



MINNESOTA JUDICIAL BRANCH

First Judicial District

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

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[First Judicial District Public Website](#)

The First District has 36 judges and more than 250 staff, with an average of 90,000 case filings annually in the counties of Carver, Dakota, Goodhue, Le Sueur, McLeod, Scott, and Sibley.

The First Edition

A Newsletter about the First Judicial District of the State of Minnesota

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SPRING 2022

Chief Justice Issues Order Lifting Pandemic-Related Restrictions and Announces Policy Continuing Remote Hearings

On April 19, 2022, Minnesota Supreme Court Chief Justice Lorie S. Gildea issued an [order](#) lifting all pandemic-related restrictions and announced a new Judicial Branch policy, the [oneCourtMN Hearings Initiative Policy](#), laying out the framework for presumed hearing locations going forward. Some hearing types that have been held remotely will return to in-person events, while many hearing types will continue to be held remotely unless exceptional circumstances exist as defined in the order. The policy contains a chart that indicates the presumed hearing location for each hearing type in all Non-Criminal case types. The order and policy are effective June 6, 2022.

The framework for remote and in-person hearings impacts both Criminal and Non-Criminal case types and lays out a plan for the continued use of remote hearings into the future. All hearings that were scheduled before June 6 will take place as detailed in hearing notices. Any hearing scheduled or hearing notice issued on or after June 6 will follow the new policy.

“The decision the Minnesota Judicial Council made to approve the oneCourtMN Hearings Initiative Policy represents one of the most important and consequential decisions made by our leadership body,” said Minnesota Supreme Court Chief Justice Lorie S. Gildea. “Committing to the long-term use of remote hearings in our district courts will greatly expand access to justice and

Inside

- 1-2 Chief Justice Order Lifting Pandemic-Related Restrictions and Announces Policy Continuing Remote Hearings
- 3 Governor Walz Appoints Stacey Sorensen Green to Fill First Judicial District Vacancy
- 4 Grant Program Funds \$500,000 in Courthouse Security Improvements
- 5 Governor Walz Appoints Kathryn Iverson Landrum to Fill First Judicial District Vacancy
- 6 Minnesota Judicial Branch Publishes 2021 Annual Report

Chief Justice Issues Order Lifting Pandemic-Related Restrictions and Announces Policy Continuing Remote Hearings

(Continued from page 1)



improve our service to the people of Minnesota.”

Information about the presumed location of Non-Criminal hearing types can be found in this [accessible chart](#). Case participants will find the most accurate information about how their court hearing will take place on their Hearing Notice.

For hearings in Non-Criminal case types, including case types like Family, Domestic Abuse, Harassment, Eviction, and Major and Minor Civil, many hearing types are generally presumed remote. There is a presumption that evidentiary hearings – hearings where evidence is being presented or testimony is taken on issues in dispute – will generally be held in-person. Judicial officers will have the authority to grant case-by-case exemptions to these guidelines, but only under exceptional circumstances.

For hearings in Criminal cases, each judicial district, for now, will have the authority to develop its own localized plan for using both remote and in-person hearings in criminal cases. These localized plans will help each district address the large backlog of

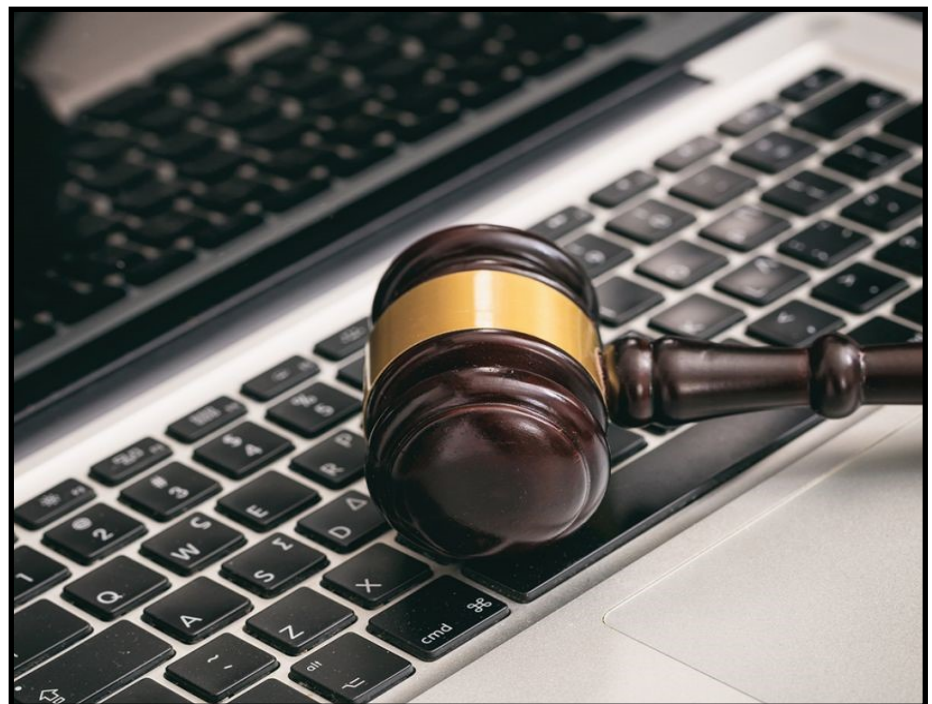
felony and gross misdemeanor cases stemming from the pandemic.

Treatment court proceedings are generally presumed in person for participants.

About the oneCourtMN Hearings Initiative Framework

The Minnesota Judicial Council in September 2021 approved the framework for the continuation of remote hearings in some case types. The work of developing the

remote hearing framework and the subsequent rollout was guided by the oneCourtMN Hearings Initiative Steering Committee appointed by Minnesota Supreme Court Chief Justice Lorie S. Gildea, and informed by feedback gathered from judges, court staff, attorneys, and court users across the state. The work to improve remote and in-person proceedings represents the commitment of the Minnesota Judicial Branch to innovation and transformational change for a more user-focused judicial system.



Governor Walz Appoints Stacey Sorensen Green to Fill First Judicial District Vacancy



Stacey Sorensen Green

On February 17, 2022, Governor Tim Walz and Lieutenant Governor Peggy Flanagan announced the appointment of Stacey Sorensen Green as District Court Judge in Minnesota's First Judicial District. Ms. Sorensen Green will be replacing the Honorable Jerome B. Abrams and will be chambered in Hastings in Dakota County.

"I am excited to appoint Ms. Sorensen (Green) to serve on the First Judicial District bench," said Governor Walz. "Ms. Sorensen (Green) is a committed member of her community with 15 years of experience as a civil litigator. I know Ms. Sorensen (Green) will work hard to create equitable outcomes for everyone who comes before her."

"Ms. Sorensen (Green) has the expertise, knowledge, and compassion necessary for this role," said Lieutenant Governor Flanagan. "Not only does she have extensive legal experience, but she also gives back to the profession by serving as a high school mock trial coach and adjunct law professor."

About Stacey Sorensen Green

Ms. Sorensen Green is an attorney for Liberty Mutual Insurance Company. Her legal practice includes personal injury, premises liability, commercial liability, workers compensation, and complex insurance litigation. Additionally, Ms. Sorensen Green serves as an adjunct professor in Mitchell Hamline School of Law's trial advocacy program, and she is a Minnesota State Bar Association Certified Civil Trial Specialist. She has served as an arbitrator for the American Arbitration Association and as a volunteer faculty member for the National Institute for Trial Advocacy. Ms. Sorensen Green coaches high school mock trial and serves on the Board of Directors for the Minnesota Council for the Gifted and Talented (MCGT), as well as the Prior Lake chapter of MCGT. Ms. Sorensen Green earned her B.A. from Macalester College and J.D. from William Mitchell College of Law.



Grant Program Funds \$500,000 in Courthouse Security Improvements

13 counties to receive funding through Safe and Secure Courthouse Initiative

Court Security

Minnesota Supreme Court Chief Justice Lorie S. Gildea announced the award of \$500,000 in grants through the Safe and Secure Courthouse Initiative on March 18, 2022. The grant funding will go towards the implementation of safety and security improvements in 13 county courthouses across Minnesota.

Safe and Secure Courthouse Initiative grants will help fund a variety of courthouse security improvements, including:

- Providing security training to courthouse officials and staff;
- Installing bullet-resistant glazing on glass at public service counters;
- Replacing aging security equipment;
- Reconstructing courtroom spaces;
- Implementing door locks, cameras, key card readers, and duress alarms; and
- Installing or upgrading security screening stations at courthouse entrances.

Grant awards ranged from \$1,800 to nearly \$155,000. Of the 13 awarded

grants, three were for less than \$5,000, and six were for more than \$25,000. As required by law, each county will provide a dollar-for-dollar match for its grant award, in either cash or in-kind services.

The counties receiving grants through the Safe and Secure Courthouse Initiative are: Anoka, Becker, Big Stone, Carlton, Chippewa, Cottonwood, Faribault, Hubbard, Koochiching, McLeod, Meeker, Ramsey, and Sibley.

“The Safe and Secure Courthouse reflects Minnesota’s statewide approach to addressing the issue of courthouse security,” said Chief Justice Gildea. “This is another step forward for our justice system, and one that will serve to better protect the thousands of Minnesotans who enter their local courthouses every day. Minnesotans deserve to feel safe when coming to court, accessing government services, or fulfilling their duties as citizens and taxpayers.”

The Safe and Secure Courthouse Initiative was established by Chief Justice Gildea and funded by a \$1 million appropriation from the Minnesota Legis-

lature in 2016. The grant program was based on a legislative proposal brought forward by the Courthouse Security Workgroup, a statewide coalition of county and justice system partners convened by Chief Justice Gildea in 2014. The Workgroup included representatives from the Minnesota Judicial Branch, the Association of Minnesota Counties, the Minnesota Sheriffs’ Association, the Minnesota County Attorneys Association, the Minnesota Board of Public Defense, and the Minnesota Inter-County Association.

Following passage of legislative funding for the program, Chief Justice Gildea formed an [Advisory Panel](#) to oversee the grant application and award process. Grants totaling \$1 million dollars were first awarded in 2017, and now a second appropriation of \$500,000 has been awarded in 2022.



Governor Walz Appoints Kathryn Iverson Landrum to Fill First Judicial District Vacancy



Kathryn Iverson Landrum

On April 19, 2022, Governor Tim Walz announced the appointment of Kathryn Iverson Landrum as District Court Judge in Minnesota's First Judicial District. Ms. Iverson Landrum will be replacing the Honorable Joseph T. Carter and will be chambered in Hastings in Dakota County.

"I am honored to appoint Kathryn Iverson Landrum to the First Judicial District," said Governor Walz. "Ms. Iverson Landrum is a true public servant, and she will provide a valuable perspective to the Dakota County bench. I am confident that she will be an excellent judge for years to come."

About Kathryn Iverson Landrum

Ms. Iverson Landrum is a manager and assistant attorney general at the Office of the Minnesota Attorney General, where she leads a division defending state agencies and employees during all stages of employment, tort, and constitutional litigation. Ms. Iverson Landrum previously served as an honors attorney for the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation. She also clerked for the Honorable Richard A. Griffin on the United States Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit and the Honorable Richard H. Kyle on the United States District Court for the District of Minnesota. Ms. Iverson Landrum's community involvement includes volunteering at the Southern Minnesota Regional Legal Services Housing Clinic and serving as the co-chair of the Attorney General's Pro Bono and Volunteer Committee. Ms. Iverson Landrum earned her bachelor's degree from Macalester College and her J.D. from Hamline University School of Law.



Minnesota Judicial Branch Publishes 2021 Annual Report

The Minnesota Judicial Branch has published its [2021 Annual Report to the Community](#). Chief Justice Lorie S. Gildea introduces the report with a “Letter from the Chief Justice”:

“Dear fellow Minnesotans:

The court system in Minnesota is nationally recognized for its professionalism, efficiency, and innovation. We have made significant technological leaps in the last decade, focused on the people we serve and on our core mission. Many of these advancements helped maintain an open door to justice during the pandemic and ensure Minnesotans had a safe place to protect their rights and resolve their disputes.

We emerged from 2020 with high hopes that the pandemic would soon subside. Instead, we found ourselves in a continuous cycle of adapting and evolving to meet its changing dynamics. 2021 was a transformative year in the history of our court system. A year in which our judges and staff not only stepped up to keep our courts open during a time of crisis, but in which we laid the foundation for a more robust, efficient, effective, and accessible court system into the future.

During this past year:

- We embraced remote hearings as an integral part of the future of our courts and established a new initiative to help shape how we will integrate both remote and in-person hearings into ongoing court operations.
- We set aggressive goals to tackle the pandemic case backlog, prioritizing our time and resources to ensure timely access to justice for the people of Minnesota.
- We launched Minnesota Court Records Online, a historic effort that has greatly expanded access, convenience, and transparency in our judicial proceedings.
- We launched the Legal Paraprofessional Pilot Project and developed several new resources for self-represented litigants as part of our enduring commitment to ensuring access to justice for all Minnesotans.
- Through our Committee on Equality and Justice, we adopted a strategic plan to continue our vital work to eliminate bias from court

operations, promote diversity and inclusion in our organization, and promote equal access to our courts.

This work would not be possible without the dedication and resiliency of our judicial officers and staff. Their service on behalf of our courts, and their ongoing commitment to deliver on our Constitutional mission, has never been more important or more impactful.

The achievements of the past year, and the lessons and experiences of the pandemic, are driving innovations that will modernize court operations in Minnesota and have a positive and lasting impact on the way we deliver justice in our state.”

The report, along with previous versions, is available on the [Publications and Reports](#) page of the Judicial Branch website. The report details the significant efforts of the Minnesota Judicial Branch throughout the past year to improve and enhance the delivery of justice in Minnesota. It also provides annual updates from judicial districts and appellate courts, including case filing statistics.

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