

Glossary of Common Legal Terms

Summons: The form used to notify a defendant of a lawsuit.

Complaint: The statement describing why the defendant is being sued.

Answer: A statement setting forth the basis of a defense.

Counterclaim: A claim by the defendant in opposition to the claim of the plaintiff.

Plaintiff: The person filing the lawsuit.

Defendant: The person(s) being sued.

Judgment Creditor: Successful party in a small claims lawsuit.

Judgment Debtor: Unsuccessful party in a small claims lawsuit.

Venue: The place a claim arose; the place where the subject property is located; the place where the defendant resides or does substantial business. It is your responsibility to review the facts of your case and to decide where to file your action.

Felony: Crime punishable by imprisonment to a state prison for a period of at least one year.

Misdemeanor: Crime punishable by confinement in the county jail of less than one year.

Judgment of Conviction: Document that reports the sentence imposed by the

Conviction Status Report: A report submitted to Department of Transportation usually notifying them of a change in the status of a defendant's case. This is common in TRAFFIC and DRUG cases.

Disposition: All cases will have a disposition; this is the resolution--the finding of guilt or innocence, or the dismissal of charges.

Court Orders Fine Including Costs: The amount the judge states is the total amount the defendant needs to pay to satisfy the judgment.

Court Orders Fine Plus Costs: The amount the judge states is the fine amount only. Court costs, assessments, and surcharges will be added to the amount of the fine. The defendant is responsible for the total amount (after costs are added). If you don't know the total amount of the fine plus costs, you may contact our office at 278-4538.

Concurrent Sentence: Sentence served simultaneously (at the same time).

Consecutive Sentence: Sentence to be served after another sentence is complete.