

## Interim Electronic Filing and Service Rule

**(a) Scope of the Rule.** This interim electronic filing and service rule recognizes that documents in proceedings before the Supreme Court of Alabama, the Alabama Court of Criminal Appeals, and the Alabama Court of Civil Appeals may be filed, served, and preserved in an electronic format in lieu of the traditional paper format and prescribes the practices and procedures that shall be followed in connection with the filing and service of electronic documents and notices. Except for service of the record on appeal as provided in subsection (j)(3), the provisions for e-filing and e-service do not apply to parties who are proceeding pro se. The Alabama Rules of Appellate Procedure shall be fully applicable to e-filed documents to the extent those rules are not modified by this rule.

### **(b) General Provisions - Definitions.**

(1) "Appellate clerk" means the clerk of the Supreme Court of Alabama, the clerk of the Alabama Court of Criminal Appeals, or the clerk of the Alabama Court of Civil Appeals, located in Montgomery, Alabama.

(2) "Appellate court" means the Supreme Court of Alabama, the Alabama Court of Criminal Appeals, or the Alabama Court of Civil Appeals.

(3) "Appellate courts' e-filing system" ("ACES") means the system utilized by the appellate courts to accept and transmit electronic documents.

(4) "Clerk's office" means the office of the clerk of the Supreme Court of Alabama, the office of the clerk of the Alabama Court of Criminal Appeals, or the office of the clerk of the Alabama Court of Civil Appeals, located in Montgomery, Alabama.

(5) "E-document" means any document, other than an e-record, that has been e-filed in accordance with this rule.

(6) "E-file" or "e-filing" means the electronic transmission of a document to the clerk of an appellate court for the purpose of filing the document.

(7) "E-record" means a record on appeal that has been prepared, assembled, and filed with the clerk of an appellate court in an electronic format as prescribed in this rule.

(8) "E-service" or "e-served" means the electronic transmission of documents in lieu of serving such documents in hard-copy form.

(9) "E-signature" is a signature that is either affixed to or deemed to be affixed to an e-document or an e-record as prescribed in section (f) of this rule.

(10) "Filer" means the registered user whose user ID and password were used to file an e-document in an appellate court proceeding.

(11) "Hard copy" is a paper copy of an electronic document.

(12) "Portable document format" or "PDF" means a computer file format developed by Adobe Systems for reproducing a document in a manner that is independent of the application software, hardware, and operating system originally used to create the document.

(13) "Registered user" means an attorney who has properly registered with ACES as set forth in section (d) of this rule.

**(c) Authorized Users.** The following persons are authorized to use ACES to e-file documents and e-records in appellate court proceedings:

(1) attorneys licensed to practice law in Alabama;

(2) pro hac vice attorneys authorized to practice in an appellate court proceeding;

- (3) circuit, district, and juvenile court judges;
- (4) circuit, district, juvenile, and family court clerks; and
- (5) court reporters.

**(d) Registration Requirements for Attorneys.** All attorneys who opt to file e-documents in appellate court proceedings shall register with the appellate courts through ACES.

(1) *Responsibility for Keeping ACES ID and Password Secure.* No registered user shall authorize or permit anyone to use his or her ACES ID or password, except for the purpose of filing an e-document on behalf of the registered user, in which event the registered user shall be deemed to be the filer.

(2) *Responsibility for Keeping Information Current.* Registered users shall be responsible for maintaining the accuracy of the information contained on ACES, including changes in their firm name, mailing address, telephone number, fax number, and primary and secondary e-mail addresses.

**(e) Format of E-Documents.**

(1) *Document Format.* All e-documents shall be formatted in accordance with the Alabama Rules of Appellate Procedure governing the formatting of documents filed in appellate court proceedings, except as modified by this rule.

(2) *Document Resolution, Size, Etc.* All e-documents shall be filed in a PDF format that has been saved with a resolution of 200 DPI (dots per inch) or higher. E-documents shall be saved as letter-size documents (8 ½ inches or 2550 pixels wide x 11 inches or 3300 pixels long) with black text on white background. E-documents shall not contain any embedded files, scripts, tracking tags, and/or any type of executable files. The filer

shall also be responsible for removing any confidential information that may be embedded in the electronic document (metadata) before it is e-filed or e-served on an opposing party or a court official. All e-documents shall be created by directly converting the word-processor document into a PDF document, unless the original document either did not exist in an electronic format or the original electronic word-processing document is no longer available to the filing party, in which event a paper copy of the document can be scanned into a PDF format.

(3) *Colored Covers and Binding on E-Documents and Hard Copies Thereof.* The provisions of the Alabama Rules of Appellate Procedure prescribing the color of covers for specified documents and how certain paper documents are to be bound shall not apply to e-documents, but shall remain in effect for the hard copies of those documents as provided in subsection (h)(2) of this rule.

(4) *Attachments.* If a registered user desires to include appendices or exhibits with an e-document, the appendices or exhibits shall be appended to the e-document as attachments to the e-document and filed in a PDF format in the same manner prescribed herein for the principal document.

(A) Those attachments that cannot be e-filed in a PDF format as prescribed herein shall be forwarded to the appellate court and to all the parties in the case in paper form within 24 hours of the date the principal document is e-filed, unless the day following the filing date for the principal document is a Saturday, Sunday, or legal holiday, in which event the attachments shall be forwarded by no later than the end of the next day that is not a Saturday, Sunday, or legal holiday. Regular mail of the United States Postal Service is a sufficient means for delivering paper copies of attachments that cannot be e-filed in a PDF format. Upon final disposition of the proceeding, the appellate court may dispose of all copies of paper attachments that were not e-filed with the principal document.

(B) A notice regarding the inability to e-file the attachments shall be appended to the end of the e-document and a copy of that notice shall also accompany all copies of the principal document that are served on the parties and any court officials in the case, whether the principal document is served electronically or in paper form. (See Sample Form A entitled "Notice Regarding Attachments.")

**(f) Electronic Signatures.** An e-signature is created by typing "s/" followed by the name of the person who is signing an e-document.

(1) *E-Signatures of Registered Users.* In the event a document is e-filed by a registered user without an e-signature or containing an e-signature that is different from the user ID and password used to file the e-document, the e-document shall be deemed to contain the e-signature of the registered user whose user ID and password were used to file the e-document. In addition to the e-signature, the filer shall include his or her e-mail address, mailing address, and telephone number under the e-signature.

(2) *E-Signatures of Court Officials.* Court officials are also authorized to use e-signatures on e-filed documents, including all certificates of completion that are to be included in e-records. Appellate court officials are authorized to use e-signatures on all documents that are e-served pursuant to this rule.

(3) *Sufficiency of E-Signatures on Hard Copies of E-Filed Documents.* Unless otherwise ordered by an appellate court, the e-signature is sufficient on all hard copies of e-filed documents.

(4) *Effect of E-Signatures.* When an e-signature is affixed to a document or is deemed to be affixed to a document as provided in subsection (1), that e-signature shall have the same effect pursuant to the Alabama Rules of Appellate Procedure as a handwritten signature of the person whose name appears or is deemed to appear thereon.

(5) *Notice of Appearance.* In the event a document is

e-filed by an attorney who has not previously appeared in the proceeding in which said e-document is filed, the e-signature on the document shall operate as a notice of appearance by the filer for the party on whose behalf the e-document was filed.

(6) *Provisions for Multiple Signatories.* In the case of a signatory whose user ID and password will not be used to e-file a document, as in the case of a document requiring multiple signatures, the filer of the document shall list thereon the names of all signatories, which shall serve as the filer's attestation that each of the other signatories has concurred in the e-filing of the document. In addition to the names of all signatories, the filer shall list each signatory's e-mail address, mailing address, and telephone number.

**(g) Production of a Paper Copy of an E-Filed Document.** At any time during the pendency of an appellate court proceeding, the clerk of the appellate court in which said cause is pending may direct any signatory on an e-document to file and serve a hard copy of that document.

**(h) E-Filing and E-Service of Electronic Documents.**

(1) *When an E-filed Document Is Deemed Filed.* An e-filed document shall be deemed filed in compliance with the Alabama Rules of Appellate Procedure on the date and time the document, along with any e-filed attachments, has been successfully uploaded onto ACES. Central time shall be used to determine the filing date and time for purposes of this rule. A document is successfully uploaded on ACES when ACES has successfully received the entire document, including any e-filed attachments.

(2) *Hard Copies of Documents to be Filed.* In addition to the e-document, the filer must mail or deliver the following number of hard copies of the e-document and any attachments to the appropriate appellate court:

Supreme Court: nine (9) copies.

Court of Criminal Appeals: five (5) copies.

Court of Civil Appeals: five (5) copies.

All hard copies shall be mailed or delivered to the appropriate appellate court within 24 hours of the date the principal document is e-filed, unless the day following the filing date is a Saturday, Sunday, or legal holiday, in which event the hard copies shall be mailed or delivered by the end of the next day that is not a Saturday, Sunday, or legal holiday. The hard copies that are delivered to the appellate courts shall be accompanied by a copy of the confirmation receipt provided pursuant to subsection (h)(3) of this rule. Regular mail of the United States Postal Service is a sufficient means for delivering hard copies of e-documents to the appellate courts as provided in this rule.

(3) *Confirmation Receipt of E-Filing.* Upon the successful transmission and upload of an e-filed document, ACES shall e-serve the filer a receipt confirming the date and time that the document was filed. The confirmation receipt shall serve as proof of the filing.

(4) *Rejection of an E-Filed Document or E-Record.* In the event an appellate court rejects an e-filed document or an e-record because it does not comply with this rule or an applicable rule of the Alabama Rules of Appellate Procedure, the appellate clerk shall serve the filer or, in the event the rejection involves an e-record, the trial court clerk and the other parties with notice of the rejection. The notice shall state the reason or reasons for the rejection. The filer or the clerk of the trial court shall have 14 days from service of notice of the rejection to file and serve a corrected document or e-record, unless a different time for the filing and service of a corrected document or e-record is ordered by the appellate court.

(5) *E-Service by Counsel of Documents, Filings, Etc.* E-service of documents, motions, and other filings, as permitted by this rule, shall be considered a valid and effective means of service on attorneys and court officials and shall have the same force and legal effect

as service of a paper copy pursuant to the Alabama Rules of Appellate Procedure. E-service is effective upon the transmission of the document to any e-mail address used for legal or court business by the person being served; provided, however, that if the person attempting e-service is informed that the electronic transmission failed, the person attempting e-service shall take appropriate action to ensure that service of the e-document is completed, either electronically or otherwise. When an attorney e-serves opposing counsel of record or a court official, the certificate of service shall list the e-mail address used for such service.

(6) *E-Service by Clerk's Office.* Each appellate clerk is authorized by this rule to e-serve all notices, orders, opinions, decisions, etc., that were heretofore served in paper form, and such service on attorneys and court officials shall be deemed effective and complete upon the transmission of either the document or a hyperlink to the document that is being e-served pursuant to this rule. When e-serving court officials, appellate clerks are authorized to use the e-mail addresses maintained by the Administrative Office of Courts to communicate electronically with trial court officials or such other means of electronic communication as may be agreed upon by the appellate clerks and the trial court officials as an acceptable alternative means to perfect e-service pursuant to this rule.

**(i) Filing Fees and Costs Associated with E-Filing.**

(1) *Filing Fees and Costs.* The same fees prescribed by order of the Supreme Court for filing paper documents shall apply to e-filed documents. Such fees may be paid by credit card at the time documents are e-filed. If the filing fee is paid by credit card at the time a document is e-filed, in addition to the filing fee, the filer shall also be required to pay the applicable credit-card usage or convenience fee.

(2) *Recovery of Fees and Costs.* A prevailing party may recover credit-card usage or convenience fees associated with their use of ACES in the same manner as other costs on appeal are recoverable pursuant to Rule

35, Ala. R. App. P. Credit-card usage or convenience fees incurred through use of ACES are expenses for which counsel appointed to represent indigent defendants pursuant to Rule 24(b), Ala. R. App. P., and § 15-12-22, Code of Alabama 1975, are entitled to be reimbursed.

(3) *Waiver of Fees.* Any counsel representing a filing party may make application for waiver of the cost or filing fee associated with filing an e-document in the same manner as prescribed for making application for waiver of the cost or filing fee associated with filling a paper copy of the same document.

**(j) Assembly and Transmission of the E-Record.** Unless otherwise ordered by an appellate court, in trial court locations equipped with the hardware and software necessary to produce e-records, the clerk of the trial court shall prepare and e-file an e-record in each case appealed to an appellate court. If the original record on appeal was e-filed, all corrections or supplements to said e-record shall also be e-filed, unless otherwise directed by the appellate court. The documents in the e-record shall be assembled in volumes of no more than 200 pages. All e-records shall be filed in a PDF format that has been saved with a resolution of 200 DPI or higher. All documents in the e-record shall be saved as letter-size documents (8 ½ inches or 2550 pixels wide x 11 inches or 3300 pixels long) with black text on white background.

(1) *Clerk's Record.* The clerk of the trial court shall assemble electronic copies of the original documents to be included in the clerk's record as prescribed in Rule 10(b)(1) and Rule (10)(c)(1), Ala. R. App. P. If the documents to be included in the clerk's record are not currently available to the clerk in an electronic format, the clerk shall scan the paper copies of such documents in the manner prescribed in this section for inclusion in the clerk's record. In appeals in criminal cases, the clerk shall prepare one paper copy of the clerk's record in addition to the electronic copy. The pages of the clerk's record shall be numbered beginning with the first physical page of the record (typically the cover sheet) and shall continue throughout the clerk's record, including any blank pages, dividers,

and cover pages.

(2) *Reporter's Transcript*. The reporter's transcript shall be prepared pursuant to the provisions of Rule (10)(b)(2) and Rule (10)(c)(2), Ala. R. App. P. Except as otherwise provided herein for appeals of criminal cases, the court reporter shall provide the clerk of the trial court with an electronic copy of the reporter's transcript in lieu of the paper copies prescribed in Rule 10, Ala. R. App. P. The reporter's transcript shall be filed with the clerk in a PDF format consistent with the size and resolution provisions specified above. At the time the transcript is filed with the clerk of the trial court, the court reporter shall file a copy of their certificate of completion with the Clerk of the appellate court in which the appeal is pending.

(A) *Civil Cases*. In appeals of civil cases, the court reporter shall prepare and file a single electronic copy of the designated reporter's transcript with the clerk of the trial court within the time allowed in Rule 11(a)(2), Ala. R. App. P.

(B) *Criminal Cases*. In appeals of criminal cases, the court reporter shall prepare and file a single electronic copy and one paper copy of the reporter's transcript with the clerk of the trial court within the time allowed in Rule 11(b)(2), Ala. R. App. P.

(3) *Record on Appeal*. The clerk of the trial court shall assemble the e-record within 7 days (1 week) from the date the reporter's transcript is filed in the trial clerk's office, or, in the event there is no reporter's transcript, within 28 days (4 weeks) from the filing of the notice of appeal unless the time is shortened or extended by an order entered pursuant to Rule 11(c), Ala. R. App. P.

(A) *Assembly*. The e-record shall be assembled with the cover page first, followed by the clerk's record, the reporter's transcript and certificate of completion, the trial court clerk's "Certification of Completion and Transmittal" as provided for in

Rule 11, Ala. R. App. P., and the trial clerk's index to the entire record. The clerk's index shall include an index to the documents, written charges, and indices that are contained in the e-record and an index to the documents and exhibits incapable of being legibly reproduced in an electronic format.

(B) *Hard Copy of Record in Criminal Cases.* In appeals of criminal cases, simultaneously with the preparation, filing, and service of an e-record, the clerk shall also prepare, certify, and transmit a hard copy of the e-record to the appellant's counsel unless the appellant is proceeding pro se, in which event the hard copy shall be transmitted to the appellant.

(C) *E-Record Deemed Filed.* Immediately upon completion of the Certificate of Completion and Transmittal, the clerk of the trial court shall upload the e-record onto the trial court's online system. The e-record will be deemed filed with the appellate clerk upon the successful upload of the e-record onto the online system.

(4) *Notification to Parties.* Simultaneously with the upload and transmission of the e-record to the appellate clerk, the clerk of the trial court shall notify the parties or, if they are represented by counsel, their attorneys, that the e-record has been certified complete and electronically transmitted to the appellate court and that a copy of the e-record is available online through the trial court's online system. Notification may be by e-mail if an e-mail address is available, otherwise notice shall be by paper.

(5) *Exhibits.* The customary provisions regarding exhibits will apply. If an exhibit cannot be legibly scanned, the exhibit will be handled in the same manner as exhibits that cannot be photocopied. (See Rule 11(e), Ala. R. App. P.) The clerk of the trial court shall retain custody of the original exhibits unless otherwise ordered by the appellate court, so as to allow the attorneys access to the exhibits while preparing their briefs.

**(k) Difficulties Caused by Technology.** If a party misses a filing deadline as the result of an inability to e-file a document caused by a difficulty caused by technology occurring on the deadline date for filing the document, the party must file the document within the time prescribed in this section, accompanied by a motion to accept the document as timely filed, before the appellate court will accept the document. The motion shall include a declaration stating the reason or reasons for missing the deadline and stating why the document should be accepted as timely filed. The document and motion shall be filed by no later than the first day on which the appellate court is open for business following the deadline date for filing the document. If the appellate court grants the motion to accept the document as timely filed, the document shall be deemed timely filed on the date the appellate court grants the motion, notwithstanding any statute or Supreme Court rule to the contrary. (See Sample Form B entitled "Declaration of Technical Difficulties and Motion to Accept as Timely Filed.")

SAMPLE FORM A

[Appellate Court Case Number]

\_\_\_\_\_  
Appellant/Petitioner

vs

\_\_\_\_\_  
Appellee/Respondent

**Notice Regarding Attachments**

Describe document, e.g., the map] \_\_\_\_\_ that is intended as an attachment to \_\_\_\_\_, which was e-filed on \_\_\_\_\_, is of such size, content, or form that it could not be scanned and e-filed and is therefore being filed with clerk of the above appellate court in its original form.

I certify that a copy of this notice and the attachments will this date be served on counsel for each party to the case.

Dated this \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 20\_\_\_\_.

s/[Name of Filing Party]

Address  
City, State, Zip Code  
Phone: (xxx) xxx-xxxx  
Fax: (xxx) xxx-xxxx  
E-mail: xxx@xxx.xxx

SAMPLE FORM B

[Appellate Court Case Number]

\_\_\_\_\_  
Appellant/Petitioner

vs

\_\_\_\_\_  
Appellee/Respondent

**DECLARATION OF TECHNOLOGY DIFFICULTIES  
AND MOTION TO ACCEPT AS TIMELY FILED**

Please take notice that the undersigned registered user was unable to e-file the attached \_\_\_\_\_ [title of document] in a timely manner due to technology difficulties. The deadline for filing the said document was \_\_\_\_\_ [filing-deadline date]. The reason(s) that I was unable to e-file the above-mentioned document in a timely manner and the good-faith efforts I made prior to the filing deadline to both file in a timely manner and to inform the Court and the other parties that I could not do so are set forth below.

[Statement of reasons and good faith efforts to file and to inform (including dates and times)]

\_\_\_\_\_  
I hereby move that the Court accept the above document as being timely file.

I certify that a copy of this declaration and the attached pleading will this date be served on counsel for each party to the case.

Dated this \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 20\_\_\_\_.

s/[Name of Filing Party]

Address  
City, State, Zip Code  
Phone: (xxx) xxx-xxxx  
Fax: (xxx) xxx-xxxx  
E-mail: xxx@xxx.xxx