bulk access data (e.g., FTP) (7 votes)
5. Better coordination between the PSC and the courts (6 votes)
6. Standardize e-filing – display file name of uploaded files before hitting submit (5 votes)
7. Unified filing workflows that are consistent in all jurisdictions (5 votes)
8. Allow bulk search requests (similar to the Department of Defense SCRA's multiple records request) (4 votes)
9. Change logs for system updates (4 votes)
10. Effective reporting path for nationwide PACER outages (nights, weekends) (3 votes)

The AO will review suggestions and determine if they are feasible to accomplish financially, technically, and legally.

Open Discussion

Members discussed additional questions regarding the MFA requirements and CMM effort. A member asked what the hardest parts are for making changes at the courts. The AO responded that the CMM product will require a cultural shift since it will be different from CM/ECF, which the courts have been using for decades. Another member asked if the Public User Group was supposed to be fighting for the public. The AO responded that the EPA program was responsible for advocating for the public but looks to the Group to provide feedback and input. A couple of members reiterated their suggestion that PACER be made available free of charge. The AO reminded them that discussing the EPA Fee Schedule was outside of the scope of the Group and that electronic public access services are funded entirely through the collection of user fees. A member also suggested that there be more in-person meetings and not just the first and last meeting. A member also asked when the Group can expect the next meeting. The AO responded that the goal is to schedule the next meeting sometime in mid-October to discuss accessibility.

Next Steps

The Group will meet again by teleconference sometime in mid-October to discuss accessibility and other topics, if requested and if time permits.