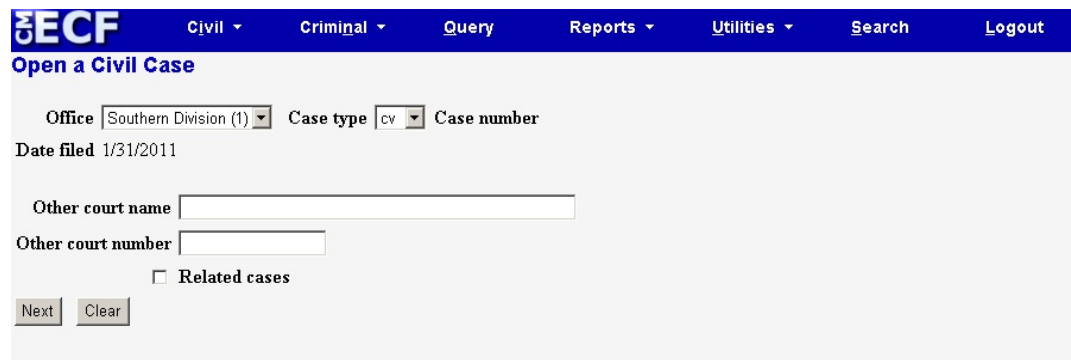


Opening a Civil Case and Electronic Submission of Initiating Pleadings

The Western District of Michigan Local Civil Rules govern electronic filing of initiating pleadings. Parties should familiarize themselves with the pertinent Local Rules before proceeding and may want to reference:

[Local Civil Rule 5.7\(c\)
Case Opening Protocol](#)

To begin, the documents must be in pdf format to be filed. After gaining access to CM/ECF, click *Civil* on the blue menu bar. Under the *Open a Case* heading, click on *Open a Civil Case* as shown below.



For each item on the above screen, make a selection unless otherwise directed below.

- Office: Refer to Local Civil Rule 3.2. Enter the appropriate division: Southern Division (1) or Northern Division (2). **Do NOT add Southern Division (4) or Southern Division (5).**
- Case type: This field will default to *cv*, which is the appropriate selection.
- Case number: The number will be automatically generated and will be provided at the end of this process.
- Date filed: This field will default to the current date.
- Other court name: This field is only applicable if the initiating filing is a notice of removal. Enter the name of the other court (e.g., Ingham County Circuit Court).
- Other court number: This field is only applicable if the initiating filing is a notice of removal. Enter the other court's case number (e.g., 10-01491-NI).
- Related cases: Check the box if the case is related to another pending civil case in the Western District of Michigan. Refer to [Local Civil Rule 3.3.1\(d\)\(iii\)](#).

Click *Next* to continue.

Open a Civil Case

Jurisdiction

Cause of action **Filter:**

Nature of suit **Filter:**

Origin

Citizenship plaintiff

Citizenship defendant

Jury demand **Class action** **Demand (\$000)**

Arbitration code **County**

Fee status **Fee date** **Date transfer**

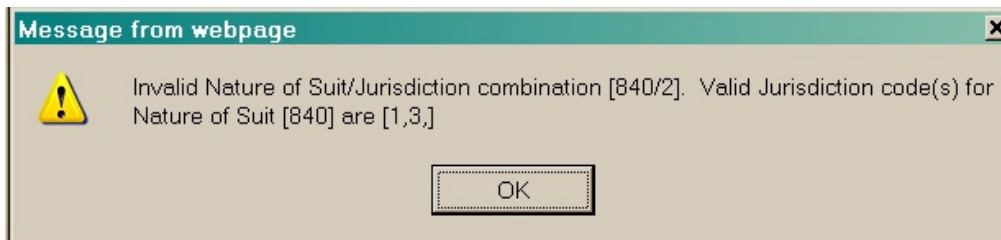
For each item on the above screen, make a selection unless otherwise directed below.

- Jurisdiction:** Select the appropriate jurisdiction. If 4 (*Diversity*), make selections under *Citizenship plaintiff* and *Citizenship defendant*.
- Cause of action:** Select a cause of action that best describes what the case is about. Enter key data in the *Filter* field to narrow cause of action search.
- Nature of suit:** Select a nature of suit that best describes the type of case. Enter key data in the *Filter* field to narrow search nature of suit search.
- Origin:** Select 1 (*Original Proceeding*) if the case is originating in this court. Select 2 (*Removed from State Court*) if the case is initiated in this court by notice of removal.
- Citizenship plaintiff:** Only make a selection if jurisdiction is 4 (*Diversity*).
- Citizenship defendant:** Only make a selection if jurisdiction is 4 (*Diversity*).
- Jury demand:** Select the party that demands the jury trial in the initiating documents filed. Making a selection on this screen does not equate to filing a demand for jury trial.
- Class action:** This field will default to *n*. Select *y* if the party is seeking a class action in the initiating documents filed. Making a selection on this screen does not equate to filing the appropriate documents.

Demand (\$000):	Enter the amount demanded in the relief of the initiating document, if appropriate. The format of the amount is in thousands of dollars (e.g., \$75,000 is entered as 75 in the demand field). Do not enter dollar signs or commas.
Arbitration code:	Leave blank.
County:	Select the county of residence of the first-listed plaintiff. If a U.S. government plaintiff, select the county of residence of the first-listed defendant.
Fee status:	This field will default to <i>pd (paid)</i> , which is appropriate in the majority of new civil actions. Other options include: fp (<i>in forma pauperis</i>) - Do not select. none (no fee required) - Select if the United States is the plaintiff or if initiating document is a §2255 motion. pend (<i>ifp pending</i>) - Select if the plaintiff has properly applied to proceed <i>in forma pauperis</i> . wv (waived) - Select if the filing fee has been waived (Note: This is rarely appropriate).
Fee date:	This field will default to the current date.
Date transfer:	Leave blank.

Click *Next* to continue.

The system will verify the accuracy of combinations entered on the previous screen. For example, if an invalid Nature of Suit and Jurisdiction combination is selected, the following screen will appear:



If you receive this error message, click **[OK]** and reselect a valid combination.

The participant entry screen is split into two panels as shown below:

Right panel:

For searching/creating parties.

Left panel:

Displays progress (parties, etc. that have been added).

The screenshot shows the ECF system interface. At the top is a blue navigation bar with the ECF logo and menu items: Civil, Criminal, Query, Reports, Utilities, Search, and Logout. Below the navigation bar is a section titled "Open a Civil Case". On the left side of this section, there are two buttons: "Add New Party" and "Create Case". Below these buttons are two links: "Collapse All" and "Expand All". On the right side, there is a search section titled "Search for a party". It contains three input fields: "Last / Business Name", "First Name", and "Middle Name". Below these fields is a "Search" button.

Add the names of the plaintiff(s) first, then add the names of the defendant(s). Refer to the Party Name Standards.

On the right panel, under *Search for a party*, enter at least two characters of the last/business name using an asterisk to substitute for unknown letters (e.g., Jo*s will find Jones, Johnson, Joe's Fancy Restaurant, etc.). Enter initial capital letters, as appropriate. The Party Name Standards will provide additional search guidance.

Click *Search*.

If the party's name is already in the database, it will appear under the *Search Results* as shown below. Scroll through the list, if necessary, to find an appropriate party for selection. To scroll through the list, either click the up/down arrows, or drag the button between the arrows. Click the name to highlight and select, then click *Select Party*.

If the *Search Results* do not present an appropriate party for selection, click *Create New Party*. Alternatively, if the person's name is not already in the system, a message that states "No Person Found," will be displayed. Click *Create New Party*.

Party Information

Last name First name

Middle name Generation

Title

Role

Pro se

Prisoner Id Unit

Office

Address1

Address 2 Show this address on the docket sheet

Address 3 City

State Zip Country

Prison

Phone Fax

Party text

On this *Party Information* screen above, only **Role** and **Party text** fields are to be completed. All other fields should not be modified or selected.


Occasionally address information may be displayed for the party name selected. Whether it is accurate or not, it is important to accept the address as presented. The Court will modify/remove the address if appropriate upon receipt of filing.

Role: This field will default to *defendant*. Select the appropriate role.
 Party text: (Optional) Enter additional descriptive information regarding the party (e.g., a Michigan corporation).

Click *Add Party*.

The party just added will move to the left panel as shown below. Search for and add the remaining parties.

The screenshot shows the ECF system interface. At the top is a blue navigation bar with the ECF logo and menu items: Civil, Criminal, Query, Reports, Utilities, Search, and Logout. Below the navigation bar, there are two main panels. The left panel contains a list of parties. The first party is Jennifer Jones, with roles: Alias, Corporate Parent or other affiliate, and Attorney. The second party is Sarah Smith, with roles: Alias, Corporate Parent or other affiliate, and Attorney. Each party entry has a 'Delete party' button and a green plus icon. The right panel is titled 'Search for a party' and contains three input fields: 'Last / Business Name', 'First Name', and 'Middle Name', along with a 'Search' button.

When all parties have been added, if a party has an alias, click this icon  to the right of *Alias*.

On the right panel, under *Search for a an alias for.....*, enter at least two characters of the last/business name using an asterisk to substitute for unknown letters (e.g., Jo*s will find Jones, Johnson, Joe's Fancy Restaurant, etc.). Enter initial capital letters, as appropriate. The Party Name Standards will provide additional search guidance.

Click *Search* and then Click *Select Alias* or *Create New Alias* and the following screen will appear.

The screenshot shows the 'Alias Information' form. It has several input fields: 'Last/Business name', 'First name', 'Middle name', 'Generation', and 'Start date'. The 'Start date' field is pre-filled with '2/2/2011'. There is a 'Type' dropdown menu currently set to 'agent'. Below the dropdown is a list of alias types: agent, aka, assign, bg, cons, dba, dec, div, est, exrel, fdba, fka, iden, nee, nfo, nka, obo, other, pro, rpi, subfor, subs, suc, ta, and trust. An 'Add Alias' button is located to the left of the dropdown menu.

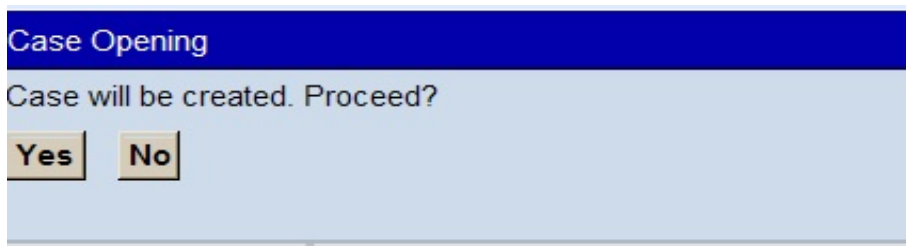
For each item on the above screen, complete or make a selection unless otherwise directed below.

Last name:	Complete, if not already completed.
First name:	Complete, if applicable and not already completed.
Middle name:	Complete, if applicable and not already completed.
Generation:	When applicable (ex. Sr., Jr., II, III, etc.).
Type:	Refer to the <u>Party Name Standards</u> for definitions.
Start date:	This field will default to the current date.

Click *Add Alias*.

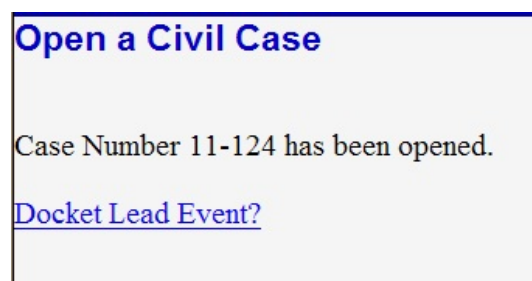
Do not add *Corporate Parent or other affiliate or Attorney*. You will have the opportunity to add yourself as the attorney during the course of filing the initiating pleading.

Click *Create Case* and you will receive the message below.



Click *Yes* to proceed.

The case number will be presented with confirmation that the case has been opened as shown below. Click on the link *Docket Lead Event?*



Select the initiating document event appropriate to the filing and then click *Next*.

The assigned case number appears in the *Civil Case Number* box. Click *Next*.

Upload the initiating document as well as any attachments (in pdf format), such as exhibits and summons. For Notice of Removals, attach separately the following: summons, complaint, answer, exhibits, and notice of filing notice of removal.

IMPORTANT: Contact the Clerk's Office at 616-456-2381 when submitting an emergency filing to make them immediately aware. If the Clerk's Office is closed, leave a message, so they can have this information the next business day.

A civil cover sheet is no longer required per the [Case Opening Protocol](#). At this time, do not attach the Corporate Disclosure Statement. This will be filed after you complete the next step.

Complete the remaining prompts and submit the filing. After the Notice of Electronic Filing (NEF) is presented, immediately proceed to:

- 1) Pay the filing fee or,
- 2) E-file the appropriate financial documents to proceed *in forma pauperis*.

To pay the filing fee:

Click *Civil* on the blue menu bar. Under the *Fees* heading, click *Make a Payment*. A list of available events will appear. Click to select *Filing Fee - Credit Card Payment*.

Click *Next* and complete the remaining prompts to pay the filing fee. Refer to [Credit Card Payments](#) for guidance. **Note that the transaction is not complete until the Notice of Electronic Filing (NEF) is displayed.**

To proceed *in forma pauperis*:

Click *Civil* on the blue menu bar. Under the *Fees* heading, click *Proceed In Forma Pauperis*. A list of available events will appear. Click to select as appropriate to the filing.

Electronically file any additional documents that may accompany the initiating document, such as the Corporate Disclosure Statement and an Answer.

You have completed the case opening and filing of initiating pleadings process. Upon receipt, the Clerk's Office will assign a judge to your case. You will be electronically notified of this action. Please contact our Help Desk at (616) 456-2206 or (800) 290-2742, or by e-mail at ecfhelp@miwd.uscourts.gov. The CM/ECF Help Desk is available Monday through Friday, 8:00 a.m. until 5:00 p.m., excluding Federal Holidays.