



# NEWS

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## **Florida TaxWatch Releases Report on Civil Court Filing Fee Waivers for Indigent Floridians**

A Florida TaxWatch Research Report released today recommends that the Legislature consider reinstating the civil-filing-fee waiver for persons of indigent status. The report, **Charging Indigent Floridians Civil Court Filing Fees Raises Questions of Cost Efficiency and Equal Access to the Florida Court System**, concludes that the waiver system may be more cost-effective than the current system, which does not include an automatic waiver for qualified indigent individuals.

The study undertaken by Florida TaxWatch found that the collection of civil court filing fees from indigent persons was not cost-effective; in fact, the more vigilant a clerk is in his or her efforts to collect past-due fees from indigent persons under the current system, the less likely it is that the costs will be recouped by collection of the initially assessed fee. Additionally, there is evidence to indicate that the filing fee acts as a deterrent to court access in some instances.

"Equal access to Florida's court system is a fundamental taxpayer and citizen right," said **Dominic M. Calabro**, president and CEO of the non-partisan, non-profit research institute and government watchdog Florida TaxWatch. "Furthermore, reinstating the civil-filing-fee waiver system for indigent individuals will improve cost-efficiency because, as this study shows, the juice isn't worth the squeeze. It's clearly a win-win situation."

The report also recommends that if the waiver is not reinstated, the Legislature should develop statewide policies for fee collection in order to ensure equal treatment throughout Florida, and should enforce the existing reporting requirement to enable future study on the subject of civil-filing-fee waivers.

**NOTICE TO ALL MEDIA:** Dominic M. Calabro will be at a press conference TODAY to discuss this report. The press conference will be held at 1:30 p.m., Wednesday, March 19, 2008, on the Fourth Floor of the State Capitol outside the House Chambers.

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Florida TaxWatch is a statewide, non-profit, non-partisan research institute that over its 29 year history has become widely recognized as the watchdog of citizens' hard-earned tax dollars. Its mission is to provide the citizens of Florida and public officials with high quality, independent research and education on government revenues, expenditures, taxation, public policies and programs and to increase the productivity and accountability of Florida state and local government. Its support comes from homeowners and retirees, small and large businesses, philanthropic foundations, and professional associations. On the web at [www.FloridaTaxWatch.org](http://www.FloridaTaxWatch.org).