
A Report to the Community

The 2008 Annual Report of the Minnesota Judicial Branch



**MINNESOTA
JUDICIAL
BRANCH**

Letter from the Chief Justice



Dear fellow Minnesotan,

I am pleased to present you with the Minnesota Judicial Branch's 2008 Report to the Community. Over the last few years, Minnesota's courts have undergone many changes with the goal of improving our ability to fulfill our core mission: *To provide justice through a system that assures equal access for the fair and timely resolution of cases and controversies.*

We have worked to reduce administrative costs, increase our efficiency and make use of new information technologies to improve service to court users, reduce costs and streamline our work. We are employing nation-leading tools, technologies and innovations to measure and improve our performance. In the brief report that follows, you will learn more about these exciting advances.

We remain committed to providing excellent service, more efficient operations and more effective use of judicial resources in the years ahead. But we will need the support of our partners in the Executive and Legislative Branches, along with the citizens of this state, to sustain this commitment to improvement during the tough economic times ahead.

This report is one of many ways we seek to earn that support. We look forward to your questions, your input and your partnership in the years ahead.

Sincerely,

Eric J. Magnuson
Chief Justice
Minnesota Supreme Court

The Minnesota Judicial Branch

The Judicial Branch Mission

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

Judicial Branch FY 2008 Budget

\$246,077,000 - District Courts
\$44,592,000 - Supreme Court/State Court Administration
\$9,766,000 - Court of Appeals
\$300,435,000 - Total

Judicial Branch Staff and Judges

2,890 - Permanent full-time employee positions authorized
315 - Number of authorized judgeships
Supreme Court- 7
Court of Appeals- 19
District (Trial) Courts- 289

Judicial Districts: 10

Number of Judicial Branch hearing facilities: 101

Oldest Courthouse: Washington County Courthouse, 101 West Pine Street, Stillwater, 1869.

Number of Courthouses on the National Register of Historic Places: 62



The Winona County Courthouse was completed in 1889. In 1970, the courthouse became the first Minnesota courthouse to be placed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Eric J. Magnuson

Named Chief Justice

In March 2008, Governor Tim Pawlenty announced the appointment of Eric J. Magnuson to succeed Russell A. Anderson as the 21st Chief Justice of the Minnesota Supreme Court effective June 1, 2008.

Prior to his appointment, Magnuson worked as an attorney specializing in appellate law. Magnuson was a law clerk to former Minnesota Supreme Court Chief Justice Robert Sheran from 1976 to 1977, and a law clerk to former Minnesota Supreme Court Chief Justice Douglas K. Amdahl, who was a Hennepin County district court judge at the time. Magnuson earned his juris doctorate degree from William Mitchell College of Law in St. Paul, and his Bachelor of Arts degree in history from the University of Minnesota.



Chief Justice Eric J. Magnuson in his chamber.

“Eric is nationally recognized for his appellate advocacy and writing, and is consistently ranked among the top appellate attorneys by his peers,” said Pawlenty in announcing the appointment. “Eric has also taken on leadership positions in his law firms and in legal professional associations, which will serve him well as he assumes the leadership of the state’s judicial system.”



Supreme Court Chief Justice Eric J. Magnuson (L) and Court of Appeals Chief Judge Edward Toussaint (R).

Building a 21st Century Court System

In 2005, Minnesota completed the transition to a fully unified, state-funded trial and appellate court system. The unification of the formerly county-based district (trial) courts and appellate courts was undertaken to ensure equal access to justice and court services for all Minnesotans, with the promise of improving system efficiency and reducing costs. Only three years old, the transformation has already yielded numerous benefits.

Reducing Administrative Costs/Promoting Cross-Jurisdictional Collaboration



At one time, each of Minnesota's 87 counties had its own court administrator. Today, nearly 40 percent of counties share a court administrator, and in some areas, courts in three counties are overseen by a single court administrator. In addition, multi-court work groups and budgeting have been created to cut costs, share workloads and improve consistency of practice and procedure.

Administration for two of the 10 judicial districts, the Seventh and the Eighth, has been combined, with the districts sharing a judicial district administrator and staff. Additional administrative consolidations are in the planning stage or under consideration.

Multi-county drug courts have been created in an effort to bring this cost-effective strategy for reducing recidivism and improving public safety to less populated regions of the state. By the end of 2008, Minnesota had three multi-county drug courts serving: Brown-Nicollet-Watonwan counties, Clay-Becker counties, and Faribault-Martin-Jackson counties.

Restructuring of State Mandated Programs

As part of the conversion to state funding, 87 disparate Guardian ad Litem, interpreter, jury, and psychological services programs have been transformed into uniform state systems delivering higher quality services at lower unit costs. As a result, hiring qualifications and training have been standardized, administrative costs reduced and complaint and disciplinary procedures standardized and streamlined.

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In 2008, work began on an effort to consolidate 87 separate district court jury databases into a single statewide database, enabling the automation of several functions, such as jury payroll. Consolidation of this jury information will provide a means to centralize printing and mailing of jury notices, thus providing savings on labor and postage statewide. In conjunction with the consolidation, a new Website will be created in 2009 where prospective jurors can go 24/7 to get information and to fill out their juror summons questionnaires, saving the time court staff now spend processing and recording questionnaires received by mail.



Hennepin County District Court Judge Kathryn Quaintance celebrates Adoption Day with a family.

Consolidating Collection of Past Due Fines and Fees

In an effort to increase collections of overdue fines and fees, several Minnesota courts in 2008 began turning over outstanding court fines, fees and restitution to a collection agency under contract with the Minnesota Judicial Branch. Initially 538,000 cases and \$71 million in debt were referred to the agency. More cases were eventually referred. By the end of 2008, \$22.9 million in overdue debt was collected from 765,000 cases. In 2008, work began on a procedure that will automate and further improve the collection process.

Using Technology to Improve Efficiency, Increase Service to the Public and Reduce Costs

In April 2008, a multi-year effort to consolidate 10 disparate court case management databases, some dating to the 1970s, into a new, state-of-the-art computerized case management system, was completed on time and on budget. The Minnesota Court Information System (MNCIS), provides a Web-based technology platform that enables the sharing of records between criminal justice agencies, eliminates redundant data entry, increases information access to justice partners and to the public and reduces errors and costs.

The creation of a single, Web-enabled district court case management system led quickly to the development of a service that allows the public to access public case records through the Judicial Branch Website, www.mncourts.gov. Remote access to district court case records quickly became the most popular feature on the Website. In 2008, the first full year of this service, more than one million case searches were performed.

At the same time, a 2008 update to the Appellate Court Case Management System has made that service, which provides the register of action in existing cases and includes scheduling of upcoming oral arguments, searchable through the Judicial Branch Website.

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Meanwhile, with the completion of MNCIS, work began on the effort to automate case filing, traffic citation processing and the collection and processing of fines and fees for low level “payable” offenses.

E-filing of Criminal Complaints

E-filing of criminal complaints provides the ability to pass criminal case filing information electronically from law enforcement agencies directly into the court’s case management system. The e-filing process leverages technology to reduce the need for court staff to enter much case data manually, eliminate duplicate entries and other errors and speed up the sharing of information with justice system partners.



Former Chief Justice Russell A. Anderson presents a plaque to Pine County Board members in recognition of their commitment to a new courthouse in Pine City, MN.

In 2008, Ramsey and Olmsted counties joined Hennepin, St. Louis, and Carver counties in offering the e-complaint service to law enforcement agencies. As a result, 450,000 e-complaint filings were completed in 2008.

One of the more promising initiatives involves the automating of the processing of traffic citations issued by local law enforcement officers. By early 2009, four courts were receiving citations directly from law enforcement agencies electronically: Anoka, Dakota, Sherburne and Washington. Additional counties testing e-citations include Rice, Steele and Scott counties.

Centralized Payable Processing

Each year the courts collect more than \$200 million in fines and fees, which are then disbursed to municipalities, the state general fund and local programs designated by law to receive those funds. None of the proceeds go to fund the courts.

Work began in 2008 on an automated process that will calculate how the collected funds should be disbursed. The automation will reduce court staff time spent entering payments and calculating the fee splits and disbursing the funds to the appropriate recipient.

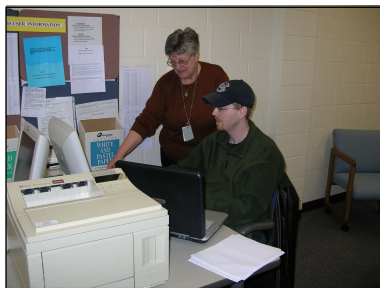
A pilot project begun in December 2008 will eventually be expanded to implement this process in nine courts: Hennepin, Ramsey, Dakota, Scott, Olmsted, Anoka, Washington, Stearns and St. Louis. These nine counties account for 860,000 of the 1.2 million payable citations filed state-wide annually.

Internet and Telephone Payment of Fines and Fees

The MNCIS citation Web and phone payment project provides the public with the ability to obtain information about and pay traffic, parking, and other citations via the Web or phone using a credit card. In addition to providing a convenient payment method and reducing the number of routine questions asked of court staff, the process automates previously manual processes, such as receipting a payment, generating notice to Driver and Vehicle Services that a driver's license should be reinstated or case record updating.

Starting in March 2008, MNCIS citation Web payment was piloted in Dakota County District Court. In 2008, close to \$400,000 was paid via citation Web payment, representing over 3,200 citations that did not require that a court clerk manually enter a payment and dispose of the case. Pilot testing of telephone payment functionality is scheduled to begin in early 2009. The goal is to expand these customer friendly and labor saving services to other courts in 2009 and 2010.

Virtual Self-Help Center



Washington County District Court Self-Help Center.

To simplify access to the courts for the tens of thousands of people who go to court without legal representation (pro se) and to improve the operational efficiency of handling pro se cases, the Minnesota Judicial Branch launched a statewide virtual Self-Help Center. This virtual service includes a robust Self-Help Website, and the option to get one-on-one help via telephone and email from three court staff who are specially trained in educating people about the law, court forms and procedures and making referrals to legal advice resources. The public can use the virtual Self-Help Center from anyplace with Internet

access, including public Self-Help computer workstations located in each district courthouse. The workstations have phones with direct-dial access to the staff call-center, and people can reach the call-center from their personal phones as well. In 2008, the statewide Self-Help staff provided one-on-one assistance to more than 5,000 people with cases in Minnesota courts, and the Website was visited by more than 190,000 individual users.

Family Court Early Evaluation Program Honored For Innovation, Effectiveness

The Fourth Judicial District (Hennepin County) Family Court's Early Neutral Evaluation Program was selected as a finalist from more than 600 applicants competing for a prestigious Innovations in Government Award from the Ash Institute For Democratic Governance at the John. F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University. Winners will be announced in September 2009.



Hennepin County Family Justice Center.

The Early Neutral Evaluation (ENE) process pairs parties to child custody disputes with skilled teams of evaluators early in the case to reduce conflicts and improve the prospects for a settlement acceptable to both parties. Settlement rates have exceeded 70 percent in more than 2,300 child custody and parenting time cases since the program began in 2002. ENE teams typically spend less than six hours on each case, compared to an average of 45 hours for traditional evaluations.

“The Hennepin County Court Early Evaluation program is becoming a best practice for family cases throughout Minnesota,” said Judge Tanja Manrique, Presiding Judge for Hennepin Family Court. “Courts in Duluth, Anoka, St. Paul, Grand Rapids, Stillwater and a dozen counties in Southern Minnesota are implementing the model and tailoring it to serve local needs.”

Study: Minnesota’s Drug Courts Improve Public Safety and Save Taxpayers Money



Former Chief Justice Russell Anderson speaks at the third anniversary celebration of the Ramsey County DWI Court.

A preliminary evaluation of Minnesota’s drug courts was completed in 2008. In January 2002, there were two drug courts in the state of Minnesota. By the end of 2008, there were 35 drug courts serving 902 participants. Since July 2001, 552 participants have graduated from Minnesota drug courts.

A drug court is a non-adversarial, treatment-based court program that utilizes justice system partners to closely monitor a defendant’s progress toward recovery through ongoing treatment, frequent drug testing, regular court appearances, strict supervision and the use of immediate sanctions and incentives to foster positive behavior change.

A three-year study of 382 drug court participants in six of Minnesota’s oldest drug courts found that participants spent, on average, half as much time incarcerated as the comparison group, resulting in a savings of \$7,040 of public costs per participant, or a total of \$2.7 million. Fifteen percent of drug court graduates spent no days incarcerated, compared to only seven percent of the comparison group.

Of those graduates who entered drug court without a job, 74 percent left employed or as a full-time student. Two-thirds (67 percent) of graduates that were homeless or had temporary housing upon entry were renting or owned their residence at graduation.

Minnesota’s results reflect studies by several states that have shown the drug court model of adjudicating defendants with drug or alcohol addictions is more effective than traditional approaches in reducing recidivism, which improves public safety, and reducing jail time, which saves taxpayers money.

Measuring What Matters

One of Minnesota's nationally renowned trial court judges, Hennepin County District Court Judge Kevin Burke, often says, "We measure the things we care about; we care about the things we measure. To improve performance, we must first measure it."

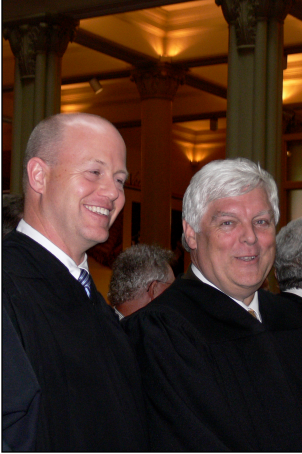
The ability to track and improve performance throughout the judiciary is a revolutionary new tool with the potential to yield significant dividends for court customers, business partners and taxpayers.

The Minnesota Judicial Branch performance measurement system is:

- **Comprehensive** – measurements span the work of the Branch, covering everything from fairness to timeliness to employee satisfaction. During survey periods, court customers in every courthouse in the state were asked to provide their thoughts on a wide variety of topics immediately following their service experience.
- **Institutionalized** – the judiciary has integrated the work of its employees around a set of goals and measurable outcomes.
- **Ground-breaking** - no longer the province of Fortune 500 companies and business schools, performance measurement is enabling Minnesota's courts to become a more efficient, effective and accountable public system. The Minnesota Judicial Branch is leading the way nationally in measuring fairness, workload and performance.

"The Minnesota state trial courts are a national leader in implementing and using a comprehensive system of court performance measurement aimed at providing high quality service to the public and making the most effective use of public resources. Minnesota continues to be a highly innovative role model for other states across the country."

Brian Ostrum, National Center for State Courts



Judge David Knutson, Dakota County, and Judge Tom Neuville, Rice County.

Hennepin County District Court was the first jurisdiction in the country to integrate measures of fairness into the daily workings of court. Collaborating with researchers from New York and Columbia Universities, Hennepin County challenged the traditional notion that litigants' perceptions of the courts were largely based on the outcome of their case, i.e. winners in court were pleased and losers were not. Research has demonstrated that litigants who felt they were treated fairly, who understood the court's order, who believed they were listened to and whose cases were resolved in a timely manner were more likely to abide by the court's orders and had higher levels of confidence in the judiciary, regardless of outcome. In fact, fair treatment – the court's core mission -- mattered twice as much to litigants as the outcome of their case.

Parallel to this effort, the Minnesota Judicial Branch began working with the National Center for State Courts (NCSC) to expand the courts' studies of workload performance. Minnesota was the first state in the country to complete a comprehensive, statewide study of judicial and staff workload by case type and by function, enabling a more accurate analysis of staffing needs. The study has been used in each judicial district to benchmark the number of staff needed by function and to better analyze the current deployment of staff, including determining where staffing is short, adequate or heavy.

In 2009, court officials will begin to pair this workload data with a series of national performance assessments, having identified specific measures that support Core Judicial Branch Goals. Minnesota's state courts can now justify resources and staffing with both performance and workload data, making it the first state court system in the country to be able to do so.

Core Judicial Branch Goals

Access to Justice – the Judicial Branch must be open, affordable and understandable

Timeliness – resolving cases and controversies in a timely way

Integrity and Accountability – maintaining a record system that is accurate, complete and timely

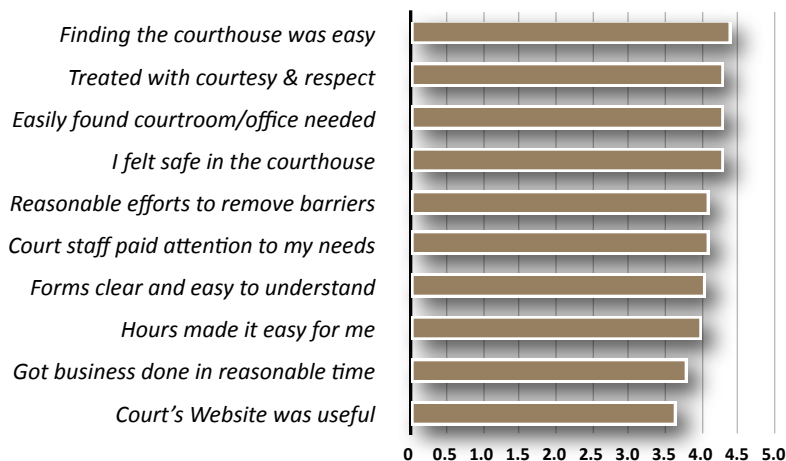
Excellence – making decisions that are fair, reasoned, understandable and resolve the controversy

Fairness and Equity – providing due process and equal protection and ensuring that jurors are representative of their communities

Quality Court Workplace Environment – ensuring that judges, staff and jurors are qualified to perform their duties and have the materials, motivation, direction, sense of mission and commitment to do quality work

The judiciary’s governing body, the Judicial Council, has approved a comprehensive series of Key Results and Measures, each of which directly supports one or more of the Branch’s goals.

In late 2007 and 2008, the Judicial Branch administered surveys to more than 6,500 court users in every county and courthouse across the state. In a parallel effort, court employees and judges were surveyed about their perceptions of the workplace. Coupled with data from the court’s new case information system (MNCIS), the figures yielded a series of court performance results that will be used as a baseline against which to compare future surveys. The details of the survey and results are publicly available on the judiciary’s Website, www.mncourts.gov, in the “Publications and Reports” section.



Reaching Out to the Community

Each year, as part of the effort to help the public better understand the role of the courts in democracy and in the justice system, the Judicial Branch undertakes a number of outreach initiatives. In 2008, judges spoke at more than 380 appearances at schools, civic groups and community events.

The Minnesota Judicial Center is the home of the Supreme Court, the Court of Appeals, and State Court Administration. More than 1,300 people, including 650 Minnesota school students, visited the Judicial Center and State Capitol Court Chamber in 2008.

The Supreme Court Traveling Oral Argument Program



The Supreme Court takes questions from Hopkins High School students following oral arguments.

Twice each year the Supreme Court holds oral arguments in high schools. The arguments are followed by a question and answer session where the justices interact with local students, share lunch with high school students, participate in classroom visits, and host a community dinner open to the public during the fall visit.

In April 2008, the Supreme Court visited Hopkins High School. The court visited Moorhead High School in October. A community dinner attended by more than 125 area citizens was held at Minnesota State University Moorhead in conjunction with the visit to Moorhead High School.

Since 2006, Supreme Court oral arguments have been recorded and made available for viewing on the Judicial Branch Website, www.mncourts.gov. On average, the videos draw more than 1,400 views a month, with a December 2008 high of over 2,500 views.

The Court of Appeals Travels, Even Virtually

Each year, in an effort to ease access to the Court of Appeals for citizens and attorneys, the court holds some of its oral arguments outside of its home in the Minnesota Judicial Center in St. Paul. In 2008, the Court of Appeals heard 168 cases in community settings. This made it possible for attorneys to participate in oral arguments via ITV (interactive television) in 29 cases.

The Minnesota Judicial Branch Hits Public Television Stations Around Minnesota

The Minnesota Judicial Branch, in collaboration with the Fourth Judicial District, produced six episodes of “Meet Your Court,” a half-hour public affairs television show about issues involving the court system. These episodes featured topics of statewide interest, including the role of drug courts in reducing recidivism and improving public safety, the changing nature of the family and its impact on the business of family courts and the long-lasting consequences of a criminal conviction. The programs were originally broadcast in the Twin Cities metropolitan area through Metro Channel Six, which reaches 175,000 homes. Subsequent broadcasts have taken place throughout the state on local cable access stations.



Kids Kourt participants at the Wright County Courthouse.

“The District Court Show,” a half-hour television program hosted by Tenth Judicial District Judge Steve Halsey, is broadcast monthly throughout the district and features topics of interest about the courts.

Second Judicial District Judges Gary Bastian and Judith Tilsen host a monthly television program, “One and the Same,” which airs on cable stations throughout Ramsey, Washington and Dakota Counties. The hour-long program covers current events relating to the justice system and topics that have some bearing on issues coming before the bench.

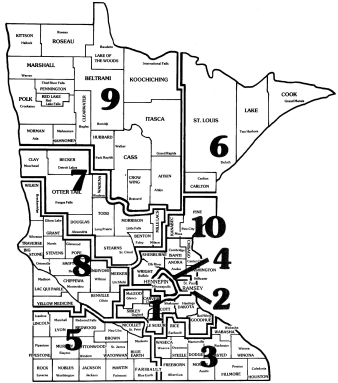
“Justice Matters: Cases That Shaped History and the Law,” about the Minnesota Supreme Court, was re-broadcast in 2008. The hour-long television program was a co-production of the Judicial Branch and TPT-TV Minnesota Channel and was broadcast on public television affiliates throughout Minnesota several times during the year.

Work began in 2008 on a half-hour program highlighting the role of Minnesota’s drug courts in reducing crime and increasing public safety. The program, “Drug Courts: Justice That Heals,” a co-production of the Judicial Branch and TPT-TV Minnesota Channel, was broadcast in March 2009.

Judges in Print

In 2008, several Minnesota judges, including Judge Steve Halsey (Buffalo), Judge George Harrelson (Marshall) and Judge Paul Rasmussen (Clearwater) published regular columns in area newspapers explaining the business of the courts and making the legal process more understandable for non-lawyers. Reader responses have shown that these columns are well-read and are considered useful by readers.

District Courts



289 Judgeships, 10 Judicial Districts

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

Appeals from: Conciliation Court*

Conciliation Division: Civil Disputes up to \$7,500

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

2008 District Court Case Information	
Major criminal (serious and other felony, gross misdemeanor DWI, other gross misdemeanors)	61,292
Major civil (personal injury, contract, property damage, harassment, other)	43,380
Probate/Mental Health (trust, guardianship/conservator, commitment, estate/other probate)	16,834
Major Family (dissolution w/child, dissolution w/o child, child support, domestic abuse, other family)	47,839
Juvenile (delinquency felony, delinquency gross misdemeanor, juvenile petty offender, dependency/neglect, truancy)	53,063
Major Case Total	222,408
Minor Civil (implied consent, unlawful detainer, conciliation)	172,535
Minor Criminal (5 th degree assault, parking, non-traffic misdemeanor, petty misdemeanor, misdemeanor DWI, other traffic)	1,539,804
Total	1,934,747

Court of Appeals

Chief Judge Edward Toussaint, Jr. 1995 - present
Judge Harriet Lansing 1983 - present
Judge R.A. "Jim" Randall 1984 - 2008
Judge Thomas Kalitowski 1987 - present
Judge Roger Klaphake 1989 - present
Judge Randolph Peterson 1990 - present
Judge Bruce Willis 1995 - 2008
Judge Gordon Shumaker 1998 - present
Judge Jill Flaskamp Hallbrooks 1998 - present
Judge Terri Stoneburner 2000 - present
Judge David Minge 2002 - present
Judge Natalie Hudson 2002 - present
Judge Wilhelmina Wright 2002 - present
Judge Christopher Dietzen 2004 - 2008
Judge Renee Worke 2005 - present
Judge Kevin Ross 2006 - present
Judge Heidi Schellhas 2008 - present
Judge Francis Connolly 2008 - present
Judge Matthew Johnson 2008 - present
Judge Michelle Larkin 2008 - present
Judge Larry Stauber, Jr. 2008 - present
Judge Louise Bjorkman 2008 - present

19 Members, 3-Judge Panels

Appeals from:

Trial court decisions (except first-degree murder convictions)
 Decisions of Commissioner of Economic Security
 Administrative agency decisions (except Tax Court & Workers' Compensation Court)

Original Actions:

Writs of mandamus or prohibition, which order a trial judge or public official to perform a certain act such as permitting media coverage of a hearing

2008 Court of Appeals Case Information		
	Cases Filed	Dispositions
General Civil	629	660
Criminal	765	827
Administrative Rule	3	2
Economic Security	172	230
Writs - Certiori	92	110
Habeas / Certified Questions	18	31
Commitment	52	47
Family	190	228
Juvenile Delinquency	36	36
Juvenile Protection	50	59
Implied Consent	41	63
Discretionary Review / Writs	93	92
Total	2,141	2,385

Court of Appeals Reduces Waiting Time for Appeals



Court of Appeals Chief Judge Edward Toussaint, Jr.

The Minnesota Court of Appeals provides citizens with prompt and deliberate review of all final decisions of the trial courts, state agencies and local governments. Court of Appeals' decisions are the final ruling in about 95 percent of the 2,400 appeals filed every year.

By law, the court must issue a decision within 90 days after oral arguments. If no oral argument is held a decision is due within 90 days of the case's scheduled conference date. This deadline is the shortest imposed on any appellate court in the nation.

By the end of 2007, a substantial backlog had developed and the court requested that the Legislature expand the 16-member court to 19 members. With the the addition of three new judges, the court embarked on an effort to reduce delays that included judges accepting additional cases.

As a result of this effort, the number of cases awaiting decisions has been reduced substantially. In December 2007, there were 674 cases awaiting scheduling. By April 2009, that number had been reduced to 254 cases. During the same period the number of cases awaiting scheduling for oral arguments was reduced from 320 to 107.

"The additional sixth panel of judges, who were sworn in on January 1, 2008, together with our other efforts has allowed us to expeditiously resolve pending appeals," said Chief Judge Edward Toussaint. "Our main focus is to resolve disputes fairly and impartially, under the law, so that the people will be well-served."

Court of Appeals Mediation Program Aims to Decrease Conflict, Reduce Costs



Court of Appeals Judge Harriet Lansing

An innovative Minnesota Court of Appeals pilot program promises to decrease conflict levels for families involved in appellate litigation, decrease the time on appeal and achieve more satisfying outcomes for litigants. The Family Law Appellate Mediation pilot program began on September 2, 2008.

"We have launched this mediation program with a strong belief, based on our research and the experience of other pioneering states, that this process will improve outcomes for families by reducing the costs of litigation, resolving cases more quickly, diminishing the level of painful conflict, improving judicial efficiency and focusing on healing rather than further damaging fundamental family relationships," said Court of Appeals Judge Harriet Lansing.

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In 2006, 2,344 cases were filed with the Court of Appeals, 245 of them related to family law. The average length of time from filing of a family law case to release of an opinion was more than 280 days.

It is estimated that 80 to 100 appellate family law cases could be resolved by mediation through the pilot program, an alternative to going through the lengthy and costly process of providing transcripts, briefs, and argument in the Court of Appeals. The program runs through August 2009.

The mediation program will include all family law cases, which generally involve disputes over property division, child custody, child support or parenting time. Limited exceptions can apply in special cases, such as those involving domestic violence. The workgroup applied for and received a \$30,000 grant from the State Justice Institute for technical assistance for training mediators, program design and development and evaluation.

“The project has been a remarkable example of how a court can fashion a positive initiative working with members of the bar and law professors who have contributed time on a pro bono basis,” said Minnesota Court of Appeals Chief Judge Edward Toussaint.



Supreme Court justices, Court of Appeals judges, retired appellate court judges, court staff and law clerks served lunch to those in need at Dorothy Day Center, St. Paul, MN, in May 2008. This was the sixth annual cookout with volunteers from the courts.

Supreme Court

7 members, En Banc panel

Appeals from:

Court of Appeals decisions

Trial court decisions if Supreme Court chooses to bypass the Court of Appeals

Tax Court decisions, Workers' Compensation Court of Appeals

Original Actions:

Review of all first-degree murder convictions

Writs of Prohibition, Writs of Habeas Corpus, Writs of Mandamus

Legislative election disputes

Chief Justice Eric Magnuson 2008 - present
Associate Justice Alan Page 1993 - present
Associate Justice Paul Anderson 1994 - present
Associate Justice Helen Meyer 2002 - present
Associate Justice G. Barry Anderson 2004 - present
Associate Justice Lorie Gildea 2006 - present
Associate Justice Christopher Dietzen 2008 - present
Chief Justice Russell Anderson 1998 - 2006; C.J. 2006 - 2008

2008 Supreme Court Case Information		
Direct Appeals		
	Cases Filed	Dispositions
Workers' Compensation	25	21
Civil	12	3
Tax Court	5	4
Attorney Discipline	58	52
Writs	5	6
First Degree Homicide	43	40
Total Direct Appeals	148	126
Petitions for Further Review (PFR)		
Filed		619
Denied		527
Granted Further Review		81
Other		15
Dispositions (PFR)		
Affirmed		22
Mixed		9
Remand / Reverse		28
Other Decision		1
Dismissal		1
Total (PFR)		61

Minnesota Judicial Council

Membership for Fiscal Year 2008

Hon. Russell A. Anderson (Chair) <i>Chief Justice, Supreme Court</i>	Hon. Michael L. Kirk <i>Chief Judge, Seventh District</i>
Hon. John Rodenberg (Vice-Chair) <i>Judge, Fifth District</i>	Hon. Paul A. Nelson <i>Chief Judge, Eighth District</i>
Hon. G. Barry Anderson <i>Associate Justice, Supreme Court</i>	Hon. Gerald J. Seibel <i>Chief Judge, Eighth District</i>
Hon. Edward Toussaint Jr. <i>Chief Judge, Court of Appeals</i>	Hon. Jon A. Maturi <i>Chief Judge, Ninth District</i>
Hon. Wilhelmina M. Wright <i>Judge, Court of Appeals</i>	Hon. Gary R. Schurrer <i>Chief Judge, Tenth District</i>
Hon. William E. Macklin <i>Chief Judge, First District</i>	Sue K. Dosal <i>State Court Administrator</i>
Hon. David L. Knutson <i>Judge, First District</i>	Jeffrey G. Shorba <i>Deputy State Court Administrator</i>
Hon. Gregg E. Johnson <i>Chief Judge, Second District</i>	Gerald J. Winter <i>District Administrator, First District</i>
Hon. William A. Johnson <i>Chief Judge, Third District</i>	Mark S. Thompson <i>District Administrator, Fourth District</i>
Hon. Lucy Ann Wieland <i>Chief Judge, Fourth District</i>	Shelley Ellefson <i>District Administrator, Third District</i>
Hon. Denise D. Reilly <i>Judge, Fourth District</i>	Judith Besemer <i>Court Administrator, Blue Earth County</i>
Hon. George I. Harrelson <i>Chief Judge, Fifth District</i>	Hon. Charles A. Porter, Jr. <i>MDJA President, Fourth District</i>
Hon. James B. Florey <i>Chief Judge, Sixth District</i>	Timothy Ostby <i>District Administrator, Seventh and Eighth Districts</i>

Chief Justice Russell Anderson Retires



In January 2008, Chief Justice Russell A. Anderson announced his intention to retire effective June 1. Anderson's tenure in public service began when he was elected Beltrami County Attorney in 1978, a position he held until 1982 when he was appointed to the district court bench by Governor Al Quie. After serving 16 years on the trial court bench chambered in Crookston, Anderson was appointed as an Associate Justice on the Supreme Court in 1998 by Governor Arne Carlson. He was appointed Chief Justice by Governor Tim Pawlenty in 2006.

As an Associate Justice on the Supreme Court, Anderson worked closely with then-Chief Justice Kathleen Blatz on completing the restructuring of the trial and appellate courts into a single, state-funded third branch of Minnesota government guided by a newly-created Minnesota Judicial Council.

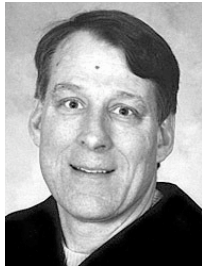
State Court Administrator Honored



Minnesota State Court Administrator Sue K. Dosal was named the recipient of the 2008 Warren E. Burger Award by the National Center for State Courts (NCSC). The award honors an individual who has made significant contributions to the improvement of state or local court operations and whose work has application to courts nationwide.

Minnesota Judicial District Chief Judges

Fiscal Year 2008



Hon. Jon A. Maturi
9th Judicial District



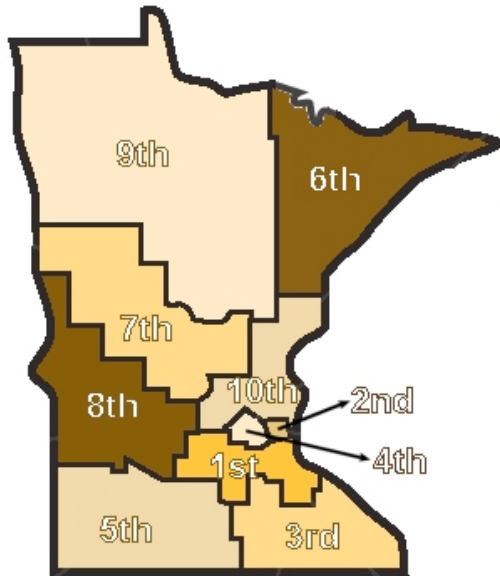
Hon. James B. Florey
6th Judicial District



Hon. Gary R. Schurrer
10th Judicial District



Hon. Michael L. Kirk
7th Judicial District



Hon. Gregg E. Johnson
2nd Judicial District



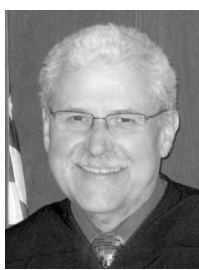
Hon. Paul A. Nelson
8th Judicial District



Hon. Lucy A. Wieland
4th Judicial District



Hon. Douglas L. Richards
5th Judicial District



Hon. William E. Macklin
1st Judicial District



Hon. William A. Johnson
3rd Judicial District