
Report to the Community

The 2015 Annual Report of the Minnesota Judicial Branch



**MINNESOTA
JUDICIAL
BRANCH**

Letter from the Chief Justice



Dear fellow Minnesotans,

On behalf of the judges and staff of the Minnesota Judicial Branch, I am pleased to present the 2015 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.

Over the past several years, the Minnesota Judicial Branch has been implementing an ambitious innovation agenda, 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 centerpiece of this innovation agenda is eCourtMN, our transition to electronic case records. In 2015, our eCourtMN transformation reached a major milestone: our court customers can now electronically file and serve court documents in all 87 district courts across the state, and electronically file court documents with both the Minnesota Court of Appeals and Minnesota Supreme Court.

We also celebrated an important anniversary in 2015: the 10-year anniversary of the Minnesota Judicial Council, the policy-making body of the Minnesota Judicial Branch. The Minnesota Judicial Council was established by Minnesota Supreme Court Chief Justice Kathleen Blatz in 2005, following the completion of Minnesota’s transition to a state-funded, unified court system. Over the past 10 years, the Minnesota Judicial Council has allowed our state’s court system to work strategically, collaboratively, and holistically. The result has been 10 years of innovation, modernization, and centralization of shared services throughout the Judicial Branch.

In the pages that follow, you will see the results of the Minnesota Judicial Council’s strategic planning process, and the initiatives we have undertaken to improve our service to Minnesotans and ensure access to our courts. I am proud of the accomplishments of our employees and judges, and remain committed to our mission to provide equal access for the timely resolution of cases and controversies. 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

The Judicial Branch Mission

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

Judicial Branch Overview

There are three court levels in Minnesota: district court, Court of Appeals, and Supreme Court. Minnesota has ten judicial districts that contain all district courts in the state.

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

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

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

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

One district court judge in each judicial district is elected as a chief judge by the bench for a two-year term, and is responsible for management of the entire judicial district. The chief judge is assisted by a judicial district administrator. The district courts are served by 289 district court judges, 25 referees, and 31 magistrates.

There are 106 Judicial Branch hearing facilities across Minnesota.

Judicial Branch FY2016 Budget	
District (Trial) Courts	\$271,896,000
Court of Appeals	\$11,748,000
Supreme Court/State Court Administration/State Law Library	\$34,259,000
Total	\$317,903,000

The Year of eCourtMN

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

After years of pilot testing and developing key elements of eCourtMN, 2015 marked the single most transformative year of this initiative. Over the past year, the Minnesota Judicial Branch brought the benefits and convenience of eCourtMN across the state, and continued building new electronic tools that aim to speed case processing and enhance information-sharing throughout the state's justice system.

This section presents a look at how eCourtMN transformed the state's court system in 2015:

District Court eFiling and eService Expands Statewide

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

How eCourtMN has transformed Minnesota's justice system

- ▶ Court customers can now instantly file and serve court documents electronically, from their home or office, and have on-demand access to court documents and information.
- ▶ Judges and court staff have new electronic tools to manage and process electronic court document. In the near future, automatic electronic workflows will speed the work of the courts, and automate “routine” administrative processes.
- ▶ Justice system partners - such as law enforcement, prosecutors, and public defenders - now have instant online access to court documents and records.
- ▶ Members of the public have free access to public court records and documents via public terminals in courthouses in all 87 counties. In the future, the public can expect to have additional access to court documents through an online portal.



Over the past several years, the Minnesota Judicial Branch pilot-tested eFiling and eService in 11 district courts across the state, including the district courts in Cass, Clay, Cook, Dakota, Faribault, Hennepin, Kandiyohi, Lake, Morrison, Ramsey, and Washington counties. Based on the success of that pilot, electronic filing and service became mandatory for attorneys, government agencies, guardians ad litem, and sheriffs filing documents in those 11 pilot courts on July 1, 2015.

In late September, the Minnesota Judicial Branch began expanding the availability of eFiling and eService to the other 76 district courts in the state. The Judicial Branch implemented a 12-week rollout plan, bringing new district courts onto the system in regional groups. The statewide rollout was completed as scheduled, and eFiling and eService is now available in all 87 district courts in the state.

In the 76 non-pilot courts, use of eFiling and eService will be optional for all filers through June 30, 2016. This means filers will still be able to file documents using the traditional, paper-based method. Under recent amendments to Minnesota’s court rules, use of the eFiling and eService system will become mandatory for attorneys, government agencies, guardians ad litem, and sheriffs in all district courts statewide on July 1, 2016.

Number of eFiled Documents in Minnesota District Courts



eFiling in Appellate Courts

Minnesota appellate eFiling, which allows users to electronically file documents with the Clerk of the Appellate Courts in cases pending before the Court of Appeals or the Supreme Court, was expanded on March 1, 2015.

The expansion allows attorneys to eFile in all appellate case types in which all parties to the appeal are represented by an attorney admitted to practice in Minnesota, and permits all court reporters and executive branch records managers to eFile in any appellate case, regardless of whether the parties to the appeal are represented by an attorney or have filed any documents electronically.

E-Filing and Self-Represented Litigants

While eFiling will soon be mandatory for attorneys and other regular courtroom participants, use of the eFile and eServe system will remain optional for self-represented litigants – those who choose to represent themselves in court.

Even though self-represented litigants are not required to eFile, the Minnesota Judicial Branch is seeking ways to make it easier for these customers to take advantage of the added speed and convenience of eFiling. A pilot project completed in Minnesota's Fourth Judicial District (Hennepin County) allowed self-represented litigants to use an online interview process to complete a petition for an Order for Protection or Harassment Restraining Order. Once completed, the petition was then electronically routed to judges for review and signature.

The Minnesota Judicial Branch hopes to take the lessons and feedback received from this pilot to implement similar tools in other judicial districts and across various case types.

Did You Know?

Minnesota ranks as one of the highest-scoring states in the nation on the *Justice Index*, an independent examination of how well state court systems ensure access to justice for those who can't afford an attorney, those with limited-English proficiency, and those with disabilities.

To learn more about how Minnesota helps self-represented litigants, see page 11.

eCharging and eCitations Enhance Justice System Efficiency

For the past several years, the Minnesota Judicial Branch has worked with the Minnesota Bureau of Criminal Apprehension (BCA), prosecutors, and local law enforcement agencies to promote the use of eCitations and eCharging. The eCharging application allows prosecutors to file complaints electronically, speeding case processing and reducing staff time needed for data entry. The eCitation system automatically transfers citation information entered into a squad car or office computer to law enforcement and court databases.

On July 1, 2015, eCharging became mandatory for prosecutors filing a criminal complaint in the 11 eCourtMN pilot counties, including Cass, Clay, Cook, Dakota, Faribault, Hennepin, Kandiyohi, Lake, Morrison, Ramsey, and Washington. Filing criminal complaints through the eCharging application will become mandatory statewide on July 1, 2016.

In addition, beginning July 1, 2016, law enforcement statewide will be required to electronically file citations with the court.

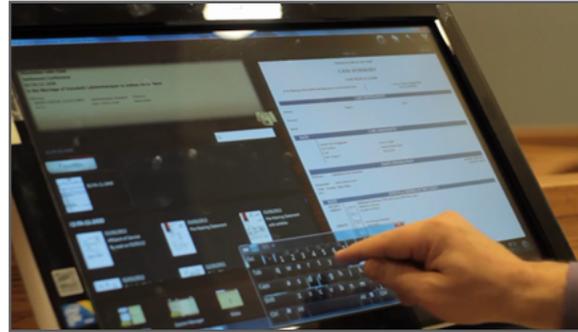
Both eCharging and eCitations are designed to increase efficiency within the justice system, and improve the accuracy of data provided to the courts and used by law enforcement. By the end of 2015, 319 law enforcement agencies in the state were filing eCitations, and prosecutors in 85 of Minnesota's 87 counties were using the Minnesota BCA eCharging application to file complaints.

Increased Information-Sharing in Minnesota's Justice System

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

New Minnesota Government Access

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



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

By the end of 2015, more than 4,000 individual users from more than 130 government agencies were using MGA on a daily basis to retrieve court documents and information. At the beginning of 2016, New MGA was available statewide to corrections and probation agencies, social services, public defenders, and county attorneys. By April 2016, it will be available to city attorneys, law enforcement agencies, and other agencies. The rollout schedule can be found at <http://www.mncourts.gov/MGA.aspx>.

Court Integration Services

While New MGA allows justice partners to access court records via a secure portal using an access account and log-in credentials, Court Integration Services is the technical means by which data and documents are transferred between the court's case management system and another government agency's case management system. Examples of successful integrations include providing the Department of Public Safety with court dispositions for drivers records, or receiving eFiled attorney assignments from the State Public Defenders Office. These electronic integrations increase efficiency in the justice system by reducing redundant data entry in multiple systems, and increases accuracy by eliminating rekeying of data.

Expanding Access to Court Records for the Public

Until recently, the only way a member of the public could view a document filed in a Minnesota district court was by traveling to the specific courthouse where the document was filed. Paper court records meant that there was only one official copy of each court document, which could lead to delays when a member of the public requested a document being used by a judge or court staff.

Minnesota's transition to electronic case records has greatly expanded access to court records:

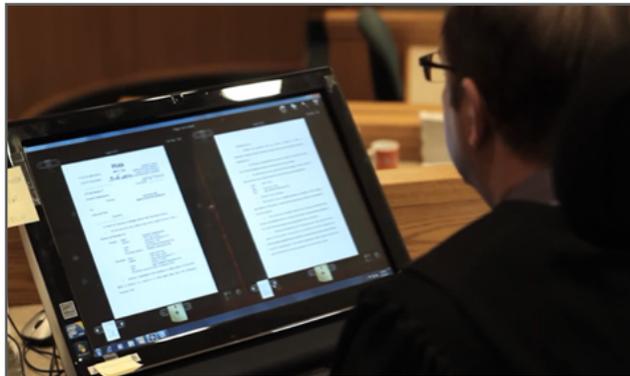
- Today, members of the public can view electronic case documents from all 87 district courts and Minnesota's appellate courts simply by visiting their nearest court facility. At more than 100 locations across the state, members of the public can utilize computer terminals that provide free, instant access to all public electronic court records in the state.
- The Minnesota Judicial Branch is also working to expand online access to court records. Today, members of the public can use an online portal – called Minnesota Public Access (MPA) – to view a multitude of case information, including the Registers of Actions and hearing dates. Recent changes to the court rules that govern access to court records – promulgated by the Minnesota Supreme Court in 2015 – will allow the Judicial Branch to begin providing online access to most public court documents as well. Development of this resource is expected to be explored in 2016.

A More Efficient Courthouse

The transition to electronic case records is making Minnesota's courtrooms and courthouses more efficient.

To assist judges in managing electronic records in their courtrooms, the Minnesota Judicial Branch has developed BenchWorks, an internal judicial case management application that permits judicial officers to conduct a number of case-related tasks through a single system. Through BenchWorks, district court judges are able to prepare for and conduct hearings, track and assign work, view and sort court calendars, and view and annotate electronic documents.

In addition, the Minnesota Judicial Branch spent 2015 developing, testing, and preparing to implement Task Manager, a new tool that will create electronic workflows within the courthouse, automating certain case processes that needed to be done manually with paper-based records. At the end of 2015, the Judicial Branch was planning to implement Task Manager in a handful of pilot counties in the first few months of 2016, and statewide by the end of 2016.



Minnesota Judicial Branch Strategic Plan:

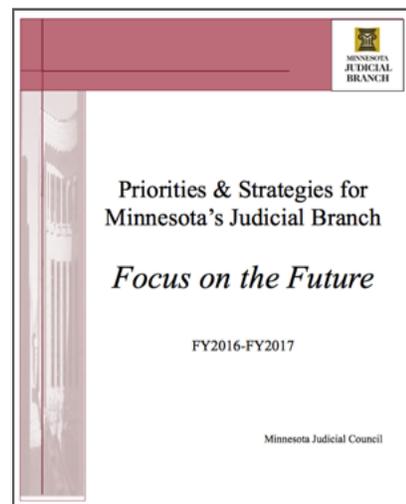
Minnesota courts have a national reputation for professionalism, efficiency, and innovation:

- ▶ 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 ensuring access to justice.
- ▶ In 2015, one of the nation’s leading experts in court management selected the Minnesota Judicial Council – the policymaking body of the Judicial Branch – as one of most effective court governance models in the nation.
- ▶ Across the country, court systems are looking at Minnesota’s transition to an electronic case record as a model for how to leverage technology to enhance efficiency and increase access to court records.

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

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

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



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

Strategic Goal #1 – Access to Justice

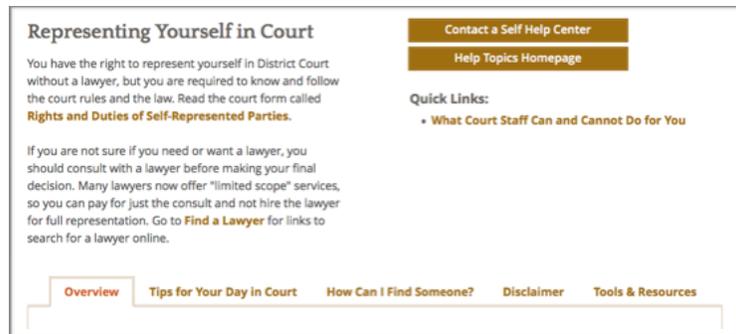
Expanding Services for Self-Represented Litigants (SRLs)

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 Services

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

- **Online:** Through the redesigned Minnesota Judicial Branch website, court users can find general legal information, court forms, form completion services, videos and tutorials, and links to low-cost or no-cost legal advice.
- **Phone:** The statewide Self Help Center handled 21,649 phone calls from self-represented litigants in 2015.
- **E-mail:** The statewide Self Help Center answered 4,682 e-mails from self-represented litigants in 2015.
- **Court Forms:** The Statewide Self Help Center reviewed 1,097 court forms for self-represented litigants in 2015.



The Minnesota Judicial Branch website, www.mncourts.gov, offers a variety of Help Topics to help court customers navigate the legal process. Help Topics offer useful information, court forms, videos, and links to related tools and resources.

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 Center 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 with extensive information and resources about Minnesota’s judicial system.

In 2015, Hennepin County walk-in self help centers located at the Government Center and Family Justice Center provided assistance to 38,662 self-represented litigants.

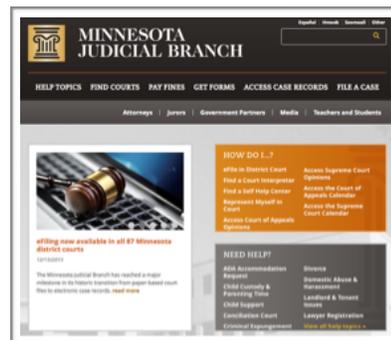
The Ramsey County Family Court walk-in Self Help Center provided assistance to 15,637 self-represented litigants in 2015. In addition, the Ramsey County Family Court Legal Advice Clinic, which is held three afternoons per week and is staffed by volunteer attorneys, assisted 522 parties in 2015. The Court’s Motion to Modify Child Support Clinic, which is held twice per month and is staffed by Self Help Center employees, assisted 88 parties in 2015.

Also in 2015, Minnesota’s Tenth Judicial District opened a new Self Help Center at the Anoka County Courthouse. The Center provides legal information and resources to self-represented litigants, and serves residents from throughout the District, which includes Anoka, Chisago, Isanti, Kanabec, Pine, Sherburne, Washington, and Wright counties. The Center supplements services currently offered by the Anoka County Law Library and associated legal clinics. The Tenth Judicial District Self Help Center assisted 1,443 parties with 1,475 matters between the grand opening in June and the end of 2015.

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.

Website Redesign Offers Expanded Help to Court Users

Each day, approximately 20,000 users visit the Minnesota Judicial Branch website, www.mncourts.gov, to find court-related information, access case records, electronically file court documents, and pay fines for citations. In an effort to improve the usability and navigation of this important public resource – with a focus on providing site visitors quick access to the tools, resources, and information they most frequently utilize – the Minnesota Judicial Branch launched a redesigned public website in June 2015.



Ensuring the Safety of Minnesota's Courthouses

According to incident data gathered by the Center for Judicial and Executive Security, the number of security threats and violent incidents in court buildings across the country has increased dramatically in recent years. Minnesota has not been immune to this rise in courthouse violence. This includes the tragic shooting in the Cook County Courthouse in Grand Marais in 2011, bomb threats closing down courthouses, physical attacks on public defenders in courtrooms, knives and other weapons being found in courthouses or collected at screening stations, and white powder scares at multiple court facilities.

In 2015, Minnesota's justice system partners – including the Minnesota Judicial Branch, the Association of Minnesota Counties, the Minnesota Sheriffs' Association, the Minnesota County Attorneys Association, the Minnesota Board of Public Defense, and the Minnesota Inter-County Association – convened a Courthouse Security Workgroup to develop a plan to improve the safety and security of Minnesota's court facilities. This partnership has led to increased courthouse security training, new courthouse security assessments, and improved policies and procedures. In addition, the Courthouse Security Workgroup will seek state funding during the 2016 Legislative Session to help counties implement security improvements at courthouse locations across the state.

“Ensuring the safety of our courthouses is essential to preserving access to our justice system.

Every day, thousands of Minnesotans enter their local courthouse to seek justice, protect their rights, access government services, and fulfill a variety of duties as citizens and taxpayers. It is crucial that these facilities are well-protected, and that Minnesotans feel they can access their local courthouse safely and securely.”

— *Minnesota State Court Administrator Jeffrey Shorba*



Strategic Goal #2 – Effective Results

Conservator Auditing Program Earns Four Awards in 2015

In 2015, the Minnesota Judicial Branch received three national awards and one statewide award for its efforts to better protect elderly and vulnerable adults from financial abuse.

The awards were given to recognize the Minnesota Judicial Branch’s Conservator Account Auditing Program (CAAP), a nation-leading initiative to protect the assets of vulnerable individuals – persons with developmental disabilities, Alzheimer’s disease, dementia, or traumatic brain injuries – for whom the court has appointed a conservator to manage the individual’s financial affairs.

Through CAAP, the Minnesota Judicial Branch has modernized and improved the way the state oversees the work of conservators:

- Conservators now submit transactions through MyMNConservator, the first and only online mandatory reporting tool for conservators in the country. The system contains “red flag” logic that automatically reviews filed accounts and alerts auditors to possible errors, inconsistencies, or transactions that require further review.
- The program also established a centralized conservator account auditing center, staffed by a team of trained experts who conduct compliance audits on conservator accounts from across the state. This has resulted in stronger oversight of conservatorship accounts, and freed up significant staff resources at the district court level.

The program earned the following awards in 2015:

- The 2015 Paul H. Chapman Award from the Foundation for Improvement of Justice
- The 2015 Justice Achievement Award from the National Association for Court Management
- A 2015 Court Information Technology Officers Consortium Innovation Award
- A 2015 State Government Innovation Award from the University of Minnesota’s Humphrey School of Public Affairs.



(L to R) Tenth Judicial District Administrator Michael Moriarity, CAAP Program Administrator Cate Boyko, and State Court Administrator Jeff Shorba accept the 2015 State Government Innovation Award.

Minnesota Completes Transition to Statewide Court Payment Center

The Minnesota Judicial Branch has completed a multi-year project to operationally centralize the processing of citations – including case initiation, the contact center, and payments and receipts – for all 87 district courts.

The effort to centralize the processing of payable citations, such as traffic and parking violations, ordinance violations, and citations issued by the Department of Natural Resources, began in late-2009. The Judicial Branch established the Minnesota Court Payment Center (CPC), a statewide operation that provides a convenient, one-stop resource for individuals with questions about their citations, as well as the option to pay citations using the Internet, telephone, or U.S. mail to a central accounting office located in Willmar, MN.

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

By June of 2011, the CPC was managing payables case processing for all district courts, minus the state’s highest-volume courts in Hennepin and Ramsey counties. An evaluation completed in 2015 showed the CPC had significantly reduced the workload for staff in the district courts, and that centralization had contributed to the reduction of the statewide number of Judicial Branch staff working on processing payments.

Transitioning Hennepin and Ramsey county district courts to the CPC presented a unique level of complexity compared to the state’s other district courts. Annually, Hennepin and Ramsey county district courts process more citations than the state’s other courts combined, primarily due to the high number of parking citations issued in the metropolitan area. Additionally, Hennepin and Ramsey courts rely on specialized hearing officers to help dispose of the higher volume of cases.

After significant planning and preparation, the State Court Administrator’s office transitioned Ramsey County District Court citation processing to the CPC in July 2015. Hennepin County District Court citation processing was transferred in January 2016. Today, the CPC is processing citations for all 87 district courts in the state. Hennepin and Ramsey county district courts continue to offer court users the opportunity to meet with a hearing officer, and court users can still make a payment in person at the courthouse in the county in which the citation was issued.

New Initiative Aims to Improve Enforcement of Orders for Protection

In 2015, the Minnesota Judicial Branch completed statewide implementation of an initiative designed to improve the safety of domestic violence victims and enhance enforcement of protective orders. Through this project, Minnesota has overhauled the way it manages and shares data related to Orders for Protection. Orders for Protection (OFPs) are civil orders issued by judicial officers to help keep domestic violence victims safe from their abusers.

Prior to the completion of this project, Minnesota’s district courts stored data relating to OFPs in an aging database that was not integrated with the Judicial Branch’s broader Minnesota Court Information System (MNCIS). This lack of integration limited both the frequency with which local district courts could share data related to protective orders with the Minnesota Bureau of Criminal Apprehension (BCA), as well as the amount of detail about protective orders that ended up in the hands of local law enforcement charged with enforcing the orders.

The Minnesota Judicial Branch has now fully integrated OFP data into MNCIS. This integration has not only streamlined court operations but, much more importantly, will serve to enhance the enforcement of protective orders, thereby increasing the safety of domestic violence victims and law enforcement. Benefits of this integration include:

Faster enforcement of Orders for Protection: Through this integration, as soon as a new OFP is entered into MNCIS or an OFP is updated by the court, that data is shared instantly with both the BCA and the FBI. That information then becomes available to law enforcement officers responsible for serving the OFP on the respondent and enforcing the conditions of the Order. Prior to this integration, OFP data was only transmitted from the courts to law enforcement twice per day.

More information in the hands of law enforcement: Due to the limitations presented by the prior database used to store OFP information, the data that was eventually transmitted to law enforcement only displayed a two-digit code representing condition language ordered by a judicial officer, rather than the full text of the conditions ordered by the court. Today, law enforcement officers can now access the full language of judicial officers’ conditions in OFPs from squad car computers, eliminating the potential for confusion and uncertainty about how to enforce the Orders.

Less uncertainty for those seeking protection: Law enforcement is now able to instantly report that an OFP has been served on the respondent. Those seeking protection through an OFP have the option to receive an automated e-mail message from the court notifying them that the respondent has been served with the OFP.

The project was funded through a federal grant from the Office on Violence Against Women to the Minnesota Department of Public Safety, Office of Justice Programs. Project partners included the State Court Administrator’s Office, the Minnesota Bureau of Criminal Apprehension (BCA), the Minnesota Chiefs of Police Association, the Minnesota Sheriffs’ Association, the Minnesota Coalition for Battered Women, and the Minnesota Indian Affairs Council.

Drug Courts Continue to Show Success, Growth

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

In 2014, the Minnesota Judicial Branch utilized a new investment from the Legislature and the Governor to fund the largest one-year expansion of drug court programs in Minnesota. In 2015, the Judicial Branch continued to expand the availability of drug court programs across the state, while also releasing a new evaluation that highlighted the positive impact of drug courts on both offenders and the broader community.

New Drug Courts Opening in 2015

Three new drug courts opened in Minnesota in 2015:

- A multi-county drug court serving Norman, Polk and Red Lake counties
- The Le Sueur County Drug Court
- The White Earth Nation/Becker County DWI Court, designed for repeat-DWI offenders.

With this expansion, Minnesota now has 52 operational drug courts across the state. A complete list of operational drug courts in Minnesota is available at <http://www.mncourts.gov/Help-Topics/DrugCourts.aspx>.

New Evaluation Shows Drug Court Impact

In 2012, the Minnesota Judicial Branch released the first comprehensive evaluation of the effectiveness of Minnesota's drug courts. The groundbreaking study, which compared 535 drug court participants to similar offenders who experienced traditional court processes over two-and-a-half years, found that drug courts significantly reduced recidivism, improved community outcomes, and reduced incarceration and related costs for drug court participants.

In March 2015, the Minnesota Judicial Branch released a follow-up to that 2012 evaluation, which tracked the progress of the same drug court participants and similar offenders over an additional year-and-a-half. The new evaluation found that drug court participants – now four years removed from their entry into a drug court program – continued to show significantly lower recidivism rates and reduced incarceration costs.

Looking Ahead

During the 2015 Legislative Session, lawmakers once again made a significant new investment in drug courts, and the Minnesota Judicial Branch has established a Drug Court Funding Workgroup with the goal of developing a transparent, predictable, and stable drug court funding mechanism. In addition, the Judicial Branch is working with an outside research firm to develop a peer review process for Minnesota's drug, hybrid, and DWI courts.

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

In late 2015, the Minnesota Judicial Council approved \$1 million in funding for justice system technology projects through the recently-established Court Technology Fund.

A temporary \$2 fee on certain court filings, enacted 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 Court Technology Fund had roughly \$1 million in proceeds available for distribution for FY2016. A 10-member advisory board established by the Minnesota Judicial Council reviewed 22 requests for funding from the fund, totaling \$3.4 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 15 projects for a total of \$1 million.

Among the projects funded in FY2016 through the Court Technology Fund was implementation of electronic citations (eCitations) at eight law enforcement agencies, assisting counties in integrating with the court's case management system, development of electronic tools to help self-represented litigants, and a redesign of the Mid-Minnesota Legal Assistance online help service.

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 Court Technology Fund is exhausted.

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.

[The latest report, published in October 2015](#), details results in six key areas: Access to Justice, Timeliness, Integrity and Accountability, Excellence, Fairness and Equity, and Quality Workplace Environment.

Strategic Goal #3 – Public Trust

Law Day “Open Courthouse” Event Showcases Justice System to Duluth Residents

On Friday, May 1, the St. Louis County Courthouse in Duluth opened its doors to the public as part of a Law Day “Open Courthouse” event designed to showcase the work of Minnesota’s Sixth Judicial District, and educate students and the public about the role of judges, attorneys, law enforcement, and citizens in administering Minnesota’s justice system.

Nearly 300 community members attended the event, which included guided courthouse tours; an opportunity to learn about the justice system from judges, attorneys, and law enforcement; an information fair with representatives from numerous law- and justice-related organizations; and a free legal advice clinic.

The Open Courthouse event was scheduled on Law Day, a national day set aside to celebrate the rule of law. Law Day underscores how law and the legal process have contributed to the freedoms that all Americans share. Law Day was first established in 1958 through a proclamation by President Dwight D. Eisenhower. Congress passed a joint resolution designating May 1 as Law Day, U.S.A, in 1961.

The Open Courthouse event was hosted by Minnesota’s Sixth Judicial District in partnership with the Minnesota State Bar Association, with the support of the St. Louis County Attorney’s Office, the St. Louis County Sheriff’s Department, the Sixth District Public Defenders Office, the Volunteer Attorney Program, and the St. Louis County Law Library.

Based on the success of the event, the Minnesota Judicial Branch is planning on holding more “open courthouse” events across the state in 2016 and 2017.



Minnesota Supreme Court Associate Justice Christopher J. Dietzen (center) on the bench with visitors to the Open Courthouse event.

Minnesota Celebrates 800th Anniversary of Magna Carta

People around the world celebrated the 800th anniversary of Magna Carta in 2015, commemorating a manuscript which helped shape our common ideals of freedom, liberty, and the rule of law. As part of this global celebration, the Minnesota Judicial Branch partnered with a broad coalition of legal and civic organizations to bring a special exhibit titled, “Magna Carta: Enduring Legacy,” to Minnesota. The exhibit, which was developed by the American Bar Association and the Law Library of Congress, shares images of objects from Library of Congress collections that illustrate Magna Carta’s influence throughout the centuries and explain the document’s long history.



Minnesota Supreme Court Chief Justice Lorie S. Gildea (left) with Governor Mark Dayton as he presents to her a Constitution Day proclamation.

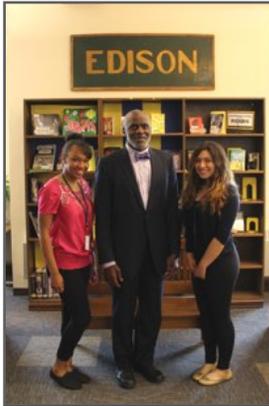
On Thursday, September 17 – Constitution Day – the Minnesota Judicial Branch and several partner organizations hosted a public event at the Minnesota History Center to showcase this traveling exhibit, along with several important artifacts related to Minnesota’s Constitution from the collections of the Minnesota Historical Society. The reception included a short program featuring remarks from Minnesota Supreme Court Chief Justice Lorie S. Gildea, Governor Mark Dayton, and David Mao, Deputy Librarian of Congress.

In addition to the Constitution Day event, the Minnesota Supreme Court Historical Society, Learning Law and Democracy, and the Minnesota Historical Society, in partnership with the Minnesota Judicial Branch, created “Constitution Week” resources and activities for teachers and students. These materials were aimed at helping students understand the importance of the rule of law and their constitutional rights, with an emphasis on the role the signing of the Magna Carta in 1215 had in shaping those rights.

Other Constitution Week activities and resources included:

- A statewide Twitter event, which gave students a chance to win prizes by learning about Magna Carta and the Constitution.
- A Magna Carta trivia app, developed by Thomson Reuters, the Minnesota Supreme Court Historical Society, and the Learning Law and Democracy Foundation.
- A Constitution Day video, featuring Chief Justice Gildea, which teachers can use in their classrooms.
- An essay contest related to the Magna Carta for Minnesota high school juniors and seniors, sponsored by the Minnesota Supreme Court Historical Society.

Supreme Court Visits Duluth, Minneapolis High Schools



Associate Justice Alan C. Page with student guides from Edison 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 in order to reach out to citizens in the community they are visiting.

In May 2015, the Supreme Court’s traveling oral argument program was held at Thomas Edison High School in Minneapolis, with hundreds of students from Edison High and other Minneapolis public schools in attendance.

In October 2015, the Supreme Court traveled to Duluth to hold their annual community dinner and hear oral arguments at Denfeld High School. The dinner was attended by approximately 160 community members, and more than 1,400 students from across the region viewed the oral arguments in the high school auditorium.



The members of the Supreme Court with staff and students from Denfeld High School.

Supreme Court Order Expands Camera Access to Criminal Court

On the morning of November 10, 2015, a reporter and cameraperson from a Twin Cities TV station became the first media members to record a district court criminal proceeding under a new pilot project authorized by the Supreme Court earlier in the year.

The pilot, which began November 10 under a recent Supreme Court order, permits electronic audio/visual coverage of district court criminal proceedings held after a guilty verdict has been returned or a guilty plea has been accepted. Coverage is not subject to the consent of parties, though the order grants judges the authority to deny or limit camera coverage for good cause.

By the end of 2015, cameras had been present at five sentencing hearings across the state under the pilot.

To learn more about the pilot and read a summary of the Supreme Court’s order and information on related court forms, please visit the [Cameras in Courtrooms](http://www.mncourts.gov) page on www.mncourts.gov.

Minnesota Celebrates Women in the Legal Profession



(L to R) Minnesota Women Lawyers President Pam Rochlin, Minnesota Supreme Court Associate Justice Wilhelmina Wright, and Minnesota Supreme Court Chief Justice Lorie Gildea at the Minnesota Women in Law celebration.

A public event held at the Minnesota State Law Library in April celebrated the contributions and accomplishments of Minnesota’s female judges and attorneys.

The event offered members of the public an opportunity to tour, “Minnesota Women in Law,” an exhibit celebrating the advancement of women in the legal profession, which was on loan from the United States District Court, District of Minnesota. Guests also heard remarks from Minnesota Supreme Court Chief Justice Lorie S. Gildea, Minnesota Supreme Court Associate Justice Wilhelmina Wright, Minnesota Attorney General Lori Swanson, and Minnesota Women Lawyers President Pam Rochlin.

“We were the first state in the nation with a female majority on our state Supreme Court. It may be hard to imagine today, but this was no small story in 1991.

This was a major milestone in our state’s history. And from that moment, we have seen the number of women in the legal profession – and the number of women serving on the bench – reach numbers that may have been unimaginable in 1991.

Back then, women represented just 12 percent of judges in Minnesota. Because of the trailblazers we are honoring today, we can celebrate the fact that women now preside in nearly 40 percent of our state’s courtrooms.

This growing diversity on our bench not only represents a great step forward for women in the legal profession; it represents a great step toward a justice system that better reflects the people we serve.”

— Minnesota Supreme Court Chief Justice Lorie S. Gildea, speaking at the “Minnesota Women in Law” event on April 28, 2015.

District Courts

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

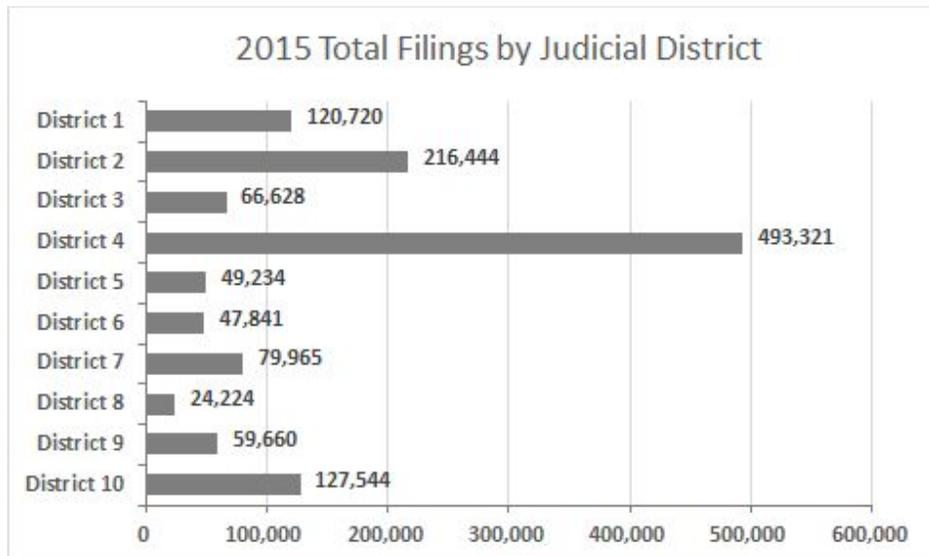
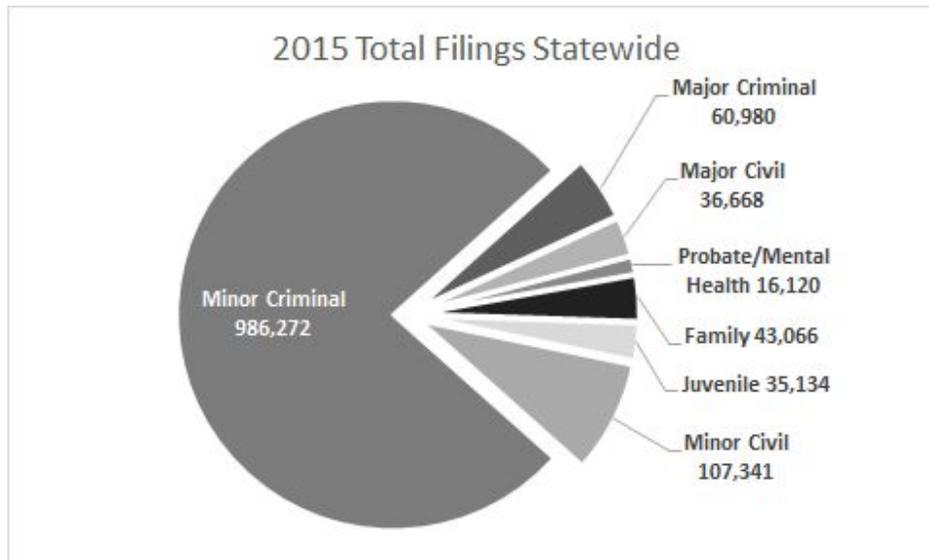
Jurisdiction: Civil Actions, Criminal Cases, Family, Juvenile, Probate, Violations of City Ordinances

Appeals from: Conciliation Court*

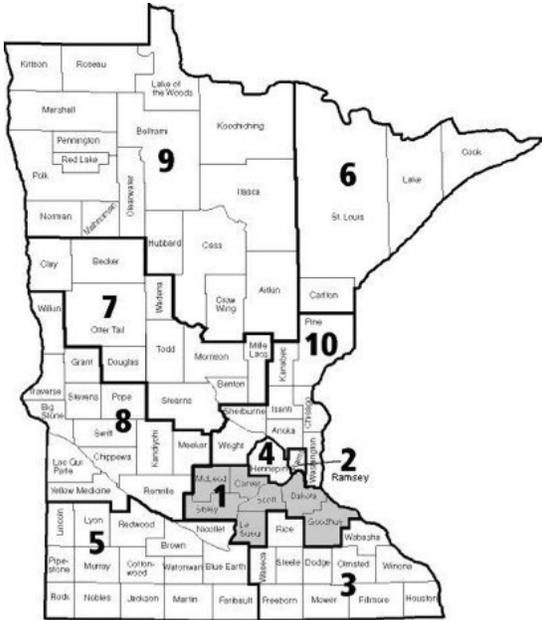
Conciliation Division: Civil Disputes up to \$15,000

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

There were 1,285,581 cases filed in the district courts in Minnesota in 2015.



First Judicial District



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

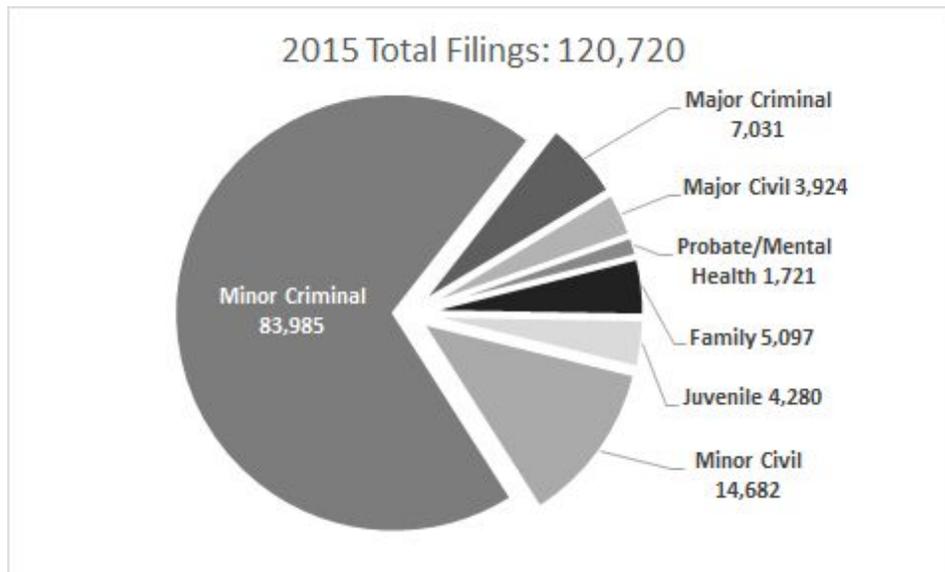
36 Judgeships

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

Brian Jones, District Administrator

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

2015 Case Filings for the First Judicial District



Scott County Kiosk Speeds Public Defender Appointment Process

New functionality has recently been utilized in the inmate kiosk at the Scott County Jail that allows inmates to more efficiently share financial information with the court before their first hearing, speeding up the process of determining whether or not a public defender will be appointed. Rather than making the determination with paperwork or in the courtroom, inmates are asked a series of financial questions electronically by the kiosk, and their responses are sent by e-mail to the Scott County court administration office for review and appointment if qualifications are met.

The former appointment process had court staff reviewing the inmate application for a public defender, and making a recommendation to the judge on whether the individual was qualified, on the hearing date after the inmate had been brought over from the jail to the courtroom. The process was inefficient and did not allow the public defenders ample time to review all of the necessary documents prior to the court hearings.

The new appointment process was established through collaboration between Scott County District Court and the Scott County Sheriff, Scott County Jail administration staff, the Scott County Public Defender, and State Court Administration's Information Technology Division.

Courtroom Technology Upgrades Installed in Scott County

Scott County and the Minnesota Judicial Branch collaborated in 2015 to install new technology, including monitors, a document camera, and an upgraded sound system, into one of the courtrooms at the Scott County Courthouse.

Attorneys and litigants are now be able to present their exhibits from a laptop, and those exhibits are seen by courtroom participants and jurors on the new monitors placed throughout the courtroom. The new document camera also allows for displaying physical exhibits like photos or maps, and it provides the capability for witnesses to make annotations on exhibits.

The upgraded audio system was necessary because of increased noise in the courtroom in recent years due to more court activity in the growing county, as well as the use of scanners and printers, which is necessary for court administration to be able to update case information in the electronic case management system. The new audio system is particularly helpful to the court reporter, who must be able to hear properly in order to fully capture the record.

Le Sueur County Drug Court Launches

The Le Sueur County Drug Court held its first drug court hearing on Feb. 9, 2015. The Drug Court operates on a post-plea basis, accepting non-violent felony offenders who are at a high risk for recidivism and have high treatment needs – those who are addicted to alcohol and drugs.

With the influx of methamphetamine from Mexico, controlled substance crime in Le Sueur County went up almost 100 percent in 2013 and 2014 compared to the previous three years. In response, Le Sueur County’s Board of Commissioners agreed to pay for a year of operating expenses for the Drug Court.

Twentieth Annual Domestic Violence Conference Held

The First Judicial District Domestic Violence Coordinating Council held its annual Domestic Violence Conference on October 2, 2015, with approximately 100 people in attendance. The Conference has brought justice partners together with nationally-known speakers for 20 years to discuss and receive training on a topic that the judicial system is all too familiar with – violence in the home. The conference strives not only to educate system providers and partners, but also to rejuvenate empathy for victims.

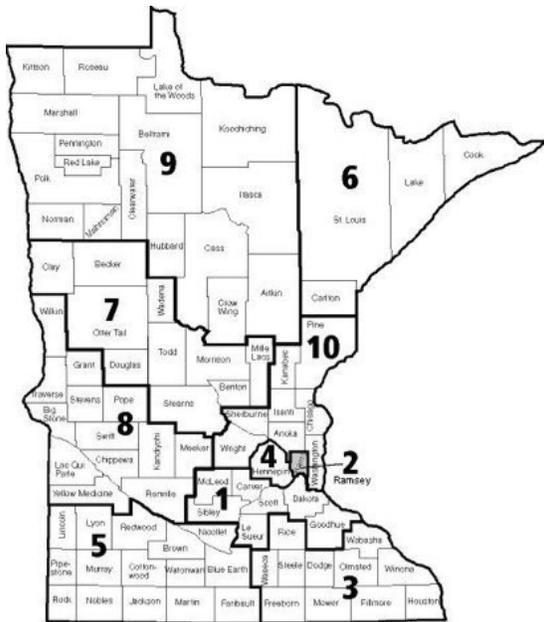
Dakota County Northern Service Center Implements Weapons Screening

Dakota County installed weapons screening at the Northern Service Center in West St. Paul in 2015 in an effort to provide enhanced security for court litigants.

Screening deputies report that there has been minimal opposition from the public to the screening, and that the vast majority of visitors are very cooperative, understanding, and even appreciative of the additional safety measures, which have not caused any long lines of people awaiting entry, even during the busiest times of day.

The installation of the weapons screening equipment is the result of the combined efforts of the Dakota County commissioners, Dakota County Administration and Risk Management, the Dakota County Sheriff’s Office, and Dakota County District Court.

Second Judicial District



1 County: Ramsey

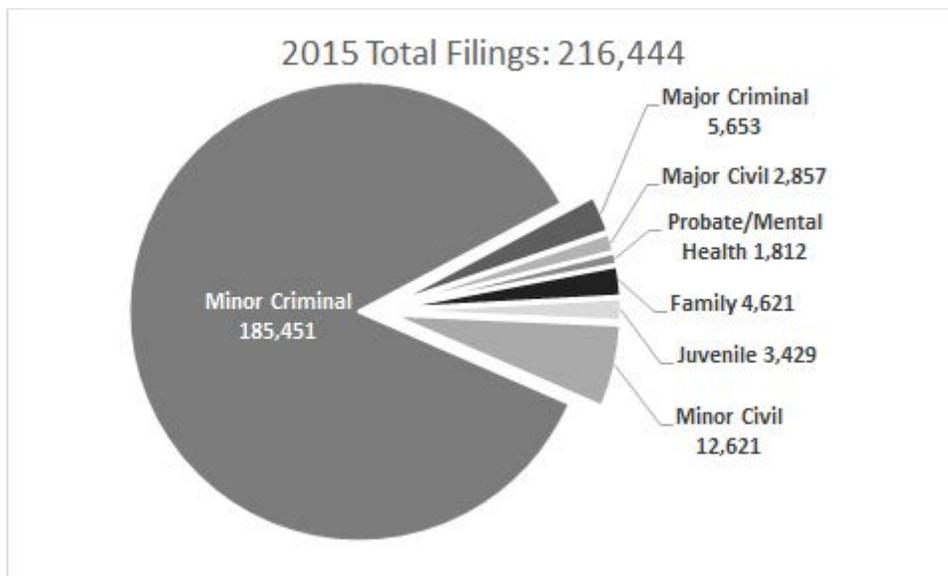
29 Judgeships

Hon. Teresa R. Warner, Chief Judge
Hon. John H. Guthmann, Assistant Chief Judge

Heather M. Kendall, District Administrator

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

2015 Case Filings for the Second Judicial District



Ramsey County Mental Health Court Named 2015-2016 National Criminal Justice/Mental Health Collaboration Learning Site

The Council of State Governments Justice Center, in partnership with the U.S. Department of Justice's Bureau of Justice Assistance, selected the Ramsey County Mental Health Court (RCMHC) as one of only four 2015-2016 peer-to-peer learning sites in the nation as part of the National Criminal Justice/Mental Health Collaboration Learning Sites Program.

The RCMHC directs eligible defendants with mental health disorders from the criminal justice system to community-based mental health, substance abuse, and support services, and has produced a number of public benefits, including reduction in jail crowding, expedited case processing, an increase in services for mentally ill offenders, and reduced recidivism.

The development of the RCMHC has required a significant and complex change in the manner in which the county, courts, and communities work together. The RCMHC model has a proven and documented track record of success through a significant reduction in program graduate recidivism rates, along with a reduction in the cost of recidivism. In a one-year follow-up, only three percent of program graduates had new charges, compared to 22 percent in a comparison group. Results remained consistent in the three-year follow-up, with only 11 percent of program graduates having new charges, compared to 35 percent of a comparison group.

Ramsey County DWI Court Celebrates 10-Year Anniversary

The Ramsey County DWI Court marked its 10-year anniversary and celebrated its success with a public event at the Ramsey County Courthouse on January 29, 2015.

The Ramsey County DWI Court became the first DWI Court program in Minnesota when it was established in January 2005. The program targets non-violent offenders who are charged with at least their third misdemeanor DWI offense, and is designed to enhance public safety by holding repeat DWI offenders accountable through the use of technology, judicial supervision, chemical dependency treatment, intensive case management, and supplemental services.

A recent evaluation of the Ramsey County DWI Court conducted by NPC Research of Portland, Oregon, found that offenders who successfully completed the program had re-arrest rates nearly 60 percent lower than similar offenders who experienced traditional court processes after two years of program entry.

Ramsey County Veterans Treatment Court Celebrates First Graduates

District court, county, and community leaders gathered at the Ramsey County Courthouse on July 9, 2015, to celebrate the first four graduates of the Ramsey County Veterans Treatment Court. This was the program's first graduation ceremony since it was founded in December 2013.

The Ramsey County Veterans Treatment Court is a voluntary court program for veterans with chemical or mental health issues who have been charged with a crime in Ramsey County. The program represents a collaborative effort of criminal justice stakeholders working together in a non-adversarial setting to promote public safety and to help veterans involved in the criminal justice system break the cycle of substance abuse, mental illness, and criminal behavior.

The Court provides veterans with the opportunity to change life circumstances, become alcohol- and drug- free, and get treatment for mental health issues. This is accomplished through comprehensive assessment and treatment, intensive supervision, random drug and breath testing, regular court appearances, and immediate sanctions and incentives. Honesty and individual accountability are at the foundation of the program.

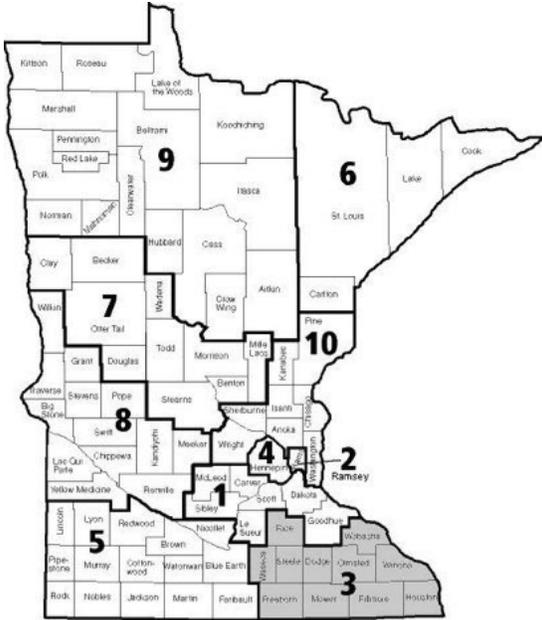
All participants in the program are assigned a volunteer veteran mentor. The role of the volunteer veteran mentor is to act as a coach, a guide, a role model, and an advocate for the individuals he or she will work with. The mentor encourages, guides, and supports the participant as she or he progresses through the Veterans Treatment Court program.

The Ramsey County Veterans Treatment Court is a collaborative effort involving Minnesota's Second Judicial District, the Ramsey County Attorney's Office, the Ramsey County Veterans Services Office, Ramsey County Community Corrections, the St. Paul City Attorney's Office, the Ramsey County Public Defender's Office, Project Remand, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, Ramsey County Human Services, and other community partners.



Second Judicial District Chief Judge Teresa R. Warner (L) speaks at the graduation presided over by Second Judicial District Judge Judith M. Tilsen (R).

Third Judicial District



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

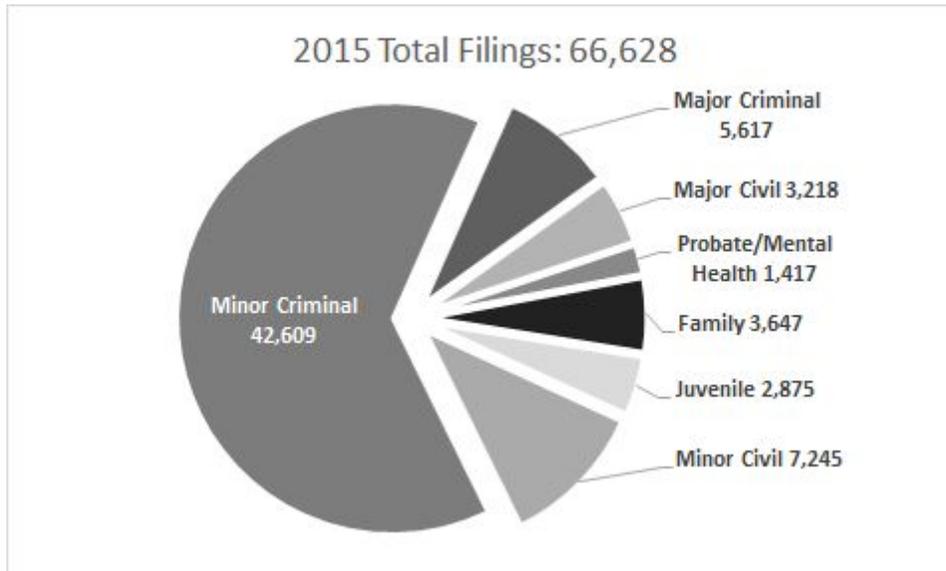
23 Judgeships

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

Shelley Ellefson, District Administrator

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

2015 Case Filings for the Third Judicial District



Steele Waseca Drug Court Team Members Travel to Washington D.C.

Five members of the Steele Waseca Drug Court (SWDC) team traveled to Washington D.C. in July 2015 to participate in the National Association of Drug Court Professionals (NADCP) annual conference.

Third Judicial District Judge Joseph Bueltel, Steele County Attorney Dan McIntosh, SWDC Coordinator Nicole Grams, Probation Agent Doug Nelson, and Dual Recovery Program Director Dave Wright attended the conference, which included sessions on the newly published evidence-based best practices for Drug Court programs.

As part of the conference, the SWDC team also met with Representative Tim Walz, Senator Al Franken, and the office of Senator Amy Klobuchar to talk about the SWDC program and express appreciation for the three legislators' support of Drug Court programs.



(L to R) Third Judicial District Judge Joseph Bueltel, Dual Recovery Program Director Dave Wright, Representative Tim Walz, Probation Agent Doug Nelson, Steele County Attorney Dan McIntosh, and SWDC Coordinator Nicole Grams at the conference.

Attendance at the conference was a continuation of the SWDC's efforts to continually improve its operation in order to ensure appropriate participants enter the program and provide proven, evidence-based interventions to reduce criminal activity and lower criminal justice costs.

The SWDC had approximately 40 participants throughout 2015, and recently received a three-year implementation grant from the Bureau of Justice Assistance.

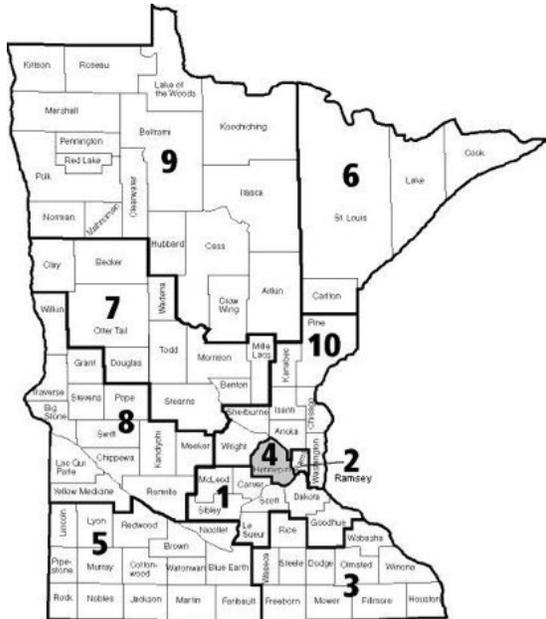
Rice County Drug Court Celebrates First Year of Operation

The Rice County Drug Court celebrated its first year of operation in June 2015. The Court was launched in 2014 to reduce the adverse impact of serious and repeat offenders on the citizens and criminal justice system of Rice County, and to create a system that is more effective for participants. As of the end of 2015, Rice County Drug Court had 13 participants.

Areas identified for improvement in 2015 include increasing the capacity of the Court, improving compliance checks in the community, reducing dropout rates, and developing integrated programming for the 80 percent of participants who have a co-occurring disorder of mental health and substance use.

Rice County Drug Court's plan for 2016 is to enhance services for and resources available to individuals in the criminal justice system, with a focus on reducing costs, enhancing public safety, providing relief for victims, and aiding participants in becoming productive members of the community. The first graduation from the program is also expected in 2016.

Fourth Judicial District



1 County: Hennepin

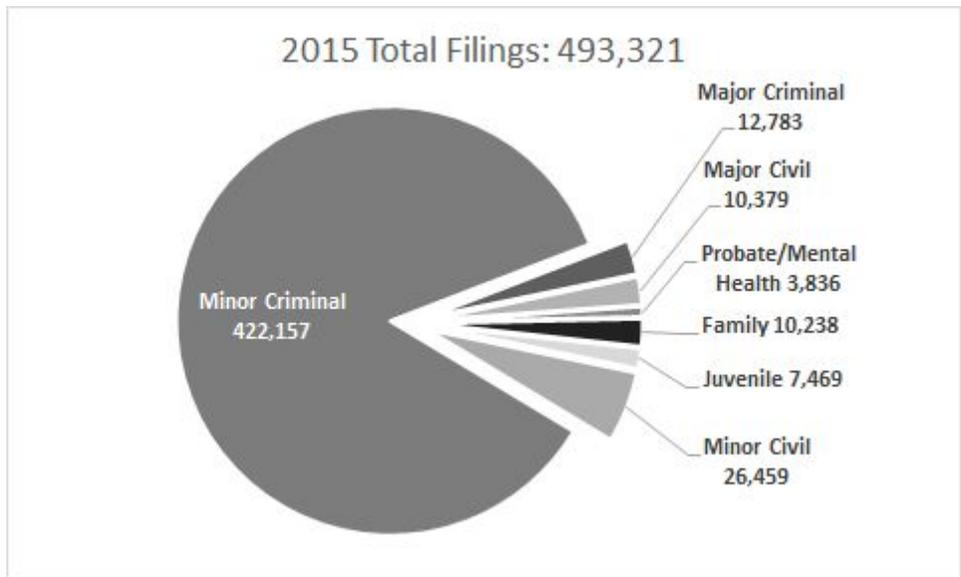
62 Judgeships

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

2015 Case Filings for the Fourth Judicial



Equal Justice Committee Holds Community Listening Sessions

The Fourth Judicial District Equal Justice Committee conducted two community listening sessions in 2015. One was held at North High School in Minneapolis, and the other at the Minneapolis Urban League. Judges met with participants in small groups to hear about court experiences and suggestions for improving the process of going to court. Several changes were implemented as a result of the listening sessions.

Public Defender Eligibility Kiosks Installed

Three public defender eligibility kiosks were installed at two Hennepin County District Court facilities in downtown Minneapolis in 2015. Two were installed at the Juvenile Justice Center, and one was installed at the Public Safety Facility.

Developed by the Court, the kiosks allows inmates to more efficiently share financial information with the court before their first hearing, speeding up the process of determining whether or not a public defender will be appointed.

eNoticing Planned

Hennepin County District Court planned in 2015 for the implementation of an electronic hearing reminder tool that automatically e-mails defendants to remind them of their upcoming hearing dates. The ultimate goal when the eNoticing project is finalized in 2016 is to use texting as the means of sending hearing reminders.

eNoticing will achieve the following goals:

- Increased hearing appearance rates and reduced failure to appear rates
- Gained workflow efficiencies without a significant increase in staff labor and printing costs
- Reduced resource waste attributed to failure to appear hearings, which translates to financial savings
- Improved public safety by keeping defendants accountable in a timely manner, and
- Less law enforcement intervention and conserved incarceration space for those with priority needs.

Court Record Imaging Project Completed

The Court Records Imaging Project was completed in 2015. The goal of the project was to image all existing old and closed paper files, including those only available on microfilm and fiche, and provide a searchable database of the images that could be accessed by the court, court partners, and the public.

All post-1913 civil, criminal, family, juvenile, probate/mental health, psychological services, and human resources paper files were imaged using a searchable PDF format. All pre-1913 court records, due to their historical value and by order of the Fourth Judicial District chief judge, have also been preserved and re-indexed, and are stored onsite.

The project eliminated all off-site vendor fees associated with records storage, and restructured, repurposed, and consolidated the court Record Center system and staff. In addition, judges now have electronic access to the imaged records from the bench, and court partners can access appropriate records from their own computers.

The public is benefitting from the project by having quicker self-serve access to old case files onsite, and having more robust search tools available to them through the electronic system.



Congressman Keith Ellison attended the Hennepin County Adult Drug Court meeting on Aug. 31, 2015. The meetings are attended by the Drug Court justice stakeholders to coordinate and organize events that will take place later the same day.

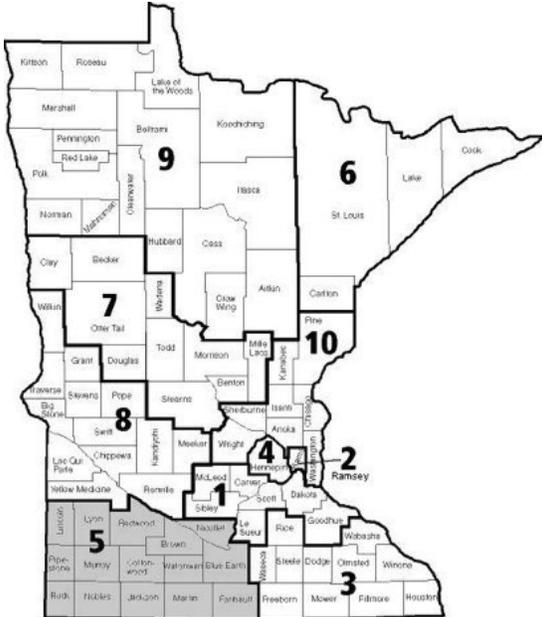


Judge Bruce Peterson addresses Hennepin County Adult Drug Court graduates on Dec. 4, 2015, in the Hennepin County Board Room.

Fourth Judicial District Featured in National Publication

Two Fourth Judicial District employees wrote an article, “How the Fourth Judicial District Became a High-Functioning Criminal Court,” that was featured in the National Center for State Courts 2015 Trends in State Courts report. [Read the article.](#)

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

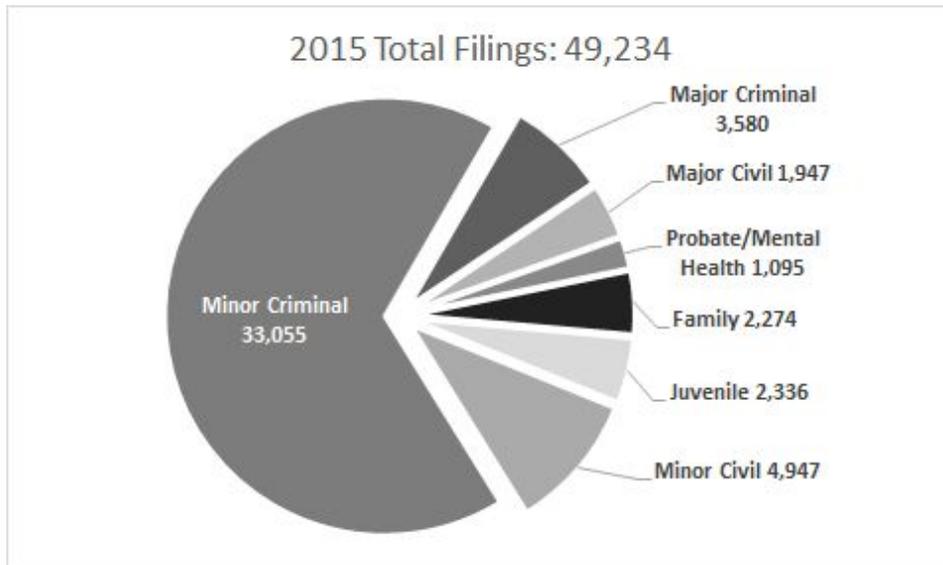
Michael J. Kelley, District Administrator

Fifth Judicial District Administration

11 Civic Center Plaza, Suite 205

Mankato, MN 56001

2015 Case Filings for the Fifth Judicial District



Longtime District Administrator retires; Kelley appointed successor

Michael J. Kelley was appointed district administrator of Minnesota's Fifth Judicial District in October 2015. Kelley replaced Richard H. Fasnacht, who retired from the Minnesota Judicial Branch after 40 years of service, including 29 years as Fifth Judicial District Administrator.

As District Administrator, Kelley now oversees the administrative affairs of the Fifth District, including management and processing of all court records and files, budgeting and accounting, human resources, and maintenance of the district's information technology infrastructure.

Kelley formerly served as Deputy District Administrator for the Fourth Judicial District (Hennepin County), a position he had held since June 2003. He is a native of the Fifth Judicial District, growing up and attending school in Fairmont (Martin County). He began his career in Minnesota's court system in 1992 as Assistant District Administrator for the Seventh Judicial District. In 1995, he took the same position in the First Judicial District. Kelley moved to the Fourth District as Administrative Services Manager in 1998. He left the Fourth District in early 2003 and joined State Court Administration as Finance Director. He returned to the Fourth District later that year.

Kelley has a Master of Science in Judicial Administration from Denver University College of Law, as well as a Bachelor of Science in Political Science and Criminal Justice from the University of South Dakota. He was also named a Certified Court Manager by the National Center for State Courts.

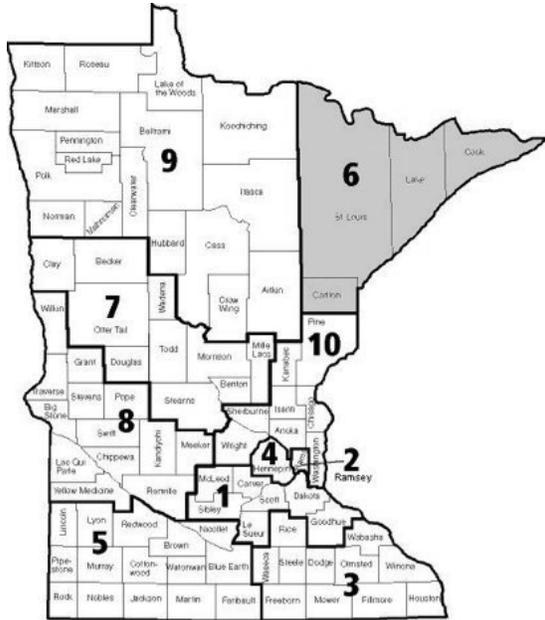
Highlights from the Minnesota Cornerstone Multi-County Adult Drug Court

The Minnesota Cornerstone Multi-County Adult Drug Court, which serves Cottonwood, Murray, Nobles, Pipestone, and Rock counties, adopted a two-mile stretch of MN Highway 59 in 2013, which happens to run in front of the Nobles County Prairie Justice Center in Worthington, MN. As part of the Court's community service projects, team members and court participants continued the practice in 2015 of periodically walking along the ditches next to the highway and picking up trash.



Graduates of the Minnesota Cornerstone Multi-County Adult Drug Court celebrated National Recovery Month in Sept. 2015 by hosting a softball tournament for the Fifth Judicial District. The Minnesota West Community College baseball team sponsored the event. Alumni from the Court host a similar event every year.

Sixth Judicial District



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

16 Judgeships

Hon. Shaun R. Floerke, Chief Judge

Hon. Gary J. Pagliaccetti,

Assistant Chief Judge

Marieta Johnson, District Administrator

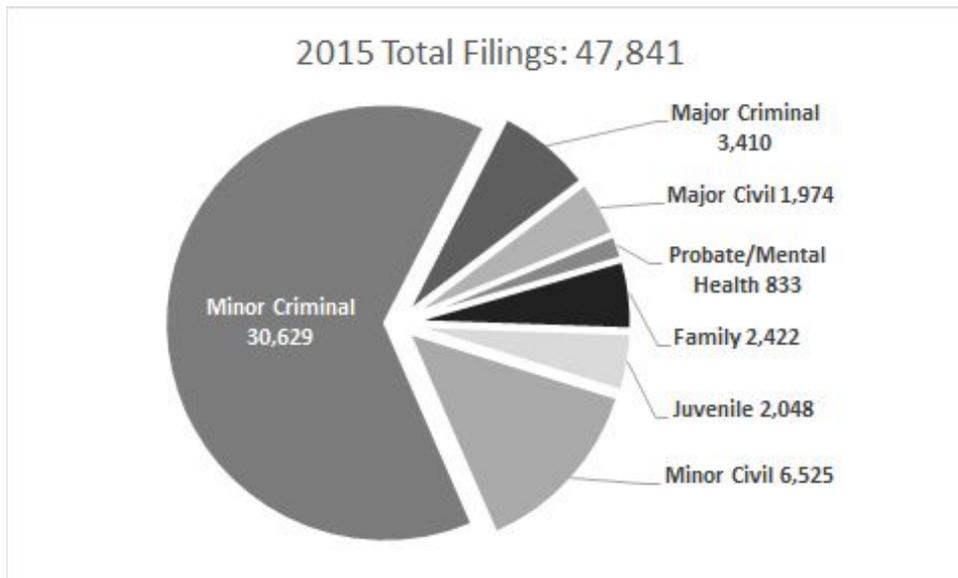
Sixth Judicial District Administration

St. Louis County Courthouse

100 North Fifth Avenue West, #139

Duluth, MN 55802

2015 Case Filings for the Sixth Judicial District



Centralization Produces New Efficiencies, Improved Service

The Sixth Judicial District spent 2015 leveraging the new efficiencies made possible through the eCourtMN transformation to centralize operations and improve service to the public.

Taking advantage of the more than 50 years of experience of two retired court administrators who served as probate registrars in their respective counties, the District consolidated all probate case management in Duluth. A full transition is underway for all filings and images to be moved and processed by the central unit, and local staff will retain courtroom and counter service skills. Commitments will continue to be performed at the local level.

The District has also hired more staff and moved work from other locations to ensure that the smallest courthouse operations in the district (Cook and Lake counties) remain full-functioning. Minor civil case management has been moved to Cook County in Grand Marais.

Effective March 2, 2015, all requests for plain and certified copies for the entire District were processed out of the District Copy Center located in Two Harbors of Lake County. Customers are encouraged to request copies online or by phone. The Copy Center is also providing a significant imaging service to other court sites.

The Sixth Judicial District has also moved oversight of major financial projects to Carlton County.

The Sixth Judicial District continues to look for ways to consolidate work. The goal is to achieve reduced turn-around times in case processing, while maintaining effective public service and courtroom support throughout the District.

Emergency Preparedness Training

Emergency preparedness training was provided to all Sixth Judicial District judges and employees in 2015. This training was done in partnership with court security and all counties within the District. Training was necessary for all to understand their role in emergency preparedness and how to help themselves, their co-workers, various stakeholders, and the public during a crisis and/or an emergency.



The Duluth Mental Health Court hosted a Christmas party for participants in 2015, who were able to enjoy decorating cookies and making bird treats.

Carlton County Drug Court Celebrates Grand Opening

Community leaders and area residents gathered at the Carlton County Courthouse on March 18, 2015, to celebrate the opening of the recently-established Carlton County Drug Court program. The event featured remarks by judges and justice system partners involved in the program, as well as comments from two recent drug court participants who spoke to the impact their participation in the program had on their recovery and ability to avoid further criminal charges.

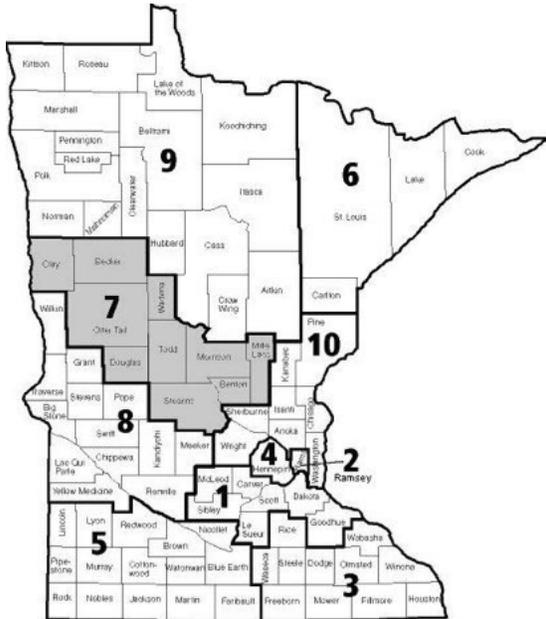
The Carlton County Drug Court is a specialized court program that targets non-violent criminal offenders who suffer from addiction to alcohol or other drugs. The program is operated through Minnesota's Sixth Judicial District in partnership with the Carlton County Attorney's Office, district public defenders, Arrowhead Regional Corrections, Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa, and regional treatment centers.

The Drug Court received funding through a 2013 legislative appropriation aimed at expanding access to drug court programs in Minnesota. The program also receives support from Carlton County, along with resource commitments from justice system and other program partners.



Sixth Judicial District Chief Judge Shaun Floerke congratulates a Duluth DWI Court graduate.

Seventh Judicial District



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

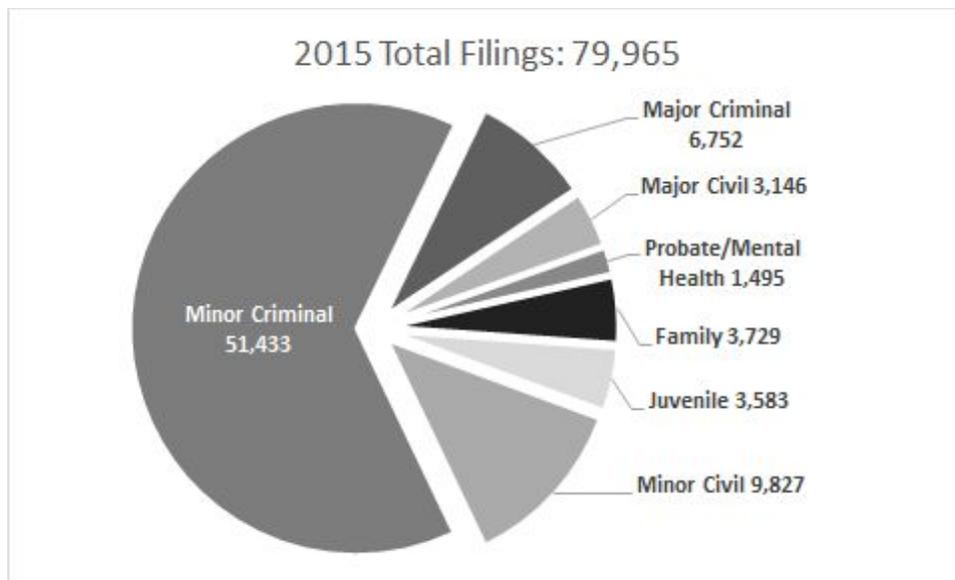
28 Judgeships

**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**

2015 Case Filings for the Seventh Judicial District



Seventh District Completes Multi-Year Redesign Effort

Minnesota's Seventh Judicial District reached a major milestone in 2015, completing a multi-year effort to realign administrative functions to ensure responsive and efficient management of the 10 district courts that comprise the District.

This project was completed in 2015 by combining administrative oversight of Otter Tail and Wadena county district courts. Today, each of the following sets of counties is served by a single court administrator: Otter Tail and Wadena; Clay and Becker; Benton and Mille Lacs; and Douglas, Todd, and Morrison. Stearns County District Court does not share a court administrator with any other county in the district.

Collaboration Results in DWI Court

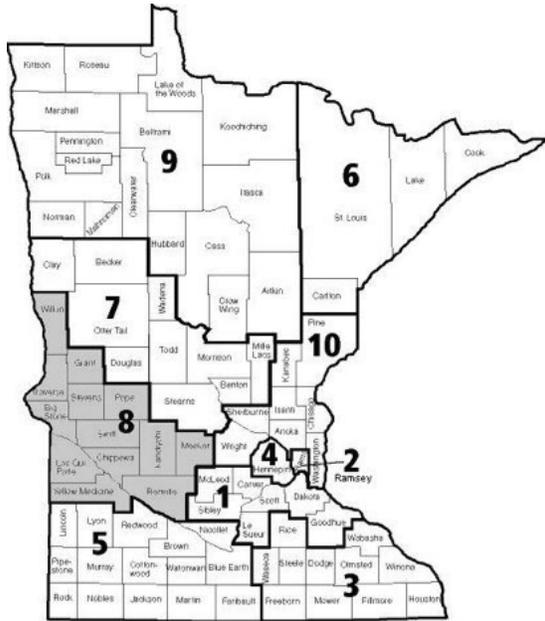
On October 29, 2015, the first White Earth/Becker County DWI Court was held with Seventh Judicial District Judge Joe Evans presiding. The Court is a collaborative effort of Becker County District Court, the Becker County Board of Commissioners, the White Earth Nation, the City of Detroit Lakes, Becker County Court Services, White Earth Substance Abuse, Becker County Human Services, Victim Advocates, the Becker County Attorney's Office, the Detroit Lakes City Attorney's Office, the Becker County Sheriff's Office, the Detroit Lakes Police Department, and the White Earth Police departments.

The White Earth/Becker County DWI Court provides accountability and culturally-specific treatment to high risk/high need DWI offenders, thereby enhancing public safety and creating healthier families and communities. This Court has the following specific goals:

1. Promote public safety by reducing the number of DWI incidents, thereby saving lives.
2. Provide individualized, culturally-specific treatment programming as a sustainable alternative to incarceration.
3. Assist high risk/high need DWI offenders in becoming productive citizens and healthy family members.

The White Earth/Becker County DWI Court serves eligible adult DWI offenders living within Becker County and those portions of the White Earth Nation within Becker County. The program is funded by its partnerships and a grant from the National Highway Traffic Safety Association through the State of Minnesota, Department of Public Safety.

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

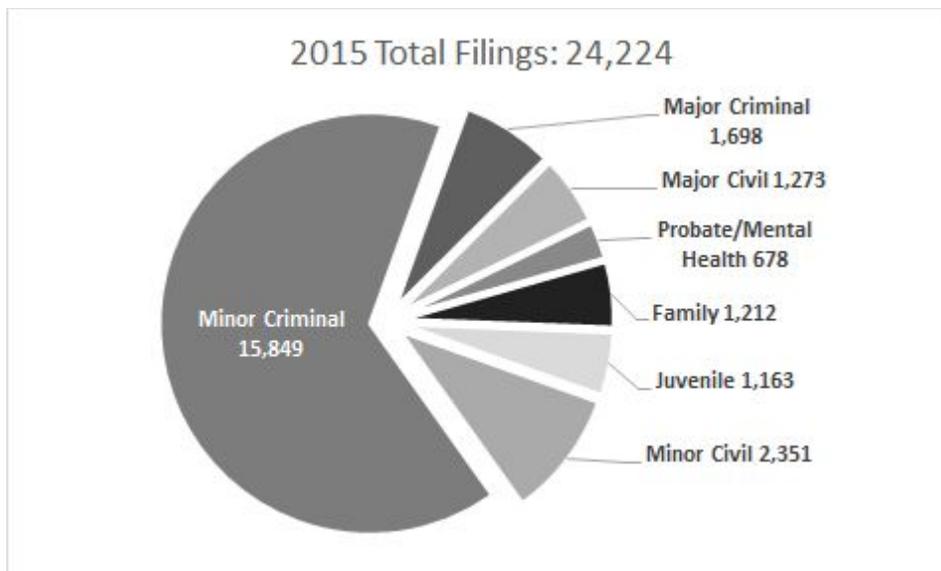
Eighth Judicial District Administration

Kandiyohi County Courthouse

505 Becker Avenue SW, Suite 107

Willmar, MN 56201

2015 Case Filings for the Eighth Judicial District



Seventh and Eighth Districts Continue Collaboration

In order to ensure the timely processing of cases, judges from Minnesota's Eighth Judicial District continued to hear cases filed in the neighboring Seventh Judicial District in 2015. The judges serve approximately 18 weeks per year in either Stearns or Otter Tail county district courts. Supreme Court Chief Justice Lorie Gildea has approved the arrangement, which will continue through June 2016, when it will be considered for renewal.

The Eighth Judicial District has the ability to remotely monitor multiple courtroom proceedings simultaneously, mainly to provide coverage for court reporters who are on leave and to eliminate unnecessary travel of court reporters when cases are conducive to remote monitoring. The court reporters have been able to utilize this capability as the primary method of capturing the court record for the cases heard in Stearns and Otter Tail counties.

Eighth Judicial District Drug Court Celebrates First Anniversary

The Eighth Judicial District Drug Court celebrated its first anniversary on July 1, 2015, as local judges and justice system professionals prepared to graduate the first offender from the program later in the year.

Those who enter the program must complete four phases, which takes between 14 and 24 months, before they are eligible to apply for graduation from the program.



Eighth Judicial District Judge Gerald Seibel recognizes local restaurant owner Rob Lucas for hiring drug court participants at his business.

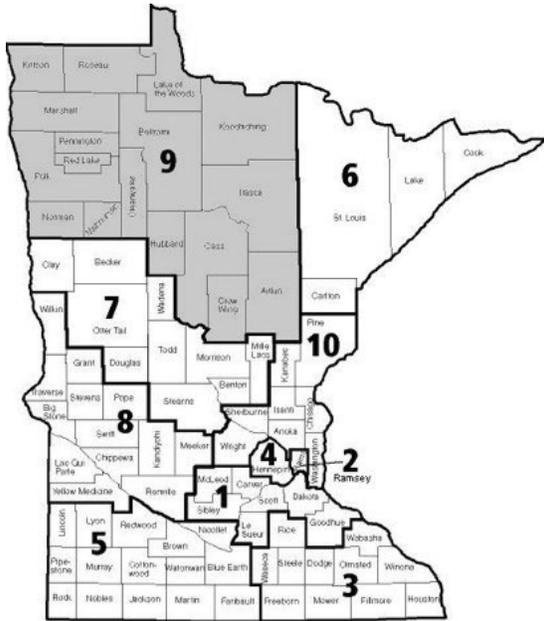
Hi-Tech Courtrooms Now Up and Running

The Eighth Judicial District installed new technology in courtrooms at the Kandiyohi, Chippewa, Meeker, and Renville courthouses in 2015.

The upgrades included 65" and 75" monitors, mobile lecterns including multiple connections for various mobile devices, a DVD/Blue-ray player, and a document camera. Once connected, attorneys can now project images and videos directly to the monitors.

The witness box in each courtroom was also equipped with a digital annotation device.

Ninth Judicial District



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

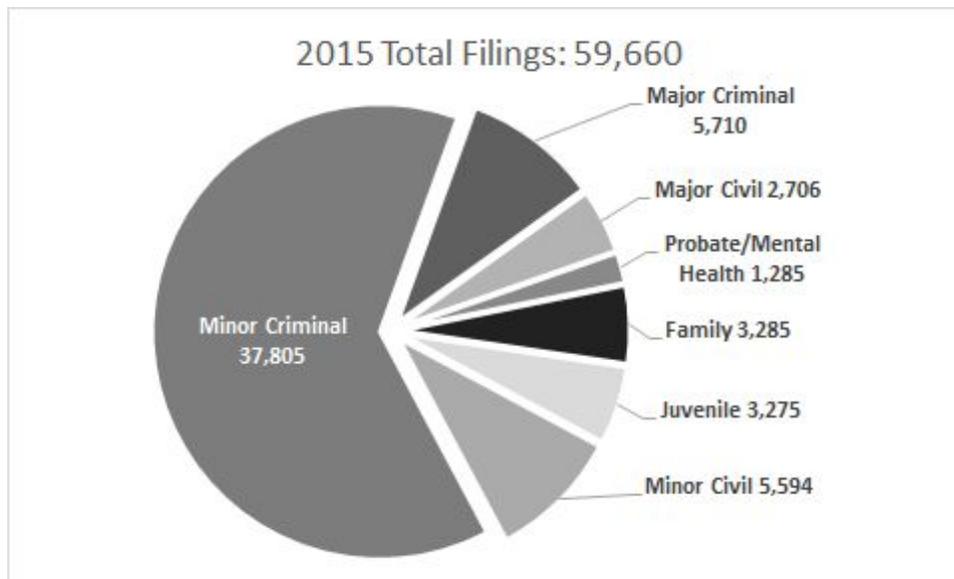
23 Judgeships

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

Paul Maatz, District Administrator

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

2015 Case Filings for the Ninth Judicial District



Beltrami County Judges Raise Red Lake, Leech Lake Flags

Beltrami County judges honored the Red Lake Band of Chippewa and the Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe on Nov. 24, 2015, at a tribal flag-raising ceremony at the Beltrami County Judicial Center in Bemidji. Flags representing the tribes joined those of the United States and Minnesota in Beltrami County courtrooms.

The ceremony, which featured songs and blessings, was held to affirm the mutual respect between the two diverse cultures represented, and to recognize what ties them together.

Ninth District Domestic Violence Court Receives Grant

In 2015, the Ninth Judicial District Domestic Violence Court received its second three-year grant “to Support Families in the Justice System” from the U.S. Dept. of Justice, Office on Violence Against Women. The grant is allowing the Court to expand services to Roseau County, and to continue the work of addressing domestic violence in Beltrami County and northern Minnesota.

The Court utilizes real-time document sharing between the Judicial Branch case management system and the Law Enforcement Technology Group (LETG) system. LETG is used by hundreds of law enforcement agencies throughout the state, and real-time secured LETG access to protection orders allows for rapid response to protect assault victims.

The Court also accepts electronically-filed reports from probation agents, allowing judges to have accurate and up-to-date information about progress made by offenders in completing or meeting court-ordered conditions.

Cass County Wellness Court Placing Participants in Treatment Faster

The Cass County Wellness (DWI) Court faced a challenge in 2015 with its effort to connect court participants with treatment programs before sentencing. As of the end of the year, participants are now involved in treatment in as little as 7 to 15 days after entry to the Court.

Waiting until sentencing to start a participant in treatment meant that the time between arrest and treatment services being provided was at least 60 days, and sometimes longer.



Cass County Wellness (DWI) Court participants and team members enjoyed a drum ceremony at a graduation picnic in September 2015.

Itasca County Wellness Court Scores Well in Evaluation

The Itasca County Wellness Court program was evaluated by Wilder Research in August 2015, and the results were very favorable:

- The percentage of participants with stable housing increased from 50 percent at intake to 75 percent at discharge, including 87 percent of the successful graduates.
- Seventy-two percent of clients had a valid driver's license at discharge, up from 34 percent at intake. Considering successful graduates only, 80 percent had a valid driver's license at exit.
- Seventy-seven percent of clients at discharge had full-time or part-time employment compared to 26 percent at intake, including 86 percent of the successful graduates.
- Successful graduates had, on average, 663 days of sobriety.
- The Return on Investment based on data from the program from 2007 through 2014 estimates a return of \$1.70 for every dollar invested in the Itasca County Wellness Court.

The Court operated at or near its capacity of 35 active participants throughout 2015. Since the program's inception in 2007, and until the end of 2015, there have been 57 graduates of the Court.

DWI Courts Open in Norman, Polk, and Red Lake Counties

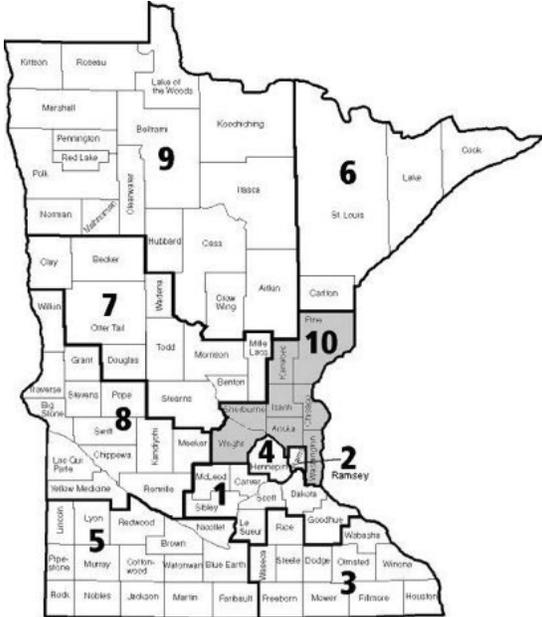
A proven model for reducing recidivism among high-risk DWI offenders expanded in northwestern Minnesota on January 1, 2015, when three new DWI Court programs opened in Norman, Polk, and Red Lake counties.

The new DWI Courts are the result of a collaborative effort between the local district courts, county attorneys, county sheriffs, Tri-County Community Corrections, county social services, and area treatment programs. The three programs independently serve residents in each of the respective counties, though the programs share common administrative staff and presiding judges.

The status of the other DWI courts in the Ninth Judicial District as of the end of 2015 was:

- Roseau County DWI Court had been in operation for almost eight years. There were 20 participants and 37 graduates.
- Kittson County DWI Court had been in operation for 11 years. There was one participant and six graduates.
- Pennington County DWI Court had been in operation for three years. They had eight participants and nine graduates.
- Marshall County DWI Court had been in operation for two years. They had three participants and two graduates.

Tenth Judicial District



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

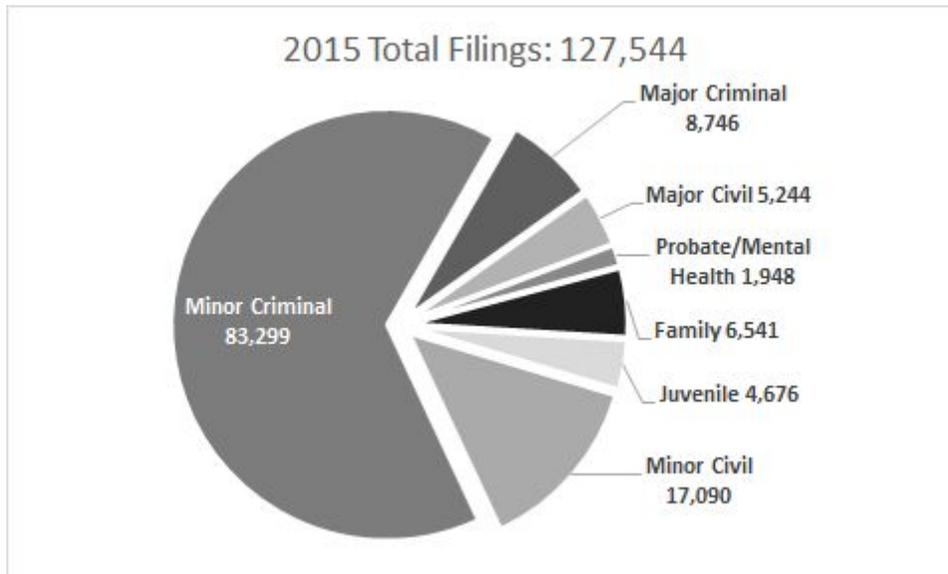
45 Judgeships

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

2015 Case Filings for the Tenth Judicial District



New Legal Self-Help Center Opens at Anoka County Courthouse

Responding to the growing number of people choosing to represent themselves in court proceedings, the Tenth Judicial District opened a new self-help center at the Anoka County Courthouse to provide legal information and resources to self-represented litigants. The self-help center, which opened to the public on June 1, 2015, serves residents from throughout the Tenth District, which includes Anoka, Chisago, Isanti, Kanabec, Pine, Sherburne, Washington and Wright counties. The center supplements services already offered by the Anoka County Law Library and associated legal clinics.

The self-help center is on the second floor of the Anoka County Courthouse, which is located at 325 East Main Street in the city of Anoka. Self-help center staff is available to provide information and resources Monday through Thursday, from 9 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. and from 1:30 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. In addition, staff is available by phone on Fridays between 8 a.m. and 3:00 p.m.

Early Neutral Evaluation Program Expands to All Counties

The Tenth Judicial District expanded and enhanced its Early Neutral Evaluation (ENE) Program in 2015, and was offering ENE in all eight counties in the District by the end of the year.

ENEs are a voluntary, confidential, high-quality, affordable, prompt, and evaluative alternative dispute resolution process focused on generating durable case settlements. Standardized forms and more uniform requirements and policies have been adopted, providing consistency for ENE providers and participants.

Training and records management changes resulted in a 263 percent increase of the known ENE outcomes recorded in the Judicial Branch case management system between the last half of 2014 and the first half of 2015, allowing the District to more thoroughly evaluate its ENE programs.

Conservator Accounts Centralized

As part of the Tenth Judicial District's Strategic Plan, the bench identified a priority to centralize all conservator accounts under \$3000 still being reviewed at the county level. The new centralized unit is located in Anoka County and not only monitors conservator accounts, but also the filing of guardianship annual reports. The unit also handles all noticing and scheduling of hearings involving conservators.

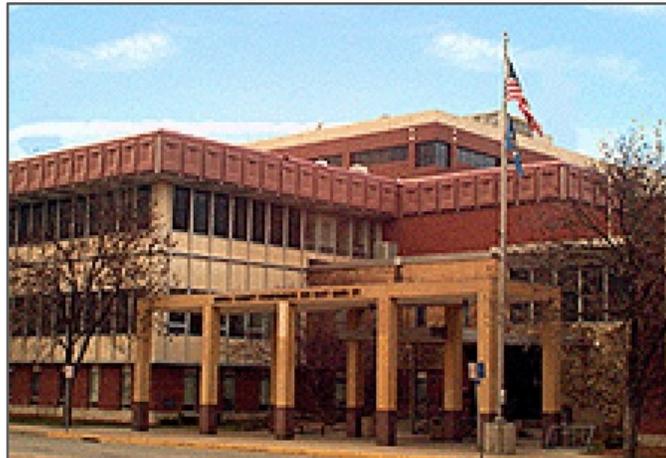
Judge Robert Rancourt Joins National Advisory Council on Drug Abuse



Tenth Judicial District Judge Robert G. Rancourt was invited in 2015 to participate in a national advisory group that helps guide the work of the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA), National Institutes of Health, an organization that supports most of the world's research on the health aspects of drug abuse and addiction.

Judge Rancourt was invited to participate in the National Advisory Council on Drug Abuse by United States Health and Human Services Secretary Sylvia Burwell. Judge Rancourt is participating in the Advisory Council for a four-year term that began in Dec. 2015.

The Advisory Council serves a crucial role in advising the NIDA in its efforts to identify, review, and support the highest caliber of scientific research on drug abuse and addiction. The Advisory Council also provides NIDA input on ways to better carry out its knowledge development and knowledge dissemination missions. It provides advice on research opportunities to pursue, guidance on ways to improve approaches to stimulating research, suggestions on methods to disseminate research-based knowledge, and ideas for working more closely with constituent groups and consumers of NIDA's research.



Anoka County Courthouse located in Anoka, MN

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 Halbrooks 1998 - present
Judge Natalie Hudson 2002 - 2015
Judge Renee Worke 2005 - present
Judge Kevin Ross 2006 - present
Judge Heidi Schellhas 2008 - present
Judge Francis Connolly 2008 - present
Judge Matthew Johnson Judge: 2008 - Nov. 2010, Nov. 2013 - present Chief Judge: Nov. 2010 - Oct. 2013
Judge Michelle Larkin 2008 - present
Judge Larry Stauber, Jr. 2008 - present
Judge Louise Bjorkman 2008 - present
Judge John Rodenberg 2012 - present
Judge Margaret Chutich 2012 - present
Judge Carol Hooten 2012 - present
Judge Michael Kirk 2012 - present
Judge John P. Smith 2013 - present
Judge Denise D. Reilly 2014 - present
Judge Peter M. Reyes, Jr. 2014 - present

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 to perform a certain act

2015 Court of Appeals Case Information

	Cases Filed	Dispositions
General Civil	420	473
Criminal	853	823
Administrative Rule	2	4
Economic Security	120	153
Writs - Certiorari	72	84
Habeas / Certified Questions	14	11
Commitment	38	23
Family	184	202
Juvenile Delinquency	15	18
Juvenile Protection	87	79
Implied Consent	31	53
Discretionary Review / Writs	47	45
Probate	35	27
Unlawful Detainer / Eviction	35	59
Total	1,953	2,054

Court of Appeals in 2015



*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. In 2015, Judge Natalie Hudson was appointed to the Minnesota Supreme Court, leaving a vacancy on the Court of Appeals.

A number of senior judges assisted the Court throughout 2015, providing coverage for vacancies and absences.

The Court disposed of more than 2,050 cases in 2015, filing opinions in almost 1,400 cases, issuing almost 1,950 orders, hearing oral arguments in 780 cases, and considering another 650 cases at non-oral conferences. Filings in 2015 were down approximately seven percent, with a noticeable decrease in the number of unemployment appeals. Approximately 170 appeals were referred to the Court's Family Law Appellate Mediation Program in 2015. Almost 38 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 1,160 cases pending before the Court at any time in 2015.

In 2015, the Court expanded e-filing, making it available in all cases where the parties are represented by attorneys. E-filing substantially reduces copying, postage, and courier costs for litigants and allows attorneys to e-file documents related to pending appeals 24 hours a day, even when the appellate Clerk's Office is not open. In addition, because of court rule changes that took effect in July 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 have already saved attorneys and litigants thousands of dollars in copying and mailing costs, making access to justice more affordable. To ensure that judges and court staff have access to needed documents, the Clerk of Appellate Courts also creates an electronic image of paper filings and makes the images available on a secure internal site. These efforts to move to an electronic environment also reduce the time and money spent by the Court of Appeals on storing and retrieving paper files.

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

Supreme Court

7 members, En Banc panel

Appeals from:

Court of Appeals decisions

Trial court decisions if Supreme Court 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

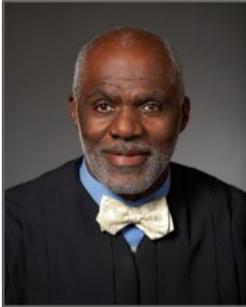
Election disputes; attorney and judicial discipline

<p>Chief Justice Lorie S. Gildea Associate Justice: 2006 - June 2010, Chief Justice: July 2010 - present</p>
<p>Associate Justice Alan C. Page 1993 - August 2015</p>
<p>Associate Justice G. Barry Anderson 2004 - present</p>
<p>Associate Justice Christopher J. Dietzen 2008 - present</p>
<p>Associate Justice David R. Stras 2010 - present</p>
<p>Associate Justice Wilhelmina M. Wright 2012 - present</p>
<p>Associate Justice David L. Lillehaug June 2013 - present</p>
<p>Associate Justice Natalie E. Hudson October 2015 - present</p>

2015 Supreme Court Case Information		
Direct Appeals		
	Cases Filed	Dispositions
Workers' Compensation	12	14
Civil	13	2
Tax Court	14	7
Attorney/Judge Discipline	69	83
Writs	1	0
First Degree Homicide	34	30
Total Direct Appeals	143	136
Petitions for Further Review (PFR)		
Filed		615
Denied		567
Granted Further Review		73
Other		12
Opinions		
Affirmed		69
Mixed		16
Remand / Reverse		21
Other Decision / Dismissal		2
Total		108

Supreme Court in 2015

Justice Alan C. Page Retires



Supreme Court Associate Justice Alan C. Page retired from the state's highest court on August 31, 2015. Justice Page was elected to the Supreme Court and took his seat on January 4, 1993. He was subsequently re-elected as an associate justice in 1998, 2004, and 2010. Over the course of his 22 years of service to the Judicial Branch, Justice Page authored more than 400 opinions. Among other responsibilities, he served as the Court's liaison to the Tenth Judicial District, and as the liaison to several administrative committees, including the Rules of Evidence and the Lawyers Professional Responsibility Board. Justice Page also participated in the Judicial Branch's reading program with elementary students, "Everybody Wins!"

Court of Appeals Judge Natalie Hudson Appointed to Supreme Court

On August 18, 2015, Governor Mark Dayton announced the appointment of Court of Appeals Judge Natalie E. Hudson to fill the vacancy left upon the retirement of Justice Alan Page. Justice Hudson joined the Court on October 26, 2015.



Justice Hudson served on the Minnesota Court of Appeals from 2002 until her appointment to the Supreme Court. Prior to her appointment to the Court of Appeals, she served as St. Paul City Attorney, an assistant attorney general for the State of Minnesota, and an assistant dean at Hamline University Law School. In announcing her appointment, Governor Dayton said Justice Hudson had demonstrated in her 13 years with the Court of Appeals a "unique aptitude for ruling on some of the most challenging legal issues" that face the state.

Rules Update

In April 2015, the Supreme Court adopted amendments to the Minnesota Rules of Court, which govern court proceedings and access to court records. The rule amendments followed extensive work by several of the Court's rules committees to review the rules and propose amendments in order to accommodate electronic filing and service in courts across Minnesota. After a public comment period and a public hearing, the Supreme Court adopted amendments to seven different sets of court rules.

Appellate Clerk's Office

During 2015, the Office of the Clerk of the Appellate Courts (Clerk's Office) made significant progress toward electronic records management and e-filing.

Imaged Records and Improved Public Access

The year 2015 marked the second year that all appellate files were imaged in their entirety. In partnership with the Judicial Branch's eCourt initiative, the appellate courts worked to enhance the public's access to imaged records by delivering a new "Courthouse View" application. Effective September 1, 2015, appellate records became available via Courthouse View in all 87 counties. In addition to the P-MACS application, which provides remote access to some appellate records, members of the public are now able to view all publicly available documents filed by parties in appellate cases on public access terminals in all Minnesota state courthouses and at the State Law Library. Documents filed on or after December 1, 2013, in appeals before both the Court of Appeals and the Supreme Court, are available.

Statewide access to electronic appellate court documents provides a significant benefit to both the legal community and self-represented litigants, specifically the savings to parties who no longer have to travel to the Minnesota Judicial Center in St. Paul to view and copy appellate court documents. In addition, the availability of electronic appellate court documents at county courthouses statewide has advanced public access to appellate case records. Confidential and sealed case documents are not available through P-MACS or Courthouse View terminals.

Expansion of Appellate E-Filing

On February 5, 2015, the Supreme Court issued an order authorizing the Clerk of the Appellate Courts to permit use of the appellate courts' electronic file and service system (E-MACS) in all case types in which all parties to the appeal are represented by an attorney admitted to practice in Minnesota. Additionally, the Court authorized e-filing by court reporters and executive branch records managers in all case types.

Since the launch of the E-MACS pilot project on October 1, 2014, the Clerk's Office has received applications to register as a system user from 1,464 potential e-filers.

During 2015, the Clerk's Office received an average of 105 new E-MACS applications and, of the approximately 3,125 filings per month, 875 (28 percent) were filed electronically in E-MACS.

Pursuant to an order of the Supreme Court, effective July 1, 2016, e-filing by court reporters, attorneys, court-appointed examiners, agency records managers, and panels appointed by the appellate courts will be required in all case types. Additionally, on or before March 1, 2016, self-represented parties will be permitted to e-file in all appellate case types.

State Law Library

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 2015, Library staff answered more than 7,000 questions. Additionally, more than 3,000 people visited the Library and utilized its resources without requiring Library staff assistance. The Library's collection includes state and federal laws, legal treatises, practice materials, and self-help materials. In addition, patrons can use public computers, current awareness materials, and online legal research resources such as Westlaw. The State Law Library also provides access to public trial court and appellate court documents from its public terminals.

The State Law Library has 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 with completion of the appeal paperwork. In 2015, the clinic assisted 42 people with their unemployment appeals. In 2016, the Library will begin offering an Appeals Self-Help Clinic for any type of appeal.



The reference department at the Minnesota State Law Library.

Through a collaboration with the Minnesota Department of Corrections, the State Law Library also provides legal resources to inmates of the state prisons. The Law Library Service to Prisoners librarians meet monthly with inmates at each of the eight primary correctional facilities in Minnesota. Most inmate requests are received and answered by mail, using the resources of the State Law Library. In 2015, the Library answered 46,109 requests. This year marked the 30th anniversary of the first full year of service by the Law Library Service to Prisoners 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, 2015

Hon. Lorie S. Gildea (Chair) <i>Chief Justice, Supreme Court</i>	Hon. John H. Scherer <i>Chief Judge, Seventh District</i>
Hon. Shari R. Schluchter (Vice-Chair) <i>Judge, Ninth District</i>	Hon. Donald M. Spilseth <i>Chief Judge, Eighth District</i>
Hon. Christopher J. Dietzen <i>Associate Justice, Supreme Court</i>	Hon. Paul T. Benshoof <i>Chief Judge, Ninth District</i>
Hon. Edward J. Cleary <i>Chief Judge, Court of Appeals</i>	Hon. 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>	Kate Fogarty <i>District Administrator, Fourth District</i>
Hon. Peter A. Cahill <i>Chief Judge, Fourth District</i>	Marieta Johnson <i>District Administrator, Sixth District</i>
Hon. Jeannice Reding <i>Judge, Fourth District</i>	Paul Maatz <i>District Administrator, Ninth District</i>
Hon. Bradley C. Walker <i>Chief Judge, Fifth District</i>	Karen Messner <i>Court Administrator, Sibley and McCleod Counties</i>
Hon. Shaun R. Floerke <i>Chief Judge, Sixth District</i>	Hon. Kevin Mark <i>MDJA President, First District</i>
Hon. James B. Florey <i>Judge, Sixth District</i>	

Minnesota Judicial District Chief Judges

As of December 31, 2015



Hon. Paul T. Benshoof
9th Judicial District



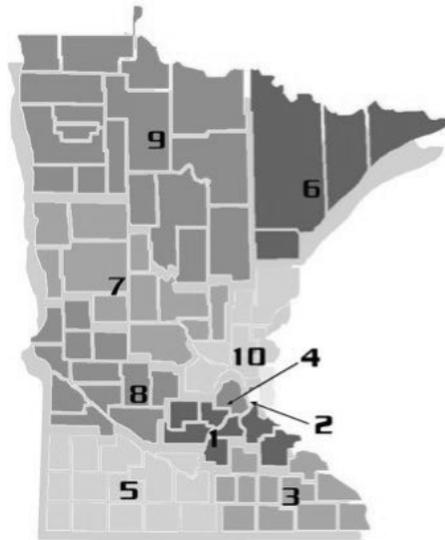
Hon. Shaun R. Floerke
6th Judicial District



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



2015 Annual Report to the Community
Produced by the State Court Administrator's Office
March 2016