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**CONSUMER** – an individual customer buying goods or services primarily for a personal, family or household purpose.

**CONTRACT** - An agreement.

**COUNTERCLAIM** - a claim entered by a defendant as a response to or as a defense against an earlier claim made against the defendant by the plaintiff.

**COURT COMMISSIONER** - An attorney authorized to conduct hearings and initial proceedings.

**COURT TRIAL** – a trial in which the judge serves as the trier of fact.

**CREDITOR** - A person who is owed money.

**CROSS-EXAMINE** - to question a witness for the opposing side in a hearing or trial

**CUSTOMER** – an individual buying goods or services.

**DAMAGES** - The amount of money requested in a lawsuit to compensate the plaintiff for injuries to person or property or for the defendant's failure to perform a contract.

**DEBTOR** - A person who owes money.

**DEFAULT** - Failure to answer a complaint or appear for a hearing.

**DEFENDANT** - The person who is sued.

**DEFENSE** - A reason why a claim in a complaint is not valid.

**DISMISSAL** - A court order terminating a case because the plaintiff has failed to appear in court or state or prove a valid claim.

**DOCKET (see Judgment and Lien Docket)**

**EMANCIPATION** – when a child is no longer legally under a parent's control. In Wisconsin, a child is emancipated when he or she turns 18 years of age or marries.

**EVICTION** - An action by a landlord to remove a tenant from the landlord's property.

**EVIDENCE** - objects, information or statements that demonstrate or prove something.

**EXAMINE** - to ask questions of a witness or other party to a case in a court of law.

**EXECUTION** - A legal procedure in which the sheriff seizes a debtor's property to pay a judgment.

**EXEMPTION** - A law allowing a debtor to keep some property free from the claims of creditors.

**EXHIBIT** - A paper or thing shown to a court during a hearing and used as evidence.

**FEE** - A charge fixed by the law for the service of public officers.

**GARNISHEE** - In garnishments, the party who owes money to the debtor and is ordered to pay it to the creditor instead.

**GARNISHMENT** - A proceeding after judgment authorizing the creditor to be paid from the debtor's wages or bank accounts.

**GUARDIAN AD LITEM** – An attorney appointed by the court to take legal action on behalf of a minor or an adult not able to handle his or her own affairs.

**HEARING** - the examination of a certain aspect of a case or the trial of a case in a court of law.

**JUDGMENT** - Final determination by the court.

**JUDGMENT AND LIEN DOCKET** - An official list of court judgments.

**JURY TRIAL** - a trial in which the jury serves as the trier of fact.

**LIEN** - the legal right to keep or sell somebody else's property as security for debt.

**NON-CONSUMER** – an individual or business customer buying goods or services for business reasons and not primarily for a personal, family or household purpose.

**NOTARY PUBLIC** - An attorney or other official authorized to certify the signing of sworn documents.

**PARTY** - A plaintiff or defendant in a case.

**PLAINTIFF** - The party who begins a lawsuit.

**PRETRIAL CONFERENCE** - A meeting between the parties, sometimes including a judge or court commissioner, to investigate settlement or narrow the disputed issues.

**PRO SE** - Latin meaning "for oneself," i.e., without the aid of an attorney.

**PROOF OF SERVICE** - that the delivery of a legal document such as a writ or summons was accomplished.

**REPLEVIN** - A lawsuit seeking return of property.

**RETURN DATE** - The initial date at which the defendant must respond, answer, or appear in court. In some counties, the plaintiff must also appear.

**RETURN OF EARNEST MONEY** – An action brought to recover money paid to a seller as a deposit for the purchase of real property.

**RETURN OF PROPERTY (REPLEVIN)** – An action brought to recover personal property being held by someone else.

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**SATISFACTION** - A notice from the plaintiff stating a defendant has paid the judgment.

**SELF-REPRESENTATION** (see **Pro Se**)

**SERVICE** - The delivery of the complaint, summons or other papers filed by one party to another party.

**SETTLEMENT AGREEMENT** - an agreement reached without completing legal proceeding.

**STIPULATED DISMISSAL** - A court order dismissing the suit upon agreement of the parties. If the agreement is not kept, the dismissal may be vacated and a judgment entered.

**STIPULATION** - A legally binding agreement between parties.

**SUBPOENA** - A court order that a witness appear in court.

**SUMMONS** - A court order that the defendant answer the complaint or appear in court at a stated time.

**TRIAL** - a formal examination of the facts and law in before a court of law to determine an issue.

**VENUE** - The county or counties in which a lawsuit may be filed and tried.