

BENEFITS OF THE TYLER TECHNOLOGIES TRANSITION FOR KBA MEMBERS

BY CHARLES BYERS

As members of the Kentucky Bar Association, attorneys stand to gain significant advantages from the Kentucky Court of Justice's adoption of Tyler Technologies' Enterprise Justice platform. This transition represents a significant step forward in modernizing the judicial system, directly benefiting legal practitioners.

For attorneys practicing across jurisdictions, familiarity with Tyler's File & Serve electronic filing solution provides a sense of uniformity. Tyler, a recognized leader in judicial software, serves 21 other statewide court systems, including the neighboring states of Indiana, Illinois and West Virginia. This continuity will offer KBA members a seamless experience when working across these state lines.

Tyler's judicial software is used by 14 of the 20 largest courts in the country, and it serves over 55% of the U.S. population. By leveraging the resources of Tyler, the KCOJ gains access to advanced features and ongoing enhancements developed by the market leader. These improvements, such as enhanced eFiling support and robust training options, save time and offer KBA members cutting-edge tools.

Reliability and security also improve with data hosted in the AWS Government Cloud to ensure compliance with rigorous standards. Additionally, the platform's uptime and availability address long-standing challenges, creating a more consistent system for users.

With better analytics, workflow tools for judges and clerks and a commitment to continuous improvement, this transition underscores the ongoing effort to enhance the court system for everyone it serves – especially Kentucky's legal professionals. In the long term, this system will help propel Kentucky toward fully electronic court records. Attorneys often encounter delays caused by manual processes. The new technology will streamline access, reducing the need for courthouse visits and reducing some paper-based delays.

ROAD TO THE eRECORD

Being raised by parents who grew up during the Great Depression instilled certain values in me: hard work, honesty and caring for others. One of the most pronounced values was to make things last as long as possible – whether it was cars, clothes or case management systems.

In the mid-1990s, the Kentucky Court of Justice recognized the need to move away from its mainframe and typewriter-based court record system that had been in place since 1976. A commercial case management system, aptly called Sustain, was purchased. And sustain us it has.

This initial step toward modernization laid the foundation for further innovations in case management technology, driven by the ingenuity of developers at the Administrative Office of the Courts. Developers created a new front end for the system and introduced near-real-time polling, allowing data collection every 15 minutes for the central CourtNet database. Previously, data was updated only overnight. AOC developers transitioned the back end to a Microsoft solution and introduced the Wyse box, a secure access device providing a PC-like experience to users. That was 30 years ago, and KYCourts II remains in production for most Kentucky counties.

In 2010, the KCOJ hired its first chief information officer, and one of my first assignments was to assess the KYCourts II application. With assistance from the Commonwealth Office of Technology and the National Center for State Courts, KYCourts II was deemed functionally and technically obsolete. A cost model for replacement was created by comparing state contracts, analyzing network and infrastructure capacity and mapping business processes. In 2011, a six-year, three-phase project was submitted to the General Assembly's Capital Planning Advisory Board. However, it was not funded.

In 2013, the General Assembly passed House Bill 238, authorizing and appropriating agency bonds for Phase I of the project. With no assurance of future funding, the AOC stretched those dollars as far as possible. That's where my Great Depression values came in handy. Network



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GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR KENTUCKY'S NEW TRIAL CASE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

Pursuant to Supreme Court Rule 1.010, in furtherance of the Kentucky eCourt Program vision and as part of the Kentucky Court of Justice's transition to an electronic record, the Supreme Court hereby adopts these guiding principles for Kentucky's new trial case management system.

1. Elected officials and KCOJ Personnel will be provided with tools needed to facilitate just, prompt, and safe resolutions of court matters.
2. The implementation of a new trial case management system is an opportunity to standardize court processes statewide and create a technological foundation for future growth and effective operations.
3. Software customization of a new trial case management system will only occur if required by law. This will ensure process uniformity, reduce overall cost, and promote sustainability.
4. Organizational change management is critical to the success of the implementation of a new trial case management system and will require an on-going resource investment.
5. The new trial case management system subcommittee and implementation project teams must include broad representation of the trial courts.
6. A substantial commitment of concentrated time from elected officials and KCOJ personnel will be required for project success.
7. Communication with the vendor will be in a clear, consistent, and uniform approach and only as provided in the new trial case management system contract. Comments, questions, or requests must go through the project manager designated by the Administrative Office of the Courts.

The Supreme Court of Kentucky issued Administrative Order 2024-12 on April 12, 2024, to issue the following guiding principles for updating the Kentucky Court of Justice's trial case management system.

infrastructure was prioritized, leading to substantial investments in circuits, networking components and data center capacity. The AOC issued a request for proposals, resulting in the procurement of enterprise content management – a system for managing court records and other content throughout their lifecycle – and appellate case management solutions. CourtNet 2.0 was developed and internal development of eFiling began.

While a vision for electronic court records began to take shape, Phase I funding was insufficient to procure a vendor solution for trial courts. Out of necessity, a process to make technical updates to KyCourts II was born and work began on what would become KY3.

The first KY3 pilot went live in Trimble County in October 2017. Over the next two and a half years, additional functionality and counties were added, despite challenges such as scope increases, a tight technical labor market and competing priorities.

Then came March 13, 2020, when we were called into a meeting to discuss “potential” measures to be taken to contain a new contagion called COVID-19. Little did we know what would follow. Without reliving the details, suffice it to say we were all distracted for quite some time. While little good came from the pandemic, the General Assembly passed House Bill 244 in 2022, authorizing federal American Rescue Plan Act funds for project completion. After nearly a decade, we had funding – and a deadline.

Substantial research followed, including vendor interviews, videoconferences and site visits. In January 2024, the AOC issued an RFP, and after a thorough process, Tyler Technologies was selected. On Sept. 1, Kentucky became Tyler's 22nd statewide Enterprise Justice client implementation

The Kentucky Court of Justice has launched a new webpage for updates on the transition to the cloud-based Enterprise Justice platform by Tyler Technologies. The page will be updated regularly with resources and announcements. Use the QR code to stay informed!



and 17th statewide trial court client. Tyler's Enterprise Justice case management system will be deployed as a Software as a Service (SaaS) platform powered by Amazon Web Services (AWS). In addition to replacing KYCourts II and KY3, the contract includes File & Serve for eFiling and Guide & File for self-represented litigants, as well as court analytics and payment solutions.

“This marks the beginning of a long-planned technological transformation for the Judicial Branch,” Chief Justice Lurance B. VanMeter said in his 2024 State of the Judiciary remarks. “It is a pivotal milestone in our journey toward fully digitizing court records, ensuring the judiciary is well-equipped to meet the demands of the future.”

ARPA funding required the funds to be obligated by the end of 2024 – a deadline we met – and spent by the end of 2026. While ambitious, this timeline is achievable. Following the contract's finalization, Tyler and AOC teams hit the ground running. The project kickoff took place Oct. 15, and progress is well underway. Tyler praised the AOC's preparedness, noting that process maps greatly aided product configuration.

Jefferson and Fayette counties will be the first to go live on File & Serve in fall 2025, with a rapid statewide expansion planned for winter 2025. For Enterprise Justice, Fayette (KY3) and Hart, LaRue and Nelson counties (KYCourts II) will go live in summer 2026. A statewide rollout is expected to conclude by 2030. These steps mark a rapid advancement toward a fully electronic court record. The next few years will be hectic, as this is the largest technology project the KCOJ has ever undertaken. The year 2030 seems far away, but it will be here before we know it. Before we're finished, many team members who are beginning this journey will likely retire or move on to other places.

Another value instilled in me by my Depression-era parents is to leave everything better than you found it. Our team is confident that these changes will improve process uniformity and system sustainability for the court well into the future.

THE JOURNEY CONTINUES. 