

# GSCCCA Update

Vol. 14, No. 1  
March 2010

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

## Board of Directors

### Chairman:

**Tom Lawler**  
Clerk of Superior Court  
Gwinnett County

### Vice Chairman

**F. Barry Wilkes**  
Clerk of Superior Court  
Liberty County

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Clerk of Superior Court  
Crisp County

### David J. Burge

Partner – Smith,  
Gambrell & Russell, LLP

### Connie H. Cheatham

Clerk of Superior Court  
McDuffie County

### C. Michael Johnson

Attorney at Law  
Eastman

### Cindy Mason

Clerk of Superior Court  
Columbia County

### Arch W. McGarity

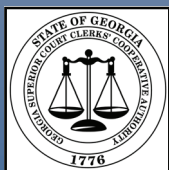
Chief Judge  
Superior Courts  
Flint Judicial Circuit

### Gail C. Robinson

Commissioner  
Houston Co.

### Rhett Walker

Clerk of Superior Court  
Dodge County



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## Authority Expands Online Training

In a continuing effort to increase the ease and availability of training to clerks and their staffs, the Authority is now offering more online training. The new *UCC Training Course* will consist of four lessons:

- ❖ What a UCC is
- ❖ Why UCCs are filed
- ❖ Reasons to reject UCCs
- ❖ How to treat a rejection

In addition to this new course, the Authority offers four other online courses:

- ❖ *Introduction to the GSCCCA Indexing Standards*

- ❖ *Extended Real Estate Indexing Standards Course*
- ❖ *Notary Public Training*
- ❖ *GSCCCA Fines and Fees Training*

Online training courses are a simple and easy way to train new employees, cross train current employees or just stay well informed! Register today and take advantage of these convenient and efficient training tools. Registration is available at <http://training.gsccca.org>, or through the Clerk Resource Center by clicking on the link for Training Workshops. If you have questions or need assistance with registration, contact Rachel Rice at 800.327.9058 ext. 1010. ■

## Robinson Joins Board

Houston County Commissioner **Gail C. Robinson** has been appointed by Governor Sonny Perdue to the Authority Board of Directors. In accordance with Georgia Code, the Authority Board shall have one county commissioner representative. Robinson, a private practice attorney in Warner Robins, will serve a three-year term. Pictured here at the Authority's recent Board meeting, Robinson is administered the oath of office by Notary Public Mike Smith, the Authority's communications director.



# January Board Meeting Review

The Authority Board met on January 13 for its quarterly meeting. Following is a summary of the reports and actions of the meeting.

## General Business:

Notary Public Mike Smith, who serves as communications director for the Authority, administered the oath of office to new board member Gail Robinson.

The minutes of the October 14, 2009, board meeting were presented and approved by the Board.

Greg Morgan provided the Accountant's Review of Financials. Morgan stated that the financial report is a simple reflection of the down-turn in the economy adversely affecting revenue. A motion to accept the financial reports as presented was approved by the Board.

## UCC Project:

A report was given on the UCC Project. FY2009 saw UCC filings decline below 200,000 for the first time.

## Historical Deed Project:

A report was given on the Historical Deed Project. The Authority has received data from 55 counties for data back to 1990 and 135 counties for data back to 1991. While the project is still under suspension, data is being reviewed for those clerks' offices at their request. Indexing Standards are reviewed annually to coincide with any legislative changes. The current

standards went into effect in 2008.

## Fines & Fees Division:

A report was given on the Fines & Fees Division. Court compliance rates are at almost 100%.

## Training:

A report was given on the Authority's 2010 training schedule. There will be six Real Estate Indexing Standards classes and seven Fines and Fees training courses at various

sites around the state. Classes will be hosted by Superior Court Clerks.

## E-Filing Project:

An update was given by Sheila Studdard, Clerk of Superior Court of Fayette County, on the E-Filing Project. Studdard presented a preliminary standards document for review by the Board and requested that the Board adopt

the PRIA (Property Records Industry Association) e-filing standards. Authority IT staff agreed that PRIA standards be adopted as a framework from which to develop the project.

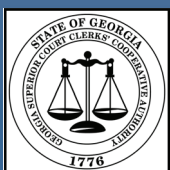
## Other Issues:

Barry Wilkes, Clerk of Superior Court of Liberty County, presented a report on the proposed GSU (Georgia Southern University) project. The project would create a virtual office for any clerk's office suffering a catastrophic event that rendered their office inoperable. Participating clerks would be

*(Continued on Page 4)*



*Sheila Studdard, Superior Court Clerk of Fayette County, provides an update for the Board on the E-Filing Project.*



# Authority Offers Training Across State

The Authority has set its 2010 training calendar and has scheduled 13 classes for clerks and their staff around the state. These classes will be hosted by a Superior Court Clerk and will be offered free-of-charge. Following are descriptions of the classes:

## Real Estate Indexing Standards Training

This training course is suitable for both new and experienced indexers. The course content will include a review of the GSCCCA state-wide Standards for indexing real estate, lien and plat records with an emphasis on the following:

- the reasoning behind the Standards;
- a review of the latest changes to the Standards;
- a review of various deed and lien instrument types and their purpose;
- indexing difficult instruments such as those from securitization trusts;
- a review of the Authority's online Standards training course.

## Fines & Fees Training

This training course 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;
- an overview of the Georgia statutes, as well as the GSCCCA Rules and Regulations, in support of how court fees should be processed;
- GSCCCA web-based tools available to aid in the calculation of all applicable

surcharges and deductions, as well as base fine amounts;

- "hot" topics including new court fee legislation passed during the 2010 session;
- a Q&A period designed to address any issues not discussed during the

course presentation.

Each training class provides an opportunity to increase and solidify your knowledge or that of your staff. Registration is available via fax (866.847.4105) or online at [www.gsccca.org/training](http://www.gsccca.org/training). Class size is limited, so register today. ■

*Each training class provides an opportunity to increase and solidify your knowledge or that of your staff.*

## 2010 Training Schedule

### Real Estate Indexing Standards Training

March 17	Evans	Columbia Co.
June 23	Thomasville	Thomas Co.
July 22	LaFayette	Walker Co.
August 11	Eatonton	Putnam Co.
Sept. 21	Cochran	Bleckley Co.
October 19	Atlanta	GSCCCA office

### Fines & Fees Training

March 23	Reidsville	Tattnall Co.
May 13	Dawson	Terrell Co.
June 9	Thomson	McDuffie Co.
July 21	Ocilla	Irwin Co.
August 10	Newnan	Coweta Co.
August 19	Ellijay	Gilmer Co.
October 20	Winder	Barrow Co.



# Authority Makes Effort to Protect SSNs

Identity theft is a serious issue across the country and continues to generate debate. At issue for clerks' offices and the Authority is the accessibility of social security numbers (SSNs) and how the misuse of SSNs plays into identity theft. A social security number in the wrong hands can cause great harm and lead to financial ruin. Jurisdictions and filing offices across the country are facing pressure by the public to take a stance on the public display of SSNs contained in publicly-recorded documents such as UCCs. So what is a clerk's office to do?

At this point, clerks' offices are doing all they can do as allowed by law. The responsibility of the filing office is to accept and record UCCs as long as the document meets minimum filing requirements. One of those requirements is NOT to check to see if the document contains a SSN. Clerks' offices do not have the authority to alter an original document presented for filing. However, when asked, clerks' offices are encouraged to strongly suggest that UCC documents not be

filed with SSNs. The Authority advises filing parties to not include SSNs on UCC documents as well.

Likewise, the Clerks' Authority has no legislative power to alter original publicly-recorded documents such as UCCs. However, beginning November 1, 2006, the Authority voluntarily began manually redacting (blocking from view) SSNs entered by filing parties on UCCs.

As a further enhancement of the redaction process, as of April 2009, the Clerks' Authority automated the redaction process which allows for the review of all pages of a UCC filing. The process searches for

SSNs and makes them unavailable for viewing online.

The Authority will continue to monitor its redaction of SSNs in relation to UCC documents and make adjustments where necessary. If you have any questions or comments, please contact Mike Smith at 404.327.9753 or [mike.smith@gsccca.org](mailto:mike.smith@gsccca.org). ■

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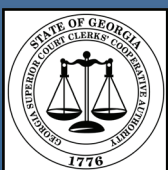
## *(Board Meeting — Cont. from Page 2)*

able to conduct the basic functions of their office in a virtual setting. Wilkes stated that, after meeting with GSU representatives, the scope of the project would require considerable funding which is not currently available. However, development of a template that can be used by clerks to create a web presence is being developed by GSU.

The Board approved the following meeting dates for 2010: April 14, July 14 and October

13. Each board meeting will be preceded by a work session at 1:00 p.m. on the Tuesday before the board meeting.

Mike Holiman, executive director of the Council of Superior Court Clerks, presented a report on legislative issues. Holiman stated that there could be filing fee increases proposed to bring Georgia more in line with other states. Board members requested that Holiman inquire as to the prospects of eliminating the sunset provision. ■





## Lawler Wins 2009 ÉCLAT Award



Congratulations to Authority Chairman and Gwinnett County Superior Court Clerk **Tom Lawler** for being the 2009 recipient of the ÉCLAT, an award established to recognize Superior Court Clerks for their achievement. The award is an acronym for exceptional commitment, leadership, accomplishment and teamwork. Below are some of the comments of attorney Billy Jones who presented the award.

“The award is conferred to a clerk who could have been singled out for an award anytime during the past 12 years because he has been one of the most dedicated, hardest working and enterprising clerks to hold office since 1777, when the esteemed office of Clerk of Superior Court was created. This clerk’s influence has had a profound and, as time will bear out, lasting effect on Superior Court Clerks’ offices, Georgia’s judicial system and local government.

“The ÉCLAT is presented to him as what could be called an “omnibus” award, recognizing him for both his contributions and his achievements—with the sum of all that he has done magnanimously being a body of work that most could never accomplish within a lifetime, much less in a period extending just over a decade. He has said that his greatest accomplishment is, when he was asked to chair the manual committee, that he was

wise and shrewd enough to inveigle the “dream team” to create the Superior Court Clerks’ Reference Manual. What he doesn’t tell you is that he also facilitated migration of the reference manual from paper to electronic media, elevating the manual to a state-of-the-art, one-of-a-kind tool that helps you do your jobs in compliance with all the laws, rules and policies that you now have to follow. Clerks around Georgia have told me that the reference manual is the greatest innovation for Clerks of Superior Court in your 232-year history.

“This year’s recipient’s friends say he would rather go to the Capitol to lobby on your behalf more than anything, which is evident from the impact he has had on legislation affecting you—from “big” bills down to the small ones that only he and a few other eagle-eyed clerks notice when legislators are in session. He chaired the association’s legislative committee for five years and continues serving on the committee and, in the last few years, has become your foremost presence at the Capitol. His leadership and legislative efforts have helped carve out a special niche for Superior Court Clerks under the Gold Dome.

“Serving as chairman of the Clerks’ Authority since 2005, he has provided exceptional leadership that was necessary to protect the Authority’s independence while providing for and increasing services to meet the needs of clerks and the million-plus users who rely on the Authority daily.

“This retired district attorney gave up a successful law practice and passed up a chance to stay home and do nothing so he could run for Clerk of Superior Court—all because he wanted to serve the people of Georgia. Ironically, he has said that his time in the trenches with you has been the greatest of his life. His accomplishments are a story of simple greatness...the kind that clerks have become accustomed to... and are a shining example of what the ÉCLAT embodies.” ■



### Authority Provides F&F Training

Authority Training Coordinator Rachel Rice recently provided Fines and Fees training to approximately 70 representatives of the DeKalb County

Recorders Court including three judges, the court clerk, court administrator and other court personnel. Rachel (on left) is pictured here with DeKalb County Recorders Court Chief Judge Nelly Withers.

