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Arrest forms. Booking records. Statements. Bonds. Affidavits. It's time our prosecutors' offices get with the times and start accepting electronic records. Across the country our court systems are going paperless, cutting tax payer costs, improving the timeliness of criminal justice and making the lives of everyone in the system easier. Yet, the majority of police agencies in America are still required to send hard copies of case related records, in many cases by driving them over in a car or sending them via inter-office mail; they are required to send the..."original".

The law fully allows electronic forms, digital signatures, and scanned copies in place of..."the original". Unfortunately, many local courts have created judicial procedure which contravenes state law and have created policies mandating paper copies. Why? I can only surmise that such inefficiency is borne either out of mere stubbornness and a desire to stick to "how it's always been done" or, for the purpose of avoiding potential evidentiary hearings during which the parties involved must prove the validity of the electronic version of the record. Neither of these are valid reasons for not advancing efficiency. If they were, the [jurisdictions which have gone paperless over the last few years](#) would not have done so.

While our courthouses are diving into the digital age, many prosecutors' offices remain steadfast in having anything related to an arrest sent on paper. Despite the willingness, interest, capability and legal backing to digitize these records, our police records personnel are having to spend countless hours preparing paper case files. It is utterly ridiculous that in 2018, this is still occurring.

Below are some resources to help you with the process of implementing a digital transformation project.

- Get your hands on your state's Uniform Electronic Transactions Act (UETA) law (available with a simple Google search). Review what it says and become familiar with the fact that it makes electronic government records legal and valid.

- Contact your Clerk of Court and the person in charge of records management at your prosecutors' office. Have a preliminary discussion to find out if there are plans to accept electronic police records and case files. Remember, we're not just talking about what comes out of RMS; we're talking about all of those other attachments typically on paper including booking and arrest related records.
- Get your Chief/Sheriff involved. If there is resistance from the above-mentioned discussion, it may be a battle that requires buy-in from the top and headstrong leadership (of course, PRI can help too!).

Here are some other online resources to help you make your case:

- Electronic warrant initiatives: <http://www.ncsc.org/microsites/warrants-and-dispositions/home/state-initiatives/warrant-initiatives.aspx>
- Florida State's Attorney project: <http://www.orlandosentinel.com/news/breaking-news/os-jeff-ashton-state-attorney-paperless-20150525-story.html>
- Dallas criminal court project: <https://www.dallasnews.com/news/news/2010/01/11/Dallas-County-criminal-court-records-go-732>

### How We Can Help

PRI is a highly specialized management consulting firm that provides public safety agencies records management, IT and crime data consulting, training, and project management services. With core competencies in public records compliance, UCR/NIBRS, CJIS, RMS/CAD systems and records operations, PRI has proudly served over 1400 agencies since 2008.

Focus on your work while we get your records in order, your people on board, and your systems working right.

- Records management assessments
- IT project management
- UCR audits and NIBRS conversion
- Training