

# GSCCCA Update

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

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## Authority celebrates 30 years!

Thirty years ago, the Georgia General Assembly passed HB 243, and with the signa-

ture of then-Gov. Zell Miller, the Georgia Superior Court Clerks' Cooperative Authority was officially established on July 1, 1993. Three decades later, we continue to marvel, celebrate, and give thanks for the "blood, sweat and tears" shed by many to bring about this consequential event that has

resulted in the success only its visionary leaders could have imagined, or in the words of one of those leaders, former Authority Chairman Barry Wilkes, "a paradigm for how government can and ought to work."

In the beginning, it was the vision and will of a handful of Superior Court clerks that convinced their colleagues across the state to sign on to a new way of doing things ... convincing them that they would not only become more efficient and better serve the citizens of Georgia, but they would

retain control of their vital documents and maintain their revenue in the process. The

clerks' proposal involved creating a centralized indexing system for UCCs that would be developed, implemented, and managed by an authority created by the clerks. Many believed it would not be possible to get all 159 independently elected officials to agree on anything, much less using an unproven system like the one being proposed. But they

underestimated the courage, resolve and unity of Superior Court clerks who refused to become the "dinosaurs of Georgia's court sys-



*The GSCCCA inaugural board was sworn into office in August of 1993. Taking the oath are Ray Marchman (Greene Co.), Joanne Caldwell (Rockdale Co.), Woodson Daniel (Pulaski Co.), Luke Flatt (Albany banker), Dan Jordan (Jasper Co.), Sandra Glass (Oconee Co.) and Leighton Alston (Carrollton banker).*

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# April Board meeting review

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

## General Business

The minutes of the January 11, 2023 scheduled board meeting were approved. Adam Fraley, CPA, with Mauldin & Jenkins, presented financial reports for the recent quarter. Fraley commended the Authority's financial staff for their diligence in following generally accepted accounting principles which enables the Authority to meet its financial obligations. The Authority has a solid financial position moving forward. Staff presented the FY 2024 GSCCCA budget which was approved by the Board.

## Filing Activity Notification System (FANS)

FANS launched on January 15, 2023 and has since experienced strong and steady growth.

The system is designed to offer individuals the ability to receive a notification when certain real estate and personal property records are filed with a Superior Court clerk, indexed, and data is transmitted by clerks of Superior Court throughout the state of Georgia. As of April 12, 2023, FANS had more than 3,500 registered users, and from that group, 7,374 total requests had been submitted involving names, addresses and document types.



*Rachel Rice and Andy Wightwick pose with Board member Tammie Mosley.*

## Statewide Network Upgrade Initiative

This initiative involves upgrading the internet speed in every county. It was reported that, since the last board meeting, the Authority had completed an additional 6 counties and was close to finishing another 17, with other counties in the construction phase or in the very beginning of the project. To date, 50 counties have been completed.

## Fines & Fees Division

Collection rates remain very high with only a small number of courts non-compliant. Being defined as non-compliant means that the court has not reported its fines and fees collected in a timely manner as required by law. On average, the Fines and Fees Division processes approximately \$78M annually from all courts in the State of Georgia. There are approximately 1,100 courts operating across the state.

With the passage of HB 242 during the 2023 legislative session, the Driver Education Training Fund (DETF) was re-established. The DETF requires that a 3% surcharge be added to all applicable traffic offenses, effective July 1, 2023. The Board adopted revised Fines & Fees forms to reflect the DETF surcharge.

## Training & Outreach

The Authority continues to develop training courses to meet the needs of Superior Court clerks, their staffs, and the public. In 2023, the Authority is offering a variety of in-person and virtual training. Classes address UCC training, the eFile Portal, the Filing Activity Notification System (FANS), real estate indexing, protective orders, fines and fees, and notary public training.

The Authority's online training platform, eLearn, continues to experience heavy usage by clerks and the public. As of March 31, 2023, approximately 103,400 users had registered to use the site, with roughly 101,000 of those using the Notary Public course. On the real estate indexing side, nearly 2,400 court personnel have availed themselves of the Authority's online deed indexing courses. To date, 72 currently serving clerks and deputy clerks have successfully passed the Indexing Certification exam.

## eFile Project

The Authority's eFiling initiatives are being heavily leveraged by clerks to better serve the public. Currently, 150 clerks participate in UCC eFiling, with 121 mandating eFiling as



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*Board meeting review — Cont. from Page 2*

the only filing method. Thus far in FY 2023, approximately 20,000 UCCs have been eFiled per month.

All clerks participate in Real Estate eFiling to some degree. By statute, plats must be electronically filed. Of the 159 clerks, 146 accept all document types electronically. The online notary public application process has 152 clerks participating, with 50 clerks allowing Mail-in Renewals (MIR). A backlog of pending liens has been greatly improved due to the diligence of Authority staff working to resolve this backlog. Of the 46 counties with pending liens, 43 have been completely or partially resolved. Additionally, of the pending liens that were 1,000 days old or older, only nine remain unresolved.

**eFile System Certification**

Phase I and Phase II of the eFile System Certification Project have been completed. Currently, Phase III requires that vendors contact the Authority with a completed application and sponsor contact form in order to schedule eFile System Certification testing. The testing involves the vendor displaying that their system meets required functionality before the vendor deploys the system to clerks. The Authority's eAssist program was the first application to undergo the GSCCCA eFile Certification review and certification process. The target completion date for vendor eFile System Certification is July 1, 2023.

**Electronic Document Certification (eCert)**

The eCert Program allows individuals to electronically request certified copies of documents from a particular clerk's office, thereby avoiding the need to travel to the physical office. At present, 69 clerks are participating in the program, and another 15 clerk offices have been trained and are in the testing phase. As of April 10, 2023, participating clerks have received 31,952 electronic certified document requests. Authority staff is not aware of any issues related to acceptance of electronic certifications.

**Historical Plat Image Project**

The Historical Plat Image Project is substantially complete. The project includes plat images filed on or before December 31, 2003 but does not include plats contained in deed books. As of

April 10, 2023, 1.271M plat images had been processed. Accrued expenses for the project are \$3.92M, which falls within the estimated budget of \$3.8M - \$4.4M. Of the 115 clerks that were sent compensation agreements, 110 have submitted completed agreements and have been paid a total of \$2.7M, encompassing approximately 846,000 images. Additionally, 65 clerks needed additional imaging by the Authority's engaged vendor. Since the project's inception, approximately 355,000 images have been added to the system at a cost of \$1.2M.

**Historical Deed Re-Indexing Project (1989-1987)**

According to vendor reports as of April 9, 2023, the project includes an estimated 3.6M total instruments. The budget for the three-year project is \$9M - \$10.8M, with deed images from 1989 currently being collected and processed. It is anticipated that the 1988 and 1987 segments of the project will commence soon. There has been \$5.8M paid (or payable) to clerks for images and index data. It is estimated that there are 1.2M instruments to be processed for 1989, with a budget of \$3M - \$3.6M for that year. The 1989 segment of the project is scheduled to be completed by July 31, 2023. With a budget of \$4.6M, the 1988 and 1987 segments are targeted to be completed by June 30, 2025.

**Voluntary Historical Deed Re-Indexing Project**

It was reported that 90 counties are currently participating in the Voluntary Historical Deed Re-Indexing Project. More than 4.9M instruments have been released to production with another 305,000 in quarantine for review.

**UCC Project**

Approximately 7,700 requests for UCC Certified Searches were received by the Authority from July 1, 2022 through March 31, 2023. At the current rate of requests, the total number of UCC Certified Searches for FY 2023 is projected to be more than 10,300. UCC Certified Search requests are processed internally by Authority staff involving an exact-name

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### Board meeting review — Cont. from Page 3

search of the UCC database. Search results are then transmitted to the customer. For the first nine months of FY 2023, there have been 196,167 UCCs filed statewide. At this filing rate, the projected FY 2023 total would be approximately 261,000 UCCs which would represent the highest number of UCCs filed since FY 2002 (excluding pandemic years of FY 2022 and FY 2021).

#### Archival Services

At present, 158 counties participate in VaultTek (formerly known as MyVault), which offers clerks the ability to have all files backed up by the Authority free-of-charge. As of March 31, 2023, more than 267 TBs of data, containing 1.28B files, were being stored and protected for clerks through the program. During the past quarter, the Authority upgraded equipment in ten clerk offices, and, in response to requests from three clerks, restored data to their respective counties. This would not have been possible prior to VaultTek's implementation. VaultTek users also now have the option of conveniently accessing their data via the VaultTek Mobile app. Additionally, in the first three months of

2023, more than 3 million deed images and 368,000 lien images were added to storage through the Virtual Microfilm Program.

#### Notary & Authentications Division

The total number of persons commissioned as notaries public for FY 2023 through March 31, 2023 was 36,675, which is a decrease of 7% when compared to FY 2022. The number of apostilles issued rose 26.7% for FY 2023 when compared to FY 2022, for a total of 33,032 apostilles issued through March 31, 2023. The top five destination countries for apostilles are Turkey, South Korea (ROK), Mexico, Colombia, and the Russian Federation. The surge in apostille requests is attributable to Turkish citizens seeking to regain their connection with Turkey because of forced migration by the Soviet Union in World War Two through the 1950s.

Additionally, it was reported that the 13<sup>th</sup> edition of the *Georgia Notary Handbook* was published in March. The handbook was first published in 1999 in an effort to assist Georgia's notaries public. ■

## Legislation necessitates new F&F forms

Passed during the 2023 legislative session and with an effective date of July 1, 2023, HB 242 re-establishes the Driver Education and Training Fund (DETF) and requires that a 3% surcharge be added to all applicable traffic offenses with an offense date on or after July 1, 2023. As a result of this legislative change, the Authority Board has adopted updated Consolidated Monthly Remittance Reports for all courts which have an effective date of July 1, 2023. Form changes include:

- Removing the \$25 Crime Victims Emergency Fund line item for violations with an offense date prior to 7/1/2004
- Combining all Driver Education and Training Fund full payment calculations into a single line item
- Adding partial payment line item to Safe Harbor Fund
- Removing ORI number
- For Municipal Courts ONLY: Moving COUNTY to the second line giving more space to enter CITY name

Updated forms will be published to the Fines & Fees website, [www.courttrax.org](http://www.courttrax.org), on July 1, 2023, and all courts should use the new forms from that point forward. Any questions or concerns can be directed to the Authority's Fines & Fees Division at [finesandfees@gsccca.org](mailto:finesandfees@gsccca.org) or 1-866-847-4058.



*Authority celebrates 30 years — Cont. from Page 1*

*Read through the Authority's book, published in 2015 to memorialize the story of the Authority's creation and first two decades of service. It's a story of hard-fought battles, technology challenges, and, ultimately, unbelievable triumphs, won through dedication, innovation, collaboration, and partnership with Georgia's Superior Court clerks.*



tem.” Galvanized by a common goal, they came together to fight for the Authority’s creation!

As Greg G. Allen, Superior Court clerk of Forsyth County and current chairman of the Clerks’ Authority, said when asked about the Authority’s creation during an interview in 2013 for the

Authority’s book: “To think that a group of seasoned clerks of this generation, in an elected position, whose duties were codified over two hundred years ago, not only understood the radical change the world was experiencing but were able to see the future and harness technology to the advantage of the citizens of Georgia is nothing short of amazing.”

Also interviewed for the book in 2013, the Authority’s first long-serving director, David Williams, who passed away the following year, had this to say: “In the beginning, no one, including most of us who worked hard for its creation, really knew what the GSCCCA was going to be, but the clerks who worked hard at crafting the enabling legislation (Woodson, Barry, and Gary Yates) had a vision. And, ultimately, Georgia’s clerks of Superior Court came together, embraced the plan, and united to make the Clerks’ Authority a reality. The Georgia General Assembly should also be applauded for having the foresight to create the Clerks’ Authority. It shows the trust the legislature had in the clerks, and this leap of faith ... this trust they placed in clerks of Superior

Court has been rewarded with the success the Authority has experienced which includes providing projects to the state such as court fines and fees tracking and the Protective Order Registry.”



With considerable challenges and significant triumphs along the way, 30 years have passed since Gov. Miller signed HB 243, but the Authority’s creation remains the story of a collective vision being realized through the selfless commitment of many. What better way to understand and celebrate the significance of this seminal event than to hear from clerks who were fighting the fight in 1993 and played a vital role in the Authority’s creation and members of our senior management team who joined early on and have been pivotal to the many successes that have unfolded over the past three decades. Enjoy reading their thoughts, memories and unique perspectives as we honor this momentous anniversary and revel in the paradigm-shifting victory 30 years ago they led to the success story we celebrate today. (Please see comments on Pages 6-14.)



*The Authority's senior management team, circa 2010: Andy Wightwick, Mike Smith, Rachel Rice, Richard McPhaul, long-serving director David Williams, and current director John Earle*





## Comments from F. Barry Wilkes

Former Superior Court Clerk of Liberty County &  
Former GSCCCA Chairman

“It is hard to believe that more than three decades ago superior court clerks’ offices were almost void of technology and resources necessary for doing their jobs and for providing invaluable court and cadastral services to the citizens of this state. Thankfully, some of us were predestined to dream and envision a future for superior court clerks much different than what we had.

Gary Yates (then clerk of the superior court of Gwinnett County) and I (then clerk of the superior court of Liberty County) envisioned the creation of a “cooperative” for superior court clerks that would, through collaboratives and partnerships, provide resources that would enable us to improve and modernize our offices. However, we could not find a vehicle for doing so. Woodson Daniel (then clerk of the superior court of Pulaski County), through his affiliation with the state’s banking industry, found a vehicle—creation of a statewide system for filing and providing access to Uniform Commercial Code financing statements.

We came together and fought what was tantamount to a holy war to convince legislators that we—not superior court judges, the Administrative Office of the Courts, or the state’s Department of Administrative Services—were the right choice for creating and operating the statewide UCC system. Again, we were blessed, this time with the unwavering support of the Community Bankers Association of Georgia, the Georgia Bankers Association, and key legislators that had longstanding relationships with various clerks of superior court across the state. It is because of their support that we won the war and, thus, our cooperative was born—as the Georgia Superior Court Clerks’ Cooperative Authority.

The Authority has been since its creation a paradigm of innovation and service. It has been at the forefront of technology and invention because we have been blessed with consummate leadership, from the top down. Woodson Daniel, the Authority’s first chairperson, lived and breathed Authority business. Tom Lawler, the second chairperson, provided leadership that produced some of the Authority’s greatest enhancements since its creations. Jean Rogers, fourth chairperson, and Greg Allen, fifth chairperson, have likewise steered the Authority to continued improvements and advances. Hopefully, I, too, as third chairperson, contributed positively, as well.

Our greatest blessings have been our two directors. I cannot adequately express in words what David Williams, our third but first long-serving director, meant to the Authority and superior court clerks of this state. He was predestined to be our director and, as such, built the Authority into what it has become. John Earle, his successor, is just as committed to the Authority as David was. He has continued to build upon David’s legacy and has led the Authority through critical times. Both built the Authority into all that it has become by recruiting



*Barry Wilkes and  
Woodson Daniel, two  
of the Authority’s  
visionary leaders*

*Continued on Page 7*



*Authority celebrates 30 years — Cont. from Page 6*

*Comments from F. Barry Wilkes — continued*

and retaining some of the smartest, most innovative, most dedicated, and most loyal individuals. Their contributions are astronomical. Clerks of superior court love and appreciate them and consider each a part of our family.

However, I believe that our accomplishments thirty years ago would not have occurred as profoundly as they have had it not been for divine guidance that led us to John Myers, who assembled at the onset a team of “geniuses” to provide *avant-*



*Barry Wilkes honors John Myers upon his retirement.*

*garde*, cutting-edge technology and other systems required for the plethora of projects that the Authority has been called upon by legislators, clerks of superior court, and others to create and operate. We continue to be blessed with Andy Wightwick, who has been our “chief genius” for most of his life, and his brilliant and dedicated team.

I believe that we were chosen and preordained to create the Authority because Almighty God knew that we would be true and faithful servants, dedicated caretakers, and grateful beneficiaries of this magnificent enterprise that has enriched—and continues to enhance—the lives of superior court clerks, the state’s judiciary system, the state’s commerce and trade, and, most of all, the citizens of Georgia. Thus, superior court clerks have been endowed with a sacred trust and, as such, must always vigilantly safeguard and protect this trust, this gift from Almighty God.

We are most thankful that we can now celebrate that three decades have elapsed since the Authority’s creation. I pray that a hundred years from now, clerks of superior court and others will be able to celebrate its centennial.



*David Williams presents to the Board at a meeting in 2010 with then-Authority Chair Tom Lawler and future Authority Chair Jean Rogers on either side.*



*In 2015, Authority staff posed with Board members, past and present, including the four clerk members on the original Board, to celebrate the publication of the Authority’s book.*



## Comments from Gary Yates

Long-serving GSCCCA Consultant &  
Former Superior Court Clerk of Gwinnett County

“ Looking back over the past 40 years, four primary observations occur to me that I believe remain critical for Superior Court Clerks and the Clerks’ Authority as they move forward.



### Frustration Generates Innovation.

A recurring theme during discussions with fellow clerks in the 1980s and 90s was the utter frustration most clerks had with the lack of resources available to enable them to properly perform their duties. Responsibilities continued to grow but funding and support dwindled for many. Levels of funding and support varied widely across the state. Clerks knew something needed to be done which would unite all clerks statewide. The general idea was to create a common entity to provide the tools and resources to allow clerks to perform their obligations. But how? Such was the topic of many telephone conversations that I had with Barry Wilkes. During those discussions over many months the idea of an authority was conceived as perhaps the best vehicle to move the clerks forward.

### People – Right People at the Right Time.

Many outsiders underestimated the determination of the clerks and considered the plan to create an authority as a longshot. They were wrong. Superior Court Clerks were fortunate to have a number of forward-thinking leaders to take the idea and run. Most clerks and other stakeholders bought in and supported the concept. Plans were developed, ground-work laid, and the plan was successfully executed for creation of the Authority. Just a few of the people that have made significant contributions are Barry Wilkes, Woodson Daniel, Mike Holiman, John Myers, David Williams, Andy Wightwick, Tom Lawler, John Earle, and Wright Banks. Many others, too many to list, also contributed greatly to the ongoing united effort.

### Refusal to Fail.

Continuing to this day is the absolute determination by the clerks and Authority staff to successfully execute any project taken on. The number of projects implemented without a single failure is a tribute to the leadership and staff who work so hard on behalf of clerks and to the clerks themselves who make it all happen. The refusal to fail is what has made the clerks and Authority successful.

### Vigilance.

Clerks have had to be on constant alert to protect what has been built. There have been outsiders that would have preferred that the Authority had never been created much less successful. Constant guard has been in place to protect the Authority, and thus the clerks, from being sidetracked and diminished in its mission. This continues to be an extremely important element of the continued success of the Authority.

Moving forward, my advice is to continue to generate solutions by embracing frustration, engage the right people, refuse to fail, and remain vigilant. The clerks must work diligently to remain united for the common good. This is essential to protect the ongoing success for clerks. Do not allow interference to cause fractures that distract and weaken. With a united clerk body, the clerks and the Clerks’ Authority will have a promising future. I am confident that will be the case.





## Comments from Superior Court Clerks

In late November of 1992, a special joint meeting of the Council and the Georgia Superior Court Clerks' Association was held in Macon with more than 150 clerks of Superior Court in attendance. Barry Wilkes, Gary Yates and Woodson Daniel presented their unique proposal of creating a centralized indexing system for UCCs that would be developed, implemented, and managed by an authority created by the clerks. The novel concept received overwhelming support and illustrated the clerks' desire to move forward together and fight for the project.

On the following pages are comments from some of the longest-serving clerks in office today. Several were in office and attended that pivotal meeting in Macon and the others took office in January of 1993, just months prior to the Authority being established. These clerks have literally seen it all and continue serving today giving them a unique perspective on the significance of the anniversary we now celebrate.

### **Patti H. Grimsley**

Twiggs County, 1978 – present

“The Georgia Superior Court Clerks' Cooperative Authority has been the BEST thing that has ever happened to Clerks of Court. I have worked in the Clerk's office since 1975, being elected Clerk of Twiggs Superior Court in 1978. GSCCCA will help you no matter what the problem with equipment or technical issues. All members of GSCCCA will do their best to solve whatever problem you are having with computers. The best equipment and technical support always available just a phone call or email away. I can NOT praise GSCCCA enough for all the assistance they have given Clerks over the State of Georgia. It is a privilege and honor to work with such a fine, knowledgeable group of professionals. Thank you! Thank you! Thank you!



### **Connie Cheatham**

McDuffie County, 1989 – present

“So hard to believe it's been 30 years since the Georgia Superior Court Clerks' Cooperative Authority was established. We had some very astute and forwarding-thinking clerks 30+ years ago whose ideas and hard work made the mission come to fruition. We are the envy of other groups that have tried and not been successful to gain what we have. Our Clerks' Authority Board Chairs over the years... Woodson Daniel, Tom Lawler, Barry Wilkes, Jean Rogers, and current Chair Greg Allen have continued to keep us on the mission of assisting clerks with our technology needs and training. Big thanks to the current Authority staff under the leadership of John Earle; and to Andy Wightwick and his group of so-smart “techie” and to Mike Smith, and Rachel Rice. They are always so willing and capable of following through with any idea or project presented to them. Also, I have to give recognition to the many years of dedicated work that our Executive Director David Williams gave to us. His leadership and friendship are very much missed by all that knew him.



*Comments from Clerks — continued*

**Linda Hayes**

Newton County, 1984 – present

“I cannot believe the Authority is 30 years old. When Superior Court Clerks came together at training conferences, or for any reason, Barry Wilkes comes to mind always twirling his cigar and his mind racing, thinking of all the things the Clerks should do and could do. He never stopped talking about projects.



I do not remember all the details; however, I can see the group in Cordele after class one evening at the Holiday Inn for our Spring Conference in the 90's. Woodson Daniel, Barry Wilkes, Gary Yates, Sandra Glass, Carol Jackson, Edward Tucker, Dwight Wood and I were having a discussion about an Authority and the Clerks should establish one. I am sure I left someone out because this was a huge undertaking and so many were involved.

Almost before we knew it, we were on our way to establishing the Clerks' Authority. An Authority such as the Clerks' Authority was not in existence and there has never been another one of its kind. Seed money was needed to start the project; we credited Woodson Daniel for procuring the money and so it began without a dime of taxpayers' money involved.

I remember going to the capitol so many times with groups of Clerks trying to get the legislation passed to establish the Georgia Superior Court Clerks' Cooperative Authority. The Georgia General Assembly passed HB 243 in 1993 and Governor Zell Miller signed the bill into law. In 1996, HB 1613 passed requiring the Authority to develop and implement a uniform statewide index for real estate and personal property records and the Authority began creating this one-of-a-kind system without any direct cost to the State of Georgia. From 1993 to the present the Authority has successfully developed and implemented every project we have today to benefit Clerks and our citizens while saving taxpayers money.

The best way of describing the Authority to me is "The Perfect Storm" in a positive way. Events came together perfectly (not to say there were no battles to fight); however, the outcome has been nothing short of amazing. We could have never imagined the Authority as it has evolved. David Williams, the first director put together "The Dream Team" that is growing and remains today. We have had the best, the brightest, the most innovative staff you could ever hope for.



We have had and continue to have great Authority Boards that are always working and brainstorming for Clerks and our counties benefit. I hesitate to name names because someone always gets left out, but every Clerk at that time probably worked to establish the Clerks' Authority; it was a group effort. I am so proud to have been a part of that group.

The Clerks in the State of Georgia should be so proud to be a part of this Superior Court Clerks' Cooperative Authority.



*Comments from Clerks — continued*



**Cecil R. Dye**

Towns County, 1985 – present

“ The Clerks Authority has been the greatest help for me and all the other 158 clerks in Georgia. They have been there every time I have needed help and always with a great attitude doing it. When I first started in the clerk’s office everything was done by hand all the indexing of deeds and plats. All civil and criminal. The Clerks’ Authority is the greatest thing that we as clerks have. Stay united all as one.

I am glad to have seen this in my time in office. Rachel and Andy are always there to help. Thanks to everyone that works at the Clerks’ Authority for being there for us. All of you do a great job and I thank each of you.

**Adayna B. Broome**

Mitchell County, 1993 – present

“ Even though I was a new clerk the year the GSCCCA was founded, I am so thankful to know that I have been a part of such a wonderful organization for thirty years. I am thankful that there were those like Woodson Daniel, Barry Wilkes, Joanne Caldwell and others that came before me that had the knowledge to know and realize what the Clerks were facing in the future and were able to develop the Authority to represent our body of Clerks and help us whenever and wherever is needed.



**Tim Harper**

Banks County, 1993 – present

“ As a new clerk in 1993, the Clerks’ Authority was not very important because we didn’t understand the idea that someday it would be the Clerk’s best friend. After 30 years in office, I could not have made it without the help and guidance of the Authority. Especially in small counties like mine, the assistance and programs that are offered are a huge

help. And now we have very few people coming into the office; they all use the Clerks’ Authority website. Thank you to our past leaders for having the insight to see what clerks would need in the future and for making this wonderful organization such a success to the counties in the state and all the citizens of Georgia.



**Beverly Logan**

Clarke County, 1993 – present

“ As a new Clerk in 1993, the same birth year as the Authority, I can honestly say we were “raised together.” I can’t imagine Clerk life without our Authority partnership. What a blessing to have grown up together. Happy Birthday Authority! And many more!





## Comments from John Earle

GSCCCA Executive Director

“ Since joining the GSCCCA in 2004, after spending 22 years in public accounting and various corporate environments, I have been extremely impressed with the culture and operations which I would describe in a number of ways including *team oriented, efficient, cooperative, helpful, collaborative, supportive, positive, can-do approach to finding solutions, nimble, friendly and respectful*. In addition to these strong attributes, and equally important, the Authority board and staff always strive to operate in a manner that helps optimize both process and financial efficiencies in our capacity as entrusted stewards of clerk resources.

Over the past 30 years, there have been hundreds, if not thousands, of individuals who have contributed to the successes of the Clerks’ Authority, but the ones that stand out the most significantly for me during my almost 19 years include [David Williams](#), [Gary Yates](#), [John Myers](#), [Mike Holiman](#), [Wright Banks](#), [Greg Morgan](#), Authority staff members including [Jamie McCarron](#), [Mike Smith](#), [Rachel Rice](#) and [Andy Wightwick](#), and the Board chairs with whom I’ve worked: [Tom Lawler](#), [Barry Wilkes](#), [Jean Rogers](#) and [Greg Allen](#). All of these individuals have played a vital role in the creation and/or success of the Authority over the last 30 years; their contributions are too many to list in this space, but their influential mark should be indelibly noted in the GSCCCA story for years to come.

The combination of key individuals plus the cooperative spirit of the Superior Court clerks through the years has led to the many successes the Authority has achieved for the benefit of clerks as well as other stakeholders. As a current, non-clerk board member once said years ago, after serving for only a short time, “*the GSCCCA should be a model for how all state government entities operate.*” The Authority has been blessed with the good fortune of having so many forward-thinking individuals who have helped drive continued improvements to the operation of Superior Court clerk offices which I believe are the envy of every county government office in Georgia. Clerks are also to be commended for their ongoing willingness to accept and embrace change in their daily office operations for the betterment of all including the citizens they serve. Realizing that change is not always easy, it’s impressive that 159 duly elected officials have continuously united around change. From my perspective, I can’t help but think that other non-clerk bodies take note of just how unified the clerk body has been and continues to be, and a unified clerk body is a critically important element to the Authority’s continued success.



*Recent photo of the Authority’s senior management team*

As we celebrate the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the creation of the Clerks’ Authority, I believe that with the continued cooperative and unified spirit of Superior Court clerks combined with all the resources of the GSCCCA, the Authority will continue to achieve great things for all those that it serves for the next 30 years.



## Comments from Andy Wightwick

GSCCCA IT Director

“The success of the Authority was undoubtedly driven by the incredible insight, hard work, and dedication of a variety of people. I was fortunate enough to be connected to the GSCCCA shortly after it began formal operation of its mandated UCC system through a relationship with Georgia Tech that provided for technical guidance for the upcoming Statewide Real Estate Search System. As a very young professional at the time, the team that I worked for demonstrated to me what true vision and leadership looked like, along with what could be accomplished when that vision was backed by a solid plan. I owe a significant degree of the success of my professional career to the opportunities and lessons provided



to me by the early thought leaders of the GSCCCA, particularly John Myers and David Williams.



As I reflect on the early days, I think one remarkable driver of success was the serendipitous timing of the formation of the Clerk’s Authority along with advancements in technology at the time. The Authority formed at a time when internet access was just becoming more generally available, but was certainly not ubiquitous nor widespread. In fact, the GSCCCA did not even have email back in 1997 when I had the privilege of building the Authority’s first email server and helping to oversee the

installation of their first “full time” connection to the internet. The emergence and growing prevalence of the world wide web also offered multiple opportunities for advancement and opportunities that were not even available when the UCC system launched just a few years prior. I mention these items because I think that a lot of the GSCCCA’s success over time has been driven by innovative people who could first identify and then apply emerging technologies to solve contemporary problems.

The successful completion and operation of highly complex and technical projects helped the Authority become recognized as the de facto technology leader, and therefore a natural choice for guaranteeing success on future projects. The Authority started off with a small and modest team of technical experts, along with a scrappy handful of servers, and has now grown to a full-service IT staff with hundreds of virtual servers across multiple data centers and robust network connectivity into every county courthouse. The Authority has proven that it can anticipate, plan for, and ultimately accomplish even the most daunting technical task facing the clerks.



*Authority Chairman Greg Allen takes notes during Andy Wightwick’s presentation.*



*Authority celebrates 30 years — Cont. from Page 13*

## Comments from Mike Smith

GSCCCA Communications Director & Compliance Officer

“ Since its establishment in 1993, the Georgia Superior Court Clerks’ Cooperative Authority has become a trusted partner to not only Clerks of Superior Court and their staffs, but to the citizens of Georgia and customers across the globe. Because of the culture instilled from the early leaders of the organization, the Clerks’ Authority is now recognized as a shining example of how government can positively impact those needing the services provided by the Authority.

As we celebrate the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Authority’s creation, we fondly honor those who exhibited foresight in its creation: Gary Yates, Barry Wilkes, Woodson Daniel, David Williams and those who served on the first Clerks’ Authority Board of Directors. An organization is only as good as the people within it.

Those leaders believed in the Authority. That belief has enabled the Authority to evolve into an institution of resource. Those of us entrusted with its future tirelessly work to preserve and promote its founding purpose of providing resources to help Clerks of Superior Court carry out their mandated duties of office. On a personal note, I will be forever indebted to David Williams for bringing me on board 25 years ago. It changed my life. Happy Anniversary to all!



## New UCC forms coming soon

With approval and adoption by the Clerks’ Authority Board of Directors, UCC filers can begin to submit UCC forms with a revision date of July 1, 2023 as of the same date. Precipitated by changes made to the previous versions by the International Association of Commercial Administrators, clerks of Superior Court are authorized to accept new forms as of July 1, 2023.

Currently, UCC forms with a revision date of April 20, 2011, or later, have been authorized for use in Georgia. In consideration of the new forms, the Clerks’ Authority Board approved a grace period of 30 days in which the old and new versions will be accepted. On or after August 1, 2023, UCC forms with

a revision date of July 1, 2023 should be the only revision accepted by filing offices/clerks of Superior Court. UCC forms submitted with a revision date earlier than July 1, 2023 should be refused for filing.

Form modifications are relatively minor and will not affect a clerk’s review process. The reasons to refuse a filing remain unchanged. In that spirit, the Authority has scheduled three, brief 30-minute webinars for clerks and staff to review the revised UCC forms. Webinars will be conducted via Zoom on Thursday, June 8; Wednesday, June 21; and Wednesday, July 19. All webinars begin at 10:00am. To register for one of these webinars, please go to [www.gsccca.org/training](http://www.gsccca.org/training). ■



## Authority presents at Clerks' Spring Conference

Georgia's Superior Court clerks recently held their Annual Spring Conference at the King & Prince on St. Simons Island. During the week, Authority staff had the opportunity to present to clerks on a wide range of topics including the history and future of technology, eFile System Certification, the eCertification portal, the new Filing Activity Notification System (FANS), the new Fines & Fees forms and re-introduction of DETF, the new UCC forms, plat imaging, and the 1989-1987 Historical Project.

The Authority also participated in the recertification training for clerks which focused on disaster planning and records management. Tara Johnson, who manages the Authority's archival services, provided an informative session on disaster plans, including how to get started and what to do in the face of a disaster. Karen Taylor (Calhoun Superior),

Becky Crowe (Bryan Superior), and Barbara Penson (Floyd Superior) shared their own experiences with disaster and offered what they had learned and how clerks can be better prepared. Their powerful testimonies highlighted how disaster can strike anytime and anywhere! Additionally, Authority IT Director Andy Wightwick provided a valuable session on artificial intelligence—where AI started, where we are now, and where we *may be* in the future.

The conference also provided Authority staff ample opportunity to meet informally with clerks to discuss how they could better leverage the services and products offered by the Authority for the benefit of their offices. All Authority presentations during the conference are available at the Clerk Resource Center, [www.gsccca.org/clerkresource](http://www.gsccca.org/clerkresource), under Conference Materials. ■



## Sauls named Clerk of the Year

Congratulations to Pierce County Superior Court Clerk **Thomas W. Sauls** who was recently named the Stetson F. Bennett Superior Court Clerk of the Year. The award was presented by the Superior Court Clerks' Association of Georgia at their annual Clerk of the Year Banquet. Thomas is shown in the photo to the right with fellow award finalists Grant Walraven (Gordon County) and Carol W. Bragg (Wheeler County). The poem below, "They Didn't Know Us," was written for the event by F. Barry Wilkes and presented by Pat Anderson, former Superior Court clerk of Elbert County.



### "They Didn't Know Us"

By F. Barry Wilkes

*There was a time not long ago  
When winds of change started to blow,  
Stirring up a storm so severe  
We feared for most things we held dear.*

*Those we'd long counted as allies  
Became adversaries and spies,  
Motivated by unkind greed  
And huge egos they had to feed.*

*They likened us to dinosaurs—  
Weak, meek, and ill-equipped for wars—  
And said we weren't going to survive;  
That if we did, we'd never thrive.*

*They just didn't know us at all—  
How, when our backs are to the wall,  
We look to a greater power;  
Rise up and refuse to cower;*

*How, for the freedoms we defend,  
We'll paw, scrape, and fight to the end,  
Plying our wiles instead of swords  
To trounce those who think they're our lords.*

*Though they may drag us through the mud  
And try to drown us in a flood,*

*We will surmount all upheaval—  
Good will triumph over evil.*

*There was a time just yesterday  
When winds of change gusted our way,  
Stirring up a storm so severe  
We feared for most things we held dear.*

*Those who ought to be our allies  
Became adversaries and spies,  
Motivated by foolish greed  
And huge egos they have to feed.*

*They thought, without them, we'd perish—  
As would most things that we cherish—  
That, to their hubris, we would bow,  
And, to all their wants, we'd kowtow.*

*They just didn't know us at all—  
How, when our backs are to the wall,  
We look to a greater power;  
Rise up and refuse to cower;*

*How, for the freedoms we defend,  
We will resist them to the end—  
Overcoming all upheaval,  
So good triumphs over evil.*





# Numerous training opportunities available

The Authority's 2023 training program has been well received and numerous learning opportunities in different formats continue to be offered. All training is open and free-of-charge to Superior Court clerks, their employees, and vendors.

## In-person classes

In-person, classroom training is being offered on two topics: Real Estate Indexing Standards and Fines & Fees. Each class is three hours in length and hosted by a Superior Court clerk. To register for classroom training, please go to [www.gsccca.org/training](http://www.gsccca.org/training).

## Webinars

Seven different subjects are being taught via 15 remaining webinars. This includes a new 30-minute webinar recently added to the schedule to cover the newly adopted UCC

forms. This new program will be offered on June 8, June 21, and July 19. To register for a webinar, please go to [www.gsccca.org/training](http://www.gsccca.org/training).

## Online courses

In addition to the in-person classes and various webinars being held, the Authority continues to offer its popular and widely utilized online training courses via its eLearn website.

*Mike Smith is shown above teaching a Notary Public Training class to constituents of Danielle F. Forté, Superior Court clerk of Muscogee County. If interested in offering this valuable service to the notaries in your county, contact Mike Smith ([mike.smith@gsccca.org](mailto:mike.smith@gsccca.org)) or Rachel Rice ([rachel.rice@gsccca.org](mailto:rachel.rice@gsccca.org)) to get your Notary Public Training class scheduled.*



## Remaining 2023 training

### In-person classes

July 14	Jefferson	Real Estate Indexing Standards
July 18	Cordele	Fines & Fees
Sept 13	Douglas	Real Estate Indexing Standards
Sept 19	Atlanta	Fines & Fees

### Webinars

June 6	Real Estate Indexing Standards 101
June 8	New UCC Forms (NEW)
June 21	New UCC Forms (NEW)
June 27	UCC–Duties/Responsibilities of Filing Office
July 13	eFile Portal 101
July 19	New UCC Forms (NEW)
July 20	Fines & Fees 101
August 8	Protective Orders
August 25	Real Estate Indexing Standards 101
August 29	Filing Activity Notification System (FANS)
Sept 15	eFile Portal 101
Sept 20	UCC–Duties/Responsibilities of Filing Office
Oct 5	Fines & Fees 101
Oct 19	Real Estate Indexing Standards 101
Oct 24	Protective Orders

Courses include:

- ❖ GSCCCA Indexing Standards
- ❖ GSCCCA Indexing Standards – Extended
- ❖ GSCCCA Indexing Standards – Common Mistakes
- ❖ Introduction to GSCCCA Fines & Fees
- ❖ Notary Online
- ❖ Notary Online – Mail-In Renewal
- ❖ Notary Public Training
- ❖ Notary Public Final Exam
- ❖ UCC Training

Courses are available 24/7 making training completely flexible. To learn more about or to register for one of these online training options, please go to <https://eLearn.gsccca.org>.

With questions regarding any of the Authority's 2023 training opportunities, email [training@gsccca.org](mailto:training@gsccca.org). ■