

Minnesota Judicial Branch Organization

Supreme Court

- Seven Justices.
- The state's court of last resort.
- Reviews more than 800 cases a year.
- Oversees the practice of law.

Court of Appeals

- Sixteen judges who hear cases in three-judge panels.
- Considers more than 2,400 appeals each year.

District Courts

- 281 district court judges in 10 judicial districts throughout the state.
- The trial court has original jurisdiction in all civil and criminal actions within district boundaries.
- Each year, there are more than 2 million cases filed in Minnesota's district courts.

Judicial Branch Administration

- The Chief Justice is responsible for management of the Supreme Court and the entire Judicial Branch and also serves as chair of the Judicial Council.
- The Judicial Council serves as the policy-making body of the Judicial Branch.
- The Chief Judge of the Court of Appeals is responsible for management of that Court.
- A chief judge and assistant chief judge, assisted by a judicial district administrator, manage each of the 10 judicial districts. A court administrator is responsible for day-to-day operations in each county.
- The State Court Administrator (SCA) serves as staff to the Judicial Council. The SCA Office provides support services to the Judicial Branch.

For More Information:
State Court Administrator's Office

Jeff Shorba

State Court Administrator

Phone: 651-296-2474

Judicial Branch Website

<http://www.mncourts.gov/>

Fifth Judicial District

Richard H. Fasnacht

5th District Administrator

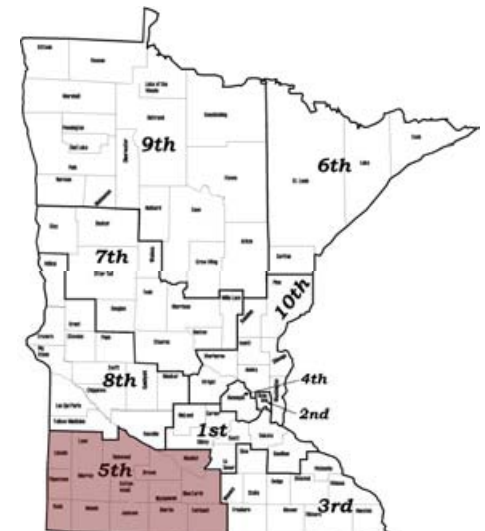
Phone: 507-344-4942

E-mail: dick.fasnacht@courts.state.mn.us



**MINNESOTA
JUDICIAL BRANCH**

**What You Should
Know About
Minnesota's
Courts ...**



The Fifth Judicial District

Minnesota's Third Branch of Government

- Article 1, Section 8 of the Minnesota Constitution states: Every person is entitled to... obtain justice freely and without purchase, completely and without denial, promptly and without delay...
- Administering justice is a **core government function**.
- The Judicial Branch mission is to provide justice through a system that ensures equal access for the fair and timely resolution of cases and controversies.

The Judicial Branch has targeted three strategic priorities for progress and innovation:

1. Access to Justice
 - Complete transition to unified case management system (MNCIS)
 - Institute electronic case initiation
 - Expand resources for pro se litigants
2. Administering Justice For Effective Results
 - Integrate judicial problem-solving approach for dealing with alcohol and other drug (AOD) offenders
 - Promote judicial approaches which target early resolution of cases involving families and children.
 - Institutionalize Children's Justice Initiative
3. Public Trust and Confidence
 - Strengthen public education regarding the role of the courts.
 - Adopt statewide core judicial branch goals.
 - Assure equitable treatment of all people in the court system regardless of race or ethnicity.
 - Assure impartial decision-making through the examination of judicial selection processes in Minnesota.

Courts in your area Fifth Judicial District:

Chief Judge

Bradley C. Walker

Assistant Chief Judge

Michelle Dietrich

Judges:

Darci J. Bentz

Leland Bush

Robert A. Docherty

Krista J. Jass

Kurt D. Johnson

Allison Krehbiel

Gordon L. Moore, III

Douglas L. Richards

Terry S. Vajgrt

Robert D. Walker

Todd W. Westphal

Christina Wietzema

5th Judicial District Initiatives

Drug Courts: Adult drug courts are available in all of the counties in the 5th District. The courts are: Brown/Nicollet/Watonwan, Blue Earth, Faribault/Martin/Jackson (FMJ), Minnesota Cornerstone which services Cottonwood, Murray, Nobles, Pipestone and Rock, and Southwest Community Drug Court serving Lincoln, Lyon and Redwood counties. A multi-county veteran's court was recently implemented for offenders who are also veterans; and two family dependency treatment courts operating in Blue Earth and FMJ counties address the needs of parents with substance use disorders.

Ignition Interlock: The 5th District is piloting an Integrated Judicial and Administrative Ignition Interlock Program that coordinates with the current MN Department of Public Safety administrative program. Ignition interlock is a proven tool that reduces impaired driving while installed on a DWI offender's vehicle. The target population is first-time DWI offenders with an alcohol concentration level of 0.16 and above; and repeat offenders.

Early Neutral Evaluation Program: 5th District Judges have begun utilizing ENE services to help parents with custody or visitation disputes. With early intervention by the Judge and an ENE team, parents understand and realize what is likely to happen if they pursue the dispute to trial. This "reality check" of a probable outcome saves parents time, money, and heartache. More importantly, the children are not subject to what might otherwise be a long, contentious custody battle.

New Case Management System: Implementation of the court's new case management system, MNCIS, was completed throughout the 5th District in April, 2006. A side benefit of the new system is that it allows easier access to court information at no cost to other government agencies such as county attorney, public defender, law enforcement, and probation offices. Approximately 75 non-court agencies in the 5th District have been granted MNCIS access. In addition, public access terminals are located in every 5th District Courthouse. MNCIS has proven to be much more "user friendly" for the general public's use in obtaining court information.

Caseload Increases: Like other parts of the State, 5th District judges have experienced significant caseload increases in recent years. Current caseload statistics indicate the 5th District now needs one more judge to effectively handle caseloads in all of our 15 counties. The additional judge need is due in large part to an increase in major criminal case filings within counties on the eastern side of the district.