



# PRESS RELEASE

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**New York State  
Unified Court System**

**Hon. Lawrence K. Marks  
Chief Administrative Judge**

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## **Newly-Charged Commission Proposes Online Enhancements to Better Equip the Court System to Meet New Yorkers' Justice Needs Amid COVID Pandemic and Beyond**

**NEW YORK**—The Commission to Reimagine the Future of New York’s Courts issued a report with recommendations for implementing and advancing online tools to better enable the Court System to deliver quality justice services to New Yorkers amid the public health crisis and beyond. The Commission, chaired by former New York State Bar Association President Henry M. Greenberg, was appointed by Chief Judge Janet DiFiore in June 2020 to examine regulatory, structural, technological and other innovations, and propose practical reforms.

The Commission is made up of six working groups: trials; appellate practice; online courts; regulatory innovations; structural innovations; and technology. The report was produced by the Online Courts Working Group, led by Brad S. Karp, Chairman of Paul, Weiss, Rifkind, Wharton & Garrison LLP, and Mylan L. Denerstein, litigation partner at Gibson, Dunn & Crutcher LLP, and unanimously adopted by the full Commission.

The Working Group’s proposals are based on extensive research of online platforms and tools used by the New York State court system and court systems across the country, and on interviews with experts and various New York State Court System stakeholders, including sections of the New York State Bar Association, advocacy

groups, prosecutors, public defenders and other providers of legal services in New York, as well as court administrators, judges and nonjudicial staff. Key recommendations include:

- Evaluating and analyzing the experience of virtual proceedings during the COVID-19 pandemic—weighing the many practical, constitutional, budgetary and technical factors—in determining their future role in the New York State Courts and ensuring the rights and needs of all parties are addressed. Given the complexity of the various considerations, among other suggestions, the Commission advises developing guidelines and principles that can be applied by judges when deciding what proceedings should be conducted virtually and how to conduct such proceedings; creating and disseminating training materials for each type of user; and having in place a system to process ongoing feedback and make continual improvements to virtual proceedings.
- Redesigning the Unified Court System website to become a centralized court portal that helps litigants and attorneys more easily navigate the court system, including consolidating the various “eCourts” systems, standardizing the web pages of the different courts, and making it easier for users to look up their case and access the e-filing system, among other improvements.
- Rolling out the Court System’s online small claims dispute resolution pilot in New York County, enhancing the small claims pilot and expanding it statewide, and developing online dispute resolution pilots for other case types, such as minor civil offenses, minor landlord-tenant matters, contract cases and local neighborhood disputes.
- Enacting legislation to allow the Chief Administrative Judge to institute e-filing on a mandatory basis in any or all of the State’s trial courts.

In light of the current budgetary climate, the Working Group’s report also advised the Court System to explore grants and other external funding sources to help cover the up-front costs of these initiatives, which, if implemented will result in long-term savings.

“The initial recommendations outlined in the Commission’s report will greatly assist the Court System’s efforts to adopt and expand data-driven solutions that not only enhance the efficiency of our operations, but also equip our courts to more effectively address the evolving justice needs of New Yorkers throughout the State, including our most vulnerable populations,” said Chief Judge DiFiore. “I am thankful to the Online Courts Working Group for their hard work on this insightful report and look forward to the Commission’s long-range proposals as we continue to examine and utilize technology to create a more fair, efficient and accessible justice system.”

“These proposals will help us build a highly-functioning virtual court system for New Yorkers, one that incorporates the latest technology to increase efficiency, promote the rule of law and advance the delivery of justice,” said Chair Henry Greenberg.

“Our recommendations will help establish an enduring online court system that will offer crucial remote accessibility during this unprecedented pandemic and beyond, while ensuring that all participants in New York’s court system continue to have equal access to the justice they deserve,” said Brad S. Karp.

“By reimagining the future of the State’s court system, we have an opportunity to make it work better for all New Yorkers, regardless of income, background or special need. By implementing these recommendations, we will be able to bring greater efficiency and, most importantly, better enable the New York State courts to fulfill their mission to deliver justice for all,” said Mylan Denerstein.

The Commission’s report is attached.

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