Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts
Office of Case Management Systems

CM/ECF

Release Notes

For PACER Users

NextGen CM/ECF Release 1.6

November 2020

This page intentionally blank.

CONTENTS

1 Introduction 5
2 New Plea and Sentencing Folder Functionality with Docket Report 6
3 Filers No Longer Automatically Given Sealed Access When Added as Parties to a Case 10
4 PDF-Related Functionality for Public Users 11
5 Courts Have Option to Determine If Document Number Should Be Assigned to a Docket Entry 12
6 New Defend Trade Secrets Act of 2016 Nature of Suit Code 13
7 Intermittent Filing Issues with White Screen 14
8 Blank Pages Viewing PDFs in Acrobat Reader 15
9 Central Sign-On Noticing Updates Not Saved Correctly 16
10 Pay.gov – Prevention of Duplicate Payments 17

Update Summary

Date	Section	Change
July 2020	All	Document created.
October 2020	All	Released
November 2020	4	Modified section title and added PDF check changes

1 Introduction

This release addresses several security, technical, and functional issues reported by various courts over the last several months, as well as introduced new functionality. This release includes the following bug fixes and new functionality that are specific to District CM/ECF public/attorney users:

1. As part of the judiciary's ongoing initiative to protect cooperator information, and in response to the recommendations of the Task Force Protecting Cooperators created by the Director of the Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts to reduce the risk of identification and harm for criminal defendants who choose to cooperate with the government, a new "Plea and Sentencing Folder" functionality for the Docket Report was created.
2. Courts have reported a bug that automatically gives sealed access to filers that have added themselves as parties to a case. This functionality been amended to prevent sealed access until the court has reviewed the filing.
3. PDF documents that include embedded files such as audio, video, or files having a .swf extension will not be allowed to be uploaded while filing a pleading. PDF documents having any of these embedded files will be rejected and an error will be displayed to the user.
4. New functionality is provided to CM/ECF courts that gives them the option to determine if a document number should be assigned to a docket entry. Instead of having a document number, these docket entries will be displayed as "doc" on the Docket Sheet and other reports.
5. In December 2019, the Statistics Subcommittee and the Judicial Resources Committee approved the creation of a new nature of suit code for civil cases related to the Defend Trade Secrets Act (of 2016). The new nature of suit will be effective October 1, 2020.
6. A court has reported intermittent filing issues where a white screen is displayed to attorneys, preventing the attorney from completing their filing. This white screen issue has been resolved.
7. There was a bug in iText which corrupts PDF pages that have an unusual structure to the page tree. Acrobat reader will not display the corrupted pages. This has been resolved.
8. When saving Noticing Data in the Central Sign-On Utility for external filers, the frequency and format type are not saved to the user interface database. This has been resolved.
9. Courts have reported that intermittent filers receive an error message upon Pay.gov processing a fee payment. This has been resolved.

2 New Plea and Sentencing Folder Functionality with Docket Report

In order to reduce the risk of identification and harm to criminal defendants who choose to cooperate with the government, a new "Plea and Sentencing Folder" functionality for the Docket Report was created. The Docket Report for criminal cases will now add links at the top of the Docket Report for criminal cases that will connect users to either a Plea Filings report or a Sentencing Filings report. The following illustrates how links to the new reports will appear:

The following information applies to the use of the Plea Filings and Sentencing Filings reports:

- Special user access privileges must be provided by the court before each of these reports can be accessed; otherwise, the user will be displayed a message similar to the following when attempting to use the links:

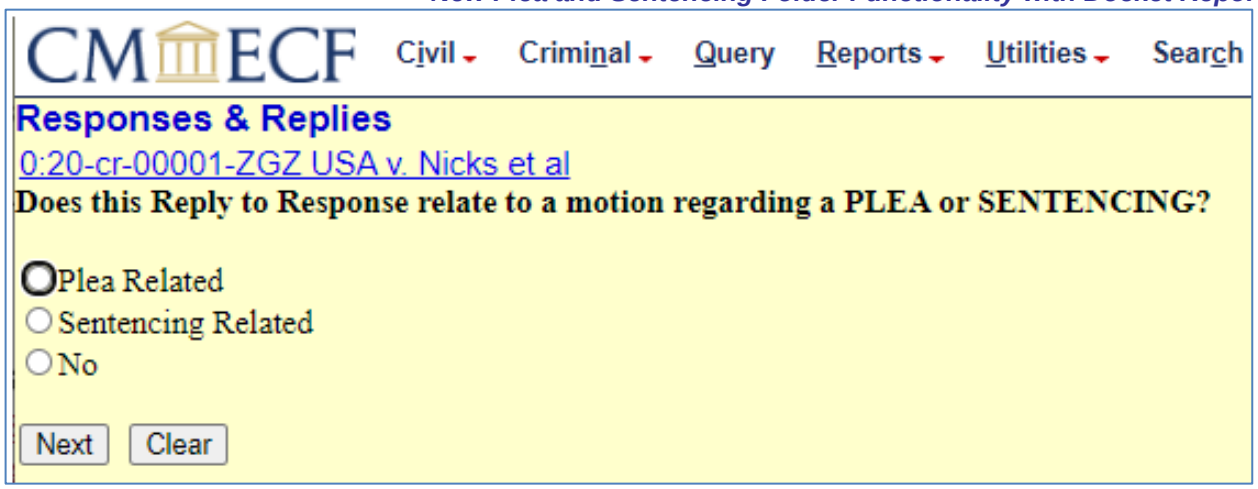
  NOTICE: The contents, if any, are available remotely only to select parties defined by the court or judge.

- Authorized users are not billed for the output that is provided in these reports.

- The new Plea Filings and Sentencing Filings reports will respect the access controls each court places on the individual filings for each user. If attorneys are included in a sealed/restricted access group, they will see entries in the plea and sentencing filings reports. If external users are not in a sealed/restricted group, they can expect to see the court configurable message similar to the one above.

- Courts will determine which events will receive a plea or sentencing classification. This classification determines if the event is visible on the main Docket Report or whether it instead belongs in either the Plea Filings or Sentencings Filings reports. The decisions on classifying events may vary across courts based on the events available for filing within each court.

  Classification of entries for a folder may occur in the background without filer input; however, there may be instances where a court has determined that the filer should be prompted during filing to designate how the filing should be classified. An example of a filer prompt is shown below:



- Docket entries that are classified as Plea Filings with an attached PDF will have Document Numbers that are prefixed with the letter P (e.g., P-#####). The numeric portion, the #### of the P-#####, of the Document Number for items designated as plea related is a unique and non-sequential numeric value within CM/ECF. The following illustrates docket entries that are classified as Plea Filings for the new Plea Filings report:

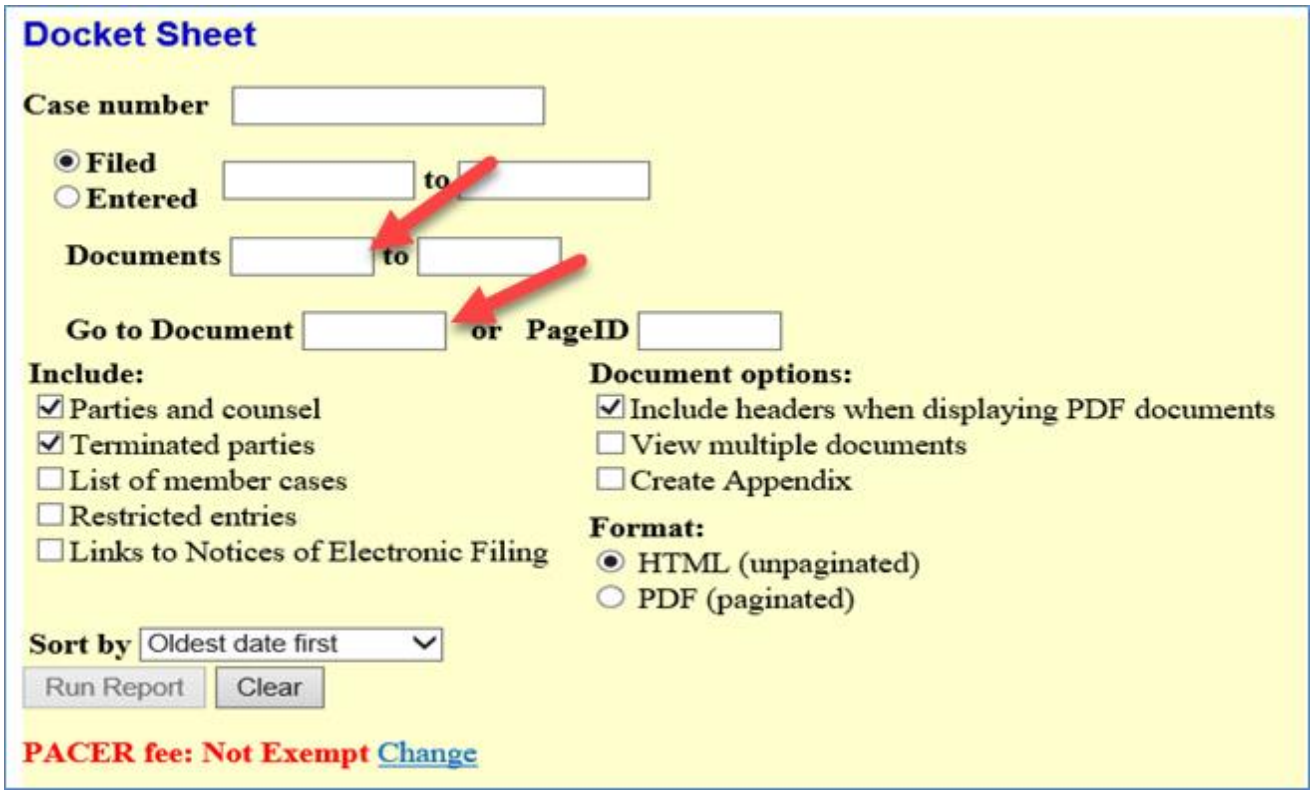
8:19-cr-05250-CBC-NNN All Defendants USA v. Garcia et al
Date filed: 02/19/2019
Date of last filing: 02/10/2020

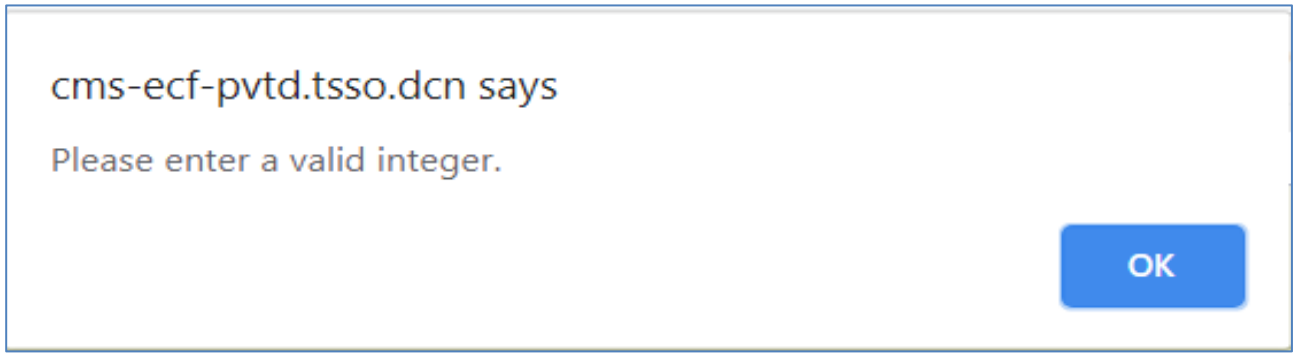
Plea Filings

Date Filed	#	Docket Text
05/10/2019	P-638962	PSF PLEA AGREEMENT as to Marcos Araujo Dias (Toups, SysadminPVTD) (Entered: 01/29/2020)
05/15/2019	P-638965	Minute Order. Proceedings held before Nathan N Nine, Jr:PSF Plea Agreement Hearing as to Marcos Araujo Dias held on 5/15/2019. (Court Reporter har.) (Toups, SysadminPVTD) (Entered: 01/29/2020)
05/15/2019		PSF Plea Agreement Accepted as to Marcos Araujo Dias (Toups, SysadminPVTD) (Entered: 02/06/2020)
02/05/2020	P-639917	PSF REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS on Plea of Guilty as to Marcos Araujo Dias. Signed by Nathan N Nine, Jr on 2/5/2020. (Toups, SysadminPVTD) (Entered: 02/10/2020)

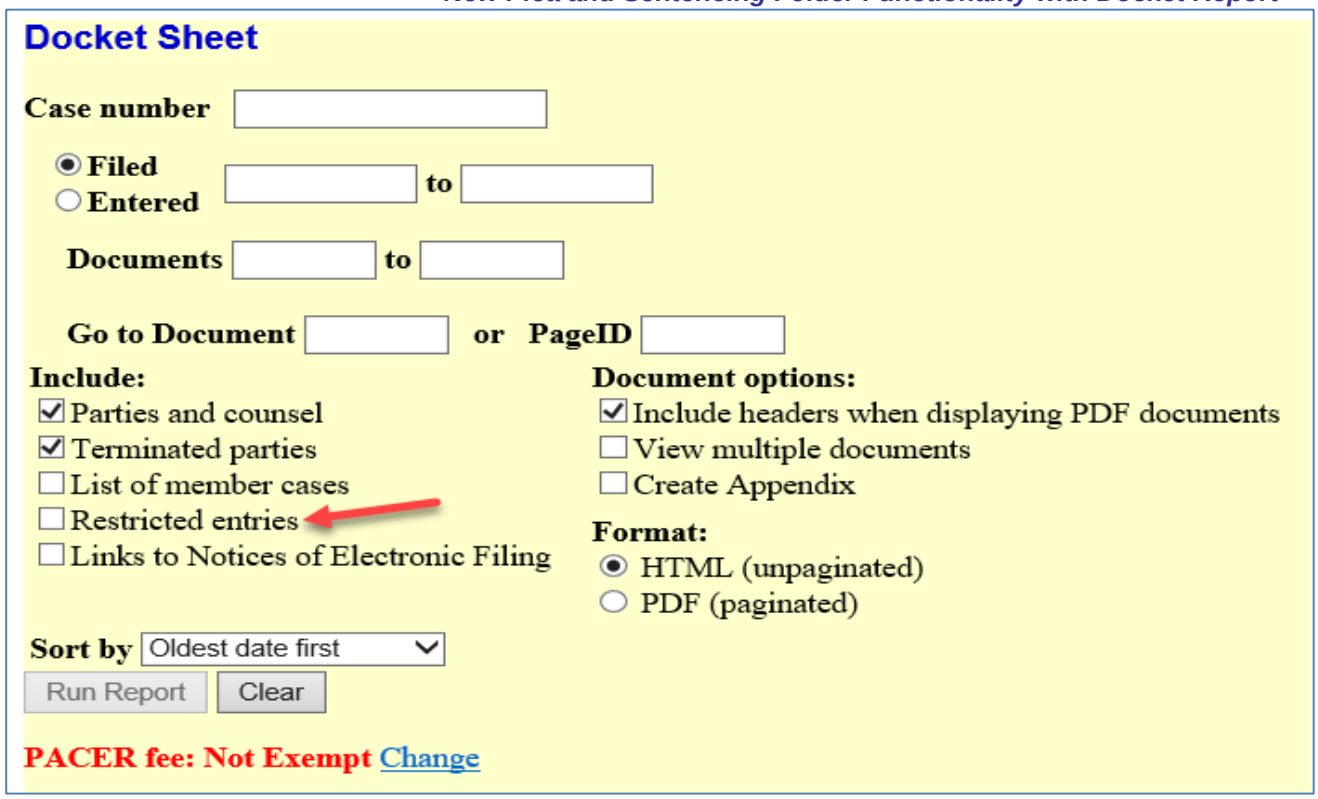
- Docket entries that are classified as Sentencing Filings with an attached PDF will have Document Numbers that are prefixed with the letter S (e.g., S-#####). The numeric portion, the #### of the S-#####, of the Document Number for items designated as sentencing related is a unique and non-sequential numeric value within CM/ECF. The following illustrates docket entries that are classified as Sentencing Filings on the new Sentencing Filings filter:

- Users are not able to generate a Docket Sheet using the prefixed P or S document numbers as criteria for generating the report. CM/ECF will return an error message that is similar to the following if users attempt to enter a “P” or “S” in the document number field:





- Users with access to events designated as plea or sentencing filings, may opt to view the entries on the Docket Report by selecting the “Restricted entries” option on the Docket Report Selection screen as illustrated below:



- As a result of implementing the Plea Filings and Sentencing Filings functionality, public docket reports should no longer contain skipped docket entry numbers.

3 Filers No Longer Automatically Given Sealed Access When Added as Parties to a Case

Filers docketing events that add themselves as parties to a case will no longer automatically be granted access to sealed/restricted documents or entries in the case. Court staff will review the request prior to providing access to restricted materials and some requests may be denied.

4 PDF-Related Functionality for Public Users

The utility used for preventing corrupted PDF documents from being uploaded in CM/ECF was modified by adding functionality that also prevents PDF documents that include embedded files such as audio, video, and files having a .swf extension, etc. from being uploaded. PDF documents having any of these type embedded files that launch an application will be rejected and display an error to the filer similar to the following:

> **ERROR: Document is malformed or contains code which may cause an external action (such as launching an application). This PDF document cannot be accepted.**
>
> **Error File: C:\Documents\PDF with Audio.pdf**

To further explain the behavior of CM/ECF with Release 1.6 and steps filers may take, a new document, PDF-Related Functionality for Public Filers in NextGen CM/ECF Release 1.6, has been posted to the PACER Service Center website.

This document provides an overview of PDF-related functionality for the Appellate, Bankruptcy and District court types with the NextGen CM/ECF Release 1.6. The document covers:

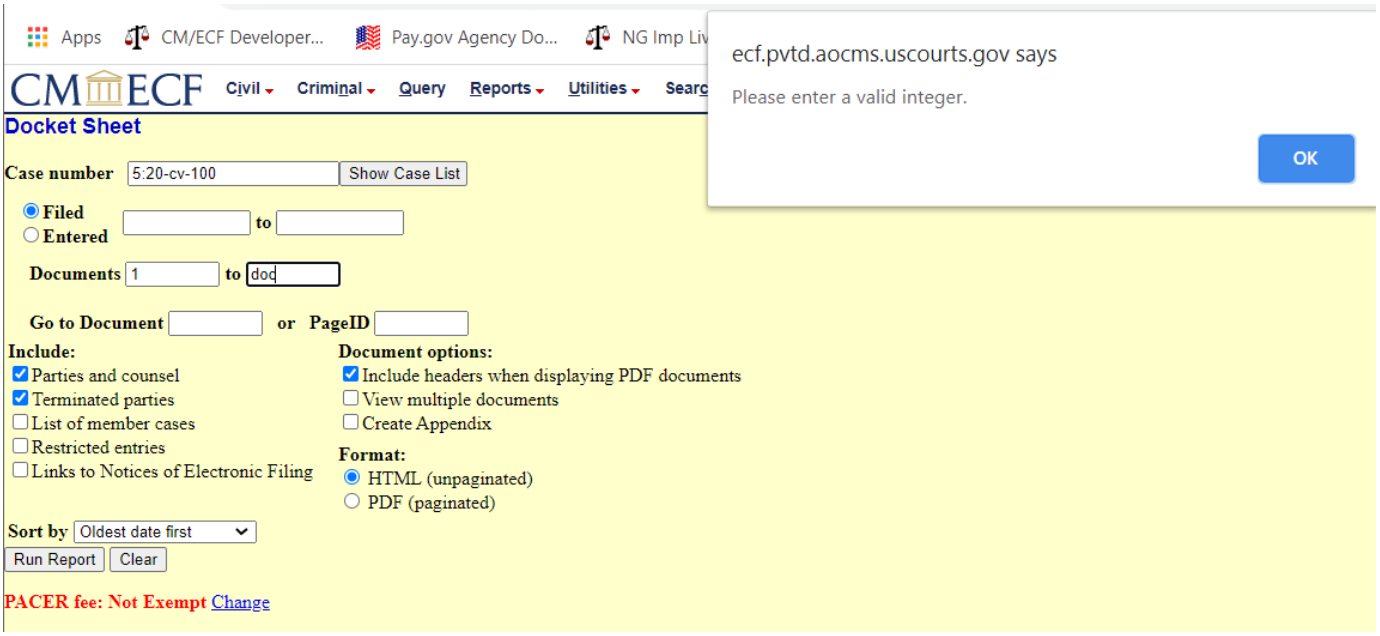
- PDF Definition and Software
- Converting Documents to PDF
- Viewing a PDF Document Prior to Upload
- Document Size Requirements
- PDF Content Criteria
- How to Flatten a PDF
- Viewing Combined PDFs in CM/ECF

5 Courts Have Option to Determine If Document Number Should Be Assigned to a Docket Entry

New functionality is provided to CM/ECF courts that gives them the option to determine if a document number should be assigned to a docket entry when a PDF document is filed. Instead of having a traditional document number, these docket entries will be displayed as “doc” on the Docket Sheet and other reports. The “doc” docket entry number will behave and display like all other docket entry numbers within the application. Any access restrictions applied to the event receiving a “doc” docket entry number will be respected.

Date Filed	#	Docket Text
04/08/2020	1	COMPLAINT against Brian Blue, Jonathan Harvey, filed by Luis A Lopez. (Toups, SysadminPVTD) (Entered: 05/08/2020)
04/13/2020	2	ANSWER to 1 Complaint with Jury Demand by Jonathan Harvey. (Toups, SysadminPVTD) (Entered: 05/08/2020)
04/20/2020	3	ANSWER to 1 Complaint with Jury Demand by Brian Blue. (Toups, SysadminPVTD) (Entered: 05/08/2020)
05/08/2020	4	SCHEDULING ORDER: Final Pretrial Conference set for 12/18/2020 04:00 PM in Ron Jessee Site 4 before Unice A Upsilon. Amended Pleadings due by 6/23/2020. Discovery due by 7/15/2020. Joinder of Parties due by 6/23/2020. Jury Trial set for 1/27/2021 09:00 AM in Courtroom 1 before Unice A Upsilon. Proposed Pretrial Order due by 1/4/2021.. Signed by Unice A Upsilon on 4/21/2020. (Toups, SysadminPVTD) (Entered: 05/08/2020)
05/08/2020	doc	MOTION to Substitute Attorney by Jonathan Harvey Motions referred to Ellen S Eighteen. Responses due by 5/11/2020 (Toups, SysadminPVTD) (Entered: 05/08/2020)
05/08/2020		ORDER granting [doc] MOTION to Substitute Attorney Motion to Substitute Attorney. Added attorney Henry Truong_DBTester for Jonathan Harvey. Attorney Chuck Attorney Fozard t erminated. Signed by Ellen S Eighteen on 5/8/2020. (Toups, SysadminPVTD) (Entered: 05/08/2020)
05/08/2020	5	MOTION for Extension of Time to File by Brian Blue, Jonathan Harvey Motions referred to Ellen S Eighteen. Responses due by 5/26/2020 (Toups, SysadminPVTD) (Entered: 05/08/2020)
05/28/2020	6	MOTION for Leave to Appear test by Brian Blue Motions referred to Ellen S Eighteen. Responses due by 6/15/2020 (Rieman, SysadminPVTD) (Entered: 05/28/2020)
05/28/2020	7	RESPONSE in Opposition re 6 MOTION for Leave to Appear test filed by Jonathan Harvey. (Graves, Rigel) (Entered: 05/28/2020)
06/18/2020	8	NOTICE of Appearance by Luis A Lopez (Toups, SysadminPVTD) (Entered: 06/18/2020)

If courts implement the use of “doc” for docket entries, users will not able to generate a Docket Sheet for limited docket entries by populating the “Documents __ to ___” or “Go to Document” field using non-numeric values, like “doc”. CM/ECF will return an error message as shown below.



6 New Defend Trade Secrets Act of 2016 Nature of Suit Code

The Statistics Subcommittee agreed to create a new Nature of Suit (NOS) for cases involving the Defend Trade Secrets Act of 2016. A new NOS Code (880) has been created to identify these cases. The nature of suit is effective October 1, 2020 and will be accompanied by an updated JS-44, Civil Cover Sheet. The AO will not accept JS-5/JS-6 or CJRA statistical records with NOS 880 for any cases filed prior to October 1, 2020. CM/ECF will not present the new nature of suit for selection until October 1, 2020.

7 Intermittent Filing Issues with White Screen

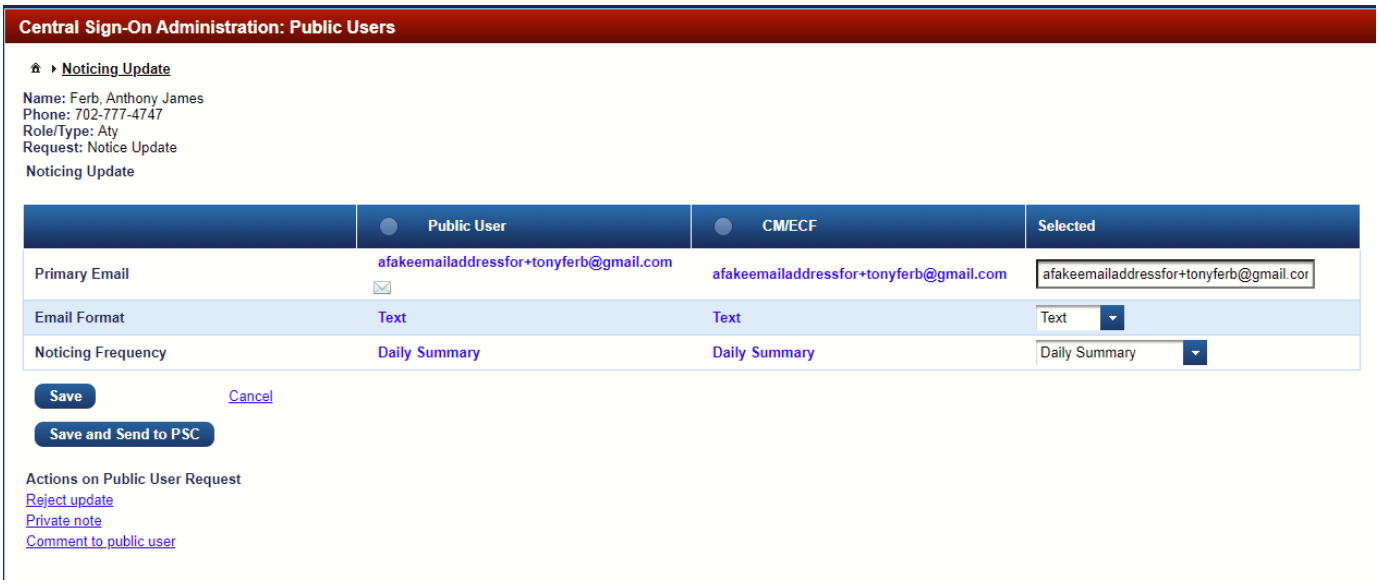
A court has reported intermittent filing issues where a white screen is displayed to attorneys, preventing the attorney from completing their filing. This issue has been fixed.

8 Blank Pages Viewing PDFs in Acrobat Reader

Some PDFs have an unusual structure for the page tree. If these documents are filed in CM/ECF, when a user attempts to open them in Acrobat Reader (not the browser), Acrobat will not display any of the document pages that may be corrupted (unusual page tree structure). If the documents are opened in a browser (IE/FF/Chrome), the PDF document opens, and no pages are missing. CM/ECF has been upgraded to prevent this problem, allowing all pages of the PDF and headers to display without errors.

9 Central Sign-On Noticing Updates Not Saved Correctly

Fixed an issue introduced in DC 1.5 where a public user's Noticing frequency and format preferences were not always saved per the selections made in the CSO Administration Utility. For example, due to this bug a noticing update could be submitted and appear with Each Transaction as the desired frequency, but it could be saved in the database as a Daily Summary when it is processed in the CSO utility. This has been resolved.



10 Pay.gov – Prevention of Duplicate Payments

Multiple courts have reported that outside users experience intermittent issues when using Pay.gov to pay for fees collected through CM/ECF docketing events. After entering their payment information in Pay.gov, the users receive an error message and the event will not complete in CM/ECF, however, payment was successful in Pay.gov. The users then re-attempt to file the event and pay the fees and docketing is successful in CM/ECF. The result is that the filer has been charged twice for the event and court staff must issue a refund.

This upgrade provides a solution to prevent the payment transaction from failing upon returning the user to CM/ECF.