



## Law

### **e-Filing for criminal cases starts today**

BRENDAN KEARNEY  
Daily Record Legal Affairs Writer  
August 7, 2008 6:32 PM

Nearly five and a half years after Maryland's federal court became one of the first in the nation to require electronic filing for civil cases, today it will become one of the last to extend that policy to criminal cases.

Documents will be filed through the PACER system, accessible from the U.S. District Court's Web site. Since its March 2003 introduction in Maryland, PACER has contained docket entries for criminal cases but very few documents could be viewed online.

To address the security concerns expressed by defense attorneys, some documents, such as a witness cooperation agreement, will remain sealed. Access to documents containing sensitive financial information will not be accessible online even if they are not sealed.

In addition, upon request, certain docket entries can be sealed and entire cases can be exempt from e-filing, according to the court's attorney manual on the subject.

Attorneys must still serve paper copies of any sealed documents and any documents at all upon pro se litigants. The court also will require paper copies of documents longer than 15 pages.

While the change will certainly come with a learning curve, court clerks believe it will make filing cheaper and more convenient and make the filed documents easier to access.

Two-hour training sessions will be held Tuesday and Thursday at the federal court in Baltimore, and Thursday in Greenbelt. To sign up, go to the U.S. District Court's Web site, <http://www.mdd.uscourts.gov/>.