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# Report to the Community

The 2016 Annual Report of the Minnesota Judicial Branch

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MINNESOTA  
JUDICIAL  
BRANCH

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# Letter from the Chief Justice

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Dear fellow Minnesotans,

On behalf of the judges and staff of the Minnesota Judicial Branch, I am pleased to present the 2016 Annual Report to the Community. This report highlights the efforts of the Minnesota Judicial Branch to improve and enhance the delivery of justice in our state.

By constitutional imperative and statute, Minnesota's courts must provide an open door for justice. The state's Constitution promises every Minnesotan the right "to obtain justice freely...promptly and without delay." This promise guides the work of the Minnesota Judicial Branch.

The pages that follow will detail the many ways the Judicial Branch worked in 2016 to increase the efficiency of our courts, improve outcomes for court participants, and expand access to justice in Minnesota. These include:

- Building on our successful transition to electronic court records, which has increased convenience for court users, and made it easier than ever before for the public to interact with their court;
- Establishing more drug courts and other treatment court programs throughout the state, making this proven and effective criminal justice model available to more Minnesotans;
- Expanding our nation-leading efforts to provide help and support to people who choose to represent themselves in court proceedings;
- Providing long overdue increases to the per diem and mileage reimbursement paid to jurors; and
- Launching the first statewide initiative aimed at improving the safety and security of our courthouses.

I am proud of the accomplishments of our employees and judges and remain committed to our mission to provide equal access for the timely resolution of cases and controversies. I hope you find this report informative and useful.

Sincerely,

Lorie S. Gildea  
Chief Justice  
Minnesota Supreme Court

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# Minnesota Judicial Branch

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## The Judicial Branch Mission

*To provide justice through a system that assures equal access for the fair and timely resolution of cases and controversies.*

## Judicial Branch Overview

There are three levels of court in Minnesota: district courts, the Court of Appeals, and the Supreme Court. District courts are located in each of the state's 87 counties and are divided among 10 judicial districts for administration purposes.

The Chief Justice of the Minnesota Supreme Court is the administrative head of the Judicial Branch and responsible for its overall management. The Chief Justice chairs the Minnesota Judicial Council, the administrative, policy-making body for the Judicial Branch.

The State Court Administrator's Office serves as staff to the Judicial Council and provides central administrative infrastructure services to the entire Judicial Branch, including human resources, finance, legal research, information technology, communications, statewide program management, and research and evaluation services.

The Chief Justice leads the Supreme Court, which, in addition to resolving the cases that come before the Court, has the responsibility for regulating the practice of law and for the promulgation of statewide rules of procedure and practice for all courts of the state. There are seven justices on the Supreme Court.

There is a chief judge of the Court of Appeals, appointed by the governor for a three-year term who serves as the head of that Court. There are 19 judges on the Court of Appeals.

One district court judge in each judicial district is elected as a chief judge by the bench for a two-year term, and is responsible for the management of the entire judicial district. The chief judge is assisted by a judicial district administrator. The district courts are served by 291 district court judges, 24 referees, and 31 magistrates.

There are 106 Judicial Branch hearing facilities across Minnesota.

<b>Judicial Branch FY2017 Budget</b>	
<b>District (Trial) Courts</b>	\$278,694,000
<b>Court of Appeals</b>	\$11,979,000
<b>Supreme Court/State Court Administration/State Law Library</b>	\$35,866,000
<b>Total</b>	\$326,539,000



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## Letter from the State Court Administrator

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Over the past decade, the Minnesota Judicial Branch has embarked on a remarkable innovation agenda which has seen our courts embrace new technologies to enhance efficiency and improve our service to the public. This incredible innovation has been guided by the strategic vision of the Minnesota Judicial Council. The role of the State Court Administrator's Office has been to execute and implement this vision, working in partnership with judges and staff in our district and appellate courts.

In recent years, this work has been focused heavily on the Judicial Branch eCourtMN initiative and Minnesota's transition to electronic court records. The staff of State Court Administration has played an integral role in this historic transformation, helping build the new electronic tools and resources that have become a core part of our court operations.

The work of State Court Administration also extends well beyond the eCourtMN initiative. This annual report highlights many of the important projects that State Court Administration has helped advance in 2016, from the expansion of treatment courts to more parts of the state, to the nation-leading service we provide to self-represented litigants. More broadly, by providing statewide services in areas like human resources, finance, and technical support, the work of State Court Administration allows the state's district and appellate courts to focus more of their resources directly on processing cases and administering justice on behalf of the people of Minnesota.

To learn more about the work of the State Court Administrator's Office, see page 58 of this report or visit:

[www.mncourts.gov/SCAO](http://www.mncourts.gov/SCAO).

It is an honor to serve as Minnesota's State Court Administrator, and to work alongside talented judges and staff who are dedicated to improving the justice system in our state.

Sincerely,

Jeff Shorba  
State Court Administrator

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# Minnesota Judicial Branch Strategic Plan:

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Minnesota courts have a national reputation for professionalism, efficiency, and innovation:

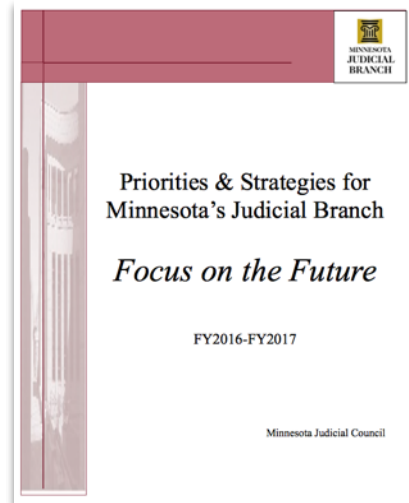
- ▶ Minnesota ranks as one of the highest-scoring states in the nation on the Justice Index, an independent examination of the performance of state-based justice systems in ensuring access to justice.
- ▶ One of the nation's leading experts in court management selected the Minnesota Judicial Council – the policymaking body of the Judicial Branch – as one of most effective court governance models in the nation.
- ▶ Across the country, court systems are looking at Minnesota's transition to an electronic case record as a model for how to leverage technology to enhance efficiency and increase access to court records.

The Minnesota Judicial Branch has earned this positive reputation by taking seriously the need to periodically assess the performance of its courts, and utilizing those assessments to identify new and innovative ways of processing cases, sharing information, and improving service to the public.

Every two years, the Minnesota Judicial Council directs a comprehensive strategic planning process that defines the Judicial Branch's major goals for the upcoming biennium, and creates an operational roadmap to achieve those goals. The Minnesota Judicial Branch's major goals for the current FY2016-17 Strategic Plan are as follows:

- ▶ **Access to Justice:** A justice system that is open, affordable, understandable, and provides appropriate levels of service to all users.
- ▶ **Administering Justice for Effective Results:** Adopting approaches and processes for the resolution of cases that enhance the outcomes for individual participants and the public.
- ▶ **Public Trust, Accountability, and Impartiality:** A justice system that engenders public trust and confidence through impartial decision-making and accountability for the use of public resources.

The pages that follow detail the initiatives the Judicial Branch has undertaken in the past year in support of these strategic goals.



*The Minnesota Judicial Branch's FY2016-17 Strategic Plan can be found at <http://www.mncourts.gov/MinnesotaJudicialCouncil.aspx>*

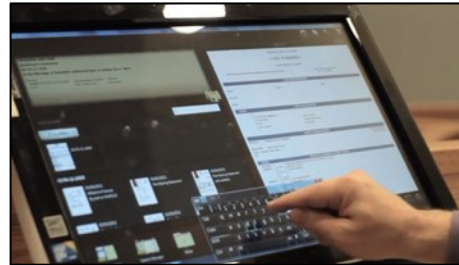
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# Strategic Goal #1 – Access to Justice

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## **eCourtMN Continues to Drive Innovation in Minnesota's Courts**

In 2012, the Minnesota Judicial Branch launched a multi-year initiative called eCourtMN. Through eCourtMN, the Judicial Branch aimed to transition from paper-based court files to electronic case records. The ultimate goal of this transformation was to make Minnesota's justice system more efficient and more convenient for court users, while increasing access to court records for customers and the public.



The eCourtMN initiative reached many important milestones in 2016. Below is a look at some of the key developments.

### **Electronic filing**

#### ***eFiling and eService in the District Courts***

One of the key elements of eCourtMN is the establishment of eFiling and eService (eFS), which gives case participants the ability to submit documents to the court and serve documents to opposing parties electronically, through an online portal. This allows court customers to file documents without traveling to the courthouse or paying for postage or courier costs, allows filers to submit documents immediately and outside of courthouse business hours, and allows court documents to be sent to filers electronically.

By the end of 2015, the Minnesota Judicial Branch had implemented eFS across the state. On July 1, 2016, the use of the eFS system for the majority of court users, including attorneys, government agencies, guardians ad litem, and sheriffs, became mandatory. For other filers – such as self-represented litigants – use of eFS remains optional.

To help court users navigate the eFS system, the Minnesota Judicial Branch operates the statewide eFS Support Center. In 2016, Support Center staff provided assistance on 12,000 inquiries for Minnesota court users. More information on the eFS Support Center can be found at [www.mncourts.gov/efile](http://www.mncourts.gov/efile).

### ***eFiling in the Appellate Courts***

As part of the transition to electronic case records, the Minnesota Judicial Branch has also implemented electronic filing in the state's appellate courts. Appellate court electronic filing was made available in March 2015, and became mandatory for attorneys, court reporters, executive branch records managers, court-appointed examiners, and panels appointed by the appellate courts on July 1, 2016. Electronic filing remains voluntary for self-represented parties.

**Today, close to 45,000 documents are being eFiled in Minnesota appellate courts every month.**

### **Increased Information-Sharing in Minnesota Courts**

Transitioning to an electronic case record has allowed the Minnesota Judicial Branch to implement new and innovative ways of sharing court information with government partners in Minnesota's justice system, including prosecutors, public defenders, and law enforcement. Court records are now stored electronically, and can be transferred through secure online portals, resulting in increased efficiency and eliminating delays caused by retrieving and copying paper court documents at courthouses.

#### ***New Minnesota Government Access***

New Minnesota Government Access (New MGA) is an online portal developed by the Minnesota Judicial Branch to allow outside government agencies to access appropriate electronic court records and documents stored in the court's case management system.

New MGA was made available to a small number of pilot government agencies in late 2014. Based on the success of that pilot, along with the overwhelming interest from government agencies to have this increased access to court information, the portal began rolling out to agencies statewide in early 2015.

By April 2016, access to New MGA was made available to every government agency in the state. By the end of 2016 close to 125,000 individual documents were being viewed each month through New MGA.

#### ***Court Integration Services***

Court Integration Services is the technical means by which data and documents are transferred between the court's case management system and a government agency's case management system. Examples of successful integrations include providing the Department of Public Safety with court dispositions for drivers' records, and receiving eFiled attorney assignments from the state public defenders' office. These integrations increase efficiency by reducing redundant data entry, and increase accuracy by eliminating rekeying of data. More than 268,000 different messages are currently sent out to subscribers every day from Court Integration Services.

## Electronic Records Increases Efficiency in Justice System

Minnesota's transition to electronic case records is also making the state's justice system more efficient by allowing law enforcement and prosecutors to more easily transmit charging documents and warrant applications to the court.

### *eCitations and eCharging*

For the past several years, the Minnesota Judicial Branch has worked with the Minnesota Bureau of Criminal Apprehension (BCA), prosecutors, and local law enforcement agencies to promote the use of eCitations and eCharging.

The eCharging system allows prosecutors to file complaints electronically, speeding case processing and reducing staff time needed for data entry. The eCitation system automatically transfers citation information entered into a squad car computer to law enforcement and court databases. Both eCharging and eCitations are designed to increase efficiency within the justice system, and improve the accuracy of data provided to the courts and used by law enforcement. Use of eCharging and eCitations became mandatory statewide on July 1, 2016.

### *eSearch Warrants*

The Minnesota Judicial Branch has also been working with the BCA to develop an electronic search warrant application and judge signing process within the existing BCA eCharging system. The system allows law enforcement agencies to submit warrant applications through an electronic portal. Judges then use the same portal to review the application and, if appropriate, sign and return the warrant to the requesting officer. At the end of 2016, this technology was being used on a pilot basis, with the goal of expanding eSearch Warrants statewide in 2017.

## Services for Self-Represented Litigants

Minnesota is a nationally-recognized leader in providing services to self-represented litigants (SRLs) through self help centers, as well as through collaborations with bar associations, legal services organizations, and law libraries. As the number of people representing themselves in court proceedings remains high, Minnesota continued to prioritize services for SRLs in 2016 by increasing the number of court locations offering walk-in self help centers, launching a new clinic to help Minnesotans navigate the appeals process, and other efforts.

The following pages include a summary of services available to self-represented litigants in Minnesota.

### *Virtual Self Help Services*

To provide assistance to court customers across the state, the Minnesota Judicial Branch manages a “virtual” statewide Self Help Center. This Center provides assistance to SRLs in a variety of ways:

- **Online:** Through more than 50 “Help Topics” located on the Minnesota Judicial Branch website, customers can find general legal information, court forms, form completion services, videos and tutorials, and links to low-cost or no-cost legal advice. All of this information is provided in plain language to increase accessibility.
- **Phone:** The statewide Self Help Center handled 23,604 phone calls from SRLs in 2016.
- **E-mail:** The statewide Self Help Center answered 5,701 e-mails from SRLs in 2016.
- **Court Forms:** The Statewide Self Help Center reviewed 837 court forms for SRLs in 2016.



### *Self Help Workstations*

Since 2008, self help workstations (consisting of a desk, computer, printer, and phone) that can be used to find court information, print court forms, and talk over the phone with statewide Self Help Center staff about forms, procedures, and legal resources, have been made available in 89 courthouse and library locations across Minnesota.

### *District Court Walk-In Self Help Centers*

Several district courts operate walk-in self help centers that provide customers with extensive information and resources about Minnesota’s court system.

In 2016, Hennepin County walk-in self help centers located at the Government Center and Family Justice Center provided assistance to 39,032 SRLs.

The Ramsey County Family Court walk-in Self Help Center provided assistance to 10,335 SRLs in 2016. In addition, the Ramsey County Family Court Legal Advice Clinic, which is held three afternoons per week and is staffed by volunteer attorneys, assisted 596 customers in 2016. The Court’s Motion to Modify Child Support Clinic, which is held twice per month and is staffed by Self Help Center employees, assisted 51 customers with 59 matters in 2016.



In 2015, Minnesota's Tenth Judicial District established a Self Help Center at the Anoka County Courthouse to provide legal information and resources to the growing number of people choosing to represent themselves in court proceedings. In 2016, based on the success of the program in Anoka County, the Tenth Judicial District began offering weekly walk-in service hours at the courthouses located in Chisago, Isanti, Kanabec, Pine, Sherburne, Washington, and Wright counties. In addition to offering walk-in service hours throughout the District, Tenth Judicial District Self Help Center staff are available to provide assistance over the phone and by e-mail to those with cases in the District. In 2016, the Tenth District Self Help Center provided SRLs with assistance on 4,391 matters.

### ***State Law Library***

In 2016, the Minnesota State Law Library in St. Paul launched a new Self-Help Clinic to provide free assistance to individuals seeking to file an appeal with the Minnesota Court of Appeals or the Minnesota Supreme Court. The Appeals Self-Help Clinic is held monthly, and offers self-represented litigants an opportunity to have a brief meeting, at no cost, with a volunteer attorney to better understand the rules and procedures of Minnesota's appellate courts. Almost a quarter of all appeals in Minnesota involve a party who is not represented by an attorney. Volunteer attorneys are coordinated through the Appellate Practice Section of the Minnesota State Bar Association. In its first year, the Clinic assisted 96 people. Twenty-one of those sessions were done over the phone with individuals who were not in the metro area. Ninety-three percent of the Clinic customers reported being satisfied or very satisfied with the assistance received.

The State Law Library also offers a twice-monthly clinic to assist people appealing a denial of unemployment benefits to the Court of Appeals. Over 80 percent of this type of case involves a party who is unrepresented. There were 102 unemployment appeals filed last year, and the clinic, started in 2013, assisted 30 people in 2016. The clinic's volunteer attorneys are primarily members of the Labor and Employment Law Section of the Minnesota State Bar Association.

In addition to the help provided at the appellate clinics, the State Law Library continues its long tradition of serving anyone seeking legal information via the phone, e-mail, mail, live chat, and in person.

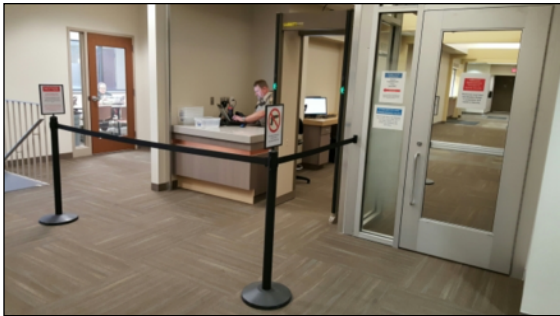
### **Minnesota Earns National Grant to Enhance Access to Justice System**

In 2016, Minnesota was selected as one of seven states that will receive a grant from the **Justice for All Project**, a national initiative aimed at improving access to the civil justice system. The Minnesota Judicial Branch will administer the grant in Minnesota through a partnership between the courts, the Minnesota State Bar Association, and the Minnesota Legal Services Coalition.

## Courthouse Security Grant Program Launched

A new grant program aimed at improving the safety and security of Minnesota's courthouses and other court facilities has been launched.

The Safe and Secure Courthouse Initiative was established by Minnesota Supreme Court Chief Justice Lorie S. Gildea and allocated \$1 million by the Minnesota Legislature in 2016. Counties and other local government entities that maintain court facilities were eligible to apply, and grants can be used to help pay for security equipment, training, assessments, or other projects that improve the safety and security of a court facility.



*The Dodge County Sheriff's Office implemented enhanced building security and court safety procedures at the Dodge County Courthouse in Mantorville in February 2016.*

The requesting entities must have demonstrated a 50 percent cash or in-kind match from non-state sources.

Applications were accepted through early 2017. An advisory panel of judges, court staff, county officials, and statewide justice partners will review and score applications based on grant criteria. Final award decisions will be made in June 2017.

**“Courthouse security is an important issue not only for the people who work in these public buildings, but for the thousands of Minnesotans who enter their local courthouses every day to seek justice, protect their rights, access government services, and fulfill a variety of duties as citizens and taxpayers.**

It is crucial that these facilities are well-protected, so that Minnesotans feel they can access their local courthouses safely and securely. I am hopeful that this one-time grant program can be the start of a long-term strategy to improve the safety of courthouses across Minnesota.”

*Chief Justice Lorie S. Gildea*

### Juror Per Diem, Mileage Reimbursement Doubled in 2016

In 2016, the Minnesota Judicial Branch doubled the per diem and mileage reimbursement paid to jurors serving in the state's district courts.

Jurors are now paid \$20 for each day they report to a courthouse, and are reimbursed for the roundtrip mileage between their home and the courthouse at the rate of 54 cents per mile. Prior to July 5, 2016, jurors were paid \$10 per day and reimbursed for mileage at the rate of 27 cents per mile.

**In 2016, more than 44,500 Minnesota citizens reported for jury duty in the state's district courts.**

The increase in juror per diem and mileage reimbursement was the result of new funding approved during the 2016 Legislative Session. The Minnesota Judicial Branch sought the funding increase as part of its supplemental budget request, and Governor Mark Dayton included the request in his supplemental budget recommendations. The Legislature approved the new funding – \$1.5 million annually – as part of the omnibus supplemental budget bill, which was signed into law on June 1.



In addition to per diem and mileage reimbursement, jurors who are normally caring for their children during the day, or an adult family member with a mental or physical disability who cannot be left alone, can be reimbursed for daycare expenses during their service, up to \$50 per day per family.

**“Jury service is one of our most important civic duties as Americans.**

While we know that the small amount jurors receive for their service doesn't reflect the importance of their work, we hope that this higher compensation will make it a little easier for citizens to participate in their justice system.

We are grateful to the Governor and Legislature for supporting this funding request, and for helping us send a message to jurors that we value the crucial role they play in our courts.”

*Chief Justice Lorie S. Gildea*

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# Strategic Goal #2 – Effective Results

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## **Court Payment Center Earns National Award**

In the first few weeks of 2016, the Minnesota Judicial Branch completed a multi-year project to operationally centralize the processing of citations – including case initiation, the contact center, and payments and receipts – for all 87 district courts. Today, the Court Payment Center processes all payable citations in the state, providing a convenient, one-stop resource for individuals

with questions about their citations, as well as the option to pay citations using the Internet, telephone, or U.S. mail to a central accounting office located in Willmar, MN.



The goal of the re-engineering effort was to leverage technologies to permit more opportunities for self-service, reduce labor costs to the Minnesota Judicial Branch, improve service to the public, apply consistent treatment of cases, allow staff in the local courthouses to focus on more complex case processing, and automatically refer cases eligible for collection efforts to a collection agency.

A year after the project was officially completed, the Minnesota Court Payment Center was recognized as a Bright Idea by the Innovations in American Government Program at the Ash Center for Democratic Governance and Innovation at Harvard John F. Kennedy School of Government.

The award recognizes the Minnesota Judicial Branch efforts to implement sustainable changes to the way it offers services to meet the needs of court customers, while adapting to technology opportunities and changing customer expectations in the digital age.

## **‘Rocket Docket’ Expanded**

The Expedited Litigation Track (ELT) pilot project – otherwise known as ‘Rocket Docket’ – was expanded significantly in 2016. The initiative aims to improve the manner in which district courts process certain civil cases.

The pilot began in Dakota County and St. Louis County (Duluth) district courts in 2013. Under the pilot, certain civil cases are assigned to the ELT pilot track, and are managed through a process that assures early involvement by a judge; limited discovery; curtailed continuances; and the setting of a trial date within four to six months of filing of the action or, where applicable, assignment to ELT.

In 2015, the Minnesota Judicial Branch completed an evaluation of the ELT pilot based on the early results from Dakota and St. Louis counties. The evaluation showed modest improvement in the time to disposition of the cases involved in the pilot, which led to the expansion of the pilot to the state's largest district court in Hennepin County on January 1, 2016. In addition, attorneys and litigants involved in the pilot reported through survey responses that the ELT improved the overall quality of justice and access to the courts.

More civil case types were added to the pilot on January 1, 2016. With this addition, ELT now encompasses five civil cases types: Consumer Credit Contract, Other Contract, Personal Injury, Other Civil, and Conciliation Court Appeals.

On July 1, 2016, Olmsted County District Court became the latest court to join the pilot project.

More information is available at <http://www.mncourts.gov/Help-Topics/Expedited-Civil-Litigation-Track.aspx>.

### **Minnesota's Conservator Auditing Program Highlighted at U.S. Congressional Hearing**

The Minnesota Judicial Branch Conservator Account Auditing Program (CAAP) was highlighted during a hearing of the United States Senate Special Committee on Aging on November 30, 2016. CAAP is a nation-leading initiative to protect the assets of vulnerable individuals – persons with developmental disabilities, Alzheimer's disease, dementia, or traumatic brain injuries – for whom the court has appointed a conservator to manage the individual's financial affairs.

The hearing, entitled, "Trust Betrayed: Financial Abuse of Older Americans by Guardians and Others in Power," examined what is known about the extent of elder financial abuse and what is being done to combat it, particularly in the context of guardianships and conservatorships.

The Minnesota Judicial Branch was invited to participate in the hearing by Special Committee Chairman Sen. Susan M. Collins (R-Maine) and the Committee's ranking member, Sen. Claire McCaskill (D-Missouri). In their written invitation, the senators said they were hopeful to learn more about CAAP, and how the program can serve as a model for other states. The Minnesota Judicial Branch was represented by CAAP Manager Cate Boyko, who has overseen the program since its inception in 2012.

More information on CAAP is available at <http://www.mncourts.gov/Help-Topics/Guardianship-and-Conservatorship.aspx>.

## Treatment Courts Continue to Expand in Minnesota

The use of drug courts and other treatment court programs continued to expand in Minnesota in 2016.

In the fall of 2016, treatment court programs in Minnesota were awarded grants from the United States Department of Justice's Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) and the United States Department of Health and Human Services' Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). The grants funded implementation of five new treatment court programs, and provided support to enhance and improve seven existing programs.

The following five programs were awarded implementation grants from the BJA to support the launch of new programs:

- Anoka County Drug Court;
- Olmsted County Drug Court;
- Roseau County Drug Court;
- Scott County Drug Court; and
- Wright County Drug Court.

The Anoka County Veterans Treatment Court and the Steele-Waseca Adult Drug Court were awarded enhancement grants from the BJA to expand and improve those existing treatment court programs.

In addition, Minnesota's Sixth Judicial District was awarded a three-year grant from SAMHSA to enhance district-wide coordination and delivery of services for five treatment courts in Minnesota's Arrowhead region. These programs include:

- Carlton County Drug Court;
- Range Hybrid Drug/DWI Court (Virginia);
- South St. Louis County Drug Court (Duluth);
- South St. Louis County DWI Court (Duluth); and
- South St. Louis County Mental Health Court (Duluth).

Each of the grants detailed above were awarded through a nationwide, competitive process.

### **"Drug Courts" Become "Treatment Courts"**

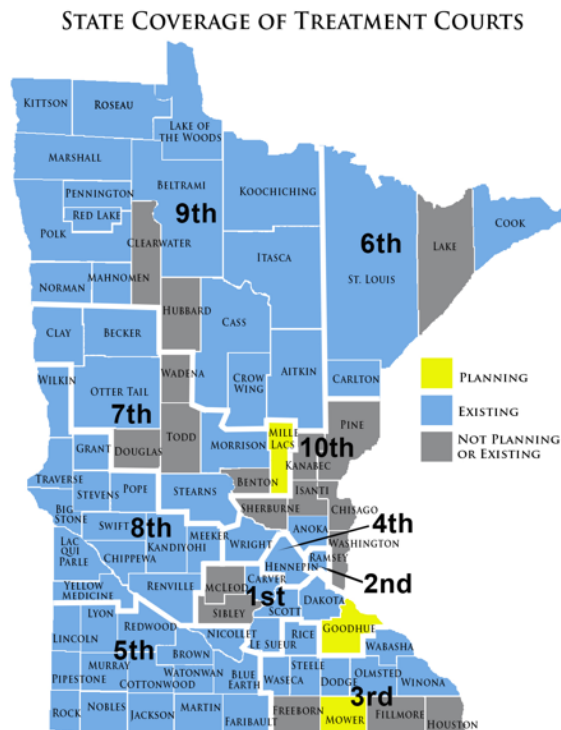
In the summer of 2016, the Minnesota Judicial Council approved a recommendation from the Drug Court Initiative Advisory Committee to formally change the universal term of reference from "drug court" to "treatment court."

The term "treatment court" is now used to describe, generally, drug courts, DWI courts, veterans courts, mental health courts, juvenile drug courts, family dependency courts, and other problem-solving court programs.



The new federal grants helped continue a significant expansion of treatment court programs in Minnesota in recent years. At the beginning of 2014, Minnesota had 41 operational drug and mental health court programs in the state. By the end of 2016, Minnesota had 59 operational treatment courts, including 11 multi-county programs, providing services in close to 80 percent of Minnesota's counties.

This expansion has been fueled by new investments by the Minnesota Judicial Branch, the state Legislature, state and federal agencies, and local governments. The expansion has also been backed by state and national research showing the effectiveness of these programs.



### Treatment Courts: Proven and Effective

Since 2012, Minnesota has conducted three statewide evaluations of treatment court programs. These evaluations, as well as many other national studies, have shown the real, positive impact of treatment courts:

- Reduced recidivism among program participants;
- Long-term cost savings in the criminal justice system; and
- Better outcomes for offenders struggling with addiction, including higher rates of employment, stable housing, and educational attainment.

A summary of these evaluations, with links to complete reports, is available at [www.mncourts.gov/Help-Topics/Treatment-Courts.aspx](http://www.mncourts.gov/Help-Topics/Treatment-Courts.aspx), under 'Research and Reports.'

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# Strategic Goal #3 – Public Trust

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## “Open Courthouse” Events Allow the Public to Get Firsthand Look at Minnesota’s Justice System

Increasing the public’s knowledge and understanding of the justice system is one of the most important responsibilities of the judges and staff who work in the Minnesota Judicial Branch. In an effort to better engage the public about the work of the judiciary, the Minnesota Judicial Branch has launched an “open courthouse” initiative, which invites community members to visit their local county courthouse and meet with judges, prosecutors, public defenders, law enforcement, and other members of their local justice system.

On, April 29, 2016, the Minnesota Judicial Branch celebrated Law Day by hosting two open courthouse events in Anoka and Mankato.

At the Anoka County Courthouse and Government Center in Anoka, visitors took guided courthouse tours, learned about their local justice system at a legal services information fair, and viewed demonstrations by the Anoka County Sheriff’s Department K-9 Unit. In addition, various community organizations sponsored free legal service clinics, where participants received no-cost legal assistance on topics ranging from family law, immigration, senior issues, expungements, and more. The Anoka County Sheriff, the Anoka County Attorney, and the Tenth Judicial District Public Defender’s Office also gave presentations on important issues facing Anoka County.



*A visitor to the Anoka County Open Courthouse event checks in at the information table.*



*Supreme Court Justice Natalie Hudson and Fifth Judicial District Chief Judge Bradley Walker speak to visitors at the Mankato Open Courthouse event.*

Visitors to the Blue Earth County Justice Center in Mankato heard a presentation on Minnesota’s justice system from Minnesota Supreme Court Associate Justice Natalie Hudson and Fifth Judicial District Chief Judge Bradley Walker. Following the presentation, visitors took guided courthouse tours featuring presentations by judges and local justice partners. Local community organizations also took part in a legal services information fair.

On Friday, September 16, hundreds of area residents toured the newly-renovated Dodge County Courthouse and the Government Services Building in Mantorville, as part of an event designed to showcase the local justice system on Constitution Day.

The tour gave visitors the opportunity to see firsthand the results of a major remodeling project that updated and modernized the oldest active courthouse in the state, transformed the former Kasson-Mantorville Intermediate School into a contemporary Government Services Building for county officials and staff, and made it easier for the public to access their local court and county services.

### Supreme Court Visits Albert Lea, Lakeville High Schools

Each spring and fall, the Minnesota Supreme Court travels to a high school in the state to hear oral arguments and meet with students and staff. The program begins with arguments in a real case, followed by a question and answer session with students, lunch with students and school staff, and visits to classrooms. There are also opportunities for the members of the Court to meet with local officials and dignitaries. During the fall visit, the Court hosts a community dinner in order to reach out to citizens in the community they are visiting.



*Ms. Cumah Blake, representing the Office of Governor Mark Dayton, reads a proclamation to attendees, while Judge Jodi Williamson and other special guests look on.*



*Supreme Court Justice G. Barry Anderson presents the Dodge County Board of Commissioners with a plaque of special recognition.*



*The members of the Minnesota Supreme Court and First Judicial District Chief Judge Terrence Conkel with Lakeville North High School student guides and Principal Marne Berkvam.*

In April 2016, the Supreme Court's traveling oral argument program was held at Lakeville North High School, in front of nearly 600 students. In October 2016, the Supreme Court traveled to Albert Lea to hold their annual community dinner and hear oral arguments at Albert Lea Senior High School. The dinner was attended by more than 150 community members, and nearly 700 students viewed the oral arguments in the High School auditorium.



*The members of the Minnesota Supreme Court take questions from students at Albert Lea Senior High School.*

### **Judges, Justices Participate in 14th Annual Court Cookout at Dorothy Day Center in St. Paul**

Judges from the Minnesota Court of Appeals, justices of the Minnesota Supreme Court, and staff from the Minnesota Judicial Branch served lunch at the Dorothy Day Center in St. Paul on Friday, May 27, 2016. The annual barbecue is a long-standing tradition, and just one part of the Courts' continuing commitment to community outreach. Judges, justices, and staff of the appellate courts have served more than 7,000 meals to those in need in the 14 years of this event.



*Court of Appeals judges, Supreme Court justices, and staff from the Minnesota Judicial Branch participate in the annual cookout at Dorothy Day Center in Saint Paul.*

The event is made possible by financial and volunteer contributions from Minnesota Supreme Court justices, Court of Appeals judges, retired appellate court justices and judges, appellate court law clerks, the State Law Librarian, and other court staff. Ice cream parfaits are provided by Mr. Louis Henry and the Marion Street McDonald's restaurant.



### Minnesota Judicial Center Event Explores ‘Why Treaties Matter’

On Friday, March 18, 2016, the Minnesota Judicial Branch and the Minnesota Tribal Court State Court Forum held an event at the Minnesota Judicial Center to highlight how Dakota and Ojibwe treaties with the U.S. government impacted the lands and history of Minnesota and its people.

The event, which was attended by dozens of community members, featured opening remarks from Minnesota Supreme Court Chief Justice Lorie S. Gildea. In addition, Professor Colette Routel, Co-Director of the Indian Law Program at Mitchell Hamline School of Law, delivered a short presentation titled, “Finding the Indian Understanding of Treaties.”



*Visitors to the ‘Why Treaties Matter’ exhibit view one of the panels on display in the Minnesota State Law Library.*

Event attendees also had the opportunity to tour “Why Treaties Matter: Self-Government in the Dakota and Ojibwe Nation,” a nationally-recognized, award-winning, traveling exhibit. The exhibit was hosted by the Minnesota State Law Library from March 15 through March 31.

### Committee for Equality and Justice Works to Build Public’s Trust and Confidence in Minnesota’s Courts










The Committee for Equality for Justice (CEJ) was established by the Minnesota Judicial Council in 2010 to work collaboratively across the Judicial Branch to advance efforts to eliminate bias from court operations, promote equal access to the court, and inspire a high level of trust and public confidence in Minnesota’s courts.

Membership of the CEJ is reflective of the state’s geographic and demographic diversity. It is comprised of 28 individuals who are justice system partners, attorneys, court employees, judges, and members of the public.

The CEJ produces an annual report highlighting its efforts to fulfill its mission. Those annual reports can be found at: [www.mncourts.gov/MinnesotaJudicialCouncil/CEJ.aspx](http://www.mncourts.gov/MinnesotaJudicialCouncil/CEJ.aspx).

## Social Media Provides New Way to Communicate with Court Users, Public

The Minnesota Judicial Branch expanded its use of social media in 2016, aiming to improve how it communicates with court users and the public. Below is a look at where information about the courts can be found on social media.

 <a href="https://twitter.com/mncourts">@mncourts</a> Statewide news and information about the Minnesota Judicial Branch	 <a href="https://twitter.com/HennepinCourt">@HennepinCourt</a> News and information from the Fourth Judicial District/Hennepin County District Court	 <a href="https://twitter.com/MN6DistCourt">@MN6DistCourt</a> News and information from the Sixth Judicial District, serving Carlton, Cook, Lake, and St. Louis counties	 <a href="https://twitter.com/StateLawLibrary">@StateLawLibrary</a> News and information from the Minnesota State Law Library
 <a href="https://twitter.com/MNLawyerRg">@MNLawyerRg</a> News and information from the Minnesota Lawyer Registration Office	 <a href="https://twitter.com/MNBdLaw">@MNBdLaw</a> News and information from the Minnesota Board of Law Examiners	 <a href="https://twitter.com/MNBdCLE">@MNBdCLE</a> News and information from the Minnesota Board of Continuing Legal Education	
 <a href="https://www.linkedin.com/company/minnesota-judicial-branch">https://www.linkedin.com/company/minnesota-judicial-branch</a> Provides statewide career opportunities and news from the Minnesota Judicial Branch.		 <a href="https://www.youtube.com/user/MNJudicialBranch">https://www.youtube.com/user/MNJudicialBranch</a> Videos about Minnesota's court system can be found on <a href="http://www.mncourts.gov">www.mncourts.gov</a> and the Minnesota Judicial Branch YouTube channel.	

## Pilot Program Continues to Allow Cameras in Criminal Proceedings

Since November 10, 2015, a pilot program has been underway in Minnesota district courts that has allowed the news media greater access for cameras and other recording equipment in certain criminal proceedings.

The pilot, established by order of the Minnesota Supreme Court, permits electronic audio and visual coverage of district court criminal proceedings held after a guilty verdict has been returned or a guilty plea has been accepted. Coverage is not subject to the consent of parties, though the order grants judges the authority to deny or limit camera coverage for good cause.

Through the end of 2016, cameras or other recording devices had been used in 31 hearings under the pilot.

The Advisory Committee on the Rules of Criminal Procedure will present a report on the pilot to the Minnesota Supreme Court on or before January 1, 2018.



## The Changing Face of Minnesota's Judiciary

In March 2016, the Honorable Margaret H. Chutich was sworn in as the 93rd justice of the Minnesota Supreme Court. Five months later, the Honorable Anne K. McKeig was sworn in as the Court's 94th member. With these appointments, 2016 marked just the 22nd time in 158 years of Minnesota statehood that more than one new justice joined the state's Supreme Court in the same calendar year.

The state's intermediate appellate court, the Minnesota Court of Appeals, also saw significant changes in 2016, as three new judges were appointed to the 19-member body. This was just the second time that three or more new judges had joined the Court of Appeals in the same year since the Court expanded from 16 to 19 members in 2008.

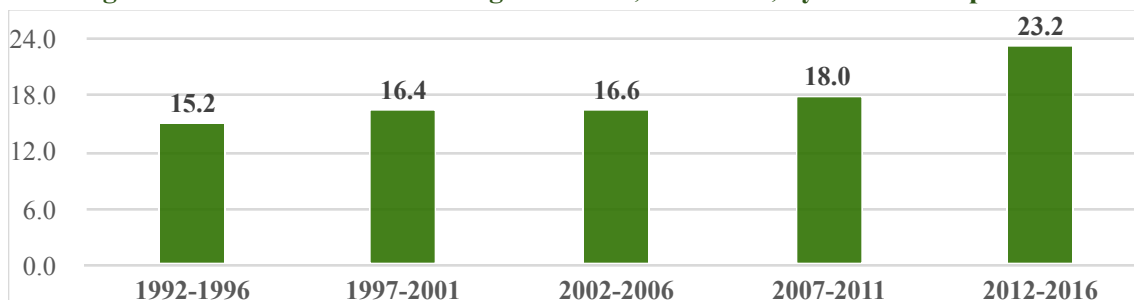
The significant change to the makeup of Minnesota's appellate courts in 2016 is part of a broader trend in the state's judiciary. Since 2010, more than 150 new justices and judges have taken office in Minnesota<sup>1</sup>. In the seven-year span from 2010 through 2016, an average of 22 new judges or justices took office each year, a figure 45% higher than the previous seven-year span.

While many factors may contribute to this increasing rate of judicial officer turnover, including an uptick in the number of judicial officers serving in the state's courts, it is clear that the retirement wave occurring throughout the United States is having – and will continue to have – an impact on Minnesota's judiciary. The Minnesota Judicial Branch has determined that by 2020, at least 37% of all judges who were on the Bench in 2015 will have either retired or will have turned 65-years-old.

### *A Closer Look at Minnesota's Changing Judiciary*

The following charts highlight the significant changes occurring in Minnesota's district and appellate courts. The chart below shows the average annual number of judges and justices newly appointed or elected to serve during each five-year span for the past 25 years.

**Average Annual Number of New Judges/Justices, Statewide, by Five-Year Span**



<sup>1</sup> For the purpose of this section, the data includes justices and judges who are newly elected or appointed to serve in a district or appellate court, as well as a small number of sitting district court judges who are subsequently appointed or elected to serve on an appellate court. This data is intended to measure the amount of change/turnover occurring in Minnesota's courts, not only the number of new individuals who are serving as justices/judges.

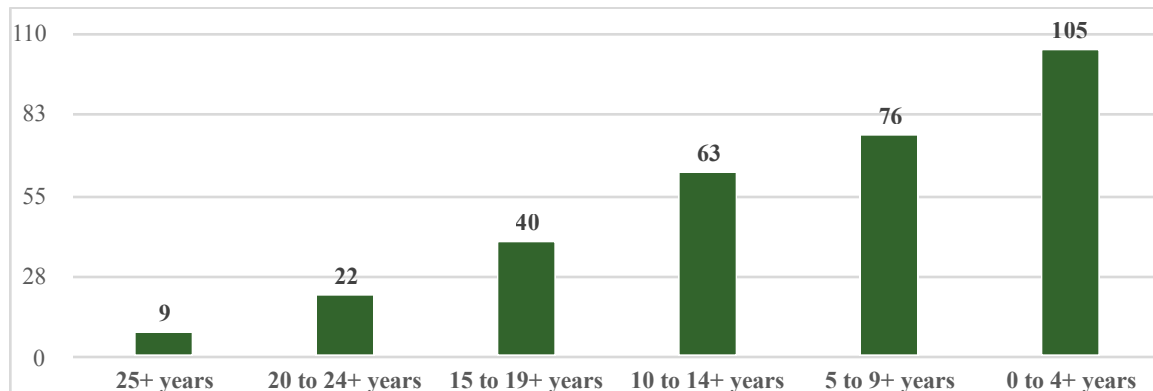
*A Closer Look at Minnesota's Changing Judiciary (cont.)*

The table below shows the number of judges and justices who were newly appointed or elected to serve in each judicial district and each appellate court between 2010 and 2016. For comparison purposes, the chart also includes the number of judgeships in each judicial district, along with the number of judges/justices that serve on each appellate court, as of December 31, 2016.

**New Judges by Judicial District/Appellate Court, 2010-2016**

<b>District/Court</b>	<b>Number of Judges/Justices Newly Appointed or Elected to District/Court, 2010-2016</b>	<b>Total Number of Judgeships by District/Court, End of 2016</b>
First Judicial District	16	36
Second Judicial District	17	29
Third Judicial District	12	24
Fourth Judicial District	38	62
Fifth Judicial District	8	17
Sixth Judicial District	5	16
Seventh Judicial District	12	28
Eighth Judicial District	7	11
Ninth Judicial District	6	23
Tenth Judicial District	13	45
Court of Appeals	11	19
Supreme Court	7	7

The chart below shows years of service on the bench for the judges and justices who were serving in Minnesota district and appellate courts as of December 31, 2016.

**Years of Service of Sitting Judges/Justices, for Judges/Justices serving as of 12/31/2016**

*A Closer Look at Minnesota's Changing Judiciary (cont.)*

***Training, Education Prepare New Judges for Service***

To help prepare attorneys for service on the bench, the Minnesota Judicial Branch offers a wide array of training and education options for newly appointed or elected judges.

The State Court Administration Judicial Education Team provides a wealth of educational resources and continuing education programming to new judges. This includes electronic resources, such as bench cards, bench books, policies, and forms. New judge education programs include:

- **Judicial Mentoring Program:** This program is designed to provide judges new to the Minnesota Judicial Branch with a structured method of obtaining performance feedback and assistance in their transition to the bench. Through such a structured mentoring program, experienced judges provide direct assistance and feedback to mentee judges and thereby enhance both their experience and their performance on the bench.
- The weeklong **New Judge Orientation Program** provides education to new judges on their judicial roles, responsibilities, and courtroom management. Seasoned judges share their expertise, perspectives, and legal knowledge with new judges to raise awareness about how they are a part of something greater than themselves or their own district court.
- The **Judicial Trial Skills Program** is a one-day workshop designed to provide new judges with a practical courtroom learning opportunity. Participants take turns presiding over a criminal trial with judge faculty members acting in the roles of county attorney, defense attorney, defendant, victim, and police officer. The faculty judges provide participants with meaningful instruction and feedback regarding judicial demeanor and courtroom management.
- **Bridging the Gap** is a one-day program designed to respond to the ever-emerging learning needs of newer judges as they progress in their professional development. These sessions are taught by skilled, veteran judges who impart information and expertise, but who also incorporate participants as both learners and teachers to build upon their insights and experiences.
- **eLearning Courses:** The Minnesota Judicial Branch is committed to providing new judges with a variety of opportunities to receive judicial education via eLearning programs. Courses are made available in both live webcast and on-demand formats, allowing judges to receive valuable information on emerging legal topics from the convenience of their chambers, supplementing the robust in-person judicial education programming offered by the Judicial Branch.

To learn more about the judges and justices serving in Minnesota's district and appellate courts, visit the **Minnesota Judicial Officer Directory** at:  
<http://www.mncourts.gov/About-The-Courts/Overview/JudicialDirectory.aspx>

# District Courts

291 Judgeships, 10 Judicial Districts, 104 hearing facilities across the state

Jurisdiction: Civil Actions, Criminal Cases, Family, Juvenile, Probate, Violations of City Ordinances

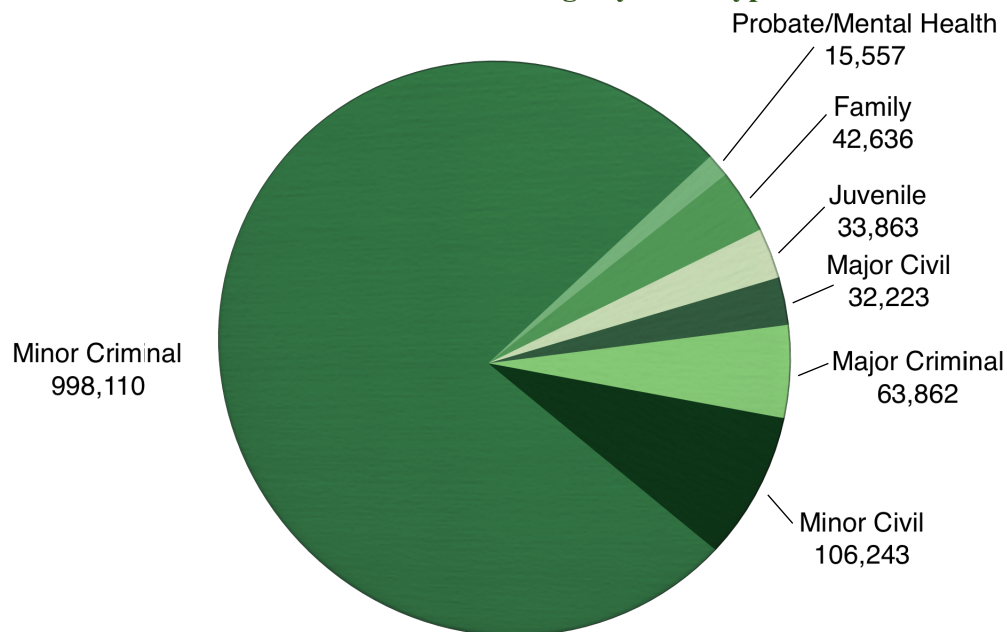
Appeals from: Conciliation Court\*

Conciliation Division: Civil Disputes up to \$15,000

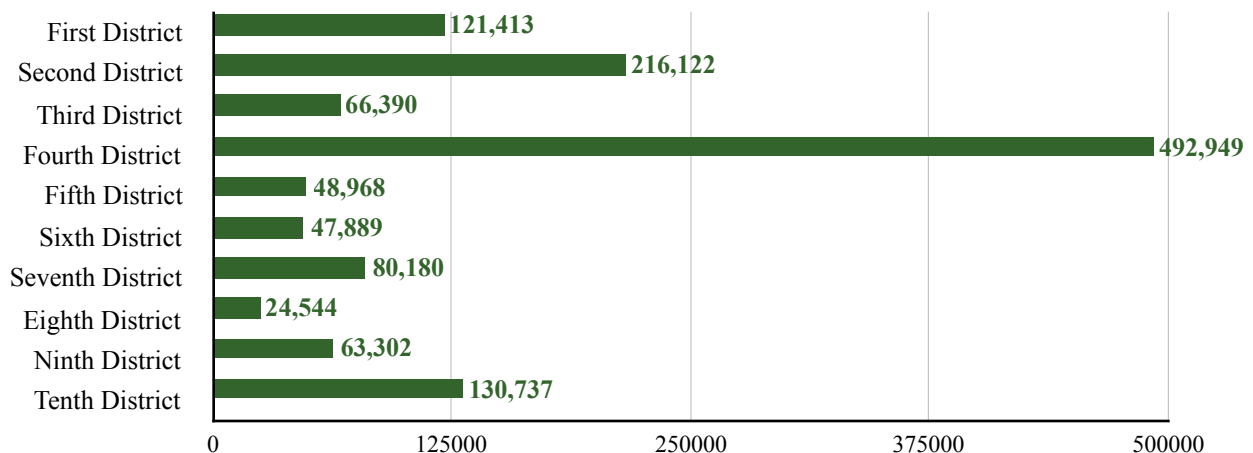
\*Called trial de novo - actually a new trial, not just a review of the conciliation court

**There were 1,292,494 cases filed in Minnesota district courts in 2016.**

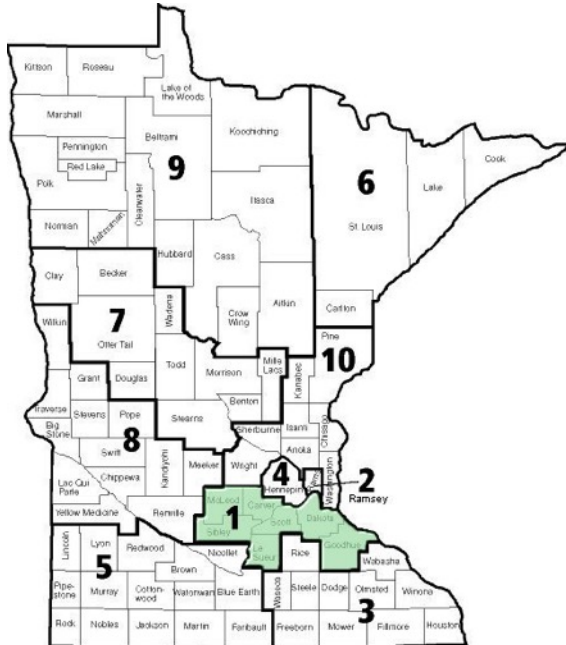
## 2016 Statewide Case Filings by Case Type



## 2016 Statewide Case Filings by Judicial District



# First Judicial District



**7 Counties: Carver, Dakota, Goodhue,  
Le Sueur, McLeod, Scott, Sibley**

**36 Judgeships**

**5 Child Support Magistrates**

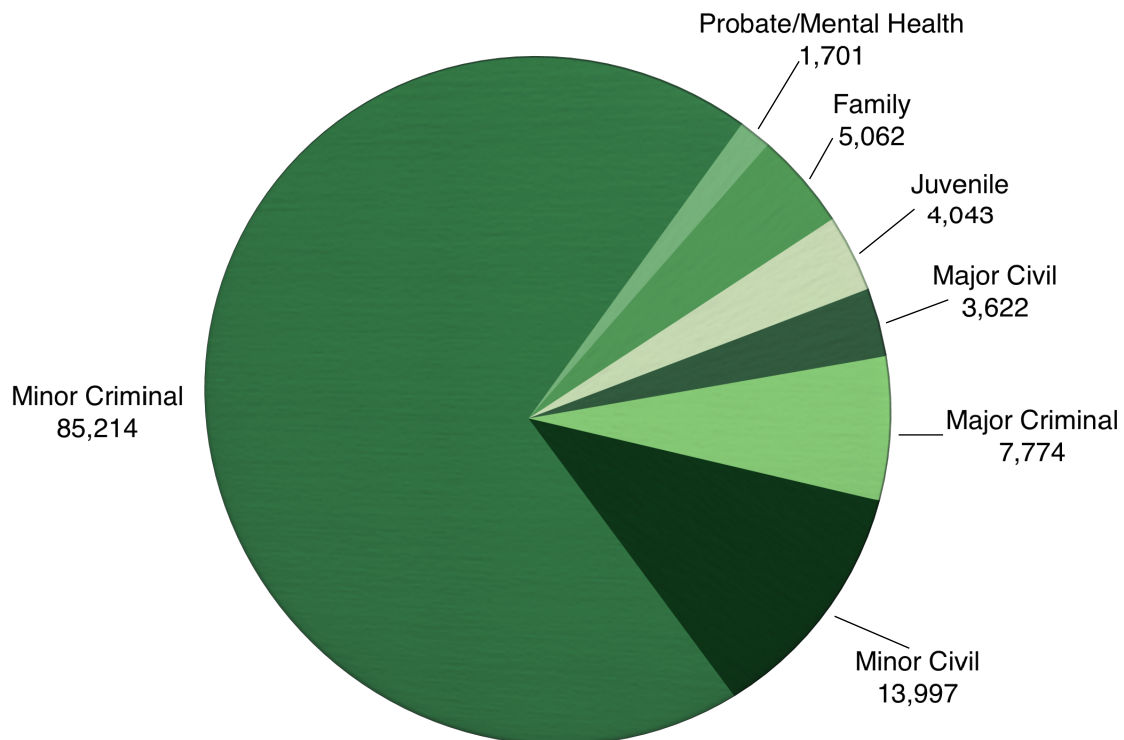
**Hon. Terrence E. Conkel, Chief Judge**

**Hon. Kathryn D. Messerich,  
Assistant Chief Judge**

**Brian Jones, District Administrator**

**First Judicial District Administration  
1620 South Frontage Road, Suite 200  
Hastings, MN 55033**

## 2016 First Judicial District Case Filings



## **McLeod County Courthouse Jail Expansion and Security Upgrade**

For McLeod County, the second time is a charm. After the initial McLeod County jail expansion and security upgrade project came in significantly over budget in early 2015, the County Board went back to the drawing board. The Board sent the project back to Wold Architects, who reduced the footprint while maintaining the key components and changing some of the building materials. The County Board also voted to hire a construction management firm, Contegrity, to manage the bidding and construction process. These decisions paid off on February 11, 2016, as the bids came in slightly below the budget the Board approved earlier for the project.

Along with the jail expansion, the project includes a new lobby area that will be shared by Court Administration and the Law Enforcement Center. The lobby will allow space for point-of-entry screening, should the County decide to implement that in the future. A secure hallway, including holding cells, from the jail to one of the courtrooms on the upper level will also be added. New public restrooms and additional elevator service are also included with this project.

Separate from this, the County Board appropriated funding to remodel one of the courtrooms on the upper level. This will allow for some of the electronic technology that the courts have moved toward in recent years. The remodeling will coincide with the jail expansion and security upgrade project.

The construction project will run through July 2017. This project would not have happened without the bequest of former Glencoe Enterprise Publisher, AnnaMarie Tudhope, who left the bulk of her approximate \$4 million estate to McLeod County for jail construction. The County plans to include some type of memorial to Tudhope.

## **Le Sueur County Moves Forward with New Justice Center**

On August 2, 2016, the Le Sueur County commissioners voted to approve a new off-site Justice Center. The proposed Justice Center will be located on the south side of State Highway 99. According to Darrell Pettis, Le Sueur County Administrator, if all goes as planned, construction on the new Justice Center will begin in spring 2018, with completion in spring 2019.

The new Justice Center will house Court Administration, the Sheriff's office (administration and dispatch), the county jail, probation, and possibly the Department of Corrections and emergency management. There will also be space for the County Attorney.

Once the new Justice Center is completed, the County will begin remodeling the existing courthouse, specifically the second floor where Court Administration and Probation currently have office space and the courtrooms. Once remodeled, the second floor space will house other county offices.



## **Law Day Highlights Across the First District**

Since 1958, the legal community has celebrated Law Day on May 1. This day is used to focus on the nation's commitment to the rule of law, as well as educate society on a specific aspect of the legal system.

The theme for 2016 was, "Miranda: More than Words," in recognition of the case of *Miranda v. Arizona* and the procedural protections afforded to all by the U.S. Constitution.

The First District used Law Day to host many activities on the Friday before and the Monday after May 1, which fell on a weekend in 2016.

On April 29, Goodhue County Court Administration and the Goodhue County Law Library hosted an education table in the lobby, which allowed for the public to interact with staff and further their knowledge about Miranda. Additionally, court customers could take a short quiz about Miranda and enter to win a prize, and Goodhue County students in grades five to 12 participated in a poster contest. The First District court administrators voted on the winner of the contest based upon the following factors - message, visual effectiveness, and universal appeal.

The Scott County Court Administration Office, Volunteer Lawyers Network, Southern Minnesota Regional Legal Services, St. Croix Legal Services, the Scott County Child Support Office, and the Scott County Law Library combined efforts to provide a fantastic full day of activities on May 2. These ranged from demonstrations on searching for case information, mini consultations focused on family and criminal law questions, and a clinic on the possibility of seeking an expungement. Additionally, child support officers were available to assist those who had questions in regard to their cases. They even had an attorney on hand to discuss various government benefits programs.

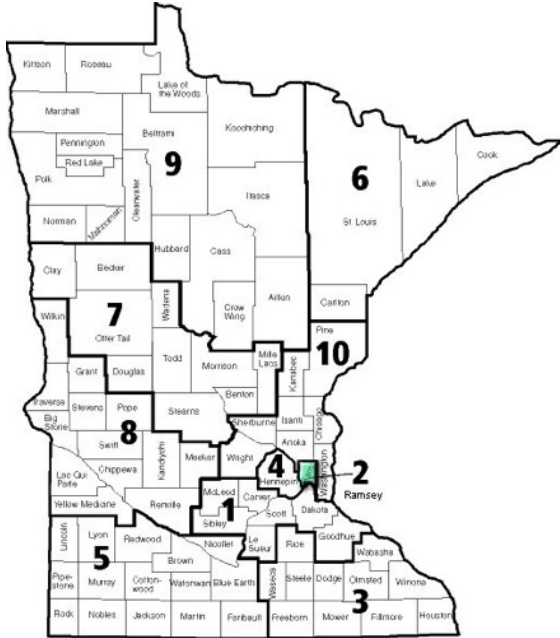
These yearly events help ensure court customers have access to information they need, as well as understand the important role the law, as well as the courts, play in maintaining a fair and just society.

## **Free Legal Clinics Expanding to Goodhue County**

Legal Assistance of Dakota County, Ltd. (LADC) expanded the free legal clinics they offer to include Goodhue County on October 5, 2016. The clinics are held the first Wednesday of every month, from noon to 2 p.m., by appointment only, at the Goodhue County Law Library, located in the basement of the Justice Center.

The legal issues discussed must be related to family law, and the individual seeking advice must be at 200 percent or below the poverty guidelines. The clinics are facilitated by a staff member of LADC, and legal advice is provided by volunteer lawyers who are primarily practicing in Goodhue County.

# Second Judicial District



**1 County: Ramsey**

**29 Judgeships**

**4 Referees**

**2 Child Support Magistrates**

**Hon. John H. Guthmann, Chief Judge**

**Hon. Robert A. Awsumb,**

**Assistant Chief Judge**

**Heather M. Kendall, District Administrator**

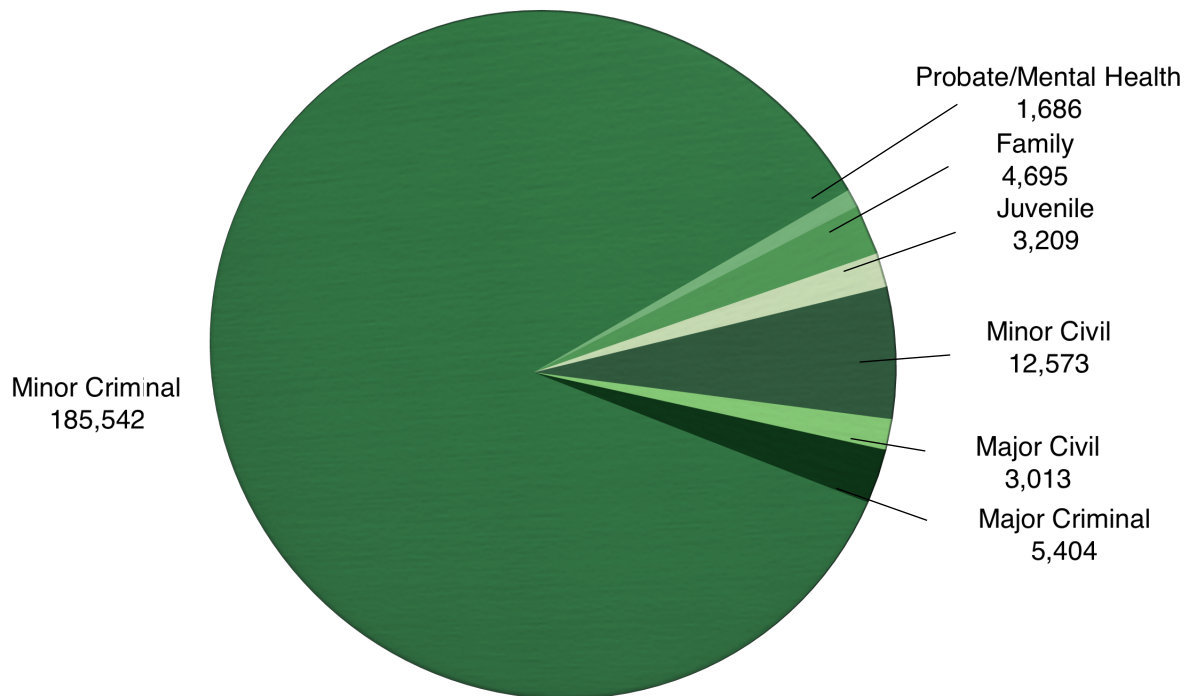
**Second Judicial District Administration**

**1700 Ramsey County Courthouse**

**15 West Kellogg Boulevard**

**Saint Paul, MN 55102**

## 2016 Second Judicial District Case Filings



## **Second Judicial District Plans for New District Court Records Office**

The Second Judicial District planned in 2016 for the establishment of a comprehensive centralized process for records access and retrieval. That planning led to the first of three phases being implemented on January 30, 2017, which included allowing district court record copy requests to be made by letter, e-mail, fax, or through the Judicial Branch's eFiling and eService system.

The newly established District Court Records office is the result of consolidating the work of five locations into one with the mission to provide access and copy services for all district court records including criminal, civil, probate/commitment, family, and juvenile. The second two phases include: counter assistance for customers seeking records and copies of records, and availability of public access terminals. Processing of appeals and exhibit management will also move to District Court Records.

A centralized office would not have been feasible without a corresponding District-wide project to digitize all court records – from paper or microfilm to digital imaging. This project is near completion and marks a successful two-year endeavor to ensure the court's records are easily accessible while also maintaining the highest level of quality for business partners, litigants, and the general public.

## **Treatment Court Unit Implements Triage System**

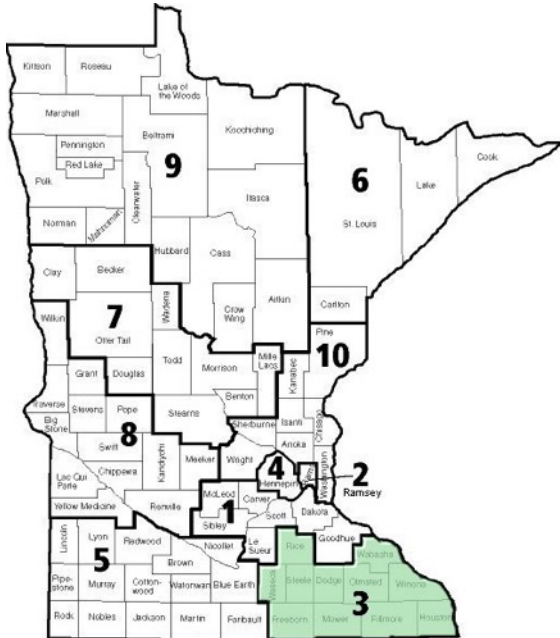
In 2016, the Treatment Court Unit of the Second Judicial District implemented a centralized intake process known as the Triage System for the four treatment courts in the District, which include the Adult Substance Abuse Court (ASAC), the DWI Court, the Mental Health Court (MHC), and the Veterans Treatment Court (VTC).

Prior to the implementation of the Triage System, the four treatment courts all had different referral processes and eligibility criteria, and used intake screens and assessments to determine the appropriateness of referrals to the specific treatment court. The Triage System not only resulted in more consistency in the referral process, but it also dramatically improved the speed of services to customers.

Customers referred to the treatment courts in the District are now all screened and, if needed, assessed for both a substance use disorder and mental health issues. All customers are given a chemical health assessment or diagnostic assessment prior to acceptance into any treatment court. Many referrals receive both assessments because they are co-occurring, meaning that they suffer from both a substance use disorder and a mental health issue.

This coordinated effort is accomplished by a Triage Team consisting of treatment court coordinators, a mental health professional, a chemical health professional, Veterans Justice Outreach of the Veterans Administration, and the Triage Coordinator.

# Third Judicial District



**11 Counties: Dodge, Fillmore, Freeborn,  
Houston, Mower, Olmsted, Rice, Steele,  
Wabasha, Waseca, Winona**

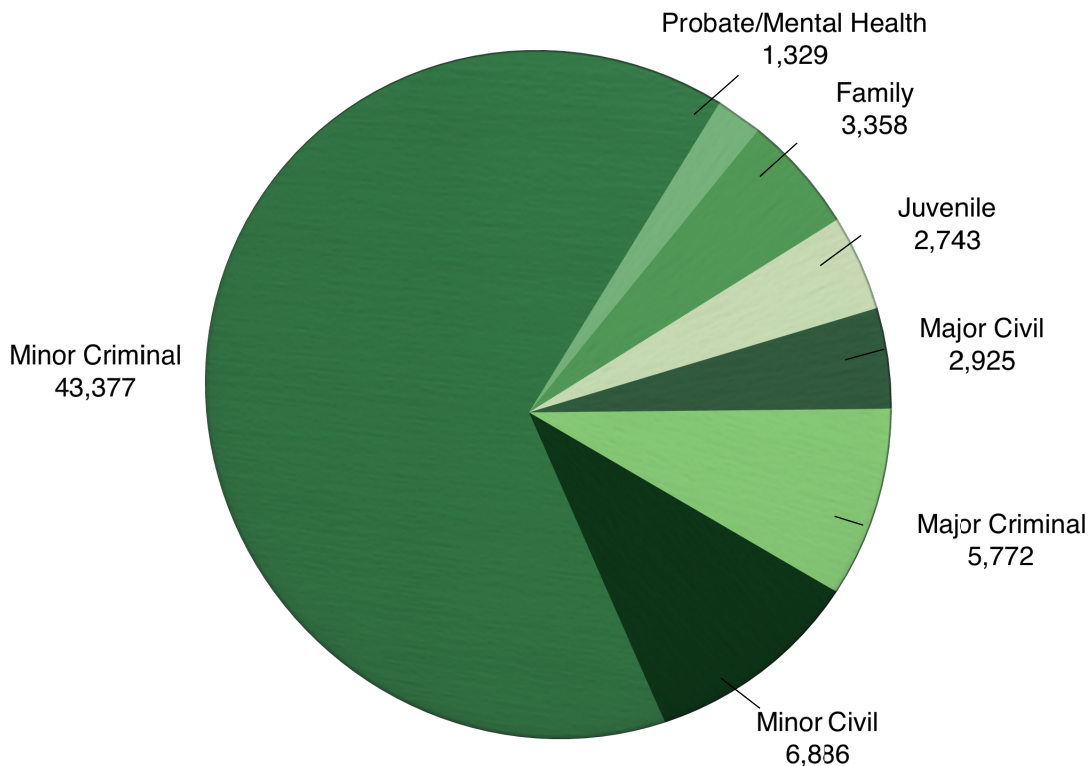
**24 Judgeships  
1 Referee  
2 Child Support Magistrates**

**Hon. Jeffrey D. Thompson, Chief Judge  
Hon. Jodi L. Williamson,  
Assistant Chief Judge**

**Shelley Ellefson, District Administrator**

**Third Judicial District Administration  
1696 Greenview Drive SW  
Rochester, MN 55902**

## 2016 Third Judicial District Case Filings



## **Equal Justice Committee Holds Community Listening Sessions**

The Third Judicial District Equal Justice Committee conducted two community listening sessions in 2016. One was held in April, and a follow-up session was held in November. Both sessions were held at John Adams Middle School in Rochester, MN.

The purpose of the session in April was to listen to perspectives of local underrepresented populations in order to learn what they believe the court can do better with respect to understanding their experiences. The purpose of the session in November was to provide some follow-up on progress made toward the court-related issues that were raised during the April session, along with soliciting input on how to address other court-related issues raised in that April session.

## **District Adds Twenty-Fourth Judge to the Bench**

By order of the Minnesota Supreme Court, a vacant referee position in the Second Judicial District was transferred to the Third Judicial District and converted to a district court judgeship. Judge Christa M. Daily was appointed to this newly-created judicial district vacancy, effective June 10, 2016. She is chambered in Mower County.

## **Winona Criminal Justice Coordinating Council Receives National Alliance on Mental Illness Criminal Justice Award**

The National Alliance on Mental Illness presented the Winona Criminal Justice Coordinating Council with a Criminal Justice Award in 2016. The Award recognizes an individual or group in the area of criminal justice that has demonstrated through its action a strong commitment to the decriminalization of mental illness. Specifically, the Council was chosen to receive the award because of its engagement in the Stepping Up Initiative, a national effort to reduce the number of people with mental illnesses in jail.

## **Olmsted County Joins “Rocket Docket” Pilot**

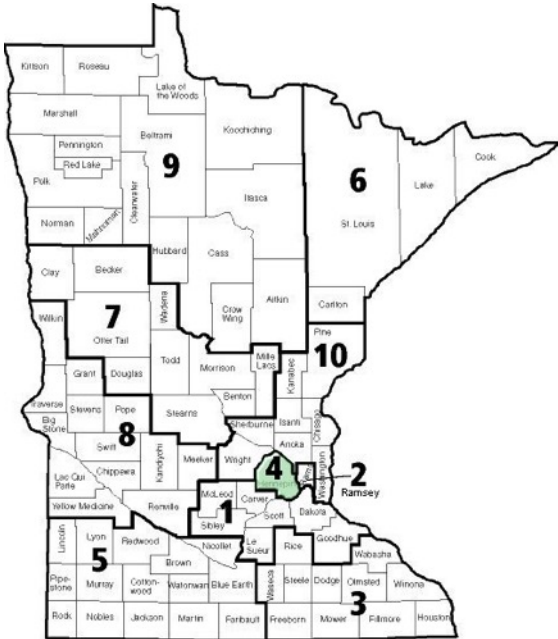
By Supreme Court order in 2016, Olmsted County joined the Expedited Litigation Track (ELT) pilot already in place in Hennepin, Dakota, and St. Louis counties. In these pilot counties, certain civil cases are assigned to the ELT pilot track. They are managed through a process that assures early involvement by a judge. The overall amount of time parties can conduct discovery is limited in ELT, and cases are given a trial date within four to six months of the filing or assignment to the ELT. The pilot also curtails subsequent continuances of trial dates.

## **Olmsted County Justice Council Producing Results**

The newly-formed Olmsted County Justice Council (OCJC) quickly produced effective outcomes in 2016. Its first major initiative was the creation of the Olmsted County Drug Court. The Court Scheduling Workgroup has been working collaboratively to resolve arraignment calendar workload issues. Finally, OCJC conducted a ‘war on warrants’ to resolve the high number of active warrants in the County.



# Fourth Judicial District



**1 County: Hennepin**

**62 Judgeships**

**16 Referees**

**5 Child Support Magistrates**

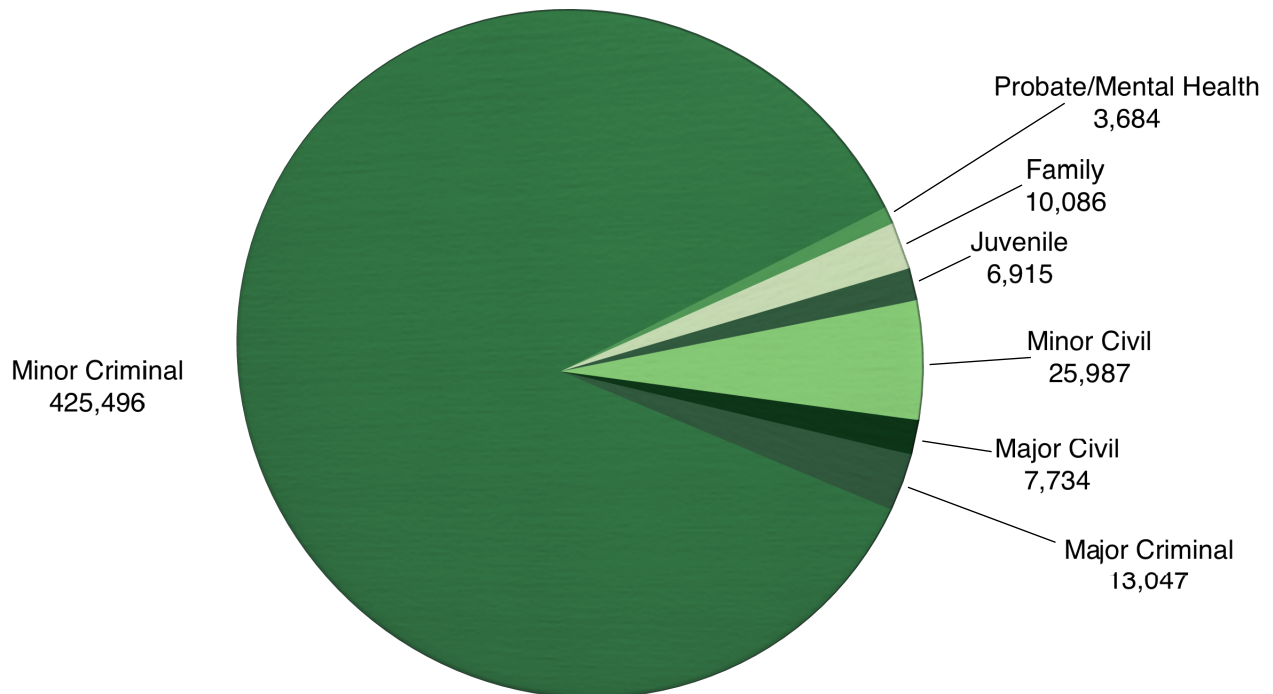
**Hon. Ivy S. Bernhardson, Chief Judge**

**Hon. Toddrick S. Barnette,  
Assistant Chief Judge**

**Kate Fogarty, District Administrator**

**Fourth Judicial District Administration  
12-C Government Center  
300 South Sixth Street  
Minneapolis, MN 55487**

## 2016 Fourth Judicial District Case Filings



## Office Relocation Improves Safety of Court Facilities

Many offices were relocated in the Hennepin County Government Center - the main facility of the Fourth Judicial District (Hennepin County District Court) - in 2016. The Violations Bureau, the Criminal eFiling office, the Hearing Office, the Scheduling and Interpreters Unit, the Jury Office, and the Jury Assembly Room were all relocated behind weapons screening on the Public Service Level and on floor C24.

The strategic goal to move court operations and customer service functions behind weapons screening was an essential accomplishment in providing justice services that elevate public trust and confidence in the Fourth Judicial District.

Court staff and customers pass through weapons screening before conducting court business. Previously, jurors would also pass through weapons screening, but they would need to do so each time they were called up to a courtroom. Jurors are now screened upon their arrival to the courthouse. This saves valuable time for jurors and Sheriff's deputies throughout the day.



*The new Jury Assembly Room on the 24th floor of the Hennepin County Government Center.*

## Therapy Dogs Help Juveniles and Families

In 2016, the Juvenile Justice Center (JCC) began facilitating volunteer visits by pet therapy dogs in the JCC lobby in downtown Minneapolis.

In recent years, the U.S. has seen a great expansion of therapy dogs in courthouses, with a special focus on the criminal justice system. The therapy dogs provide an immediate calming effect on juveniles and their families who are waiting for their cases to be called.

The JJC works with North Star Therapy Animals, a non-profit group of approximately 125 volunteers who provide the therapy dogs. Canine teams now visit the JJC lobby on the second and fourth Wednesday of each month, from 9 a.m. to 11 a.m.



*Tanner, a therapy dog provided by the Fourth Judicial District.*

## New Technologies Enhance Customer Convenience and Communication

In 2016, the Fourth Judicial District demonstrated how technology connects court staff and judges with each other, with their customers, and with their stakeholders in order to communicate more effectively.

Case “cue” display monitors were installed at each courthouse location to direct people to their courtrooms. The display monitors are similar to the ones used at airports. Party names are listed alphabetically and include the case number, the judge assigned to the case, and the courtroom location.

The District also expanded video hearings; converted payable cases, such as traffic tickets, from its own case management system to the statewide case management system; and increased content on the Branch public website.

Three jury kiosks were installed in the hall of the new Jury Assembly Room for jurors to sign in quickly for jury service. Jurors scan their jury summonses rather than rely on a manual check-in system conducted by court staff. This innovation increases efficiency for jurors and staff.

In addition, the District started to use Twitter to more effectively communicate with the public.

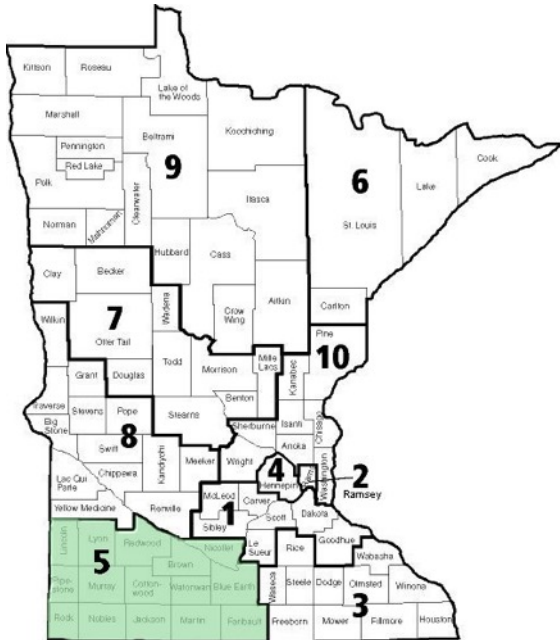


*Three jury kiosks have increased convenience for Hennepin County jurors and improved efficiency for court staff.*

## Eldercaring Coordination Pilot Initiated

The Fourth Judicial District participated in a nationwide Eldercaring Coordination pilot designed by the Association for Conflict Resolution in 2016. Three attorneys who previously worked in family coordination are now qualified as Eldercaring Coordinators in the District. The model is designed to help families in extremely contested guardianship cases find resources for family support and avoid trials and escalating conflict. The pilot has referred seven cases, and has been successful in helping the District gather information about how to best bring alternative dispute resolution concepts to guardianship cases.

# Fifth Judicial District



**15 Counties: Blue Earth, Brown, Cottonwood, Faribault, Jackson, Lincoln, Lyon, Martin, Murray, Nicollet, Nobles, Pipestone, Redwood, Rock, Watonwan**

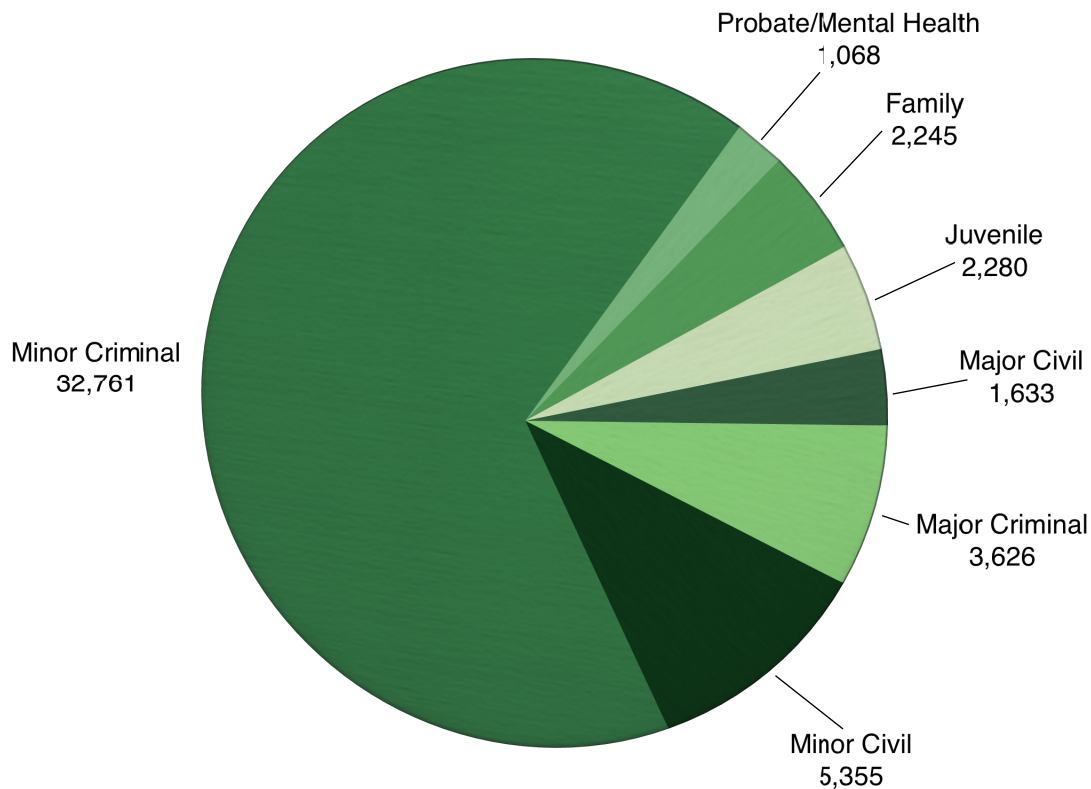
**16 Judgeships  
2 Child Support Magistrates**

**Hon. Bradley C. Walker, Chief Judge  
Hon. Michelle A. Dietrich,  
Assistant Chief Judge**

**Michael J. Kelley, District Administrator**

**Fifth Judicial District Administration  
11 Civic Center Plaza, Suite 205  
Mankato, MN 56001**

## 2016 Fifth Judicial District Case Filings



## **StandDown Held in Blue Earth and Watonwan Counties**

Fifth Judicial District Judges Bradley C. Walker and Gregory J. Anderson presided over special StandDown calendars for court cases involving Minnesota veterans on November 9, 2016. The Minnesota Assistance Council for Veterans hosts a number of StandDown events throughout the state during the year for homeless veterans and those experiencing an issue that has become a barrier in their lives. The idea is to bring many services to one location and make them more accessible to all veterans who otherwise may not seek out services or take advantage of benefits due to them.

## **Courtroom Technology Upgrades result in Improved Remote Interpreting Capability**

The Fifth Judicial District completed an extensive project in 2016 to upgrade its courtroom technology and sound systems. One of the outcomes of the upgrade has been an improved ability to utilize remote interpreter capability. The upgrade could result in significant savings in interpreter travel costs given the frequent need for interpreters within the District.

Another benefit is that the system allows for simultaneous interpretation, which makes it possible to avoid talking over interpreters in the courtroom and avoid delays caused by the traditional method of consecutive interpreting.

## **Supreme Court Grants Petition to Convert Vacant Referee Position to Judgeship**

The Fifth District successfully petitioned the Supreme Court, under authority provided in state statute, to convert a vacant referee position to a new judgeship in 2016. The District created a part-time referee position in 2012 in response to an increase in family case filings. As caseloads continued to increase, the referee position was gradually increased to a full-time position. The referee position became vacant in the fall of 2016, prompting the petition.

## **Minnesota State Bar Foundation Awards Grant for Early Neutral Evaluation**

The Fifth District was awarded a \$1,500 grant from the Minnesota State Bar Foundation in 2016 to help defray the cost for indigent parties to participate in the Early Neutral Evaluation (ENE) process in the District. ENE is a confidential, voluntary, evaluative process designed to facilitate prompt dispute resolution in custody, parenting time (visitation), and financial matters.





## St. Louis and Carlton Counties Hold “Warrant Workout Days”

The Sixth District held two “warrant workout days” in 2016. The first was held at the St. Louis County Courthouse in Duluth on May 13, and the second was held at the Carlton County Courthouse on August 25.

Both events were sponsored by the local criminal justice communities, and offered people with an outstanding arrest warrant an opportunity to meet with justice system officials and take steps to resolve their case. The Carlton County event processed cases involving warrants issued in Carlton County, while the St. Louis County event processed cases involving warrants issued anywhere in the state.

Visitors to the events were able to speak with public defenders and prosecuting attorneys, and arrange to pay any outstanding fines. For the benefit of those who had traffic-related warrants, a representative from the Driver Diversion Program was also present at the St. Louis County event to provide information about the Program and possible options for a path towards driver’s license reinstatement.



*The St. Louis County Courthouse in Duluth.*

## Community Dialogue Session Held

A community dialogue session was hosted by the Sixth Judicial District’s Equal Justice Committee on October 29, 2016, at Denfeld High School in Duluth. Sixth District judges, as well as a referee and the Sixth District Court Administrator, participated as panelists. The meeting was conducted as a large group dialogue session with an American Sign Language interpreter available.

The purpose of the event was for the public to meet the judges and share ideas and concerns related to the court system, including ideas for improving the courts. The session also allowed judges and administration to listen first-hand to the individual experiences of members of the public.

Suggestions for follow-up by the District’s Equal Justice Committee are accessible on the Judicial Branch website at <http://www.mncourts.gov/MinnesotaJudicialCouncil/CEJ.aspx>.

## **Mental Health Treatment Court Gets Specialized Mental Health Probation Services**

St. Louis County Social Services hired a new mental health probation officer to serve the St. Louis County-Duluth Mental Health Treatment Court in 2016, due to the program's success since it was established in 2013. That success has been measured by the number of people the treatment court program has kept out of jail.

Previously, offenders in the Mental Health Treatment Court program were assigned a probation officer who also had other caseloads. That proved not to be ideal for offenders with mental health issues, and it was decided that they would benefit from reporting to a full-time mental health steward.

St. Louis County will spend \$150,000 through 2017 and 2018 to see if the added mental health probation officer can help reduce costs for emergency shelters and hospital emergency rooms, and can help offenders find stable housing, stay on their medications, seek treatment, and kick their chemical dependency addictions.

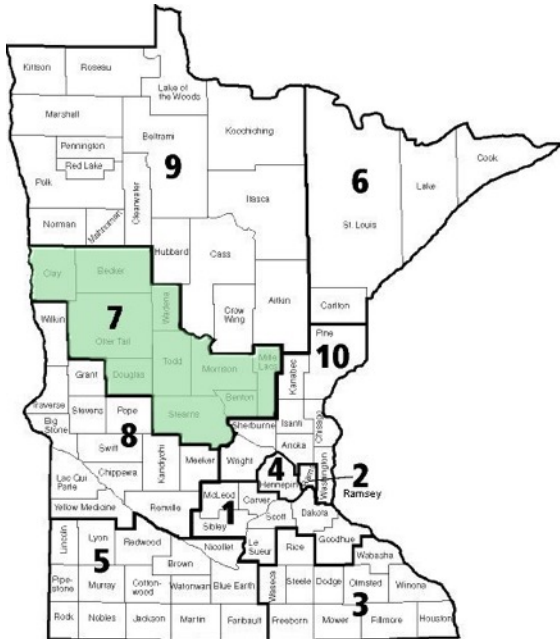
## **Sixth District Centralizes Operations**

The Sixth District centralized some of its operations in 2016.

The processing of documents filed into the Judicial Branch's eFile and eServe system for any of the cases in the District's counties has been centralized at the Carlton County Courthouse.

The District also started taking steps to centralize its document security efforts with the development of a Quality Assurance position. This pilot effort was launched at the behest of the Supreme Court Chief Justice as the Judicial Branch looks for the best way to ensure 100 percent compliance with document security.

# Seventh Judicial District



**10 Counties: Becker, Benton, Clay, Douglas, Mille Lacs, Morrison, Otter Tail, Stearns, Todd, Wadena**

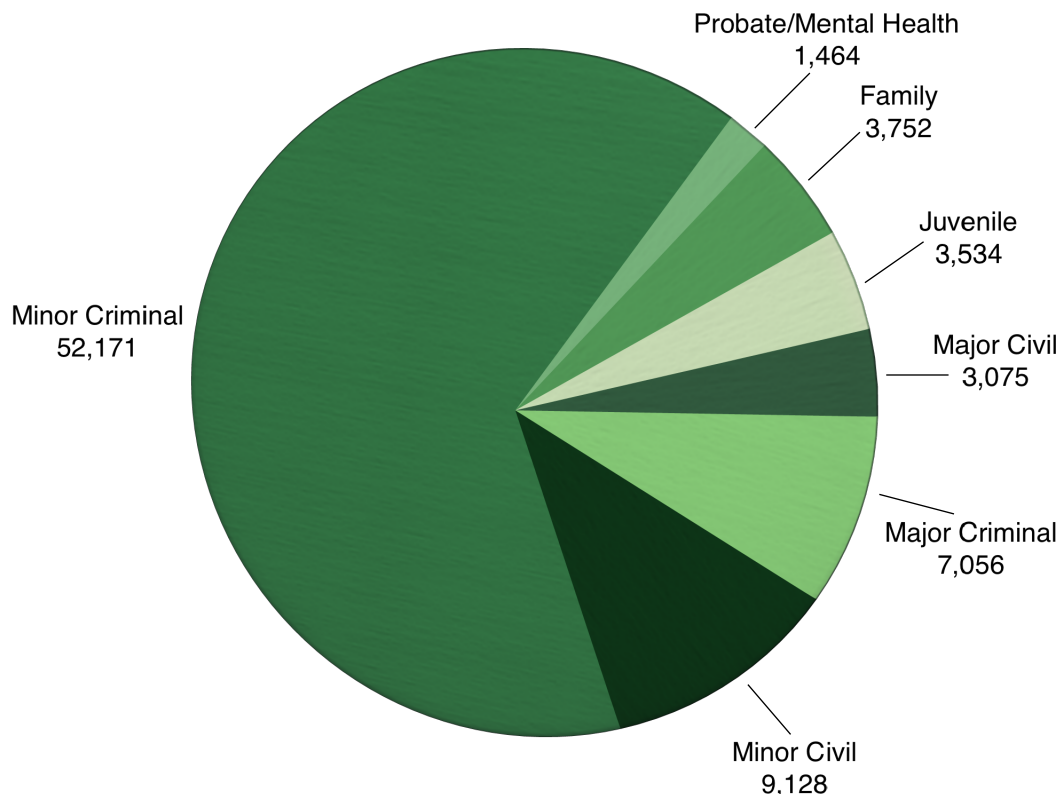
**28 Judgeships  
5 Child Support Magistrates**

**Hon. John H. Scherer, Chief Judge  
Hon. Ann L. Carrott, Assistant Chief Judge**

**Timothy Ostby, District Administrator**

**Seventh Judicial District Administration  
Stearns County Courthouse  
725 Courthouse Square #406  
Saint Cloud, MN 56303**

## 2016 Seventh Judicial District Case Filings



## Judges, Court Staff Engage in Community Dialogue Sessions

Two community dialogue sessions were hosted by the Seventh Judicial District's Equal Justice Committee in St. Cloud in 2016.

On May 2, "Our Kids, Our Future. A Community Conversation" was held at St. Cloud Technical High School. The event was a collaborative effort of the Minnesota Judicial Branch, Stearns County judges, Stearns County Court Administration, Independent School District 742, Stearns County, the Stearns County Attorney's Office, Stearns County Community Corrections, the City of St. Cloud Police Department, the FBI Minneapolis Citizens Academy Alumni Association, and the Minneapolis Division of the FBI.

The purpose for the event was to educate parents about truancy and chemical abuse and how the two are often interrelated, as well as to provide information on the dangers of social media. More than 100 individuals participated in the event. Interested parties approached the presenters after the session inquiring about individual matters. Individual feedback forms indicated that the social media information was the most helpful.

On May 21, the second community dialogue session was held at the Tuscan Center. The event was a collaborative effort of the St. Cloud Chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, Stearns County District Court, and the Seventh Judicial District, and its purpose was for the public to meet the judges and share ideas about improving the courts.

There was an open invitation to address bias, juvenile issues, debt collection, housing, child protection, custody, family law, or any matter that comes before the Court. The only limitation was that individual pending cases could not be discussed.

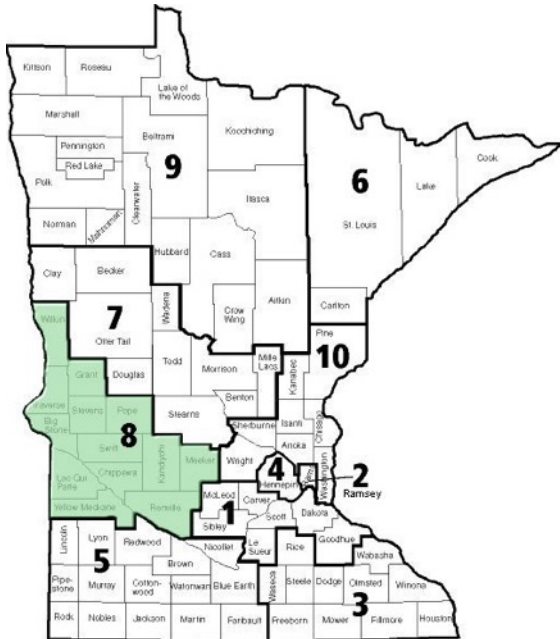
The meeting was conducted as a large group dialogue session with approximately 50 community members attending. A Spanish interpreter provided consecutive interpretation for the entire session and for more than half of the attendees. A Somali interpreter was also available.

The attendees had five major concerns:

- Federal Immigration and Customs Enforcement
- Treatment of Individuals by Agencies Outside of the Courts
- Public Defender Representation and Legal Aid Funding
- Driver's License Issues
- Words, Actions, and Data Concerns

All community members agreed that the session was helpful. The major themes of the discussion will be reviewed by the Minnesota Judicial Council Committee for Equality and Justice and the Seventh District Equal Justice Committee, and will be used to inform the priorities and actions of both. In determining those priorities and actions, both will devise strategies and approaches which underpin the fundamental goal of providing equal access to justice for all court users.

# Eighth Judicial District



**13 Counties:** Big Stone, Chippewa, Grant, Kandiyohi, Lac Qui Parle, Meeker, Pope, Renville, Stevens, Swift, Traverse, Wilkin, Yellow Medicine

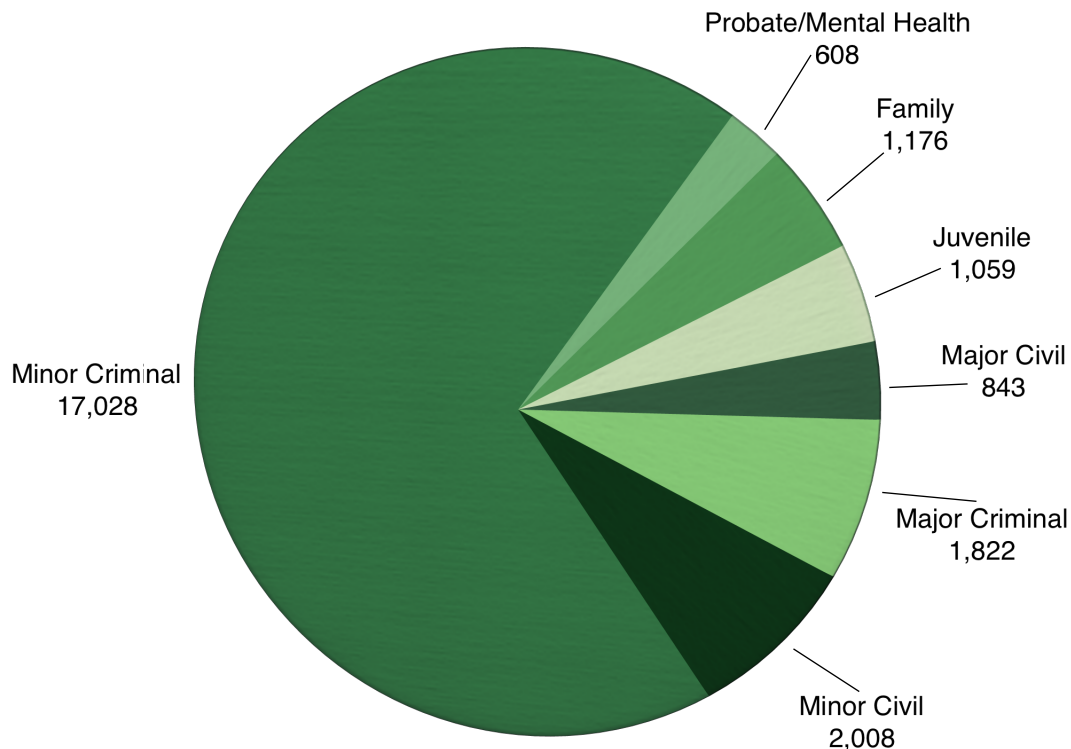
**11 Judgeships**  
**2 Child Support Magistrates**

**Hon. Michael J. Thompson, Chief Judge**  
**Hon. Dwayne N. Knutsen,**  
**Assistant Chief Judge**

**Timothy Ostby, District Administrator**

**Eighth Judicial District Administration**  
**Kandiyohi County Courthouse**  
**505 Becker Avenue SW, Suite 107**  
**Willmar, MN 56201**

## 2016 Eighth Judicial District Case Filings





## **Drug Court Works to Feed Starving Children**

On August 15, 2016, staff and participants from the Eighth Judicial District Drug Court volunteered with a local non-profit organization of people who assist in providing food to people in need. The event assisted in the organization's mission to package food for children and families in several third world countries.

## **Interactive Video Teleconference Units Updated**

In order to continue to allow for parties in cases to appear in court remotely, all Interactive Video Teleconference (ITV) units were updated in all 24 courtrooms of the Eighth Judicial District in 2016.

## **Centralization, Collaboration Used to Improve Case Processing**

In 2016, the Eighth Judicial District launched an effort to centralize the processing of guardianship and conservatorship casework for the 13 courts in the district. In addition, the centralized unit has taken on the same work from Clay and Otter Tail county district courts in the Seventh Judicial District, and plans to absorb the work from Stearns County District Court (also in the Seventh Judicial District) in the near future.

Through centralization, specialization, and cross-district collaboration, the Eighth Judicial District aims to not only increase efficiency, but also to improve how these cases are processed in the region.

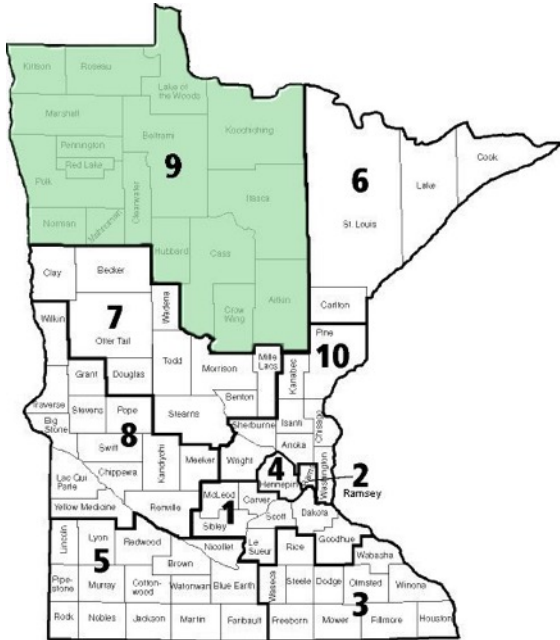
## **Technology Courtrooms Implemented**

The Eighth Judicial District implemented five new technology courtrooms in 2016. One was included in the construction of the new courthouse in Yellow Medicine County, and the other four were added in the courthouses in Renville, Kandiyohi, Chippewa, and Meeker counties.

The technology courtrooms allow for more interactive court hearings between all participants. For example, attorneys can present information from their devices via digital connectors. Their screen is then displayed on two large screen TVs for court staff and other participants to view. Once connected to the system, attorneys have access to many different annotation tools, which include a whiteboard, a spotlight function, zoom, and other functions. The technology in the courtrooms also allow for anyone to connect wirelessly with a mobile device to view what is currently being presented, or to present something themselves. Court staff and presenters can control the systems from a unit located on their desks or on the podium.

The courtrooms are also equipped with two assisted-listening devices that can be used to amplify audio from other participants, or allow for an interpreter to speak directly to a non-English speaking party.

# Ninth Judicial District



**17 Counties:** Aitkin, Beltrami, Cass, Clearwater, Crow Wing, Hubbard, Itasca, Kittson, Koochiching, Lake of the Woods, Mahanomen, Marshall, Norman, Pennington, Polk, Red Lake, Roseau

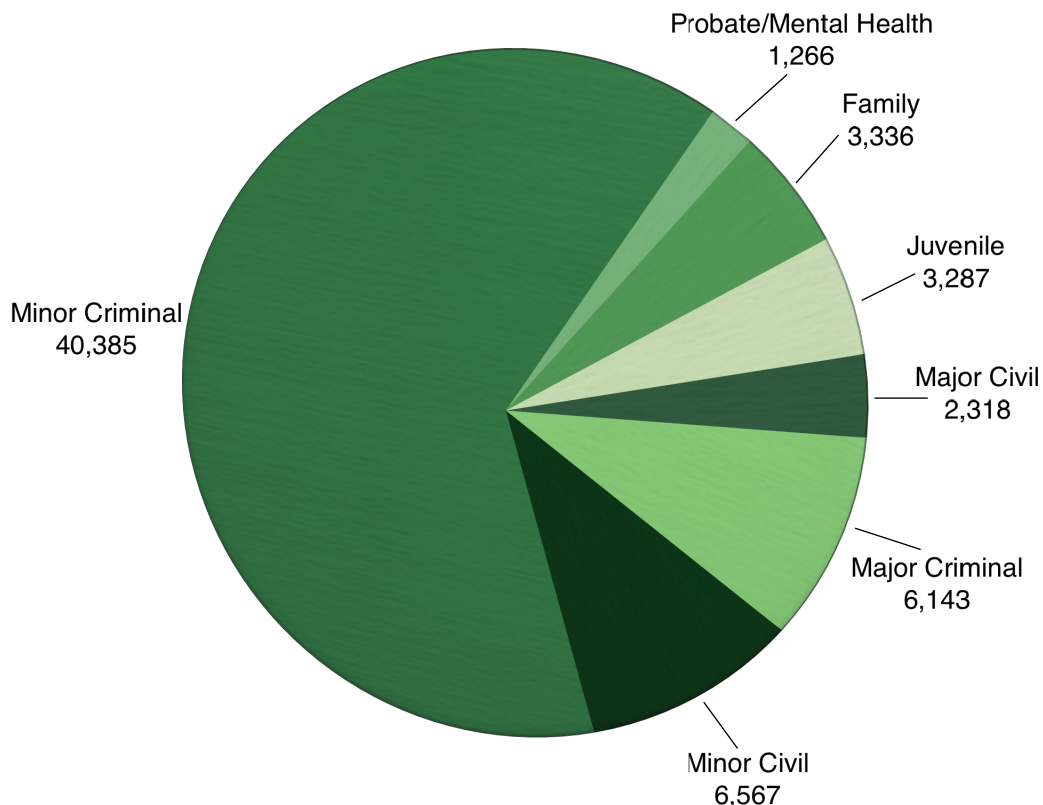
**23 Judgeships**  
**2 Child Support Magistrates**

**Hon. Paul T. Benshoof, Chief Judge**  
**Hon. Tamara L. Yon, Assistant Chief Judge**

**Paul Maatz, District Administrator**

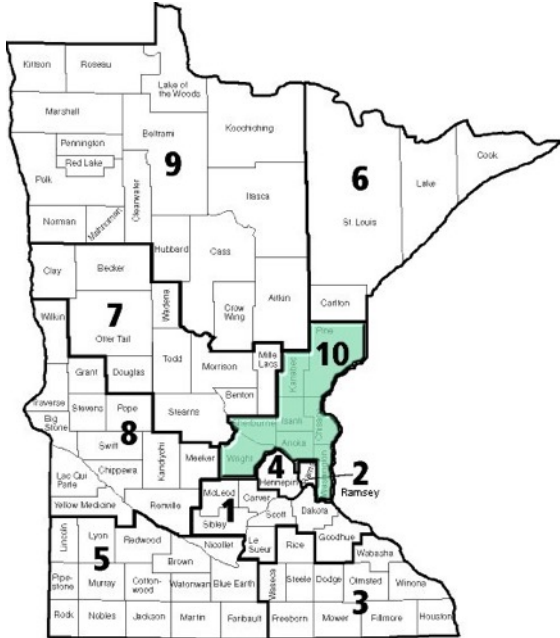
**Ninth Judicial District Administration**  
**Community Services Building**  
**616 America Avenue NW #250**  
**Bemidji, MN 56601**

## 2016 Ninth Judicial District Case Filings





# Tenth Judicial District



**8 Counties: Anoka, Chisago, Isanti,  
Kanabec, Pine, Sherburne, Washington,  
Wright**

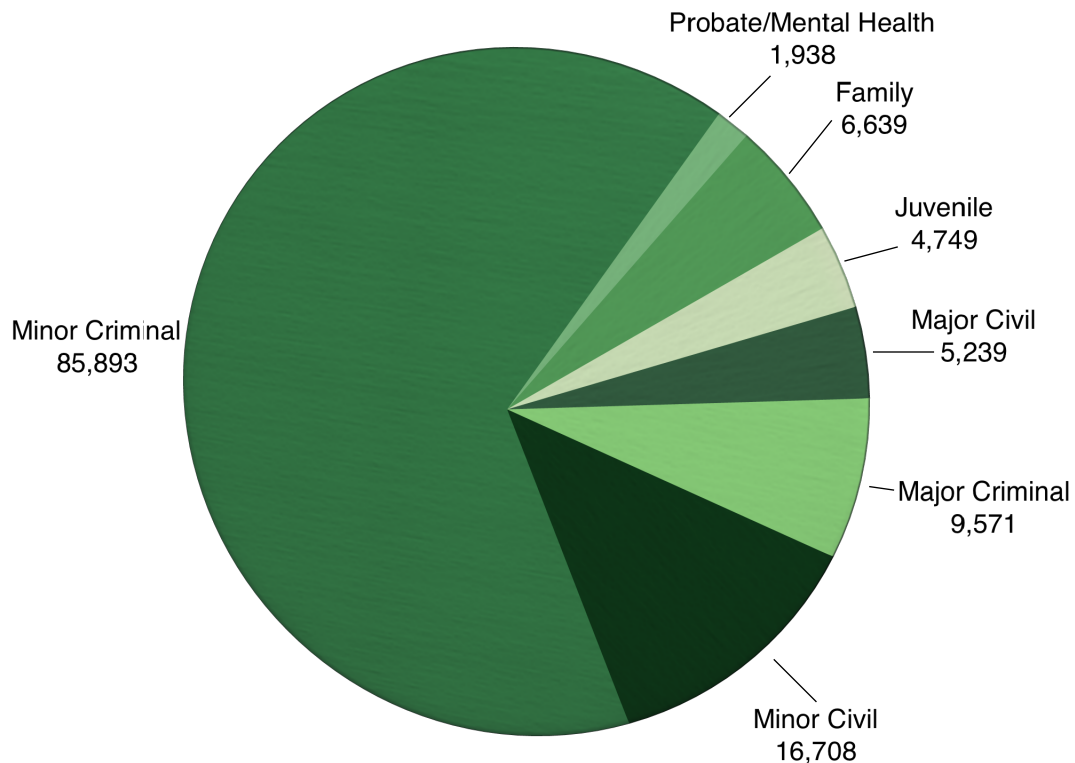
**45 Judgeships  
4 Child Support Magistrates**

**Hon. Douglas B. Meslow, Chief Judge  
Hon. Susan R. Miles,  
Assistant Chief Judge**

**Michael Moriarity, District Administrator**

**Tenth Judicial District Administration  
7533 Sunwood Drive NW, Suite 306  
Ramsey, MN 55303**

## 2016 Tenth Judicial District Case Filings

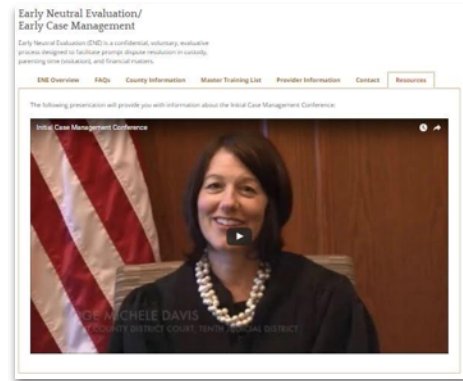


## Early Case Management/Early Neutral Evaluation Programs Expand

After the Minnesota Judicial Council approved hiring a statewide Early Case Management/Early Neutral Evaluation (ECM/ENE) Coordinator in 2016, the Tenth District's Coordinator, Angel Lussier, was asked to take over statewide coordination.

ECM/ENE are effective problem-solving approaches to assist parties in reaching resolution of family court cases before significant financial and emotional resources are expended on litigation. Lussier has provided program technical assistance around the state while developing roster guidelines, trainer and curriculum standards and processes, and training and public information.

The District also hired Miriam Friesen in 2016 to provide litigant services. In this position, Friesen continues the work of implementing and coordinating the District's ENE program, including streamlining and standardizing ENE policies and procedures, providing support to the self help centers throughout the District, and promoting the District's goals to increase access to justice and promote public trust and accountability.



*An educational video describing the Initial Case Management Conference and Early Neutral Evaluation options is available at <http://www.mncourts.gov/Help-Topics/ENE-ECM.aspx>.*

## Tenth District Judges Honored

The Minnesota District Judges Foundation (MDJF) presented Anoka County Judge Tammi Fredrickson with its Outstanding Service to the Minnesota Judiciary Award in 2016 for her work in judicial education.

As MDJF President, Judge Fredrickson forged new partnerships and alliances with State Court Administration to enhance judicial education. Judge Fredrickson has been on the MDJF Program and Education Committee since 2007, and is a popular mentor at the Judicial Branch New Judges Orientation training and at the University of Minnesota trial skills program.



*District Judge  
Tammi Fredrickson*



*District Judge  
James Dehn*

Isanti County Judge James E. Dehn was presented with the University of Minnesota Center for Transportation Studies' Distinguished Public Leadership Award in 2016 for his extensive work to reduce drunk driving in Minnesota.

In nearly three decades on the bench, Judge Dehn has established numerous initiatives designed to reduce drunk driving and prevent recidivism among DWI offenders.



## Enhancing Public Safety by Rethinking Probation Sentences

Washington County District Court volunteered in 2016 to begin partnering with Washington County Community Corrections to become one of two pilot sites in the nation working on a new way of delivering probation services to adult offenders. This model, called dosage probation, is a new initiative from the National Institute of Corrections.

Dosage probation relies on an offender's internal motivation to change his or her behavior. Offenders can shorten the time they are sentenced under probation supervision by actively participating and completing programming to reduce the likelihood of future criminal behavior. These targeted dosage hours must address the top five areas that lead to criminal behavior: criminal thinking patterns and values; poor decision-making skills; anti-social peers; family/marital stressors; and chemical abuse.

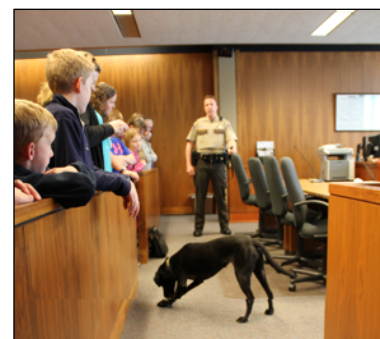
Offenders are referred to program providers who have been identified by the Community Corrections Department as offering research-based services directly related to these areas. Once an offender has served at least one year of probation, and has completed the dosage hours (along with the conditions of probation), he or she is granted a discharge from the sentence. If an offender chooses not to participate in the dosage program, he or she will remain on probation for the duration of the sentence. A sentencing judge may choose to remove the option for any case based on the individual circumstances surrounding the offense.

## “District Court Show” Nears 100th Broadcast Milestone

In 2016, “The District Court Show” prepared to broadcast its 100th episode in early 2017. The show is produced by Quad Cities Community Television (Anoka, Andover, Ramsey, and Champlin counties) and is co-hosted by Wright County District Court Judges Steve Halsey and Elizabeth Strand. This 30-minute program, which first aired in January 2004, can be viewed online at [www.QCTV.org/districtcourtshow](http://www.QCTV.org/districtcourtshow).

## Law Day Celebrations

On April 29, 2016, Anoka County and Washington County celebrated Law Day 2016 by hosting two “open courthouse” events in Anoka and Stillwater. In total, more than 400 Minnesotans attended the two events to tour their local courthouse, learn more about their justice system, and take part in free legal service clinics. Both events were recognized as finalists by the American Bar Association Law Day Awards program. More information about the “open courthouse” initiative is available on page 18 of this report.



*Visitors to the Anoka County Law Day event view a demonstration of the Sheriff's Office K-9 unit.*



# Court of Appeals

19 Members, Three-Judge Panels

## *Appeals from:*

District court decisions (except first-degree murder convictions), administrative agency decisions (except Tax Court & Workers' Compensation Court), decisions of local governments

## *Original Actions:*

Writs of mandamus or prohibition, which order a trial judge or public official to perform or not perform a certain act

Chief Judge Edward Cleary Judge: 2011 - October 2013 Chief Judge: November 2013 - present
Judge Randolph Peterson 1990 - present
Judge Jill Flaskamp Halbrooks 1998 - present
Judge Renee Worke 2005 - present
Judge Kevin Ross 2006 - present
Judge Heidi Schellhas 2008 - present
Judge Francis Connolly 2008 - present
Judge Matthew Johnson Judge: 2008 - Nov. 2010; Nov. 2013 - present Chief Judge: Nov. 2010 - Oct. 2013
Judge Michelle Larkin 2008 - present
Judge Larry Stauber, Jr. 2008 - present
Judge Louise Bjorkman 2008 - present
Judge John Rodenberg 2012 - present
Judge Carol Hooten 2012 - present
Judge Michael Kirk 2012 - present
Judge Denise Reilly 2014 - present
Judge Peter Reyes, Jr. 2014 - present
Judge Lucinda Jesson 2016 - present
Judge Tracy M. Smith 2016 - present
Judge Diane Bratvold 2016 - present

## 2016 Court of Appeals Case Information

	Cases Filed	Dispositions
General Civil	456	452
Criminal	803	893
Administrative Rule	1	1
Economic Security	97	99
Writs - Certiorari	78	66
Habeas / Certified Questions	23	18
Commitment	27	35
Family	202	181
Juvenile Delinquency	9	12
Juvenile Protection	83	82
Implied Consent	58	49
Discretionary Review / Writs	69	51
Probate	29	31
Unlawful Detainer / Eviction	27	28
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,962</b>	<b>1,998</b>

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# Court of Appeals in 2016

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*Court of Appeals  
Chief Judge Edward  
J. Cleary*

The Minnesota Court of Appeals provides citizens with prompt, deliberate review of final decisions of the district courts and some decisions of state agencies and local governments. The decision of the Court of Appeals is the final judicial resolution in more than 95% of cases filed, with review being granted by the Supreme Court in less than five percent of cases.

The Court of Appeals is composed of 19 judges who hear cases in three-judge panels at the Minnesota Judicial Center in St. Paul and at various locations around the state. In 2016, Judge Lucinda Jesson joined the court, filling the vacancy left by the 2015 appointment of Judge Natalie Hudson to the Minnesota Supreme Court. Judge Tracy Smith succeeded Judge John Smith, who retired. And Judge Diane Bratvold replaced Judge Margaret Chutich, who was appointed to the Supreme Court. A number of senior judges also assisted the Court throughout 2016, providing coverage for vacancies and absences.

The Court disposed of approximately 2,000 cases in 2016, filing opinions in almost 1,350 cases, issuing 1,880 orders, hearing oral arguments in 635 cases, and considering another 730 cases at non-oral conferences. Filings in 2016 were up slightly, with noticeable increases in the number of family and implied-consent appeals. Approximately 187 appeals were referred to the Court's Family Law Appellate Mediation Program in 2016. Almost 38% of the cases that are mediated are resolved by agreement of the parties, reducing overall costs and delays for hundreds of families.

In 2016, e-filing became mandatory for all attorneys, court reporters, and state agencies. E-filing remains optional for self-represented litigants. E-filing substantially reduces copying, postage, and courier costs for litigants. Documents relating to pending appeals may be e-filed 24 hours a day, even when the Clerk of the Appellate Court's office is not open. Attorneys and litigants are no longer required to file duplicate copies of appeal papers, motions, and other routine filings. These changes have already saved attorneys and litigants thousands of dollars in copying and mailing costs, making access to justice more affordable. To ensure that judges and court staff have access to needed documents, the Clerk of the Appellate Courts also creates an electronic image of paper filings and makes the images available on a secure internal site. These efforts to move to an electronic environment have substantially reduced the time and money spent by the Court of Appeals in storing and retrieving paper files.

With 19 judges, about 2,000 new filings per year, and strict deadlines for issuing written decisions, the Court of Appeals has always been a very busy place. Because of the dedication of the judges and staff and their commitment to initiatives that enhance efficiency and ensure that every case receives timely consideration and review, the Court of Appeals continues to provide meaningful access to appellate review to thousands of citizens every year.

# Supreme Court

7 members, En Banc panel

*Appeals from:*

Court of Appeals decisions  
 Trial court decisions if Supreme Court decides to bypass  
 the Court of Appeals  
 Tax Court decisions, Workers' Compensation Court of Appeals  
 decisions  
 Review of all first-degree murder convictions

*Original Actions:*

Writs of Habeas Corpus, Mandamus, and Prohibition;  
 Election Disputes; Attorney and Judge Discipline

Chief Justice Lorie S. Gildea Associate Justice 2006 - June 2010 Chief Justice July 2010 - present
Associate Justice G. Barry Anderson 2004 - present
Associate Justice David R. Stras 2010 - present
Associate Justice David L. Lillehaug 2013 - present
Associate Justice Natalie E. Hudson 2015 - present
Associate Justice Margaret H. Chutich 2016 - present
Associate Justice Anne K. McKeig 2016 - present

2016 Supreme Court Case Information		
Direct Appeals		
	Cases Filed	Dispositions
Workers' Compensation	21	11
Civil	16	7
Tax Court	9	13
Attorney/Judge Discipline	52	61
Writs	2	0
First Degree Homicide	17	39
<b>Total Direct Appeals</b>	<b>117</b>	<b>131</b>
Petitions for Further/Accelerated Review (PFR/PAR)		
Filed		648
Review Denied		558
Granted Further/Accelerated Review		89
Other (Remand, dismiss)		8
Opinions		
Affirmed		71
Affirmed in Part		9
Reverse/Remand		22
Other (Discipline, dismiss, other disposition)		22
<b>Total</b>		<b>124</b>

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# Supreme Court in 2016

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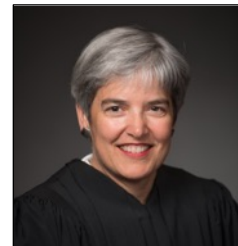


*United States  
District Court  
Judge Wilhelmina  
Wright*

Supreme Court Associate Justice Wilhelmina M. Wright resigned from the state's highest court on February 17, 2016, following her confirmation by the United States Senate as a United States District Court Judge for the District of Minnesota. Justice Wright joined the Minnesota Court of Appeals in September 2002, joined the Supreme Court on September 27, 2012, and was elected as an associate justice in 2014. She also served as a judge for the Ramsey County District Court, from 2000 to 2002. Justice Wright authored more than 600 opinions during her service as an appellate judge for the State of Minnesota. As a Supreme Court justice, she served as the

Court's liaison to the Second and Seventh judicial districts, and as the liaison to several boards and administrative committees, including the General Rules of Practice, the Board of Continuing Legal Education, and the Legal Services Advisory Committee.

On January 10, 2016, Governor Mark Dayton announced the appointment of Court of Appeals Judge Margaret H. Chutich to fill the vacancy left upon the resignation of Justice Wilhelmina M. Wright after her confirmation as a federal district court judge. Justice Chutich joined the court on March 17, 2016.



*Minnesota Supreme  
Court Justice  
Margaret Chutich*

Justice Chutich was appointed to the Minnesota Court of Appeals in 2012. Before joining the appellate courts, Justice Chutich served as the Assistant Dean for the University of Minnesota's Humphrey School of Public Affairs, as Deputy Attorney General of the Law Enforcement Section of the Minnesota Attorney General's Office, and as an Assistant United States Attorney for the District of Minnesota. In announcing her appointment, Governor Dayton said that Justice Chutich has served the State of Minnesota honorably through her service on the Minnesota Court of Appeals and with the State Attorney General's Office.



*Retired Minnesota  
Supreme Court  
Justice Christopher  
Dietzen*

Supreme Court Associate Justice Christopher J. Dietzen retired from the state's highest court on August 31, 2016. Justice Dietzen joined the Minnesota Court of Appeals in December 2004, joined the Supreme Court on February 19, 2008, and was elected as an associate justice in 2010. Justice Dietzen authored more than 125 opinions during his tenure with the Supreme Court, and more than 225 opinions during his service as a Court of Appeals judge. He served as the Supreme Court's liaison to the First and Sixth judicial districts, and as the liaison to several administrative committees, including the Rules of Civil Procedure and the Civil Justice Reform Task Force. Justice Dietzen also served on the Judicial Council and as chair of the Sentencing Guidelines Commission.

On June 28, 2016, Governor Mark Dayton announced the appointment of Hennepin County District Court Judge Anne K. McKeig to fill the vacancy left upon the retirement of Justice Christopher Dietzen. Justice McKeig joined the Court on September 1, 2016.

Justice McKeig was appointed as a judge of the Fourth Judicial District in 2008 and was the presiding judge in Hennepin County Family Court until her appointment to the Minnesota Supreme Court. Before her appointment to the District Court, Justice McKeig served as an Assistant Hennepin County Attorney in the Child Protection Division for over 16 years, where she specialized in Indian Child Welfare cases. In announcing her appointment, Governor Dayton said that Justice McKeig's distinguished career reflected a commitment to ensuring justice for some of Minnesota's most vulnerable people.



*Minnesota  
Supreme Court  
Justice Anne  
McKeig*

### **Regulating the Practice of Law in Minnesota**

In addition to holding oral arguments, disposing of cases at special term, and deciding cases in written opinions, the Supreme Court is responsible for the regulation of the practice of law in Minnesota. Under its auspices, a bar examination is given twice a year to law school graduates, and the Court admits successful applicants to the practice of law at monthly ceremonies. The Court also continually monitors attorneys through yearly registrations, required reporting of continuing education credits, and administration of the lawyer discipline process. The Supreme Court can take disciplinary action, such as suspension or removal, against attorneys or judges who have violated ethical rules.

The Supreme Court has established several boards to help oversee this work:

**The Lawyers Professional Responsibility Board** oversees and administers the attorney discipline system.

**The Client Security Board** administers a fund established by the Minnesota Supreme Court to reimburse clients who suffer loss of money or other property through the dishonest conduct of attorneys.

**The Board of Law Examiners** administers the bar examination and the process to admit attorneys to the practice of law in Minnesota.

**The Board of Legal Certification** accredits organizations that certify lawyers as specialists in certain fields of law.

**The Board of Continuing Legal Education** oversees the administration of the Rules for Continuing Legal Education. The Board also has oversight responsibilities for the **Lawyer Registration Office**, which maintains the database of all Minnesota-licensed lawyers and processes annual registration statements and annual fee payments.

**Demographic Data**

In January 2016, the Lawyer Registration Office began collecting race/ethnicity information in addition to gender data from attorneys during the lawyer registration process.

**Active Attorneys**

Race/Ethnicity	Active Admitted 0 to 10 yrs	Active Admitted 11 to 20 yrs	Active Admitted 21 to 30 yrs	Active Admitted 31 to 40 yrs	Active Admitted 41+ yrs	Active Total	Total Active & Inactive
Asian/Pacific Islander	318	194	61	15	1	589	714
Black/African American	192	128	95	40	12	467	550
Hispanic/Latino	132	72	39	8	2	253	307
Native American/ Alaskan	36	31	29	9	1	106	116
White/Caucasian	6,170	4,757	4,130	3,457	1,499	20,015	23,118
Multiple	143	52	23	19	6	243	279
Choose Not to Answer	1,631	761	583	413	129	3,556	4,032
<b>Totals</b>	<b>8,622</b>	<b>5,995</b>	<b>4,960</b>	<b>3,961</b>	<b>1,650</b>	<b>25,229</b>	<b>29,116</b>

	Active Admitted 0 to 10 yrs	Active Admitted 11 to 20 yrs	Active Admitted 21 to 30 yrs	Active Admitted 31 to 40 yrs	Active Admitted 41+ yrs	Active Totals	Total Active & Inactive
Female	3,633	2,715	1,835	1,035	85	9,312	11,149
Male	4,085	2,974	2,863	2,765	1,516	14,211	16,051
Choose Not to Answer	904	306	262	161	49	1,706	1,916
<b>Total</b>	<b>8,622</b>	<b>5,995</b>	<b>4,960</b>	<b>3,961</b>	<b>1,650</b>	<b>25,229</b>	<b>29,116</b>

**Inactive Attorneys**

Race/Ethnicity	Inactive Admitted 0 to 10 yrs	Inactive Admitted 11 to 20 yrs	Inactive Admitted 21 to 30 yrs	Inactive Admitted 31 to 40 yrs	Inactive Admitted 41+ yrs	Inactive Total	Total Active & Inactive
Asian/Pacific Islander	47	52	21	4	1	125	714
Black/African American	24	25	24	6	4	83	550
Hispanic/Latino	21	18	14	1	0	54	307
Native American/ Alaskan	3	2	5	0	0	10	116
White/Caucasian	579	861	892	600	171	3,103	23,118
Multiple	9	18	5	3	1	36	279
Choose Not to Answer	111	136	139	78	12	476	4,032
<b>Total</b>	<b>794</b>	<b>1,112</b>	<b>1,100</b>	<b>692</b>	<b>189</b>	<b>3,887</b>	<b>29,116</b>

	Inactive Admitted 0 to 10 yrs	Inactive Admitted 11 to 20 yrs	Inactive Admitted 21 to 30 yrs	Inactive Admitted 31 to 40 yrs	Inactive Admitted 41+ yrs	Inactive Totals	Total Active & Inactive
Female	399	606	549	258	25	1,837	11,149
Male	344	443	502	393	158	1,840	16,051
Choose Not to Answer	51	63	49	41	6	210	1,916
<b>Total</b>	<b>794</b>	<b>1,112</b>	<b>1,100</b>	<b>692</b>	<b>189</b>	<b>3,887</b>	<b>29,116</b>



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# Appellate Clerk's Office

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The Office of the Clerk of the Appellate Courts provides docketing, scheduling, and case management services for the Minnesota Supreme Court, the Minnesota Court of Appeals and the Supreme Court Appeals Panels (SCAP). AnnMarie S. O'Neill, Clerk of the Appellate Courts, manages a team of eight staff members who are responsible for maintaining accurate appellate records and for providing customer service and e-filing support to case participants and members of the public.

On July 1, 2016, appellate e-filing became mandatory in all case types for court reporters, attorneys, court-appointed examiners, agency records managers and panels appointed by the appellate courts. Additionally, beginning in 2016, self-represented parties were permitted to e-file in all appellate case types. Appellate stakeholders have embraced the transition from voluntary to mandatory e-filing and frequently provide positive feedback regarding the efficiencies of the E-MACS (e-filing) system and the effectiveness of the robust training materials and videos available on the Judicial Branch website.

Since the launch of the E-MACS pilot project on October 1, 2014, the clerk's office has created 3,511 user accounts. This number is up from 1,464 registered users at the end of 2015.

During 2015, the clerk's office received an average of 875 e-filings per month. That translated to approximately 28% of the total incoming filings being submitted electronically via the E-MACS system on a voluntary basis. During 2016, the average number of monthly e-filings rose to 1,320 which represented approximately 60% of the total incoming filings submitted electronically. The number of monthly e-filed documents rose significantly during the second half of the year, after the July 1, 2016, mandatory e-filing requirements took effect.

In April 2016, the Judicial Branch responded to the increasing number of SCAP petitions filed each year by adding a third three-judge panel to conduct SCAP hearings. SCAP hearings are held when a civilly committed patient petitions for release from a state security hospital or requests a less restrictive placement. District court judges from the First, Second, and Tenth judicial districts serve as chief judges of these panels. The addition of the third panel has reduced the amount of time between when a patient's petition is filed and the first available hearing date. Clerk's office personnel are responsible for docketing all SCAP filings, conducting pre-hearing conferences, assigning three-judge panels, and scheduling the hearings.



In December 2016, clerk's office employees assisted with moving back to the newly renovated Supreme Court Capitol Courtroom and Historic Chief Justice Chambers. Clerk's staff also participated in mock hearings to test new audio and visual equipment in the Courtroom prior to the first official oral arguments held at the Capitol on January 3, 2017.

*The Supreme Court Courtroom in the Minnesota State Capitol*

# State Court Administration

Working under the direction of the Judicial Council, the State Court Administrator's Office (SCAO) provides leadership and direction for the effective operations of the Minnesota Judicial Branch, as well as central administrative infrastructure services.

The State Court Administrator's Office is organized into an Executive Office and six divisions:

**Court Services** provides leadership and technical assistance to courts on a wide variety of topics, including: court administrative procedure, the Court Interpreter Program, expedited child support, the Children's Justice Initiative, treatment courts, psychological services, jury management, self-represented litigant services, the Minnesota Court Payment Center, and research and evaluation.

**Information Technology** provides technical services including: development of applications, procurement and management of purchased software, network services such as e-mail and file sharing, web development and hosting, integrations with the Courts' business partners, and installation and maintenance of personal computers.

**Finance** manages payroll, contracts, reimbursements, budget requests, receipts, and grants, and provides financial training and guidance to Judicial Branch leadership and staff.

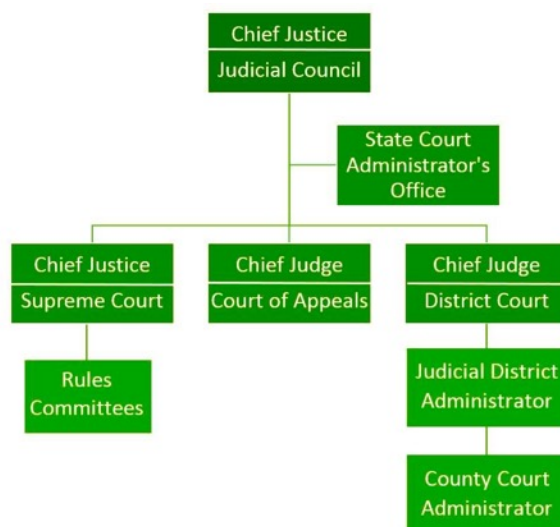
**Human Resources and Development** provides HR services and oversees all education and development efforts for judges, management, and employees.

**Legal Counsel** provides research, legal advice, and training for judges, court managers, and court staff.

**Court Information Office** is the communications, public affairs, and media relations division of the Minnesota Judicial Branch.

Through the work of these divisions, the State Court Administrator plans for statewide Judicial Branch needs, develops and promotes statewide administrative practices and procedures, oversees the operation of statewide court programs and strategic initiatives, and serves as a liaison with other branches of government.

**Minnesota Judicial Branch  
Organizational Chart**



# State Law Library

The Minnesota State Law Library provides legal information to the courts, attorneys, self-represented litigants, and the general public on a statewide basis. The Library supports the legal research needs of the appellate and district courts, and serves as the archive for the Minnesota Judicial Branch.

The Library is open to everyone, and assists attorneys and the public in finding legal materials via e-mail, phone, live chat, and in person. In 2016, Library staff answered more than 6,500 questions. Additionally, almost 3,000 people visited the Library and utilized its resources without requiring Library staff assistance.

The Library's collection includes state and federal laws, legal treatises, practice materials, and self-help materials. In addition, patrons can use public computers, current awareness materials, and online legal research resources such as Westlaw. The State Law Library also provides access to public trial court and appellate court documents from its public terminals.

The State Law Library has two free clinics for people seeking advice on appeals, one of which is a clinic for people seeking to appeal a denial of unemployment benefits to the Court of Appeals. In 2016, the clinic assisted 30 people with their unemployment appeals. In January 2016, the Library opened an Appeals Self-Help Clinic for most other types of appeals. During the year, the attorney volunteers met with 96 people.



*More information about the Minnesota State Law Library is available at:*  
[www.mn.gov/law-library/](http://www.mn.gov/law-library/).



*The Minnesota State Law Library is located on the ground floor of the Minnesota Judicial Center in St. Paul.*

Through a collaboration with the Minnesota Department of Corrections, the State Law Library also provides legal resources to inmates of the state prisons. The Law Library Service to Prisoners librarians meet monthly with inmates at each of the eight primary correctional facilities in Minnesota. Most inmate requests are received and answered by mail, using the resources of the State Law Library. In 2016, the Library answered more than 40,000 requests. The program expenses are funded by inmate canteen and phone services, and are not paid for by Minnesota taxpayers.

In addition, the State Law Library provides assistance and advice to county law libraries located throughout the state, provides training to county law library staff, and regularly answers questions about collection development, budget issues, and staffing.

# Minnesota Judicial Council

As of December 31, 2016

Hon. Lorie S. Gildea (Chair) <i>Chief Justice, Supreme Court</i>	Hon. John H. Scherer <i>Chief Judge, Seventh District</i>
Hon. Shari R. Schluchter (Vice-Chair) <i>Judge, Ninth District</i>	Hon. Michael J. Thompson <i>Chief Judge, Eighth District</i>
Hon. G. Barry Anderson <i>Associate Justice, Supreme Court</i>	Hon. Paul T. Benshoof <i>Chief Judge, Ninth District</i>
Hon. Edward J. Cleary <i>Chief Judge, Court of Appeals</i>	Hon. Douglas B. Meslow <i>Chief Judge, Tenth District</i>
Hon. Terrence E. Conkel <i>Chief Judge, First District</i>	Hon. Krista K. Martin <i>Judge, Tenth District</i>
Hon. Thomas W. Pugh <i>Judge, First District</i>	Jeffrey G. Shorba <i>State Court Administrator</i>
Hon. John H. Guthmann <i>Chief Judge, Second District</i>	Dawn Torgerson <i>Deputy State Court Administrator</i>
Hon. Jeffrey D. Thompson <i>Chief Judge, Third District</i>	Kate Fogarty <i>District Administrator, Fourth District</i>
Hon. Ivy S. Bernhardson <i>Chief Judge, Fourth District</i>	Marieta Johnson <i>District Administrator, Sixth District</i>
Hon. Jeannice Reding <i>Judge, Fourth District</i>	Paul Maatz <i>District Administrator, Ninth District</i>
Hon. Bradley C. Walker <i>Chief Judge, Fifth District</i>	Karen Messner <i>Court Administrator, Sibley and McCleod Counties</i>
Hon. Sally L. Tarnowski <i>Chief Judge, Sixth District</i>	Hon. Kevin Mark <i>MDJA President, First District</i>
Hon. James B. Florey <i>Judge, Sixth District</i>	

# Minnesota Judicial District Chief Judges

As of December 31, 2016



Hon. Paul T. Benshoof  
9th Judicial District



Hon. Sally L. Tarnowski  
6th Judicial District



Hon. Douglas B. Meslow  
10th Judicial District



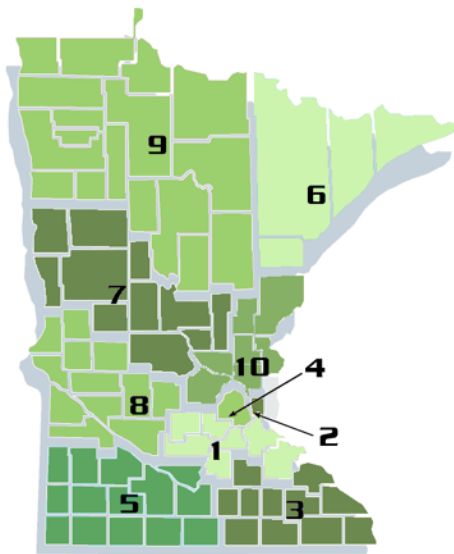
Hon. John H. Scherer  
7th Judicial District



Hon. John H. Guthmann  
2nd Judicial District



Hon. Michael J. Thompson  
8th Judicial District



Hon. Ivy S. Bernhardson  
4th Judicial District



Hon. Bradley C. Walker  
5th Judicial District



Hon. Terrence E. Conkel  
1st Judicial District



Hon. Jeffrey D. Thompson  
3rd Judicial District



**2016 Annual Report to the Community**  
**Produced by the State Court Administrator's Office**  
**March 2017**