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**United States Courts for the Ninth Circuit**

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**NEWS RELEASE**

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## **Court of Appeals Moves to Preserve Citations to Online Resources**

SAN FRANCISCO – The United States Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit is taking further steps to ensure that information derived from the Internet and cited in official court opinions remains available even if the original online resource ceases to exist or is altered.

Virtually all Internet users have experienced the frustration of a bad web link. This often results from “link rot,” which occurs over time as information is removed or moved to other online locations. Failure to obtain online information referenced in a court opinion, however, goes beyond inconvenience and can prove critical to judges and lawyers in considering other cases.

Since 2008, court librarians in the Ninth Circuit have been tracking citations to online resources and preserving original documents and/or web pages as Adobe PDF files. Although stored on the court website, <http://www.ca9.uscourts.gov/library/webcites/>, the availability of these files is not readily apparent to legal researchers.

The process will change January 4, 2016, when PDF files of online resources cited in opinions are automatically added to the official case docket. The files will be immediately available to anyone accessing the docket through the court’s case management/electronic case filing system, or CM/ECF, and the federal judiciary’s PACER system.

“Preserving the Internet resource and having the information easily accessible from the docket will be extremely helpful to the bench, bar, and public,” observed Ninth Circuit Chief Judge Sidney R. Thomas.

Since January 2008, circuit librarians have identified 643 Ninth Circuit opinions having citations to online resources. The yearly totals range from a high of 102 opinions in 2011 to 69 opinions in 2014 with an average of 80 opinions per year. The number of web links cited in an opinion ranges from one to as many as 30.

Besides documents and web pages, court librarians also track citations to audio and video files hosted on Internet websites. However, the court does not currently retain multimedia files due to storage constraints and other factors.

The Judicial Conference of the United States, the judiciary's national governing body, has advised all federal courts to preserve online resources cited in decisions. The Ninth Circuit is the third federal appellate court to add online resources to its case dockets. The courts of appeals for the Eleventh Circuit and District of Columbia Circuit also do so.

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