

United States District Court  
Northern District of Texas



Opening a Civil Case / Filing a Complaint  
(Updated 3/2022)

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## **A. Introduction**

This document is intended to guide a licensed attorney who is a registered user of ECF through the process of opening a public civil case in ECF. It also explains how to docket the complaint or other initiating document, during which you will pay the filing fee (if one is due) and request the clerk to issue a summons, if desired.

For questions concerning electronic civil case opening, please contact your [local clerk's office](#) or [ECF Help Desk](#).

You may electronically file the following initiating documents:

- Application for Writ of Garnishment;
- Complaint;
- Notice of Removal;
- Petition for Writ of Habeas Corpus; or
- Petition for Writ of Mandamus
- Petition to Enforce IRS Summons (filed by the U.S. Attorney)

The Complaint event, as explained on page 21, may also be used to docket other types of matters, such as:

- Motion to Quash Administrative Summons or Subpoena; or
- Motion to Quash an IRS Subpoena or Application to Enjoin under 12 U.S.C. § 3410 (Customer Challenge case);

## B. Opening a Civil Case

Before you begin, have the following available and saved as separate Portable Document Format (PDF) files, each one no larger than 35 MB:

1. The Complaint, Notice of Removal (NOR), or other initiating document,
2. Any exhibits thereto,
3. A completed [Civil Cover Sheet](#) (and for an NOR, a [Supplemental Cover Sheet](#)), and
4. The [Certificate of Interested Persons](#), and
5. A valid credit or debit card (VISA, MasterCard, American Express, Discover, Diner's Club) to pay the required filing fee (if one is due).

Note: If your document references a document that was previously filed in ECF, you may create a hyperlink in the current document to the previously filed document. Additionally, you may create a hyperlink in your current document to any attachment you intend to upload at the same time you docket the current document. For instructions on creating these hyperlinks, please see the [Cross-Document Hyperlinks](#) manual;

To file a new civil case using ECF, log into the system and select "Civil" on the main menu bar. See Figure 1.



Figure 1

Click on the link [Open a Civil or Miscellaneous Case](#). See Figure 2.

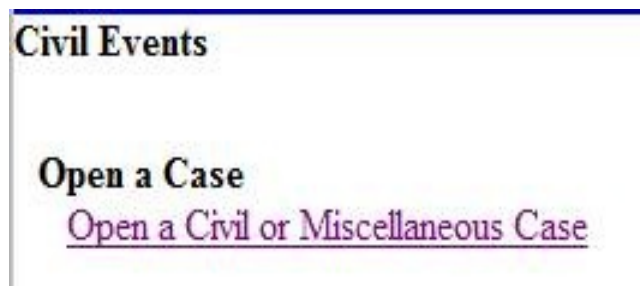


Figure 2

**WARNING:** A sealed case may not be electronically filed at this time. Select Civil (cv) and click the [Next] button. See Figure 3.

**Open a Civil or Miscellaneous Case**

What type of case are you filing?

Civil (cv)  
 (Ex. Complaint, Notice of Removal, Application for Writ of Garnishment, Petition for Writ of Habeas Corpus, Petitions to Enforce/Quash Administrative Summons, etc.)

Miscellaneous (mc)  
 (Ex. Motion to Quash/Compel Subpoena, Registration of Judgment, Registration of Appointment of Receiver, etc.)

**Figure 3**

Review the message and click the [Next] button. See Figure 4.

**Open a Civil or Miscellaneous Case**

**IMPORTANT:**  
 To receive a file mark of this date, before midnight Central time today, you must both open the case AND docket the initiating document.

In order for ECF to properly assign a case number, at the top of the next screen, select the **correct Office** and the **type mc (miscellaneous)** case. (Click here for complete instructions on [Opening a Miscellaneous Case.](#))

After you docket the initiating document, the Notice of Electronic Filing you receive will display the case number and the alpha-designation of the judge assigned to your case.

**Figure 4**

The Open a Civil Case screen appears. See Figure 5.

**Open a Civil or Miscellaneous Case**

Office  Case type

Date filed: 5/10/2016

Other court name

Other court number

JPML number

**Figure 5**

- Select the appropriate divisional **Office** for this case from the drop-down list.

**WARNING:** It is critical that you select the appropriate divisional office, as an error will delay your case.

- Select the default **Case type**, which is “cv” for Civil.

- If filing a Notice of Removal from state court, enter the court name in the **Other court name** field (e.g., 302<sup>nd</sup> Judicial District). Enter the case number from the other court in the **Other court number** field.
- The **JPML number** is a 1-4 digit number assigned by the Judicial Panel on Multidistrict Litigation. The JPML creates an MDL docket number when it determines that civil cases involving the same issue, but filed in different courts, should be consolidated in one court for pretrial proceedings. Enter the JPML number, if applicable, and click **[Next]** to continue.

### C. Entering the JS 44 /Civil Cover Sheet Information

Most of the information needed to complete this screen is on the civil cover sheet. See Figure 6.

**Open a Civil or Miscellaneous Case**

**Jurisdiction** 3 (Federal Question) ▼

**Cause of action** [ ] ▼ Filter: [ ] Clear filter

**Nature of suit** 0 (zero) ▼ Filter: [ ] Clear filter

**Origin** 1 (Original Proceeding) ▼

**Citizenship plaintiff** [ ] ▼

**Citizenship defendant** [ ] ▼

**Jury demand** n (None) ▼ **Class action** n (No Class Action Alleged) ▼ **Demand (\$000)** [ ]

**Arbitration code** [ ] ▼ **County** Anderson ▼

**Fee status** pd (paid) ▼ **Fee date** 5/10/2016 **Date transfer** [ ]

Next Clear

**Figure 6**

Enter the **Jurisdiction** code. See Figure 7.

**Jurisdiction** 4 (Diversity) ▼

**Cause of action** 1 (U.S. Government Plaintiff)

2 (U.S. Government Defendant)

**Nature of suit** 3 (Federal Question)

4 (Diversity)

**Origin** 5 (Local Question)

**Figure 7**

If there is more than one basis for jurisdiction, select the basis for jurisdiction by giving precedence in the following order.

1. U.S. Government Plaintiff - Jurisdiction based on 28 U.S.C. §1345 and §1348. Suits by agencies and officers of the United States are included.
2. U.S. Government Defendant - The plaintiff is suing the United States, its officers or agencies.
3. Federal Question - Suits brought under 28 U.S.C. §1331, where jurisdiction arises under the Constitution of the United States, an amendment to the Constitution, an act of Congress, or a treaty of the United States.
4. Diversity of Citizenship - Suits brought under 28 U.S.C. §1332, where parties are citizens or businesses of different states or countries. Citizenship for plaintiff and defendant must be entered in the corresponding fields. See Figure 9.
5. Local Question - **This option is not currently used. Do not select this option.**

Select the **Cause of action** and the **Nature of suit** code from the drop down lists or use the **Filter** fields to filter the cause of action and nature of suit pick lists. Both fields will accept up to 10 alpha-numeric characters. Once you begin entering data in the filter field, the corresponding pick list limits the selections to just the items that match the filter string. Enter either partial or complete filter information to locate the cause of action or nature of suit. To change the filter, type over the entered characters, or click the **[Clear filter]** button. Clicking the **[Clear filter]** button returns the cause of action or nature of suit drop down list to its complete list. See Figure 8.

The screenshot shows two rows of form fields. The first row is for 'Cause of action', with a dropdown menu showing '28:1332fr (28:1332 Diversity-Fraud)', a 'Filter:' field containing 'Diversity', and a 'Clear filter' button. The second row is for 'Nature of suit', with a dropdown menu showing '370 (Fraud or Truth-In-Lending)', a 'Filter:' field containing '370', and a 'Clear filter' button.

**Figure 8**

When entering an **Origin** code, choose 1 (Original Proceeding) unless you are filing a Notice of Removal, in which case, choose 2 (Removal from State Court). All other options are for internal use only. See Figure 9.

The screenshot shows a dropdown menu for 'Origin' with the following options: 1 (Original Proceeding), 2 (Removal from State Court), 3 (Remand from USCA), 4 (Reinstated/Reopened Case), 5 (Transfer-in from Other District), and 6 (Transfer-in per MDL Order). The first option is selected. Below the dropdown are several other form fields: 'Citizenship plaintiff' (with '1 (Original Proceeding)' selected), 'Citizenship defendant', 'Jury demand' (with 'n (No)' selected), 'Arbitration code', 'Fee status' (with 'pd (paid)' selected), and 'Next' and 'Clear' buttons.

**Figure 9**

If jurisdiction is based on diversity (see Figure 6, above), enter **Citizenship plaintiff** and **Citizenship defendant**. See Figure 10. Otherwise, skip this step.

**Citizenship plaintiff** 1 (Citizen of This State) ▼  
**Citizenship defendant** 5 (Incorporated/Principal Place of Business-Other State) ▼

**Figure 10**

If no jury demand has been made, leave the **Jury demand** field at its default of “n (None).” If you are making a jury demand in your complaint, or if a jury demand was made in the state court action, choose the appropriate code to indicate whether the jury demand was made by the defendant, plaintiff, or both. See Figure 11.

**Jury demand** n (None) ▼  
b (Both)  
d (Defendant)  
n (None)  
p (Plaintiff)

**Figure 11**

If you are requesting class action certification, change the **Class Action** field from “n” to “y.” See Figure 12.

**Class action** n (No Class Action Alleged) ▼

**Figure 12**

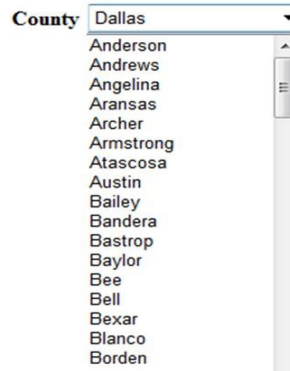
If applicable, enter the monetary **Demand (\$000)** of the plaintiff. This must be entered in thousands, rounded to the nearest thousand dollars. For example, if the demand is for \$149,800, enter “150.” Do not include the dollar sign. See Figure 13.

**Demand (\$000)** 150

**Figure 13**



With the exception of a case in which jurisdiction is based on the plaintiff being the United States, in the **County** field, enter the name of the county where the first listed plaintiff resides at the time of filing. In U.S. plaintiff cases, enter the name of the county in which the first listed defendant resides at the time of filing. (NOTE: In land condemnation cases, the county of residence of the “defendant” is the location of the tract of land involved.) See Figure 14.

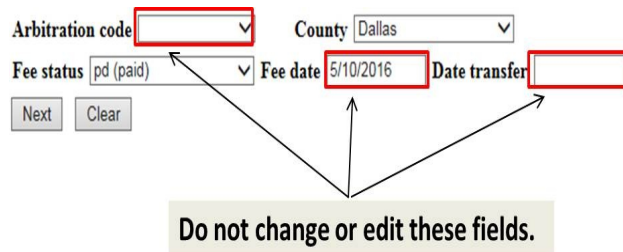


County Dallas

- Anderson
- Andrews
- Angelina
- Aransas
- Archer
- Armstrong
- Atascosa
- Austin
- Bailey
- Bandera
- Bastrop
- Baylor
- Bee
- Bell
- Bexar
- Blanco
- Borden

**Figure 14**

If the case filing fee is waived, or if you are filing on behalf of the United States, change the **Fee status** field to “wv (waived or USA).” If an Application to Proceed In Forma Pauperis will be included with the initiating document you file, change the **Fee status** field to “ifp (in forma pauperis).” Otherwise, leave the **Fee status** field at its default of “pd (paid).” All other selections are for internal use only. See Figure 15.



Arbitration code [red box] County Dallas

Fee status pd (paid) Fee date 5/10/2016 Date transfer [red box]

Next Clear

**Do not change or edit these fields.**

**Figure 15**

After selecting or entering all of the required information on the Open a Civil or Miscellaneous Case screen, click the [Next] button. See Figure 16.

**Open a Civil or Miscellaneous Case**

Jurisdiction 4 (Diversity)

Cause of action 28:1332fr (28:1332 Diversity-Fraud) Filter: Diversity

Nature of suit 370 (Fraud or Truth-In-Lending) Filter: 370

Origin 1 (Original Proceeding)

Citizenship plaintiff 1 (Citizen of This State)

Citizenship defendant 5 (Incorporated/Principal Place of Business-Other State)

Jury demand n (None) Class action n (No Class Action Alleged) Demand (\$000) 150

Arbitration code  County Dallas

Fee status pd (paid) Fee date 5/10/2016 Date transfer

Figure 16

A warning screen appears. Read the warning message and click [Next]. See Figure 17.

**Open a Civil or Miscellaneous Case**

**WARNING: Add opposing counsel information in removal actions ONLY! The clerk will remove attorney information for any attorney who has not appeared in the case. If you do not file your initiating document immediately, this case number may be voided and reassigned.**

Figure 17

## D. Adding Party Information

The Party Addition screen appears. Read the critical reminders. See Figure 18.

**Open a Civil or Miscellaneous Case**

Party Addition Screen - Critical Reminders:

- Select an EXISTING party in ECF if you find a match. Enter your first party AT THE BOTTOM OF THIS PAGE. Use broad search strategies but before you Select Party, double-click on the name to verify that the party record is a match. (You can add party text in the Party Information screen, e.g., Next Friend.)
- Complete the Party Information screen EXACTLY as directed in the graphic below. Then click Add Party.
- Use the Participant Tree icons to add all attorneys and any alias listed on the complaint. You will add any corporate parent when you docket the Certificate of Interested Persons event. The clerk will add any attorney who is unavailable in ECF.

Once all participants have been added, click Create Case. If you then realize you made an error that does not prevent you from docketing the papers you need to file, PROCEED IN THIS CASE. During the quality control review, the clerk will make necessary corrections.

**How to Complete the Party Information screen - see sample at right**

- ENSURE NAME IS CORRECT.**  
You may select a party with all caps and/or punctuation, if the record otherwise matches your party. If you must create a new party, you will be able to add the name on this screen to USE NEEDED CASE GROUPS for an account and REMOVED JURISDICTIONS. Enter any party text (e.g., "Individually and as Trustee of ABC Corp") at the bottom of this screen.
- SELECT ROLE (e.g., Plaintiff (pl:pty), Defendant (df:pty)).**
- DO NOT ENTER CONTACT INFORMATION UNLESS PARTY IS PRO SE.**  
If party is pro se, add address, phone, and fax and set "Pro se" field to "Pro se allowed to file electronically."
- NEVER ENTER AN EMAIL ADDRESS FOR ANY PARTY.**  
Leave defaults and other blanks as is (i.e., do not modify "start date," "corporation," or "notion").

Party Information

Alias:

Role:  (Pl:pty/Def:pty)

Role:  (Pl:pty/Def:pty)

Role:  (Pl:pty/Def:pty)

Address:

Address 2:   Use this address on the linked case

State:  (Pl:pty/Def:pty) Country:

Phone:  Fax:

E-mail:

Party not Individually and as Trustee of ABC Corp

Start date:  (YYYY)

End date:  (YYYY)

Organization:  (Pl:pty/Def:pty)

Notion:  (Pl:pty/Def:pty)

Attorney Addition - Critical Reminders:

- Use the Participant Tree icons to add all attorneys listed on the complaint. The clerk will add any attorney who is unavailable in ECF.
- Remove lead attorney status for non-lead attorneys in the Attorney Information screen.
- Do NOT make other updates and NEVER add or modify an email address. The clerk will update contact information if necessary.
- The DESIGNATION picklist is set to RETAINED. Please do NOT modify.

Search for a party

Default All  Last Business Name  First Name  Middle Name

3:23 ev-77777

Figure 18

Notice the screen is divided into two sections. The left pane displays the case participant tree. The right pane displays the search for a party function. If the party has previously been involved in litigation in this district, the name will already exist in the ECF database. To minimize the number of duplicate names in the database, it is a best practice to search for and use an existing name, rather than automatically selecting **[Create new party]**.

To search for the name of a party, enter the last name of the individual or the business name in the **Last/Business Name** field. Using fewer search characters will give you more search results. For example, you may enter “Wi” to find “John Williams.” If you get too many search results, use more letters. For example, “John Williams” will also be returned if you enter “Williams.”

Enter the first few letters of the plaintiff’s last name, and click **[Search]**. See Figure 19.

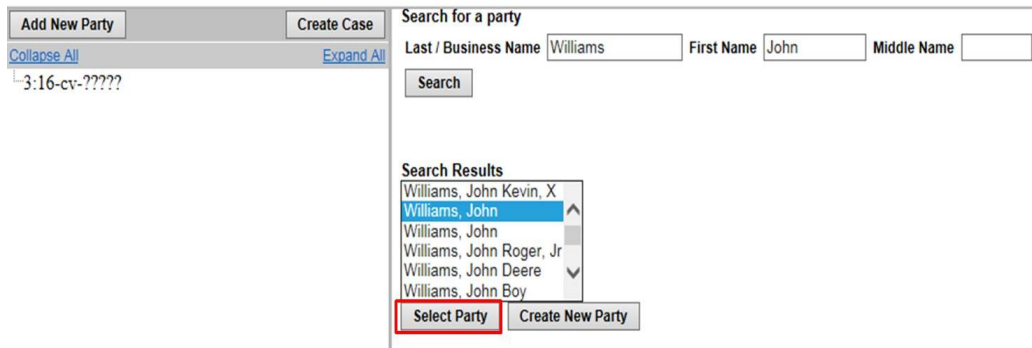
The screenshot shows a software interface for searching parties. On the left, there is a tree view with a case entry '3:16-cv-????'. On the right, a search form is titled 'Search for a party'. It contains three input fields: 'Last / Business Name' with the text 'Wi', 'First Name', and 'Middle Name'. A 'Search' button is located below the fields. At the top of the right pane, there are buttons for 'Add New Party' and 'Create Case'. The left pane has 'Collapse All' and 'Expand All' buttons.

**Figure 19**

#### **Party Name Search Hints:**

- The search is not case sensitive.
- A wildcard (\*) is not required at the beginning or end of a search string, but if it is used it will return different results. For example, entering “Wi” without a wildcard character in the **Last/Business Name** field will display John Williams and Wilson’s Auto Parts, but will not display Willie Smith or John Switzer. Entering a wildcard (e.g., “\*am”) before (or after) the character string will search for the character string within the words. For example, entering “\*am” will display Bob Cunningham and the United States of America.
- Try alternative searches if the first search was not successful.

If the name of the party is found in the **Party search results**, highlight the name and click on **[Select Party]**. See Figure 20.



**Figure 20**

Helpful Hint: Before selecting the name from the list, you may double click the name to see the party record information, including the party’s address, if any. See Figure 21.

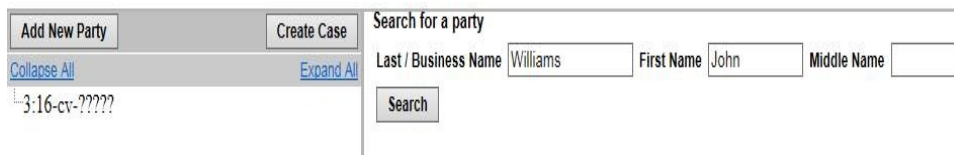


**Figure 21**

If the address is your party’s address, or if there is no address, minimize the party record information, highlight the party name, and click [**Select Party**].

If an address is already associated with the party name, but the address is not the address of your party, minimize the party record information and then click on [**Create new party**]. You must also click on [**Create new party**] if you do not find your party listed.

When creating a new party, be sure to add the complete name in the appropriate fields at the top of the page. The standard for capitalization in the Northern District of Texas is to capitalize only the first letter of each name. PLEASE DO NOT ENTER THE NAME IN ALL CAPS. If filing on behalf of a minor, enter only the minor’s initials, not the minor’s full name. See Fed. R. Civ. P. 5.2(a)(3). See Figure 22.



**Figure 22**

You must identify the role that the party has in the case. Click on the drop down arrow next to the **Role** field and select the appropriate party role (e.g., **Plaintiff (pla:pty)**, **Petitioner (pet:pty)**). See Figure 23.

The screenshot shows the 'Party Information' form for John Williams. The 'Role' dropdown menu is highlighted with a red box and set to 'Plaintiff (pla:pty)'. A callout box on the left states: 'Do not enter address information for businesses or any other party that is going to be represented by an attorney!'. The form includes fields for Title, Pro se (No), Prisoner id, Office, Address 1-3, State, Zip, City, Country, Prison, Phone, Fax, E-mail, Party text, Start date (5/10/2016), End date, Corporation (no), and Notice (yes).

**Figure 23**

Do not add or modify address information. Do not add an email address for the party. Use the Party text field at the bottom of the Party Information screen if additional identifying information is needed (e.g., "Individually and in his official capacity," "A minor," "Estate of," "Trustee of"). Do not change the Start date field. Leave the Notice field set to its default of "Yes."

Click the **[Add Party]** button at the bottom of the screen to add the party or click the **Start a New Search** link to clear the screen and begin a new party search.

The Search for a party screen appears again and John Williams and his role type now appear in the participant tree. See Figure 24.

The screenshot shows the 'Search for a party' screen. The search criteria fields are empty. The search results show 'John Williams' with role 'pla' and icons for edit, delete, add alias, and add attorney. The search criteria fields are empty.

**Figure 24**

After searching for, selecting, and adding a filer, the filer's name appears in the participant tree and is added to the party pick list. You can either:





- edit the party information by clicking on the pencil "edit" icon;
- delete the party by clicking on the red X "delete" icon;
- add an alias by clicking on the "add alias" icon;
- add an attorney for this party by clicking on the "add attorney" icon, entering a name, and searching;

- copy attorney(s) from other parties in the case to another party by clicking on the “copy attorney” icon; or
- add a new party by clicking on the [Add New Party] button at the top left of the screen.

When a new party is added, he/she is added to the party pick list and to the participant tree in the left pane. Parties that are added to civil cases during docketing will have control icons in the participant tree so you can add aliases, corporate parents, or other affiliates for the party during this process.

Note: There are no icon controls for existing participants in the participant tree during docketing. If a new participant is added during the docketing process, then icon controls will be available for the new participant only.

Following is a table showing the functional icons that allow you to delete a party; add an alias, corporate parent, or attorney; copy an attorney from one party to another in the case; or edit a party, alias, corporate parent, or attorney. See Figure 25.

Icon	Description
	Delete this party from this case.
	Add new alias, corporate parent, or attorney.
	Copy attorney(s) from other parties in the case to this party.
	Edit the party, alias, corporate parent, or attorney. Only displays beside actual names of participants, so if no participant has been added, this icon is suppressed.

**Figure 25**

Note: The participant tree is displayed during case opening, and during docketing if the screen allows you to add, select, or edit a case participant.

## E. Entering an Alias

If a party has an alias that is identified in the complaint, (e.g., dba, aka) click the **Add Alias** icon and use the search techniques discussed under **Search for a party**. See Figure 26.



Figure 26

Search for an alias by entering part or all of the last name or business name. See Figure 27.

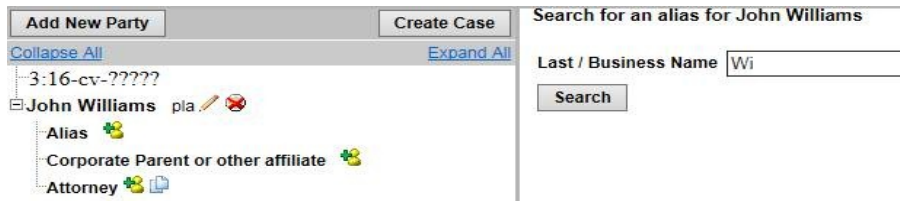


Figure 27

Review the Alias search results, highlight a name, and click **[Select Alias]**. If you do not find the alias you are seeking, click **[Create New Alias]**. See Figure 28.



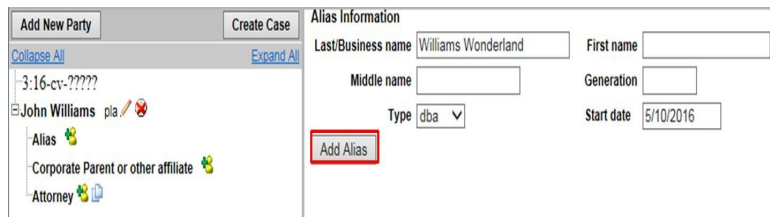
Figure 28

After clicking on **[Create New Alias]**, enter the complete name of the alias on the Alias Information screen. Next, change the **Role** to the correct type. Choose from:

- agent = agent of, one acts for another
- aka = also known as
- dba = doing business as
- fdba = formerly doing business as

fka = formally known as  
 nee = born (placed before a married woman's maiden name)  
 obo = on behalf of  
 other = an alias of a role not otherwise listed  
 rpi = real property in interest  
 ta = trading as

After completing the Alias Information screen, click the **[Add Alias]** button. See Figure 29.



**Figure 29**

The Alias Information for John Williams now appears in the participant tree. See Figure 30.



**Figure 30**

Continue adding parties as appropriate using the steps outlined in Section D above. See Figure 31.



**Figure 31**

After completing the information screen for each party, click the **[Add Party]** button at the bottom of the screen.

**Important:** At this point, the parties and linked information listed in the participant tree are temporarily stored but are not saved in the database until the case is actually *created*. If you need to make modifications, use the appropriate functional icons to add, delete, or modify case participant information. You can collapse or expand the party tree information by toggling



individual plus/minus symbols. Alternatively, you can collapse or expand the party lists by clicking on the **Collapse All** or **Expand All** hyperlink located at the top of the participant tree.

Note: In a large civil case (one with many parties), parties will be divided into chapters of 10 parties each. Each chapter will be displayed in the participant tree as a hyperlink, and a chapter can be expanded by clicking on the hyperlink.

## F. Adding an Attorney

Next, you must add yourself to the case. Click the **Add Attorney** icon to use the search techniques discussed under **Search for a party**, and, then enter your information. See Figure 32.

The screenshot shows a software interface for adding an attorney. On the left, a tree view displays a case structure with 'Attorney' selected. On the right, a search form titled 'Search for an attorney for John Williams' contains input fields for 'Bar Id', 'Last Name', 'First Name', and 'Middle Name', along with a 'Search' button.

Figure 32

**Search for an attorney** by entering your Bar Id or part or all of your last name, and click **[Search]**. See Figure 33.

This screenshot shows the search form with 'Woods' entered in the 'Last Name' field and 'Antonio' in the 'First Name' field. The 'Search' button is highlighted with a red box.

Figure 33

Review the Attorney search results, highlight your name, and click **[Select Attorney]**. See Figure 34.

This screenshot shows the search results section with 'Woods, Antonio' highlighted. The 'Select Attorney' button is highlighted with a red box.

Figure 34

The Attorney Information screen appears. If your address is incorrect, but you are confident the attorney record is yours, add yourself to the case with the incorrect address. (Do not edit your

address in these fields. Immediately following case opening, correct your address information using the [Maintaining Your Account](#) instructions.)

Since you are opening the case under your login and password, leave the **Lead attorney** selection set to **Yes** to designate yourself as the lead attorney for the case. Only one attorney per party should be designated as lead attorney (see LR 77.1 (b)). Set the **Notice** field to **Yes** so that you will receive a Notice of Electronic Filing (NEF) each time a filing is made in this case. Do not change the **Start date** or the **Seal Flag**. These fields are for internal use only. Click the **[Add Attorney]** button. See Figure 35.

The screenshot shows a web-based form for adding an attorney. On the left, there is a participant tree with a red box around the 'Add Attorney' button. The main form area is titled 'Attorney Information' and contains the following fields:

- Title:
- Office:
- Unit:
- Address 1:
- Address 2:
- Address 3:
- City:
- State:
- Country:
- Zip:
- Fax:
- Phone:
- E-mail:
- Pro Hac Vice:
- Designation:
- Seal Flag:
- Start date:
- Lead attorney:
- Notice:
- End date:

At the bottom of the form, there is a red box around the 'Add Attorney' button and a link for 'Start a New Search'.

**Figure 35**

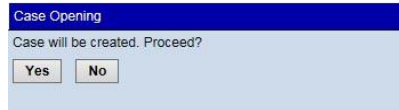
After you are satisfied with the party and attorney information in the participant tree, click **[Create Case]**. See Figure 36.

The screenshot shows the 'Create Case' button highlighted with a red box. The participant tree on the left is expanded to show the following structure:

- John Williams (pla) with Alias (Williams Wonderland, Corporate Parent or other affiliate) and Attorney (Antonio Woods)
- Johnsonville (dft) with Alias (Corporate Parent or other affiliate) and Attorney

**Figure 36**

Click **[Yes]** to proceed with Case Opening. Click **[No]** to return to the case participant tree screen to add or modify case participant information, or, if necessary, to abort the case opening process. See Figure 37.



**Figure 37**

A warning screen appears. Read the warning message and click **[Next]**. See Figure 38.

**Open a Civil or Miscellaneous Case**

Pursuant to LRs 3.1(c) and 81.1(a)(3)(D), a separately signed Certificate of Interested Persons (COIP) must be filed - in a form approved by the clerk - with a Complaint or Notice of Removal. The COIP form is available at [www.txnd.uscourts.gov](http://www.txnd.uscourts.gov) under Forms/Civil Forms. After you docket the initiating document, use the Certificate of Interested Persons/Disclosure Statement event, located under Other Filings/Other Documents.



**Figure 38**

## G. Filing a Complaint

After creating the case, **write down or otherwise note the case number before continuing.** The case number displayed will show only the year and civil case number (e.g., “16-25”). See Figure 39. It will not display the division in which the case was filed (“1” for Abilene; “2” for Amarillo; “3” for Dallas; “4” for Fort Worth; “5” for Lubbock; “6” for San Angelo; or “7” for Wichita Falls), nor the type of case (e.g., “cv” for civil).

Note: After the case number is assigned, you may not use the back button to make corrections or additions. If you did not add all parties to the case before the case number was assigned, you may add additional parties in the next step when you file your complaint (or other initiating document). Even if you made a significant error that you cannot correct while docketing the complaint, it is best to proceed in the case, since the clerk will correct any errors by the end of the next business day.

**WARNING:** Even though your case number has been assigned, you are not finished. The case opening process is incomplete until you docket your complaint or other initiating document and pay any required filing fee.

Click on the [Docket Lead Event?](#) hyperlink to file your complaint or other initiating document. See Figure 39.

**Open a Civil or Miscellaneous Case**

You have opened a civil case. Please proceed, even if you made an error entering a party, attorney, etc. (The clerk will correct it for you later.)

Click [Docket Lead Event](#) below and, on the next screen, select the appropriate event from the list (but not *Miscellaneous Case Initiating Documents*, which is reserved for use in miscellaneous cases).  
Case Number 16-25 has been opened.



**Figure 39**

Select the applicable initiating document type (e.g., Complaint, Notice of Removal, Petition for Writ of Habeas Corpus) and click the **[Next]** button. For this example, Complaint is selected. See Figure 40.

**Figure 40**

The system automatically displays the last case number accessed. See Figure 41.

**Figure 41**

Verify the case number before continuing. If this is not your newly assigned case number, use your back button to return to the previous screen and enter the correct case number. When you have verified that you have the correct case number, click **[Next]** to continue.

Select the party or parties filing the complaint. You may select multiple parties by holding down the “Ctrl” key on the keyboard and using the mouse to highlight more than one name. Click **[Clear]** to deselect the party or parties. See Figure 42. Click **[Next]** to continue.

**Figure 42**

Select the party(ies) this filing is against. You may select multiple parties by holding the “Ctrl” key down and clicking to highlight more than one name. When all defendants have been selected, click **[Next]** to continue. See Figure 43.

NOTE: If any party(ies) were not added previously, add them now by clicking **[New Party]**. Follow the procedure for adding or creating a new party explained in Section D above.

**Complaints and Other Initiating Documents**  
3:16-cv-00025 Williams v. Johnsonville

**Pick Party**  
Collapse All Expand All  
John Williams pla  
Alias  
Williams Wonderland  
Attorney  
Antonio Woods  
Johnsonville dft

Please select the party that this filing is against.

Select the Party: OR Select a Group:

Williams, John [pla]  
Johnsonville [dft]

No Group  
 All Defendants  
 All Plaintiffs  
 All Parties

Next Clear New Party

**Figure 43**

Attach the complaint. Click **[Browse...]**. See Figure 44.

**Complaints and Other Initiating Documents**  
3:16-cv-00025 Williams v. Johnsonville  
Select the pdf document and any attachments.

Main Document  
Browse...

Attach your main document.

When adding attachments, select a category and/or enter a description.  
Both will appear in the docket text, so do not repeat words in the description that are in the category you select.

Attachments	Category	Description
1. Browse...		

Next Clear

**Figure 44**

A pop-up box will appear. Navigate to the appropriate folder containing the PDF document(s) you wish to file. Right-click on the document and select the option to open the document in Adobe Acrobat. This allows you to preview the document to ensure you have selected the correct file. (Remember, once submitted, a document cannot be edited.) See Figure 45.

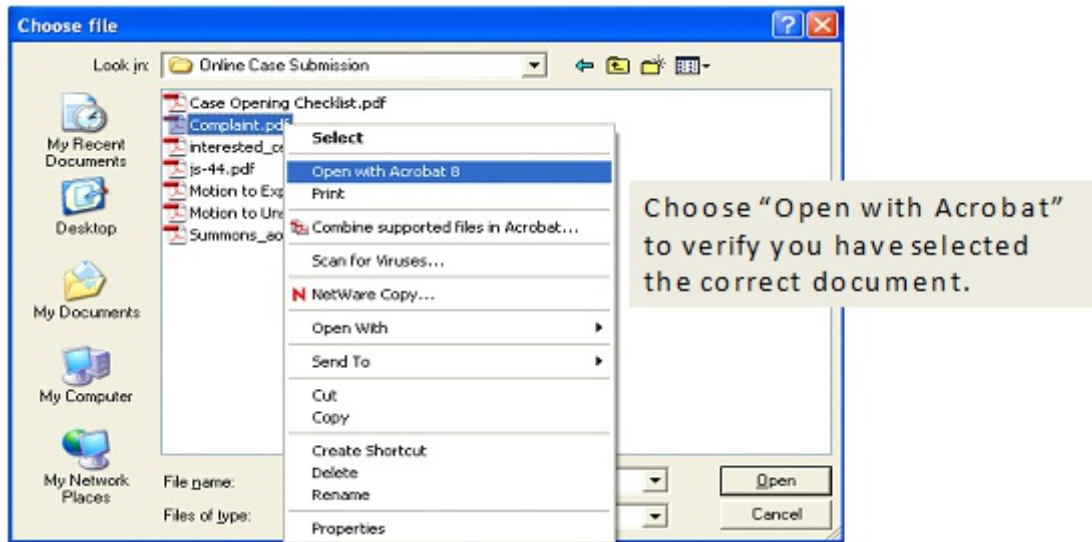


Figure 45

After verifying you have selected the correct PDF document, click **[Open]** to accept the PDF for filing. See Figure 46.

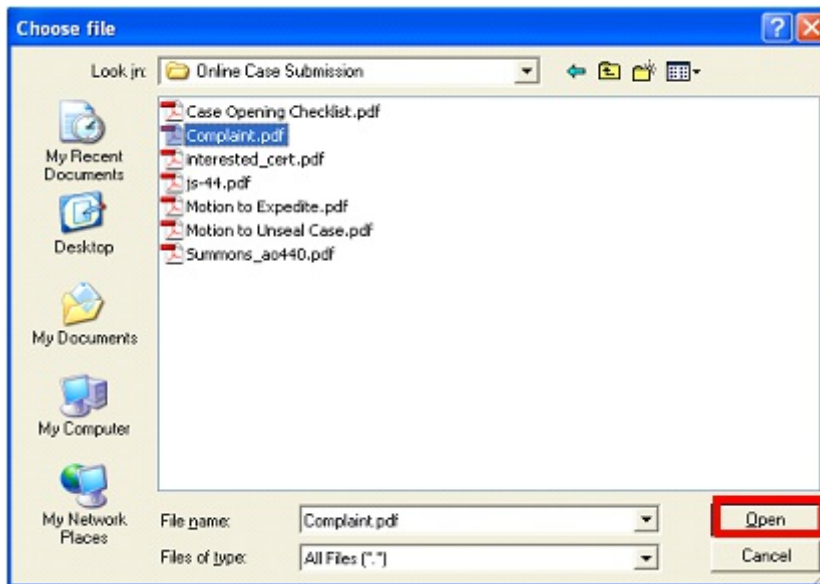


Figure 46

The path to the **Filename** will appear in the **Main Document** text field box. Since you are required to attach additional PDF documents to the initiating document (e.g., civil cover sheet, supplemental civil cover sheet), and may have other documents (e.g., exhibits) to attach, click **[Browse]** under the **Attachments** section of the screen to add the first attachment. See Figure 47.

#### Complaints and Other Initiating Documents

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Select the pdf document and any attachments.

##### Main Document

M:\User\Woods\Online Case Submission\ Browse...

Attach your main document.

When adding attachments, select a category and/or enter a description.

Both will appear in the docket text, so do not repeat words in the description that are in the category you select.

Attachments	Category	Description
1. <input type="text" value="Browse..."/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

**Figure 47**

Navigate to the appropriate folder and select the next PDF document to be attached. View the document before attaching it. After attaching it, enter a **Category** and/or a **Description** for the attachment using the Category list and/or the Description field. Additional rows will be added as needed to attach the next PDF document. Click **[Browse]** to repeat the process until all attachments have been added.

When all of the documents are attached, click the **[Next]** button. See Figure 48.

#### Complaints and Other Initiating Documents

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Select the pdf document and any attachments.

##### Main Document

M:\User\Woods\Online Case Submission\ Browse...

Attach your main document.

When adding attachments, select a category and/or enter a description.

Both will appear in the docket text, so do not repeat words in the description that are in the category you select.

Attachments	Category	Description
1. M:\User\Woods\Online Case Submission\ Browse...	Affidavit(s)	of Jon Brown <input type="button" value="Remove"/>
2. <input type="text" value="Browse..."/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

**Figure 48**

If, as plaintiff, you have made a jury demand, select Yes; otherwise, leave the radio button set to No. See Figure 49.

### Complaints and Other Initiating Documents

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Does this Complaint include a jury demand?

Yes

No

Next

Clear

**Figure 49**

## H. Paying the Filing Fee

After attaching all of the documents, you will be asked if this complaint is being filed under any of four possible exemptions from the payment of the filing fee. If you do not qualify under any of these four options, select **None of the above**, and click [Next] to continue. The option for filing a complaint in an existing case (fee previously paid) should not be used when filing a complaint in a new civil case. See Figure 50.

### Complaints and Other Initiating Documents

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Is this initiating document being filed:

By a government attorney on behalf of the USA

In Forma Pauperis status granted or CJA appointment

In Forma Pauperis status requested

In an existing case (fee previously paid)

In a case where a fee is not due pursuant to a statute

None of the above

Next

Clear

**Figure 50**

If **None of the above** was selected, a filing fee is required, and the filing fee payment screen will appear. See Figure 51. Click [Next] to continue.

### Complaints and Other Initiating Documents

[2:22-cv-00005-Z-BR Bull v. Cruz et al](#)

CASREF

Fee: \$

You will be redirected to the payment submission software. Enter your account information carefully! Incorrect information will result in payment reversal, for which a non sufficient funds (NSF) fee may be charged.

After you submit payment on the following screen, continue clicking Next until the event is complete and you receive a Notice of Electronic Filing.

After you complete the docket event, go to Utilities Internet Payment History to print your receipt. (This is the only option to be provided a receipt.)

If you receive an error while completing the payment screen and must restart the docket event, use the Internet Payment History report to confirm that only one payment was collected. If a duplicate payment was collected, contact our office so we may reverse the extra charge.

Next

Clear

**Figure 51**



Note: Secure payment screens will guide you through paying the filing fee.

## I. Requesting a Summons for Service of Process

Next, you will be presented with the opportunity to request a summons to be issued by the clerk. Select the appropriate option for your case and click **[Next]**. See Figure 52.

### Complaints and Other Initiating Documents

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#### Regarding service of process:

- The clerk is requested to issue a summons for each defendant
- The clerk is requested to issue a summons for each federal defendant
- The clerk is requested to issue a summons for each federal and non-federal defendant
- The clerk is requested to issue summons if the motion to proceed IFP is granted
- I will submit the summons forms to the clerk for issuance using the Request for Clerk to Issue Document event
- I do not wish for a summons to be issued at this time - eg. waiver of service of summons, IFP requested, delayed service, etc

Next

Clear

### Figure 52

If you request summons to be issued, the clerk's office will electronically issue the summons(es) within one business day. A Notice of Electronic Filing will be sent to you with links to the requested summons forms. You may print the summons forms and then effect service of process pursuant to FED. R. CIV. P. 4.

Read the message and click **[Next]**. See Figure 53.

### Complaints and Other Initiating Documents

[3:16-cv-00025 Williams v. Johnsonville](#)

**In each Notice of Electronic Filing the filer receives, the judge assignment is indicated in the subject line, and a link to the Judges' Copy Requirements is provided. The court reminds the filer that any required judge's copy of this and future documents must be delivered to the court, in the manner prescribed, within three business days of filing.**

Next

Clear

### Figure 53

## J. Completing the Filing

The docket text field for the complaint is displayed. Review the final docket text. Enter any additional docket text into the text field. (If you have used the complaint event to docket any of the other initiating documents noted in the introduction, enter the title in the text field.) See Figure 54. Click [Next].

### Complaints and Other Initiating Documents

3:16-cv-00025 Williams v. Johnsonville

Docket Text: Modify as Appropriate.

COMPLAINT against Johnsonville filed by John Williams. (Filing fee \$400; Receipt number 0539-283211) Clerk to issue summons(es). In each Notice of Electronic Filing, the judge assignment is indicated, and a link to the [Judges Copy Requirements](#) is provided. The court reminds the filer that any required copy of this and future documents must be delivered to the judge, in the manner prescribed, within three business days of filing. Unless exempted, attorneys who are not admitted to practice in the Northern District of Texas must seek admission promptly. Forms, instructions, and exemption information may be found at [www.txnd.uscourts.gov](http://www.txnd.uscourts.gov), or by clicking here: [Attorney Information - Bar Membership](#). If admission requirements are not satisfied within 21 days, the clerk will notify the presiding judge. (Attachments: # (1) Affidavit(s) of Jon Brown) (Woods, Antonio)

Next

Clear

Figure 54

The final docket text will be displayed. Complete the transaction by clicking the [Next] button. If you need to correct any errors (e.g., linking the complaint to the wrong party), contact the clerk's office for assistance. See Figure 55.

### Complaints and Other Initiating Documents

3:16-cv-00025 Williams v. Johnsonville

Docket Text: Final Text

COMPLAINT against Johnsonville filed by John Williams. (Filing fee \$400; Receipt number 0539-283211) Clerk to issue summons(es). In each Notice of Electronic Filing, the judge assignment is indicated, and a link to the [Judges Copy Requirements](#) is provided. The court reminds the filer that any required copy of this and future documents must be delivered to the judge, in the manner prescribed, within three business days of filing. Unless exempted, attorneys who are not admitted to practice in the Northern District of Texas must seek admission promptly. Forms, instructions, and exemption information may be found at [www.txnd.uscourts.gov](http://www.txnd.uscourts.gov), or by clicking here: [Attorney Information - Bar Membership](#). If admission requirements are not satisfied within 21 days, the clerk will notify the presiding judge. (Attachments: # (1) Affidavit(s) of Jon Brown) (Woods, Antonio)

**Attention!!** Pressing the NEXT button on this screen commits this transaction. You will have no further opportunity to modify this transaction if you continue.  
Have you redacted?

Source Document Path (for confirmation only):

C:\fakepath\Complaint.pdf pages: 2  
C:\fakepath\Affidavit.pdf pages: 2

Next

Clear

Figure 55

## K. Determining the Judge Assigned to the Case

Review the Notice of Electronic Filing. In addition to serving as notification that the event was accepted by ECF, and providing document filing information and relevant hyperlinks, the NEF indicates who will and will not receive a “Notice of Electronic Filing” via email. The NEF also identifies the judge assignment. The presiding judge’s alpha designation appears at the end of the case number, and the judge’s name appears in the Judge Assigned section. In this illustration, case 3:16-cv-00025-B was randomly assigned to U.S. District Judge Jane J. Boyle. See Figure 56.

**WARNING: Only the filing attorney will receive a Notice of Electronic Filing when opening a new case, since no other attorneys have appeared. The filing attorney is responsible for service on all other parties.**

[Complaints and Other Initiating Documents](#)  
[3:16-cv-00025-Williams v. Johnsonville](#)

U.S. District Court  
Northern District of Texas

### Notice of Electronic Filing

The following transaction was entered by Woods, Antonio on 5/10/2016 at 1:45 PM CDT and filed on 5/10/2016

Case Name: Williams v. Johnsonville

Case Number: [3:16-cv-00025-B](#)

Filer: John Williams

Document Number: 1

Judge Assigned: Jane J Boyle (presiding)

### Docket Text:

COMPLAINT against Johnsonville filed by John Williams. (Filing fee \$400; Receipt number 0539-283211) Clerk to issue summons (es). In each Notice of Electronic Filing, the judge assignment is indicated, and a link to the [Judges Copy Requirements](#) is provided. The court reminds the filer that any required copy of this and future documents must be delivered to the judge, in the manner prescribed, within three business days of filing. Unless exempted, attorneys who are not admitted to practice in the Northern District of Texas must seek admission promptly. Forms, instructions, and exemption information may be found at [www.txnd.uscourts.gov](#), or by clicking here: [Attorney Information - Bar Membership](#). If admission requirements are not satisfied within 21 days, the clerk will notify the presiding judge. (Attachments: # (1) Affidavit(s) of Jon Brown) (Woods, Antonio)

3:16-cv-00025-B Notice has been electronically mailed to:

Antonio Woods antonio\_woods@txnd.uscourts.gov

3:16-cv-00025-B Notice required by federal rule will be delivered by other means (as detailed in the Clerk's records for orders/judgments) to:

The following document(s) are associated with this transaction:

Document description: Main Document

Original filename: n/a

Electronic document Stamp:

[STAMP dcecfStamp\_ID=1004035775 [Date=5/10/2016] [FileNumber=143538-0] [a5debe67e8df2012ccb4783d0677b6f7ebde93eb9e97050965f2b0d37f495c324e9fc834fba6d0c4e18d983f3edc4b7cc9b5ec217ead12349539152df34beb7b]]

Document description: Affidavit(s) of Jon Brown

Original filename: n/a

Electronic document Stamp:

[STAMP dcecfStamp\_ID=1004035775 [Date=5/10/2016] [FileNumber=143538-1] [eb537683a9fc50ca3ea269603453963617dbe823e65b320c4c1ca231b088cc6c07b4db669b59905b26ca2a2d7a3b4ed856c97a85c5f58a01055fc560b13f73fad]]

Figure 56

A [table](#) listing all of the district and magistrate judges’ alpha designations and their copy requirements is provided on the ECF page of the court’s website.