



Laura Hinojosa

Hidalgo County District Clerk



EFILETEXAS.GOV: THE NEW WAY OF DOING BUSINESS

Attorneys attempting to make (civil case) over-the-counter transactions on January 2nd were escorted to public kiosks located inside the district clerk office where staff provided a crash course on the new e-filing process.

In December 2012, the Texas Supreme Court mandated e-filing in civil matters. The first group of counties (Harris, Dallas, Tarrant, Bexar, Travis, Collin, Denton, El Paso, Hidalgo and Fort Bend), the Supreme Court, the Court of Criminal Appeals and the 14 Courts of Appeal became mandatory January 1, 2014. As a result, attorneys can no longer file paper documents at the clerk's counter.

“The process is simple,” says Laura Hinojosa. “The e-filing portal is extremely user-friendly, which facilitates maneuvering through the process.” EfileTexas.gov, formerly known as TexFile, is the official e-filing portal where attorneys and legal professionals can go to get started. After selecting the preferred Electronic Service Provider, filers enter login information, case information and scan their documents.

“Our transition has been rather smooth,”



E-filing promotes the efficient and uniform administration of justice. In the 21st century, we no longer can rely on an 18th or 19th century vision for our systems. E-filing will revolutionize our courts for the better.”

~Nathan Hecht, Chief Justice, Supreme Court of Texas



says Hinojosa. “Other than a handful of attorneys who were unaware of the mandate and paper documents that we have received and returned by mail, we haven’t had any major hiccups. Like anything new, its been an adjustment process, and one which we’ve adapted to quickly. Nonetheless, we continue to learn and look forward to efficient and successful outcomes.” To learn more, logon to www.efiletexas.gov.

Temporary Fees



HB 2302, passed during the 83rd Legislative Session, allows a local government that uses the electronic filing system to charge a fee of \$2 for each electronic filing transaction. The intent of the legislation is to allow the local governments to recover the operating costs incurred as a result of integrating with the e-filing system.

The fee, set to expire in September 2019, was approved by county commissioners' court on September 6, 2013 and became effective January 1, 2014. The Records Archive and Preservation Fee was also increased from \$5 to \$10 through the passage of HB 1513, which allows clerks to temporarily increase fees to aid in the preservation and restoration services performed in connection with maintaining a district court records archive.

Unclaimed Cash Bonds



Each district and county clerk must maintain a registry of the court to receive payments ordered tendered into the court's registry. The Hidalgo County District Clerk's Office Registry and Trust Division assists the public in depositing various types of funds which may include non-criminal cash bonds.

In assessing accounts held in the registry, the accounting division found unclaimed accounts dating back to 2008. This prompted the district clerk office to initiate a disbursement effort in conjunction with the Texas Attorney General's Office. Over the past year, the collaborative effort has resulted in the Child Support disbursement of over \$123,975.79. Monies were disbursed through AG offices in McAllen, Edinburg and Weslaco.

"We are delighted to be able to work collectively with the Attorney General's office as we take a proactive approach to ensure children and families receive the monies they are entitled to," said Laura Hinojosa.

According to records, older accounts were pending an Order of Disbursement, which has since been addressed.

Are we going the extra mile?



Our district clerk staff serves the public in several capacities. In addition to making court records accessible, deputy district clerks assist in providing jury information, processing passport applications, and assisting the general public in providing general judicial or local government-related information. On many occasions many employees will go out of their way to assist a constituent or to ensure they are assisted accordingly. If you are a satisfied constituent, we encourage you to

send your praises and recognition of outstanding employees. Your comments on employees who have gone the extra mile can be emailed to: districtclerk@co.hidalgo.tx.us. We look forward to hearing from you!

Petition for an Order of Nondisclosure



The Office of Court Administration (OCA) is statutorily directed to prescribe a petition for an order of nondisclosure. See Texas Government Code, Section 411.081(f-1). Pursuant to this directive, OCA has published the following four documents:

1. Order of Nondisclosure overview
2. Petition for Order of Nondisclosure Form
3. Instructions for Completing Petition for Order of Nondisclosure
4. Model Order of Nondisclosure

Documents can be downloaded from the OCA Website at:

<http://www.courts.state.tx.us/oca/nondisclosure/index.asp>

Any questions or concerns with the Petition for an Order of Nondisclosure Form can be directed to:

Office of Court Administration
P. O. Box 12066
Austin TX 78711-2066
Telephone: (512) 936-1183
Fax: (512) 463-1648
Email: ted.wood@courts.state.tx.us

Ronald McDonald House Check Presentation



Hidalgo County District Clerk Staff presented a check today totaling \$3,000 to Ronald McDonald House Charities of the RGV, as part of their *Blues for Bucks Workplace Fundraising Campaign* to benefit local charitable organizations.

Ronald McDonald House Charities provides a home-

away-from-home for families whose seriously-ill children are receiving medical care at local hospitals and clinics. Since their doors opened in 1998, more than 1,500 families have called the Rio Grande Valley's Ronald McDonald House home. Although based out of Harlingen, the Ronald McDonald House currently hosts a "Family Room" in the Edinburg Children's Hospital offering families with sick children a place to stay.

"We are grateful and commend the district clerk staff for their efforts," says LaHuan Guthrie, Development Manager at the Ronald McDonald House. "We want to continue to support more children throughout their recovery and give more families a comfortable place to stay during their difficult time. Its people like the district clerk staff that help us provide stable and vital resources to children in need."

The district clerk office kicked off their charitable efforts in 2008. The program, which allows department staff to wear jeans every Friday in exchange for a \$5 donation, has since then expanded their efforts through the creation of a "charitable organizations list" of which staff randomly selects a recipient every six months. Over the past four years the district clerk office has collected over \$36,000 which has gone to local charitable organizations throughout Hidalgo County.

"We are blessed beyond belief and welcome the opportunity to give back, as little as it may be," says Laura Hinojosa, Hidalgo County District Clerk. "We are humbled to partner with Ronald McDonald House Charities of the RGV as they work diligently to make a difference in the lives of sick children and families in Hidalgo County and beyond."

Learn more about the Ronald McDonald House of the RGV by calling 956.412.7200 or logon to their website at www.rmhcrgv.org.

Contact Information

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Office Hours

Monday—Friday
7:30am—5:30pm



Please visit our website! Whether verifying fees, responding to your jury summons, or accessing case and passport information, you will find all the information you need here:

www.co.hidalgo.tx.us/districtclerk

We also encourage your honest assessment of our services as we continue to evolve and improve through your valuable input. Email your comments to: districtclerk@co.hidalgo.tx.us

Food Bank of the RGV



The district clerk office is proud to announce the Food Bank of the RGV as the next recipient of the “Blues for Bucks Workplace Fundraising Campaign.” The organization was randomly selected from a list of charitable organizations and will be the beneficiary of staff contributions collected on “jean days” over the next six

months. The Food Bank of the Rio Grande Valley, Inc. serves Hidalgo, Willacy and Cameron Counties in the southern tip of Texas and is passionately committed to end hunger in our communities.

Meet Oneida Lamas



The district clerk office is proud to announce the appointment of Oneida Lamas as our interim supervisor. Oneida has worked at the district clerk office over twelve years. Throughout her tenure, Oneida has been cross-trained in most if not all divisions within the office, which makes her an enormous asset to our organization. Oneida will oversee the overall day-to-day operations at the Judicial Annex, while supervising administrative and personnel matters. Oneida will be working closely with other administrators to carry out her duties and the responsibilities of the office.