

GSCCCA Update

Vol. 21, No. 3
August 2017

An update on the activities of the Georgia Superior Court Clerks' Cooperative Authority

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Attorney-at-Law
Oliver & Weidner, LLC
Clarkesville



GSCCCA
1875 Century Blvd
Suite 100
Atlanta, GA 30345
Tel: 404.327.9058
Tel: 800.304.5175
www.gsccca.org

Authority Strong in FY 2017

In today's world, change moves at a breakneck pace. To survive, you must keep up. To be truly successful, however, you must stay ahead of the curve ... anticipating needs, innovating to meet those needs, and then driving the change. Communications mogul Rupert Murdoch captured this concept perfectly when he famously noted:

*"The world is changing very fast.
Big will not beat small anymore.
It will be the fast beating the slow."*

FY 2017 marks another successful year for the Georgia Superior Court Clerks' Cooperative Authority, and this quote highlights much of the reason why. Of course, the Authority would not exist without the paradigm-shifting vision of our founders and the continued support and collaboration of Georgia's 159 clerks of Superior Court. But just as critical to our success this past fiscal year and for the past two decades has been a continuing commitment to streamlining our operations, delivering solid results, providing unmatched customer service, and, perhaps most important in today's fast-paced, competitive environment, remaining focused on innovation and at the forefront of technology. Anticipating and meeting the evolving needs of Superior Court clerks

Following is the Executive Summary from the Authority's 2016-2017 Accomplishments & Year-end Report. Numbers reflect fiscal year-end (June 30) totals unless otherwise stated. Contact Communications Director Mike Smith at mike.smith@gsccca.org with questions. The full report is available by using the following link: https://www.gsccca.org/docs/default-document-library/2016-2017_accomplishments.pdf?sfvrsn=2

and providing them with the tools to help them not just remain relevant but be successful is our overarching vision and guides every aspect of our business.

The Authority was created by clerks for the benefit of clerks, and this symbiotic relationship is paramount to building on our progress to date and achieving even greater results in the future. Below are a few comments from clerks about the Authority and its importance to their work:

"I want to send a shout out to the Authority staff! I have just finished helping a citizen eFile their plat. The process was quick and painless! We had no trouble receiving the participant ID number in a timely fashion. It was there in 2 seconds! I have worried

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July Board Meeting Review

The Authority Board met on July 12 for its quarterly meeting. Following is a summary of the reports and actions of the meeting.

General Business

The minutes of the April 12 scheduled board meeting were approved. Mr. Greg Morgan, with Mauldin & Jenkins, provided the Accountant's Review and reported that, overall, the Authority is on solid financial footing. It is anticipated that revenues will remain positive as the economy remains strong. Cash position is strong, but, as planned for, a decrease is expected in the coming months as work increases on the Authority-sponsored Historical Deed Re-Indexing Project.

2016-2017 Accomplishments & Year-end Report

The Authority's fiscal year-end report was reviewed, and staff was commended for their hard work and efficiency in carrying out the Authority's mission and goals.

Introduction of Staff

Authority senior staff introduced members of their respective teams. These staff members are vital to the successful operation of the Authority but may be unknown to board members.

SB 160 – “Back the Badge”

A motion was approved by the Board to adopt the change to Rules and Regulations regarding the Priority Distribution List to include the Georgia State Indemnification Fund.

Image Archive Program

The following motion was approved by the Board:

I move that the Georgia Superior Court Clerks' Cooperative Authority staff implements an image archive program so as to provide for the redundant backup of all images of deeds, liens, and plats of all clerks of Superior Court which are now held by the Authority or which are hereafter delivered to the Authority. I further move that such program:

- 1. Be consistent with the terms and provisions of Code Section 36-9-5(c)(2)(E) so as to provide for compliance of each Superior Court clerk with the terms of such Code Section.*
- 2. That such program provide for the storage of such data outside the State of Georgia of at least one set of such images in addition to any*

storage within the State of Georgia.

- 3. This program shall not be construed to replace backup requirements of clerks pursuant to 15-6-62.1.*

I further move that the Authority staff take such steps as are necessary to suspend all further creation of microfilm for deeds.

Fines & Fees Division

Approximately \$85.2 million in court fees was collected and disbursed by the Fines & Fees Division for FY 2017, and compliance rates continue to be near 100%. Staff is in the process of identifying candidates to interview for an open position within the division.

Training Update

It was reported that 59 clerks and employees have successfully passed the Real Estate Indexing Certification exam to become certified indexers. Notary public classes continue to be successful and attract strong attendance. Preparations are in the early stages for the COAG Fall Conference.

eFiling Project

It was reported that 104 counties are currently participating in UCC eFile, and that a record number of UCCs are being eFiled on a monthly basis, more than 9,000 on average. There are currently 122 clerks' offices participating in Child Support eFile, and 158 clerks' offices participating in Real Estate eFile.

Data Archive Project (MyVault)

Currently, 144 clerks participate in MyVault, the Authority's Data Archive Project. In the last year, 14 requests to restore data were fulfilled. Ransomware has been a common issue with infected files and data, and in the last two years, there have been six occasions where data was restored to clerks' offices in relation to ransomware. Downtime for the clerk's office was minimal due to diligent monitoring.

Historical Deed Re-Indexing Projects

It was reported that 1.6 million instruments have been added to the system and are in production and available due to the Historical Deed Re-Indexing Projects.

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Board Meeting Review — Cont. from Page 2

Outreach Activities

Participation by the Authority in the Notary Public Administrators (NPA), a staff section of the National Association of Secretaries of State (NASS), continues to benefit clerks, businesses and notaries public across Georgia. The *Guiding Principles for Remote Notarization Standards*, a document developed by NPA, was presented at the recent NASS conference and to the Authority Board. Authority Communications Director & Compliance Officer Mike Smith was recognized and congratulated for having recently received a Lifetime Achievement Award from NASS for his years of dedicated service to the organization.

Notary & Authentications Division

The number of notary applications remained stable for the year with approximately 46,000 applications approved. The top ten countries to which apostilles were sent remained mostly the same, with the exception of Brazil, which entered the list

at number eight in its first year joining the Apostille Treaty.

UCC Project

It was reported that 240,703 UCCs were filed statewide for FY 2017, which is the most since 2007. The increase in filings is an indicator of a strong economy.

Legislative Update

An update was given on the Authority's preparations to meet the mandates of HB 337, the State Tax Execution Modernization Act, which becomes effective January 1, 2018. Timelines were reviewed and deadlines were discussed, and it was determined that staff is on track to meet expectations.

Next Board Meeting

The next quarterly board meeting will be held on October 11, 2017 at the Authority office. ■

Board Initiates Image Archive Project

At its July meeting, the GSCCCA Board of Directors adopted a resolution to implement a new Image Archive Program. The Board learned that the statutory requirements for clerks of Superior Court to store deeds and other real estate records had been changed by the legislature so that keeping such documents using electronic means is now an additional approved option in lieu of microfilm. Code Section 36-9-5 now allows such storage as an alternative to keeping the records in fireproof safes or vault, in fireproof cabinets, on microfilm or offsite storage within 100 miles of the county.

Following discussion, the Board adopted a motion directing the Authority staff to implement an Image Archive Project consistent with the terms of Code Section 36-9-5(c)(2)(E) so as to provide for compliance of each Superior Court clerk with the terms of such code section and that the project shall provide for the storage of such data outside the State of Georgia of at least one set of such images in addition to any storage within the State of Georgia. It was noted that this program shall not be construed to replace other backup requirements of clerks pursuant to 15-6-62.1. The Authority staff was further directed to take such steps as are necessary to suspend all further creation of microfilm for deeds.

Implementation of this project will result in the enhanced security for clerks' real estate records by providing security copies of the real estate images of deeds, liens and plats in multiple locations including out-of-state storage. This process will also make the images much more directly accessible to clerks as the Authority will provide a website dedicated to the secure viewing and retrieval of archived images. Images will be routinely audited for quality and preservation into the future.



Authority Strong — Cont. from Page 1

“From the beginning
and rooted to its
core, innovation,
collaboration and vision
have defined the Authority.”

*about how this was going to work, and I will worry no more. It was awesome! Thank you all for all the hard work you put into this to make it an easy process! Everyone at the Authority is wonderful and I don't know what I would do without them.” (Stacy Har-
alson, Harris County Superior Court Clerk)*

“Thank you for understanding and your help! I really do appreciate EVERYTHING you guys at the GSCCCA do for us clerks. We wouldn't be able to do our jobs as efficiently as we do without you. Everyone at the Authority allows us clerks to be better clerks.” (Rita Harkins, Lumpkin County Superior Court Clerk)

“Thank you for a great week at St. Simons for all of us new clerks. The Clerks' Authority is so good to my office in that we do not have a county IT person. Not sure what I would do without you!” (Leigh W. Starrett, Elbert County Superior Court Clerk)

“Thank you [for suggesting a new monitor.] I think I would feel more comfortable with a newer more reliable monitor to go with the new PC. I haven't told you this in a while – YOU ARE AWESOME! – always on the ball, responsive, helpful and efficient with such a great attitude!” (Lynn W. Ham, Monroe County Superior Court Clerk)

“You are always so helpful and I sincerely appreciate all you do for us.” (Debbie Kines, Grady County Superior Court Clerk)

“Thank you for helping me with this matter!! I do not know what I would do without you!!” (Nora Leigh Rogers, Echols County Superior Court Clerk)

From the beginning and rooted to its core, innovation, collaboration and vision have defined the Authority. Although the culture remains the same, the GSCCCA is a very different organization today than the one that opened its doors in 1995. Since its establishment, the Authority has not

only fulfilled its original purpose of establishing a statewide system for the indexing of UCC documents, but has successfully developed and implemented, at no cost to the state, a variety of additional projects. Effective collaboration with other state agencies and numerous not-for-profit groups for the benefit of the State of Georgia and its citizens has become one of the hallmarks of the Authority's success and why it is respected both locally and nationally for its progressive, innovative and effective approach to problem solving.

For over two decades, the Authority has been an innovator within the public records arena and has led the State of Georgia to the forefront of court technology. Using a mix of old-fashioned cooperation and state-of-the-art technology, the GSCCCA has taken abstract ideas, that many believed were not possible, to the concrete world of implementation, and in so doing, has changed the way many do business and made life easier for those accessing real estate records, financing statements, civil and criminal case data, and other legal documents.

Today the Clerks' Authority is a diverse entity that oversees the following divisions, projects, programs and registries:

- ❖ Notary Division
- ❖ Fines & Fees Division
- ❖ UCC Project
- ❖ Real Estate Deed Project
- ❖ Historical Deed Re-Indexing Project
- ❖ County-Funded Historical Deed, Lien and Plat Re-Indexing Project
- ❖ Lien, Plat & Map Project
- ❖ PT-61 Project
- ❖ Premium Search Account
- ❖ Clerks' Authority Map Search Application (Mobile App)
- ❖ Data Archive Project (MyVault Online Archive Service)
- ❖ Microfilm Project
- ❖ eFile Project
- ❖ Civil Case Data Project
- ❖ Protective Order Registry
- ❖ Criminal Case Data Project (Offender-Based Tracking System)
- ❖ Carbon Sequestration Registry

In successfully developing and implementing these projects, the Authority modernized Superior Court clerk offices and created several one-of-a-kind systems that integrated and standardized information from Georgia's 159 counties on a

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Authority Strong — Cont. from Page 4

central website, www.gsccca.org. The Authority databases provide accountability, uniformity, efficiencies and cost-savings by affording:

- ❖ Unprecedented access to valuable information – free access through search terminals installed in all Superior Court clerk offices, and convenient internet access, by subscription, for those desiring 24-hour, 7-day-a-week access.
- ❖ Additional funding for clerks' offices.
- ❖ Information that allows lawmakers to more effectively set public policy.
- ❖ Critical and timely crime data to protect the safety of the public and law enforcement officers throughout Georgia.

The GSCCCA is governed by a board of ten members whose meetings are open to the public. The Authority was created, implemented and continues

to operate without receiving any funds through local, state or federal taxes, and its activities undergo constant legislative oversight. The Authority has been continually praised for its wise use of available resources, and has proven to be a resounding success for offering unique services for Georgia's counties and citizens.

Following are highlights from FY 2017:

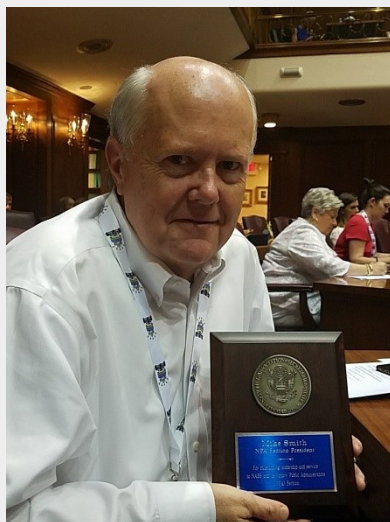
- ❖ Implemented the changes necessary to comply with a 2016 **legislative mandate requiring all plats in Georgia to be electronically recorded** beginning January 1, 2017. Specifically, the Authority expanded its eFiling portal to accommodate the shift to

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Authority's Participation in NASS Benefits Clerks

The 2017 National Association of Secretaries of State (NASS) Conference, held July 7-10 in Indianapolis, Indiana, produced new developments in the notary public arena that could affect the state of Georgia in the future.

During the last year, NASS established a Remote Notarization Task Force to examine a process known as "remote notarization." Remote notarization employs the use of audio visual technology to allow for the notary and the principle (signer) to execute a notarial act without the two being in the physical presence of each other. Therefore, remote notarization modifies the long-held requirement that the signer and notary public be in the same room or physically share "the same space."



At the NASS Summer Conference, NASS membership, at the recommendation of the Remote Notarization Task Force, voted to move forward with developing industry standards in relation to remote notarization. The NPA contributed greatly to the effort by developing the *Guiding Principles for Remote Notarization Standards*. This document focuses on fundamental issues that have been raised by various interested parties over the past several months and identifies underlying principles that should be considered as states move forward with remote notarization.

Congratulations to Authority Director of Communications & Compliance Mike Smith, who currently serves as president of the Notary Public Administrators (NPA), a staff section of NASS, who was recognized at the conference as a recipient of the NASS Medallion Award. The award was presented to Mike for outstanding service and dedication to furthering the mission of the National Association of Secretaries of State within the states and for his many years promoting the ideals of the Notary Public Administrators.



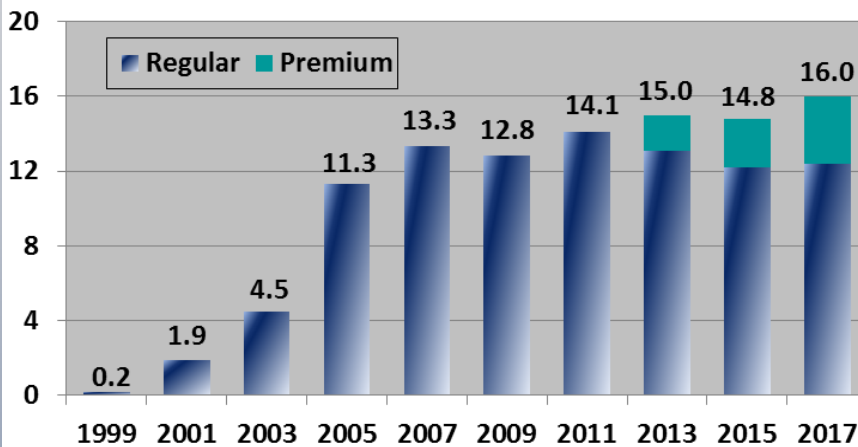
Authority Strong — Cont. from Page 5

mandatory plat eRecording, and all Superior Court clerks are able to electronically process plats that have been submitted to the GSCCCA portal in compliance with the eRecording mandate. From January 1, when the mandate became effective, through June 30, 9,800 plats were accepted through the portal. The process of electronically filing plats will result in a more efficient end-to-end process and higher fidelity reproduction of printed plat copies.

to complete the deed indexing for all incomplete indexing and imaging for the year 1992 with a goal to move the inclusive range of deed data back to 1992 for all counties. In FY 2017, over 4,500 additional deed instruments were added to the system under this program.

- ❖ Added over 286,500 deed and 14,300 plat instruments through the **County-Funded Historical Deed, Lien and Plat Re-Indexing Project**, for a total of over 1.5 million additional instruments in production since the program was implemented in 2013. As a result of this project, the public has access to additional real estate information at no additional cost to the Authority, and clerks' offices have access to additional resources through print image fees initiated through the Authority's website. Forty-two counties are now participating in the program.

Monthly Subscribers (thousands)

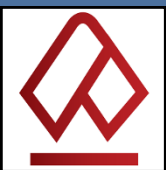


- ❖ Worked closely with legislators, the Superior Court Clerks' Association of Georgia, the legal community, the land title industry, and the Department of Revenue to reach a compromised solution for the **electronic filing of state tax liens**. The Authority hosted a series of meetings resulting in the agreement to the terms of House Bill 337, signed into law and effective January 1, 2018. The Authority continues to work with all interested stakeholders in the planning and development of the complicated provisions of this new law.
- ❖ Continued work on the **Historical Deed Re-Indexing Project** to include all deed instruments filed with clerks of Superior Court in 1991 and 1990. The ability to transmit historical index data and images to the Authority was opened on January 2, 2017. The Authority compensated the offices of those clerks of Superior Court who have previously completed their 1991 and 1990 historical deed imaging indexing pursuant to a *Clerk-Funded Historical Indexing Agreement*. Throughout the year, the Authority administered the project

- ❖ Complied with legislative mandate to establish "**Safe Harbor Fund**" effective January 1, 2017, and entered into an inter-governmental agreement with the Department of Administrative Services to collect "**Georgia State Indemnification Fund**" monies effective July 1, 2017. To support clerks in their efforts to comply with the new mandates and to ensure accurate collection and disbursement of funds, the Fines & Fees staff notified all courts and vendors with details on the new funds, updated www.courttrax.org to reflect legislative changes and legal advice, and revised Rules & Regulations, indexing forms, training materials and other affected documents. Staff also created a new daily detail report for the Safe Harbor Fund and added it to the online calculator, which will also be done for the Georgia State Indemnification Fund once it becomes effective.

- ❖ Implemented **Bulk Lien eFiling**. This new process allows filers to upload multiple, one-page liens as a single electronic document, streamlining the eFiling process. The Authority has offered several webinars to help clerks and filers, including tax commissioners, get started with bulk lien eFiling.

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- ❖ Increased **Premium Search accounts** by nearly **20%** for a fiscal year-end total of **3,637 accounts**. Launched in 2012, the Premium account includes the Clerks' Authority Map Search Application and allows users to search by property address as well as land lot making the mobile app attractive to realtors, bankers, attorneys, surveyors, appraisers, and other members of the business community.
- ❖ Improved the functionality of the **Clerks' Authority Map Search Application** on IOS and Android devices ensuring that the applications work as designed with the latest versions of the respective operating systems. The Authority's mobile app provides the most up-to-date and accurate real estate sales data in the state of Georgia and is available free-of-charge to Premium Search account subscribers.
- ❖ Upgraded a **core SQL Server** at the Failover Datacenter from SQL Server 2005 to 2008. SQL Server is a relational database management system responsible for storing and retrieving data as requested by other software applications. This particular database server hosts many of the GSCCCA's most critical databases. The deployment required extensive database, application, and website testing. The upgrade brings the database to a more modern version, which is critical to support, and also provides access to additional features and functionality. Of significant importance, the upgrade brings the version of SQL Server at the Failover Datacenter in sync with the version at the Primary Datacenter, allowing feature parity and improved management.
- ❖ Upgraded 40 county connections, drastically increasing combined bandwidth while lowering the overall cost, and coordinated 23 county-based network moves, changes, or implementations.
- ❖ Instituted a new program providing notary handbooks at a discounted rate to Superior Court clerk offices. The goal of the program is to provide point of sale education materials to Georgia notaries public. Twenty-five counties have participated in the program with a total of **725** handbooks being sold at the local level.
- ❖ Maintained a compliance rate of

close to **100%** for all courts through a dedicated and consistent notification process by the Fines & Fees Division.

In addition to the many enhancements and new features that were added over the last twelve months, the Authority continued to successfully manage its many existing programs. Numbers don't tell the full story but the following statistics show the volume of work handled by the Authority, and are further evidence of our growth and success over the past 22 years.

Following are highlights from FY 2017:

- ❖ Added nearly **12 million** images to the system for a fiscal year-end total of nearly **252 million** images accessible to the public through www.gsccca.org.
- ❖ Had over **365 million** page views and nearly **1.1 million** unique visitors to www.gsccca.org. The public accessed the Authority's invaluable data via the Internet nearly **5 million times** from 210 countries this past fiscal year.

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SB 160 Becomes Law

During the 2017 legislative session, Senate Bill 160, referred to as "Back the Badge," was passed. The bill earmarks monies for the Georgia State Indemnification Fund (GSIF) which is maintained by the Department of Administrative Services (DOAS). The Authority entered into an intergovernmental agreement with DOAS to collect the GSIF on their behalf as part of the monthly Fines & Fees Division remittance reports. Mandates of the bill include minimum fines of \$2,000 imposed for violations of O.C.G.A. §§ 16-5-21(c) and 16-5-24(c), and \$300 for violations of O.C.G.A. § 16-10-24, with all money earmarked for GSIF.

As a result of the agreement with DOAS, the Authority has updated all Consolidated Monthly Remittance reports to add a new line item for remitting GSIF monies. In addition, the Authority has received multiple letters of guidance from the Attorney General's office in reference to SB 160. New forms, letters of guidance, language from the bill, and updated FAQs have been posted on www.courttrax.org.



Authority Strong — Cont. from Page 7

- ❖ Compensated clerks' offices over **\$5 million** this fiscal year for prints (\$.50 per print) off the Authority website, and **\$51 million** for prints since the Authority was established.

- ❖ Compensated clerks' offices nearly **\$800,000** for deed images this fiscal year, and **\$14.6 million** for deed images since the inception of the project.

- ❖ Restored **118 GBs of data** for 10 counties through the Authority's **MyVault Online Archive Service** in FY 2017. Currently, **144 counties** participate in the program with one county added this past fiscal year. The online vault stores and protects **over 662 million files** totaling more than **84 TBs** of live data.

- ❖ Ordered, processed and shipped a total of **819 pieces of new equipment** to clerks' offices including CPUs, monitors, servers, laptops and scanners. The Authority has provided over **25,000 pieces** of new equipment to clerks' offices since opening its doors in 1995.

- ❖ Deployed **374 pieces of new equipment** (171 computers, 135 monitors & 68 scanners) to 50 Superior Court clerk offices to replace depreciated equipment as part of the Statewide Computer Replacement Project for all counties.

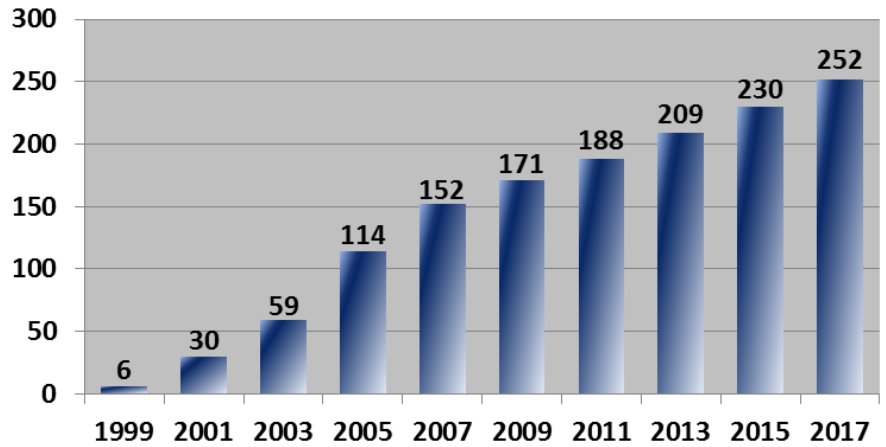
- ❖ Electronically transmitted to the Georgia Crime Information Center (GCIC), a division of the GBI, nearly **44,000 Protective Orders** indexed by clerks.

- ❖ Electronically transmitted to GCIC **340,000 records** of criminal court dispositions from various courts for the purpose of compiling criminal histories and background checks.

- ❖ Received over **16,000 phone calls** and **8,300 email requests** to HelpDesk with a 98% resolution rate.

- ❖ Increased participation in **Notary Online** to **133 counties**. **88%** of notary applications in Geor-

Total Images in System (millions)



gia were submitted electronically via the Authority's Notary Online system.

- ❖ Maintained the **statewide notary database** (A statewide total of **46,200 notary commissions** were issued by clerks of Superior Court and then submitted to the Authority for inclusion in the statewide database.) and issued **30,000 apostilles** since taking over this valuable service in 1998. In FY 2017, the Notary Division served over **8,900 walk-in customers**, processed **3,800 mail-in orders**, answered **8,500 phone calls**, and sold **1,200 Notary Handbooks**.

- ❖ Backed up **500 TBs** of data. If this data were transferred to CDs, the resulting stack would be 4,000 feet tall, or about $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile high.

- ❖ Collected and disbursed approximately **\$85.2 million** in court fees; performed annual court reviews on approximately **1,100 courts** to help ensure the accuracy of the data being reported to the Authority; and processed nearly **31,000 monthly reports**.

- ❖ Conducted **107 classroom training sessions**, webinars and one-on-one programs on various subjects for over **2,000 participants** at **42 different locations** around the

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Authority Strong — Cont. from Page 8

state. The Authority also trained nearly **8,000** people through its five online courses.

- ❖ Indexed nearly **241,000** UCCs and conducted **7,600** Certified Searches for FY 2017. Since the project's inception in 1995, the Authority has indexed nearly **5.9 million** UCCs and conducted almost **246,000** Certified Searches.
- ❖ Blocked **10.6 million** pieces of spam and virus-laden emails. This amounts to over 92% of all incoming email.

Beyond the numbers, though, we gauge our success by the response and feedback we continue to receive from clerks, bankers, lawyers, realtors and other customers about how integral our products have become to their business. In addition to the comments included earlier, below are some of the recent kudos we have received from clerks and website customers:

"Thank you for keeping us straight."

"Many thanks!!! Great customer service!"

"I really appreciate all the Authority does for me and my office."

"Thanks for all your expert advice and guidance."

"We received the new scanner this morning and ready for the old one to be returned. Thank you for everything."

"I really appreciate you taking the time to explain what happened with my account and for your help in clearing up the charge. I really appreciate the customer service."

In addition to supporting Superior Court clerks, the Authority enables convenient access to invaluable

information – from real estate records and lending information to active notaries and court fines and fees. The Authority's statewide indexes and other programs help everyday Georgians and give the business community innovative tools for

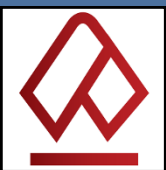
making their work more efficient and effective. Our productivity and success are no accident, but rather the result of the outstanding and prudent leadership of our actively engaged Board who informs and strengthens our business, the effort, skill and dedication of our professional staff who remain vested and fully engaged in our organization's mission, and the continuing support of 159 clerks of Superior Court and their

willingness to work together for the good of all clerks and the State of Georgia.

For over 20 years, through legislative battles, technological challenges and economic adversity, Superior Court clerks and Authority staff have worked together to create the amazing success story we know today ... or in the words of former Authority chair Barry Wilkes, "a paradigm for how government can and ought to work."

Yet, we know our story is far from complete. As we enter our 23rd year of service, we cannot rest on our laurels if we want our future to be as bright as our past. The pace of change is accelerating, creating new opportunities, new challenges, and new uncertainties. In this environment, we will have to be more nimble and more adept, continuously reevaluate and reimagine every aspect of our business, and out-innovate today, so that we can outperform tomorrow. We are committed to remaining entrepreneurial and strategic, and positioning the Authority for preeminence not only over the short run, but also over the long run, and continue our stellar record of innovation and success for decades to come. ■

“ ... we will have to be more nimble and more adept, continuously reevaluate and reimagine every aspect of our business, and out-innovate today, so that we can outperform tomorrow.”



Changes to Filing of State Tax Liens

As a result of the passage of House Bill 337 during the 2017 legislative session, significant change will be introduced to how state tax liens issued by the Department of Revenue (DOR) are filed with Superior Court clerks. Working closely with legislators, the Superior Court Clerks' Association of Georgia, the legal community, the land title industry, and the DOR, the Authority helped forge a compromised solution for the electronic filing of state tax liens. A series of meetings was hosted by the Authority resulting in the agreement to the terms of H.B. 337, signed into law and effective January 1, 2018. The Authority continues to work with all interested stakeholders in the planning and development of the complicated provisions of this new law.

A detailed project update along with a timeline of major project events was provided to the Authority Board at its July meeting. In part, the timeline illustrated that during the months of May through July, the Authority staff participated in over 20 meetings with the DOR. It is significant to note that this figure does not count the various development meetings that also occurred. The number of meetings alone is just a small indicator of the vast amount of coordination and planning that is necessary to make a project like this successful.

For planning purposes, the project has been logically partitioned into several development phases, with each phase focusing on certain critical aspects of the project. The first phase, which started in May, has focused on establishing firm business requirements and building the systems that are required to be in place for the DOR to successfully eFile liens through the GSCCCA portal. This functionality and corresponding interaction with the DOR technical team was seen as a priority for the project to allow ample time for the organizations to perfect their technical interfaces. A core

aspect of the new legislation is the actual electronic filing of the lien, and this first phase is committed to ensuring eFiling success!

The next phase of the project, which starts in August and is projected to end on the last day of September, focuses on implementing the various changes to the GSCCCA search systems that are

mandated by the new law. Specifically, the GSCCCA must provide a search for state tax liens that have been submitted to the GSCCCA portal but have not yet been recorded by the clerk of Superior Court.

This search must also provide the user the ability to filter name results by the last four digits of an individual's social security number or a business's tax ID number; however, the GSCCCA search system will not actually display such information in its search results.

The Authority must also modify its basic lien search such that

state tax liens are always included in relevant search results regardless of any county filter that may be applied. A key provision of the new law is that state tax liens have statewide effect, so it is necessary for the GSCCCA system to reveal such state tax liens in searches in a county agnostic fashion.

Finally, the new legislation impacts the information that must be included on the PT61 form. The law indicates that a new field must be added to capture the "Certificate of Clearance" number on the form, providing that such a certificate has been obtained by the attorney/filer. A recent letter of advice from the attorney general's office further specifies that DOR has the ability to promulgate rules and regulations that can require the new field to be completed. Based on that advice and meetings with the DOR, at this time it is an-



The GSCCCA staff will continue its outreach in earnest to educate clerks about the indexing changes required and to provide adequate training.

Continued on Page 11



State Tax Liens — Cont. from Page 10

anticipated that the GSCCCA will need to comply with a regulation to make the Certificate of Clearance number a required field. It is further anticipated that there will be additional fields requested by the DOR, as allowed by the new legislation.

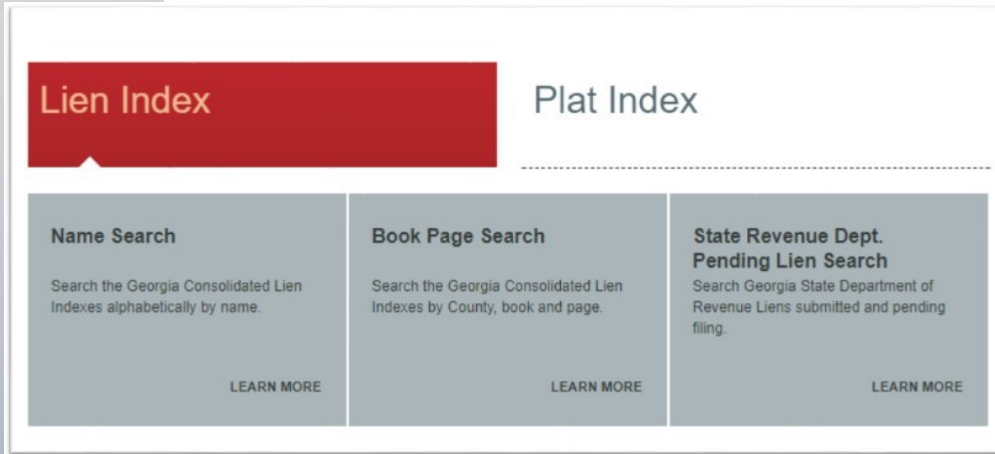
each facet of the system to be tested from end to end. It is during this phase that the system will be exercised precisely in the manner it will be expected to perform once the system is live. This phase, which will run until the project go-live date of 1/1/2018, will also include small changes

to ancillary eFiling systems, such as the Authority-developed eAssist application. The eAssist application is provided to clerks that may not have a local system capable of accepting eFiled documents, in order to provide such functionality and to ensure clerks can comply with the law.

When the project goes live on 1/1/2018, every state tax lien that has been previously recorded in every county will be invalid. The DOR has a process by which they can effectively reinstate any previously filed lien by

electronically filing a "renewal" of that lien. It is currently anticipated that the DOR will file up to 300,000 of these renewals in the very early stages of the project. In addition, there is a subsequent queue of approximately 300,000 liens that the DOR has issued but has not yet recorded for various reasons. It is anticipated that the DOR will seek to file these documents as soon as realistically possible. At this time, all of these volume estimates are tentative and subject to change.

To assist clerks, the Authority is planning several training and outreach initiatives. This includes basic communication and project updates via email, as well as training to provide instruction on the anticipated indexing standards changes. Specifically, the Authority will hold three, one-hour webinars titled "State Tax Lien eFiling & Indexing Standards Changes" scheduled for October 26, November 14, and December 4. (See more information on training on Page 12.) The Authority is also planning internal staff training to ensure that our team of customer support specialists are able to answer a majority of the questions that may arise. Additionally, it is the understanding of the GSCCCA that the DOR will also be engaging in various outreach initiatives and will provide dedicated support for filers and clerks alike. Finally, the proposed new rules and regulations of the Department of Revenue are open for comment until 10:00 a.m. on September 21, 2017. ■



Since the beginning of the Lien Project, the various Land Record Management system vendors that provide service to Superior Court clerks have been a critical part of its success. These vendors supply software and systems that transmit the information clerks index to the GSCCCA for inclusion in the statewide system. The systems also provide the digital "front counter" that is used to receive electronic filings from the GSCCCA eFiling portal.

As a result of this new legislation, these vendor systems will need to be modified in a number of ways. One obvious change is to ensure that the systems are updated and able to receive state tax liens electronically from the GSCCCA portal. It will also be necessary for these systems to allow the indexing of new information that is required by law, particularly a document control number associated with each state tax lien, and the last four digits of the SSN or FEIN of each debtor listed. It is a goal of this second project phase to enable such vendors the ability to begin full system integration testing with the GSCCCA system by 9/30/2017. The GSCCCA staff will continue its outreach in earnest to educate clerks about the indexing changes required and to provide adequate training.

The third and last phase of the project will focus on integration testing and final system refinements. The goal is to provide ample time for



Authority Adds New Webinars to Schedule

The Authority has added more webinars for the second half of 2017. Webinars are remote training conducted via the internet and phone and allow a clerk to have as many staff members as they wish participate. New topics include State Tax Lien eFiling & Indexing Standards Changes and eAssist Updates. See the full schedule to the right and course descriptions for all webinars below.

Fines & Fees — This two-hour webinar will cover many facets of the court fee system including the proper assessment, collection and distribution of state and local surcharges and deductions relative to fines, court costs and bond forfeitures; recent legislative changes; an overview of the Georgia statutes and the GSCCCA Rules and Regulations; and sample breakdowns of civil and criminal fines and fees.

UCC Training — This 1.5-hour webinar will provide an overview of processing UCCs in accordance with Georgia law and procedures. The training will cover UCC forms, grounds for refusing to accept a UCC, UCC eFiling, and administrative procedures.

Indexing Standards: Common Mistakes — This one-hour webinar will address common mistakes found in index data for real estate instruments. These include: government name errors, the “HUD” problem, typos, numbers, abbreviations, hyphenated names, name variations, and cross-indexes from other counties.

Bulk Lien eFiling — This one-hour webinar will provide the necessary steps to getting started with bulk lien eFiling. From participating vendors to how-to-register and file, this class is suitable for clerks and filers alike. Is your tax commissioner’s office interested in participating in bulk lien eFiling? Invite them to join you!

Protective Orders — Designed for both new employees and those who need a refresher, this two-hour webinar will cover how to scan and index protective orders and verify reports.

State Tax Lien eFiling & Indexing Standards Changes — Due to recent legislation, state tax lien eFiling will become mandatory on January 1, 2018. This one-hour webinar will review the changes to the Real Estate Indexing Standards and provide an overview of eFiling state tax liens.

eAssist Updates — eAssist is a Windows application used in counties to process plats submitted through the Authority’s eFile system. This one-

2017 Training Schedule

Classroom Training:

Real Estate Indexing Standards:

September 19 Adel
September 22 Hamilton

Webinars:

August 24	UCC Training
September 7	UCC Training
September 12	Indexing: Common Mistakes
September 14	Fines & Fees
September 27	Bulk Lien eFiling
October 3	Protective Orders
October 4	Bulk Lien eFiling
October 26	State Tax Lien eFiling
November 8	eAssist Updates
November 14	State Tax Lien eFiling
November 17	eAssist Updates
December 4	State Tax Lien eFiling
December 5	eAssist Updates

hour webinar will cover the upcoming changes to eAssist for state tax lien eFiling and will include a demonstration of processing state tax liens. Learn about the new changes going into effect January 1, 2018 when eFiling state tax liens becomes mandatory.

In addition to the many webinars on the schedule, the Authority will also hold two more **Real Estate Indexing Standards** classes on September 19 and 22. Suitable for new and experienced indexers, the class will include a review of the GSCCCA Standards for indexing real estate, lien and plat records with an emphasis on underlying concepts behind the Standards, common errors, difficult parties and instruments, and the indexing certification test. Hosted by Superior Court clerks and offered free-of-charge, both classes will be held from 9:00 am to 12:00 noon.

The Authority has a new software tool for webinar training, so all webinar registrations should now be submitted to <https://gsccca.webex.com>. Classroom registrations are still submitted on www.gsccca.org/training. Have questions? Contact Rachel Rice at 404-227-0724 or rachel.rice@gsccca.org. ■

