Report to the Community

The 2009 Annual Report of the Minnesota Judicial Branch

MINNESOTA
JUDICIAL
BRANCH

Minnesota Judicial Branch • 25 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd. • Saint Paul, MN 55155

Letter from the Chief Justice

Dear fellow Minnesotans,

I am pleased to present the Minnesota Judicial Branch's 2009 Report to the Community. This year's report highlights our multifaceted strategy for reducing administrative costs, increasing efficiency and making use of new information technologies to improve service to court users, reduce costs, and streamline our work.

The application of new technology is at the heart of several initiatives, including the creation of a Court Payment Center to allow more efficient processing of the more than one million payable citations filed each year. This labor saving strategy will give Minnesotans for the first time the ability to pay fines and fees via the Internet or over the phone with a credit card.

Efforts to provide for the electronic filing of citations and criminal charges are underway that will help reduce paperwork, speed case processing, and increase collection of fines. Planning began in 2009 for a pilot project to demonstrate the benefits of e-filing of civil cases in Hennepin County District Court, with the goal of eventually expanding civil e-filing statewide.

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

Courts are the heart of the primary guarantees of our democratic system: protection of individual liberties and the enforcement of the rule of law in our civic and business lives. Strong and capable courts benefit us all.

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

Sincerely,

Eric J. Magnuson
Chief Justice
Minnesota Supreme Court

The Minnesota Judicial Branch

The Judicial Branch Mission

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

Judicial Branch FY2009 Budget

$252,116,000 - District Courts
$44,972,000 - Supreme Court/State Court Administration
$10,370,000 - Court of Appeals
$307,458,000 - Total

Judicial Branch Staff and Judges

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

Judicial Districts**:** 10
Number of Judicial Branch hearing facilities: 101
Oldest Courthouse: Washington County Courthouse, 101 West Pine Street, Stillwater, 1869.
Number of Courthouses on the National Register of Historic Places: 62

Re-forming Minnesota's Court System

This 2009 Report to the Community is being published at a time of great changes in the Minnesota Judicial Branch; changes that are transforming Minnesota's court system into a more efficient, more responsive, and more customer-focused institution.

The list of innovations underway is long, but includes changes in how more than one million payable citations a year are processed by the courts; modifications in how the more than 100 court facilities in the Judicial Branch are administered; shifts in how the record of court proceedings is made and retained; and improvements to how parties to cases and the general public can access court records, pay fines, and respond to a jury summons.

Many of these changes were made possible by the completion in 2008 of the Minnesota Court Information System (MNCIS), a, state-of-the-art case management system that links every courthouse and makes information available on every case handled by Judicial Branch courts since 1982. MNCIS created the opportunity to provide real-time sharing of case information with law enforcement, and state and federal justice agencies. By the end of 2009, more than 50,000 data exchanges were occurring each day between Judicial Branch computers and information systems operated by our justice system partners.

Each month more than 25,000 data passes occur to update criminal history information at the Bureau of Criminal Apprehension. More than 16,000 data exchanges each month update computers at the Department of Vehicle Services.

By the end of 2009, more than 325,000 cases were being filed electronically. That number is expected to grow significantly in the next few years as more law enforcement agencies, and city and county attorneys, develop the capacity to file citations and cases electronically into the MNCIS system, saving court staff time, reducing data entry errors, and ensuring consistency in court records throughout the state.

While many of the changes underway have resulted from the installation of new technology, some have come in response to inadequate state funding and the resulting loss of court staff. In 2009, the Judicial Branch operated with about 90 percent of the staff it needed to process the more than 1.65 million cases filed during the year. A new caseload study completed as this report was being prepared shows that more than 20 new judgeships and the staff to support them would be necessary to bring the courts up to the level needed to process in a timely manner all cases filed.

These are difficult times for Minnesota, as the state moves through what is proving to be the worst economic downturn since the 1930s. Tax revenues were down significantly in 2009, at the same time that operating costs, especially involving health care programs, were rising. Funding for all parts of state government has been cut, with more cuts predicted for the coming years.

This report will illustrate many of the transitions mentioned above, as well as highlight some initiatives planned for the years ahead. The Minnesota Judicial Branch continues to identify and implement new ways to become more efficient and effective at resolving cases in order to better serve the citizens of the state of Minnesota.

Using Technology to Streamline Operations and Improve Service

Court Payment Center

In 2008, the Judicial Council, the Judicial Branch's policy-making body, formed a committee to study current court practices and recommend changes that would improve case processing and make more effective use of the Branch's limited resources. Several of the resulting recommendations involved the implementation of new technology.

Court staff from around the State of Minnesota meet at the Minnesota Judicial Center to prepare for the rollout of the Court Payment Center.

One of the most ambitious recommendations, which was ultimately adopted by the Judicial Council, called for consolidating and centralizing the processing of about one million payable citations, mostly traffic-related, including automating payment processing and the updating of court records. A virtual Court Payment Center (employees are located throughout the state) was created to take on the task, which in the past had been done manually by staff at each courthouse.

The transition to a centralized citation payment process will save the courts an estimated $2.7 million a year and free up more than 50 court employees for other case processing. The Judicial Council charged the State Court Administrator with overseeing creation of the Court Payment Center, with the goal of transferring 85 counties to the new system by June 30, 2011. The district courts in Hennepin and Ramsey counties will be added to the system in 2012.

St. Louis County Deputy Sheriff Andrew Feiro enters an E-citation in his squad car.

The Court Payment Center project involves more than just streamlining the processing of citation payments, however. It starts with the transition by local law enforcement, and eventually the State Patrol, to the use of E-citations, which are entered by the officer in the squad car, then transferred electronically to the Judicial Branch's case records system. The process in the past has been completed manually by both law enforcement and court staff.

Once the citation is transferred, the defendant has the option of paying the fine at the courthouse, by mail with a check, or by credit card over the phone or Internet. Those having questions or wanting to contest their citation are able to get information or be referred to the local court to schedule a court date through a toll-free statewide call center.

Once a payment is made, the case file is updated to record the payment. The Judicial Branch's system will then automatically determine the distribution of revenue to the appropriate state or local entity. Courts do not receive revenue from citations. If the citation recipient fails to pay the citation by the required deadline, the Judicial Branch's system will automatically transfer the account to a collection vendor, which will begin collection actions.

The implementation of the Court Payment Center followed months of planning and coordination between court staff and local law enforcement agencies.

E-charging and E-complaints

While work was proceeding on the Payment Center, another project involved the implementation of **E-charging** and **E-complaints**, the electronic filing of charges and complaints by prosecutors directly into the Judicial Branch case records system. This initiative, which is being led statewide by the Minnesota Bureau of Criminal Apprehension (BCA), will speed case processing, improve file accuracy, and eliminate the need for court staff to enter case information manually.

Civil E-filing

Planning began in 2009 for a pilot project that would allow litigants in Hennepin County to file certain types of civil cases electronically, reducing the time court staff spend entering case information. The goal is to make **E-filing** of civil cases available statewide.

Jury Management

Technology was at the heart of another 2009 effort to streamline court operations and improve service to the public; the centralization of the jury summons process. In July 2008, the Judicial Branch began an effort to reduce operating costs and improve juror experience. The project called for consolidating 89 disparate jury management databases into a single statewide database; implementing a Web-based service that allows prospective jurors to complete and return their qualification questionnaires online; automating juror payment; and outsourcing summons printing, processing, and mailing.

More Effective Approaches to Case Resolution

The Minnesota Judicial Branch has been a national leader in developing innovative adjudicatory strategies. Minnesota was a pioneer in promoting the use of **Alternative Dispute Resolution** (ADR) to help people resolve legal disputes before going to court. ADR involves an independent third person, called a "neutral," who tries to help parties resolve or narrow areas of conflict.

The use of ADR early in a case can result in a more efficient, cost-effective resolution of disputes, with greater satisfaction to the parties. Many of the civil cases filed in Minnesota state courts are now settled through ADR.

Early Case Management

In 2009, the use of Early Case Management (ECM) increased beyond a five-county pilot begun in 2004, with the goal of establishing programs in all 10 judicial districts. The ECM process empowers families to resolve disputes faster, more economically, and with less intervention from the courts. Parties are assisted by a team experienced in the dynamics of mediation, negotiation, and evaluation. When successful, ECM can eliminate the need for children to be subjected to what might otherwise be a long and contentious custody battle. The goal is for parents to come to an arrangement that works best for the children, rather than having the court decide what is best for the family.

Early Case Management is an emerging model for processing martial dissolution cases more effectively and efficiently, especially in cases involving child custody and parenting time. It relies on judicial management early in the case to help facilitate early settlement. An additional component of this program is the use of Early Neutral Evaluation (ENE) in settling disputed financial issues. ENE is often less expensive and time-consuming than other forms of ADR.

A similar approach involving family law cases on appeal to the Minnesota Court of Appeals began in September 2008. Of the 110 cases that had gone through the Court of Appeals Family Law Appellate Mediation Pilot Program by early 2010, 55 were settled through the use of mediation, saving the litigants money and the stresses of going through the full appeals process, and in the process reducing the Court's case backlog. The remaining 55 cases were placed back into the regular appellate process for briefing and oral argument.

Drug Courts and Other Problem-Solving Strategies

Minnesota was a pioneer in the use of what have come to be known as problem-solving courts, which are special, intensive supervision court calendars devoted to addressing specific types of cases. In problem-solving courts, the court works closely with prosecutors, public defenders, probation officers, social workers, and other justice system partners to develop a strategy that will support an offender in completing a treatment program and abstaining from repeating the behaviors that brought them to court.

Ottertail County District Court Judge Wally Senyk speaks at an Otter Tail County DWI Court graduation as a graduate looks on.

Problem-solving court strategies include extended probation, frequent appearances before a judge, frequent meetings with probation officers, staggered sentencing that breaks up jail time into segments and allows the participant to "earn" reductions in jail time with good behavior, and regular alcohol and drug testing.

Research shows that this approach is more effective than traditional adjudication strategies at reducing repeat offenses, and it can improve public safety and save taxpayers money with the reduced need for incarceration and social services.

In 2009, 38 drug and DWI courts heard cases throughout the state, including the newly-created Southwest Community Adult Drug Court (Redwood, Lincoln, and Lyon counties).

The Judicial Branch partnered with Twin Cities Public Television (TPT- Minnesota Channel) in 2009 to produce two programs on drug and DWI courts. "Drug Courts--Courts that Heal" explains how drug courts work and includes interviews with people who have successfully completed a program and remain law-abiding and drug and alcohol-free. The program was broadcast on public television channels throughout Minnesota and will be re-broadcast in 2010. Copies of the program can be obtained through the Judicial Branch Court Information Office. A shorter companion program, "Drug Courts: Saving Money, Saving Lives" can be viewed through the Judicial Branch Website (www.mncourts.gov).

Minnesota State legislators observe a Hennepin County Drug Court conference.

Similar problem-solving strategies are being used with cases that involve defendants with chronic mental health issues, juvenile truancy, domestic violence, and community disputes. 2010 will see the approach expanded to deal with cases involving returning war veterans. Another project will involve unmarried parents in custody dispute cases in Hennepin County District Court.

Self-Help Services Expand

The Judicial Branch has expanded its efforts considerably in recent years to assist self-represented litigants, as well as others involved in court interactions. Many courts now operate Self-Help Centers. In 2009, the Hennepin County District Court Self-Help Center assisted more than 42,000 walk-in clients, which was a 28 percent increase in two years. The Center provides videos on how to represent yourself in court, online tools for filling out forms, brief legal advice from volunteer attorneys, one-on-one help to learn court procedures, one-on-one review of court forms, and referrals to community resources and legal services. Self-Help Center staff speak English, French, Somali, and Spanish.

An extensive Web-based virtual Self-Help Center created over the past three years is now one of the most visited sections on the Judicial Branch Website, with more than 230,000 page views in 2009. To supplement the virtual Self-Help Center, a statewide telephone Self-Help service was created in 2009. In addition, public service computer terminals with a phone connection to the Self-Help Center have been installed in all courthouses.

Litigants seeking assistance with common court matters can now view several helpful videos through the Judicial Branch Website. Many of the videos have been captioned for use by viewers with hearing disabilities. A tutorial on how to file a case in conciliation court (civil disputes involving amounts under $7,500) is available in Spanish, Hmong, and Somali.

Most court interactions require litigants to complete one or more court forms. In 2009 many common court forms were developed in languages other than English to assist non-English speakers. Many forms are now available in Hmong, Somali, Spanish, Cambodian, Lao, Oromo, Russian, and Vietnamese.

Reform Through Collaboration

Minnesota's Judicial Branch is a partner in a larger justice system that includes law enforcement, county attorneys, public defenders, private attorneys, and civil legal services organizations. In 2008 and 2009, Chief Justice Eric J. Magnuson brought together two new collaborations to identify ways to improve the administration of justice in Minnesota in the face of shrinking financial resources.

The **Criminal Justice Forum** was established by Chief Justice Magnuson in the fall of 2008 and operated throughout 2009. The effort was in response to projected state budget deficits. The forum reviewed statutes, court rules, practices, and policies to identify ways to better coordinate and prioritize case processing and improve Minnesota's justice system.

The Criminal Justice Forum included representatives from the Association of Minnesota Counties, the Minnesota Department of Corrections, the Minnesota County Attorneys Association, the Minnesota City Attorneys Association, the Minnesota Association of Community Corrections Act Counties, the Metropolitan Inter-County Association, the Minnesota Bar Association Criminal Section, the Minnesota Public Defenders, the Minnesota Department of Public Safety, the Minnesota Sheriffs Association, and the Minnesota Chiefs of Police Association.

The 2009 Legislature requested that the Chief Justice convene a **Civil Justice Forum** for the purpose of examining civil justice practices in search of new efficiencies and potential cost savings. Chief Justice Magnuson called the first meeting of the Forum on October 28. In subsequent meetings, the forum examined civil case processing statutes, court rules, and practices in an effort to identify changes that would facilitate more cost-effective and efficient civil case processing.

Civil Justice Forum membership includes the Minnesota State Bar Association, the American Board of Trial Advocates, the Minnesota Association for Justice, the Minnesota Defense Lawyers Association, Civil Legal Services, the Minnesota City Attorneys Association, and the Minnesota County Attorneys Association.

The Coalition to Preserve Minnesota's Justice System was created in 2008 by Chief Justice Magnuson to advocate for adequate funding for Minnesota's justice system. During 2008 and 2009, the Coalition conducted joint news conferences and media briefings throughout the state explaining the potential impact of further budget cuts on local communities. Coalition members included the Minnesota State Bar Association, the Hennepin County Bar Association, the Ramsey County Bar Association, the Minnesota Board of Public Defense, the Minnesota City Attorneys Association , AFSCME, the Teamsters, the Minnesota Sheriffs' Association, the

Minnesota Chiefs of Police Association, the Minnesota Association of Verbatim Reporters and Captioners, the Legal Services Coalition, and the League of Women Voters of Minnesota. This group continued to meet with Legislators in 2009 to emphasize the need for adequate funding of this core function of government.

Funding Shortfall Results in Case Delays, Service Cuts

In the past three biennia, state funding for the Judicial Branch has fallen short of staffing and judicial needs. As a result, the Branch ended 2009 with more than 250 staff vacancies and a shortage of 24 judges. Judicial vacancies are being held open for a minimum of four months to save money, with delays often stretching longer. As a result, case processing has suffered increased delays, and public service has been reduced.

In many parts of the state, the time it takes to get a case into court has doubled. Statewide, 25 percent of serious felonies now take longer than a year to come to trial, leaving defendants, victims, and witnesses in limbo. It is not uncommon for a case filed in a conciliation court to take six to eight months to come before a judge.

A Scott County Courthouse courtroom.

Public service windows in the Third, Fourth, Sixth, Eighth, Ninth, and Tenth judicial districts are now closed a half-day a week to allow staff to process cases. Work hours and wages have been reduced 6.5 percent in the Eighth Judicial District, further reducing staff time to process cases and assist customers.

In an effort to minimize further staff cuts, the Judicial Council negotiated a two year wage freeze with employee unions, and extended the freeze to non-union employees. Judicial salaries were also frozen.

Community Outreach

Each year, as part of the effort to help the public better understand the role of the courts in a democracy and in the justice system, the Judicial Branch undertakes a number of initiatives. In 2009, our judges spoke at more than 360 appearances for schools, civic groups, and community events. They reached more than 14,000 Minnesotans.

The Supreme Court Traveling Oral Argument Program

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

Members of the Minnesota Supreme Court answer student questions during a visit to Buffalo High School.

In May 2009, the Supreme Court's traveling oral argument program was held at Buffalo High School. The court visited Hibbing High School in October. A community dinner attended by more than 150 area citizens was held at St. Leo's Hall in Hibbing in conjunction with the visit to Hibbing High School. More than 2,300 students from more than 10 communities participated in these events.

Minnesota Supreme Court Chief Justice Eric J. Magnuson addresses citizens from across the Iron Range at a community dinner held in Hibbing, MN.

Webcasts

Since 2005, Supreme Court oral arguments have been recorded and made available for viewing on the Minnesota Judicial Branch Website, www.mncourts.gov. On average, the videos draw more than 1,850 views a month, with a June 2009 high of more than 5,300 views.

Judges and Court Staff Volunteer Their Time

The Minnesota Judicial Center is the home of the Supreme Court, the Court of Appeals, and State Court Administration. More than 1,690 people, including 1,500 Minnesota school students, visited the Judicial Center and the State Capitol Court Chamber in 2009. Visits and tours are arranged through the Court Information Office.

The Minnesota Judicial Branch partners with several organizations throughout the year in order to provide support through judge and staff volunteering. Minnesota Supreme Court justices and Court of Appeals judges helped prepare students for service as judges, and administered oaths of office to Youth Executive, Legislative, and Judicial Branch officials during the 2009 YMCA Youth in Government Model Assembly program held at the Minnesota Capitol Complex.

Supreme Court justices and Court of Appeals judges spoke on a weekly basis throughout the 2009 legislative session to more than 200 high school juniors participating in the Minnesota House of Representative's High School Legislative Page Program.

William Mitchell College of Law's Future in Learning Law (FILL) program brings students interested in a future legal career to the Minnesota Judicial Center to visit courtrooms and chambers and to meet with appellate judges and justices to learn more about the judiciary.

Judges and court staff pause for a photo after serving lunch to those in need at Dorothy Day Center in St. Paul, MN.

Supreme Court justices, Court of Appeals judges, a retired Supreme Court justice, retired Court of Appeals judges, law clerks, and court staff served lunch at the Dorothy Day Center in St. Paul on May 22, 2009. It marked the seventh time members of the Judicial Branch participated in the free lunch event. Judges and staff served more than 3,000 meals to those in need in the first six years of this event and served an additional 550 meals in 2009. "It is an honor for us to be able to participate in this event," said Judge Jill Flaskamp Halbrooks, chair of the committee that organizes the event for the courts. "We look forward to it each year. It is very rewarding to be able to reach out and provide a special meal for people in need."

The Minnesota Judicial Branch Hits Public Television Stations Around Minnesota

The Judicial Branch partnered with TPT-TV Minnesota Channel to produce a half-hour television program highlighting the role of Minnesota's drug courts in reducing crime and increasing public safety. The program, "Drug Courts: Justice That Heals," was broadcast on public television stations throughout Minnesota in March 2009, and was rebroadcast several times during the year.

"The District Court Show," a monthly half-hour television program produced and hosted by Tenth Judicial District Judge Steve Halsey, was broadcast throughout his district, featuring topics of interest about the courts.

Ramsey County District Court Judges Gary Bastien and Judith Tilsen co-host "One & the Same," a public affairs television program broadcast on cable TV stations in Ramsey County and parts of Dakota and Washington counties.

Judges in Print

In 2009, several Minnesota judges published columns in area newspapers explaining the business of the courts and making the legal process more understandable for non-lawyers: Judges Steve Halsey (Buffalo), Paul Rasmussen (Clearwater), and Randy Slieter (Renville). Reader responses suggest that these columns are well-read and considered useful by readers.

Around the Branch in 2009

Ramsey County Civil Commitment Court to Get New Home

Planning began in 2009 for a new East Metro Behavioral Health Crisis Center, which, when completed in 2011, will house the Second Judicial District (Ramsey County) Civil Committee Court. The court has been housed in Regions Hospital, which presents space and security challenges. The new facility will also house the Ramsey County Detoxification Center; the East Metro Mental Health Crisis System of Care, which will serve residents of Ramsey, Dakota, and Washington counties; and a chemical health assessment center.

Fifth Judicial District Leader in Drug Court Development

By the end of 2009, adult drug courts were operational in 10 of the 15 counties in the Fifth Judicial District, with an average of 100 participants involved at any one time. In 2009, there were 29 drug court graduates from the 18-month-long intensive treatment and monitoring program.

A new multi-county adult drug court for Lincoln, Lyon, and Redwood counties began in December 2009 in partnership with the Lower Sioux Indian Community.

The state's first multi-county family dependency treatment court was started in Faribault, Martin, and Jackson counties in 2009. The court is one of only nine applicants nationwide to receive federal funding from the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention in 2009.

Fourth Judicial District Judges Present Pihlaja Justice Partner Award

Fourth Judicial District Judge Steven Pihlaja

On May 31, 2009, the judges of the Fourth Judicial District announced the recipient of the first annual Steven A. Pihlaja Justice Partner Award to Hennepin County Bar Association (HCBA) President Mary Vasaly. The Pihlaja Justice Partner Award is named for a judge known for his selfless and effective volunteer work in the community. Judge Pihlaja was appointed to the bench on May 31, 2002, and continued to work while battling cancer. He died in 2008. His focus centered on making life better for others—as a judge, colleague, friend, and neighbor. The award was presented to Vasaly in September.

During her term as HCBA President, Vasaly vigorously pursued necessary funding for the courts, public defenders, and the delivery of civil legal services to the disadvantaged in Hennepin County. Ensuring the guarantee of equal justice was a hallmark of her term. "The citizens of Hennepin County are indebted to her, and we, the members of the Hennepin County bench, are proud to call her a justice partner."

Washington County District Court Gets New Home, Initiates New Programs

A technology-enhanced courtroom in the new Washington County Courthouse, completed in August 2009.

Judges and court staff moved into the new Washington County Courthouse in August. Work continues to refurbish the old court space, which, when completed, will provide additional court space.

In 2009, Washington County District Court initiated an Early Neutral Evaluation (ENE) program for family cases with the goal of helping families resolve disputes in a more effective, less time-consuming, and less expensive way.

The Washington County District Court Offender Recovery Program (ORP) was also implemented in 2009. The program, which is targeted at high-risk criminal offenders with chemical dependency issues, requires participation in evidence-based drug treatment programming.

Anoka County District Court Implements Early Neutral Evaluation for Family Disputes

In the fall of 2007, a member of the Anoka County Bar Association's Family Law Section proposed forming a committee to consider whether an Early Neutral Evaluation (ENE) program could be implemented in the county. A committee was formed, which included members of the bar, the bench, legal aid, court services, court administration, and the county attorney's office; a representative of Alexandra House (the county's domestic violence shelter); guardian ad litems; and other interested people. Subcommittees were formed to develop forms, handle finances, recruit neutrals, gather data, etc. A sliding fee scale was established based on the parties' incomes.

Funding was provided by the State Justice Institute, the Minnesota State Bar Foundation, and the Anoka County Bar Association. Central Minnesota Legal Services donated money to be used to reimburse neutrals who assisted parties not able to pay the fees. The committee contracted with a pilot coordinator who selected the neutrals and scheduled the parties for their ENE sessions. The pilot began in August 2008 with five judges. In July 2009, the judges in Anoka county voted to expand the pilot so that parties in all marriage dissolution cases could participate.

Priorities & Strategies for Minnesota's Judicial Branch FY2010-FY2011

STRATEGIC GOAL 1: ACCESS TO JUSTICE

Priority 1A: Demonstrate the need and build support for obtaining the resources needed to insure the provisions of and access to justice

Priority 1B: Continue efforts to fully integrate the Minnesota Court Information System (MNCIS) and to maximize its use through continual training

Priority 1C: Implement technological initiatives aimed at reducing workloads for court administration staff

Priority 1D: Provide centralized self-represented litigant services to Minnesotans

Priority 1E: Plan for access and service delivery levels in the context of anticipated future fiscal constraints

STRATEGIC GOAL 2: ADMINISTERING JUSTICE FOR EFFECTIVE RESULTS

Priority 2A: Integrate a judicial problem-solving approach into court operations for cases involving alcohol and other drug (AOD) addicted offenders

Priority 2B: Provide early resolution of family law cases

Priority 2C: Begin planning for a multi-disciplinary task force aimed at examining family law in general and the family court process (trial and appellate levels) to identify areas where improvements could be made

Priority 2D: Evaluate and, if appropriate, expand the Family Appellate Mediation Pilot Program

STRATEGIC GOAL 3: PUBLIC TRUST, ACCOUNTABILITY, AND IMPARTIALITY

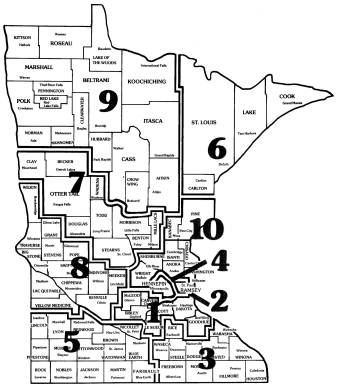
Priority 3A: Continue the performance standards implementation initiative

Priority 3B: Continue efforts to implement education and development opportunities for Judicial Branch employees

Priority 3C: Recognize the 20th Anniversary of the Race Fairness in the Courts Study

Priority 3D: Encourage and facilitate communication and collaboration between the Minnesota Judicial Branch and Minnesota Tribal Courts

District Courts



289 Judgeships, 10 Judicial Districts

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

Appeals from: Conciliation Court*

Conciliation Division: Civil Disputes up to $7,500

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

2009 District Court Case Filing Information	
Major criminal (serious and other felony, gross misdemeanor DWI, other gross misdemeanors)	56,411
Major civil (personal injury, contract, property damage, harassment, other)	44,671
Probate/Mental Health (trust, guardianship/conservator, commitment, estate/other probate)	15,105
Major Family (dissolution w/child, dissolution w/o child, child support, domestic abuse, other family)	48,891
Juvenile (delinquency felony, delinquency gross misdemeanor, juvenile petty offender, dependency/neglect, truancy)	46,593
Major Case Total	**211,671**
Minor Civil (implied consent, unlawful detainer, conciliation)	160,072
Minor Criminal (5th degree assault, parking, non-traffic misdemeanor, petty misdemeanor, misdemeanor DWI, other traffic)	1,233,874
Grand Total	**1,605,617**

Court of Appeals

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

19 Members, 3-Judge Panels

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

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

2009 Court of Appeals Case Information

	Cases Filed	Dispositions
General Civil	652	710
Criminal	671	903
Administrative Rule	0	1
Economic Security	316	231
Writs - Certiori	98	108
Habeas / Certified Questions	19	18
Commitment	40	54
Family	232	237
Juvenile Delinquency	26	44
Juvenile Protection	67	71
Implied Consent	28	44
Discretionary Review / Writs	104	105
Total	**2,253**	**2,526**

Court of Appeals Reduces Waiting Time for Appeals

Court of Appeals Chief Judge Edward Toussaint, Jr.

The Minnesota Court of Appeals provides citizens with prompt and deliberate review of all final decisions of the trial courts, state agencies, and local governments. Court of Appeals' decisions are the final ruling in about 96 percent of the 2,400 appeals filed every year.

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

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

As a result of this effort, the number of cases awaiting decisions has been reduced substantially. In December 2007, there were 674 cases awaiting scheduling. By May 31, 2010, that number had been reduced to 104 cases.

One of the innovative strategies contributing to the Court's success is the Family Law Mediation Pilot Program, which began in September 2008. With the assistance of mediators, litigants and lawyers, the pilot was able to resolve 54 percent of family law appeals referred to mediation, saving the time and expense that would otherwise have been spent on briefing and arguing those cases to three-judge panels.

In addition, the Court created a Self-Help Website, with forms and information on eviction, criminal, unemployment, and civil appeals; appeal deadlines; and more.

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

Supreme Court

7 members, En Banc panel

Appeals from:
Court of Appeals decisions
Trial court decisions if Supreme Court chooses to bypass the Court of Appeals
Tax Court decisions, Workers' Compensation Court of Appeals

Original Actions:
Review of all first-degree murder convictions
Writs of Prohibition, Writs of Habeas Corpus, Writs of Mandamus
Legislative election disputes

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

2009 Supreme Court Case Information

Direct Appeals		
	Cases Filed	Disposi-tions
Workers' Compensation	17	16
Civil	17	9
Tax Court	6	4
Attorney Discipline	37	57
Writs	4	5
First Degree Homicide	30	36
Total Direct Appeals	**111**	**127**

Petitions for Further Review (PFR)	
Filed	778
Denied	700
Granted Further Review	81
Other	31

Dispositions	
Affirmed	26
Mixed	9
Remand / Reverse	23
Other Decision / Dismissal	3
Total	**61**

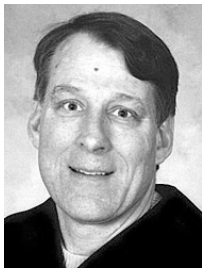
Minnesota Judicial Council

Membership for Fiscal Year 2009

Hon. Eric J. Magnuson (Chair) *Chief Justice, Supreme Court*	Hon. Michael L. Kirk *Chief Judge, Seventh District*
Hon. John Rodenberg (Vice-Chair) *Judge, Fifth District*	Hon. Paul A. Nelson *Chief Judge, Eighth District*
Hon. G. Barry Anderson *Associate Justice, Supreme Court*	Hon. Gerald J. Seibel *Judge, Eighth District*
Hon. Edward Toussaint Jr. *Chief Judge, Court of Appeals*	Hon. Jon A. Maturi *Chief Judge, Ninth District*
Hon. Thomas J. Kalitowski *Judge, Court of Appeals*	Hon. Timothy R. Bloomquist *Chief Judge, Tenth District*
Hon. William E. Macklin *Chief Judge, First District*	Sue K. Dosal *State Court Administrator*
Hon. David L. Knutson *Judge, First District*	Jeffrey G. Shorba *Deputy State Court Administrator*
Hon. Kathleen R. Gearin *Chief Judge, Second District*	Gerald J. Winter *District Administrator, First District*
Hon. William A. Johnson *Chief Judge, Third District*	Mark S. Thompson *District Administrator, Fourth District*
Hon. James T. Swenson *Chief Judge, Fourth District*	Shelley Ellefson *District Administrator, Third District*
Hon. Denise D. Reilly *Judge, Fourth District*	Chuck Kjos *Court Administrator, Olmsted County*
Hon. Douglas L. Richards *Chief Judge, Fifth District*	Hon. Charles A. Porter, Jr. *MDJA President, Fourth District*
Hon. James B. Florey *Chief Judge, Sixth District*	Timothy Ostby *District Administrator, Seventh and Eighth Districts*

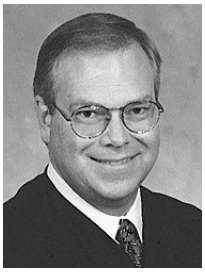
Minnesota Judicial District Chief Judges

Fiscal Year 2009



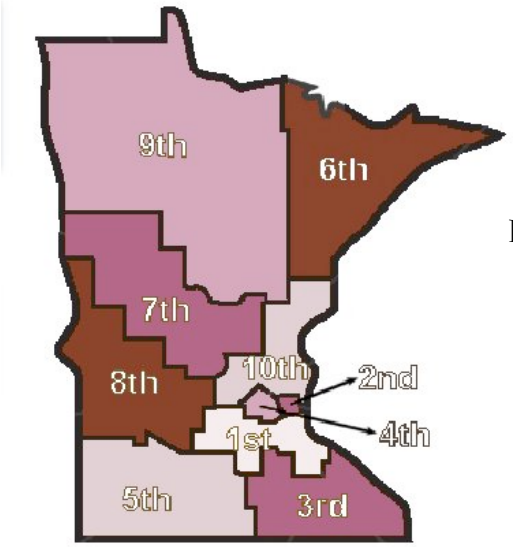
Hon. Jon A. Maturi
9th Judicial District

Hon. James B. Florey
6th Judicial District



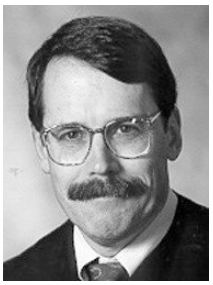
Hon. Timothy R. Bloomquist
10th Judicial District

Hon. Michael L. Kirk
7th Judicial District



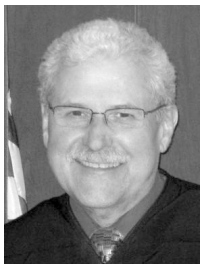
Hon. Kathleen R. Gearin
2nd Judicial District

Hon. Paul A. Nelson
8th Judicial District



Hon. James T. Swenson
4th Judicial District

Hon. Douglas L. Richards
5th Judicial District



Hon. William E. Macklin
1st Judicial District

Hon. William A. Johnson
3rd Judicial District