

EXHIBIT A

COURTHOUSE NEWS SERVICE

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Jeff Shorba
State Court Administrator
Minnesota Judicial Center
25 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd., Suite 135
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Mr. Shorba,

I am the editor of Courthouse News, a national news service that publishes a daily news page at courthousenews.com as well as daily reports on new litigation and new appellate rulings which are subscribed to by law firms and the media.

I first traveled to Minnesota for our news service in 2004. I spoke at the time with Laurie Kusek, the administrative manager, and Lynn Fuchs, the civil court operations supervisor, in Hennepin County District Court. I was welcomed by both as a member of the media and I was brought into the clerk's office which was, if memory serves, on the third floor of the government center.

I have a clear memory of a stack of new civil complaints on a small table, with rollers, I believe, next to cubicles where the docketing clerks worked. In that stack were the just-filed cases that still did not have case numbers because they had not yet been docketed.

I met a similar reception in Ramsey County District Court and was also allowed behind the counter to review the just-filed complaints, although I did not get any business cards so I can't remember the names of the officials.

The media had traditional access in what are by far the two biggest courts in Minnesota which means that we saw the new civil actions right after they crossed the counter – when they were received – before docketing.

This timely access to newly filed complaints was common in the region. I saw similar access to new paper filings in Des Moines, St. Louis, Chicago, Milwaukee, Detroit and Indianapolis. Such access to new civil complaints was common throughout the nation.

That is because new civil actions are a common and traditional source of news, and because news has a short shelf life. I compare news to bread, fresh on the day it's made and stale the next.

Now Minnesota relies on electronic filing through Odyssey software leased from Tyler Technologies. We at Courthouse News are very familiar with Tyler's products and know that it

provides a “Press Review Tool” to its clients if they ask for it. The press review tool provides on-receipt access to the media and can provide access to the public as well. The PRT mimics traditional paper access in the electronic age, allowing journalists to see the new e-filings on receipt, as the cross the virtual counter, before docketing or what is now called processing.

Over the years, a number of Tyler courts have set up such press review queues, for instance in Georgia, Nevada and California. As I write this letter, Travis County District Court in Texas is testing the recently implemented Press Review Tool.

But such on-receipt access is not limited to Tyler courts. State courts in Connecticut, New York and Hawaii provide the same on-receipt access through in-house systems. Utah uses Tybera to provide on-receipt access to new civil actions. Alabama does the same, through OLIS. The biggest court in the nation, Los Angeles Superior, gives on-receipt access through Journal Technologies while Orange County Superior next door does the same through an Electronic Media Inbox within its old homegrown system called CCMS.

Late last month, Florida with a population of 21 million agreed to set up a statewide press queue giving access to nonconfidential civil complaints at the latest within five minutes of receipt. The Florida E-Filing Authority’s vendor is Granicus which also provides the e-filing software for Arizona where the press also has access to a statewide press queue, called a News Media Portal.

Federal courts, including the District of Minnesota, also provide on-receipt access to efiled complaints through the PACER system.

It should be noted that almost all these courts provide on-receipt access while keeping necessary controls in place. They require a press queue username and password and oftentimes a modest subscription fee, in order to gain access to the electronic in-box. We support those control measures.

While there are variations in how all these courts go about providing the press queue access, the timing does not vary: it is on receipt, when the news is fresh.

In conclusion I would respectfully ask that you provide the Minnesota media with an electronic in-box that allows the press to see new civil complaints when they are received, which I believe is when the right of access attaches under the First Amendment.

Thank you,

Bill Girdner
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