

**Northern District of Florida**  
**CM/ECF Attorney User Guide**  
**Chapter 7**

**Filing a Civil Complaint or a Notice of Removal**

Civil and miscellaneous case openings may be completed electronically by any attorney in good standing and that has been admitted to this Court.

Step by step directions for electronic case filing can be found in the [Guide to Civil Case Opening By Attorneys](#) located on the Court's Internet Web site. Please review these directions thoroughly before attempting the process.

**Sealed Documents**

The system will not allow an attorney user to cause a PDF to be sealed in the system.

Local Rule 5.5 states:

(A) **General Rule.** Each case file and each document filed in it is public unless one of these provides otherwise: a statute, court rule, administrative order, or order in the case. The Court may, by an order in the case, modify any sealing or redaction requirement set out in an administrative order or this rule.

(B) **Documents That May Be Sealed Without an Order.** When a statute, court rule, or administrative order requires the sealing of a category of documents, a party may submit a document in that category for filing under seal, without moving for leave to file the document under seal. The Clerk must maintain the document under seal unless the Court orders otherwise.

(C) **Documents That May Be Sealed Only With an Order.** A party who wishes to file any other document under seal must, if feasible, move in advance for leave to file the document under seal. The party may submit the document for filing under seal only if the Court authorizes it. If a party

submits a document for filing under seal before the Court authorizes it—either because obtaining advance authorization was not feasible or in violation of this rule—the Clerk must promptly refer the sealing issue to the Court and must maintain the document under seal until otherwise ordered.

**(D) Filing Redacted Versions of Sealed Documents.** When feasible, a party who files a document under seal must file a redacted version that will become part of the public file. Filing a redacted version is feasible unless (1) a person could infer from the redacted version the substance or import of the information that called for sealing the original or (2) the redacted version would include so little information that publicly filing it would serve no purpose.

**(E) Redacting Documents That Are Improperly Filed with Personal Identifiers.** If a party violates Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 5.2 or Federal Rule of Criminal Procedure 49.1 by failing to redact a personal identifier, the party must promptly file a properly redacted substitute. When the substitute is filed, the Clerk must seal the unredacted original.

## **E-Filing Documents in Civil Cases - A Step By Step Guide**

This section of the User's Manual describes the step-by-step process for e-filing a **Motion**. The process will be similar when filing other types of pleadings.

Registered filers will use the **Civil** menu option to electronically file PDF documents with the Court in all civil (CV) and civil miscellaneous (MC) cases.

### **Step 1: Select the Type of Document to be Filed**

Using your mouse, select Civil from the menu bar. The Civil Event window opens displaying all of the events, or menu selections, from which you may choose for your filing.

Under the category **Motions and Related Filings**, select the **Motions** hyperlink.

The screenshot shows the CM/ECF website interface. At the top, there is a navigation bar with the CM/ECF logo and several menu items: Civil, Criminal, Query, Reports, Utilities, Search, Help, and Log Out. Below this is a blue header area labeled 'Civil Events'. Underneath, there are three columns of links. The first column is titled 'Initial Pleadings and Service' and includes links for 'Service of Process', 'Complaints and Other Initiating Documents', 'Answers to Complaints and Other Initiating Documents', and 'Other Answers'. The second column is titled 'Other Filings' and includes links for 'ADR Documents', 'Notices', 'Trial Documents', 'Appeal Documents', and 'Other Documents'. The third column is titled 'Attorney Case Opening (v2.5)' and includes a link for 'Open Civil Case'. Below these columns is a section titled 'Motions and Related Filings', which contains two links: 'Motions' (circled in yellow) and 'Responses and Replies'.

The **Motions** screen appears and displays a motion selection field. This list is in alphabetical order. Selections may be made by scrolling through the menu until you find the type of motion you wish to file. The motion type is selected by clicking on the name.

*Selecting more than one motion type from the list.* If you are filing a motion that contains more than one request, you may select all options that apply by clicking on the first option, holding the control key (Ctrl) down on your keyboard, and clicking on other desired reliefs. This technique should only be used when the selections are related to the motion request as a whole. Do not select multiple reliefs if they involve unrelated requests such as a “Motion to Appear Pro Hac Vice” and a “Motion for Summary Judgment”.

Unrelated motions should be filed using separate CM/ECF entries so that each PDF receives a unique docket entry number which may be later referenced by the applicable judge within an order.

Click the next button after selecting the desired motion type(s). For demonstration purposes, **Preliminary Injunction** has been selected.

**Motions**

Start typing to find another event.

Available Events (click to select events)	Selected Events (click to remove events)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mediation</li> <li>Medical Exam</li> <li>Miscellaneous Relief</li> <li>More Definite Statement</li> <li>New Trial</li> <li>Order of Sale</li> <li>Partial Summary Judgment</li> <li>Permanent Injunction</li> <li><b>Preliminary Injunction</b></li> <li>Proceed In Forma Pauperis</li> <li>Produce</li> <li>Protective Order</li> <li>Psychiatric Exam</li> <li>Quash</li> <li>Quash IRS Summons</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Preliminary Injunction</li> </ul>

Next Clear

### Step 2: Enter the Case Number in Which the Document is to be Filed

A new motions screen opens with a Case Number field. Enter the number of the case in which you are filing the motion and click on Next.

CM ECF ci

**Motions**

Civil Case Number

Next Clear

### Step 3: Designate the Party Filing the Document

Highlight the name of the party or parties for whom you are filing the motion on the "Select Party" screen. If you represent all defendants or all plaintiffs you may select the entire group by selecting the first party, pressing and holding down the control (Ctrl) key, and selecting the remaining parties as

shown below. In some instances (when available), you may also utilize the “group” buttons for this purpose.

**Motions**  
4:12-cv-00051-RH-CAS GRIFFIN v. CITY OF TALLAHASSEE et al CASE CLOSED on 08/02/2012  
CLOSED, MEDIATION

**Pick Filer**

[Collapse All](#) [Expand All](#)

- REBECCA BLIZZARD dft
- CAROLINE CARPENTIERI dft
- CITY OF TALLAHASSEE dft
- KEITH GRIFFIN pla
- LAWANA WASHINGTON dft

Select the filer.

**Select the Party:**

- BLIZZARD, REBECCA [dft]
- CARPENTIERI, CAROLINE [dft]
- CITY OF TALLAHASSEE [dft]
- GRIFFIN, KEITH [pla]
- WASHINGTON, LAWANA [dft]

#### Step 4: Creating an Attorney/Party Association

If this is the first e-filing made by an attorney for a party in a case, the system will ask the user to make a party/attorney association as shown in the example below:

The following attorney/party associations don't exist for this case.

Please check the box on the left of the screen if you intend to become counsel of record for the listed party.

If not, then the box should be *unchecked*.

- REBECCA BLIZZARD (pty:dft) represented by Elizabeth Evans (aty)
- CAROLINE CARPENTIERI (pty:dft) represented by Elizabeth Evans (aty)
- CITY OF TALLAHASSEE (pty:dft) represented by Elizabeth Evans (aty)
- LAWANA WASHINGTON (pty:dft) represented by Elizabeth Evans (aty)

**Select all**

If you intend to represent the filing party in this case, leave the box located to the left of the party's name checked (the default setting) and then click Next. Creating an attorney/party association will cause the filing attorney's name to be added to the docket sheet on the behalf of the selected party or parties. The filing attorney will also receive Notice of Electronic Filings (NEFs) in the case.

If you are filing for an attorney who is unavailable (i.e., on vacation, out of the office, etc.), using your own login, and you do not intend to represent the party in this action, **uncheck** the association box(es) and click Next. Your name will not be added to the docket sheet header, you will not be an attorney of record in the case, and you will not receive NEFs regarding future filings.

### Step 5: Specify a PDF File for Upload into the Court's Electronic Database

The screen depicted below displays a field for locating and selecting the PDF file for the document you are filing:

The screenshot shows a web interface for filing a document. At the top, it says "Motions" and "4:12-cv-00051-RH-CAS GRIFFIN v. CITY OF TALLAHASSEE et al CASE CLOSED on 08/02/2012". Below that, it says "CLOSED, MEDIATION". A note states: "A description must be entered for each attachment added. You may select a category, but it is not required. Select the PDF document and any attachments." There is a section for "Main Document" with a text input field and a "Browse..." button. Below that is a table with three columns: "Attachments", "Category", and "Description". The first row is numbered "1." and has a text input field with a "Browse..." button, a dropdown menu, and a description input field. At the bottom, there are "Next" and "Clear" buttons.

Attachments	Category	Description
1. <input type="text"/> Browse...	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

You must attach an electronic copy of the pleading when prompted by the system. CM/ECF will not let you continue with your entry until a PDF file is

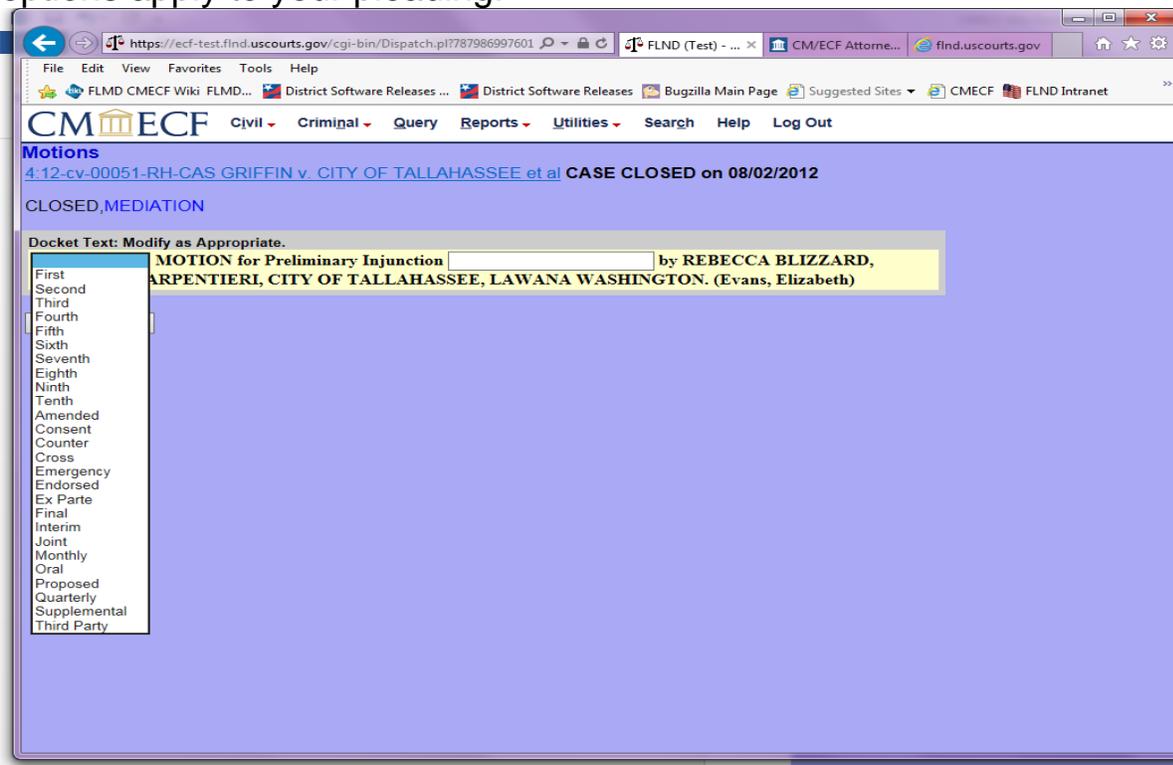
selected. All documents that you intend to e-file **MUST** reside in PDF format. Documents submitted in formats other than PDF will cause an error message to appear.

You will select Browse and upload the main document and if you have any attachments you will upload those as well with a description of what the attachment is (i.e. Exhibit A). When you are finished uploading all documents hit Next.

### Step 6: Modifying Docket Text

Now that you have selected the appropriate PDF files for upload, you will be presented with proposed docket text. This is the summary text that appears on the docket sheet.

Click on the down arrow (shown below) to open a modifier drop-down list. Select a modifier if appropriate. This field may remain blank if none of the options apply to your pleading.



For example, you may have previously filed a motion and now wish to file an amended motion. In that case, you would file the motion just as you had previously with the exception of adding the text “Amended” to the entry by choosing it from the drop-down list shown above. Taking this step alerts the clerk to the filing of an amended motion and allows the clerk to remove the original motion from the judge’s pending motions report.

You would also want to select an option from this list if you plan to file an Emergency motion so that the nature of your pleading stands out to the case manager. (It is also recommended that you alert the applicable Clerk’s Office staff by phone regarding any emergency pleadings to be filed so that they may be referred to the judge as soon as possible.)

There is also an area to add additional text. Click in the open text area to type additional text for the description of the pleading. This field will support approximately 256 characters.

### Step 7: Submit the Pleading

Click on the Next button. A new **Motions** window appears with the complete text for the docket report:

The screenshot shows a web interface for a court docket entry. At the top, the title "Motions" is displayed in blue. Below it, the case number "4:12-cv-00051-RH-CAS GRIFFIN v. CITY OF TALLAHASSEE et al" and the status "CASE CLOSED on 08/02/2012" are shown. The entry type is "CLOSED, MEDIATION". The docket text is "MOTION for Preliminary Injunction by REBECCA BLIZZARD, CAROLINE CARPENTIERI, CITY OF TALLAHASSEE, LAWANA WASHINGTON. (Evans, Elizabeth)". A red warning message states: "Attention!! Pressing the NEXT button on this screen commits this transaction. You will have no further opportunity to modify this transaction if you continue." Below this, it asks "Have you redacted?". The source document path is "C:\Users\elawrence\Desktop\Testing PDF.pdf" with 1 page. At the bottom, there are "Next" and "Clear" buttons.

Review the text for typos or spelling errors and be sure that the text reflects the correct number of additional attachments. (NOTE: You will not see a reference to your main PDF pleading, i.e., the file you browsed for first before any additional attachments were contemplated, within the docket text.)

If you need to modify your entry, click the Back button on the browser's toolbar to find the screen you wish to alter. Once you have corrected the error, continue with the entry using the navigational buttons located on the ECF screen. **DO NOT use the FORWARD button**, located on the browser's tool bar as ECF will not recognize the changes that were made.

When you are satisfied with the filing, hit Next. This will commit your filing and you will receive an NEF. The NEF provides confirmation that CM/ECF has registered your transaction and that the pleading is now an official court document. It also displays the date and time of your transaction, the attorney or court user who filed the document, the docket entry number that was assigned, the docket text, the names and e-mail addresses of attorneys who were served electronically, and the names and addresses of those who require service by U.S. mail.

For future reference, it is suggested that you note the docket entry number assigned by CM/ECF on your copy of the PDF file residing on your hard drive; this can be accomplished by renaming the file. This action will save you time and money should you require additional review of the filed document since you will be able to locate the document easily on your personal or network drive rather than accessing it through PACER.

CM/ECF will electronically transmit the NEF to the attorneys of record in the case who have registered for e-filing. The NEF also displays the names and addresses of individuals who will **not** be electronically notified of the filing.

It is the **filer's** responsibility to serve hard copies of the pleading and the **Notice of Electronic Filing** to attorneys and parties (including newly admitted attorneys and attorneys who have had their NEFs temporarily turned off due to reported technical difficulties) who are not set up for electronic notification.

Pro se parties will not have access to e-file and must be served with a hard copy of all filed pleadings unless that party is also an attorney admitted to practice within the Northern District of Florida who has previously registered for e-filing.