

AOC Now Charges AlaCourt Subscribers Per-Page Fee



Beginning March 2, 2009, the Administrative Office of Courts began charging lawyers subscribing to AlaCourt a “per-page” fee for electronic access¹ to images of court documents that have been filed in cases in which they are not counsel of record, and will charge subscribers other than lawyers for each document image accessed electronically through AlaCourt. For electronic access by a lawyer to images of documents filed in cases in which that lawyer is counsel of record, there will continue to be no charge to that attorney for accessing or viewing documents in his or her cases.

Subscribers will be offered electronic access to document images via AlaCourt through several different plans. The amount charged, which will vary from ten to 50 cents per page, will depend upon the number of documents allowed to be accessed under the particular plan chosen, *i.e.*, the higher the number of pages per month allowed to be accessed under the particular plan that the lawyer selects, the lower the per-page charge for access to documents will be.

These charges are essential for maintaining AlaCourt, because the legislature has never appropriated the funds for a statewide electronic data storage, access and transmittal system and now, due to budgetary constraints, is unlikely to be able to do so in the foreseeable future. The revenues generated by these charges will be used to support the greatly increased costs² of handling e-filing by lawyers, document-scanning by circuit

clerks and maintenance and operation of the computers and applications that store these document images, among other things. Without these revenues, AlaCourt would become cost-prohibitive and could not be continued.

Also, in keeping with Chief Justice Sue Bell Cobb’s commitment to openness in the judicial branch, the general public, most of whom will not be subscribers to AlaCourt, will be able to electronically access court documents through a program called, “Just One Look.” Under this program, for a flat fee of \$9.95, anyone with Internet access will be able to go into AlaVault and view the case action summary on any case in the state; and, to the extent that pleadings, orders or other documents in that case are in AlaVault, those documents may be accessed for the same fee that members of the public are charged for copies of documents from court files in clerks’ offices. ▲▼▲

Endnotes

1. “Access” will include any of the following: (1) viewing the document online, (2) printing a paper copy of the document or (3) downloading a storable PDF copy of the document. The “per-page” charge will be incurred regardless of whether one or all of these types of access are utilized.
2. By the end of 2004, there were 2.65 million pages of documents recorded and available for online access through AlaCourt. At the end of 2005, there were 20.5 million pages of documents in AlaVault. By the end of 2006, 34.9 million pages were available online, and at year’s end in 2007, there were 64.83 million pages available. Currently, there are over 100 million pages of court documents available to be accessed from AlaVault via AlaCourt.