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# Report to the Community

The 2014 Annual Report of the Minnesota Judicial Branch

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**MINNESOTA  
JUDICIAL  
BRANCH**

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# Letter from the Chief Justice

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Dear fellow Minnesotans,

On behalf of the members of the Minnesota Judicial Branch, I am pleased to present the 2014 Annual Report to the Community. This report highlights the efforts of the Minnesota Judicial Branch to improve and enhance the delivery of justice in our state.

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

Judicial Branch.

Today, the Minnesota Judicial Branch is implementing an ambitious innovation agenda that is utilizing new technologies and reengineered business practices to make Minnesota's court system more accessible, more efficient, and better able to serve the needs of Minnesotans. The Judicial Branch initiated this innovation agenda in recognition of the need to make the most efficient use of the funding provided for judicial services and to maintain the quality of services provided to the public.

The Minnesota Judicial Branch's ambitious innovation agenda is driven by a comprehensive strategic planning process directed by the Minnesota Judicial Council, the policy-making body of the Judicial Branch. This report details the goals of this strategic planning process, and the initiatives underway within the state's court system to achieve these goals.

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

Sincerely,

Lorie S. Gildea  
Chief Justice  
Minnesota Supreme Court

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# The Minnesota Judicial Branch

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## By the Numbers

### **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 FY2015 Budget**

\$256,622,000 - District (Trial) Courts

\$11,035,000 - Court of Appeals

\$32,925,000 - Supreme Court/State Court Administration/State Law Library

\$300,582,000 - Total

### **Judicial Branch Members**

Approximately 2,500 permanent employees

Number of authorized judgeships - 315

Supreme Court - 7

Court of Appeals - 19

District (Trial) Courts - 289

Judicial Districts: 10

Number of Judicial Branch hearing facilities: 106

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

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

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# Minnesota Judicial Branch Strategic Plan: *A Focus on the Future*

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Minnesota's courts have a national reputation for professionalism, efficiency, and innovation. Minnesota ranks as one of the three highest scoring states in the nation on the *Justice Index*, an independent examination of the performance of state-based justice systems in assuring access to justice<sup>1</sup>. A separate survey of court stakeholders from around the country places Minnesota's courts among the best in the nation in terms of fairness, impartiality, and competence<sup>2</sup>.

The Minnesota Judicial Branch has earned this reputation by taking seriously the need to periodically assess Judicial Branch performance and identify new and innovative ways of more effectively handling cases. Every two years, the Judicial Branch conducts a comprehensive strategic planning process that defines the major goals for the next two years, and creates an operational roadmap to achieve those goals.

The Minnesota Judicial Branch's major goals for the current FY2014-15 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 this strategic plan.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.justiceindex.org/findings/>

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.instituteforlegalreform.com/uploads/sites/1/Lawsuit\\_Climate\\_Report\\_2012.pdf](http://www.instituteforlegalreform.com/uploads/sites/1/Lawsuit_Climate_Report_2012.pdf)

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# Strategic Goal #1 – Access to Justice

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## ***The eCourtMN Initiative: The largest transformation in the 150-year history of the Minnesota Judicial Branch***

In 2012, the Minnesota Judicial Branch undertook a multi-year, transformational effort aimed at making Minnesota’s courts more efficient, more accessible, and better able to serve court customers and the public. That effort – known as the eCourtMN initiative – is transforming Minnesota’s courts by replacing paper-based court files with an electronic information environment.

### **The eCourtMN Vision** **Customer Convenience and Access**

Through the eCourtMN initiative, court customers will be able to instantly and securely file and serve court documents electronically, from their home or office. Customers will no longer worry about courthouse “business hours,” and will file and review court documents 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The public will have expanded access to court records, including the ability to access public court documents via public terminals in all 87 counties.

### **A More Efficient Courtroom**

Judges and staff will have electronic tools to manage and process electronic court documents, which will increase efficiency and reduce the time and expense of managing and processing paper documents. New electronic workflows will automate “routine” administrative processes, leaving more time for judges and staff to focus on the complex issues that come before the court.

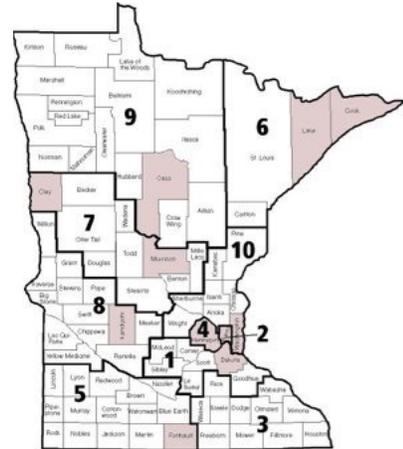
### **A Stronger Justice System**

Law enforcement, county attorneys, public defenders, and other government partners will have a new electronic portal to instantly access court documents and records, increasing efficiency and information sharing throughout the justice system.

## eCourtMN Status Report

Many of the key features of the eCourtMN initiative – including the electronic filing and service of court documents – are currently being pilot-tested in 11 counties across the state (Cass, Clay, Cook, Dakota, Faribault, Hennepin, Kandiyohi, Lake, Morrison, Ramsey, and Washington counties).

In 2014, the Judicial Branch’s efforts focused on developing the new tools judges and court staff will use to effectively manage the new electronic case record, while creating the new electronic portals court customers, justice partners, and the public will use to access electronic case records:



- The Judicial Branch installed public computer terminals in courthouses in all 87 counties. The public can use these terminals to access public court records and documents from courts across the state – regardless of which district court the documents were filed in. No longer must a member of the public travel to the county in which a case is being heard to access records associated with that case.
- The Judicial Branch also developed and began pilot-testing a new online system that government agencies will be able to use to gain instant access to relevant court documents and case records. This new portal will increase efficiency throughout the justice system.

## eCourtMN: Looking Ahead

Over the course of 2015, many of the key elements of eCourtMN will expand statewide:

- The ability to electronically file and serve court documents will be implemented in the remaining 76 counties.
- The online portal that government agencies will use to access electronic court records will move out of the pilot-testing phase, and become available to all agencies statewide.
- The new electronic tools and processes judges and court staff will use to more efficiently and effectively work with the new electronic court record will be rolled out to courthouses across the state.

### eCourtMN Receives Innovation Award

The Minnesota Judicial Branch’s eCourtMN initiative was named one of the 10 most innovative projects in state government by the University of Minnesota’s Humphrey School of Public Affairs Public and Nonprofit Leadership Center. The project received a 2014 State Government Innovation Award during an August award ceremony in St. Paul.

“Throughout the Judicial Branch, we are implementing an ambitious redesign agenda that is utilizing new technologies and reengineered business practices to make Minnesota’s court system more accessible, more efficient, and more transparent,” said Minnesota Supreme Court Chief Justice Lorie S. Gildea, who accepted the award on behalf of the Judicial Branch. “The eCourtMN Initiative is the centerpiece of these efforts, and we are so proud to have this recognition and are honored by this award.”



### Improving the Security of Minnesota Courthouses

Ensuring the safety and security of Minnesota’s courthouses is critically important to ensuring access to justice. Every Minnesotan who visits a courthouse to access his or her justice system deserves to do so in a safe and secure environment.

In 2014, the Minnesota Judicial Branch established a justice partner workgroup, the Courthouse Security Workgroup, to explore the issue of courthouse security. The Workgroup consists of judicial officers and staff, county commissioners and administrators, county attorneys, county sheriffs, and public defenders.

The Workgroup is working to develop recommendations on how Minnesota can assess the security infrastructure needs of Minnesota courthouses, the training needs of county and court staff, and possible funding options that could be explored to meet those needs. The Workgroup will continue meeting throughout 2015.

Also in 2014, the Judicial Branch secured a grant through the State Justice Institute to fund several courthouse security assessments throughout the state. The findings from those assessments will help guide the work of the Courthouse Security Workgroup. The grant also funded development of new emergency training resources for courthouse staff.

## Expanding Services for Self Represented Litigants (SRLs)

Courts across the country, including those in Minnesota, are experiencing high numbers of parties proceeding without a lawyer.

Minnesota is a nationally-recognized leader in providing services to self-represented litigants through Self-Help Centers and collaborations with bar associations, legal services organizations, and law libraries.

### “Virtual” Self-Help Center

To provide help in all counties, the Judicial Branch manages a “virtual” Self-Help Center (SHC). This Center provides assistance to self-represented litigants in a variety of ways:

- **Through the website:** General legal information, court forms, form completion software, videos and tutorials, and links to low-cost or no-cost legal advice are all available on the Self-Help Center website. There were 1,746,888 visitors to the statewide SHC homepage in 2014.
- **Over the phone:** The virtual Self-Help Center handled 18,354 phone calls from self-represented litigants in 2014.
- **Via email:** The virtual Self-Help Center answered 1,317 emails from self-represented litigants in 2014.

### 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 Self-Help staff about forms, procedures, and legal resources, have been made available in all courthouses in Minnesota.

### Walk-in Self Help Centers

Several district courts operate walk-in Self-Help Centers that can provide court users extensive information and resources about Minnesota’s judicial system.

In 2014, Hennepin County walk-in Self-Help Centers located at the Government Center and Family Justice Center provided assistance to 36,256 people.

In 2014, the Ramsey County walk-in Self-Help Center provided assistance to 15,138 people.

The Ramsey County District Court Legal Advice Clinic, which is held three afternoons per week and is staffed by volunteer attorneys, assisted 665 parties in 2014. In addition, the Court’s

Motion to Modify Child Support Clinic, which is held twice per month and is staffed by Self-Help Service Center employees, assisted 124 parties in 2014.

Each of Minnesota’s 10 judicial districts also coordinate with volunteer attorneys and other legal experts to provide free or low-cost legal advice clinics.

# Strategic Goal #2 – Effective Results

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## **New Drug Court Programs Open Across the State**

Drug courts are specialized, problem-solving court programs that target non-violent offenders who suffer from addiction to alcohol or other drugs. Drug courts closely monitor the defendant's progress toward sobriety and recovery through ongoing treatment, frequent drug testing, and regular mandatory check-in court appearances.

In 2014, the Minnesota Judicial Branch opened six new drug court programs across the state, utilizing new funding for problem-solving court programs approved by the Legislature in 2013. In addition, a grant from the Minnesota Office of Traffic Safety funded the creation of three new DWI Courts in northwestern Minnesota, which opened on January 1, 2015. With the addition of these new programs, Minnesota now has 50 operational drug courts.

Drug courts have proven their effectiveness. A 2012 statewide evaluation comparing over 500 drug court participants to nearly 650 offenders with similar profiles who did not enter a drug court program showed that drug court participants:

- Had lower recidivism rates over two-and-a-half years.
- Spent fewer days incarcerated, saving the state on average \$3,200 per participant over two-and-a-half years.
- Showed gains in employment, educational achievement, home rental or ownership, and payment of child support over the run of the program.

Below is a list of the new drug court programs that opened in the past year:

### **Opened Summer 2014**

- Eighth Judicial District Drug Court, serving multiple counties in western Minnesota
- Carlton County Drug Court
- Morrison County Drug Court
- Ramsey County Veterans Court

- Rice County Drug Court
- Steele-Waseca Drug Court

### **Opened January 2015**

- Polk County DWI Court
- Norman County DWI Court
- Red Lake County DWI Court

## New Study: DWI Courts Reduce Recidivism, Save Money

A study released in late 2014 by a national research firm shows Minnesota’s DWI Court programs are saving taxpayer money by reducing recidivism among targeted DWI offenders.

The evaluation of nine DWI Court programs in Minnesota was conducted by NPC Research of Portland, Oregon. The Minnesota Department of Public Safety’s Office of Traffic Safety contracted with NPC Research to conduct the assessment, with the goal of producing a credible and rigorous evaluation of the process and effectiveness of Minnesota’s DWI courts. The study was funded by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.

Key findings from the DWI Court evaluation include:

**DWI courts reduce recidivism:** DWI Court graduates (those who completed the DWI Court program) had lower re-arrest rates compared to DWI offenders who experienced traditional court processes at eight out of the nine DWI courts included in the evaluation. The reduction in re-arrest rates ranged from 31 percent to 78 percent among graduates of these programs.

**Minnesota DWI courts have completion rates well above the national average:** The nine DWI courts included in the evaluation had completion rates ranging from 65 percent to 86 percent, well above the national average of 53 percent for drug and DWI court programs.

**DWI courts save taxpayer money:** Six of the seven programs that were included in a cost analysis showed cost savings due to reduced recidivism for DWI court participants. The average cost savings to local agencies and the state in these six programs ranged from \$1,694 to \$11,386 per participant over two years.

DWI courts are one of several types of drug court programs in Minnesota. DWI courts are dedicated to changing the behavior of repeat DWI offenders by addressing the root cause of impaired driving: alcohol and other substance abuse. These programs pair strict offender supervision – including frequent court appearances and random drug testing – with ongoing counseling, treatment, and other social services. The programs target nonviolent DWI offenders who are considered the highest risk to reoffend: those with multiple DWIs and addictions to alcohol or other drugs.

A copy of the NPC Research evaluation can be found at [http://www.mncourts.gov/Documents/0/Public/Court\\_Information\\_Office/MN\\_DWI\\_All\\_Site\\_Summary\\_August\\_2014\\_FINAL\\_-FOR\\_OTS.pdf](http://www.mncourts.gov/Documents/0/Public/Court_Information_Office/MN_DWI_All_Site_Summary_August_2014_FINAL_-FOR_OTS.pdf).

## **New Fund Supports \$1 Million in Justice System Technology Improvements**

In late 2014, the Minnesota Judicial Council approved \$1 million in funding for justice system technology projects through the newly-established Court Technology Fund.

A temporary \$2 Technology Fee on certain court filings, established by the Legislature in 2013, is deposited in the Court Technology Fund. By statute, the proceeds from the Court Technology Fund are to be used to develop, maintain, and enhance justice system and court technologies. The statute authorizing the fee assigned responsibility for administering the Court Technology Fund to the Minnesota Judicial Council, the administrative policy-making authority of the state's Judicial Branch.

The fee went into effect on July 1, 2013, and as of September 30, 2014, had accumulated approximately \$1 million. As authorized by statute, the Judicial Council established a 10-member advisory board to provide recommendations for the fund awards. The advisory board began accepting funding applications for the first round of disbursements from the Court Technology Fund in August, and forwarded their funding recommendations to the Judicial Council in October.

In total, the advisory board reviewed and scored 26 applications requesting a total of \$3.6 million. To assist in the framing of the decision-making process, the Judicial Council set guiding principles for the advisory board to consider when reviewing funding applications. This included promoting partnerships within the justice system, improving customer service, providing greater access to the justice system, creating new efficiencies, and reducing the overall cost of the justice system. After a thorough review of the applications, the advisory board recommended, and the Judicial Council subsequently approved, funding for 13 projects for a total of \$1 million.

The Technology Fee is set to expire on June 30, 2018. The advisory board plans to accept applications for funding on an annual basis until the fee expires and the Fund is exhausted.

More information on the Court Technology Fee, including a list of court filings it applies to and a Frequently Asked Questions document, can be found at <http://www.mncourts.gov/?page=3862&item=57657>.

## **Use of eCitations and eCharging Expanding**

The Judicial Branch is working with the Bureau of Criminal Apprehension and local law enforcement agencies to promote the use of eCitations and eCharging. eCharging allows county attorneys to file complaints electronically, speeding case processing and reducing staff time needed for data entry. eCitations automatically transfer citations entered into a squad car computer to law enforcement and court databases. Both of these tools increase efficiency within the justice system, and improve the accuracy of data provided to the courts and used by law enforcement.

Currently:

- 258 law enforcement agencies are using eCitations, including 39 agencies that went live on eCitations in 2014. Earlier calculations showed that 62.9 percent of all cases statewide were filed via eCitation (including Hennepin and Ramsey counties).
- 75 of Minnesota's 87 counties are now using the Minnesota Bureau of Criminal Apprehension eCharging application, including 16 new counties added in 2014.

### **Technology Project Aims to Increase Safety of Domestic Violence Victims**

The Minnesota Judicial Branch has begun pilot testing a new system designed to improve the safety of domestic violence victims and law enforcement.

The project seeks to improve how the court system manages and shares data related to Orders for Protection (OFPs), which are civil orders issued by judicial officers to help keep domestic violence victims safe from their abusers. Currently, OFP data is stored in an aging database that is not integrated with the court's broader information system. This lack of integration means that OFP data is only transferred to law enforcement (via the Bureau of Criminal Apprehension) twice a day on weekdays, resulting in law enforcement waiting hours – or even entire weekends – to get new or updated information. This not only delays the enforcement of OFPs, but jeopardizes the safety of victims and of law enforcement officers who rely on the information contained in OFPs.

With the new OFP database currently being tested, the Judicial Branch aims to establish a more modern and efficient system for tracking and sharing OFP data between the courts and law enforcement. The new system has many benefits for domestic abuse victims and law enforcement:

- OFP data entered by court staff will be shared instantly with law enforcement and justice partners, allowing for quicker enforcement of protection orders.
- The system will increase the amount of information relayed to law enforcement, erasing possible confusion and ensuring that law enforcement is aware of potential issues or dangers that may be present when enforcing the order.
- Domestic abuse victims will be able to receive a simple e-mail notification when the OFP is served.

Development of the new system occurred throughout 2014, and testing of the new system began in January 2015. The results of the pilot will determine a statewide rollout strategy that will likely begin in the second quarter of calendar year 2015.

## Safeguarding the Assets of Vulnerable Individuals

In 2011, the Minnesota Judicial Branch implemented an online system designed for conservators – those who have been appointed to make financial decisions for vulnerable individuals. The electronic system allowed conservators to record and send their inventory and annual accountings to the court as mandated, reducing errors and enhancing the court’s auditing capability.

In 2014, the Branch developed MyMNConservator (MMC), an improved electronic system that also provides better tools for court staff and auditors to monitor conservator accounts. This new system has not only made the court system more efficient, but it is helping safeguard the assets of vulnerable individuals.

There are over 5,800 vulnerable persons in Minnesota whose assets are monitored by the court through the MMC application.

Minnesota is the only state to have an online filing tool for conservators to submit their annual accounting to the court. The plan to share this application with many other states is being coordinated through the National Center for State Courts in conjunction with the Minnesota Judicial Branch.

## Measuring Judicial Branch Performance

Since 2008, the Branch has assessed its performance through a number of indicators, including customer satisfaction, case disposition timeliness, and employee satisfaction. The results are tabulated annually in a report titled “Performance Measures – Key Results and Measures Annual Report,” which is available on the Judicial Branch website, [www.mncourts.gov](http://www.mncourts.gov).

The latest report, published in September 2014, details results in six key areas: Access to Justice, Timeliness, Integrity and Accountability, Excellence, Fairness and Equity, and Quality Workplace Environment.

The full report can be found at [http://www.mncourts.gov/Documents/0/Public/Research/Annual\\_Report\\_2014\\_Perf\\_Measures\\_Jud\\_Council.pdf](http://www.mncourts.gov/Documents/0/Public/Research/Annual_Report_2014_Perf_Measures_Jud_Council.pdf).

## New Procedures in Civil Cases Promotes Efficiency

The Expedited Litigation Track (“ELT”) is a condensed, mandatory procedure for four civil case types: Consumer Credit Contract, Other Contract, Personal Injury, and Other Civil. ELT is designed to promote efficiency in civil case processing, reduce cost to the parties and the court system, and provide a just result in the form of a quick jury trial when civil actions cannot be resolved by judicial decision (e.g., summary judgment) or by settlement. The hallmarks of the ELT are:

- A mandatory early case management conference held within 45-60 days of filing, or early judicial intervention, resulting in an order scheduling discovery and motion deadlines.

## 2014 Annual Report

- Proportionate discovery and motion practice and the use of informal processes where possible; and
- A specific trial date (aka trial date certain) within 4-6 months of filing, with limited continuances.

ELT has been operating since July 1, 2013, on a pilot project basis in two Minnesota locations: Dakota County in the First Judicial District, and St. Louis County (Duluth, MN) in the Sixth Judicial District. A report examining ELT, including participant surveys, is expected to be filed in spring 2015.

### **Increased Data Sharing Improves Accuracy of Firearm Background Checks**

Responding to a law passed by the Minnesota Legislature in 2013, the Minnesota Judicial Branch has completed major data-sharing projects that will improve the accuracy of background checks completed on prospective firearm purchasers and permit applicants.

The 2013 legislation required the Judicial Branch to send additional court case data to the National Instant Criminal Background Check System (NICS). Mandated by the Brady Handgun Violence Prevention Act of 1993 and launched by the FBI on November 30, 1998, NICS is used to instantly determine whether a prospective buyer or permit applicant is eligible to buy or carry firearms or explosives.

Since September 28, 2010, the Minnesota Judicial Branch has been electronically transmitting to NICS information on all individuals civilly committed, as well as on individuals in criminal and public juvenile delinquency cases who have been found incompetent or not guilty by reason of mental illness or mental deficiency.

Under the 2013 legislation, the Minnesota Judicial Branch was required to electronically enter into NICS information on all persons civilly committed between January 1, 1994, and September 28, 2010, if the information had not already been entered. This project, which was a coordinated and cooperative effort between the State Court Administrator's Office and the district courts statewide, required the review and updating of approximately 58,700 civil commitment cases. Consistent with the typical rates of commitment, approximately half of the cases reviewed (28,880) resulted in a commitment order and that information was electronically transmitted to NICS.

As part of another project, the Judicial Branch also enhanced the ongoing data transmitted to NICS by including case information for delinquency cases when the juvenile is 16-years-old or older and is adjudicated delinquent or placed on a diversion program for a crime of violence.

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# Strategic Goal #3 – Public Trust

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## Supreme Court Convenes in Champlin, Worthington



*Members of the Minnesota Supreme Court, staff and students of Champlin Park High School.*

Each spring and fall the Supreme Court travels to a high school in Minnesota 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 open to the public in order to reach out to citizens in the community they are visiting.

In May 2014, the Supreme Court’s traveling oral argument program was held at Champlin Park High School, where more than 850 students from high schools across the Anoka-Hennepin School District attended.

In October 2014, the Supreme Court traveled to Worthington to hold their annual community dinner and hear oral arguments at Worthington High School. The dinner was attended by approximately 180 community members, and more than 1,000 students from across the region viewed the oral arguments in the high school gymnasium. The oral arguments and the subsequent question-and-answer session with students were broadcast on local cable television stations and streamed live on the Internet.



*Students from Worthington High School and surrounding communities watch as the Minnesota Supreme Court takes the bench in the Worthington High School gymnasium.*

## Changes to “Cameras in the Courtroom” Rule Considered

In December 2014, the Minnesota Supreme Court held a public hearing on a potential change to Minnesota’s Court Rules that would ease restrictions on the use of cameras and other recording devices in courtrooms during criminal cases. The Court heard from advocates and opponents of the proposed rule change, and is currently considering whether to authorize a pilot allowing audio and video coverage of certain criminal proceedings without the consent of all parties.

Under the current Court Rules, district court judges have the authority to authorize the recording of civil proceedings upon request, but can only authorize the recording of criminal proceedings with the consent of all parties in the case. The Rules also provide a defined list of participants, case types, and proceedings that cannot be recorded, even if there is general authorization to use recording equipment.

In late 2013, the Supreme Court instructed the Advisory Committee on the Rules of Criminal Procedure to “consider expanding the use of audio and video coverage without the consent of all parties to certain criminal proceedings where concerns previously expressed regarding witnesses and jurors are minimized or largely absent, such as arraignments, pretrial hearings, and sentencing proceedings.” The Advisory Committee filed their “Report and Proposed Amendments to the Minnesota General Rules of Practice” on July 29, 2014.

The Advisory Committee recommended a temporary pilot that would establish a presumption that judges grant requests to use recording devices in criminal proceedings “after a guilty plea has been tendered or a guilty verdict has been returned.” The proposed pilot would prohibit coverage of hearings before a jury, give victims the right to object to coverage, and would not include exclusions to recording device usage that exist in current Court Rules. All types of criminal cases would be included in the scope of the pilot.

## Judicial Branch Celebrates Constitution Day

Constitution Day, September 17, is a federally recognized day that celebrates the signing and adoption of the United States Constitution in 1787. In support of this educational opportunity, the Minnesota Judicial Branch produced and made available informational materials about the Constitutions of the United States and the state of Minnesota on the “For Teachers and Students” section of the Minnesota Judicial Branch website, [www.mncourts.gov](http://www.mncourts.gov).

In addition, Minnesota Supreme Court Chief Justice Lorie S. Gildea delivered a special online video message to teachers and students in which she recognized Constitution Day. The video message from the Chief Justice was shared with schools across the state and posted on the Minnesota Judicial Branch YouTube Channel at [www.youtube.com/mnjudicialbranch](http://www.youtube.com/mnjudicialbranch).

## Outreach in the Community

Improving the public's trust and confidence in the judiciary is a commitment highlighted in the Strategic Priorities of the Minnesota Branch. Each year, the Branch undertakes a number of initiatives aimed at reaching out to and educating the citizens of the State of Minnesota. In 2014, judges and court staff spoke at more than 300 events at schools, and in front of civic and community groups, reaching more than 20,000 Minnesotans.



Minnesota Supreme Court justices and Court of Appeals judges, retired judges, law clerks, the State Law Librarian, and court staff served lunch to more than 600 people at the Dorothy Day Center in St. Paul on May 23, 2014. “We look forward to this event each year. We are honored to be able to meet and serve the clients at Dorothy Day,” said Court of Appeals Judge Jill Flaskamp Halbrooks, who co-chairs the event with Supreme Court Justice Wilhelmina Wright and Court of

Appeals Senior Judge Jim Randall. “The special lunch is a meaningful way for members of the courts and court staff to connect with the community and to provide a special meal for people in need. Meeting those we serve helps put a face to members of the Judicial Branch.” Judges and staff have served more than 6,500 meals during these events over the past 11 years.

## Partnerships Bring Understanding

The Judicial Branch partners with several organizations throughout the year, providing support through use of court facilities, and judge and staff volunteers. During the 2014 YMCA Youth in Government Model Assembly program held at the Minnesota Capitol complex, Supreme Court justices and Court of Appeals judges helped prepare students for service as judges, and administered oaths of office to Youth Executive, Legislative and Judicial branch officials.

Since 1999, Supreme Court justices and Court of Appeals judges have spoken to high school juniors participating in the Minnesota House of Representatives High School Legislative Page Program. Students from across Minnesota learn about the Third Branch of government and have time to ask questions. Throughout the 2014 Legislative Session, justices and judges spoke to more than 150 students.

In June 2014, Minnesota Supreme Court Chief Justice Lorie S. Gildea, on behalf of the Minnesota Judicial Branch, welcomed the almost 400 participants of the 2014 Minnesota Girls State program during their Joint Convention in the Minnesota State Capitol rotunda. Following the opening session, approximately 200 “citizen” participants spent the day in the courtrooms of the Minnesota Judicial Center as part of the court component of the program.

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# District Courts

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

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

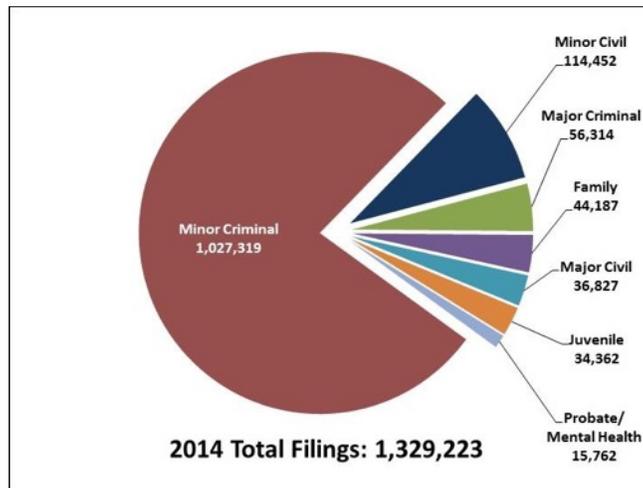
Appeals from: Conciliation Court\*

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

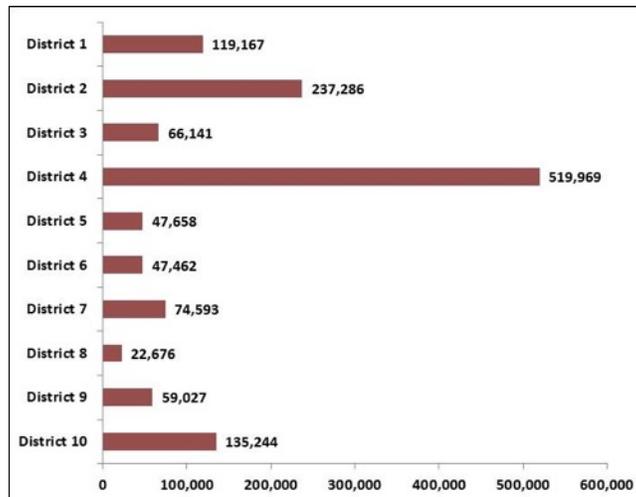
\*Called trial de novo - actually a new trial, not just a review of the conciliation court

There were 1,329,223 cases filed in the district courts in Minnesota in 2014.

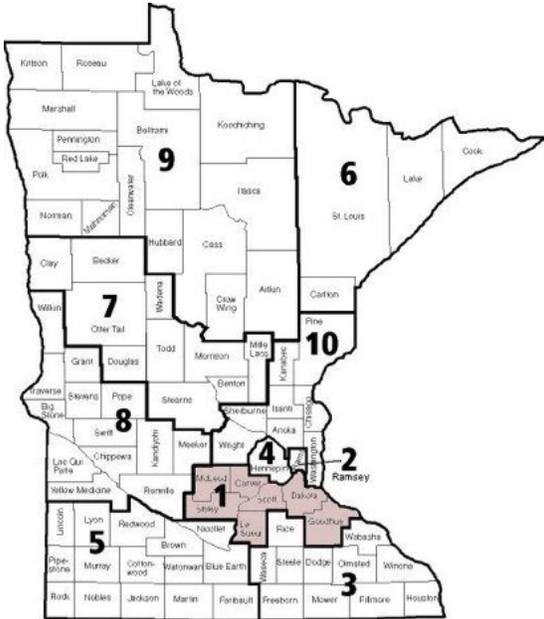
## 2014 Case Filings by Case Type



## 2014 Case Filings by Judicial District



# First Judicial District



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

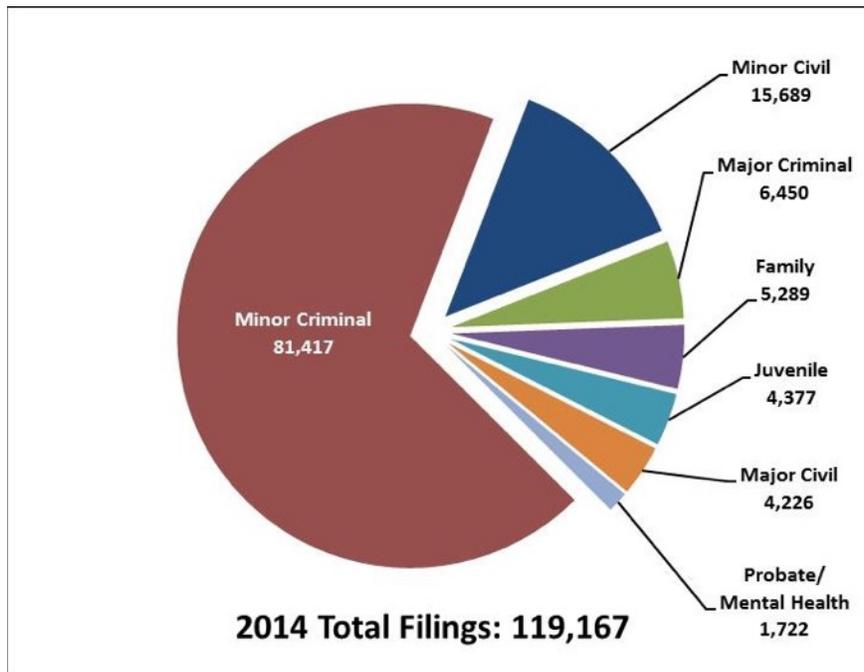
**36 Judgeships**

**Hon. Terrence E. Conkel, Chief Judge  
Hon. Kathryn D. Messerich,  
Assistant Chief Judge**

**Gerald Winter, District Administrator**

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

## 2014 Case Filings for the First Judicial District



### **Dakota County Court Reporter Earns National Certification**

Janice Dickman, court reporter for Dakota County District Court Assistant Chief Judge Kathryn Messerich, earned national certification as a Registered Merit Reporter in 2014 that places her among the country's top court reporters. Only about 3000 of the National Court Reporters Association's more than 18,000 members have achieved that status through a skills test measuring speed and accuracy.

Dickman started working for Dakota County District Court as a court reporter in 1988.

### **Judge Thomas McCarthy Receives Community Ally Award**

The Committee Against Domestic Abuse (CADA) presented Sibley County District Court Judge Thomas McCarthy with its first annual Community Ally Award at its annual breakfast on April 25, 2014. This award recognizes a person who demonstrates outstanding service to survivors of domestic abuse and sexual assault, including improving services for or fostering fair and respectful treatment of survivors.

Erin Kissner, CADA Victim Advocate for Sibley and Brown counties, nominated Judge McCarthy for the recognition. She observed, "In his work both on and off the bench, Judge McCarthy displays exceptional service to survivors of domestic and sexual violence. In the last year, Judge McCarthy has been instrumental in getting area community groups, such as the Knights of Columbus and the Masons, to see the necessity of helping survivors. He also shows care and compassion for survivors from his role as district court judge. His friendly and calm demeanor from the bench helps survivors to feel more relaxed when having to confront their abusers in Orders for Protection hearings."

Judge McCarthy noted that if we are to seriously reduce the number of victims entering the system, the men of our society must take a stand to stop this type of violence.

CADA is a nonprofit organization whose mission is providing safety and support to victims of domestic violence and sexual assault through education, advocacy, and shelter. CADA provides services in eight counties in southern Minnesota.

### **First Judicial District Employees Receive Minnesota Association for Court Management Awards**

The Minnesota Association for Court Management (MACM) announced the recipients of its 2014 awards at its annual meeting in September 2014.

**Jerry Winter, First Judicial District Administrator**, received the 2014 MACM Lifetime Achievement Award for his many contributions to the court management profession and for his years of service to the court community. In 1980, he accepted a position as the Fifth Judicial District Administrator, and he became the First Judicial District Administrator in 1985. Winter has been an influential leader in the Minnesota Judicial Branch. During his tenure, he has served on numerous state, district, and county committees. Most importantly, perhaps, he was appointed by

## 2014 Annual Report

Minnesota Supreme Court Chief Justice Kathleen Blatz to serve as Chairperson of the Transformation Workgroup, which developed alternatives to the governance structure of the Minnesota Judicial Branch and ultimately resulted in the creation of the current Judicial Council. He subsequently served as a charter member of the Judicial Council and on many other important committees. Winter brings to his position a wealth of knowledge and experience, and he uniquely manages others and achieves successful results through the strength of his gentle personality. His thoughtful and cooperative approach is both effective and appreciated.

**Vanessa Jeske, Court Operations Supervisor, Goodhue County Court Administration,** received the MACM 2014 Early Career Excellence Award for outstanding leadership and knowledge in the field of court administration. Jeske has worked for Goodhue County Court Administration for eight years. She started her career with the courts as a court collector and jury manager, and the following year she worked as a senior court clerk. Within two years of starting with the courts, she became a Court Operations Supervisor. She has also served as a site lead for many eCourtMN implementation initiatives. Jeske is described as extremely knowledgeable about court operations, flexible and innovative, always positive, going above and beyond in everything she does, and someone who has already proven herself to be an effective leader in court administration.

### **Carver County Court Administrator Elected to National Association for Court Management Board of Directors**

Vicky Carlson, Carver County Court Administrator since 2007, was elected Secretary/Treasurer for the National Association for Court Management (NACM) in July 2014. She was previously elected to the NACM Board in 2011 as the General Jurisdiction Director. NACM is the largest organization of court management professionals in the world, with members from all levels and types of courts.

Prior to serving in Carver County, Carlson was a court administrative manager in Dakota County District Court. She attended Metro State University and holds a Bachelor's Degree in Public Administration. She has also been a Fellow of the National Center for State Courts, Institute for Court Management, since 2011.

### **Judge Janet Cain Inducted into Burnsville High School Hall of Fame**

On September 5, 2014, First Judicial District Judge Janet Cain was inducted into the Burnsville High School (BHS) Hall of Fame. She joined 60 previously inducted honorees, including First Judicial District Judge David Knutson.

The BHS Hall of Fame was established in 2006 as part of the school's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration as a way to recognize those who have made exceptional achievements in their field, significant contributions to Burnsville High School, and unique contributions to their community on a local, state, national, or international level.

Judge Cain is a 1982 BHS graduate. Governor Tim Pawlenty appointed her as a First Judicial District Court Judge in 2007.

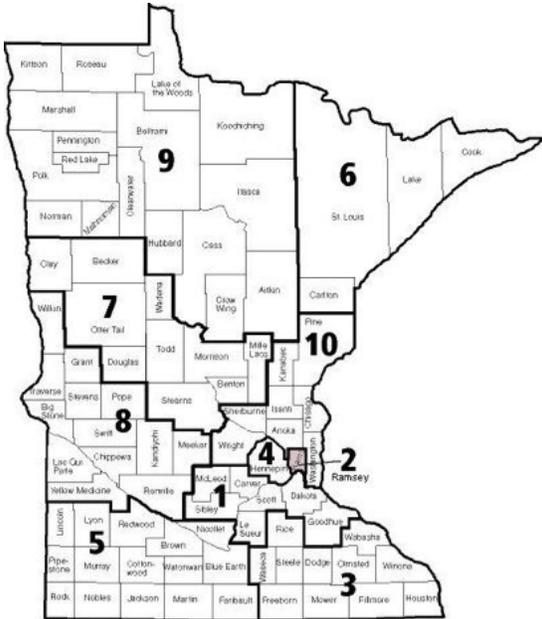
### **Audio and Video Upgraded in Carver County Courtrooms**

Audio and video upgrades to the courtrooms in the Carver County Justice Center were completed in September 2014, which included a speaker being placed at each participant location, an expanded audio rack, and video technology for trials.

Carver County Judge Michael Wentzell commented, “[s]implistic as it may sound, the most fundamental way for all parties to receive a full and fair hearing, is for all parties to be heard - by the judge, jurors, parties, and court reporter. Numerous jurors have commented on the quality of the sound and the presentation of visual evidence made possible through these technological upgrades. On behalf of the judges, we appreciate the foresight of the Carver County Board of Commissioners in acting on this very important issue.”

In addition to the excellent sound system, two courtrooms were equipped with laptop and HDMI connectors. Once connected, attorneys can project an image from a laptop or other device directly to the 70” courtroom monitor. Each courtroom is also equipped with two wireless microphones and devices for the hearing-impaired.

# Second Judicial District



**1 County: Ramsey**

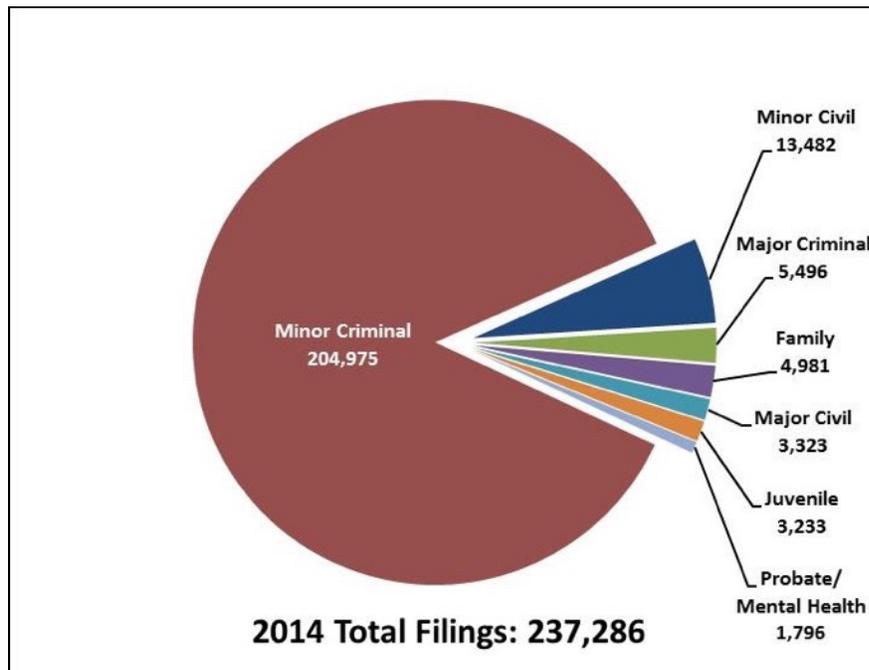
**29 Judgeships**

**Hon. Teresa R. Warner, Chief Judge**  
**Hon. George T. Stephenson,**  
**Assistant Chief Judge**

**Heather M. Kendall, District Administrator**

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

## 2014 Case Filings for the Second Judicial District



## Problem-Solving Courts Launched and Recognized



*Carolyn Hardin, NDCI, presents a plaque to Judge Judith M. Tilsen and Judge Joanne M. Smith.*

On May 8, 2014, the Ramsey County Adult Substance Abuse Court was selected by the National Drug Court Institute (NDCI) as one of 10 Mentor Courts in the United States. For the next three years, the Court will serve as a model court program and play a significant role in drug court training, technical assistance, and research. 2014 was the fifth year the Adult Substance Abuse Court has been a National Merit Court.

The Ramsey County DWI Court proved to be effective and fiscally responsible in a 2014 statewide evaluation of DWI Courts in Minnesota. In addition, Judge Lezlie Ott Marek won the Metro Area Judge MADD Award on April 7, 2014, for her exceptional work in the DWI Court.

The Ramsey County Veterans Treatment Court became the newest problem solving court in Ramsey County beginning in the spring of 2014.

Ramsey County Mental Health Court Coordinator Brandi Stavlo received the Minnesota Lawyer Unsung Heroes Award for 2014.



*Members of the DWI Court team. From left to right, Mark Gangl, Judge Diane R. Alshouse, Judge Leslie O. Marek, Kate Courtney, and Tanya Jones.*

### Initiative Launched to Improve Permanency in Child Protection Cases

The Second Judicial District launched “Foundations 48” in 2014, which is an initiative to enhance the first 48 hours of a child protection case using best practices to improve permanency outcomes.

Foundations 48 recognizes that creating a solid foundation from the beginning of a child protection case is critical to acting in the child’s best interest and achieving permanency for that child. Through trust and effective communication, Foundations 48 addresses the three foundational building blocks of any case within the first 48 hours, which include child well-being, concurrent planning, and timely access to services. The first 48 hours of a child protection case begins



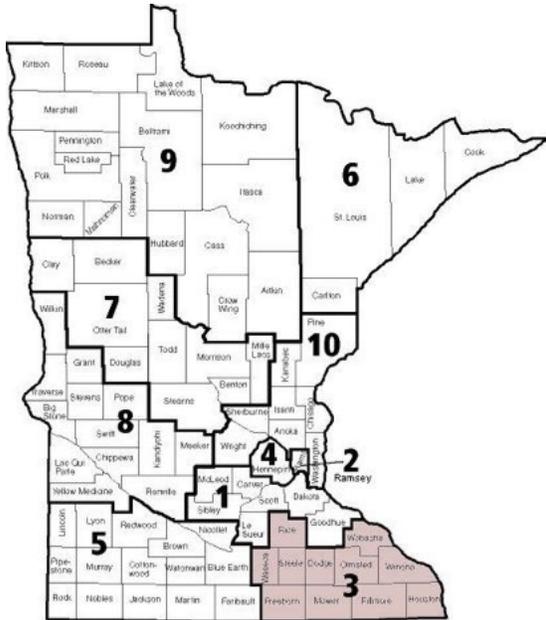
*Participants in Veterans Treatment Court speak with Judge Joanne M. Smith during a weekly check-in.*

## 2014 Annual Report

at the first hearing, which is when all stakeholders are present, counsel is appointed, and a Guardian ad Litem is assigned.

The launch of Foundations 48 resulted in the Second Judicial District being selected as one of eight Model Court Implementation Sites nationwide by the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges (NCJFCJ). The Sites were selected based on a number of factors, including: the court's commitment and motivation to implement system reform efforts; the court's willingness to organize and form a strong collaborative team; and the court's desire to improve current court practice. NCJFCJ staff work with the Implementation Sites in developing a strong collaborative, implementing best practices, and in improving court systems for the benefit of the children and families.

# Third Judicial District



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

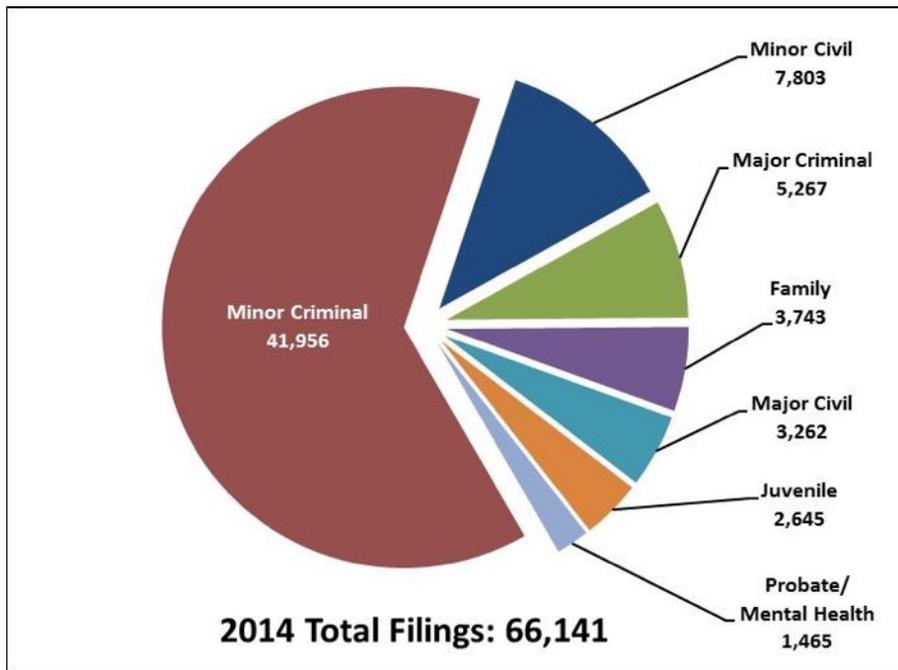
23 Judgeships

Hon. Jeffrey D. Thompson, Chief Judge  
Hon. Robert Birnbaum, Assistant Chief Judge

Shelley Ellefson, District Administrator

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

## 2014 Case Filings for the Third Judicial District



### **First Family Court Referee Sworn-In**

On January 31, 2014, Gail Baker was sworn-in as the Third Judicial District's first Family Court referee. Having a full-time referee has been a tremendous help to the District bench in resolving cases in a timely manner.

### **Completely New Bench in Mower County**

Mower County District Court experienced 100 percent judicial turnover in the late spring of 2014 as a result of Judges Donald Rysavy and Fred Wellmann both retiring. Kevin Siefken and Jeffrey Kritzer were appointed as new judges in Mower County, and were sworn-in in June.

### **Major Workflow Re-Engineering Underway**

All counties within the Third District are well underway with major workflow re-engineering efforts to create efficiencies and prepare staff for implementation of the eCourtMN initiative. It is anticipated that staff transition to eCourtMN and a paperless environment will be virtually seamless as a result of this comprehensive workflow re-engineering preparation.

### **Audit-Related Monitoring Activities Centralized**

Several audit-related monitoring activities have been centralized within the Third District in order to streamline processes and promote efficiency and accountability. In August 2014, District office staff began reviewing all court administration credit and adjustment financial transactions. Additionally, over the course of the summer, the District's interpreter coordinator became an approver of all interpreter invoices.

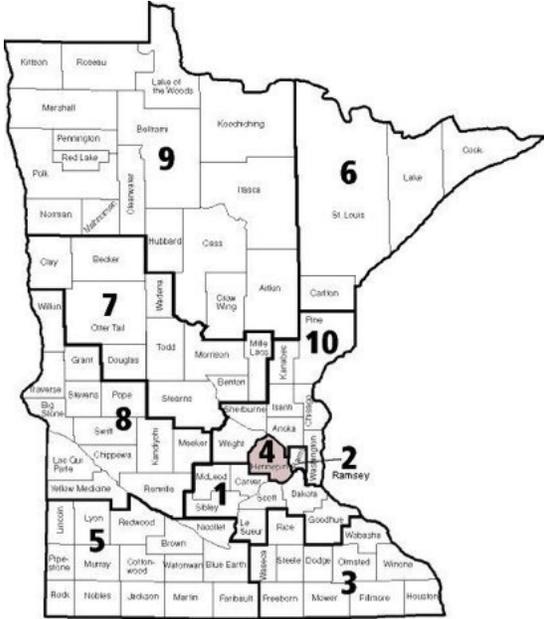
### **Monitoring of Conservator Accounts Centralized**

In the fall of 2014, the Third District centralized the court examination and monitoring of all annual accounts, and accounts under \$3,000, filed by conservators anywhere within the District. The consolidation of this workload has created efficiencies in conservator case processing, has streamlined and improved communication with conservators, and has resulted in greater consistency in case processing throughout the District.

### **Wabasha County Drug Court Celebrates 10th Anniversary**

In August 2014, the Wabasha County Drug Court celebrated its 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Throughout the course of its 10-year operation, the Court has worked with 66 participants, and has graduated 41.

# Fourth Judicial District



**1 County: Hennepin**

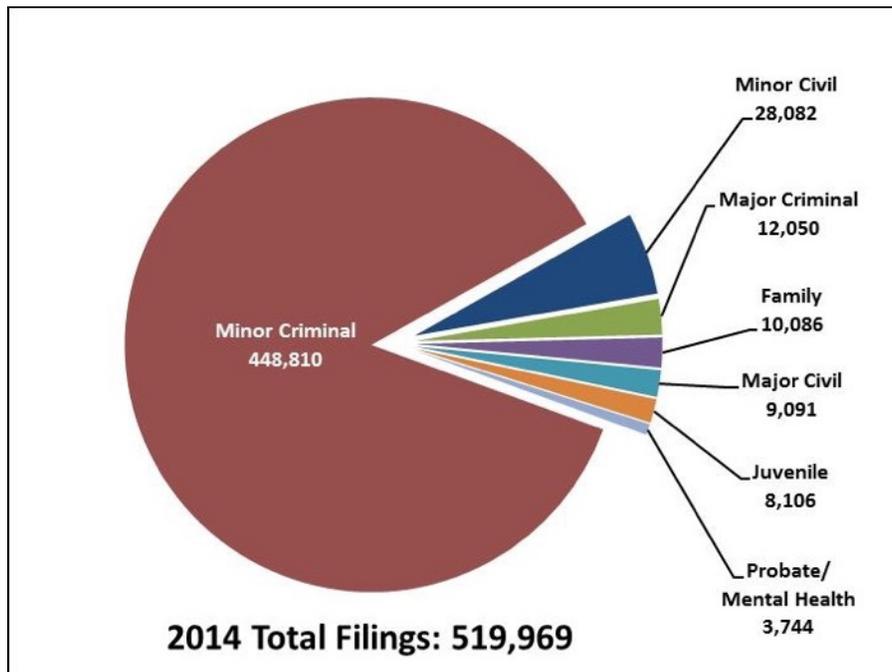
**62 Judgeships**

**Hon. Peter A. Cahill, Chief Judge**  
**Hon. Ivy S. Bernhardson, Assistant Chief Judge**

**Kate Fogarty, District Administrator**

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

## 2014 Case Filings for the Fourth Judicial District



## **Hennepin County Selected for National High-Functioning Criminal Justice Systems Study**

The Justice Management Institute (JMI) selected to study Hennepin County in 2014 as part of a ground-breaking effort to focus on what the justice system of the future could like look and how counties can make significant improvements and ensure greater fairness and equity. Specifically, the goal of the study was to determine common factors across jurisdictions that reduce jail populations, produce cost-savings, improve public safety, and increase efficiencies in the administration of justice overall.

JMI documented what is working in eight local criminal justice systems from around the country, including Hennepin County. The results of this assessment will help inform the broader justice reform community as it sets out to affect system improvement.

The site visit exploring Hennepin County's criminal justice system confirmed JMI's belief that it is one of the higher-functioning systems in the United States, particularly in the areas of sharing and collecting data and collaborative practices.

## **Hennepin County Family Justice Center Chosen for Federal Project**

The Hennepin County Family Justice Center was selected in 2014 as one of four courts to participate in the U.S. Department of Justice's Office on Violence Against Women Family Court Enhancement Project, which is designed to improve court decisions for families who have experienced domestic violence. The other courts are in Delaware, Illinois, and Oregon.

The Project will incorporate experts on domestic violence and the courts to determine what changes can be made to custody and visitation decisions for violence-affected families.

## **DWI Court Designated as Academy Court**

Hennepin County DWI Court was recognized in 2014 by the National Center for DWI Courts (NCDC), in partnership with the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), as one of four courts that will serve as a DWI Academy Court for the next three years in the United States.

As an Academy Court, Hennepin County DWI Court will help develop, identify, and test national best practices for DWI courts; provide assistance to those interested in starting a DWI court; and host court team training.

Currently there are more than 600 DWI courts nationwide including 17 DWI courts in Minnesota.

Hennepin County DWI Court was founded in January 2007 with the goal of improving public safety and permanently changing the behavior of repeat DWI offenders. As of December 9, 2014, Hennepin County DWI Court had enrolled 445 participants, of which 251 had graduated from the

## 2014 Annual Report

program and turned their lives around. Also as of December 9, there were 123 participants in the program.

Hennepin County DWI Court has a strong team of court professionals, volunteers, members of community organizations, and members of law enforcement that makes a significant positive impact on the lives of repeat DWI offenders and their families.

### Hearing Office Offers Saturday Appointments, Pilots eHearings

The Fourth District Hearing Office introduced Saturday appointments in 2014 at the Hennepin County Public Safety Building, from 8 a.m. to noon, one Saturday a month. At the end of 2014, approximately 135 defendants had appeared for the Saturday appointments. Fourth District Court Administration is now conducting a cost-benefit analysis to determine whether to continue the Saturday appointments.

The Hearing Office also completed the first phase of its pilot project for eHearings in June 2014, during which it conducted 630 administrative hearings via either Skype, WebEx, or Zoom in six months. The Fourth District is now preparing for the second phase of the pilot, which will provide eHearings to those defendants who wish to contest a payable citation and live beyond a 50-mile radius from Minneapolis. Once the second phase is completed, District Court Administration will decide whether to expand the service to any defendant who wishes to have an eHearing and who has the compulsory technology to facilitate it.

### Employee and Judge Receive Awards

Information Technology Supervisor James Anderson was selected as one of Minnesota Lawyer's Unsung Legal Heroes in 2014.

Fourth Judicial District Judge Kevin Burke received the American Judges Association's Chief Justice Richard W. Holmes Award of Merit in 2014, which is given to a judge for outstanding contributions to the judiciary.



*L to R: Kate Fogarty, James Anderson, Chief Judge Peter Cahill*

### New Judicial District Administrator Appointed in Hennepin County



Judges in Minnesota's Fourth Judicial District appointed Kate Fogarty in 2014 as the judicial district administrator for Hennepin County District Court. The appointment was affirmed by the Minnesota Judicial Council, the governing body of the Minnesota Judicial Branch, on August 14, and was effective August 27.

Fogarty replaced Mark Thompson, who retired after 30 years of service with the Minnesota Judicial Branch, including 19 years as judicial district administrator in the Fourth Judicial District.

## 2014 Annual Report

Fogarty has worked for Hennepin County Court Administration since 2000, serving as the education and organizational development manager, hearing and fines management office manager, human resources manager, senior manager for the criminal division, and deputy district administrator. She received her B.A. in psychology from the University of Nevada-Las Vegas.

As judicial district administrator, Fogarty 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.

### **Hennepin County Housing Court Project Offers Free Legal Help**

Starting in 2014, tenants and landlords who meet low-income guidelines can now get their legal questions answered for free on a walk-in basis at the Hennepin County Government Center as part of the Hennepin County Housing Court Project.

The Housing Court Project is a collaboration between the Fourth District Housing Court, Hennepin County, Mid-Minnesota Legal Aid (for tenants), and the Volunteer Lawyers Network (for landlords).

The Housing Court Project offers legal help Monday through Friday, from 8:30 a.m. to noon, with emergency repairs, expungement of records, lock outs, service issues, evictions, lease violations, and repair problems.

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

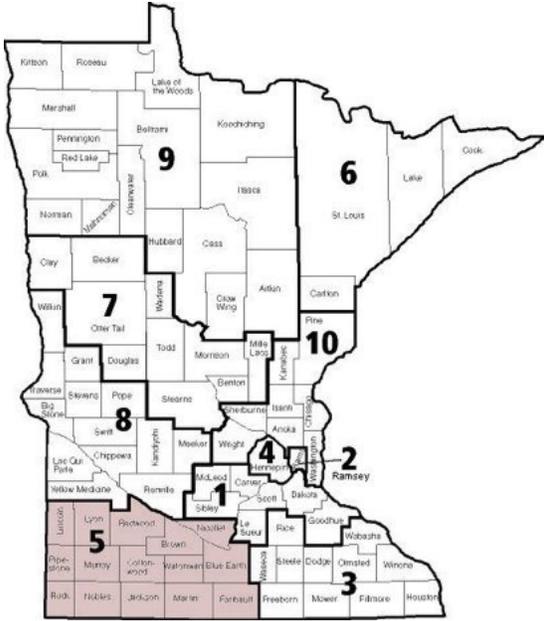
Nineteen Fourth Judicial District judges and a deputy administrator united 46 couples in matrimony at no charge on Valentine's Day, February 14, 2014, at the Hennepin County Government Center Public Service Level reflection pool.

The second annual event spotlights one of the many beneficial services available to the public at the Hennepin County Government Center.



*Participants in the 2014 Hennepin County District Court Valentine's Day wedding ceremonies.*

# Fifth Judicial District



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

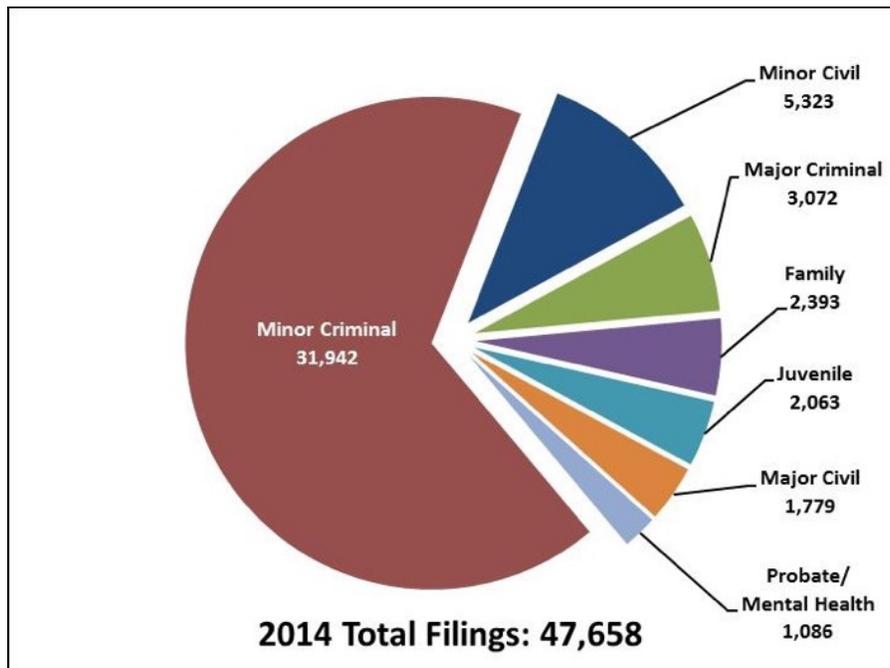
**16 Judgeships**

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

**Richard Fasnacht, District Administrator**

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

## 2014 Case Filings for the Fifth Judicial District



### **Fifth District Sees Retirement of Four Long-Time Employees**

2014 saw the retirement of four Fifth Judicial District employees with at least 35 years of public service each.

Carol Melick retired as court administrator in Brown/Nicollet counties after 35 years with the Judicial Branch. Steve Schulze retired as court administrator in Murray/Nobles/Pipestone/Rock counties after 38 years as a public official, of which approximately 25 were with the Judicial Branch. Linda Delaney retired as a senior court clerk in Pipestone County after 40 years of service, and Barb Spaeth retired as a senior court clerk in Jackson County after 35 years.

Spaeth also was the recipient of a Faces of Hope Award from the Southwest Crisis Center in 2014. The award honors individuals who have made a difference in the lives of victims and survivors of domestic and sexual violence, and their families, in southwest Minnesota.

### **Faribault-Martin-Jackson Adult Drug Court Recognized as National Mentor Court**

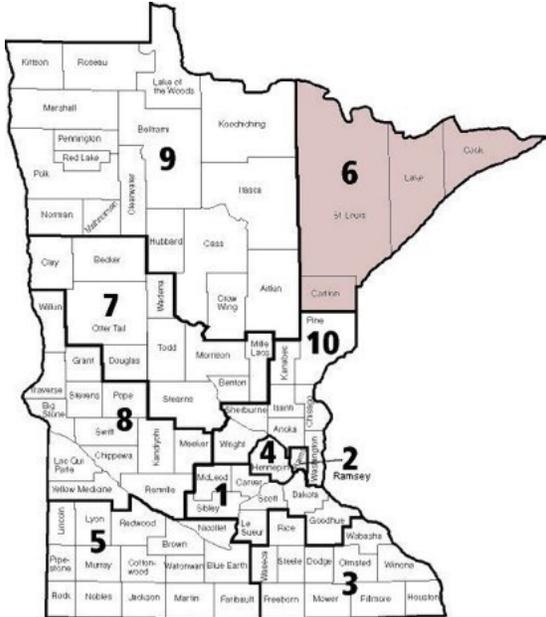
The National Association of Drug Court Professionals recognized the Faribault-Martin-Jackson Adult Drug Court as one of only 10 national mentor courts at the Court's session on May 6, 2014. Caroline Hardin, Senior Director of the National Drug Court Institute, presented the Court with a plaque in recognition of its mentor status. It is the only multi-county court in the nation to achieve this status.

Mentor Courts serve as models for individuals and court teams interested in starting an adult drug court, or for established courts interested in learning innovative practices. As a mentor court, the Faribault-Martin-Jackson Adult Drug Court hosts visitors from across the country who are interested in learning more about implementing a multi-county drug court.

In 2014, the Court hosted three visitors from both Colorado and Montana, as well as most of the Rice County, Minnesota, Adult Drug Court team.

Due to its mentor court status, the Faribault-Martin-Jackson Adult Drug Court was also able to send two professionals, at no cost, to the National Drug Court Conference in Anaheim, CA, in May 2014.

# Sixth Judicial District



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

16 Judgeships

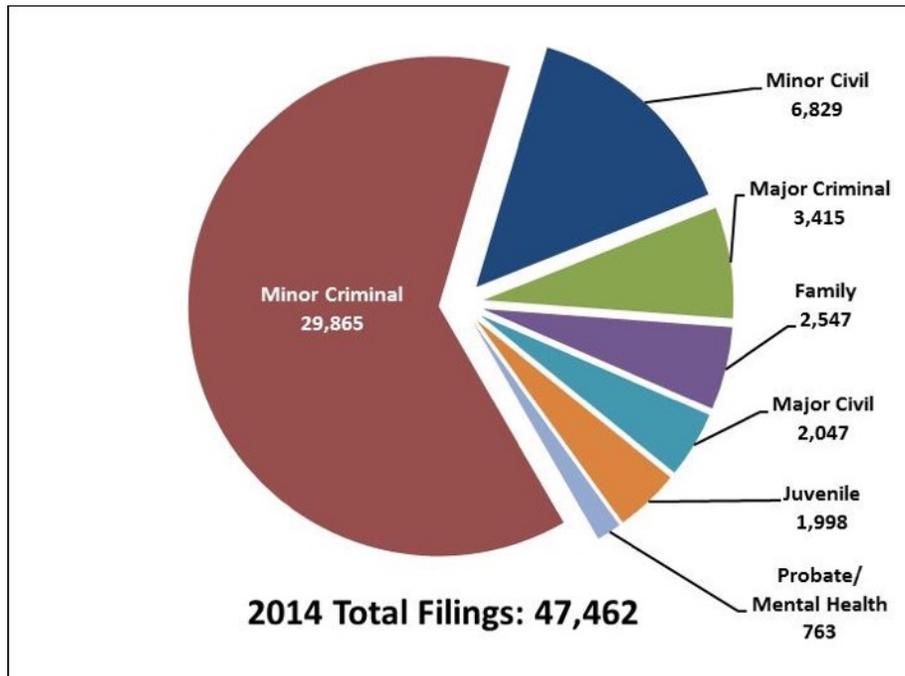
Hon. Shaun R. Flerke, Chief Judge

Hon. Gary J. Pagliaccetti,  
Assistant Chief Judge

Marieta Johnson, District Administrator

Sixth Judicial District Administration  
St. Louis County Courthouse  
100 North Fifth Avenue West, #139  
Duluth, MN 55802

## 2014 Case Filings for the Sixth Judicial District



## **Problem-Solving Courts Launched, Enhanced, and Evaluated**

The Carlton County Adult Drug Court began operating in September 2014, bringing the number of problem-solving courts in the Sixth Judicial District up to five.

The St. Louis County-Duluth Mental Health Court received a grant from the State of Minnesota Office of Justice Programs in 2014 that has allowed the Sixth Judicial District to hire a full-time mental health coordinator. Mental health courts focus on the mental health needs of people who have been charged with a crime and have a psychiatric disability. The St. Louis County-Duluth Mental Health Court served 24 mentally-ill individuals with serious felony charges in 2014.

An evaluation of nine DWI courts in Minnesota in 2014 found that the St. Louis County - South DWI Court in Duluth has an 86 percent graduation rate and results in substantial cost savings of \$4,814 per Court participant. The Court was launched in 2008.

The St. Louis County - South Adult Drug Court in Duluth served 72 participants and reported an 80 percent graduation rate in 2014.

## **Sixth Judicial District Chief Judge Floerke Receives Star Award for Traffic Safety Leadership**



*Sixth Judicial District  
Chief Judge Shaun  
Floerke*

Chief Judge Shaun Floerke of Minnesota's Sixth Judicial District received a 2014 Star Award from the Minnesota Toward Zero Deaths (TZD) program.

The TZD Star Awards are given to leaders in various fields who have demonstrated exceptional creativity, leadership, and organizational skills, and the ability to successfully motivate and collaborate with others, in efforts to move toward zero deaths on Minnesota's roads. Chief Judge Floerke was presented with the award on Nov. 13, 2014, at the 2014 TZD Conference in Duluth.

Chief Judge Floerke founded and presides over the South St. Louis County DWI Court, and he has become recognized nationally as a pioneer in taking new approaches to reduce impaired driving. He helped implement an innovative ignition interlock program in St. Louis County to complement an existing administrative program, which has led to increased safety on roads. Chief Judge Floerke has also been instrumental in assembling a working group to pilot a Screening and Brief Intervention Program for first-time DWI offenders.

Chief Judge Floerke is the co-chair of the Drug Court Initiative Advisory Committee, which reports to the Minnesota Judicial Council.

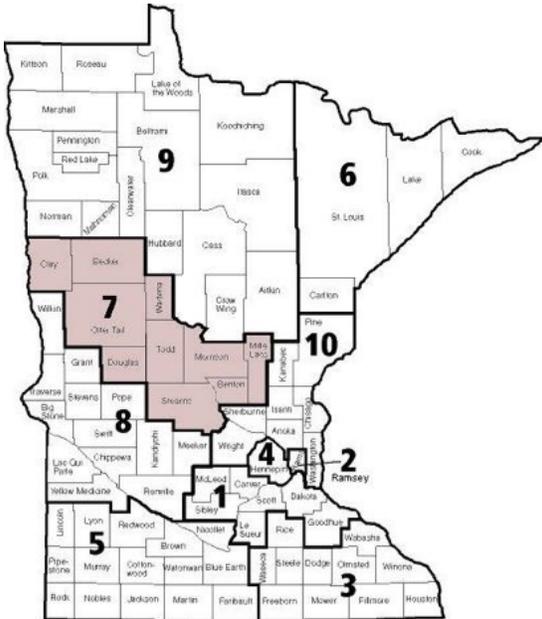
### **Duluth Courthouse Continues to Pilot Expedited Litigation Track**

The St. Louis County Courthouse in Duluth continued to be one of two pilot courts in the state for the Expedited Litigation Track in 2014. The goal of the pilot is to see if an expedited process will improve the way trial courts process civil cases. As a result of the work done as a pilot court, civil trials in Duluth are being scheduled faster than they were before.

### **Sixth District First to See All Judges Using CoSign**

In 2014, the Sixth District became the first judicial district to have all judges using the Judicial Branch's electronic signature solution, CoSign. CoSign is a key tool for the eCourtMN initiative implementation because it allows documents needing a signature to remain in an electronic format, eliminating the need to print paper simply to capture a signature. Judges are now able to sign documents from any location.

# Seventh Judicial District



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

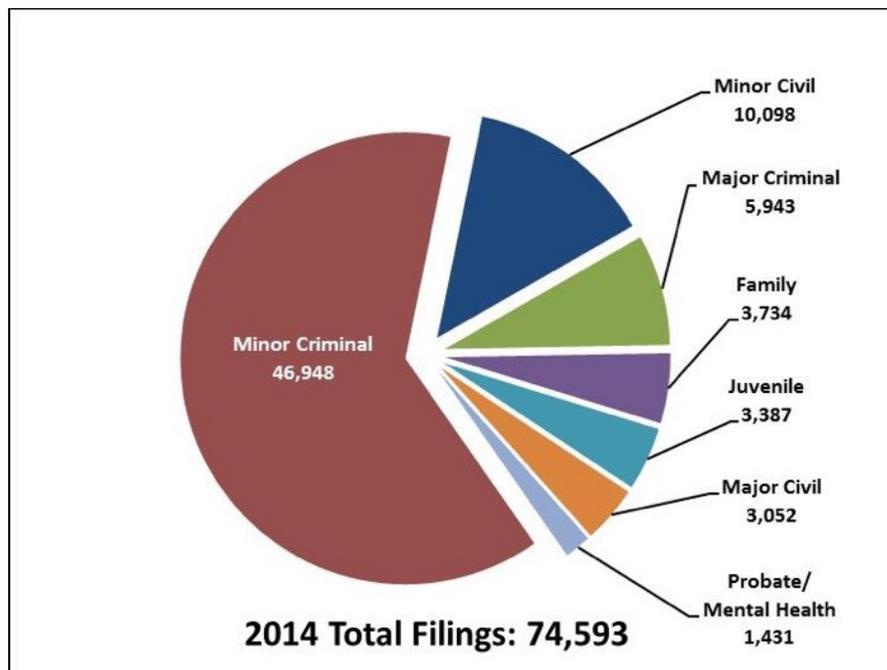
**28 Judgeships**

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

**Timothy Ostby, District Administrator**

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

## 2014 Case Filings for the Seventh Judicial District



### **Otter Tail County DWI Court Reduces Recidivism, Saves Money**

An evaluation of nine DWI courts in Minnesota in 2014 found that Otter Tail County DWI Court participants were less likely to be rearrested than offenders who were eligible for the program but did not participate. Participants were nearly half as likely to be rearrested (on any charge) as the comparison group in the first year after DWI Court entry. The evaluation also found substantial cost savings of \$11,386 per participant.

### **Morrison County Adult Drug Court Launches**

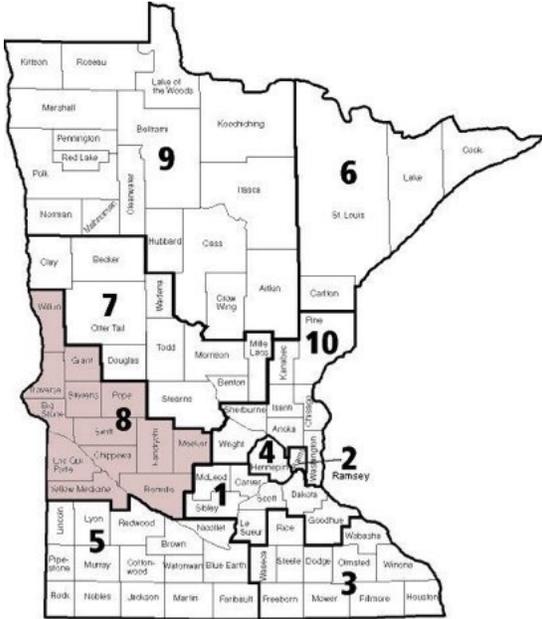
The Morrison County Adult Drug Court launched on July 2, 2014. As of the end of 2014, the Court had 15 participants.

### **Domestic Violence Courts Report Success**

The Stearns County Felony Domestic Violence Court was awarded with an Office on Violence Against Women, U.S. Department of Justice Mentor Court designation in 2014, recognizing Stearns County's national expertise in the prosecution and prevention of domestic violence. The Court, which began operation in St. Cloud in 2009, is believed to be the first of its kind nationally to focus on repeat, felony-level domestic offenders who get arrested, get released, threaten their partners again, and keep cycling through the legal system. Mentor courts support other court teams from across the nation that are looking to improve their own response to domestic violence. The mentor status of the Stearns County Felony Domestic Violence Court allows for reimbursement of local staff time used to prepare for and host mentoring training sessions.

The Clay County Domestic Violence Court reduced recidivism of its participants in 2014, and received positive input from victims and offenders. Also in 2014, the Court was awarded with two-year continuation grant funding from the Office on Violence Against Women, U.S. Department of Justice.

# Eighth Judicial District



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

**11 Judgeships**

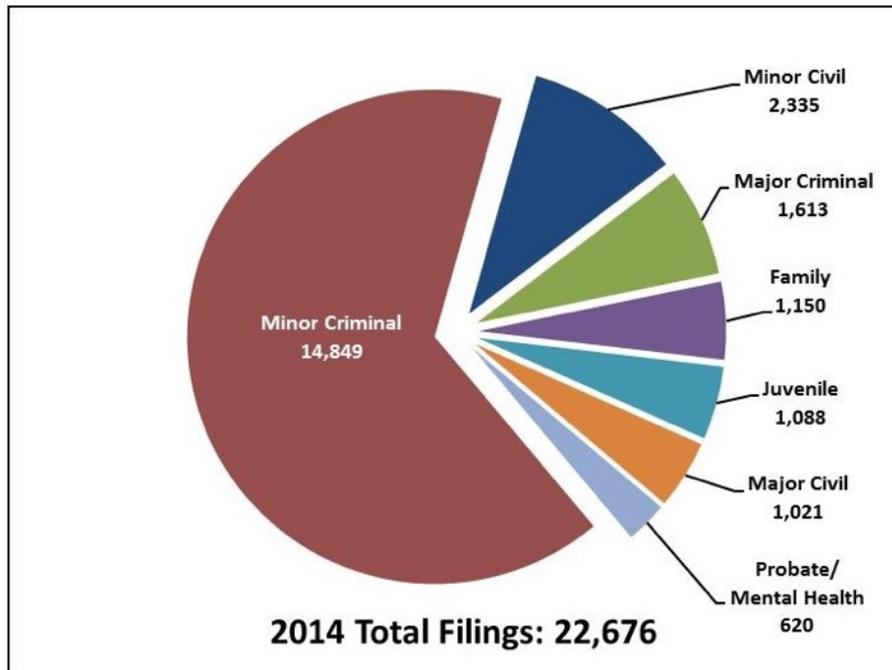
**Hon. Donald M. Spilseth, Chief Judge**

**Hon. Michael J. Thompson,  
Assistant Chief Judge**

**Timothy Ostby, District Administrator**

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

## 2014 Case Filings for the Eighth Judicial District



### **Eighth Judicial District Drug Court Launched**

The Eighth Judicial District Drug Court, the first multi-county districtwide drug court in Minnesota, was launched on July 1, 2014. The three assignment areas of Central, Northern, and Southern are presided over by three different judges.

### **Eighth District Continues to Support Seventh District**

Eighth District judges continued providing caseload assistance to Seventh Judicial District judges at the Stearns County Courthouse in 2014, and started providing the same assistance at the Otter Tail County Courthouse on June 30, 2014. During the nine-week rotations, an Eighth District judge serves on the master criminal calendar in Stearns County during weeks six and eight, and one serves on the Otter Tail County master calendar during week five.

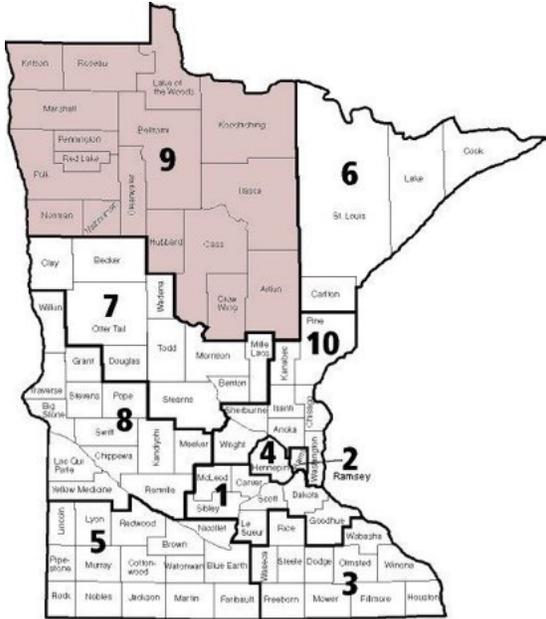
### **Performance Measures Positive**

The Judicial Branch published its [Performance Measures Annual Report](#) in Sept. 2014, and the Eighth District findings were found to be very positive.

The Eighth District had the second best overall district clearance rates for all case types. The District is disposing of about as many cases as are being filed, so no backlog is building up. The Eighth District was also one of the top three districts in time to disposition for all case types that were measured, indicating that cases are being handled in a timely manner.

The Eighth District was also found to be the district with the lowest overall age of pending cases, and was found to be above average in the length of time it takes for children removed from their homes to be adopted.

# Ninth Judicial District



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

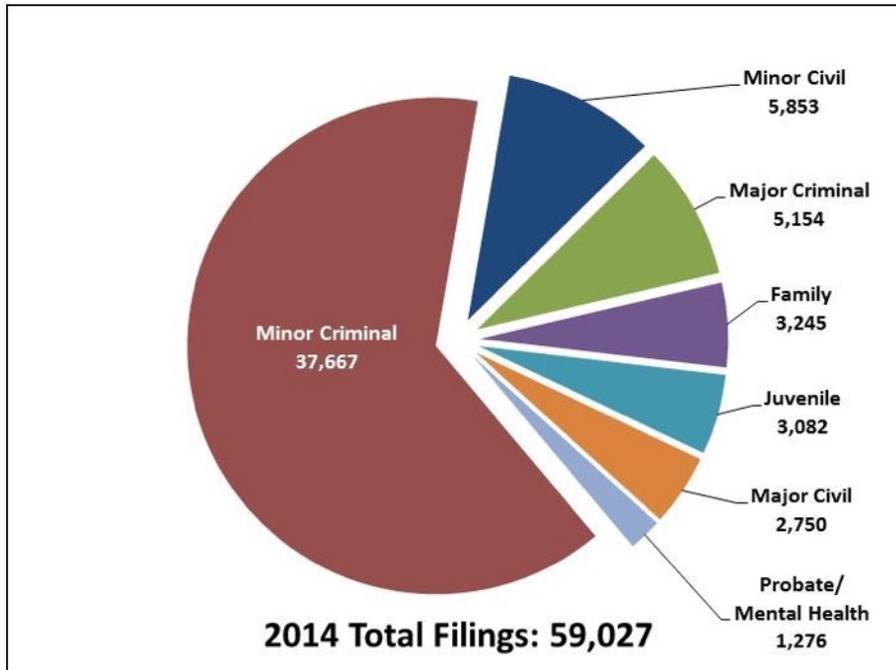
**23 Judgeships**

**Hon. Kurt J. Marben, Chief Judge**  
**Hon. Paul T. Benschopf, Assistant Chief Judge**

**Paul Maatz, District Administrator**

**Ninth Judicial District Administration**  
**Community Services Building**  
**616 America Avenue NW #250**

## 2014 Case Filings for the Ninth Judicial District



## Serving the Community

Staff from Crow Wing and Aitkin county district courts participated in a community service project in their workplaces in 2014 to raise money to contribute to different causes over the holidays. Aitkin County District Court staff adopted a family including a single mom and three children and provided them with gifts. Crow Wing County District Court staff bought items for the nursing home in Crosby, MN, donated money to the Salvation Army for Christmas dinners, bought gifts for children, and provided a monetary gift to an attorney and his family who were struggling with a medical crisis.



*Staff from Aitkin County District Court with gifts for their adopted family.*

## Joint Jurisdiction Courts Serve as Model

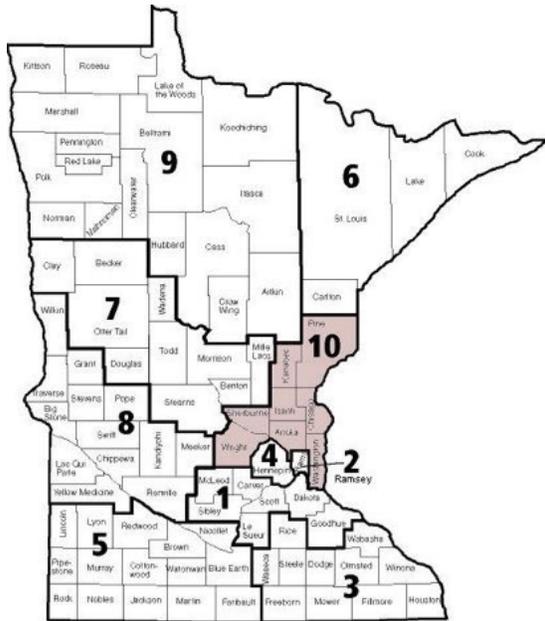
After nearly 10 years of operation, the Joint Tribal-State Jurisdiction Wellness Courts and juvenile programs pioneered between the Cass County and Itasca County district courts and the Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe Tribal Court continue to thrive and serve as a model for other jurisdictions. In 2014, Minnesota Court of Appeals Judge John P. Smith and Ninth Judicial District Judge Korey Wahwassuck worked with the Shingle Springs Band of Miwok Indians and the El Dorado County Superior Court in California to design a joint jurisdiction court to serve tribal youth and their families identified through delinquency, truancy, or dependency (child protective services) proceedings.

The judges of the Superior Court of El Dorado County were cross-sworn in to the Shingle Springs Band of Miwok Indians Tribal Court while the chief judge of the Tribal Court was cross-sworn in to Superior Court - a first in American history. The court is scheduled to begin proceedings this spring.

The Shingle Springs Band of Miwok-El Dorado County Superior Court collaboration is one of several joint jurisdiction courts that have modeled themselves after Minnesota's groundbreaking joint jurisdiction courts. Examples include the St. Regis Mohawk-New York Unified Court System's joint jurisdiction healing to wellness court, as well as tribal-state collaborations in Wisconsin and Oklahoma.

Minnesota's joint jurisdiction courts continue to serve as an example others are following to achieve better outcomes. The joint jurisdiction programs pioneered by Judges Smith and Wahwassuck were also featured in the "A Circle of Healing for Native Children Endangered by Drugs" video series produced under a grant from the Office for Victims of Crime, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice.

# Tenth Judicial District



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

**45 Judgeships**

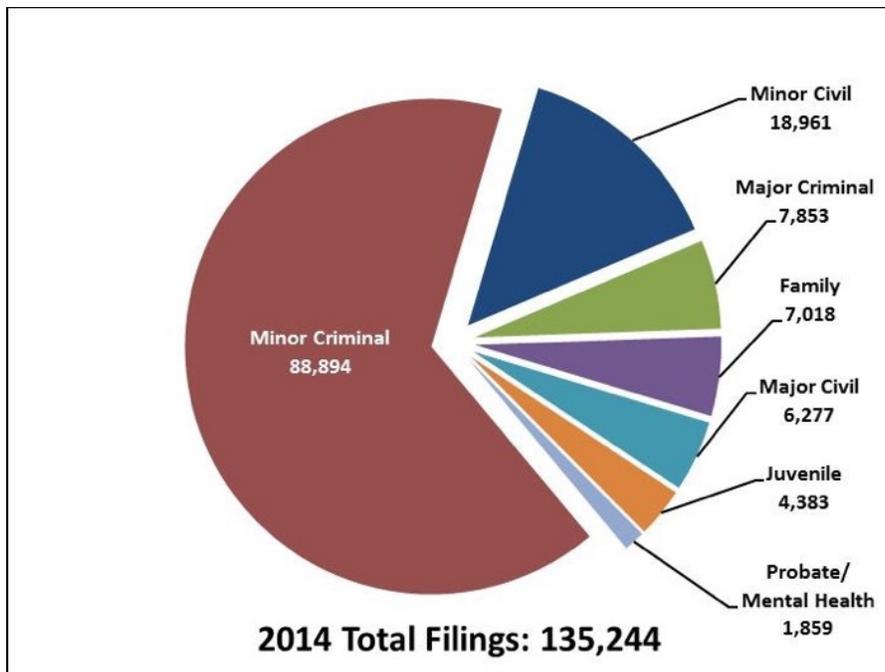
**Hon. John C. Hoffman, Chief Judge**

**Hon. Douglas B. Meslow,  
Assistant Chief Judge**

**Michael Moriarity, District Administrator**

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

## 2014 Case Filings for the Tenth Judicial District



### **Early Neutral Evaluation Program Expanded**

Noting the benefits of early case management in family cases, the Tenth District created a program in 2014 to increase the use of early neutral evaluators (ENEs), who provide a voluntary, confidential, high-quality, affordable, prompt, and evaluative alternative dispute resolution process focused on generating durable settlements in cases. The program coordinates and builds program resources and implements best practices.

County rosters of ENEs have been reviewed and updated, and new ENEs have been recruited. Also, a districtwide calendar for scheduling ENEs has been created, training refreshers have been provided to judges, and advanced ENE training has been scheduled.

The response to the new program resources has been extremely positive due to the streamlining of the family court process for litigants.

### **Regional Psychological Services Unit Expands**

A collaborative effort to increase the efficiency of psychological evaluations in court proceedings expanded in 2014. The Regional Psychological Services Unit, which coordinates court-ordered psychological evaluations for district courts, now provides additional services to the Tenth Judicial District. This expansion has made it easier for courts in Anoka, Isanti, Sherburne, and Wright counties to assign highly-qualified examiners for court-ordered evaluations, thereby improving the timeliness and quality of service to court customers. The Fourth Judicial District provides administrative oversight and support to the Unit.

# Court of Appeals

19 Members, Three-Judge Panels

Chief Judge Edward Cleary December 2011 - October 2013, Chief Judge: Nov. 2013 - present
Judge Randolph Peterson 1990 - present
Judge Jill Flaskamp Hallbrooks 1998 - present
Judge Natalie Hudson 2002 - present
Judge Renee Worke 2005 - present
Judge Kevin Ross 2006 - present
Judge Heidi Schellhas 2008 - present
Judge Francis Connolly 2008 - present
Judge Matthew Johnson Judge: 2008 - Nov. 2010, Nov. 2013 - present Chief Judge: Nov. 2010 - Oct. 2013
Judge Michelle Larkin 2008 - present
Judge Larry Stauber, Jr. 2008 - present
Judge Louise Bjorkman 2008 - present
Judge John Rodenberg February 2012 - present
Judge Margaret Chutich February 2012 - present
Judge Carol Hooten June 2012 - present
Judge Michael Kirk August 2012 - present
Judge John P. Smith Jan. 2013 - present
Judge Denise D. Reilly April 2014 - present
Judge Peter M. Reyes, Jr. April 2014 - present
Judge Thomas Kalitowski 1987 - 2014
Judge Terri Stoneburner 2000 - 2014

### *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 a certain act or not perform

## 2014 Court of Appeals Case Information

	Cases Filed	Dispositions
General Civil	513	504
Criminal	842	875
Administrative Rule	4	3
Economic Security	160	200
Writs - Certiori	74	56
Habeas / Certified Questions	10	14
Commitment	31	53
Family	197	204
Juvenile Delinquency	16	14
Juvenile Protection	49	53
Implied Consent	59	122
Discretionary Review / Writs	57	62
Probate	21	22
Unlawful Detainer / Eviction	60	45
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,093</b>	<b>2,227</b>

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# Court of Appeals in 2014

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*Court of Appeals Chief  
Judge Edward 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 approximately 96 percent of cases filed, with review being granted by the Supreme Court in only four 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. Judge Denise D. Reilly and Judge Peter M. Reyes, Jr. joined the Court in April 2014, filling vacancies left by the retirements of Judge Thomas Kalitowski and Judge Terri Stoneburner.

The Court disposed of more than 2,225 cases in 2014, filing opinions in more than 1,550 cases, issuing almost 2,100 orders, hearing oral arguments in 745 cases, and considering another 830 cases at non-oral conferences. Filings in 2014 were down about 10 percent, with a dramatic decrease in the number of unemployment appeals. Approximately 175 appeals were referred to the Court's family law mediation program in 2014. Almost 40 percent of the cases that are mediated are resolved by agreement of the parties, reducing overall costs and delays for hundreds of families. On average, there were about 1,250 cases pending before the Court at any time in 2014.

In 2014, the Court began an e-filing pilot project for criminal appeals being handled by the state public defender. E-filing will substantially reduce copying, postage, and courier costs for litigants and will allow attorneys to e-file documents relating to pending appeals 24 hours a day, even when the appellate clerk's office is not open. In addition, because of rule changes that took effect on July 1, 2014, attorneys and litigants are no longer required to file duplicate copies of appeal papers, motions, and other routine filings, and they are no longer permitted to include an appendix with any brief. These changes will save 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 Appellate Courts now creates an electronic image of every paper filing and makes it available on a secure internal site. These efforts to move to an electronic environment also reduce the time and money spent by the Court of Appeals on storing and retrieving paper files.

With 19 judges, 2,100 to 2,300 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 will continue 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 chooses to bypass the Court of Appeals

Tax Court decisions, Workers' Compensation Court of Appeals decisions

Review of all first-degree murder convictions

*Original Actions:*

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

Election disputes; attorney and judicial discipline

Chief Justice Lorie S. Gildea Associate Justice: 2006 - June 2010, Chief Justice: July 2010 - present
Associate Justice Alan C. Page 1993 - present
Associate Justice G. Barry Anderson 2004 - present
Associate Justice Christopher J. Dietzen 2008 - present
Associate Justice David R. Stras 2010 - present
Associate Justice Wilhelmina M. Wright 2012 - present
Associate Justice David L. Lillehaug June 2013 - present

2014 Supreme Court Case Information		
Direct Appeals		
	Cases Filed	Dispositions
Workers' Compensation	10	9
Civil	7	6
Tax Court	7	7
Attorney/Judge Discipline	58	59
Writs	3	3
First Degree Homicide	30	15
<b>Total Direct Appeals</b>	<b>115</b>	<b>99</b>
Petitions for Further Review (PFR)		
Filed		659
Denied		558
Granted Further Review		94
Other		6
Dispositions		
Affirmed		37
Mixed		8
Remand / Reverse		27
Other Decision / Dismissal		3
<b>Total</b>		<b>75</b>

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# Supreme Court in 2014

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The Minnesota Supreme Court is the state's court of last resort. The seven Supreme Court justices hear and decide appeals and other cases from the lower courts (the Court of Appeals and the district courts), from Executive Branch courts (the Tax Court and the Workers' Compensation Court of Appeals), and from professional regulation boards (the Lawyers Professional Responsibility Board and the Board on Judicial Standards). The Court has original jurisdiction over some matters, such as statewide election contests, and mandatory jurisdiction in other matters, such as first-degree murder cases. In other instances, the Court exercises discretionary jurisdiction by deciding whether to grant review of decisions of the Court of Appeals.

Typically, the Minnesota Supreme Court hears oral arguments at either the State Capitol historic courtroom or at the Minnesota Judicial Center in St. Paul. In May 2014, the court's Capitol courtroom was closed as part of the State Capitol renovation project. During the Capitol renovation, the Supreme Court will hear oral arguments at the Judicial Center. In addition, several times a year, the Supreme Court holds oral arguments at Minnesota high schools and law schools as part of a public outreach effort and a mission to increase public understanding and confidence in the work of the Judicial Branch.

In addition to serving as the state's court of last resort, the Supreme Court is also responsible for the regulation of the practice of law. Members of the Court therefore serve as liaisons to each of the state's 10 judicial districts, and to various committees and boards regulated by the Court. Additionally, the Supreme Court promulgates rules of practice and procedure for the legal system in the state. In 2014, the Supreme Court convened seven advisory committees that met throughout the second half of the year to develop recommended amendments to the state's Court Rules to accommodate electronic filing and service in the district courts, as well as to address access to electronic court records. The Supreme Court is currently accepting public comments on the recommended rule amendments.



*Back Row L to R: Justices Wilhelmina M. Wright, Christopher J. Dietzen, David R. Stras, David L. Lillehaug  
Front Row L to R: Justice Alan C. Page, Chief Justice Lorie S. Gildea, Justice G. Barry Anderson*

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## Appellate Clerk's Office

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The Minnesota Supreme Court, the Minnesota Court of Appeals, and the Clerk of the Appellate Courts' Office have reached a significant milestone in their efforts toward e-filing and electronic records management. After nearly two years of design, development, and testing, the appellate courts launched an e-filing pilot project on October 1, 2014.

Appellate e-filing, also known as E-MACS, is an extension of the existing appellate case management system (MACS). Phase 1 of the pilot involved e-filing for criminal appeals in Ramsey County where the State Public Defender's Office represented the appellant. Additionally, the Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED) began e-filing administrative records for unemployment appeals. In January 2015, the pilot was expanded to include criminal appeals from Hennepin County and administrative records from other Executive Branch agencies. E-filing for private attorneys is expected to begin in early spring 2015, with the rollout completed by the end of 2015.

Appellate e-filing offers the benefits of 24/7 filing, instant confirmation of receipt by the appellate courts, and the ability to pay filing fees with a credit card.

In preparation for e-filing, staff members in the Clerk of the Appellate Courts' Office began imaging all incoming mail in December 2013. As a result, the 2014 appellate files are entirely electronic, creating a user-friendly way for justices, judges, staff attorneys, and law clerks to navigate appellate records.

The appellate courts also worked with the MN eFile Support Center to have an appellate court assistance option added to the call menu. Effective December 24, 2014, members of the public are able to contact the Support Center (651-227-2002 or 1-855-291-8246) and be routed to the Clerk of the Appellate Courts' Office for assistance with appellate e-filing.

Lastly, the registers of actions in district court cases now include a Document Index number in the far-right column for documents filed on or after June 27, 2014. This feature was added to assist appellate filers with citing to the district court record.

## 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 court staff, and serves as the archive for the Minnesota Judicial Branch.

The Library is open to everyone and assists attorneys and the public in finding legal materials via e-mail, phone, live chat, and in person. In 2014, Library staff answered over 6,800 questions.

Additionally, over 3,600 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 and Lexis. The State Law Library now also provides access to trial court and appellate court documents from its public terminals.

The State Law Library has a free clinic for people seeking to appeal a denial of unemployment benefits to the Court of Appeals. At the clinic, participants can get advice from an attorney and assistance from a law student regarding completion of the appeal paperwork. In 2014 the clinic assisted 50 people with their unemployment appeals.

Through 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, but most inmate requests are received and answered by mail, using the resources of the State Law Library. In 2014, the Library assisted 2,627 individuals and provided over 42,000 items to inmates through this program.

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

# Minnesota Judicial Council

As of December 31, 2014

Hon. Lorie S. Gildea (Chair) <i>Chief Justice, Supreme Court</i>	Hon. Donald M. Spilseth <i>Chief Judge, Eighth District</i>
Hon. James B. Florey (Vice-Chair) <i>Judge, Sixth District</i>	Hon. Kurt J. Marben <i>Chief Judge, Ninth District</i>
Hon. G. Barry Anderson <i>Associate Justice, Supreme Court</i>	Hon. Shari R. Schluchter <i>Judge, Ninth District</i>
Hon. Edward J. Cleary <i>Chief Judge, Court of Appeals</i>	Hon. John C. Hoffman <i>Chief Judge, Tenth District</i>
Hon. Terrence E. Conkel <i>Chief Judge, First District</i>	Hon. Krista K. Martin <i>Judge, Tenth District</i>
Hon. Thomas W. Pugh <i>Judge, First District</i>	Jeffrey G. Shorba <i>State Court Administrator</i>
Hon. Teresa R. Warner <i>Chief Judge, Second District</i>	Dawn Torgerson <i>Deputy State Court Administrator</i>
Hon. Jeffrey D. Thompson <i>Chief Judge, Third District</i>	Gerald Winter <i>District Administrator, First District</i>
Hon. Peter A. Cahill <i>Chief Judge, Fourth District</i>	Paul Maatz <i>District Administrator, Ninth District</i>
Hon. Jeannice Reding <i>Judge, Fourth District</i>	Michael Moriarity <i>District Administrator, Tenth District</i>
Hon. Bradley C. Walker <i>Chief Judge, Fifth District</i>	Carol Renn <i>Court Administrator, Dakota County</i>
Hon. Shaun R. Floerke <i>Chief Judge, Sixth District</i>	Hon. Kevin Mark <i>MDJA President, First District</i>
Hon. John H. Scherrer <i>Chief Judge, Seventh District</i>	

# Minnesota Judicial District Chief Judges

As of December 31, 2014



Hon. Kurt J. Marben  
9th Judicial District



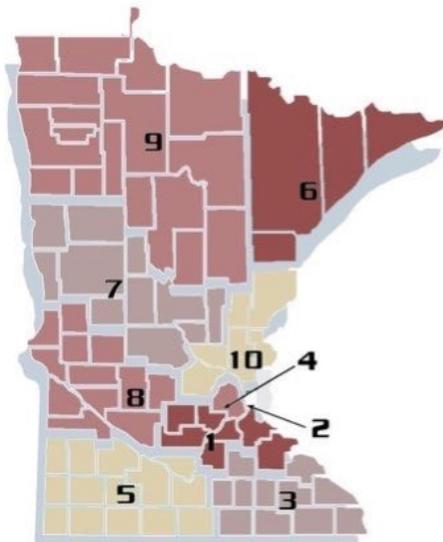
Hon. Shaun R. Floerke  
6th Judicial District



Hon. John C. Hoffman  
10th Judicial District



Hon. John H. Scherer  
7th Judicial District



Teresa R. Warner  
2nd Judicial District



Hon. Donald M. Spilseth  
8th Judicial District



Hon. Peter A. Cahill  
4th Judicial District



Hon. Bradley C. Walker  
5th Judicial District



Hon. Terrence E. Conkel  
1st Judicial District



Hon. Jeffrey D. Thompson  
3rd Judicial District



2014 Annual Report to the Community  
Produced by the State Court Administrator's Office  
March 2015