



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.

Hon. Caroline Lennon
Chief Judge
(952) 496-8200

Brian E. Jones
Judicial District
Administrator
(651) 377-7400

[First Judicial District Public Website](#)

The First District has 36 judges and more than 250 staff with a district average of 95,000 case filings annually in Carver, Dakota, Goodhue, Le Sueur, McLeod, Scott, and Sibley counties

The First Edition

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

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SPRING 2024

Legal Kiosks Providing Access to Free Legal Help Now Available in All First Judicial District Courthouses

The COVID-19 pandemic and public health emergency moved the legal system to a virtual environment, shining a spotlight on the digital divide that disproportionately impacts low-income communities. Many civil legal court hearings and other activities remain remote, and some case types will likely remain virtual. Access to the legal system and the ability to make your case for justice can require the means and resources to use technology.

To address this digital divide, the Minnesota Legal Services Coalition of providers received funding through the federal CARES Act to give communities access to civil justice by creating a statewide network of legal kiosks to be stationed in a variety of court, agency, non-profit, and other community locations. These community-based legal kiosks help Minnesotans who face technology access and transportation barriers to have meaningful access to legal resources and civil legal aid, as well as the administrative forums and court systems in which their case is proceeding.

Initially, the CARES Act funding supported the deployment of more than 250 legal kiosks statewide to expand access to free legal services. Some of those kiosks were installed in courthouses throughout the First Judicial District.

Inside

- | | |
|-----|---|
| 1-2 | Legal Kiosks Providing Access to Free Legal Help Now Available in All First Judicial District Courthouses |
| 3 | New and Updated Data Dashboards Now Available to Public |
| 3-4 | Use of MyMNGuardian Became Mandatory April 15 |
| 4-6 | Governor Walz Appoints Theodora Gaitas and Sarah Hennesy to the Minnesota Supreme Court |
| 7 | Scott County Celebrates Law Day |



The First Edition

Legal Kiosks Providing Access to Free Legal Help Now Available in All First District Courthouses

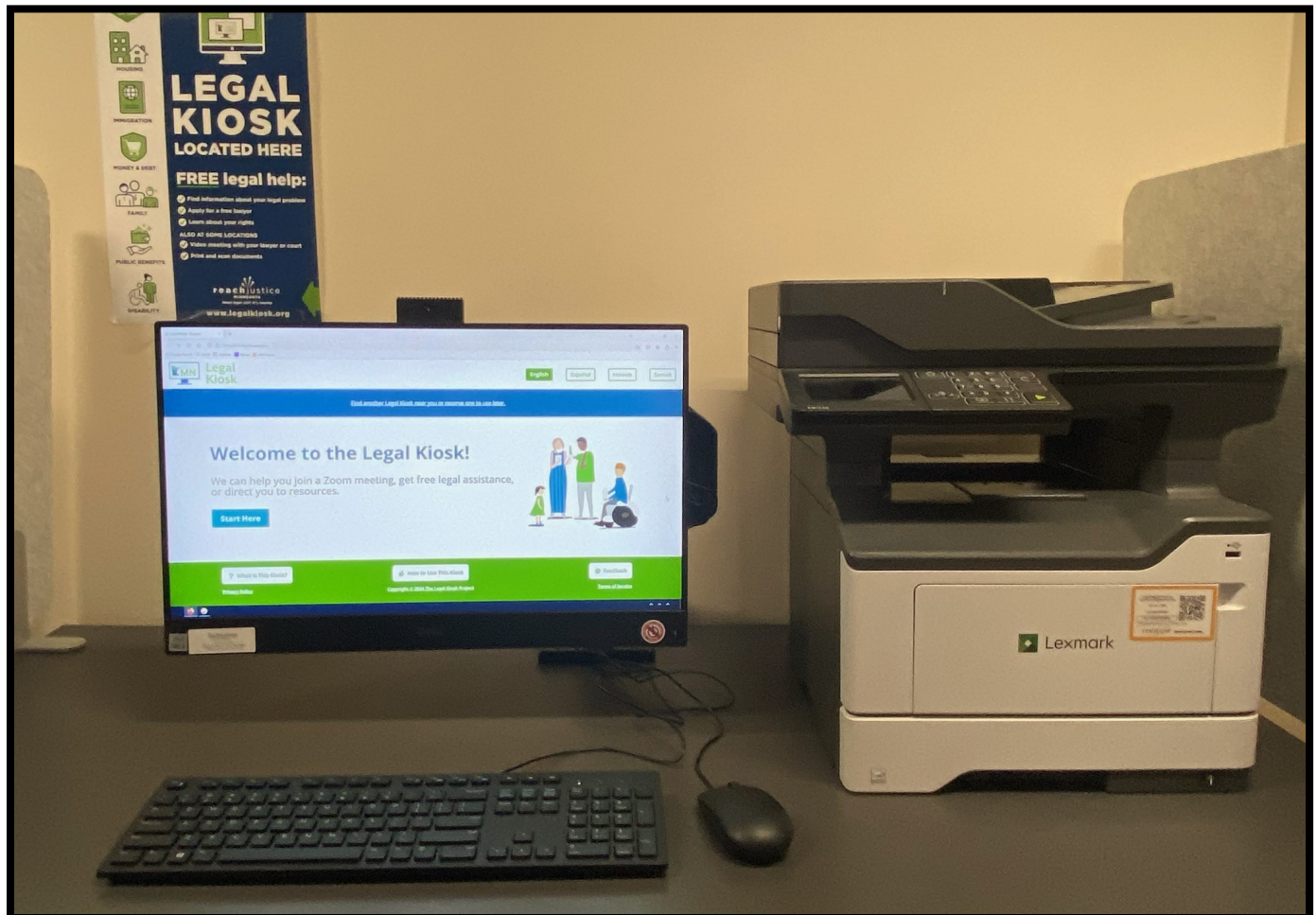
(Continued from page 1)

Recently, the First District partnered with Southern Minnesota Regional Legal Services (SMRLS) to obtain an access to justice project grant, which completed the rollout of kiosks in the remaining courthouses. At this time, anyone seeking free legal assistance can now use these kiosks in the seven counties of the First Judicial District (Carver, Dakota, Goodhue, McLeod, Le Sueur, Scott, and Sibley).

The legal kiosks are an important access point serving as a connection to legal information, self-help resources, as well as a portal that provides a connection to local legal aid partners for intake, meetings with legal aid, and the ability to attend remote court hearings. The kiosks come equipped with a locked-down desktop computer, printer, and scanner that also allow users to scan and upload documents to court files.

The kiosk terminals are available Monday through Friday, from 8:00am -4:30pm, and are ADA accessible. The interface is provided in English, Spanish, Hmong, and Somali.

Find more information about the Legal Kiosk Project at www.legalkiosk.org, and for a list of publicly accessible kiosk locations visit <https://www.legalkiosk.org/locations>.



New and Updated Data Dashboards Now Available to Public

The State Court Administrator's Office has created a new data dashboard on the Minnesota Judicial Branch (MJB) website that allows the public to access a list of criminal cases with a recent conviction under any Minnesota Statute of interest. The [District Court Convicted Criminal Case Numbers](#) dashboard is available on the [Court Statistics and Reports](#) page of the Judicial Branch website.

Using the new dashboard, visitors to the MJB website can download a set of files showing all the case file numbers of cases with a conviction under a Minnesota statute going back five years. The list can be filtered by statute, county, and date of conviction in any spreadsheet application, such as Excel. Those case file numbers can

then be used to look up case details using Minnesota Court Records Online (MCRO). The dashboard was developed to address a common data request submitted to the Court Research Office.

Per the Minnesota Rules of Public Access, only public criminal cases with a conviction are included in the data dashboard. Personally identifiable data (such as names) are not included. Sealed and expunged cases are also not included. The files are refreshed weekly.

Other data dashboards updated with 2023 data

The new dashboard continues the Judicial Branch's effort to promote

access to public information and transparency in the state's court system. Other data dashboards on the Judicial Branch website include:

- [District Court Performance Measures](#),
- [District Court Jury Service and Trial Data](#),
- [District Court Criminal Charges](#),
- [District Court Cases Filed by Race and Case Filing Rate by Race](#),
- [District Court Case Data](#).

All of these dashboards were recently updated with case filing and disposition data from 2023. All dashboards include five years of data and are updated annually to reflect recent trends.

Use of MyMNGuardian Became Mandatory April 15

On October 12, 2023, the Minnesota Supreme Court issued an [order](#) making the use of MyMNGuardian (MMG) mandatory for all court-appointed guardians in Minnesota. Starting April 15, 2024, all guardians are required to file annual Personal Well-Being Reports and Affidavits of Service using the MMG online application.



[MyMNGuardian](#) (MMG), is a mobile-

friendly application for court-appointed guardians to easily complete and electronically file [Personal Well-Being Reports](#) (PWBRs) and corresponding Affidavits of Service with the Court. Approximately two-thirds of guardians in Minnesota currently use the MMG system.

MMG encourages timely and accu-



Use of MyMNGuardian Became Mandatory April 15

(Continued from page 3)

rate filings and automatically sends reminders and notifications regarding PWBRs to guardians, based on court record information. Guardians can electronically complete and file PWBRs and Affidavits of Service through MMG. The system also keeps track of the PWBRs guardians have filed through MMG each year. Soon, reminders regarding background check due dates will also be available.

Resources and training offered to guardians

The State Court Administrator's Office is working to educate guardians about this new requirement and provide training and resources to help guardians prepare to successfully use MMG. Guardians have received email and a postcard at the address on file with the court alerting them to the new requirement and pointing

them to training and other online resources.

Guardians have been encouraged to watch the on-demand [MyMNGuardian training](#) available online. In addition, the [MyMNGuardian Help Topic](#) has information on how to set up an account in [MMG](#), view the training, review Frequently Asked Questions, and access other resources. There are also numerous [Quick Reference Guides \(QRGs\)](#) to help troubleshoot any MMG or usage issue.

Governor Walz Appoints Theodora Gaïtas and Sarah Hennesy to the Minnesota Supreme Court

On April 22, 2024, Governor Tim Walz and Lieutenant Governor Peggy Flanagan announced the appointments of Theodora Gaïtas and Sarah Hennesy as associate justices on the Minnesota Supreme Court.

Gaïtas will be replacing the Honorable Margaret H. Chutich and Hennesy will be replacing the Honorable G. Barry Anderson.

"I am honored to appoint Judge Gaïtas to the Minnesota Supreme Court," said Governor Walz. "She is a remarkable jurist who has served

at all levels of our judiciary. Her understanding of the complexities of our judicial system will make her an excellent addition to the Minnesota Supreme Court."

"Judge Gaïtas will be an extraordinary justice who will bring a wealth of life and legal experience to our state's highest court," said Lieutenant Governor Flanagan. "As a long-time appellate public defender, she will never lose sight of the people behind every decision of the justice system."

"I am honored and grateful for the opportunity to serve the Minnesota Supreme Court, and I thank Governor Walz and his team for their trust in me," said Judge Theodora Gaïtas of the Minnesota Court of Appeals. "As an associate justice, I will strive to apply the law fairly and justly for all Minnesotans."

"As Chief Justice, I am pleased to welcome both Chief Judge Sarah Hennesy and Judge Theodora Gaïtas to the Minnesota Supreme



Governor Walz Appoints Theodora Gaïtas and Sarah Hennesy to the Minnesota Supreme Court

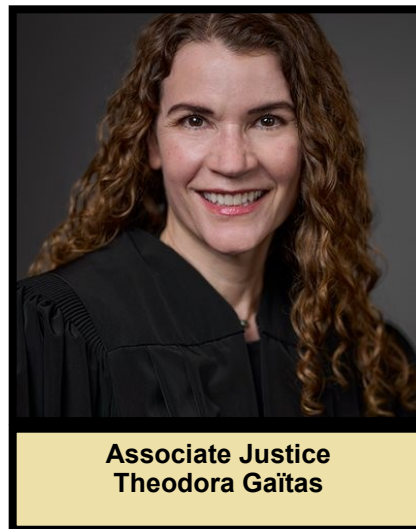
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Court,” said Chief Justice Natalie Hudson of the Minnesota Supreme Court. “Both are experienced, well-respected jurists who bring exceptional intellectual gifts and a deep commitment to serving the people of Minnesota. This is a great day for Minnesota.”

“I am delighted to learn that Judge Gaïtas has been selected for our Supreme Court,” said Cathryn Middlebrook of the Office of the Minnesota Appellate Public Defender. “I have always been impressed by the complete person that Judge Gaïtas is. Her experience, deep knowledge of the law, and her reasoned and compassionate commitment to justice bring an essential perspective to the court and to the State of Minnesota.”

“Judge Gaïtas is an outstanding choice to serve as a member of our Supreme Court,” said Chief Judge Susan Segal of the Minnesota Court of Appeals. “She brings a depth of knowledge from her years in practice before joining the bench and her service on both the district court and the Court of Appeals. Judge Gaïtas has been a talented and valued colleague

on the Court of Appeals, and I know that she has the wisdom, judgment, and commitment to equal justice and the rule of law that will make her an extraordinary justice.”



**Associate Justice
Theodora Gaïtas**

About Theodora Gaïtas

Theodora Gaïtas is a judge on the Minnesota Court of Appeals. She previously served as a judge in the Fourth Judicial District, where she presided over a felony caseload in the criminal division and as co-chair of the Domestic Violence Steering Committee. Gaïtas is co-chair of the Tribal Court State Court Forum, a committee that promotes collaboration between tribal courts and state courts in Minnesota, and co-chair of

the Court of Appeals' Equal Justice Committee and law clerk recruiting committee. Gaïtas's community involvement includes presenting at legal education events, serving as a moot court judge, and volunteering with Meals on Wheels. She earned her B.A. from the University of Minnesota and her J.D. from the University of Minnesota Law School.

“It is my privilege to appoint Chief Judge Sarah Hennesy,” said Governor Walz. “Not only is she a brilliant legal mind with extensive judicial experience, but she is a leader who knows how to move the needle towards justice.”

“I am thrilled with Chief Judge Hennesy's appointment,” said Lieutenant Governor Flanagan. “Her greater Minnesota perspective, combined with her passion for service and a deep connection to the people she serves, will make her an exceptional justice on the Supreme Court. I look forward to seeing her thrive in her new role.”

“I am profoundly honored to be selected to serve as an associate justice of the Minnesota Supreme



Governor Walz Appoints Theodora Gaitas and Sarah Hennesy to the Minnesota Supreme Court

(Continued from page 5)

Court,” said Chief Judge Sarah Hennesy of the Seventh Judicial District. “I want to extend my deepest gratitude to the Governor and his team for entrusting me with this immense responsibility. As a justice of this Court, I will work collaboratively with my colleagues to interpret the law faithfully, uphold the Constitution, and ensure that justice is accessible to all Minnesotans.”

“I’m elated that Chief Judge Sarah Hennesy will be joining the Supreme Court,” said Justice Margaret Chutich of the Minnesota Supreme Court. “She is fair, experienced, compassionate, and respectful of every person who appears before her. It’s a great day for the court and for Minnesota!”

“Humble, wise, kind, and talented is how I would describe Sarah,” said Justice Anne McKeig of the Minnesota Supreme Court. “Her leader-

ship experience, along with her district court street smarts, will serve the court well. I am excited to have her join the court.”



**Associate Justice
Sarah Hennesy**

About Sarah Hennesy

Sarah Hennesy is the chief judge of the Seventh Judicial District and is chambered in St. Cloud. She previously practiced law in both appellate and trial courts as an appellate public defender in Iowa, as a criminal

defense attorney in Washington, D.C. and Virginia, and as a staff attorney at Mid-Minnesota Legal Aid in St. Cloud. Hennesy also serves as chair of the Supreme Court Advisory Committee on the General Rules of Practice. Her community involvement includes speaking at Minnesota

Women Lawyers Association and other legal organization events, volunteering as a judge and coach for mock trial teams and working with local schools to help students learn about the judiciary. She earned her B.A. from Central College and her J.D. from Drake Law School.

For more information about the judicial selection process, please visit the [Governor's Judicial Appointments webpage](#).

Congratulations



Scott County Celebrates Law Day

Scott County hosted Law Day on May 1, 2024 at the Scott County Justice Center in Shakopee, MN. The Law Day 2024 theme was “Voices of Democracy”. Law Day is an annual commemoration held on

May 1st to celebrate the rule of law and cultivate a deeper understanding of the legal system.

Citizens in attendance learned about the Scott County elections process, how to become an election judge, and gained a deeper understanding of the voting equipment.

Following that presentation, First District Judge Charles Webber provided an overview of the Minnesota courts, discussed the importance of an independent judiciary, and shared information about the jury process and the significance of responding to jury questionnaires.

Juries that represent the communities in which they serve help to ensure trials are fair and impartial. Our justice system depends on citizen involvement. Potential jurors are randomly selected from driver’s license, state identification cards, and voter registration records.



Judge Charles Webber



Law Day 2024

The First Edition Editorial Team:

Editor: Brian E. Jones

Formatting Editor: Roseanne Juris

Comments and story ideas may be submitted to:

brian.jones@courts.state.mn.us

