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# Report to the Community

The 2017 Annual Report of the 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 2017 Annual Report to the Community. This report is designed to give you an in-depth look at the work we have undertaken in the past year to improve the work of our courts and expand access to justice in our state.

Minnesota's Constitution promises every person in our state the right "to obtain justice freely...promptly and without delay." Every day, the judges and staff of the Minnesota Judicial Branch strive to uphold that promise while working to ensure the public's trust and confidence in our courts.

The pages that follow will detail the many ways the Judicial Branch worked in 2017 to ensure fair and timely access to justice, increase the efficiency and effectiveness of court operations, and improve outcomes for those who enter our justice system. This includes:

- Building on our successful transition to electronic court records by embracing smart reengineering of our court processes;
- Expanding our nation-leading efforts to provide help and support to people who choose to represent themselves in court proceedings;
- Enhancing the security of our courthouses, to ensure Minnesotans can feel safe when accessing their justice system; and
- Launching livestreaming of the Supreme Court's oral arguments, to give more Minnesotans the opportunity to see the work of Minnesota's highest court.

I am proud of the many achievements our employees and judges have reached in the past year. As we head into a new year, we 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 serves as staff to the Judicial Council. The State Court Administrator's Office 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 293 district court judges, 23 referees, and 28 child support magistrates.

There are 106 Judicial Branch court locations across Minnesota.

<b>Judicial Branch FY2018 Budget</b>	
<b>District (Trial) Courts</b>	\$294,978,000
<b>Court of Appeals</b>	\$12,470,000
<b>Supreme Court/State Court Administration/State Law Library</b>	\$38,011,000
<b>Total</b>	\$345,459,000

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## Letter from the State Court Administrator

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After spending more than 150 years working with paper records, Minnesota has now transitioned to an all-electronic case record. Over the past several years, our courts and our customers have seen the immediate benefits of this transition: electronic filing of court documents from your home or office, instant access to statewide court records from more than 100 court locations across the state, and better information-sharing and collaboration between state and local government organizations. By embracing technology, the Minnesota Judicial Branch has made our entire justice system work better, smarter, and faster.

Thanks to the speed and versatility of working with an electronic case record, our courts are now able to explore new ways of doing the behind the scenes case processing work that ensures cases are heard and files are updated as efficiently as possible.

We can shift records – and the work associated with reviewing and processing those records – across county and judicial district lines, opening up many new opportunities for reengineering.

Later in this report, you will see greater detail on how this reengineering is benefitting our courts and improving our service to the public by making our court operations more consistent across county lines, allowing us to keep service windows in small, rural courthouses open to the public, and improving the efficiency of case processing.

Of course, that's just one part of the important and exciting work State Court Administration was involved in last year. This annual report highlights many of the important projects that State Court Administration helped advance in 2017, from securing new funding to support the state's successful treatment court programs and the security of our state's courthouses, to launching an enhanced cyber security program to better protect the electronic tools and data maintained by our courts. 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.

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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# Reengineering Minnesota's Courts

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In 2012, the Minnesota Judicial Branch launched what would become known as the largest transformation in the 150-year history of the state's court system. Through the eCourtMN initiative, Minnesota transitioned from paper-based court files towards an all-electronic case record, including eFiling, expanded access to court records, and electronic information-sharing within the justice system.

With the infrastructure of eCourtMN largely in place, in 2017, the Minnesota Judicial Branch began exploring new ways to leverage the technologies of eCourtMN to

enhance its service to the public. Having removed the limitations of working with paper-based court records, the Judicial Branch has been able to explore new ways of doing business, reengineering old business practices to make court services faster and more convenient. These reengineering efforts – many of which are highlighted below – have been focused on offering court users high-quality, consistent, and convenient service, no matter which courthouse in the state they visit.

## **Minnesota Judicial Branch Reengineering Vision**

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**High-quality, consistent, and convenient court administration services anywhere in the state.**

### ***Ensuring Statewide Court Services***

The Minnesota Judicial Branch is charged with ensuring access to justice for all Minnesotans, and maintains court operations in 106 locations across the state – more locations than any other part of state government. But the scope of work of Minnesota's courts varies considerably from county to county.

Nearly 500,000 cases were filed in Hennepin County District Court in 2017, and those cases were heard by 62 judges, 16 referees, and five child support magistrates, and processed by hundreds of staff. By contrast, in many rural counties court is in session once or twice per week, and judges may hear cases in several different counties in their district in a week. In early 2017, 17 county courthouses had fewer than two full-time employees processing case filings and staffing the customer service windows.

As part of the Judicial Branch's reengineering efforts, in 2017 the Minnesota Judicial Council approved a plan that relies on flexibility provided by the electronic case record to shift case processing work that used to be done in 87 counties to the state's lowest-volume courthouses. Through this effort, each courthouse in the state now has enough case processing work to ensure the presence of two full-time staff, meaning public service windows will remain open and available five days a week in even the most rural county courthouses.



Highlights of the plan include:

- Moving the Minnesota Judicial Branch Central Appeals Unit (CAU) from the Fourth Judicial District (Hennepin County) to the district courts in Lincoln and Pipestone counties. The CAU serves as a liaison between the state's 87 trial courts and two appellate courts, preparing a comprehensive file of relevant district court documents and exhibits to send to the Court of Appeals or the Minnesota Supreme Court when a case is appealed.
- Work in underway to centralize the processing of expedited child support orders from all 87 district courts among a group of specialized staff working in Minnesota's Eighth Judicial District in western Minnesota.
- Staff in the Ninth Judicial District in northwest Minnesota have assumed the work related to jury qualification and summoning for all 87 district courts.



*Court staff working in the Lincoln County Courthouse (left) in Ivanhoe, MN, and the Pipestone County Courthouse (right) in Pipestone, MN, are now responsible for preparing the case files that are sent to the Minnesota Court of Appeals and Supreme Court when a district court case from anywhere in the state is appealed.*

### ***Statewide Collaboration and Staff Specialization***

The eCourtMN initiative has also made it easier for Minnesota's 10 judicial districts and 87 district courts to share work across boundaries.

For example, the Sixth Judicial District has centralized many of the functions that used to be done in six different courthouses across four counties in the Arrowhead region. The District now features a centralized copy center, specialized staff handling the acceptance of eFiled documents, and specialized staff processing all probate and minor civil case work for the District. The Sixth District has even taken on the work of processing default judgment casework from Hennepin County, a great step forward in cross-district collaboration.

All 10 of Minnesota's judicial districts are engaging in similar efforts to increase efficiency by centralizing and regionalizing case processing work that used to be spread across multiple counties. This includes a statewide effort to specialize the work of reviewing eFiled documents as they are received by the court and ensuring they are correctly classified so that public information is made available to the public, and private and sensitive data is kept confidential. By shifting this statewide work to specialized staff experts, the Judicial Branch is working to speed up the process of reviewing and accepting eFiled documents for court users, while ensuring the proper safeguards are in place to protect Minnesotans' private information.

### *Increasing the Statewide Consistency of Court Operations*

For most of Minnesota history, the state's trial courts were county-funded and county-operated, and court users working between different court locations could experience significant differences in service between courthouses.

By the mid-2000s, Minnesota had transitioned to a state-funded, unified trial court system. While this transition reduced some of the variance between district courts, some local practices and customs remained.

As a statewide entity serving all 87 counties, the Minnesota Judicial Branch recognizes that bringing greater consistency to statewide court operations is critical to improving the customer experience for court users. As part of the post-eCourt reengineering work, leaders from all 10 judicial districts in Minnesota agreed to work collaboratively on an initiative to standardize many case processing procedures between all 87 district courts in the state. Ultimately, this effort should significantly reduce the differences court users may experience when working in different courthouses.

### *Looking Ahead*

The work that was undertaken in 2017 is just the first step of the reengineering the Judicial Branch aims to accomplish in the post-eCourtMN world. The Judicial Branch has established a statewide steering committee of judges and court staff charged with exploring new opportunities for smart reengineering of court operations, all with the goal of making Minnesota's court system consistent, convenient, and focused on meeting the needs of court users across the state.

#### **“Reengineering is the natural extension of eCourtMN.**

Through reengineering, we are taking the new technologies of eCourtMN, and utilizing them to make our courts more responsive to the needs of our customers.

We are strengthening our court system by making them more cohesive and more unified.

**By taking a fresh look at how we do our work, we are implementing new efficiencies that will not only enhance our service to the public, but will also make our courts more resilient to the challenges and changes that lie ahead.”**

*State Court Administrator Jeff Shorba*



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# Minnesota Judicial Branch Strategic Plan:

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

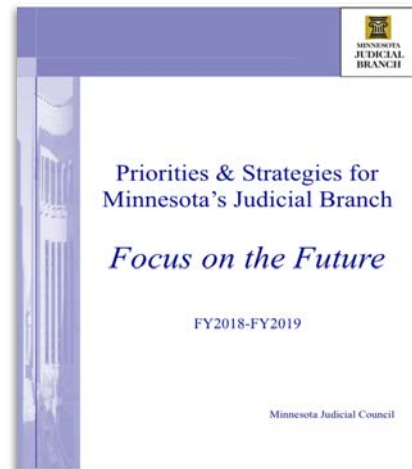
- ▶ Minnesota ranks as one of the highest-scoring states in the nation on the Justice Index, an independent examination of the performance of state-based justice systems in ensuring access to justice.
- ▶ One of the nation's leading experts in court management selected the Minnesota Judicial Council – 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 FY2018-19 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 FY2018-19 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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## Minnesota Courts Thrive in the Age of eCourtMN

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.

In July 2016, the primary goal of eCourtMN was achieved, as electronic filing and electronic service of court documents became standard in every district court in the state, as well as in the state's two appellate courts. This past year, 2017, marked the first full year Minnesota's court system operated under this new eCourtMN environment. Below is a look at how the new technologies and processes of eCourtMN have transformed Minnesota's justice system.

## eCourtMN By The Numbers

**3.4 million**

District court users eFiled 3.4 million documents in 2017, an average of 280,000 documents every month. By the end of 2017, there were 58,000 registered eFilers in Minnesota.

**29,000**

Appellate court users eFiled 29,000 documents with the Minnesota Court of Appeals and the Supreme Court in 2017.

**570**

More than 570 government agencies across the state are using Minnesota Government Access, an online portal providing secure, real-time access to appropriate court records and documents for law enforcement, prosecutors, public defenders, and other partners.

**7 million**

The Minnesota Judicial Branch maintains extensive data integrations with a variety of government agencies across the state, allowing for the instantaneous transfer of court information throughout Minnesota's justice system, and resulting in more than 7 million data exchanges every month.

## Minnesota Expands Nation-Leading 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. According to the “Justice Index,” a tool developed by the National Center for Access to Justice, Minnesota ranks among the top states in the nation in providing access to justice for those who cannot afford an attorney, those with disabilities, and those with limited-English proficiency.

In 2017, Minnesota continued offering a wide array of services to people representing themselves in court proceedings, and neared completion on two new initiatives aimed at making it easier for SRLs to complete and file court forms.

### *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, 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 nearly 23,000 phone calls from SRLs in 2017.
- E-mail: The statewide Self Help Center answered nearly 4,000 e-mails from SRLs in 2017.

### *Fillable Smart Court Forms Set to Launch*

In 2017, Judicial Branch staff began converting more than 500 court forms currently available on the Judicial Branch website into fillable smart forms. Fillable smart forms have built-in intelligence that will assist users as they fill out a form online, making it faster and easier for SRLs to create and file necessary forms. It is anticipated that several categories of fillable smart forms will be available on the Judicial Branch website in the first half of 2018.

### *“Guide & File” Tool Developed*

Guide & File is an online tool that uses web-based “interviews” to help people create court forms. Rather than filling in fields on a court form, the interview tool asks the user simple questions, and then uses the answers to those questions to produce a court form that can be printed and may be filed electronically with the court.

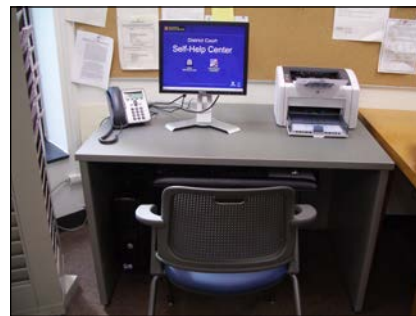
During 2017, the Judicial Branch developed and tested four Guide & File interviews for:

- Conciliation court case initiation;
- Eviction complaint (used by landlords); and
- Affidavit of service forms and initiating documents for dissolution with children (conciliation court, eviction).

It is anticipated that these interviews will be released on the Judicial Branch website in the first half of 2018. Additional Guide & File interviews will be developed in 2018.

### ***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.



*A self-help workstation in the Wright County Courthouse.*

### ***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.



*The Anoka County District Court Self-Help Center.*

#### ***Hennepin County***

In 2017, Hennepin County walk-in self-help centers located at the Government Center and Family Justice Center provided assistance to 39,318 SRLs. Each walk-in center hosts daily on-site brief legal advice clinics.

#### ***Ramsey County***

The Ramsey County Family Court walk-in Self-Help Center provided assistance to 10,973 SRLs in 2017. In addition, the Ramsey County Family Court Legal Advice Clinic, which is held three afternoons per week and is staffed by volunteer attorneys, assisted 590 customers in 2017. The Court's Motion to Modify Child Support Clinic, which is held twice per month

and is staffed by Self-Help Center employees, assisted 48 customers with 57 matters in 2017.

### *Tenth Judicial District*

Minnesota's Tenth Judicial District offers a Self-Help Center with weekly walk-in service hours at the courthouses located in Anoka, Chisago, Isanti, Kanabec, Pine, Sherburne, Washington, and Wright counties. In 2017, the Tenth District Self-Help Center provided SRLs with assistance on 5,849 matters, a 33 percent increase from 2016.

### *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 SRLs 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.



*Minnesota State Law Library desks.*

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 2017, the Clinic assisted 143 people. Twenty-two of those sessions were done over the phone with individuals who were not in the metro area. Ninety-five 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 103 unemployment appeals filed last year, and the clinic assisted 37 people in 2017. 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.

## Grant Program Funds \$1 Million in Courthouse Security Improvements

In June 2017, Minnesota Supreme Court Chief Justice Lorie S. Gildea announced the award of \$1 million in grants through the Safe and Secure Courthouse Initiative. The grants were awarded to 57 counties to fund a variety of safety and security improvements in courthouses across Minnesota, including:

- Helping counties conduct professional security assessments of their facilities;
- Providing security training to courthouse officials and staff;
- Installing bullet-resistant glass at public service counters;
- Replacing aging security equipment;
- Implementing door locks, cameras, key card readers, and duress alarms; and
- Installing or upgrading security screening stations at courthouse entrances.

The Safe and Secure Courthouse Initiative was established by Chief Justice Gildea and funded by a \$1 million appropriation from the Minnesota Legislature in 2016. The grant program was based on a legislative proposal brought forward by the Courthouse Security Workgroup, a statewide coalition of county and justice system partners convened by Chief Justice Gildea in 2014. The Workgroup included representatives from the Minnesota Judicial Branch, the Association of Minnesota Counties, the Minnesota Sheriffs' Association, the Minnesota County Attorneys Association, the Minnesota Board of Public Defense, and the Minnesota Inter-County Association.

Following passage of legislative funding for the program, Chief Justice Gildea formed an Advisory Panel to oversee the grant application and award process. Grant applications were accepted between January 2017 and March 2017. In total, the Advisory Panel received grant requests from 59 counties, totaling more than \$3.5 million.

The following is a list of counties receiving grants through the Safe and Secure Courthouse Initiative:

Aitkin	Cottonwood	Kandiyohi	Murray	Steele
Anoka	Dakota	Koochiching	Nicollet	Stevens
Becker	Dodge	Lake	Nobles	Swift
Beltrami	Fillmore	Lake of the	Norman	Todd
Benton	Freeborn	Woods	Otter Tail	Traverse
Big Stone	Grant	Lincoln	Pine	Waseca
Brown	Hennepin	Lyon	Pope	Washington
Carver	Hubbard	Martin	Ramsey	Wilkin
Cass	Isanti	McLeod	Redwood	Winona
Chisago	Itasca	Meeker	Rice	Yellow Medi-
Clay	Jackson	Mille Lacs	Sherburne	cine
Cook	Kanabec	Mower	Sibley	



## Minnesota Receives Justice for All Grant

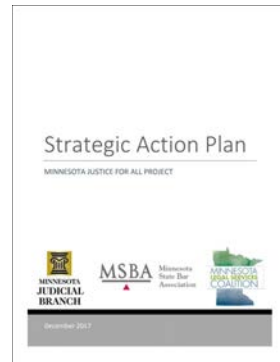
Minnesota was one of seven states to receive a grant through the National Center for State Courts (NCSC) Justice for All Advisory Committee in 2017 to create a strategic plan for increasing access to effective assistance for essential civil legal needs. This required close coordination among the Minnesota Judicial Branch, civil legal aid, and the private bar as the leads, as well as input and review from more than 60 stakeholder groups from across the state.

A Minnesota Justice for All Steering Committee was formed and led the effort, chaired by Stearns County Judge Sarah Hennesy. Based on the assessment of services currently available and the input from community partners, there were five areas that the Steering Committee identified as high priorities for improving access to the justice system.

1. Simplify family law court processes to both maximize efficiency and resources within the Minnesota Judicial Branch and improve litigant usability, trust, and confidence in the civil justice system.
2. Increase the number of attorneys providing discrete task (also referred to as “limited scope” or “unbundled”) representation to low- and middle-income people with civil legal needs through a robust and effective referral system.
3. Create a “no wrong door” system through which people with civil legal needs can access legal information, self-help resources, and legal providers, placing the burden on the system to provide the best referral at the outset.
4. Integrate legal information, resources, and referrals into community settings through co-located services, community collaboration, and prevention efforts that build trust and decrease the number of civil court cases, with a specific focus on the prevention of housing evictions across Minnesota.
5. Increase communication across existing governance structures to implement the Justice for All projects and create a new governance committee.

In 2018, the Minnesota Judicial Branch will be applying for additional implementation grant funds to take steps to achieve the goals outlined above. Working together, the courts, bar associations, and civil legal aid programs are increasing the civil legal assistance available to all Minnesotans.

Justice For All aims to support efforts by the states to include all relevant stakeholders in the civil justice community in a partnership to better understand, adopt, and move toward meaningful access to justice for all.



*The Minnesota Justice for All Strategic Action Plan is available on the [Minnesota Judicial Branch website](#).*

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# Strategic Goal #2 – Effective Results

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## **Accolades, New Funding Awarded to Minnesota Treatment Courts in 2017**

Drug courts, DWI courts, veterans courts, and other forms of treatment courts have become a core tool in Minnesota's battle against drug addiction and crime. These proven tools have been shown to reduce recidivism, save costs in the justice system, and produce better outcomes for offenders struggling with addiction or mental health issues. With one new treatment court opening in Minnesota in 2017 – the Roseau County Adult Treatment Court – the state now has 60 operational treatment courts serving 59 of the state's 87 counties.

While Minnesota has seen a significant increase in the number of treatment court programs operating across the state in recent years, many of these programs were founded on short-term grants or with other uncertain funding streams.

During the 2017 Legislative Session, the Minnesota Judicial Branch asked the Governor and Legislature to support the continued success of Minnesota's treatment courts, ultimately securing nearly \$1.7 million per year in new state funding for these existing 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).

### ***Duluth DWI Court Becomes National Model***

In May, the National Center for DWI Courts (NCDC) and the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration named the South St. Louis County DWI Court in Duluth as one of four national Academy Courts in the United States. As an NCDC Academy Court, the South St. Louis County DWI Court now helps develop, identify, and test national best practices for DWI courts, provide technical assistance, and hosts jurisdictions interested in starting a DWI court.

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The Court was selected from more than 700 DWI courts nationwide, and will serve a term of three years. The NCDCC officially designated the program as an Academy Court during a special ceremony at the St. Louis County Courthouse in Duluth on May 5.



*Learn more about about how the South St. Louis County DWI Court in Duluth is serving as a national model at [www.dwicourts.org](http://www.dwicourts.org).*

### ***Other Drug Court Awards and Anniversaries***

- On May 25, the Otter Tail County DWI Treatment Court was awarded the Excellence in Corrections Award at the Minnesota Association of County Probation Officers' 60th Annual State Conference.
- More than 60 people gathered at Diamond Point Park in Bemidji on August 7 to celebrate the 10-year anniversary of the Beltrami County DWI Court.
- The Olmsted County Drug Court celebrated its first anniversary during a public celebration at the Olmsted County Government Center in Rochester on November 30.
- On December 7, the Humphrey School of Public Affairs at the University of Minnesota named the Itasca County Wellness Court - a joint effort of Itasca County, Minnesota's Ninth Judicial District, and the Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe – one of 25 recipients of the 2017 Local Government Innovation Award.
- Anoka County's Drug Court and Veterans' Court celebrated their one-year anniversaries in December, and Wright County's Drug Court completed its first year in November.

### **Early Case Management/Early Neutral Evaluation Program Enhanced**

In 2017, the state Early Case Management (ECM)/Early Neutral Evaluation (ENE) Program implemented some significant enhancements. In July, supervision of the Program Manager's position was transferred from the Tenth Judicial District in Ramsey, MN, to State Court Administration in St. Paul. This change provides the Program with greater access to state-level resources and support. In October, the Program launched a new Provider Availability and Scheduling System (PASS) for use statewide, which Goodhue County District Court was the first to use as it launched its new local ECM/ENE program.

The ECM approach to family law cases uses aggressive, early judicial intervention to encourage parties to focus on resolving and narrowing the contested issues that are barriers to settlement. ENE strives to move families through court efficiently and inexpensively by working with them early on to reach agreements that will foster the best interests of their families.

Working with the State Family ECM/ENE Committee, the ECM/ENE Program Manager provides technical assistance and support to local courts with existing ECM/ENE programs and those wanting to start a program. The Program Manager also develops consistent business practices for use across all programs to address outside stakeholder confusion over program variations. The goal is to preserve programs' autonomy while increasing the simplicity and uniformity of practice for litigants, providers, and attorneys across district and/or county lines.

In addition, the implementation of PASS is revolutionizing the administration of ECM/ENE programs across the state by incorporating several systems for managing ENE provider rosters, roster applications, and verification of provider qualifications and availability, into one system that also allows for in-courtroom scheduling of ENE sessions.

### **Judicial Branch Working to Improve Pretrial Release Process**

Over the past few years, the Minnesota Judicial Branch has been working closely with state and local justice partners and other stakeholders to explore improvements to the process and tools judges use when making pretrial release decisions. Pretrial release decisions include determinations by judges as to whether individuals arrested and detained are released before trial on their own recognizance, on bail or bond, and with conditions.

Two statewide workgroups spent considerable time studying the framework for pretrial release decisions in Minnesota and nationally, including legal issues, research in the field, pretrial services resources, and other considerations. In 2016, the Minnesota Judicial Council approved recommendations of the first workgroup, including a requirement that each county use an evidence-based pretrial risk assessment tool that has been tested and validated by research science experts. A second workgroup with state and local justice partners recommended a pretrial risk assessment tool for statewide use. As a result, 82 counties in the state will soon use a standard pretrial risk assessment tool approved by the Minnesota Judicial Council. Training on the tool's purpose, scoring, and validation process will also be available as part of the tool implementation. The other five counties in the state will independently validate their customized risk assessment tool.

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# Strategic Goal #3 – Public Trust

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## Advisory Committee Submits “Cameras in the Courtroom” Pilot Report

In an August 12, 2015, order, the Minnesota Supreme Court amended Rule 4 of the General Rules of Practice to authorize a pilot project that permitted, without the consent of the parties, limited audio and video coverage in certain criminal court proceedings. The amendment took effect on November 10, 2015.



As directed by the Supreme Court in its order, the Advisory Committee on Rules of Criminal Procedure worked with the State Court Administrator's Office (SCAO) to monitor the pilot and, on December 20, 2017, submitted a report to the Court that summarizes the information collected, the issues the Committee discussed, and the Committee's recommendations regarding the pilot and Rule 4 of the General Rules of Practice.

Coverage data and survey responses from November 10, 2015, through May 2017, during the pilot were collected and analyzed by the Committee for its report. During the 18-month data-collection period, there were 135 media coverage requests in 79 different cases. Coverage was granted and occurred in 49 cases during the data-collection period, and four pending coverage requests were granted after the end of the data-collection period. In total, coverage was granted in 53 cases.

As the Supreme Court considers the Advisory Committee report, the conditions of the pilot project remain in effect. The Supreme Court will accept public comments on the Advisory Committee report through March 26, 2018, and has scheduled a public hearing on the report for April 25, 2018.

## Law Day Events Give Public Firsthand Look at Minnesota's Justice System

For more than 50 years, the United States has recognized May 1 as Law Day, a national day to celebrate how law and the legal process have contributed to the freedoms that all Americans share. For Law Day 2017, the American Bar Association selected the theme of “The 14th Amendment: Transforming American Democracy,” which explores how the citizenship, due process, and equal protection clauses of the 14th Amendment to the United States Constitution advanced the rights of all Americans.





*Chief Justice Lorie Gildea speaks with visitors at the Stearns County Open Courthouse event.*

In honor of Law Day, courts across Minnesota partnered with local justice system partners to sponsor Law Day events for the public and students. These events were designed to showcase the work of Minnesota's courts, and educate the public about the work of judges, attorneys, law enforcement, and citizens in administering the state's justice system.

In St. Cloud, the public was invited to visit the Stearns County Courthouse as part of an "Open Courthouse" event on April 28. The event featured special appearances by Minnesota Supreme Court Chief Justice Lorie S. Gildea and Associate Justice Margaret H. Chutich, along with guided courthouse tours, a justice system information fair, and informational displays about Stearns County history and the 14th Amendment.

Anoka County also celebrated Law Day on April 28, with an event featuring free legal advice clinics, an information fair, and guided tours of the Anoka County Courthouse and Government Center in downtown Anoka.

In Buffalo, local justice system partners offered free legal advice clinics and presentations on emerging criminal justice issues for members of the public at the Wright County Government Center on May 1.

### **Dakota County Marks Constitution Day with "Open Courthouse" Event**

On Friday, September 15, the Dakota County Judicial Center in Hastings opened its doors to the public as part of a Constitution Day "Open Courthouse" event.

During the successful event, nearly 250 visitors took behind-the-scenes tours of the courthouse, heard presentations from judges and local justice system officials, received free legal assistance through the Mobile Law Network, and attended an information fair designed to highlight justice system programs and services available in the community.

The event began with a welcoming presentation featuring local judges, county commissioners, and two justices from the Minnesota Supreme Court.



*Supreme Court Chief Justice Lorie Gildea, Justice Margaret Church, First Judicial District Chief Judge Kathryn Messerich, Asst. Chief Judge David Knutson, and Dakota County Commissioners.*



## Supreme Court Visits Wayzata, Alexandria High Schools



*The Minnesota Supreme Court convenes at Wayzata High School.*

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.

In May 2017, the Supreme Court heard oral arguments at Wayzata High School in Plymouth in front of more than 1,000 students. In October 2017, the Supreme Court traveled to Alexandria to hold their annual community dinner and hear



*The Supreme Court with student guides from Alexandria Area High School.*

o r a l  
arguments  
at Alexandria Area High School.



The dinner was attended by nearly 200 community members, and more than 900 students viewed the oral arguments in the High School auditorium.

## 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 26 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).

The statewide CEJ works closely with equal justice committees that have been established in each of Minnesota's 10 judicial districts. These committees engage in a variety of activities aimed at engaging community members and local organizations, and learning how the community views the fairness of Minnesota's court system.

In an effort to connect judges and court staff with the people in their local communities, and to give the public an opportunity to share their experiences and input with the court, the equal justice committees routinely hold community dialogue sessions. In 2017, there were seven community dialogue sessions held across Minnesota, including two events in Apple Valley (First Judicial District), and events in Fridley (Tenth Judicial District), Mahanomen (Ninth Judicial District), St. Paul (Second Judicial District), Willmar (Eighth Judicial District), and Worthington (Fifth Judicial District). Several hundred Minnesotans attended the events across the state.

### **Judges, Justices Participate in 15th Annual Court Cookout at Dorothy Day Center in St. Paul**

Judges of 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 May 26, 2017. 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 8,000 meals to those in need in the 15 years of this event.



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

## Supreme Court Returns to Historic State Capitol Chambers

On January 3, 2017, the Minnesota Supreme Court convened in the Minnesota State Capitol for the first time in nearly three years, following the completion of the historic renovation of the state's century-old Capitol building. The January 3 oral arguments were also the first official government proceedings held in the State Capitol since May 2016, when the building was closed to the public to allow for completion of the renovation.

The Supreme Court has heard oral arguments in the State Capitol since the building opened in 1903. During the renovation, the Court heard oral arguments almost exclusively in the Minnesota Judicial Center (with the exception of special events at Minnesota law schools and high schools). With the reopening of the State Capitol, the Supreme Court returns to alternating between hearing oral arguments in the State Capitol and the Judicial Center.



To celebrate the reopening of the historic Capitol Courtroom, the Minnesota Supreme Court and Minnesota Judicial Council hosted a “Grand Reopening” open house for state legislators and executive branch officials in February 2017. The event gave legislators the opportunity to take a behind-the-scenes tour of the

Courtroom, the robing room used by justices before and after oral arguments, the conference room where the Supreme Court decides cases, and the historic Chief Justice's Capitol chambers. Members of the Supreme Court and the Minnesota Judicial Council spoke with legislators about the work of the courts and Minnesota's justice system.





## Capitol Grand Reopening Celebration

Thousands of Minnesotans traveled to St. Paul in August 2017 to take part in the Minnesota State Capitol Grand Opening Celebration. Visitors to the event had the opportunity to learn about Minnesota's court system from members of the Minnesota Supreme Court, and judges and court staff from across the state.

As part of the three-day event, held August 11-13, current and former members of the Minnesota Supreme Court, along with members of the Minnesota Supreme Court Historical Society, greeted Capitol tour groups as they visited the renovated Supreme Court Capitol Courtroom. In the Courtroom, visitors learned about the state's highest court and how the Capitol renovations enhanced access to the historic Courtroom.



*Minnesota Supreme Court Justice David Lillehaug speaks to visitors in the newly renovated historic courtroom.*



*The Minnesota Judicial Branch information booth at the Capitol Grand Reopening celebration.*

In addition, judges and court staff from across Minnesota greeted Minnesotans at the Minnesota Judicial Branch information booth, which was part of an information fair. At the booth, judges and staff from the Court of Appeals and Minnesota's district courts were on hand to answer questions about the state's justice system, and share materials about Minnesota's courts and self-help legal resources available to Minnesotans.

As a member of the Minnesota State Capitol Preservation Commission, Minnesota Supreme Court Chief Justice Lorie S. Gildea had special responsibilities during the weekend, including serving ice cream at the Capitol Workers' Appreciation Ice Cream Social and Celebration on the evening of Sunday, August 13.



*Minnesota Supreme Court Chief Justice Lorie Gildea speaks at the event.*

## State Law Library Exhibit Explores the “Asian Pacific Legal Experience in America”

In early April 2017, members of the public were invited to the Minnesota State Law Library in St. Paul to view a traveling exhibit detailing the legal history of Asian Pacific peoples in the United States through three pivotal events: the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, the Japanese American Incarceration during WWII, and the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965. The exhibit, “Asian Pacific Legal Experience in America,” was available for free, self-guided tours in the Library from April 3 through April 14.

During the exhibition, the Minnesota State Law Library also hosted a special screening of the PBS film, “Of Civil Wrongs and Rights: The Fred Korematsu Story,” on April 4. The 2001 documentary details the 40-year legal fight to vindicate Fred Korematsu, a civil rights activist who resisted the internment of Japanese Americans during World War II. The screening was introduced by United States Magistrate Judge Tony N. Leung. Judge Leung became the first Asian Pacific American judge in Minnesota when he was appointed to the Hennepin County District Court bench in 1994, and subsequently became the first Asian Pacific American to serve on the federal bench in the state upon his appointment in 2011.

## Chief Justice Speaks at Public Forum in Brainerd

Minnesota Supreme Court Chief Justice Lorie S. Gildea spoke at a public forum at the Chalberg Theater on the Central Lakes College campus in Brainerd on the evening of April 25, 2017.

Chief Justice Gildea’s presentation focused on the work of Minnesota’s justice system, the important role the courts play in preserving the rights and freedoms of citizens, and the critical need for an independent and impartial judiciary. Following her presentation, the Chief Justice held a question-and-answer session with forum attendees.

The forum – “An Evening with the Chief Justice” – was sponsored by the Gordon Rosenmeier Center for State and Local Government. The Rosenmeier Center is a non-partisan organization that strives to educate and encourage participation of citizens in effective government and the political process.

## New Dashboards Expand Access to Court Data

In an effort to increase access to public information about the state’s court system, the Minnesota Judicial Branch launched a new data dashboard tool in 2017 on its website, [www.mncourts.gov](http://www.mncourts.gov). The data can be filtered by case type, district court, judicial district, and year. The data dashboards are available at: <http://www.mncourts.gov/Help-Topics/Data-Requests/Dashboards.aspx>.

## Stillwater Event Celebrates Minnesota's Oldest Standing Courthouse



*The historic Washington County Courthouse in downtown Stillwater is the oldest standing courthouse in Minnesota.*

Dozens of people visited the historic Washington County Courthouse in downtown Stillwater on June 2, 2017, to take part in a Law Day event commemorating the 150th anniversary of the oldest standing courthouse in Minnesota. As part of the event, Washington County District Court Judge Gregory G. Galler presided over a calendar of 13 civil and criminal cases, the first time a full calendar of cases had been heard in the historic courthouse in over 40 years.

Before the day's court proceedings began, Washington County Commissioner Gary Kriesel gave a presentation on the history of the historic Washington County Courthouse, which was constructed in the late 1860s and held much of Washington County government until the opening of the existing Washington County Government Center in 1975.

The Law Day events were put on through a partnership between Washington County and the judges and staff of Washington County District Court and Minnesota's Tenth Judicial District.



*Judge Gregory G. Galler presides at the historic Washington County Courthouse.*

## Judicial Branch Launches Enhanced Cyber Security Program

As Minnesota's justice system continues to leverage new technologies to increase efficiency and effectiveness, the Minnesota Judicial Branch has been working to better protect the electronic tools and information Minnesotans rely on to interact with their court system.

During the 2017 Legislative Session, the Judicial Branch secured new funding to launch an enhanced cyber security program aimed at preventing major system outages and securing the private information stored by the court system. As part of its biennial strategic plan, the Judicial Branch worked throughout the year to use this new funding to mitigate the risk of major data breaches, data corruption, data loss, and cyberattacks.



# District Courts

293 Judgeships, 10 Judicial Districts, 106 hearing facilities across the state

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

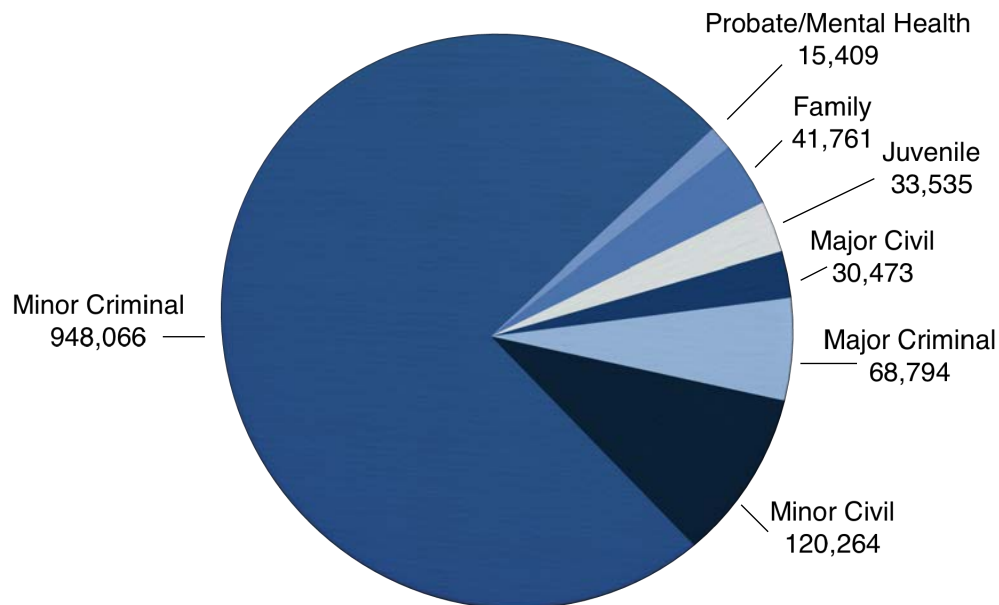
Appeals from: Conciliation Court\*

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

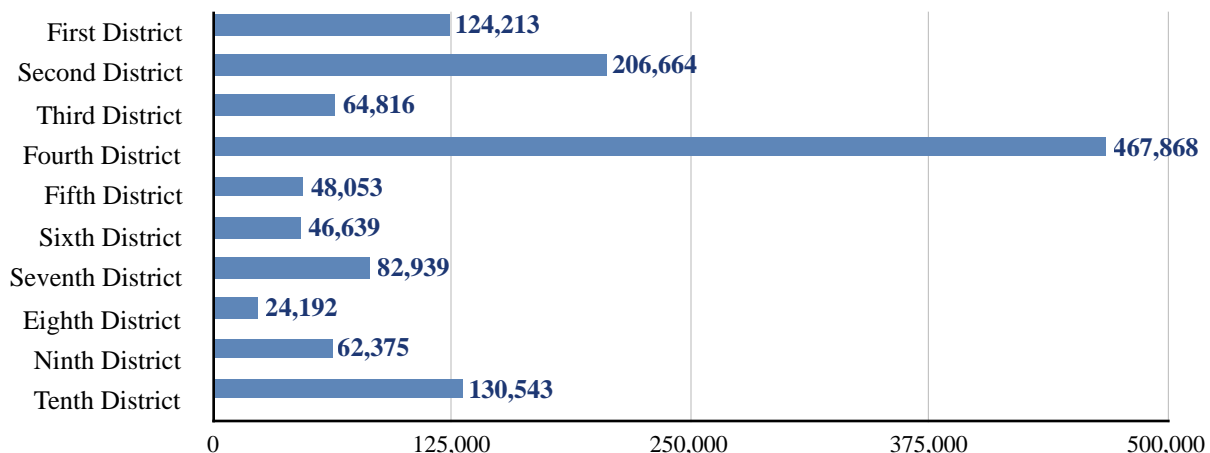
\*Called trial de novo - actually a new trial, not just a review of the conciliation court

**There were 1,258,302 cases filed in Minnesota district courts in 2017.**

## 2017 Statewide Case Filings by Case Type



## 2017 Statewide Case Filings by Judicial District





### **The Honorable Kathryn Davis Messerich Elected First Judicial District Chief Judge**

The Honorable Kathryn Davis Messerich, who was serving as assistant chief judge of Minnesota's First Judicial District, was elected to serve as chief judge of the District by her fellow judges in the District in 2017. Her term as chief judge was effective July 1.

Chief Judge Messerich has served the First Judicial District since April 2004. Prior to her appointment, she spent 17 years in private practice as a civil trial lawyer. Judge Messerich is chambered in the Dakota County Judicial Center in Hastings, Minnesota.



*First Judicial District  
Chief Judge Kathryn  
Messerich*

The Honorable David L. Knutson was elected as assistant chief judge in the First District in 2017. Judge Knutson was appointed to the bench in June 2004. He previously spent 18 years in private practice, and he served as a Minnesota state senator for 12 years, representing the communities of Apple Valley, Burnsville, Lakeville, and Rosemount, and serving as an assistant minority leader for seven years. Judge Knutson's chambers are also located in Hastings.

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

In April 2017, the First Judicial District Equal Justice Committee hosted its first Community Listening Session in Apple Valley. The purpose of the event was for the public to meet the judges and share ideas and concerns related to the court system. A follow-up Session was held in October. At the October Session, judges reported to the community regarding the court's responses to concerns raised at the April Session. Approximately 40-50 community members were in attendance. A report on the October session is available [here](#).

### **Longtime Spanish Interpreter Posthumously Receives Amicus Curiae Award**

The First Judicial District awarded its seventh annual Amicus Curiae (Friend of the Court) Award to Manuel Roman, posthumously, on May 12, 2017. Roman was an integral part of the Dakota County court system as a Spanish interpreter for approximately 30 years. He worked as an independent contractor who strived to go above and beyond the expectations of the Latino community. With his love for personal connections, his desire to help others, and his gift for Spanish-English translation, Roman was a "piece of the woodwork" in the halls of the Dakota County courthouses in Apple Valley, Hastings, and West St. Paul.

### **New Security Measures Improve Safety of Goodhue County Justice Center**

Goodhue County officials implemented new security measures at the Goodhue County Justice Center in 2017, including new equipment and full-time staffing of the screening equipment located at the building's public entrance. The steps were taken to better protect citizens who enter the building to attend district court proceedings, meet with County Attorney or Guardian ad Litem staff, or visit the Goodhue County Law Library. The screening of all those entering the building began on May 8.

### **Scott County Court Administrator Elected President of National Association for Court Management**

Scott County Court Administrator Vicky Carlson of Shakopee, MN, was elected president of the National Association for Court Management (NACM) in 2017, for a term ending in July 2018. Prior to her service in Scott County, Carlson served for seven years as the court administrator in Carver County, MN.

NACM is the largest organization of court management professionals in the world, with more than 1,700 members from the United States, Canada, Australia, and other countries. NACM is dedicated to educating court leaders, providing community, sharing information, and advocating on important court and justice system topics.

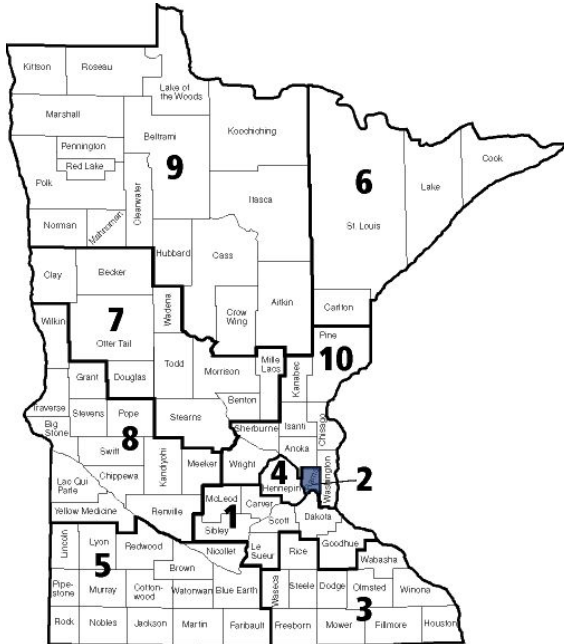
### **Dakota County “Open Courthouse” Held for Public**

On September 15, 2017, the Dakota County Judicial Center in Hastings opened its doors to the public as part of a Constitution Day “Open Courthouse” event. During the very successful event, about 250 total visitors took a behind the scenes tour of the courthouse, heard presentations from judges and local justice system officials, viewed live court reporter and mock jury selection demonstrations, received free legal assistance through the Mobile Law Network, and attended an information fair designed to highlight justice system programs and services available in the community.

First Judicial District Chief Judge Kathryn Messerich opened the event with a welcome presentation, followed by First District Assistant Chief Judge David Knutson informing visitors about the three branches of government. From the Minnesota Supreme Court, Chief Justice Lorie S. Gildea and Associate Justice Margaret Chutich spoke on the importance of the Judicial Branch.

In addition, Dakota County Board Commissioner Joe Atkins and Dakota County Administrator Matt Smith accepted a plaque honoring the Board's substantial contributions to the redesign of the Judicial Center and the continuous efforts to ensure safe and secure facilities at all three Dakota County courthouses in Apple Valley, Hastings, and West St. Paul.

# Second Judicial District



**1 County: Ramsey**

**29 Judgeships**

**5 Referees**

**3 Child Support Magistrates**

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

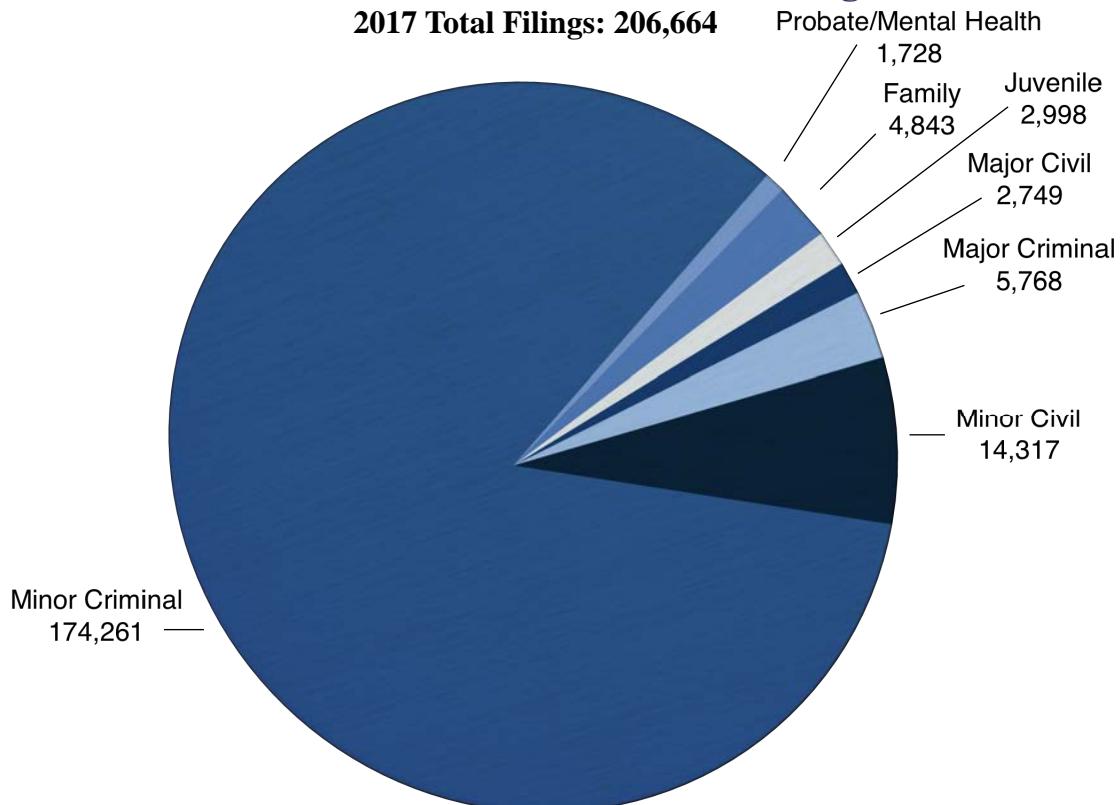
**Hon. Robert A. Awsumb,  
Assistant Chief Judge**

**Heather M. Kendall, District Administrator**

**Second Judicial District Administration  
1700 Ramsey County Courthouse  
15 West Kellogg Boulevard  
Saint Paul, MN 55102**

## 2017 Second Judicial District Case Filings

**2017 Total Filings: 206,664**



## State's First Judge of Hmong Descent Appointed

Sophia Vuelo was appointed to the Ramsey County District Court bench by Governor Mark Dayton on December 18, 2017, making her the state's first judge of Hmong descent.

Prior to her appointment, Judge Vuelo was a solo practitioner at Vuelo Law, a special assistant to the Ramsey County Attorney, an assistant public defender for the Second Judicial District, Assistant Rochester City Attorney, and Managing Attorney for Catholic Charities.

Judge Vuelo is on the Board of Directors of the Collaborative Community Law Initiative, and is former vice-president of the Hmong American Bar Association. She earned her BA from the University of Minnesota, and her JD from Hamline University School of Law.



*The Honorable Sophia Y. Vuelo, Minnesota's first judge of Hmong descent.*

## Ramsey County Workgroup Earns Award for Efforts to Improve Housing Court

The Board of Directors of the Dispute Resolution Center (DRC) awarded the 2017 A. M. “Sandy” Keith Alternative Dispute Resolution Award to the Second Judicial District Housing Court Workgroup – a collaborative effort between Ramsey County District Court and housing stakeholders to ensure a fair and effective process for all litigants appearing in Housing Court.

The Second Judicial District Housing Court Workgroup was established following a series of facilitated discussions held in Ramsey County to address challenges in the rental market that frequently find their way into the Second Judicial District Housing Court. In early 2017, Second Judicial District Chief Judge John H. Guthmann convened a group of relevant stakeholders and potential partners, in partnership with The McKnight Foundation and the National Center for State Courts. One of the goals of the group was to determine the extent to which a problem-solving approach could be applied to the Housing Court.

As a result of those facilitated discussions, Chief Judge Guthmann appointed the Workgroup on March 31, 2017, to develop strategies and recommendations to strengthen access for landlords and tenants to legal, financial, and social services—before, during, and after the Housing Court first appearance calendar.

The Workgroup focused its efforts on improving understanding of court processes with landlords and tenants, expanding the availability and awareness of mediation services, and increasing coordination with community organizations, such as providing space outside courtrooms for Ramsey County Human Services Emergency Assistance personnel to share information with Housing Court participants.



### **Ramsey County District Court Hosts Court Interpreter Open House in St. Paul**

Ramsey County District Court held a Court Interpreter Open House in St. Paul on the evening of November 15, 2017. Interpreters who interpret in other fields, and all who wanted to learn more about interpreting for the Minnesota Judicial Branch, were invited to attend. Approximately 45-50 people attended.

The evening started with opening remarks and the introduction of staff, judges, and current court interpreters. Judges then shared their experiences in working with interpreters in the courtroom. Numerous court staff and interpreters talked about the need for interpreters not only for the Second Judicial District, but on a statewide level as well. Finally, the Statewide Court Interpreter and Statewide Language Access Program Coordinator gave a presentation on the needs of the courts, and the process to become an interpreter for the courts.

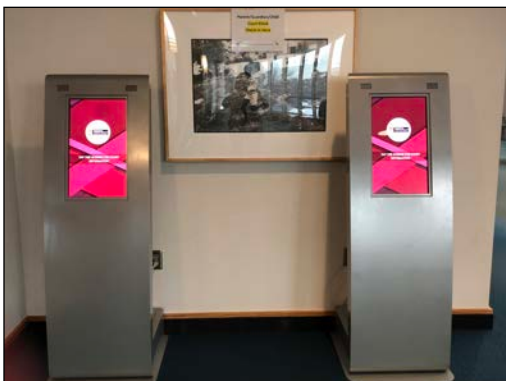
Two courtrooms were open for all attendees to observe live court interpreting demonstrations; one demonstration in Karen and the other in Hmong.

There was a great dialogue about the courts, and many questions were answered. The attendees provided positive feedback regarding the event, and were excited to have the opportunity to learn more about the courts.

### **Ramsey County Pilots Two New Technologies to Improve Court User Experience**

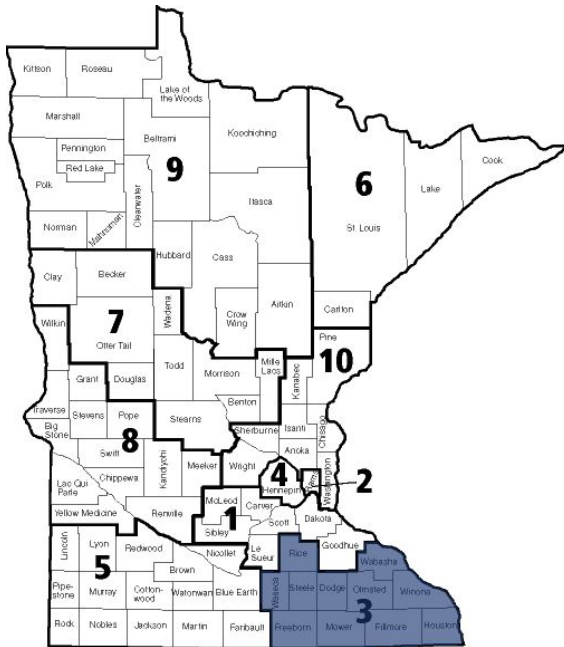
The Second Judicial District began piloting the use of Guide & File in its Conciliation and Housing courts on August 14, 2017. Guide & File is a free online tool that assists self-represented litigants in preparing court forms. Guide & File asks questions of the litigants and provides helpful information along the way. Answers are stored to create the forms necessary for filing. The pilot is being evaluated for statewide use.

The Second Judicial District piloted the use of kiosks to provide check-in services at the Juvenile Court late in 2017. The objectives are to increase the collection of important data, automate the check-in process, and alert justice partners when their client has arrived. Court staff will be meeting with the justice partners to debrief and discuss further implementation of the kiosk check-in services in other divisions of Ramsey County District Court.



*Juvenile Court participants in the Second Judicial District can now use automated kiosks to check in for their court appearances.*

# Third Judicial District



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

**24 Judgeships**

**1 Referee**

**2 Child Support Magistrates**

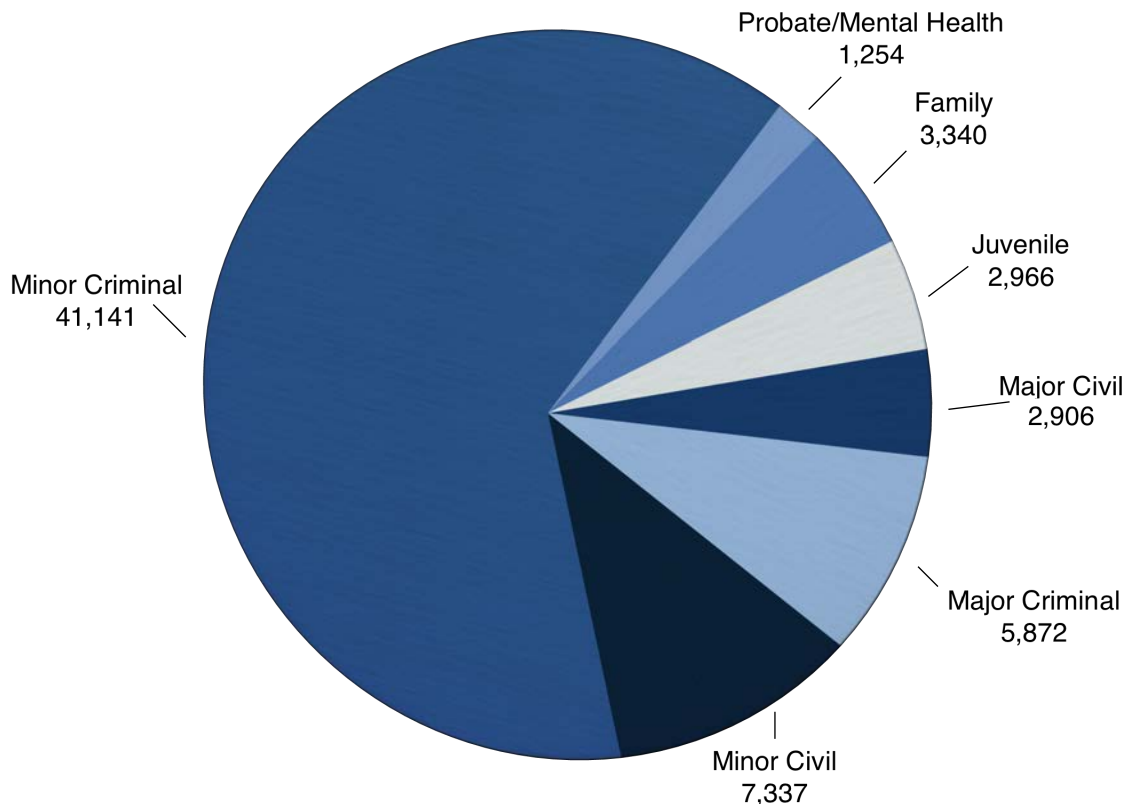
**Hon. Jodi L. Williamson, Chief Judge**

**Hon. Joseph A. Bueltel,  
Assistant Chief Judge**

**Shelley Ellefson, District Administrator**

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

## 2017 Third Judicial District Case Filings 2017 Total Filings: 64,816



### **The Honorable Jodi Williamson Elected Third Judicial District Chief Judge**



*Third Judicial  
District Chief Judge  
Jodi Williamson*

The Honorable Jodi Williamson was elected to serve as chief judge of the Third Judicial District by her fellow judges in the District in 2017.

Chief Judge Williamson has served the Third Judicial District since January 2000. Prior to her appointment, she served as an assistant city attorney and an assistant public defender, and also had a private civil practice. Chief Judge Williamson is chambered in the Dodge County Courthouse in Manorville, Minnesota.

The Honorable Joseph Bueltel was elected as assistant chief judge in the Third District. Judge Bueltel was appointed to the bench in April 2002. Judge Bueltel's chambers are located in Owatonna, Minnesota.

### **Entire District Takes Advantage of an Automated Workflow Tool**

As of the end of 2017, all counties within the Third Judicial District are now able to take advantage of an automated workflow tool called Task Manager. This tool allows for the electronic routing of work between judges, court reporters, law clerks, and court staff. The District is planning for ways to utilize this tool to facilitate its ability to share work across counties lines throughout the District.

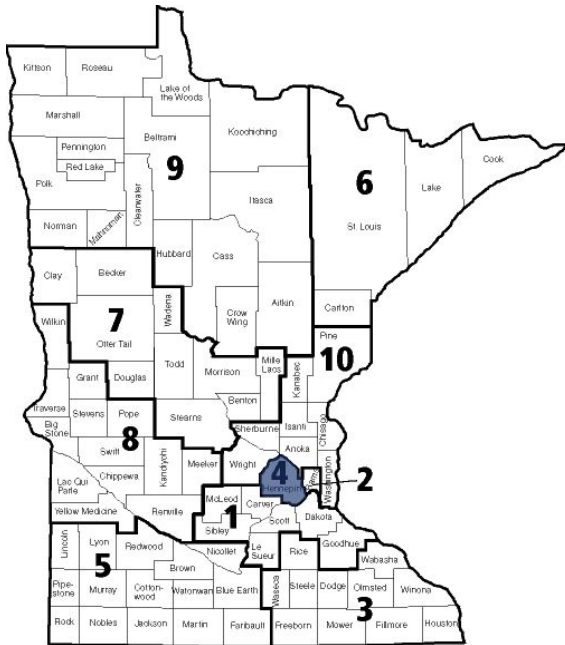
### **Dodge County Hybrid Court Hosts Annual Community Picnic**

In an effort to celebrate and support the work that treatment court participants in the District put into their recovery, the Dodge County Hybrid Court hosted its annual community picnic at Veterans Park in Kasson, Minnesota, in 2017. Treatment Court participants and community members from Dodge, Olmsted, Steele, Waseca, Wabasha, and Winona counties, as well as Rochester Adult & Teen Challenge members, teamed up to play softball and volleyball and enjoy a catered lunch.

### **Steele County District Court Displaced Due to Pipe Break**

On January 10, 2017, the Steele County Courthouse was evacuated due to a water pipe break. The building was damaged, so court operations were relocated to the Owatonna Fire Hall, which is across the street from the Courthouse. Court was also held in the Steele County Adult Detention Center and the Steele County Boardroom. The County Board decided on a complete building renovation rather than making limited repairs associated with the water damage. The renovation was completed and all court operations returned to the Courthouse in January 2018.

# Fourth Judicial District



**1 County: Hennepin**

**62 Judgeships**

**16 Referees**

**5 Child Support Magistrates**

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

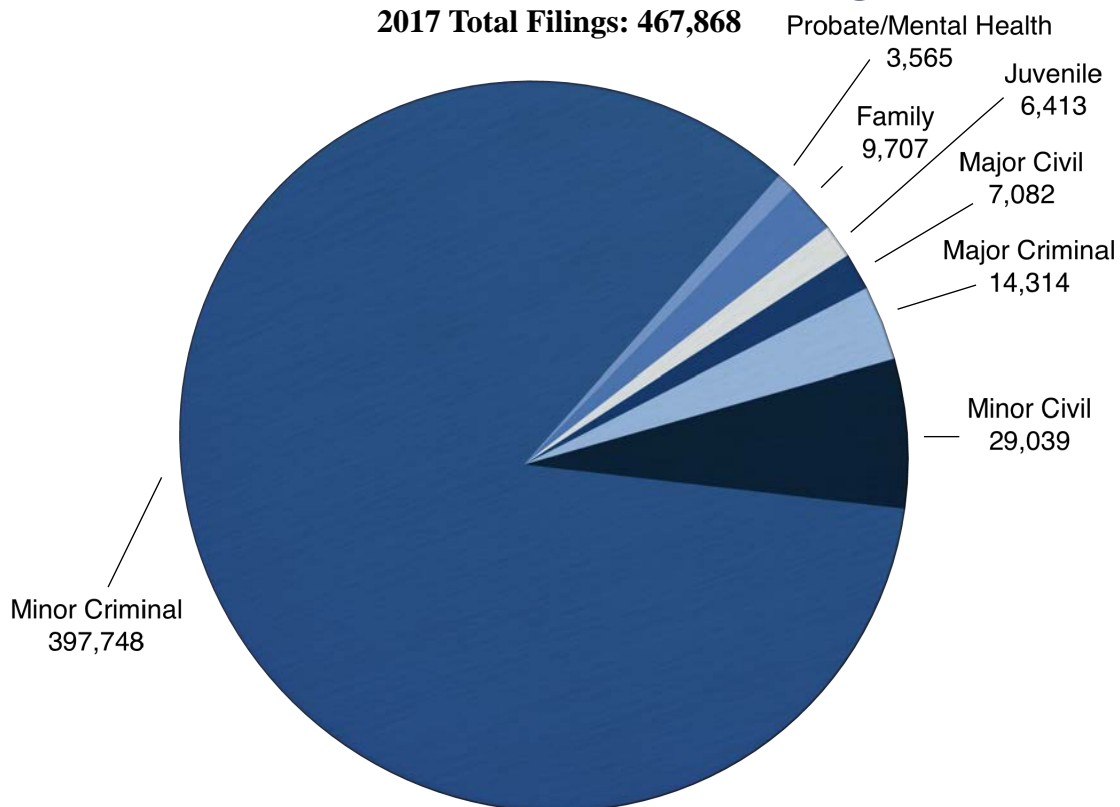
**Hon. Toddrick S. Barnette,  
Assistant Chief Judge**

**Sarah Lindahl-Pfeiffer,  
District Administrator**

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

## 2017 Fourth Judicial District Case Filings

**2017 Total Filings: 467,868**



## **New Judicial District Administrator Appointed in Hennepin County**

Jury summonses, warrants, extradition papers, and other court documents in Hennepin County now bear a new signature. Judges in Minnesota's Fourth Judicial District appointed Sarah Lindahl-Pfieffer as the judicial district administrator for Hennepin County District Court. The appointment was approved by the Minnesota Judicial Council on October 19, 2017.

Lindahl-Pfieffer replaced Kate Fogarty, who accepted a federal court position after three years as judicial district administrator in the Fourth Judicial District.

As judicial district administrator, Lindahl-Pfieffer oversees court administration staff in Hennepin County in support of a full range of court operations for the District Court, including processing and management of all records and files of the Court, as well as providing services to the public, other county offices, and the judiciary.



*Fourth Judicial District  
Administrator Sarah  
Lindahl-Pfieffer*

## **Hennepin County Judges Honored**

The Hennepin County Bar Association (HCBA) recognized Fourth Judicial District Judge William H. Koch for his commitment to the highest professional standards in the legal community with its Professionalism Award in 2017. Judge Koch received the Award at HCBA's annual meeting on June 1. The award is given to lawyers who best exemplify the practice of law as a profession, which includes a spirit of public service, and promotion of the highest possible level of competence, integrity, and ethical conduct.

In addition, Fourth Judicial District Judge Tanya Bransford received a Minnesota Lawyer Diversity and Inclusion award on October 12, 2017. It was the first year of the legal newspaper celebrating individuals and organizations that have contributed in a meaningful way to promoting diversity and inclusion within Minnesota's legal community.

## **Free Valentine's Day Wedding Ceremonies Performed by Hennepin County Judges**

In a fifth annual event, 31 couples said, "I do," in the atrium of the Hennepin County Government Center over the noon hour on Valentine's Day, February 14, 2017. Twelve Hennepin County judges united the couples in matrimony at no charge. The Honorable Ivy Bernhardson sang at the event, and background music was provided by a string quartet comprised of other judges.



## Hennepin County Judges in the Community

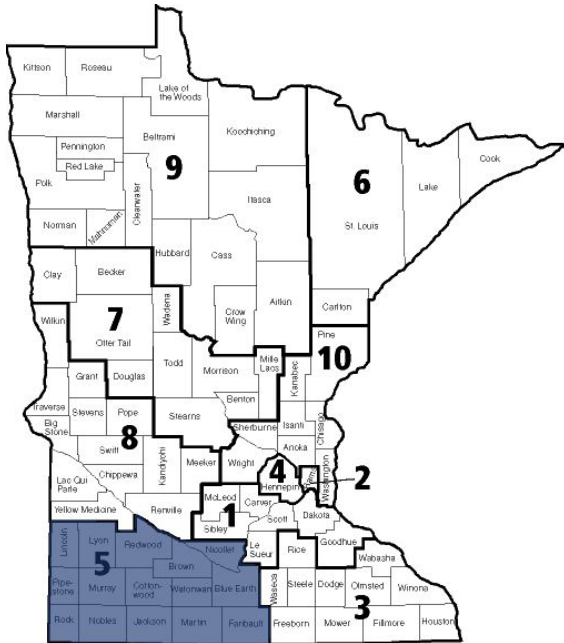
- Fourth Judicial District Referee JaPaul Harris facilitated a housing and expungement workshop on January 20, 2017, at the Brian Coyle Center with East African immigrant communities. There were approximately 35 participants and three languages spoken: English, Somali and Oromo. The areas of discussion were expungements, the process of eviction, tenant's rights, and court resources. The participants expressed an interest in having the Court return on another occasion to discuss additional topics including civil law, juvenile law, and harassment restraining orders.
- The Fourth Judicial District is participating in the Government Alliance on Race and Equity (GARE), a national network of government working to achieve racial equity and advance opportunities for all.
- On August 18, 2017, 10 young people, ages 13-19, from Minneapolis YMCA youth programs spent a half-day at Hennepin County District Court to participate in a variety of activities, including a speed networking event with judges and court staff, observing a court trial, and taking a tour of the facility.
- On August 1, 2017, 10 judicial officers from Hennepin County District Court participated in the 33rd annual National Night Out celebration. In pairs, judicial officers visited several neighborhoods throughout the city of Minneapolis, connecting with community members and organizers in attendance at the various block parties.
- On May 20, 2017, Hennepin County District Court held a Warrant Forgiveness Day at the Sabathani Community Center in Minneapolis. More than 150 people attended the event, during which justice partners cleared 145 outstanding warrants, held hearings on 262 cases, and scheduled 130 cases for future hearing. In addition, 30 defendants completed 122 hours of community service as part of the events.
- The presiding judge of Hennepin County Drug Court, the Honorable Marta Chou, is participating in an educational pilot aimed at opioid use prevention. The pilot, called Chasing the Dragon, involves speaking to middle school and high school students about the dangers of opioid abuse. The pilot involves a partnership between the Minnetonka School District, the Minnetonka Police Department, the FBI, the Hennepin County Sheriff's Office, and the South Metro Drug Task Force.



*Students learn about the dangers of opioid abuse from judges and law enforcement officers as part of the Chasing the Dragon educational program.*



# Fifth Judicial District



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

**17 Judgeships  
2 Child Support Magistrates**

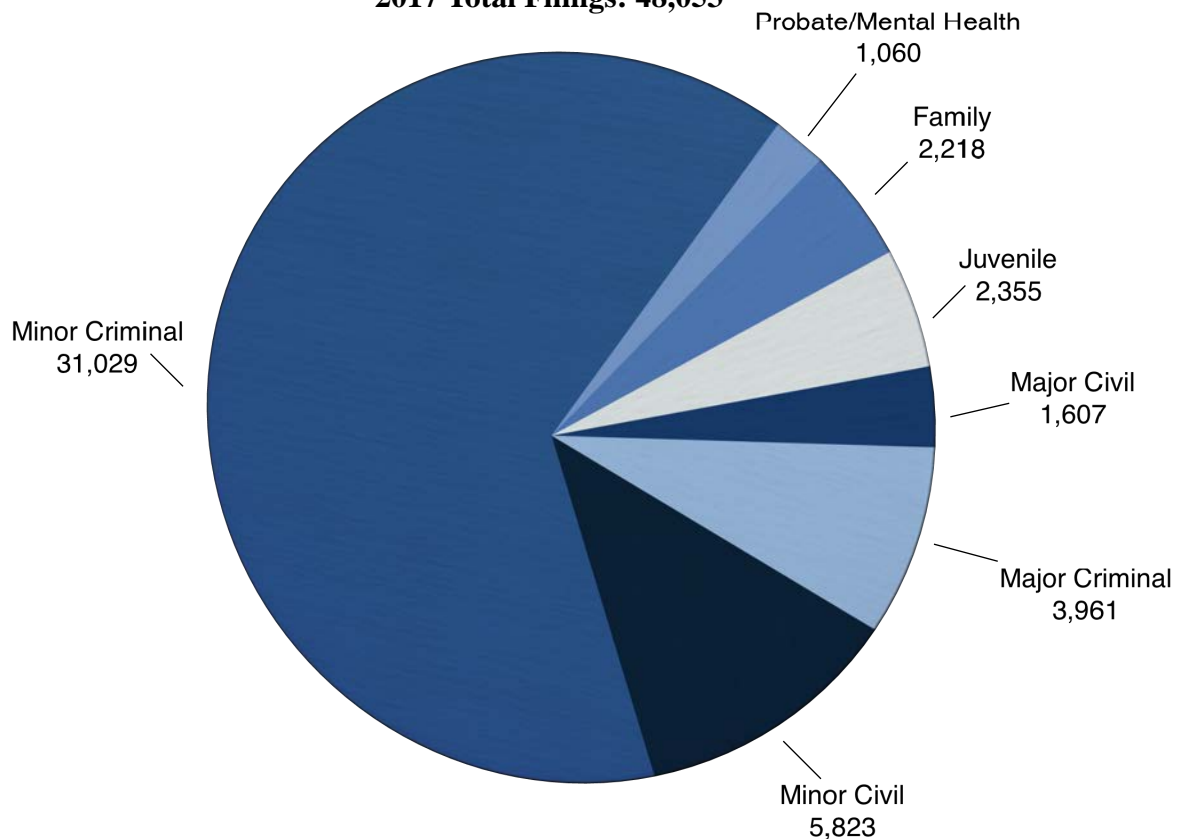
**Hon. Michelle A. Dietrich, Chief Judge  
Hon. Gregory J. Anderson,  
Assistant Chief Judge**

**Michael J. Kelley, District Administrator**

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

## 2017 Fifth Judicial District Case Filings

**2017 Total Filings: 48,053**



### **The Honorable Michelle A. Dietrich Elected Fifth Judicial District Chief Judge**

The Honorable Michelle A. Dietrich was elected to serve as chief judge of the Fifth Judicial District by her fellow district judges in 2017.

Chief Judge Dietrich has served the Fifth Judicial District since August 2008. She previously served as the Redwood County Attorney from 1997 to 2008. Chief Judge Dietrich is chambered in the Lyon County Courthouse in Marshall.

The Honorable Gregory Anderson was elected as assistant chief judge in the Fifth District. Judge Anderson was appointed to the bench in August 2008. Judge Anderson's chambers are located in Mankato.

### **Judicial Branch Central Appeals Unit Moves to Lincoln and Pipestone Counties**

Effective July 17, 2017, the Judicial Branch Central Appeals Unit moved from the Fourth Judicial District, located in Hennepin County, to the Fifth Judicial District counties of Lincoln and Pipestone, located in southwest Minnesota. The Central Appeals Unit (CAU) serves as a support partner and liaison between the 87 trial courts in the state and the appellate courts. The CAU works with the trial courts to produce an electronic case record for submission to the appellate courts.

Relocation of the Central Appeals Unit to outstate Minnesota is part of a broader effort to ensure statewide access to court services. Read *Reengineering Minnesota's Courts* on page 6 for more information on this and similar initiatives.

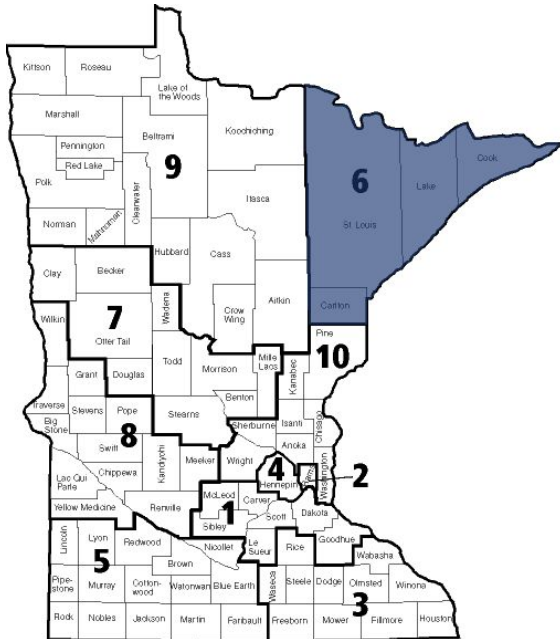
### **Self-Help Workshops Continue in 2017**

Fifth Judicial District Family Law Collaborative Resources continued to offer four recurring self-help workshops in Blue Earth, Brown, Lyon, and Watonwan counties in 2017. The workshops provide helpful information to litigants not represented by attorneys by answering general questions, explaining court process and procedures, and assisting with the completion of court forms. The workshops assisted 31 people between November 2016 and November 2017.

### **Detective Matt Grochow Receives Judicial and Court System Star Award**

Detective Matt Grochow of the St. Peter Police Department received the Judicial and Court System Star Award at the 2017 Minnesota Towards Zero Deaths (TZD) Conference in St. Paul on October 26, 2017. Detective Grochow, who is the community compliance agent of the Brown-Nicollet-Watonwan Counties Multi-County Adult Drug Court, has served on the Court for over seven years, and was recognized with the Award for his efforts and collaborations that have resulted in him helping to keep Minnesota's roads safe.

# Sixth Judicial District



**4 Counties: Carlton, Cook, Lake, St. Louis**

**16 Judgeships**

**1 Referee**

**2 Child Support Magistrates**

**Hon. Sally L. Tarnowski, Chief Judge**

**Hon. Michael J. Cuzzo,**

**Assistant Chief Judge**

**Marieta Johnson, District Administrator**

**Sixth Judicial District Administration**

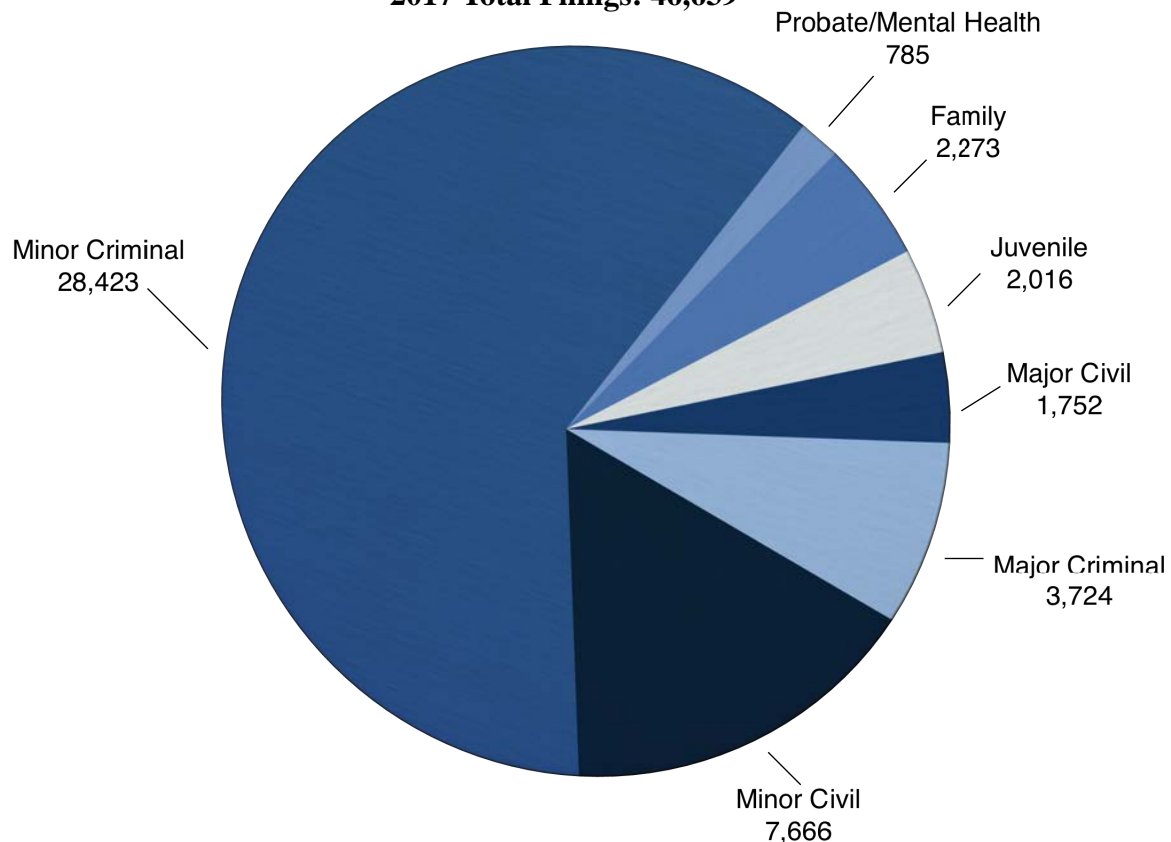
**St. Louis County Courthouse**

**227 West First Street, Suite 302**

**Duluth, MN 55802**

## 2017 Sixth Judicial District Case Filings

**2017 Total Filings: 46,639**



### **Veterans Court Participates in Justice for Vets National Training Initiative**

The Duluth Veterans Court applied for and received training as part of a Justice for Vets national training initiative in 2017. The members of the Veterans Court team received three days of training from national experts on how to develop formal policies and procedures, and improve operations. Team members also visited a mentor court site in Billings, Montana.

Since 2014, Duluth has operated the informal Veterans Treatment Court, with a mission of connecting military veterans to appropriate treatment services through a variety of partner agencies. The Court is now pending official approval by the MN State Court Administrator's Office and the Minnesota Judicial Council for certification.

### **Sixth District Continues Innovation**

As the Minnesota Judicial Branch continues its wide-ranging effort to increase efficiency and improve its service to the public (see, *Reengineering Minnesota's Courts* on page 6), the Sixth Judicial District continues to be at the leading edge of implementing these important innovations.

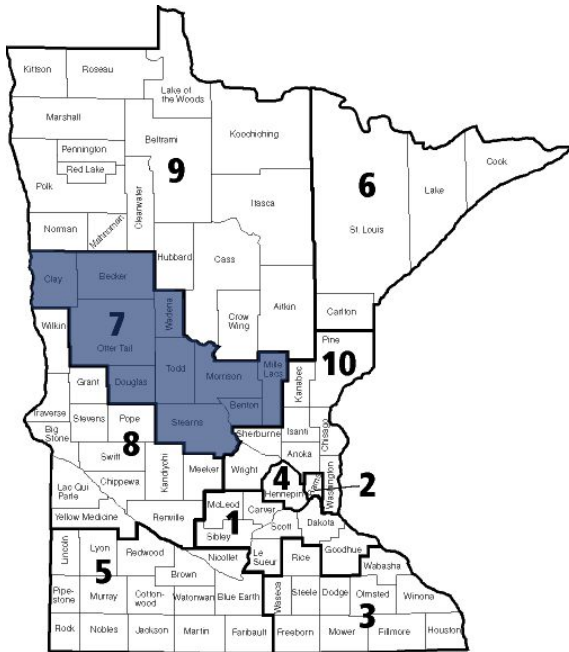
In 2017, the District centralized many services that were once performed by staff working in each of the District's four counties. Today, centralized staff manage district-wide financial operations and process district-wide Children in Need of Protection or Services orders. The District has expanded its efforts to make the process of accepting and reviewing eFiled court documents more efficient through the creation of a Centralized Analysis of Security and Accuracy unit. The Sixth District also has a very successful cross-district partnership with the Fourth Judicial District with the processing of their default judgments in Cook County.

### **Warrant Resolution Event held in Duluth**

St. Louis County District Court in Duluth partnered with local prosecutors, law enforcement agencies, the Sixth District Public Defender's Office, and Community Connect to hold a Warrant Resolution Day on October 26 at the Damiano Center in Duluth.

During the event, individuals with outstanding warrants from anywhere in Minnesota had the opportunity to speak with a public defender or prosecutor, arrange to pay outstanding fines, or have a hearing before Sixth Judicial District Chief Judge Sally Tarnowski regarding their warrants. In addition to local judges and court staff, representatives from the Sixth District Public Defender's Office, the Duluth City Attorney's Office, St. Louis County Probation, the St. Louis County Sheriff's Office, and the Driver Diversion Program were available at the event to assist with the resolution of warrants and related issues.

# Seventh Judicial District



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

**29 Judgeships  
5 Child Support Magistrates**

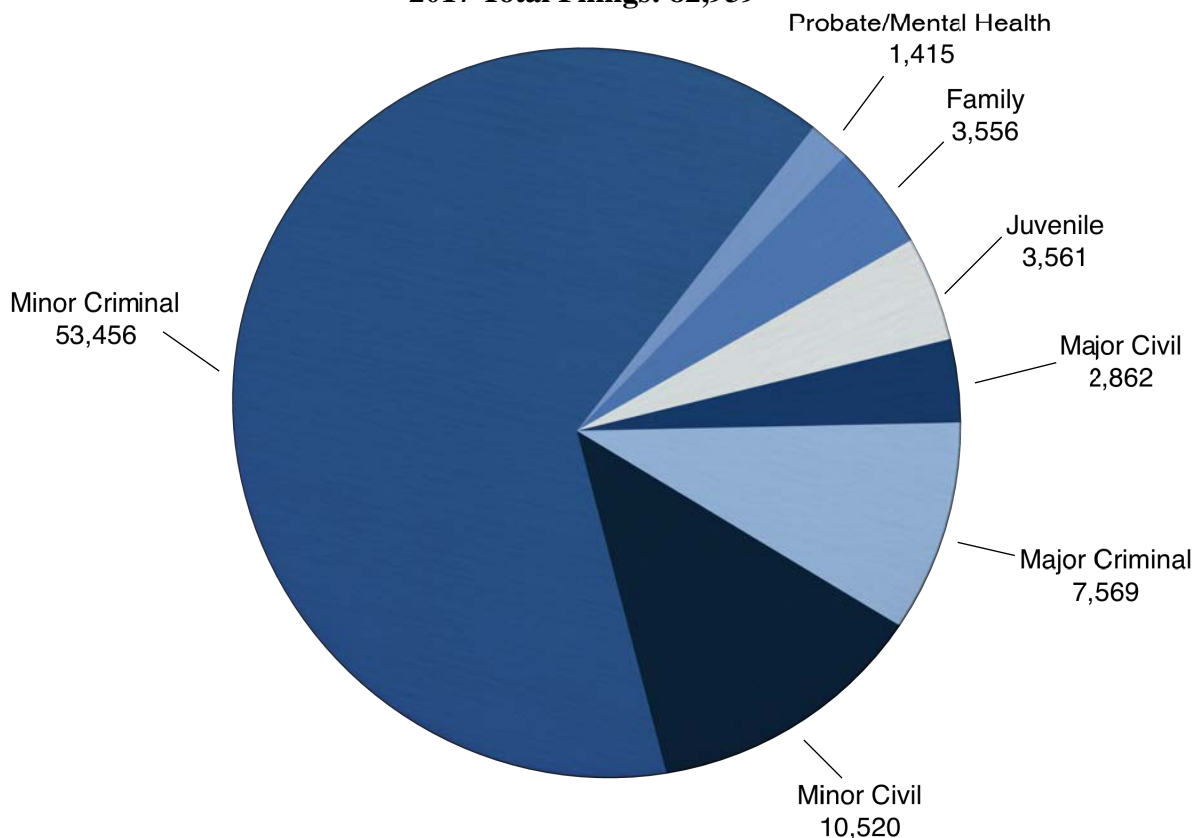
**Hon. Jay D. Carlson, Chief Judge  
Hon. Sarah E. Hennesy,  
Assistant Chief Judge**

**Timothy Ostby, District Administrator**

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

## 2017 Seventh Judicial District Case Filings

**2017 Total Filings: 82,939**





## The Honorable Jay D. Carlson Elected Chief Judge

The Honorable Jay D. Carlson was elected to serve as chief judge of Minnesota's Seventh Judicial District by his fellow judges in the District in 2017. Chief Judge Carlson has served in the Seventh Judicial District since August 2006. Before his appointment to the bench, Judge Carlson spent over 25 years in private practice. He is chambered in the Becker County Courthouse in Detroit Lakes.

The Honorable Sarah E. Hennesy was elected to serve as assistant chief judge in the district in 2017. Judge Hennesy was appointed to the bench in February 2012. She previously served as staff attorney for St. Cloud Area Legal Services from 2006 to 2012. Her chambers are located in the Mille Lacs County Courthouse in Milaca.



*Seventh Judicial  
District Chief  
Judge Jay D.  
Carlson*

## Stearns County Open Courthouse Event Celebrates Law Day

The Stearns County Courthouse opened its doors to the public as part of an “Open Courthouse” event on April 28. Minnesota Supreme Court Chief Justice Lorie S. Gildea, Associate Justice Margaret H. Chutich, and Seventh Judicial District Chief Judge John Scherer kicked off the event with a short program. Visitors were able to participate in guided courthouse tours and a justice system information fair, and view informational displays about Stearns County history and the 14th Amendment.



*Law-related artwork by  
students from Clearview  
Elementary School was on  
display during the event.*

*Justice  
Margaret  
Chutich  
addresses  
visitors at the  
kick-off.*

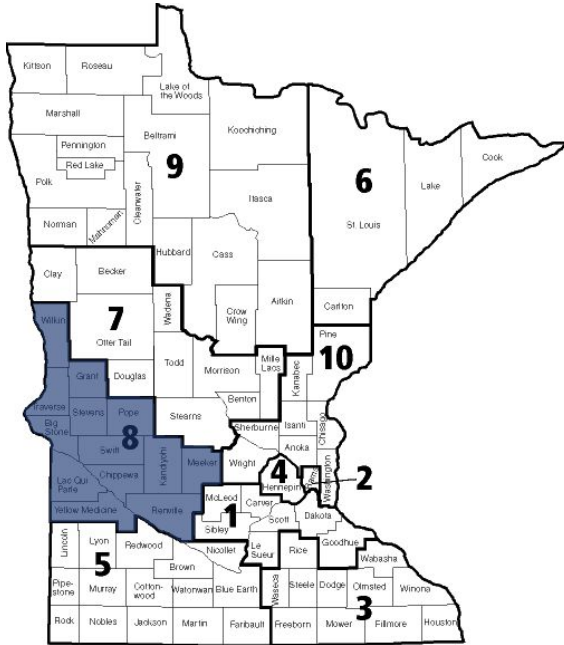


*Attendees  
visited with  
justice system  
partners and  
others at the  
information fair.*





# 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**

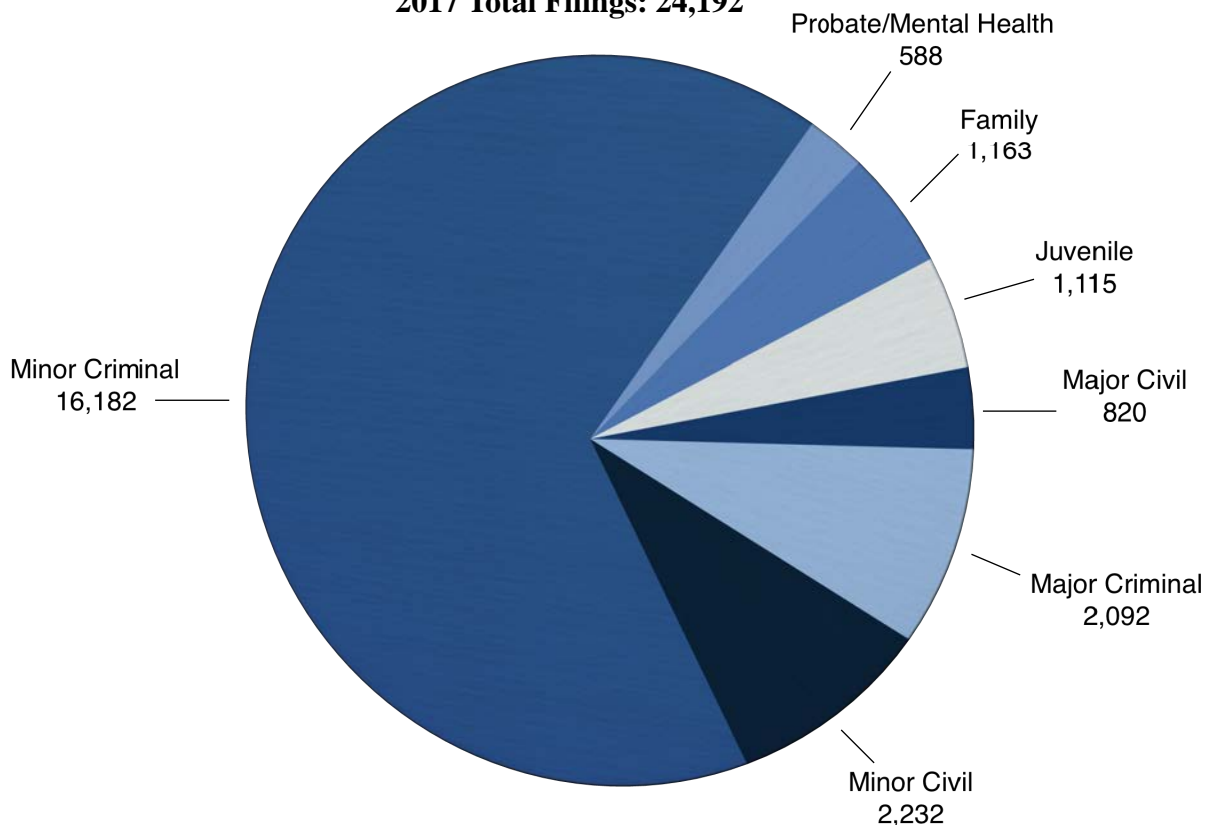
**Hon. Michael J. Thompson, Chief Judge  
Hon. Dwayne N. Knutsen,  
Assistant Chief Judge**

**Timothy Ostby, District Administrator**

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

## 2017 Eighth Judicial District Case Filings

**2017 Total Filings: 24,192**



### **Pilot Seeks Better Outcomes for Children in Need**

In an effort to improve outcomes for abused and neglected children, the Eighth Judicial District is launching a two-year pilot program targeting court cases involving Children in Need of Protection or Services (CHIPS cases).

Under the pilot, CHIPS cases in a five-county region - Kandiyohi, Meeker, Swift, Yellow Medicine, and Renville counties – will be heard by a single judge and managed by specialized court staff. Judge Jennifer K. Fischer, who is chambered in Kandiyohi County, will serve as the lead CHIPS judge during the pilot, and, in addition to her court reporter and law clerk, will be supported by two dedicated administrative staff who will focus on ensuring court cases involving vulnerable children are processed in a timely fashion. The goal of the pilot, which is slated to last two years, is to find safe, permanent homes for at-risk children as quickly as possible.



*The Honorable Jennifer K. Fischer is leading an effort to improve outcomes in cases involving children in need of protection or services.*

### **Eighth District Takes On Statewide Case Processing Work**

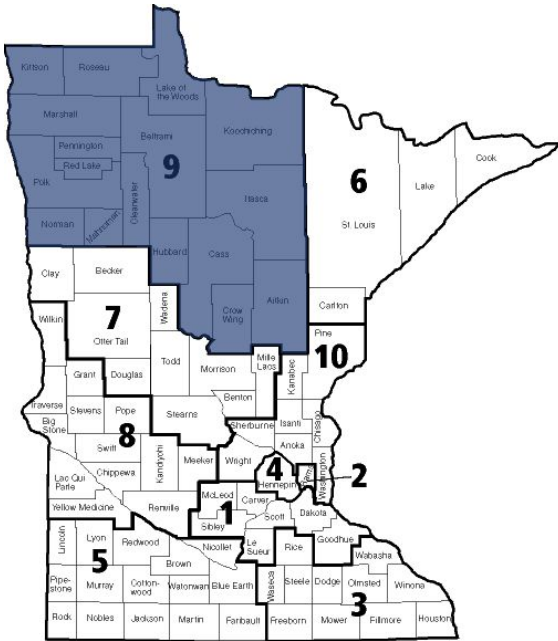
As part of a broader effort to ensure statewide access to court services, staff working in Minnesota's Eighth Judicial District will soon be responsible for processing expedited child support orders from all 87 district courts across Minnesota.

Consolidating this important statewide case work into the Eighth District will help support staffing levels in the state's smallest Judicial District, allowing the 13 district courts in the District to meet minimum staffing levels and ensure staff are available to assist court users throughout western Minnesota. For more information on this reengineering initiative, read *Reengineering Minnesota's Courts* on page 6.

### **Judges, Court Leaders Hold Listening Session in Willmar**

The Eighth Judicial District Equal Justice Committee held a community listening session on April 22, 2017, at the public library in Willmar. The event, which featured a Somali language interpreter, was designed to facilitate conversations between judges and court staff and the community that they serve. Participants talked about the local justice system and their own court experiences, and shared ideas on how judges and staff could improve the courts. The Eighth Judicial District Equal Justice Committee produced a summary report of the event and the main themes that emerged from the discussions.

# 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

**24 Judgeships**  
**2 Child Support Magistrates**

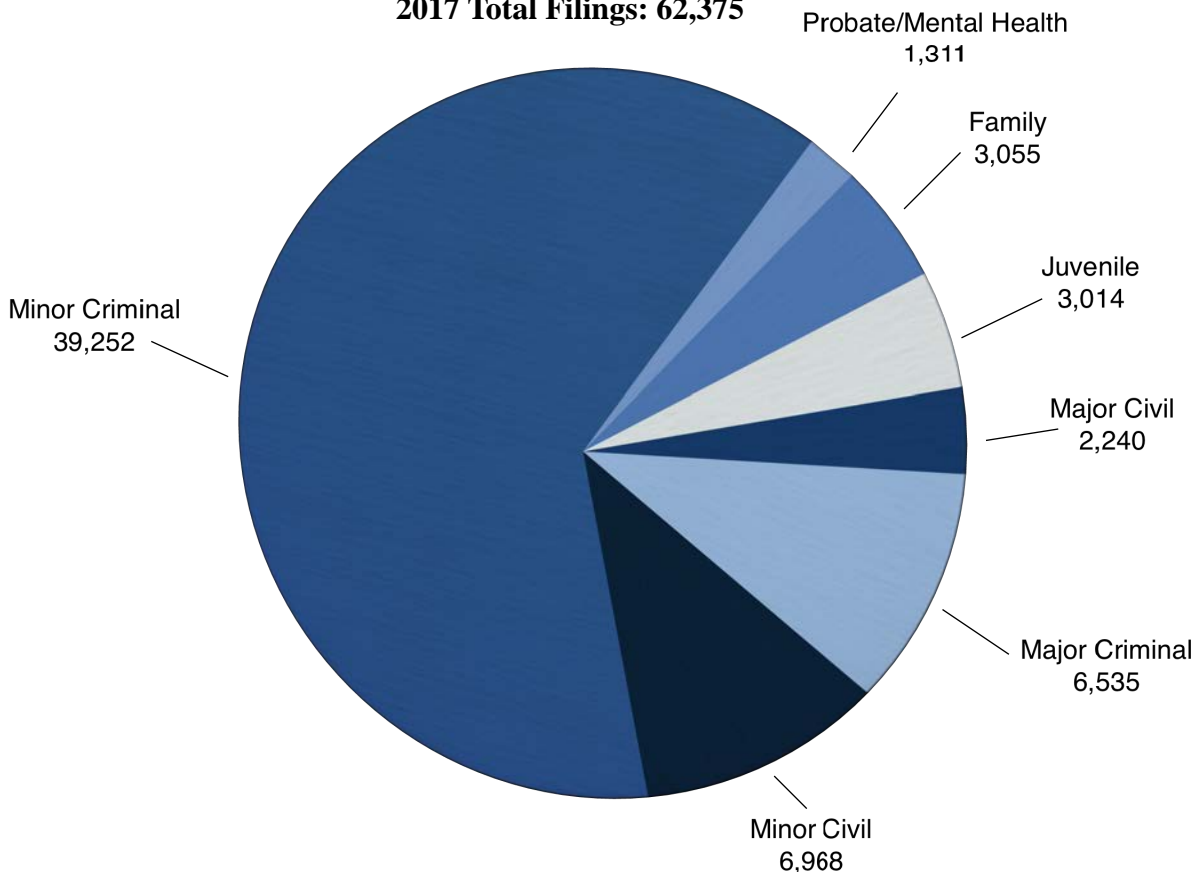
**Hon. Paul T. Benshoof, Chief Judge**  
**Hon. Tamara L. Yon, Assistant Chief Judge**

**Paul Maatz, District Administrator**

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

## 2017 Ninth Judicial District Case Filings

**2017 Total Filings: 62,375**



### **National Recognition for Beltrami County Domestic Violence Court**

In December 2017, Beltrami County's Domestic Violence Court was named a national mentor court by the U.S. Department of Justice. As one of seven programs chosen across the country, the judges and other officials who lead the Beltrami County Domestic Violence Court now assist other communities across the country in implementing or improving similar programs, or enhancing their current responses to domestic violence cases.

The Beltrami County Domestic Violence Court was founded in 2013 with the aim of reducing domestic violence in Beltrami County. Defendants who meet certain criteria appear in front of a judge, who often requires them to attend classes and seek therapy and comply with other conditions.



*Ninth Judicial District Chief Judge Paul T. Benshoof played an instrumental role in the creation of the nationally-recognized Beltrami County Domestic Violence Court in 2013.*

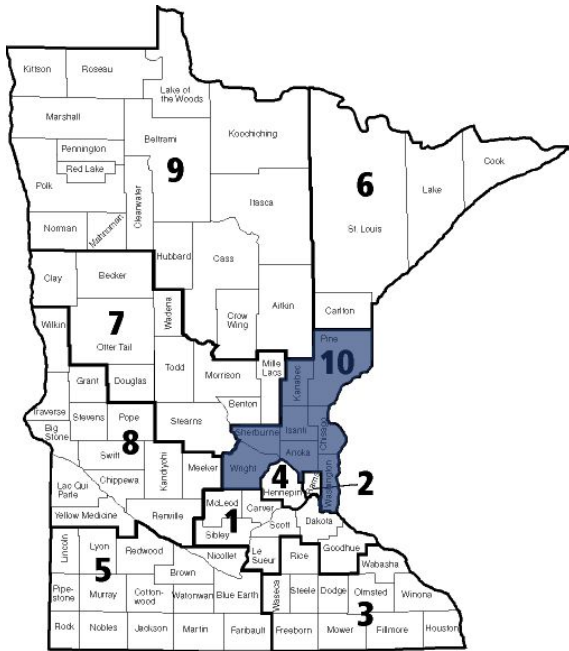
### **Ninth District Takes on Statewide Jury Summoning Work**

In 2017, the Ninth Judicial District established the Statewide Jury Summoning and Qualification Unit, which is now responsible for the summoning and qualification of jurors for all 87 of Minnesota's district courts.

Staff in this Unit are responsible for the statewide processing of juror qualification questionnaires submitted by mail or online, determining juror qualifications, reviewing juror requests to be excused for hardship, and fielding questions from jurors regarding their qualifications.

The creation of the Statewide Jury Summoning and Qualification Unit in the Ninth Judicial District is part of a broader effort to ensure statewide access to court services. Read, *Reengineering Minnesota's Courts* on page 6 for more information on this and similar initiatives.

# Tenth Judicial District



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

**45 Judgeships  
4 Child Support Magistrates**

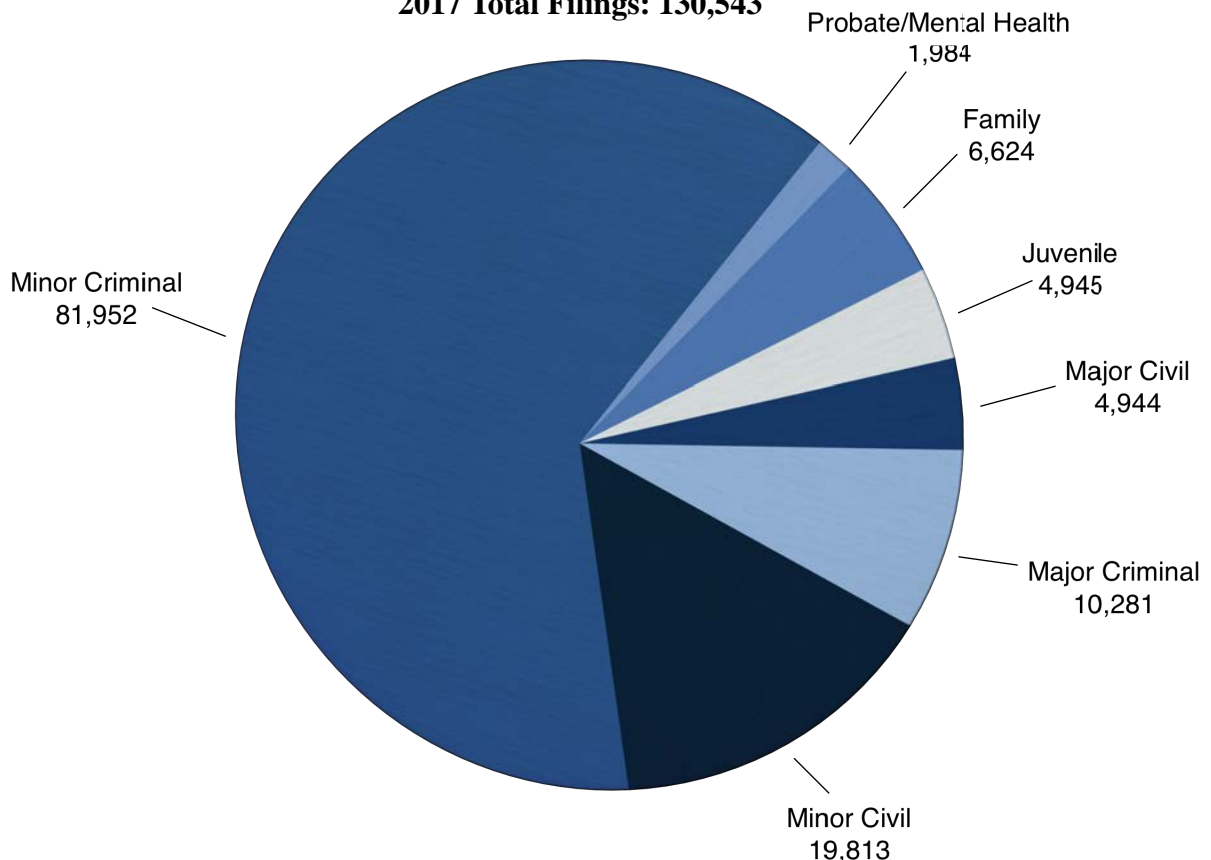
**Hon. Douglas B. Meslow, Chief Judge  
Hon. Susan R. Miles,  
Assistant Chief Judge**

**Paul Patterson, District Administrator**

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

## 2017 Tenth Judicial District Case Filings

**2017 Total Filings: 130,543**





### **New Administrator Among District Leadership Changes**

In June 2017, Tenth Judicial District Chief Judge Douglas B. Meslow announced that Paul Patterson had been appointed to serve as the new District Administrator of Minnesota's Tenth Judicial District. As District Administrator, Patterson oversees the administrative affairs of the District, including management and processing of all court records and files, district budgeting and accounting, human resources, and maintenance of the District's computer network. Patterson replaced Mike Moriarty, who retired after serving 13 years as Tenth Judicial District Administrator.

Also in 2017, Sheldon Clark was promoted from Self-Help Center Attorney to be the new Manager of Litigant Services for the Tenth Judicial District. In this role, Clark is responsible for managing the District's Self-Help Center team, the Early Neutral Evaluation program, and project management at the District level.



*Tenth Judicial District  
Administrator Paul  
Patterson*

### **Judges, Court Staff Work to Enhance Community Outreach**

The Tenth Judicial District held several community outreach events in 2017:

- The Tenth Judicial District Equal Justice committee held a community dialogue at the Fridley Community Center on January 31, 2017. The event was well-attended and the court received beneficial feedback from the community. The District is planning to host another event in 2018 to encourage on-going communication in the community.
- In addition, Law Day events were convened in both Anoka and Wright counties. Both events offered eight different free legal advice clinics to the public, tours, and presentations. In Anoka County, students from two area high schools attended a Judicial Branch education program. In total, more than 500 people attended the Law Day events in Anoka and Wright counties.
- Also, Anoka County District Court recognized National Adoption Day at a special session of court on Saturday, November 18, 2017. This session finalized adoption proceedings and celebrated multiple adoptions.

### **Treatment Courts Celebrate One-Year Anniversaries**

The Tenth Judicial District treatment courts successfully completed their first year of serving the community in 2017. Anoka County's Drug Court and Veterans' Court hit their one-year anniversaries in December. Wright County's Drug Court completed its first year in November.

## **Courthouse Building and Security Improvements**

Throughout 2017, there were several projects underway to enhance the functionality and security of Tenth Judicial District court facilities:

- Construction is underway in Sherburne County on a new court facility expected to open in June 2018.
- Wright County is in the planning phase of building a new court facility, which is scheduled for occupancy in the fall of 2019.
- Three Anoka County courtrooms built in the 1960s were remodeled to bring them into the modern era, including state of the art technology and improved in-custody facilities.
- Six counties in the District received grants through the Safe and Secure Courthouse Initiative: Anoka, Chisago, Isanti, Kanabec, Pine, and Washington. All of these counties are in the process of enhancing security in large part due to the funds received (see page 14 for more information on this courthouse security grant program).

## **Increasing Access to Services for Court Users**

The Tenth Judicial District Litigant Services Team works throughout the District in the areas of the Self Help Center, the Early Neutral Evaluation (ENE) program, and legal research as it pertains to procedures in court administration offices.

The Team added an additional staff member in 2017, and expanded hours in all eight of the counties in the District. Nearly 6,000 self-represented litigants were served by the Team in 2017.

The ENE program hosted a Continuing Legal Education event in 2017 for providers to learn different techniques as it relates to their roles. The District also piloted ENE's new Provider Availability Scheduling System, designed to enhance and simplify provider scheduling.

## **Enhancing Customer Service and Convenience**

Kiosks to allow jurors to electronically check themselves in for service were installed throughout the counties in the Tenth Judicial District in 2017. Currently, planning is underway to utilize an electronic notice feature to better assist the public in the very important role of jury service. The notices will provide potential jurors with convenient reminders of their service and an enhanced ability to check themselves in each day.

The District has also implemented a new interpreter scheduling program, along with hiring a full-time Spanish interpreter. This interpreter is available to work in each of the counties in the District. The implementation of this program allows the District to better provide service to court users, with the added benefit of cost savings.

# Court of Appeals

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 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 Smith 2016 - present
Judge Diane Bratvold 2016 - present
Judge James Florey 2017 - present

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

2017 Court of Appeals Case Information		
	Cases Filed	Dispositions
General Civil	451	476
Criminal	859	827
Administrative Rule	3	3
Economic Security	104	102
Writs - Certiorari	68	74
Habeas / Certified Questions	16	26
Commitment	33	37
Family	175	196
Juvenile Delinquency	24	14
Juvenile Protection	94	92
Implied Consent	28	22
Discretionary Review / Writs	57	58
Probate	33	31
Unlawful Detainer / Eviction	28	29
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,973</b>	<b>1,987</b>

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# Court of Appeals in 2017

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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 2017, Judge James Florey joined the Court, succeeding Judge Larry Stauber, Jr., who retired. A number of senior judges also assisted the Court throughout 2017.

The Court disposed of approximately 2,000 cases in 2017, filing opinions in 1,365 cases, issuing 1,875 orders, hearing oral arguments in about 670 cases, and considering about the same number at non-oral conferences. The number of published, precedential opinions increased more than 60% as compared to 2016 (from 94 to 152), as the Court addressed a number of cases involving issues of first impression and public importance. Filings in 2017 were up slightly, with noticeable increases in the number of juvenile delinquency and criminal appeals. More than 160 appeals were referred to the Court's Family Law Appellate Mediation Program in 2017. Almost 30% of those cases were resolved by agreement of the parties in 2017, reducing overall costs and delays for many families.

In July 2016, e-filing became mandatory for all attorneys, court reporters, and state agencies. E-filing remains optional for self-represented litigants. In the first full year of e-filing, more than 47,000 documents were e-filed with the appellate courts. 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 appellate clerk'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 on 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:*

Election Disputes; Professional Regulation

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 - February 2018
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

2017 Supreme Court Case Information		
Direct Appeals		
	Cases Filed	Dispositions
Workers' Compensation	14	21
Tax Court	12	7
Professional Regulation	57	59
First Degree Homicide	19	16
Writs	1	1
Miscellaneous	5	5
<b>Total Direct Appeals</b>	<b>108</b>	<b>109</b>
Petitions for Further/Accelerated Review (PFR/PAR)		
Filed		635
Review Denied		559
Granted Further/Accelerated Review		81
Other (Remand, dismiss)		11
Opinions		
Affirmed		56
Affirmed in Part		5
Reverse/Remand		27
Other (Discipline, dismiss, other disposition)		16
<b>Total</b>		<b>104</b>



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# Supreme Court in 2017

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## Supreme Court Begins Livestreaming of Oral Arguments

In an effort to increase public access to the work of the state's highest court, the Minnesota Supreme Court announced in August that it would begin livestreaming video of oral arguments held in both the Minnesota State Capitol Courtroom and the Supreme Court's courtroom in the Minnesota Judicial Center.

The first oral arguments livestreamed by the Supreme Court were held on August 28, in Case No. A17-1142, *The Ninetieth Minnesota State Senate, et al. vs. Mark B. Dayton, et al.* Thousands of Minnesotans tuned in to watch the proceedings, expanding access to a hearing held in a packed courtroom.



By the end of 2017, the Supreme Court had livestreamed 41 oral arguments. Both the livestreams of oral arguments, and recorded video of oral arguments available on-demand, are available at [www.mncourts.gov/SupremeCourt](http://www.mncourts.gov/SupremeCourt).

## 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, including: the Lawyers Professional Responsibility Board; the Client Security Board; the Board of Law Examiners; the Board of Legal Certification; and the Board of Continuing Legal Education, which includes the Lawyer Registration Office.

*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. The following data was reported in 2017.

**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	346	207	72	17	2	644	786
Black/African American	197	135	110	39	17	498	582
Hispanic/Latino	140	67	46	13	1	267	311
Native American/ Alaskan	36	31	31	5	4	107	118
White/Caucasian	5,966	4,928	4,117	3,482	1,634	20,127	23,259
Multiple	158	67	29	13	8	275	312
Choose Not to Answer	1,627	833	586	392	153	3,591	4,098
<b>Totals</b>	<b>8,470</b>	<b>6,268</b>	<b>4,991</b>	<b>3,961</b>	<b>1,819</b>	<b>25,509</b>	<b>29,466</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	3,476	2,746	1,852	1,085	127	9,286	11,161
Male	3,884	3,045	2,790	2,684	1,613	14,016	15,810
Choose Not to Answer	1,110	477	349	192	79	2,207	2,495
<b>Total</b>	<b>8,470</b>	<b>6,268</b>	<b>4,991</b>	<b>3,961</b>	<b>1,819</b>	<b>25,509</b>	<b>29,466</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	50	61	26	5	0	142	786
Black/African American	16	30	27	7	4	84	582
Hispanic/Latino	13	19	11	1	0	44	311
Native American/ Alaskan	3	2	6	0	0	11	118
White/Caucasian	512	947	868	618	187	3,132	23,259
Multiple	7	19	5	5	1	37	312
Choose Not to Answer	115	145	151	73	23	507	4,098
<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>29,466</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	352	669	546	280	28	1,875	11,161
Male	305	468	459	382	180	1,794	15,810
Choose Not to Answer	59	86	89	47	7	288	2,495
<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>29,466</b>

# Appellate Clerk's Office

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 seven staff members who are responsible for maintaining accurate appellate records and for providing customer service 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.

During 2016, the average number of monthly e-filings was 1,320 per month, which represented approximately 60% of all appellate filings being submitted electronically. In 2017, the number increased to 2,460 e-filings per month and translated to 93% of all appellate filings being submitted electronically.

In July 2017, the Clerk's Office transitioned appellate e-filing support to the eFiling and eService (eFS) Support Center. This resource provides appellate stakeholders with access to specialized, technical support during court business hours. The partnership between State Court Administration's Court Services Division and the Clerk's Office has led to greater efficiencies and faster filing evaluations by allowing Clerk's Office staff to focus on docketing incoming filings, while Court Services staff handle e-filing support questions.

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.

Year	Number of SCAP Cases Initiated
2009	54
2010	62
2011	98
2012	87
2013	106
2014	108
2015	185
2016	200
2017	193

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# State Court Administration

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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, and education and training to court staff, judges, and justice partners 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.

**The 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.



*The State Court Administrator's Office is located in the Minnesota Judicial Center in St. Paul.*

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# State Law Library

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

Library staff assist attorneys and the public in finding legal materials via e-mail, phone, live chat, and in person. In 2017, Library staff answered more than 7,500 questions. Additionally, more than 2,500 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 trial court and appellate court documents from its public terminals.

The State Law Library has two free clinics for people seeking advice on appeals. The Library hosts a clinic for people seeking to appeal a denial of unemployment benefits to the Court of Appeals. In 2017, the clinic assisted 37 people with their unemployment appeals. In January 2016, the Library opened an Appeals Self-Help Clinic for most other types of appeals. During 2017 the attorney volunteers met with 143 people.

In April 2017, the Law Library began offering legal reference service in some St. Paul Public Library branches. The response from the public has been very positive. With this service, the State Law Library is able get into the community and reach people who don't know about the Library, or don't know it is open to everyone.

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 2017, the Library answered more than 36,000 requests. The program expenses are funded by inmate canteen and phone service fees, 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. It 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, 2017

Hon. Lorie S. Gildea (Chair) <i>Chief Justice, Supreme Court</i>	Hon. Jay D. Carlson <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. James B. Florey <i>Judge, Court of Appeals</i>	Hon. Krista K. Martin <i>Judge, Tenth District</i>
Hon. Kathryn D. Messerich <i>Chief Judge, First District</i>	Jeffrey G. Shorba <i>State Court Administrator</i>
Hon. Thomas W. Pugh <i>Judge, First District</i>	Dawn Torgerson <i>Deputy State Court Administrator</i>
Hon. John H. Guthmann <i>Chief Judge, Second District</i>	Heather Kendall <i>District Administrator, Second District</i>
Hon. Jodi L. Williamson <i>Chief Judge, Third District</i>	Marieta Johnson <i>District Administrator, Sixth District</i>
Hon. Ivy S. Bernhardson <i>Chief Judge, Fourth District</i>	Tim Ostby <i>District Administrator, Seventh/Eighth Districts</i>
Hon. Jeannice Reding <i>Judge, Fourth District</i>	Karen Messner <i>Court Administrator, Sibley and McCleod Counties</i>
Hon. Michelle A. Dietrich <i>Chief Judge, Fifth District</i>	Hon. Teresa R. Warner <i>MDJA President, Second District</i>
Hon. Sally L. Tarnowski <i>Chief Judge, Sixth District</i>	

# Minnesota Judicial District Chief Judges

As of December 31, 2017



Hon. Paul T. Benshoof  
9th Judicial District



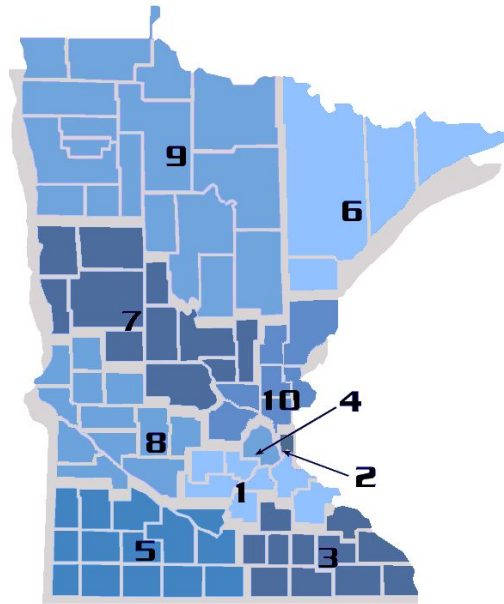
Hon. Sally L. Tarnowski  
6th Judicial District



Hon. Douglas B. Meslow  
10th Judicial District



Hon. Jay D. Carlson  
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. Michelle A. Dietrich  
5th Judicial District



Hon. Kathryn D. Messerich  
1st Judicial District



Hon. Jodi L. Williamson  
3rd Judicial District



**2017 Annual Report to the Community**  
**Produced by the State Court Administrator's Office**  
**March 2018**