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*New Mexico Foundation for Open Government Urges
State's Highest Court to Preserve Metro Court Records*

Albuquerque—The New Mexico Foundation for Open Government, FOG, has urged the justices on the state's Supreme Court to ensure that records from the Bernalillo County Metropolitan Court remain available to the public online.

In a letter sent last Thursday to the state's highest court, FOG expressed concern about the Metro Court's transfer of data to the Odyssey software system from the AS-400 system that the local court had used for many years. As a result of that change, years worth of public records contained on the AS-400 software will no longer be available online.

FOG noted in the letter that although the records may presumably still be available in some form from the Metro Court, that availability is not clear, and their removal from the internet significantly restricts access to the public.

"Requiring citizens to obtain records directly from the Metro Court results in substantially more expense and delay, unfairly burdens those persons outside of the Albuquerque area, and places an additional burden on the staff and resources of the Metro Court itself," noted Susan Boe, executive director of FOG, in the letter.

The FOG letter pointed out that having easily accessible case information going back decades benefits the public in numerous ways. First, those criminal defendants and civil litigants who are the subject of the records have a strong interest in access to the records, for such purposes as showing dismissal of criminal charges, completion of sentences, or payments of restitution;

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demonstrating satisfaction of judgments; or asserting claims for collection of past judgments.

Furthermore, there are any number of ways that past records are of use to other members of the public, including background checks by schools, volunteer organizations and employers; inquiry by the media into matters of public importance; and investigations by law enforcement, just to name a few.

FOG requested that the justices take all necessary steps to ensure that previously accessible records of the Metro Court remain available online to the citizens of New Mexico.

A copy of the FOG letter to the Supreme Court is attached to this press release.

FOG, a nonprofit corporation, is the state's leading advocate for transparency in public affairs, and is supported by members' contributions and special events advocating open government. Visit or donate to FOG at www.nmfog.org.

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