



# THEsouthernscoop

Volume 6, Issue 1

Summer 2021

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## Status of Court Operations

On June 1, 2021, Chief District Judge J. Randal Hall issued [Standing Order MC 121-016](#) with an updated list of restrictions on persons entering any courthouse in the Southern District of Georgia. Each presiding judge shall retain the sole discretion to require those persons present at a court proceeding or entering chambers to wear a face mask or covering, honor social distancing requirements, or take additional pre-cautions as may be deemed appropriate. The Savannah, Augusta, and Brunswick courthouses also have drop boxes located in the foyers of each courthouse for your convenience.

Court hearings in the Brunswick, Savannah, Statesboro, and Waycross divisions remain telephonic until further notice. Unless directed otherwise, parties appearing in hearings in the Augusta and Dublin divisions before Judge Susan D. Barrett have the option to appear either telephonically or in person. Those attending in person shall abide by CDC social distancing guidelines and the Court's COVID-19 prevention measures.



The Court continues to monitor the national response to the COVID-19 pandemic and is taking precautions accordingly. Please check the Court's website at [www.gasb.uscourts.gov](http://www.gasb.uscourts.gov) often to stay informed of current operational status, including accessibility of the Court's buildings and hearing instructions.

## COURTHOUSE LOCATIONS

*AUGUSTA	*BRUNSWICK	DUBLIN	*SAVANNAH	STATESBORO	WAYCROSS
600 James Brown Blvd Augusta, GA 30901	801 Gloucester St Brunswick, GA 31520	100 N Franklin St Dublin, GA 31021	125 Bull St Savannah, GA 31401	52 N Main St Statesboro, GA 30458	601 Tebeau St Waycross, GA 31501
(706) 823-6000	(912) 280-1376	unstaffed	(912) 650-4100	unstaffed	unstaffed

\* Clerk's Office Hours: Monday through Friday 8:30 am to 5:00 pm

## Telephonic Hearing Information

Please read each Court notice carefully to determine if a hearing will be held telephonically or in-person (*or both*). For telephonic hearings, the Court is using the AT&T Reservationless Conferencing System, which is free of charge to all parties. Dial-in procedures and toll-free numbers for each of the judges are as follows:

- Dial the appropriate toll-free number as listed below for the judge assigned.
- Enter the access code associated with the toll-free number.
- Dial in at least 10 minutes prior to your scheduled hearing time.
- Place all phones on mute when your case is not being heard. Do not use the “speaker” function. Do not place the call on hold.
- Users are prohibited from recording or broadcasting the proceedings conducted by the Court.
- Identify yourself at the beginning of the call and each time you speak.

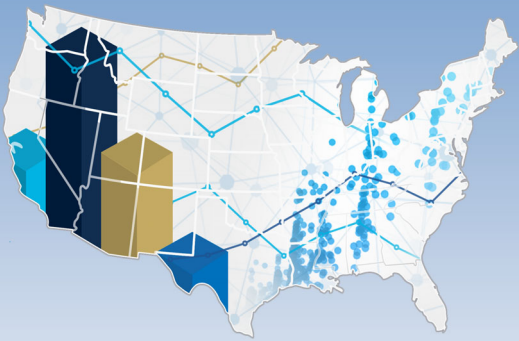
JUDGE COLEMAN	JUDGE BARRETT	JUDGE KIM
1-888-363-4749	1-888-363-4749	1-877-336-1280
Access Code: 8597913	Access Code: 7030574	Access Code: 5616052
Security Code: 0914	Security Code: 4172020	Security Code: 0423

## Current Case Management Digit Assignments

The following digits became effective June 15, 2021, and are subject to change periodically. Current case management digit assignments are also available on the Court’s website at [www.gasb.uscourts.gov](http://www.gasb.uscourts.gov) under *Court Info > General Information > Phone Directories and Case Management Digit Assignments*.

Case Administrator	Phone Number	Ch 13 cases including Adversaries	Ch 7 cases including Adversaries	Ch 7/13 Case Opening Digits	Ch 11/12 cases including Case Opening & Adversaries
Ruba (RAF)	(912) 280-1375	00 - 49 Bwk / Way	00 - 49 Bwk / Way	0, 2, 4, 6, 8 Bwk / Way	
Tory (TGG)	(912) 280-1369	50 - 99 Bwk / Way	50 - 99 Bwk / Way	1, 3, 5, 7, 9 Bwk / Way	
April R. (APR)	(912) 280-1378				All MJK
Holly (HKB)	(912) 650-4123	00 - 32 Sav / Stb	00 - 32 Sav / Stb	0, 1, 2 Sav / Stb	
Renaë (RTC)	(912) 650-4132	33 - 66 Sav / Stb	33 - 66 Sav / Stb	3, 4, 5, 6 Sav / Stb	
Laura (LLE)	(912) 650-4140	67 - 99 Sav / Stb	67 - 99 Sav / Stb	7, 8, 9 Sav / Stb	
Elizabeth (EMB)	(912) 650-4117				All EJC
Charlene (CCB)	(706) 823-6456	00 - 16 Aug / Dub	00 - 16 Aug / Dub	00 - 16 Aug / Dub	
Karen (KMS)	(706) 823-6019	17 - 32 Aug / Dub	17 - 32 Aug / Dub	17 - 32 Aug / Dub	
Betty (BJG)	(706) 823-6030	33 - 49 Aug / Dub	33 - 49 Aug / Dub	33 - 49 Aug / Dub	
Vonita (VWW)	(706) 823-6024	50 - 66 Aug / Dub	50 - 66 Aug / Dub	50 - 66 Aug / Dub	
Christina (CMT)	(706) 823-6034	67 - 83 Aug / Dub	67 - 83 Aug / Dub	67 - 83 Aug / Dub	
April G. (AKG)	(706) 823-6038	84 - 99 Aug / Dub	84 - 99 Aug / Dub	84 - 99 Aug / Dub	All SDB

*Aug = Augusta; Bwk = Brunswick; Dub = Dublin; Sav = Savannah; Stb = Statesboro; Way = Waycross*



## New Bankruptcy Filings Plummet 38.1%

*(Published on the U.S. Court's website May 3, 2021)*

Bankruptcy filings dropped 38.1 percent for the 12-month period ending March 31, 2021, a dramatic fall that coincided with the coronavirus (COVID-19), which first disrupted the economy in March 2020. According to statistics released by the Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts, the March 2021 annual bankruptcy filings totaled 473,349, compared with 764,282 cases in the previous year.

*To read the entire article, click on the link below:*

<https://www.uscourts.gov/news/2021/05/03/new-bankruptcy-filings-plummet-381-percent>

## Mary Ida Townson Appointed U.S. Trustee for Region 21

The U.S. Department of Justice has announced the appointment of Mary Ida Townson as the U.S. Trustee for Florida, Georgia, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. Ms. Townson assumed her duties in June and replaced Nancy Gargula, who is the U.S. Trustee in Region 10 and who served as the interim U.S. Trustee in Region 21 since April 2019.

To read the May 5, 2021 news release from the U.S. Department of Justice, please click the link below:

<https://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/mary-ida-townson-appointed-us-trustee-florida-georgia-puerto-rico-and-us-virgin-islands>

## New Chapter 7 Trustee - Paul A. Schofield

The United States Trustee has selected **Paul A. Schofield** to the Chapter 7 Bankruptcy Trustee panel for the Southern District of Georgia. Mr. Schofield has more than eleven years of bankruptcy experience, with ten years in private practice following his clerkship with the Honorable John S. Dalis. His experience in representing former Chapter 7 Trustee R. Michael Souther, debtors in Chapter 7, Chapter 11, and Chapter 13 bankruptcy cases, and creditors, will bring great value to the work he will perform as Chapter 7 Trustee. Mr. Schofield will serve as trustee in Chapter 7 cases filed primarily in the Brunswick and Waycross divisions.

## Upcoming Changes to Bankruptcy Rule 9036 Impacting High-Volume Paper Bankruptcy Notice Recipients



An amendment to Fed. R. Bankr. P. 9036 impacting high-volume paper bankruptcy notice recipients will become effective **December 1, 2021**. On that date, the Director of the Administrative Office (AO) will have authority to require that certain high-volume paper notice recipients receive court-generated bankruptcy notices electronically. The AO Director has initially set the threshold for application of the amended rule to entities that receive 100 or more paper bankruptcy notices in a single calendar month. This threshold will be reviewed annually and may be adjusted once a year effective on December 1st of each year.

In the coming weeks, the Bankruptcy Noticing Center (BNC) will begin outreach to the impacted high-volume paper notice recipients to assist them in preparing to receive electronic bankruptcy notices.

## Federal Rules Changes Effective December 1, 2021

The following rules amendments were approved by the Judicial Conference on September 15, 2020. The U.S. Supreme Court adopted these proposed amendments and transmitted them to the U.S. Congress on April 14, 2021. These amendments will become effective on December 1, 2021, absent congressional intervention:

**Federal Rules of Bankruptcy Procedure:** 2005, 3007, 7007.1, and 9036

**Federal Rules of Appellate Procedure:** 3 and 6, Forms 1 and 2

Click [HERE](#) for more information regarding the rule changes.

## New Chapter 11 Uniform Periodic Report Forms Required Effective June 21, 2021 (*Press Release*)

Effective June 21, 2021, Chapter 11 debtors in possession and trustees, with some exceptions, will be required to file monthly operating reports (MORs) and post-confirmation reports (PCRs) using streamlined, data-embedded, uniform forms in every case in every judicial district where the USTP operates. The new forms must be used for all report filings on or after June 21, 2021. The forms are available on the Court's website ([www.gasb.uscourts.gov](http://www.gasb.uscourts.gov)) under **Forms** > [Ch 11 Operating Reports effective June 21, 2021](#). Click [HERE](#) for more information from the U.S. Trustee Program website.

In the Southern District of Georgia Bankruptcy Court, two new docket events have been created in CM/ECF for the filing of the above-referenced reports:

Bankruptcy > Miscellaneous > **Chapter 11 Monthly Operating Report (UST Form 11-MOR)**

Bankruptcy > Miscellaneous > **Chapter 11 Post-Confirmation Report**



## Check for Unclaimed Funds!

Are you aware that unclaimed money may be available to claim if you were involved in a bankruptcy proceeding? **Visit the Court's Unclaimed Funds Locator to find out.** The Unclaimed Funds Locator is available on the Court's website ([www.gasb.uscourts.gov](http://www.gasb.uscourts.gov)) under *Court Information > Unclaimed Funds*. You can search by Creditor Name, Debtor Name, Case Number, Amount, or by Date (if known). You can also search any court in the country or limit your search to the Southern District of Georgia (GASB).

All unclaimed monies, including overpayments of filing fees are posted in the Unclaimed Funds Locator multiple times each month, so if you are aware of an overpayment, please check back regularly to see if your money has been posted. It is easy to apply for unclaimed funds and, once approved, your funds will be released. All applications are subject to approval by the presiding Judge.

For more information, please visit the Court's website at [www.gasb.uscourts.gov](http://www.gasb.uscourts.gov). There you will find all of the information needed to begin your application. Contact either the Administrative Analyst or the Budget/Finance Analyst at 912-650-4100 if you need further assistance.





## COVID-19 Bankruptcy Relief Extension Act of 2021

On March 27, 2021, President Biden signed into law the **COVID-19 Bankruptcy Relief Extension Act of 2021** ([H.R. 1651](#)), temporarily extending certain bankruptcy relief provisions that were enacted as part of last year's CARES Act **through March 27, 2022**.

Some of the key provisions of the extended Act include the following:

- Increased eligibility for the Small Business Reorganization Act (SBRA) for businesses filing under Subchapter V of Chapter 11; through March 27, 2022, businesses with debt up to \$7,500,000.00 are eligible to file a Chapter 11 Subchapter V case.
- Amending the definition of "income" in the Bankruptcy Code for Chapter 7 and Chapter 13 debtors to exclude Coronavirus-related payments for the purposes of filing bankruptcy.
- Clarifying that the calculation of disposable income for purposes of confirming a Chapter 13 Plan shall not include Coronavirus-related payments.
- Permitting certain Chapter 13 debtors to extend payments under a confirmed plan for up to seven (7) years if experiencing financial hardship due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

## Amendments to Miscellaneous Fee and Electronic Public Access Fee Schedules effective May 19, 2021

The Judicial Conference amended the Miscellaneous Fee Schedule to clarify when courts may charge a fee for insufficient funds. The following underlined language is new:

For any payment returned or denied for insufficient funds, or reversed due to a chargeback, \$53.

The Judicial Conference also approved an amendment to Section 9 of the Electronic Public Access (EPA) Fee Schedule to define "limited in scope" for the purposes of the academic research exemption. Section 9, as amended, states as follows (new language underlined):

(9) Discretionary Fee Exemptions:

[...]

- In considering granting an exemption, courts must find:
  - that those seeking an exemption have demonstrated that an exemption is necessary in order to avoid unreasonable burdens and to promote public access to information;
  - that individual researchers requesting an exemption have shown that the defined research project is intended for scholarly research, that it is limited in scope, and that it is not intended for redistribution on the internet or for commercial purposes. A request is limited in scope if the amount of exempt access requested is narrowly tailored to meet the needs of the defined research project.

Click [HERE](#) to view the most recent Bankruptcy Miscellaneous Fee Schedule.



The U.S. Bankruptcy Court for the Southern District of Georgia is preparing for the long-awaited migration to CM/ECF Next Generation (“NextGen”).

The Court is scheduled to “go live” on December 27, 2021, but you may notice changes to the program immediately, as we modify our CM/ECF menus to combine similar docket events and remove duplicate or obsolete docket events. As these changes are completed, CM/ECF filers may use the keyword Search feature in the blue menu bar at the top of the screen to locate a docket event if it is removed from a menu where it was previously located.

**IMPORTANT ACTION REQUIRED: All e-filers must upgrade their PACER accounts; each individual filer, including filing agents, must have a separate individual PACER account.**

More details are available on the Court’s NextGen webpage at  
[www.gasb.uscourts.gov/nextgen-information](http://www.gasb.uscourts.gov/nextgen-information).

## About NextGen

The Judiciary’s Case Management/Electronic Case Files (CM/ECF) system is the means by which judges, court staff, attorneys, and other public users electronically file, review, and download case information. The system is fully implemented in all federal courts.

The Judiciary is transitioning to a Next Generation of CM/ECF (NextGen). It was first released to a group of pilot courts in 2014 and a full transition is expected over several years. The first release includes a new sign-on functionality which gives users access to both PACER and electronic filing, for all NextGen courts in which the user is authorized to file electronically, from a single account.

### NextGen Goals

- Greater integration among the district, bankruptcy, and appellate systems
- Shared data with other Judiciary electronic systems
- More streamlined processes
- Greater consistency in user experience, especially for external users
- Greater efficiency by using new tools and technology



For assistance in creating new PACER accounts, upgrading your current account, or linking your upgraded PACER account after the NextGen implementation, contact the [PACER Service Center](https://www.pacer.uscourts.gov/help/pacer) at:

[pacer@psc.uscourts.gov](mailto:pacer@psc.uscourts.gov)

(800) 676-6856

<https://pacer.uscourts.gov>

### PACER Electronic Learning Modules:

<https://www.pacer.uscourts.gov/help/pacer>

<https://www.pacer.uscourts.gov/help/cmecf>

### FAQs:

<https://www.pacer.uscourts.gov/help/faqs>



## What's NEW with CM/ECF Bankruptcy Events

### New Docket Events

Under Motions/Applications menu: **Motion for Judgment on the Pleadings.**

Under Miscellaneous menu: **Supplemental Proof of Claim for CARES Forbearance Claim.** This event does not assign a document number, but assigns a document hyperlink that is available on both the Docket Report and Claims Register (*in the history section of the related claim*).

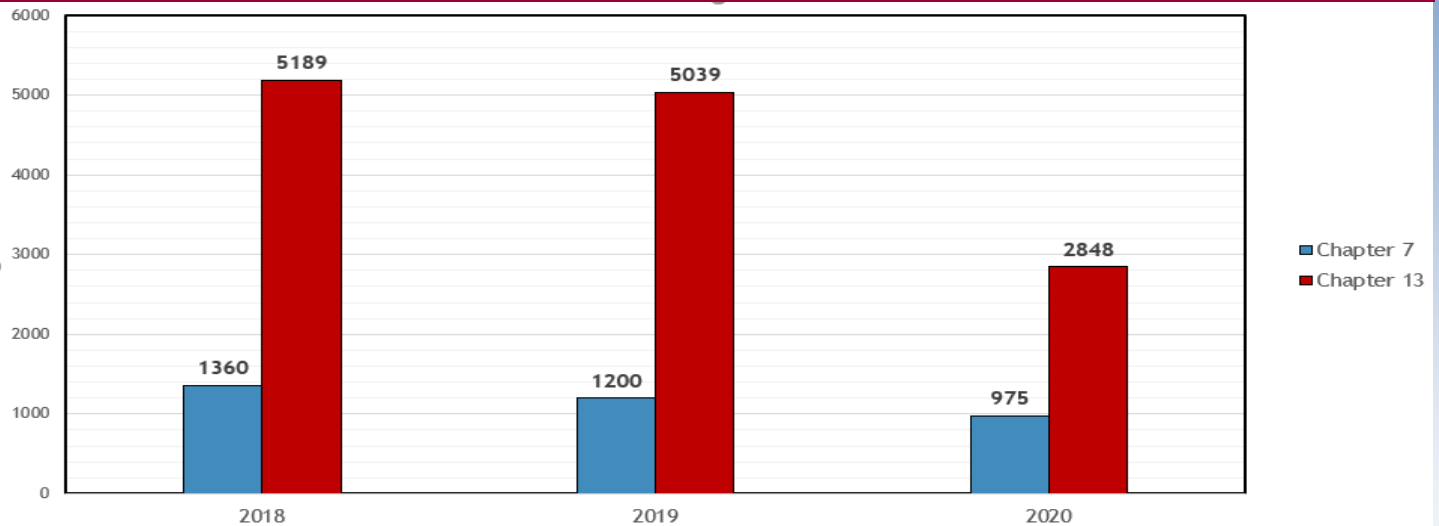
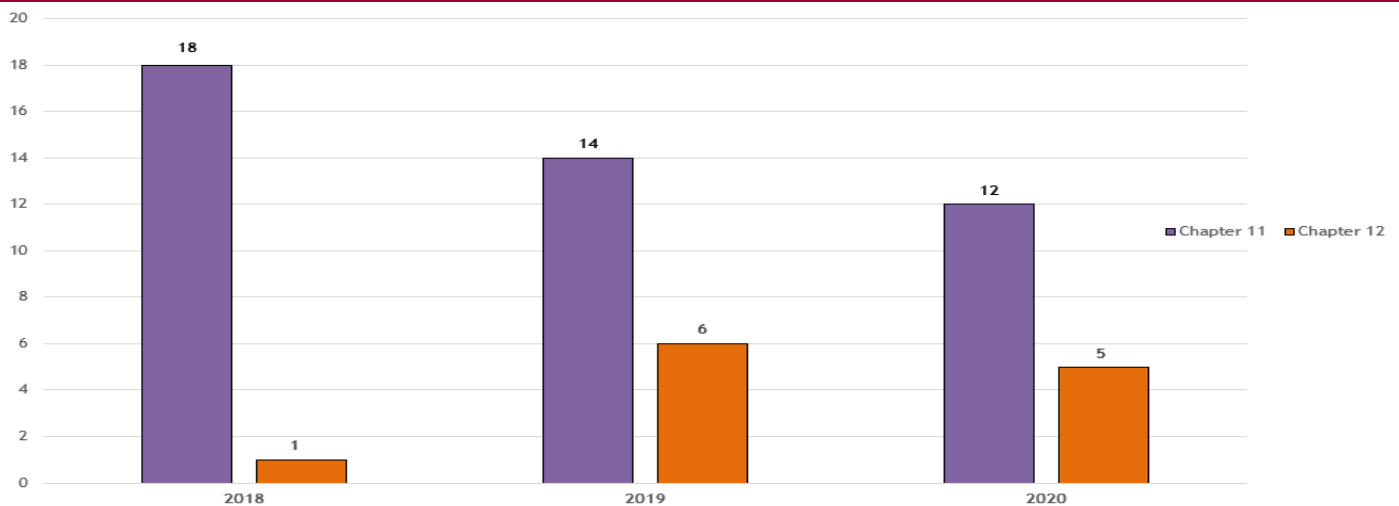
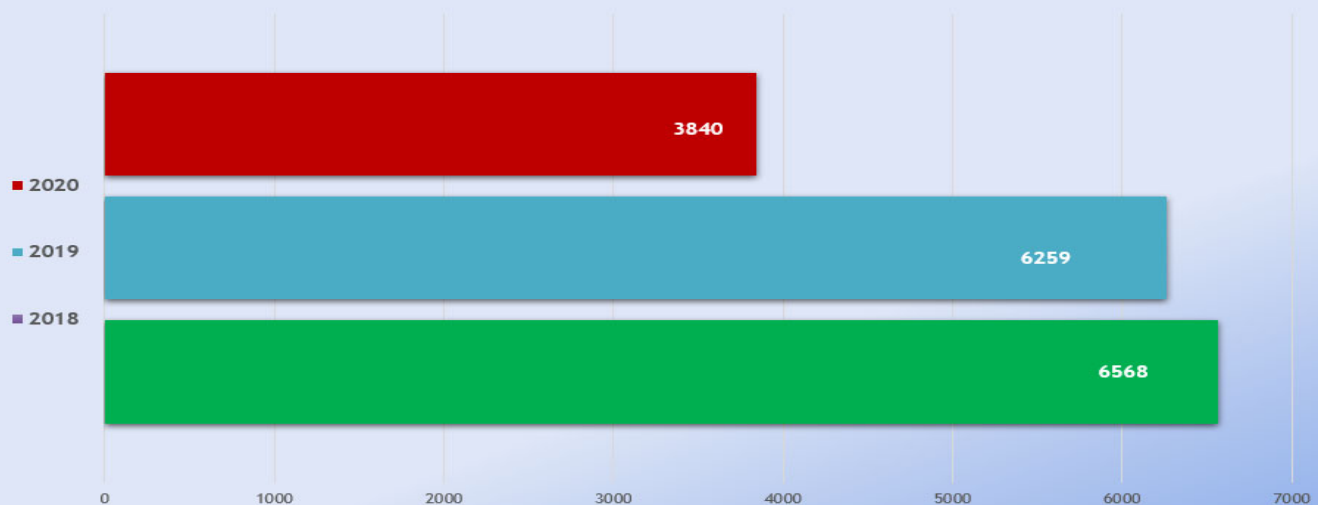
### Modified Docket Events

- **Motion to Allow/Reclassify/Reconsider Claim(s)** (*Motions/Applications*)—the image is no longer restricted, and filers are prompted to docket supporting documentation for unclaimed funds separately from the application. This event also replaces the docket event entitled “Motion to File Claim After Claims Bar Date.”

### Combined Docket Events

- Combined Certificate of Service and Amended Certificate of Service into one event entitled **Certificate of Service/Amended Certificate of Service** in the Miscellaneous menu.
- Combined Transfer of Claim and Amended Transfer of Claim into one event entitled **Transfer of Claim/Amended Transfer of Claim** in the Claim Actions menu.
- Combined Notice of Mortgage Payment Change and Notice of Mortgage Payment Change (No Proof of Claim Filed) into one event entitled **Notice of Mortgage Payment Change** in the Claim Actions menu.
- Combined Notice of Postpetition Mortgage Fees, Expenses, and Charges and Notice of Postpetition Mortgage Fees, Expenses, and Charges (No Proof of Claim Filed) into one event entitled **Notice of Postpetition Mortgage Fees, Expenses, and Charges** in the Claim Actions menu.
- Combined Response to Notice of Final Cure Payment Rule 3002.1 and Response to Notice of Final Cure Payment Rule 3002.1 (No Proof of Claim Filed) into one event entitled **Response to Notice of Final Cure Payment Rule 3002.1** in the Claim Actions menu.



**Ch. 7 & 13 Case Filings by Chapter for 12-Month Period Ending 12/31/2020****Ch. 11 & 12 Case Filings by Chapter for 12-Month Period Ending 12/31/2020****Total Case Filings (All Chapters) for 12-Month Period Ending 12/31/2020**

Statistical data is available to the public on the Judiciary's website at:  
<https://www.uscourts.gov/statistics-reports/caseload-statistics-data-tables>

# Employee News

## New Hires and Promotions

### *Shannon Auvil, Law Clerk to Judge Kim*



**Shannon Auvil** has returned to the Court family as Judge Kim's career law clerk effective January 25, 2021. Shannon served as Judge Kim's term law clerk from 2017 to 2019. Between clerkships, she gained experience as a litigation attorney at Swift, Currie, McGee & Hiers, LLP in Atlanta. Shannon is a graduate of the University of Alabama School of Law, and previously interned with the U.S. Army JAG Corps at Fort Belvoir, Virginia as well as with the Honorable L. Scott Coogler, U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Alabama. When returning to work for the Southern District of Georgia, Shannon recalled the "excellent relationships [she] made as Judge Kim's law clerk and the importance of the work of the bankruptcy court." Welcome back, Shannon! We are thrilled to be working with you again.

### *Elizabeth Bonanni, Courtroom Deputy to Chief Judge Coleman*



**Elizabeth Bonanni** was promoted to Courtroom Deputy to Chief Judge Edward J. Coleman, III in December 2020. Elizabeth has been an employee of the Bankruptcy Court for the Southern District of Georgia for four years. She began her court career in 2017 as a Case Administrator in the Savannah division, and served as the Electronic Court Recording Operator (ECRO) for Judge Coleman. She also serves as the Chapter 11/12 Clerk for Judge Coleman. Elizabeth attended Valdosta State University, where she earned Bachelor of Arts degrees in both Political Science and History. Congratulations, Elizabeth!

### *Tory Grandison, Case Administrator*



Please welcome **Tory Grandison** to our Court family. A certified paralegal, Tory has over twenty years of experience managing civil and criminal litigation cases, including almost thirteen years working in the Offices of the Federal Public Defenders in Nevada and Colorado. Prior to rejoining the federal workforce, she worked for the national law firm Hall Booth Smith, P.C. in their Brunswick office. Tory began her tenure as a Case Administrator in the Brunswick division of the Bankruptcy Court for the Southern District of Georgia on April 26, 2021. Her extensive experience in the legal field will help her to become a great success in the Bankruptcy Clerk's Office. Welcome to the team, Tory!

## Recent Retirements

### *Best Wishes to Nikki Ventura*

Nikki Ventura retired on December 31, 2020 after thirty-five years of service with the Federal Judiciary.

Nikki began her federal service in September 1985 with the United States Court of Appeals, Fifth Circuit, where she served as Secretary to the Assistant Circuit Executive for Space and Facilities.

In 1994, Nikki relocated to Savannah, Georgia, and began working for the United States Bankruptcy Court, Southern District of Georgia. Nikki held several key operations and administrative positions within the Court; she served as Administrative Assistant to the Clerk of Court, Personnel Specialist, Human Resources Manager, Case Administrator, and Courtroom Deputy to Judge Lamar W. Davis, Jr. In November 2014, she was appointed as Courtroom Deputy to Chief Judge Edward J. Coleman, III.

Nikki is enjoying retirement and spending time with her grandchildren. She works a few days a week at Compass Realty and Property Management, which is owned by her daughter Shallyn Watt. In her spare time, Nikki is taking painting lessons, doing some gardening, and redecorating her home.

Congratulations Nikki!

*We will  
miss  
you* ♥





## Georgia Southern Employee Featured in “Columns & Rows”

The Court’s very own Wendy Peña, the Budget/Finance Analyst for the Georgia Southern Bankruptcy Court, was recently featured in “Columns & Rows,” a financial newsmagazine produced by the Administrative Office’s Finance and Procurement Office. The news outlet provides news and information for the judiciary’s financial community.

In a recent edition covering Unclaimed Funds Updates, Wendy presented as part of an expert panel, discussing and highlighting best practices for unclaimed funds, and providing information about the ongoing efforts to help courts across the country disburse unclaimed funds. A special task force of the Bankruptcy Committee has been working on policies and procedures to get more claimants their money.

For more information regarding Unclaimed Funds and how to locate them, refer to **page 5** of this newsletter.

Great job on your presentation, Wendy! We are very proud of your efforts.



## Georgia Southern Bankruptcy Participates in 2021 Legal Food Frenzy



In an effort to fight hunger in Georgia, the 10th Annual Legal Food Frenzy campaign was held virtually from April 19 to April 30, 2021, with fundraising taking place online due to the Coronavirus pandemic. The Georgia Legal Food Frenzy is an annual two-week fundraising competition created in partnership with the Georgia Attorney General, the State Bar and Young Lawyers Division, and the Georgia Food Bank Association. The competition is open to everyone in the legal community to see which law firm, legal organization, and corporate/in-house counsel can have the biggest impact on hunger. The money raised benefits the regional food banks that serve the local community.



1 in 4 kids in Georgia is estimated to be at risk for hunger post-COVID; with every \$1 raised, the food banks can distribute \$8 worth of groceries into the community. From this year’s campaign, law firms and legal organization across Georgia raised an estimated \$815,502.85 to fight hunger in the State of Georgia!

For more information regarding Georgia Legal Food Frenzy, please visit their website at [GALegalFoodFrenzy.org](https://GALegalFoodFrenzy.org).

## NCBC LEAD Academy Participants

### *Congratulations to Elizabeth Bonanni, Laura Edenfield, and April Rowe*

We are pleased to announce that Clerk's Office employees Elizabeth Bonanni, Laura Edenfield, and April Rowe were recently selected to participate in the National Conference of Bankruptcy Clerks (NCBC) 2021 LEAD Academy. The LEAD Academy (Leadership, Excellence, Achievement, and Development) is a four-month leadership development program designed to encourage non-supervisory court employees to lead in place, utilizing a blended approach that includes completing foundational material, partnering with a mentor, attending a LEAD Academy Workshop, and creating a self-development plan.

Congratulations to these employees—we are proud of you and we look forward to your future successes.



## Employee Spotlight



**Christina Toole**

*Case Administrator  
Augusta, GA*

**Christina Toole** is a Case Administrator in the Augusta Division of the U.S. Bankruptcy Court for the Southern District of Georgia. She has been employed with the Court for twenty years as of May 29, 2021, beginning her federal career as a Records and Reproduction Clerk, and worked in the Clerk's Office case opening department before being promoted to the position of Case Administrator.

Christina's sweet smile and demeanor light up the Clerk's Office every day, and everyone enjoys working alongside her in Augusta. Her customer service skills are bar none - with her positive attitude and willingness to help, she represents the Court with grace and honor. By conducting numerous training classes, she has helped to teach many external filers how to file electronically in the Court's CM/ECF system.

Christina is married to Ron Toole and together they have two children, Emily and Andrew. In addition to spending time with family, Christina also enjoys being outdoors. Please view the next page of this newsletter for Christina's encouraging article on surviving COVID.

*The following employees are celebrating  
the following milestones this year:*

#### **10 Years**

Renae Creel

#### **20 Years**

Christina Toole

Wendy Pena

Lainie Saul

#### **30 Years**

Jacqueline Bauknight

**Celebrating**



**GASB**

**Milestones**



# Surviving COVID: Focus on the Good

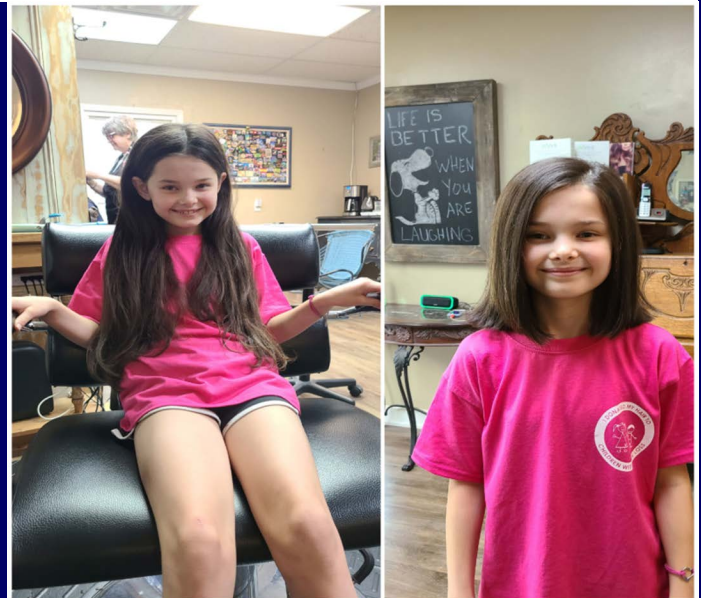
*By: Christina Toole, Case Administrator, Augusta, GA*

Over the past year, I have learned that life is shorter than we think. We each have our own timeline and we are never guaranteed what tomorrow holds. Many people have lost jobs, homes, and loved ones to COVID. In fact, there is not much that COVID has *not* affected, but through all of the gloom and doom there have been some rays of sunshine.

During the last fourteen months, our Court family in the Southern District of Georgia was able to navigate the world of teleworking. Teleworking had its challenges, but we all came together and worked hard to meet those challenges head-on and with amazing results. Having the ability to conduct court hearings telephonically was an enormous success because we were able to continue the work of the Court and maintain the Court's standard of excellence and customer service. While other courts went for months unable to conduct hearings, the Southern District of Georgia federal courts had the opportunity to continue proceedings. Everyone in the Clerk's Office stepped up and took on extra duties and did what needed to be done. As a result, I feel that we have grown stronger together as a court unit and team, and I can't wait to see what great things will be accomplished in the future. We are excited to see faces in our courtrooms again soon.

In my personal life, I have been able to slow down and to enjoy spending time with my husband and children. I don't think I realized how much we were always on the go before COVID. I was forced to learn how to telework with my son and daughter surrounding me (*sorry to those who could hear them in the background during our phone calls*), homeschool (*elementary school*), and cook what felt like one hundred meals a day. I had to learn how to relax and let my kids play outside until dark and jump into muddy puddles after a rainstorm. I am so blessed to have experienced a lot of teachable moments with my little ones. The pandemic has taught us all to love and to be kind to others. My children made meals to take to quarantined families, made gifts for our neighbors during the Christmas holidays, and my daughter selflessly gave 13 inches of her hair, which was cut and donated to kids battling cancer.

Yes, COVID has taken a lot from us all but let's focus on the good that has come from this pandemic over the last year. Let us all try to reach out and do something good for someone else and turn this around. I know we all look forward to getting back to normal in the days and months ahead.



# A Friendly Reminder

## CM/ECF User Logins

Please remember that the user login and password required to submit documents to the CM/ECF system serve as the Filing User's signature on all electronic documents filed with the Court.

No Filing User or other person may knowingly permit or allow a Filing User's password to be used by anyone other than an authorized agent for the Filing User. Once registered, the attorney bears the ultimate responsibility for all documents filed with his or her login.

Refer to this Court's [CM/ECF Administrative Procedures](#) and [ECF Local Rule 8](#) for more details.

## Is your motion *really* generic?

When filing in CM/ECF, use the **Search** feature in the blue menu bar before docketing the *motion generic* event or the generic *amendment* event. The **Search** tool helps you locate menus and events in CM/ECF that are applicable to your pleading. Also, make sure to docket amended motions using the *Amended Motion* docket event.

## Formatting Guidelines in CM/ECF

When filing a new bankruptcy case or pleading in CM/ECF, please use the following formatting guidelines:

- Do not use ALL CAPS when entering case information.
- When placing a caption on pleadings, check the CM/ECF docket to ensure the information is correct. Add debtors or other parties to cases using names and addresses exactly as they appear on the document being filed.
- For proper noticing - when adding a party care of (c/o) an attorney, do not use any symbols, if possible; if not, leave a space before and after an ampersand (&), and instead of using "c/o Attorney" add the attorney's name. For example:

Test Creditor  
Joe A. Attorney  
123 Test Street  
City, State, Zip Code

- Add a period after middle initials and abbreviations such as St., Dr., etc.
- Check grammar and spelling before filing a pleading in CM/ECF.

# Are you overpaying?



**STOP** and LOOK before you pay a filing fee.

There are numerous places within CM/ECF where you can check to see how much of the filing fee has been paid in a case. Overpayments are not automatically returned, and if you discover an overpayment, you must request the funds back from the Court by filing a Motion to Refund Court Fees. Checking to see how much has been paid to the Court **BEFORE** paying a filing fee saves both you and Court staff a lot of time in correcting any fee deficiencies or overpayments.

The methods you can use in CM/ECF to check to see how much has been paid in a case are:

- \* **Search the docket report** of the case for all receipts (*click CTRL+F and type "receipt"*). All receipts docketed in the case will be highlighted. Add each installment payment receipted to see how much has been paid in total.
- \* **Click QUERY on the main menu bar**; enter the case number and click "Filing Fee." The query will display the original fee amount owed, the receipt numbers for payments in the case, the amounts paid, and any outstanding balance owed. All overpayments will show as negative amounts.
- \* **Click REPORTS on the main menu bar**, and select "Installment Fee Tracking Report." This report shows a full list of all Chapter 13 cases that have not yet been confirmed, and Chapter 7 cases with outstanding balances that have not been discharged or closed. If the "Balance" column of the report shows a negative amount, there has been an overpayment. This report can be sorted by column by clicking on any of the underlined headers (*e.g., to sort by attorney name, click "Debtor's Attorney" and the report will sort and display the list of attorney names in alphabetical order*).



If you overpay filing fees, you may file with the Court a Motion to Refund Court Fees to have the funds credited back to the credit card with which the initial payment was made. Alternatively, you can request that the funds be sent to the Chapter 13 Trustee (*in a Chapter 13 case*) and credited toward the debtor's plan payments. A Motion to Refund Court Fees and Proposed Order must specify who is to receive the refunded payment.

Please do not hesitate to contact the Budget/Finance Analyst at 912-650-4139 if you have any questions regarding fees in a bankruptcy case. It is much more efficient to be proactive and call with questions than to overpay and wait to get the money back.

# Tips & Tricks

## Debtor Electronic Bankruptcy Noticing (DeBN)

Debtor Electronic Bankruptcy Noticing (DeBN) is a FREE and voluntary service that allows debtors to receive delivery of court notices and orders from the bankruptcy court, through the Bankruptcy Noticing Center (BNC) via email instead of U.S. Mail. For more information or to sign up, visit the Court's website at [www.gasb.uscourts.gov](http://www.gasb.uscourts.gov) and complete the request form for **Debtor's Electronic Noticing Request (DeBN)** located under *Programs and Information* > *Debtor Electronic Bankruptcy Noticing (DeBN)*.



## Proofread documents before filing!

Before filing a document in the CM/ECF database, please check to make sure the basic requirements have been met:

- ✓ The document is captioned with the correct court district, division, debtor name, case number, and chapter;
- ✓ The document contains an original or electronic signature of the filer;
- ✓ Any exhibits/attachments referenced in the document are attached;
- ✓ Certificate of service with date and signature is included; proper parties have been served at the address on record with the court.



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[www.gasb.uscourts.gov](http://www.gasb.uscourts.gov)

The Court's website is frequently updated with notifications regarding court operations during severe weather, unforeseen circumstances occurring in our area, and COVID-19, as well as new or modified administrative and general orders and procedures. Registration with Gov Delivery also enables you to receive updates from other courts with which you may be affiliated. Sign up using the link under the "News & Announcements" section at the bottom of the Court's home page.



**THE COURTHOUSE WILL BE CLOSED IN OBSERVANCE OF THE  
FOLLOWING UPCOMING FEDERAL HOLIDAYS**

July 5	Independence Day	Monday
September 6	Labor Day	Monday
October 11	Columbus Day	Monday
November 11	Veterans Day	Thursday
November 25	Thanksgiving Day	Thursday
December 24	Christmas Day	Friday

**CM/ECF and PACER will be available for online filing and access to case information.**

A special thank you to the following folks who contributed to this edition of *The Southern Scoop*\*:

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*Nikki Ventura*

*Carla Wilbourn*



**Have a great summer!**

*\*For questions, comments, or corrections regarding this newsletter, please email:*

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