PACER Case Locator (PCL)
User Manual

Updated: June 2018
pcl.uscourts.gov

Contents

Introduction

The PACER Case Locator (PCL) is a tool that allows PACER users to a search for cases in appellate, bankruptcy, and district courts. In December 2017, the PCL was updated with a new look and new features. The following document will guide you through the new PCL and show you how it works.

Index Page & Login

The PCL index page (at pcl.uscourts.gov) highlights new features and updates, provides quick links to other useful sites, and allows you to log in using your PACER credentials.
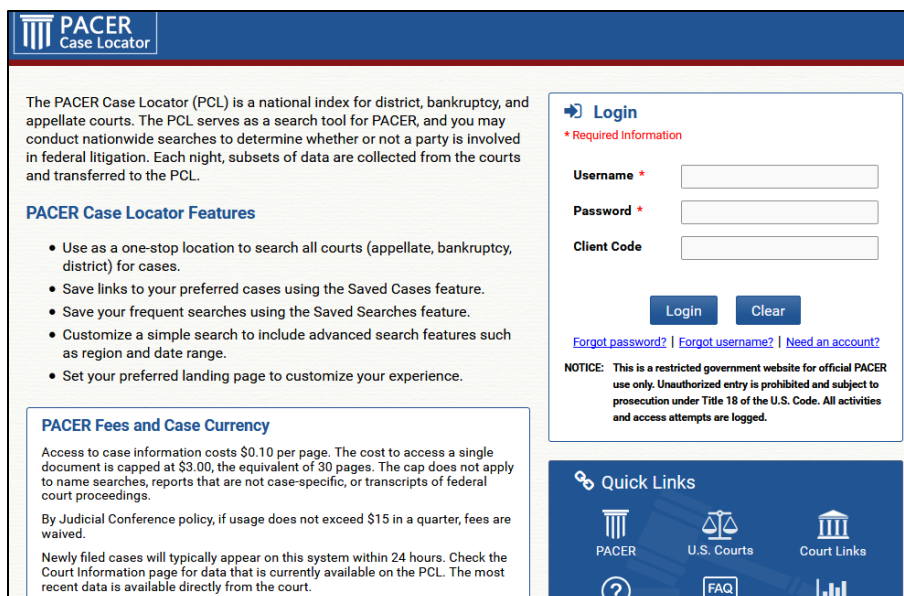
In the Login box, you must enter a username and password. The Client Code field is optional unless your account has a requirement to enter one. To make this field a requirement, go to Manage My Account on pacer.gov and select Set PACER Billing Preferences.

NOTE: You may also go to Manage My Account after you log in to the PCL. Just click My Account in the navigation bar that appears at the top of the page, and select Manage My Account.

The Quick Links box is available here and on the Welcome page. It provides links to pages and websites you may find helpful in your search.

Welcome

Upon successful login, unless you have set another page as your PCL home page, you will be taken to the welcome page.

Use the Quick Searches section of this page to go directly to the type of search you want to perform. The My Recently Run Saved Searches section allows you to view up to 10 of your most recently run saved searches.
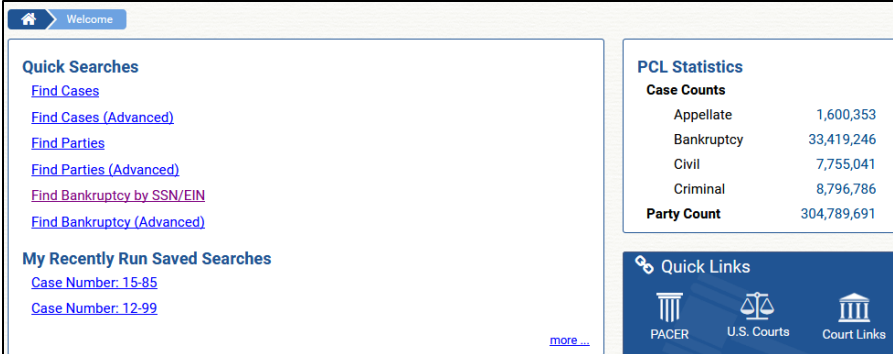
Click more on the bottom right of this screen to see all your saved searches. You may save up to 100 cases and searches.

> NOTE: Older saved searches will appear on this page if they have been run more recently than newer saved searches.

As you navigate the site, you can return to this page by clicking the PACER Case Locator icon at the top left of the screen.
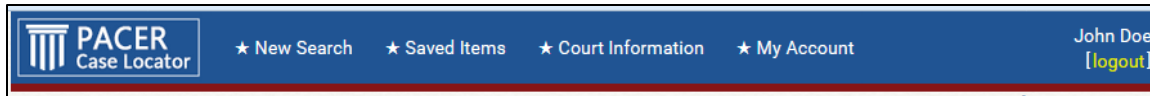

This is the default home page. To ensure you come directly to this screen when you log in, select the Make this my PCL home page checkbox on the bottom left.

Navigation Bar

After you log in, the navigation bar at the top of the screen provides several search and account options.

- New Search: Allows the user to begin a search by case or party. It includes the following:
  - Case Search
    - Basic
    - Advanced
  - Party Search
    - Basic
    - Advanced
    - Bankruptcy Search

- Saved Items: Lists searches and cases you have previously saved for later use. It includes:
  - Saved Searches
  - Saved Cases
  - Batch Searches

- Court Information: Provides a list of court abbreviations and website links.

- My Account: Allows the user to access account information. This section includes:
  - Change Client Code
  - Manage My Account
 - Billing History
  - User Options

New Search

Case Search page

Perform a case search by using either the basic or advanced options.

The basic search allows you to enter a case type, number, title, and/or court type. The advanced option allows you to expand your search by including the court region and/or date range.

If you do not select a court type, all courts will automatically be included in the search. If you select the appellate, civil, or bankruptcy court types, more fields will appear to help narrow your search.

See the Additional Search Fields by Court Type section below to learn more.
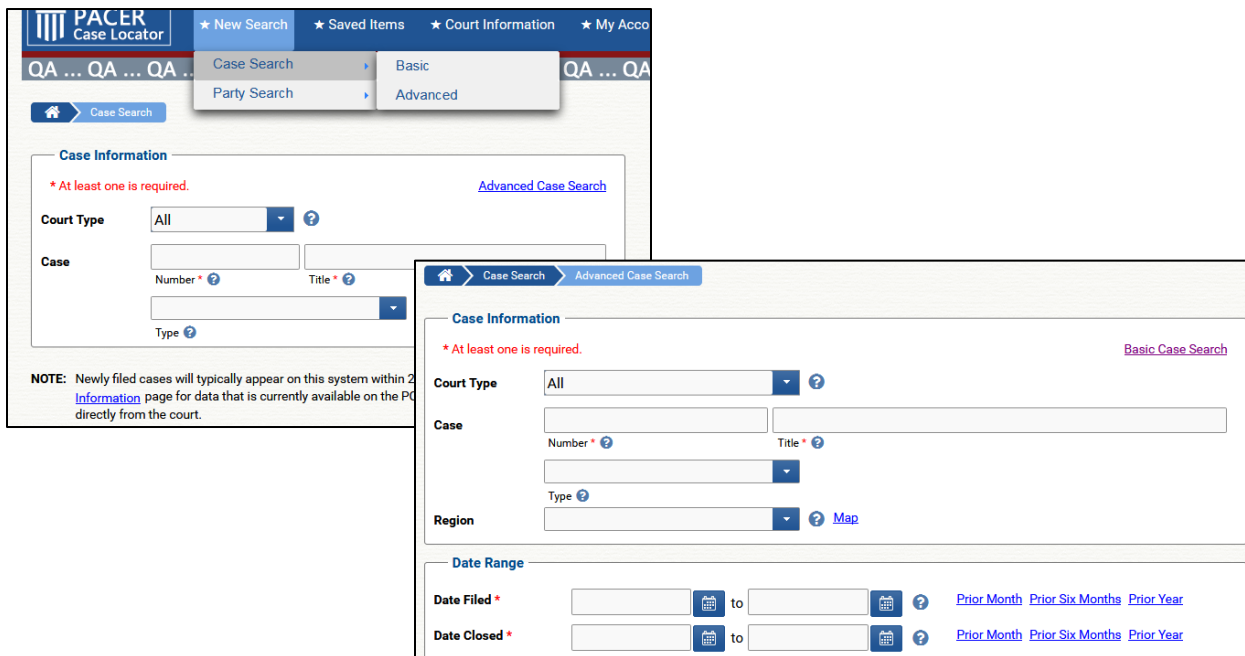
In the advanced search, you may use the Map link next to the Region field to select where you want to search.
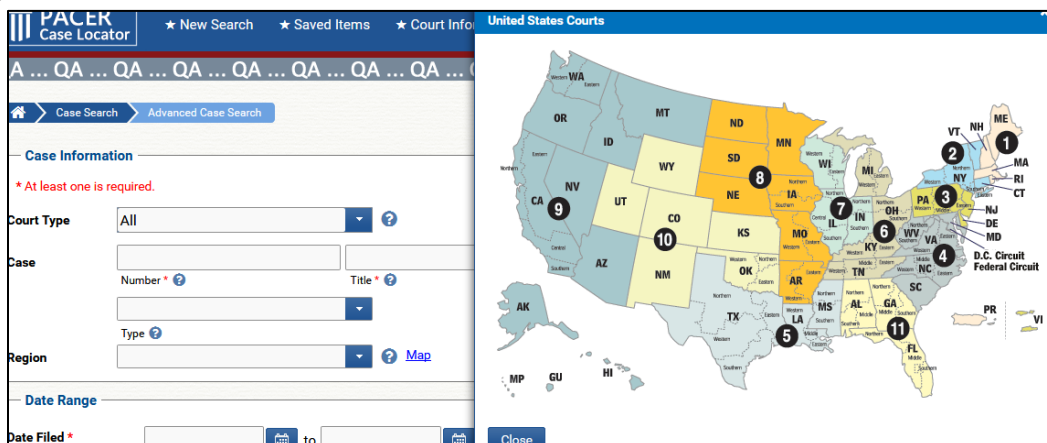
After you enter the information, click Search to continue. To change the information you have entered, either highlight the text in the field you want to change or click Clear to clear all the information you entered and start over.

If you use either of these pages often and want to go directly to one of them when you log in, select the Make this my PCL home page checkbox.
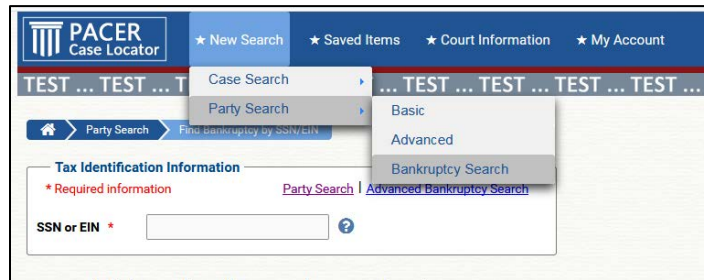
Party Search

Perform a party search by using either the basic or advanced options. The basic search allows you to enter the party name, party role, and/or court type. Party role codes are created and assigned by individual courts. This dropdown list includes the 30 most commonly used party role codes.

If you do not select a specific court type, the Court Type field will default to all courts.

The advanced option allows you to expand your search to include region and/or date range. If you do not select a court type, all courts will automatically be included in the search. If you select the appellate, civil, or bankruptcy court types, more fields will appear to help narrow your search.

In the advanced search, you may use the Map link next to the Region field to select where you want to search.

See the Additional Search Fields by Court Type section below to learn more.

After you enter the information, click Search to continue. To change the information you have entered, either highlight the text in the field you want to change, or click Clear to clear all the information you entered and start over.

If you use either of these pages often and want to go directly to it when you log in, select the Make this my PCL home page checkbox.

NOTE: A last name is required if you enter something in the First Name or Middle Name field, OR when you enter something in the Four Digit SSN field.

Bankruptcy Search

This page allows you to search for a bankruptcy party by Social Security or Employer Identification Number/Tax Identification number.
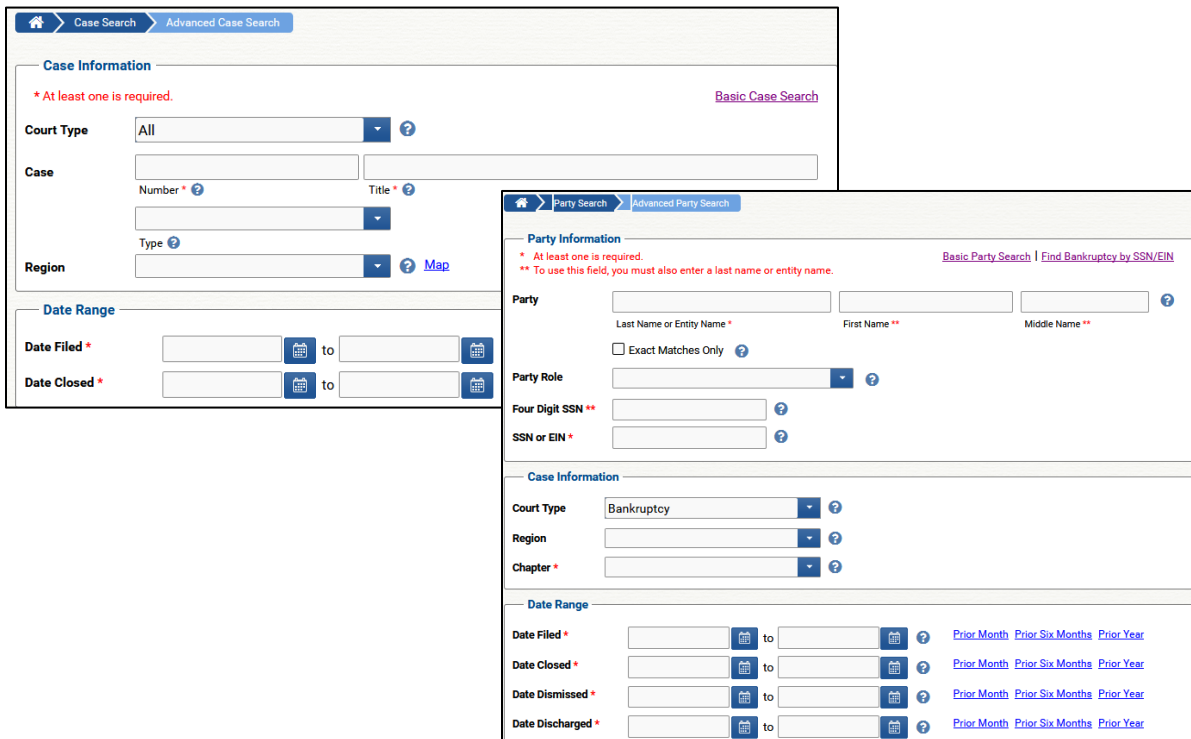

If you use either of these pages often and want to go directly to it when you log in, select the Make this my PCL home page checkbox.

Additional Search Fields by Court Type

You may search the PCL for case information in a number of ways. When running an advanced case or party search, additional search fields will appear depending on the court type you select when running an advanced search.

- Civil and appellate: Nature of Suit field
- Bankruptcy: Chapter, Date Discharged, and Date Dismissed fields

Search Results

Both the case and party Search Results screens allow you to perform a number of different tasks. The icon legend below the search results outlines those tasks:

- Save icon: Allows you to save results to the Saved Searches section, found in the navigation bar
- Sort icon: Allows you to sort your search results by the column selected
- Column icon: Allows you to select which columns you want to display
- Refine icon: Allows you to refine your search
- Download icon: Allows you to download your search results
- Save case icon: Allows you to save a case to the Save Cases section, found in the navigation bar
- Remove case icon: Allows you to remove a case from the Saved Cases section
- Show case parties icon: Allows you to see the parties involved in a case

The search results display one page at a time by default. You may download all search results to a file in XML or CSV formats.

A receipt at the bottom left of the screen shows the number of billable pages and the cost for the data on the current viewable page only. It does not include the cost for previously viewed pages.

When you roll over the "i" icon on the Case Search page, additional case information appears (e.g., jurisdiction, nature of suit, chapter, disposition, etc.).

If a search yields more than 5,400 results, you will have the option to run a batch search. For more information on batch jobs, see the Batch Search section below. When a search yields fewer than 5,400 results, you can sort the information by case title, case number, court, date filed, and date closed. You may use the sort icon at the top right of the results to sort your results, or you may also select which columns to view using the table icon.

NOTE: Sorting your results prompts a new search that likely will be billable. A notice of the fee will appear, prompting you to either continue or cancel the search.

# Saved Items

Saved Searches

The Search Results screen gives you the option to save your searches for later use. To save your searches, select the disk icon on the Search Criteria line.
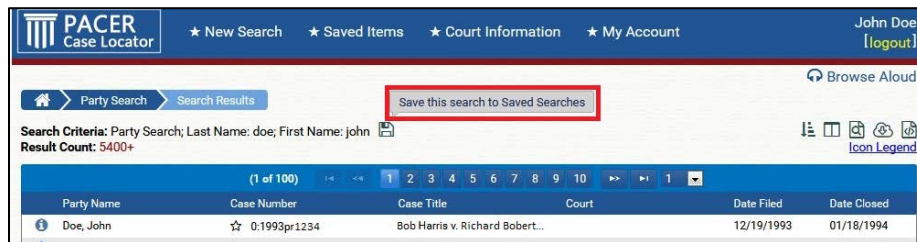

To go to your saved searches, click Saved Items on the navigation bar and select Saved Searches.

The Saved Searches page allows you to return to your previous searches, showing when you last ran the search, the type of search, and the criteria you used to run the search.

Use the icons on the right side of the screen to either rerun, edit, or delete your search from the list.
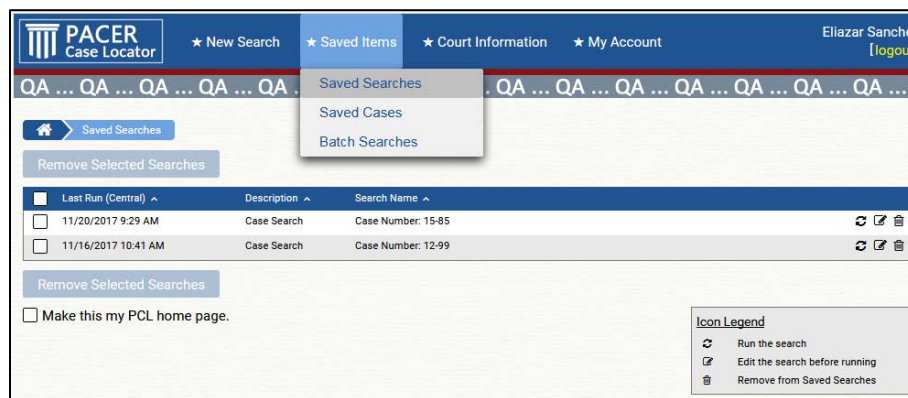

If you want to rerun the search, you will be charged a fee. There will be a notice to confirm you agree to the charges.
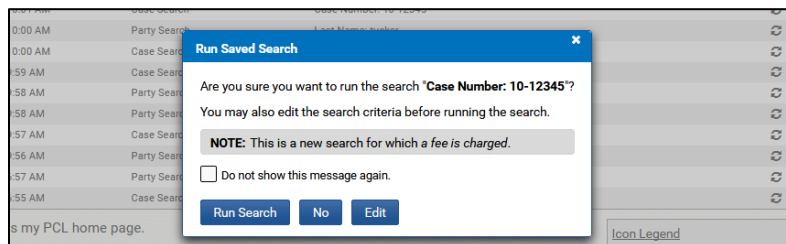
Saved Cases

The Search Results screen gives you the option to save any case for later use. Select the star icon in the Case Number column to save. When you click on the star icon, it will turn yellow, indicating you have saved the item. If you click the yellow star, it will be removed from your saved cases.
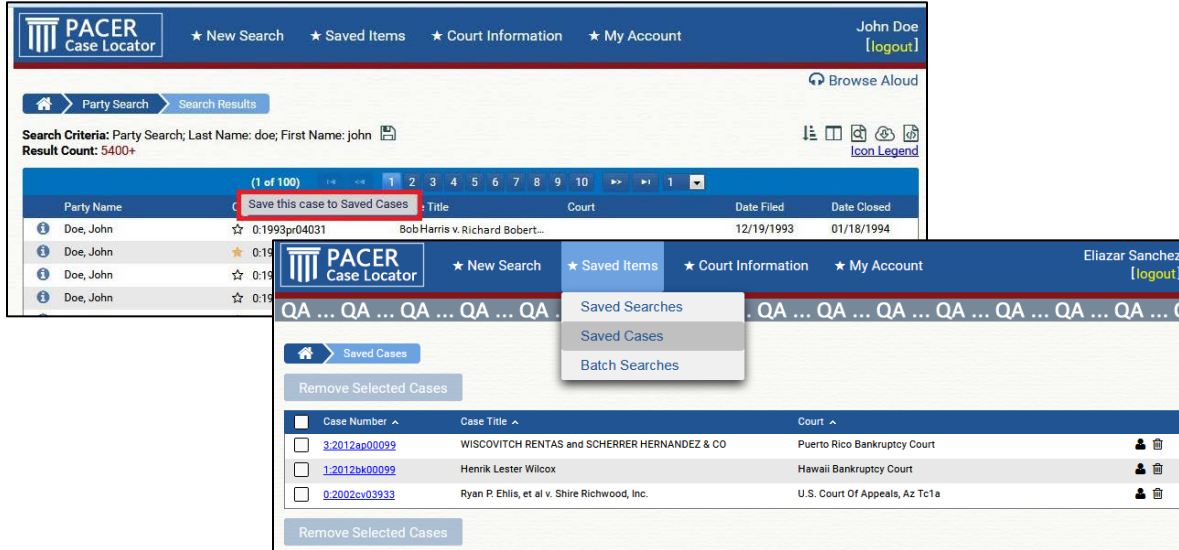
The Saved Cases page allows you to return to your saved cases, and shows case number, case title, and court for your saved cases. When you click the case link, the page will redirect you to the court's CM/ECF site.

Use the icons on the right side of the screen to view the parties for that case or to delete it from the list. If you want to view parties, you will be charged a fee. There will be a notice to confirm you agree to the charges.
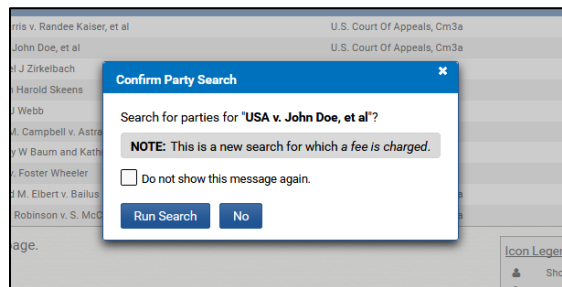
Batch Searches

Batch searches allow you to run a large search that returns results that can be downloaded as a file. The batch search icon appears at the top right when you receive more than 5,400 results. This search is limited to 100,000 results, and no fee is charged until the results are downloaded.

When the search results page first loads, a notice will inform you that maximum results have been exceeded, and provides further instruction on how to proceed.

When you select the batch search icon, you may name the search for later use when you select Batch Searches from the Saved Items dropdown.
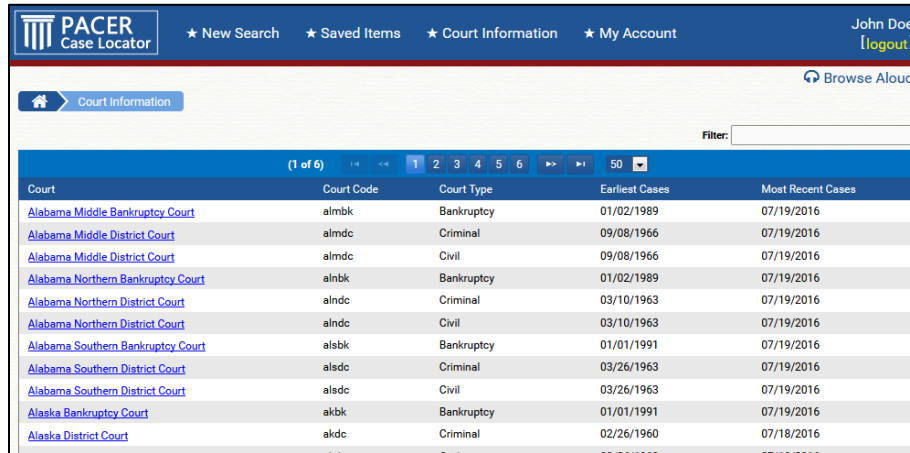
Court Information

This page provides a list of the court abbreviations used by the PCL. Click on the link to go directly to the court's website.
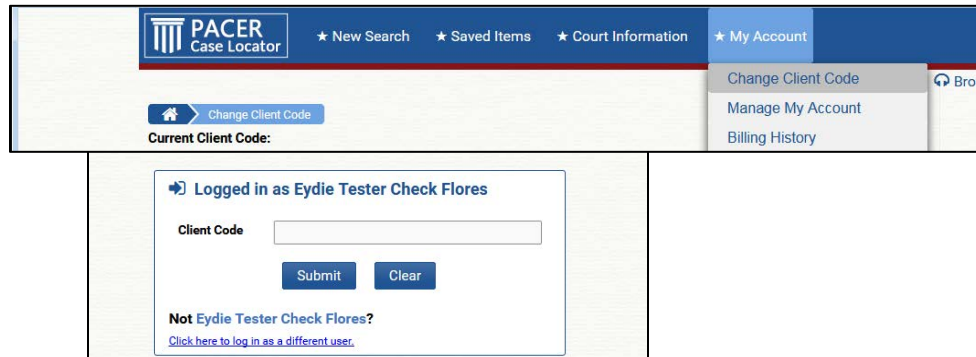

My Account

Change Client Code

The Change Client Code option allows you to update the client code already entered, or enter a client code to track charges for future billings. The client code will appear in your billing history details when entered prior to a search.

When you click Change Client Code, enter the code in the Client Code field and click Submit.

Manage My Account

Use the My Account section of the navigation bar to access details of your PACER account. When you select Manage My Account from the dropdown and log in, the screen below should appear.

Billing History

The Billing History option takes you to the Billing History screen in Manage My Account. Here you can view transactions for one or all courts during a selected time period sorted by date, client code, or court.

NOTE: The totals provided in the billing history also include charges from accessing a docket report from a court.

User Options

This section allows users to further customize their landing page, hide system messages, and select which columns they want to appear on the search results page. Click the button(s) and/or checkbox(es) in each section to make your selection; then click Update Settings.

NOTE: The default options in the Search Results Columns section are only for the variably available columns. Columns such as Case Title, Case Number, and Court will always be shown.

Page Expiration

When idle for 30 minutes in the PCL, the existing page in the user's PCL session will expire. At 27 minutes and 45 seconds of inactivity (i.e., with 2 minutes and 15 seconds remaining), a pop-up box will appear with the following message: