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Why Re-invent the Wheel? Utilize Appellate Court Briefs Databases

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Northern Kentucky Bar Association



Why Reinvent the Wheel?

Utilize Appellate Court Briefs Databases

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One of the first things new attorneys learn is that if someone has already done the work for you, then why reinvent the wheel! This saying can definitely be applied to appellate court briefs. Attorneys can utilize briefs to formulate arguments and to help explain the legal reasoning behind judicial decisions. However, the downside to using briefs has always been access. Until recently, appellate court briefs were difficult to find. A person would have to call the court or dig through archives to find the briefs filed in appellate cases. Through a partnership with the Kentucky Supreme Court and Court of Appeals, Kentucky appellate court briefs are available online through the NKU Chase College of Law Library's website. [http://chaselaw.nku.edu/library/electronic_resources/briefs_search.php]

The newly designed website has made accessing Kentucky appellate briefs even easier!

The Kentucky Supreme Court briefs database includes briefs of published opinions back to the year 1999 and briefs set for oral arguments each month. The oral argument briefs are usually available within a month or two of the date of arguments. The briefs are arranged by the month and year of the published opinion, so you can search by the date of the published decision. A new feature of the database is the ability to search the briefs by party name or docket number.

The Kentucky Court of Appeals briefs database is a fairly new addition. Briefs were added starting with 2006 published opinions and now the briefs are being digitized retrospectively. The Court of Appeals briefs can be searched by party name and docket number as well.

[http://chaselaw.nku.edu/library/electronic_resources/oral_arguments.php]

Briefs in cases that have been set for oral argument are placed in order of the date and time of the arguments. This page is by far the most popular page in this database. Briefs are only removed and put into the Supreme Court database when

published opinions have been rendered by the Court.

The screenshot shows the website's header with the NKU Salmon P. Chase College of Law logo and navigation links for Future Students, Current Students, Alumni & Friends, Employers, and Law Library. The main content area is titled "Kentucky Appellate Court Briefs" and includes a search form with options for "Supreme Court" and "Court of Appeals", a "Year, Month, & Case Name Dates" selector, and a "Search by Term" field. A search result example shows "John matches Johns or Johnson" with a docket number "1999-SC-1165". The page also features a "Contact" section for Emily Janoski-Haehlen, "Top News" links, and "Quicklinks" for various library resources.

Making Kentucky appellate court briefs more accessible to the practicing bar and to the public is the goal of this digitization project. The Supreme Court and Court of Appeals have both recognized the value that briefs offer to the legal community, so I would urge you to take a moment to explore the briefs database to see what it has to offer.