

Cincinnati Post

April 5, 2005

Domestic Case Files Taken Off Web Site

By Mark Hansel, Cincinnati Post Staff Reporter

The Hamilton County Clerk of Courts has followed through on a promise to block Domestic Relations cases on the Clerk of Court's Web site.

In a statement issued Monday, Clerk of Courts Greg Hartmann said the move was designed to better protect the privacy of citizens involved in sensitive cases, notably divorce proceedings.

"This is another step to protect citizens' privacy," said Hartmann. "Sensitive documents such as child custody and financial information should not be on internet display."

The decision blocks access on the site to more than 600,000 Domestic Relations filings from the general public.

Judges, magistrates, attorneys and parties involved in Domestic Relations cases will still be able to view filings on the Web site by obtaining a Web user name and password from the clerk's office.

Hartmann's office said the move is designed to balance citizen privacy concerns with the Clerk's responsibility to provide full and open access to court records. The documents are considered public records and will still be accessible to the general public at the Courthouse.

"A password system further protects citizens from identity theft and snooping neighbors," said Hartmann.

The move comes about two months after Hartmann removed 320,000 documents from the Web site after a woman sued in federal court alleging identity theft using information obtained from the site. Most of the documents were tickets that included social security numbers.

The Web site receives about 60 million hits each year.

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