



## Supreme Court State of Tennessee

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### **CHIEF JUSTICE LEE OUTLINES MAJOR PLANS FOR UPCOMING YEAR**

**Knoxville, Tenn.** – The Tennessee Supreme Court has an aggressive agenda for the next year with the goals of improving the service the judiciary provides to attorneys and adapting to better meet the needs of litigants.

Chief Justice Sharon Lee outlined plans for the next year while speaking at the Knoxville Bar Association's Supreme Court Dinner, an annual event that honors the Court and the justices' work.

Chief Justice Lee highlighted one of the judiciary's newest efforts – creation of a court dedicated to handling business disputes. The Business Court launched in May in Davidson County and is open to cases from across the state that meet certain criteria. Lee emphasized that through the use of technology and better scheduling, the court has already begun to see results through an efficient process that meets the needs of everyone involved.

"It has been very well received by the bench, bar, and the business community," she said.

E-filing is just one of the tools on the horizon for the Business Court and the Supreme Court plans to also implement e-filing in the appellate courts. That will involve revising Supreme Court Rule 46, which has already been put out for public comment. There is

also at least one statute pertaining to court costs that would need to be updated. The goal is to have appellate e-filing in place by the fall of next year.

Indigent representation is another area the judiciary will focus on over the next year. The State of Tennessee spends more than \$36 million serving citizens and children who are constitutionally guaranteed representation. However, Lee pointed out that Tennessee lawyers performing this work are among the lowest paid in the country.

“We need to build a better mousetrap. We need a better way of doing things. We can’t keep doing the same thing and hoping for a different result,” Chief Justice Lee said.

She announced the formation of a task force that will study the overall system to determine how the state can deliver the right to counsel in a more efficient manner and seek out innovative concepts from other jurisdictions and determine how they could be implemented in Tennessee.

Chief Justice Lee also lauded the Access to Justice program, which continues to be the number one strategic initiative of the Court and is recognized nationally for its success. Through the support that the Court’s Access to Justice Commission provides to programs throughout the state, attorneys are reporting more pro bono hours, while 2,300 people received assistance through [OnlineTNJustice.org](http://OnlineTNJustice.org).

Another major initiative is a study of the time it takes for cases to work their way through the judicial process.

“People lose faith in a judicial system that takes too long to resolve cases,” Lee said.

Lee has tapped a group of trial court judges to study the issue and propose appropriate time standards to the Supreme Court for adoption. These standards will provide guidance to trial judges as to how long it should take to resolve cases.

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