



Clerk's Message

By: José A. Rodriguez, Clerk of Court

The Clerk's Office continues to experience significant growth and operational momentum as we move through 2026. Case filings remain elevated across all divisions, with a 28% increase as of May 2026 compared to the same period last year. The District has recorded 12,774 filings through the end of May, representing 2,700 more cases than this time last year. Division-level increases include Jacksonville up 35%, Orlando up 21%, Tampa up 28%, and Fort Myers up 27%. Nationally, the Middle District of Florida continues to rank among the busiest bankruptcy courts, placing 2nd in total filings, 1st in Subchapter V, 5th in Chapter 11, and 3rd in adversary proceedings for the 12-month period ending April 30, 2026.

The Court absorbed a 10% budget reduction for FY2026, and while FY2027 projections are still developing, current House proposals point to a possible 4–6% cut. Even so, we expect to receive additional staffing credit next fiscal year based on rising case filings. Recruitment remains active, with an IT Technician position underway in the Orlando Division, an HR Specialist in the Tampa Division, a Data Quality Analyst position, and we anticipate additional Case Manager hires in FY2027. We are also pleased to recognize the following individuals who have joined the Court family this year:

Jacksonville:

05/18/26 – Jonathon Destefano-Case Manager
05/18/26 – Naomi Wilson-IT Technician II
06/01/26 – Marc Sendra-Term Law Clerk (Judge Burgess)
06/29/26 – Nicko Wardana-IT Security Officer

Orlando:

01/12/26 – Melissa Haniff-Case Manager
06/01/26 – Jajahira Benitez-Case Manager
06/01/26 – Patrick McGee-Case Manager

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Tampa:

01/12/26 – Patricia Levy, Career Law Clerk (Judge Rivera)

02/23/26 – Pietro Walker-IT Support Supervisor

03/09/26 – Emma Billings-Case Manager

03/23/26 – Ohanna Fernandes-Case Manager

The Court recently completed an IT/Operations restructuring, establishing two specialized support teams within the IT Department. The CM/ECF Operations Team, led by Seth Bowe, will manage procedures, the Help Desk, forms, and the dictionary, as well as oversee programs that support change management and quality control. The Network/Support Team, led by Pietro Walker, will oversee technical support, cybersecurity, network infrastructure, courtroom audio/visual systems, and ongoing technology upgrades.

Technology initiatives remain a central focus for the Court. The Automated Docketing Interface (ADI) has successfully implemented automated Chapter 7 discharges and will expand to Chapter 13 later this year. The CM/ECF Version 1.9 upgrade is scheduled for January 2027, and the CHAP project is set to go live in early 2027. The Help Desk is refining its voice prompts to better direct callers to appropriate support resources, and staff contact information remains available on the Court's website.

Several major facilities projects are underway across the District. In Jacksonville, flooding required temporarily relocating Chief Judge Brown to Courtroom 4B while repairs and renovations proceed in his courtroom. In Fort Myers, the courtroom audio/visual system was installed in July. Renovations to Judge Rivera's Tampa chambers are also progressing following the recent award of a contract. In addition, we have completed the audio/visual design for the Orlando courtrooms and are now working on acquiring the necessary infrastructure to support installation later in the year.

With hurricane season underway, the Clerk's Office reminds all Court users that any closures will be announced on the Court's website and through e-blasts to ensure timely communication.

As we look toward the remainder of the year, I want to extend my sincere gratitude to our entire staff for your hard work, dedication, and unwavering commitment. Your innovation, teamwork, and daily professionalism have driven our success and created an environment where excellence and collaboration truly thrive. I am incredibly proud of what we have accomplished together and energized by the opportunities ahead. As we move forward, let's carry with us the perseverance and spirit of cooperation that define this team. No challenge is too great and no goal beyond reach when we work together. Thank you for your resilience, creativity, and steadfast dedication to our mission. It is a privilege to work alongside such talented individuals.