

E-Filing Policy Issue - # 16 (Party Matching)

Issue: (State the issue and whether it is specific to a certain level of court or case type.)

Automation potentially brings with it the ability to increase efficiencies in terms of matching parties in order to provide an overall view of one person. What parameters should be set forth from a business and legal perspective in terms of how much matching should be done?

Discussion: (Provide the factual setting or context for the issue.)

The concept of matching parties in a new case to the same person who is already in the system has definite benefits but raises potential concerns as well, such as:

- A change of address, phone number, e-mail address, etc., for a party would only need to be entered once instead of in each separate case in which the person is involved.
- New case management systems are person-centric, which allows workflows to be built more efficiently surrounding cases associated with a person.
- A judge could view all actions, statewide, pending or closed, civil or criminal, involving the same person appearing before the judge.
- Better statistics can be drawn regarding repeat offenders and frequent users of the court system.
- Increased ability to see all outstanding financial balances a person has with the courts across the state.
- A certain amount of error will occur with this type of system, such that the wrong person will sometimes be matched to a party. Typical problems encountered with party matching include a name change (e.g. by marriage or divorce), hyphenated names, etc.
- Establishing a party matching system would require a programming change in AZTurboCourt. The system would need to collect and match against the last name of each party and at least one other indicator such as social security number, drivers license number, or d.o.b. Although the filer or the filer's attorney in a civil action is likely to have this information about the filing party, the filer or filer's attorney is not likely to have this information about the defendant.

Authorities: (Provide references to specific statutes, rules, codes or administrative orders you believe are pertinent to the issue.)

There does not appear to be any direct authority on this issue.

Alternative Solutions: (List all identified alternative solutions for the issue.)

- Do not match parties in the AZTurboCourt system.
- Provide a party matching feature to clerks only, for ease of updating information on a party in the system or for identifying multiple cases on which a party owes fines & fees.
- Provide a global view (party matching) feature to judges at certain points in a proceeding only, such as for setting bail or at sentencing.
- Provide a global view (party matching) feature to judges in certain case types, such as family law, Orders of Protection, etc.

Position/Recommendation: (Does the AOC E-filing team have a recommendation on this issue?)

None.

Decision:

Electronically retrieving public information that exists today to promote efficiency in the court is allowable. However, increasing the information collected at filing for the electronic record (e.g., collecting social security numbers for parties in civil cases) purely for the purpose of better identifying any litigant is not appropriate.