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Superior Court of California, County of Los Angeles

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PRESIDING JUDGE ERIC C. TAYLOR ANNOUNCES NEW FREE ONLINE DISPUTE RESOLUTION SERVICES FOR SMALL CLAIMS LITIGANTS

Los Angeles Online Dispute Resolution Program Requires Litigants to Negotiate Remotely Before Coming to Court

Effective February 24, 2021, the Court, in partnership with the Los Angeles County Department of Consumer and Business Affairs (DCBA) and the Center for Conflict Resolution (CCR), will launch a free online dispute resolution program for Small Claims litigants, Presiding Judge Eric C. Taylor announced today. The new Los Angeles Online Dispute Resolution (LA-ODR) program will require Small Claims litigants to attempt to settle their disputes online before appearing in Court.

"LA-ODR is the latest example of the Court's efforts to expand access to justice through remote technology solutions which will endure well beyond the pandemic," Presiding Judge Taylor said. "I want to extend my gratitude to our partners at DCBA and CCR who have joined with us to launch this vital program for Small Claims litigants. I also want to commend our Executive Officer/Clerk of Court Sherri R. Carter for her continued commitment to pursuing innovative solutions for court users."

"This first-of-its-kind partnership shows that public service and justice systems can collaborate using technology to help litigants resolve Small Claims disputes through mediation without the need to travel to the courthouse and appear before a judge," said Rafael Carbajal, Director of the Los Angeles County Department of Consumer and Business Affairs who funded the effort, and whose staff is providing the mediation and counseling services. "We have seen that creating accessible remote solutions can reduce the time and costs associated with appearing in court, as well as keeping our communities safer at home during the pandemic."

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Chris Welch, Executive Director of the Center for Conflict Resolution, stated, "With 32 years of experience as a court mediation provider, the Center for Conflict Resolution is honored to partner with the Court using the TurboCourt system. Another virtual door has opened to the courthouse. CCR is inside, ready to help parties resolve their disputes."

LA-ODR is the latest of many innovations that provide remote access to court services as part of the Court's *Here For You | Safe For You* initiative. These innovative services not only improve efficiency, but safely provide access to justice during the COVID-19 pandemic and will help manage pandemic-related caseloads.

The Court will notify litigants with pending and new Small Claims cases of LA-ODR, which is free for all litigants.

LA-ODR guides litigants through simple step-by-step written questions regarding their dispute. Litigants confidentially share documents, propose a resolution, and come to written settlement agreements without a court hearing. Once a resolution is reached by all parties, LA-ODR generates the forms for a settlement agreement, and, once finalized, the agreement is automatically and electronically filed with the Court at no cost. LA-ODR is mobile-friendly, enabling litigants to use the platform on their smartphones. A Spanish-language version of LA-ODR will be available soon.

LA-ODR is made possible by funding primarily provided by DCBA, with additional funding provided by the Court.

Free online mediation services provided by DCBA and CCR will be available for select LA-ODR cases.

Parties unable to reach an agreement within two court days of their scheduled court hearing will be required to appear in court (either in person, or through [LACourtConnect](#), the Court's online remote courtroom appearance service). The judge will not have access to any of the correspondence that took place within the LA-ODR platform.

LA-ODR uses TurboCourt, an online dispute resolution platform built by Intresys, Inc., a vendor which focuses on eGovernment technology solutions for judicial clients.

LA-ODR will soon be offered for Unlawful Detainer (eviction) cases. For more information on LA-ODR, visit: <https://my.lacourt.org/odr/small-claims>.

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