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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### McHenry County Launches Electronic System for Filing Orders of Protection

WOODSTOCK, IL - The McHenry County Circuit Clerk's Office is unveiling a new electronic system for filing Orders of Protection, hoping to help victims of domestic violence by making the process faster and easier. The electronic Order of Protection system was developed by the DuPage County Circuit Clerk's office and is currently in use in DuPage, Will and DeKalb counties. Kane County also has a similar system in place which has been in use since 2007. This system allows citizens seeking an Order of Protection, Civil No Contact Order or Stalking No Contact Order, to get basic information about the process and begin their petition online, saving time when they visit the courthouse to complete the process.

Those requesting an Order of Protection must still go to the courthouse and sign the petition before a judge will decide whether to grant the order. But the new electronic system enables them to complete the paperwork ahead of time, reducing the cumbersome process at the courthouse. Last year 1,650 Orders of Protection were filed in McHenry County, compared with 1,527 filed in 2010. According to Circuit Clerk Katherine Keefe, so far 1,021 Orders of Protection have been filed in 2011.

"It's an easier, more customer-friendly process," Keefe said. McHenry County has been testing the program since August 1, 2011, using it with all parties that have received assistance from Turning Point when completing their Order of Protection. "Not only does the program save the parties requesting an order time and make the process more understandable, it also saves Circuit Clerk and Turning Point staff time in processing the documents and the printed petitions make it easier for the judges to decipher, over handwritten petitions."

The process someone would follow to request an Order of Protection would be to access the new system on the Internet at [www.illinoisprotectionorder.org](http://www.illinoisprotectionorder.org). For those without Internet access, the program is also available on 10 public access terminals in the Circuit Clerk's office. There are numerous help screens that assist the person requesting the Order of Protection in understanding the requirements and knowing how to complete the paperwork. The system saves the person's petition and gives them a receipt number. At that point they can come to the courthouse and either receive assistance from Turning Point in completing their petition, or if they do not need additional assistance they can proceed directly to the Circuit Clerk's Civil Division. At the Circuit Clerk's counter they will sign their petition on an electronic signature pad and their case will be filed. Finally their petition will be presented to a judge who will decide whether to grant the Order of Protection.

"Our ultimate goal is to improve the quality of services that victims of domestic violence receive when they come to the Court for help," Keefe said. "The next step in this project will be to move the Orders of Protection electronically from the Circuit Clerk to the Sheriff and other law enforcement, which we hope to have completed before the end of the year."

For more information, please contact McHenry County Circuit Clerk Kathy Keefe at 815-334-4193.

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