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Annual Report 1996
Minnesota State Courts

1996

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Dear Minnesotans;

With nearly 2 million cases flooding the state court system every year, Minnesota courts are now close to the point of being able to offer only assembly-line justice for many Minnesotans. In 1996, the trial courts disposed of more than 205,000 major cases which is an increase of almost 38 percent from 1986. That is an average of 737 major cases and more than 6,236 minor cases per judge. What that means to Minnesotans, whether they have ever been in a courtroom or not, is that judges can spend an average of only 11.3 minutes per DWI case, 20.5 minutes on each domestic abuse matter and 5 minutes on a juvenile traffic matter.

Increase in Most Serious Crimes and Juvenile Offenses

While the media reports daily on crime and juvenile delinquency, most Minnesotans would be shocked by the increase in the most serious crimes. Felonies and gross misdemeanors increased by 76 percent from 1986 to 1996. Even more disturbing is that juvenile petitions jumped 105 percent during the same time period.

Swift Court Action is the Best Deterrent

Delays in reaching criminal cases not only reduce the deterrent effect of the sentence, but increase the risk of re-offense if there is a prolonged pre-trial and disposition period. In 1988, Minnesota's State Planning Office undertook a comprehensive study of sentencing effectiveness. After a thorough examination, the report found that the only factor that is a proven deterrent to repeat offenses is the speed with which judicial sanctions are imposed. The mere volume of our trial court criminal and juvenile caseloads threatens to crush our ability to swiftly conclude criminal, juvenile and family court cases.

*Annual
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Minnesota
State Courts*

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Meeting the Challenge

Meeting the Challenge but Questioning the Assembly Line Approach

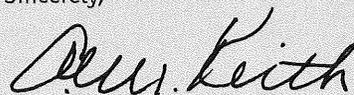
The trial courts have done an incredible job of rising to the challenger of this huge influx of cases. As the number of the most serious and time-consuming cases has increased by 38 percent in the past 10 years, the number of judges has increased by only 12 percent in the same period. Despite these challenges, the courts have developed ways to manage the caseload efficiently. Judges and court staff are continually refining methods.

Judges and administrators organize and operate the system in a way that compensates for the lack of human and financial resources. Stakeholders inside and outside the system have taken a hard look at how business is done and how it could be done. Systems are in place that provide continuous feedback about how the caseload is being managed. This feedback, and experience in courtrooms throughout the state, has underscored the importance of five basic approaches the courts are taking:

1. The judiciary has begun to intervene earlier. We understand, for example, that there is a relationship between truancy and future interactions with the courts.
2. Courts are putting additional focus on the problems of children and families. The courts are developing ways to make family court more expeditious and more effective by involving cross-disciplinary and less adversarial approaches.
3. Judges and staff are continually identifying ways that we can efficiently move cases while not losing sight of the most effective outcome.
4. Courts are collaborating more broadly inside and outside the justice system, realizing that judges can be catalysts for bringing other justice system entities together to address underlying problems as well as the symptoms.
5. Court administration is continuing to adapt modern business practices to the management of the courts. Over the past 15 years, the system has been restructured and streamlined, professional administrators have been hired; and court operations have been computerized. In addition, judges have set time standards for moving cases through the system. Cases are tracked to keep them moving on schedule.

All of these approaches take time and resources and they are difficult to accomplish while judges and staff are keeping the justice system assembly line going. At times, the challenges seem insurmountable, particularly when it comes to the public's major expectation — that courts effectively address crime. Judges and court personnel have devised ways to intervene earlier, to handle cases with an eye toward more effective outcomes and to use interdisciplinary approaches to address the root causes of the problems that come before them. As we approach the next century, the court system is implementing a strategic plan that will enhance the public's access to justice, strengthen the judiciary's leadership in addressing community problems, provide for greater accountability, underscore the rule of law in dealing more effectively with crime, increase coordination and collaboration of scarce resources, and expand the innovative use of technology to improve the outcomes of the judicial process. The judiciary will need the full support of a well-informed citizenry, the legislative and executive branches of government as well as the entire justice system if we are to be successful in fulfilling the expectation that we effectively assist in resolving disputes and maintaining order in the democratic and diverse society we enjoy.

Sincerely,



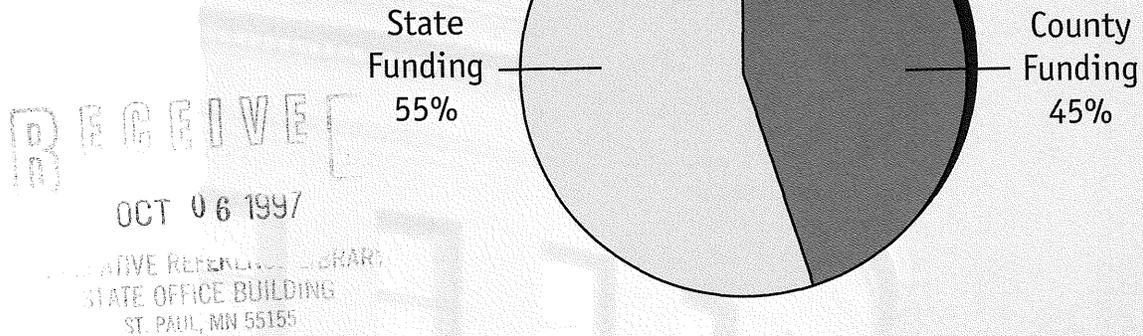
A.M. Keith
Chief Justice

State Court System Budget

State/County Burden

1996

The judicial branch's operating budget is made up of state and county funding.



1996 Judicial Branch Annual Operating Budget

The state court system's annual operating budget includes all three levels of the court system plus the state law library and other services.

* Estimate based on 3% inflationary increase over 1995.

STATE FUNDING

Supreme Court	\$ 3,916,445
Civil Legal Services	5,882,100
State Court Administration	8,137,000
Community Dispute Resolution/ Victim-Offender Mediation	245,000
State Law Library	1,712,177
Court of Appeals	5,785,369
State Funded Trial Courts	<u>65,043,237</u>

\$ 90,721,328

COUNTY FUNDING (Est.)*

\$ 74,470,000

TOTAL

\$165,191,328

Supreme Court Disposition Summary

	No. of Cases
Disposition by Option	
• Affirmed	61
• Affirmed as Modified	4
• Affirmed in part, reversed in part	6
• Affirmed in part, reversed in part & remanded	1
• Certified question of law answered	2
• Closed	20
• Reversed	46
• Reversed & remanded	10
• Vacated	1
Total, by opinion	151
Summary Affirmance	81
Per Curiam	8
Dismissed & Other	51
Petition for review denied	660
Total dispositions	951

Among the most visible ways that the Minnesota Supreme Court exerts its leadership role in the administration of justice is through the work of the task forces it creates and supports. The Court identifies major societal issues upon which the court system can have a significant impact. Once the issues have been identified the Court brings together professionals and lay people who can contribute to addressing the problems involved. When the task force publishes a report, the justices follow up with the implementation of task force recommendations.

For example, the Supreme Court Implementation Committee on Gender Fairness in the Courts has been highly influential in the statewide justice system's approach to addressing issues of domestic violence. The development of a statewide database for orders for protection is one of many successfully implemented recommendations made by the original task force. This initiative is expected to save lives by providing police, judges and other justice system participants with the information needed to enforce orders for protection. In 1996, Supreme Court task forces dealt with foster care and adoption, visitation and child support, the guardian ad litem system, court interpreter services, and multicultural diversity and racial fairness in the judicial system.

In addition, each member of the Supreme Court serves as the liaison to a judicial district and/or to a Supreme Court board. The following is a listing of current liaison assignments:

Chief Justice A.M. Keith

General Rules of Practice Committee - chair
Visitation and Child Support Task Force - liaison
Pardon Board - statutory member
4th District - liaison

Justice Esther M. Tomljanovich

Rules of Criminal Procedure Committee - liaison
Sentencing Guidelines Commission
MN Gender Fairness Implementation Committee - chair
MN Board of Continuing Legal Education
10th District - liaison

Justice Sandra S. Gardebring

Rules of Civil Appellate Procedure Committee - chair
Juvenile Rules Committee - liaison
Judicial Branch Technology Planning Committee - chair
Tribal Courts - liaison
Foster Care Advisory Committee - liaison
Board of Law Examiners
3rd District - liaison
5th District - liaison

Justice Alan C. Page

Implementation Committee on Multicultural Diversity and Racial Fairness - chair
Lawyers Professional Responsibility Board - liaison
Legal Services Advisory Board - liaison
Lawyers Trust Account Board - liaison
2nd District - liaison
6th District - liaison

Justice Paul H. Anderson

Rules of Civil Procedure Committee - chair
Judicial Evaluation Committee - liaison
Court Interpreter Advisory Committee - chair
Access to Public Records Rules Committee - chair
State Law Library Committee - chair
Minnesota News Council
Implementation Committee on Multicultural Diversity and Racial Fairness
4th District - liaison
7th District - liaison

Justice Edward C. Stringer

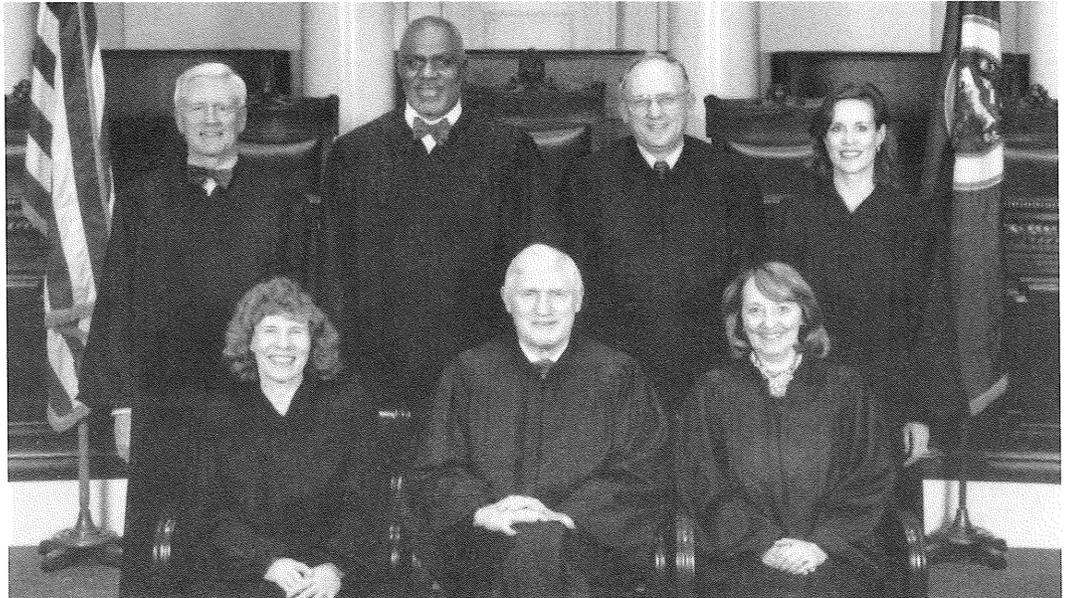
Committee on Rules of Evidence - liaison
Standing Committee for Administration of No-fault Arbitration - liaison
Legal Services Funding Committee - liaison
Minnesota State Bar Association
MSBA Continuing Legal Education
2nd District - liaison
9th District - liaison

Justice Kathleen A. Blatz

Guardian ad Litem Committee - liaison
Board of Legal Certification - liaison
Client Security Board - liaison
Prison Industry Board - liaison
1st District - liaison
8th District - liaison

On October 31, 1996, Justice Mary Jeanne Coyne retired from the Supreme Court after 14 years as an associate justice. On November 1, 1996, Hon. Kathleen Blatz was sworn in as the 80th member of the Court. She came from the Hennepin County trial court bench where she had served since 1994. Prior to becoming a judge she was an assistant Hennepin County attorney, and a private attorney. She was a state representative from 1979 to 1994.

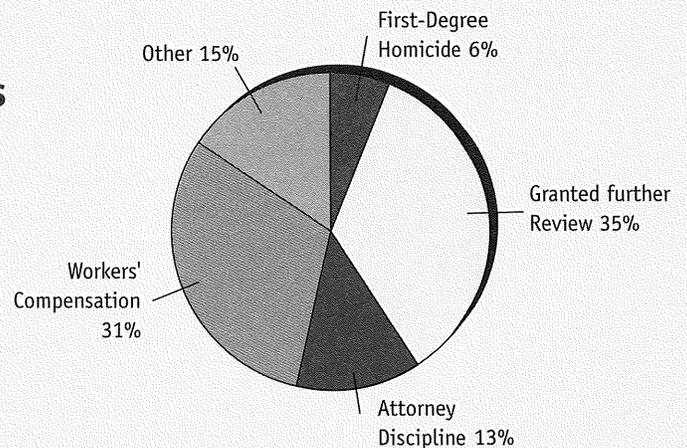
In its ongoing effort to educate the public about the court system and to reach out to communities throughout Minnesota, the Supreme Court heard oral arguments in the spring and fall in Greater Minnesota. In the spring of 1996, the court heard a case in New Ulm and in the fall, the Court went to Crookston. In each community, the Court met with community leaders to have an open exchange about community concerns regarding the justice system. The day of oral arguments was dedicated to public education. Area high school and college students were invited to observe the oral arguments and have lunch with the justices to discuss questions and issues relevant to them. This initiative, started in 1993, has become a popular tradition of the Court which it hopes to develop into further community outreach endeavors at all levels of the court system.



STANDING: Justice Edward C. Stringer, Justice Alan C. Page, Justice Paul H. Anderson, Justice Kathleen A. Blatz. SEATED: Justice Esther M. Tomljanovich, Chief Justice A. M. (Sandy) Keith, Justice Sandra S. Gardebring.

Supreme Court 1996 Case Filings

The composition of the Supreme Court's filings shows that the majority of its cases come from the Court of Appeals and the Workers' Compensation Court of Appeals.

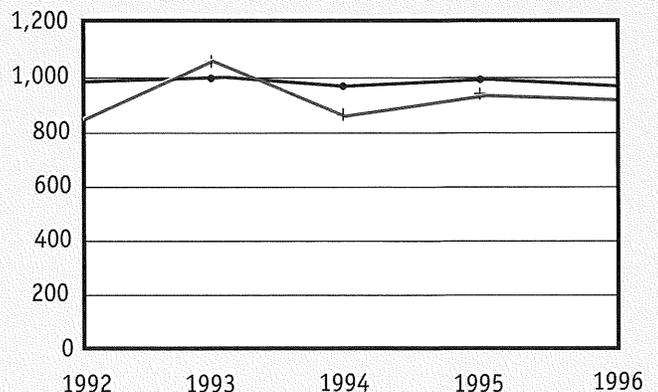


Note: Petitions for further review denied not included.

Supreme Court Case Flow 1992-1996

1992-1996

Despite an increase in petitions for review, which take more time to dispose, dispositions kept pace with filings.



• Filings + Dispositions

Mission Statement

"The Minnesota Court of Appeals exists to provide the people with impartial, clear and timely appellate decisions made according to law."

Vision

"The Minnesota Court of Appeals strives to be an accessible intermediate appellate court that renders justice under the law fairly and expeditiously through clear, well-reasoned decisions and promotes cooperative effort, innovation, diversity, and the professional and personal growth of all personnel."

The mission and vision statements, written and adopted in 1995 by the judges and staff, have guided the work of the Court of Appeals in 1996 as the Court has developed policies, procedures and greater efficiencies.

In keeping with its focus on access, a Court committee on pro se litigation is addressing the difficulties some self-represented litigants have in understanding the appellate process and what is required of them. The committee is producing a document to assist nonlawyers

in the practical matters of bringing an appeal.

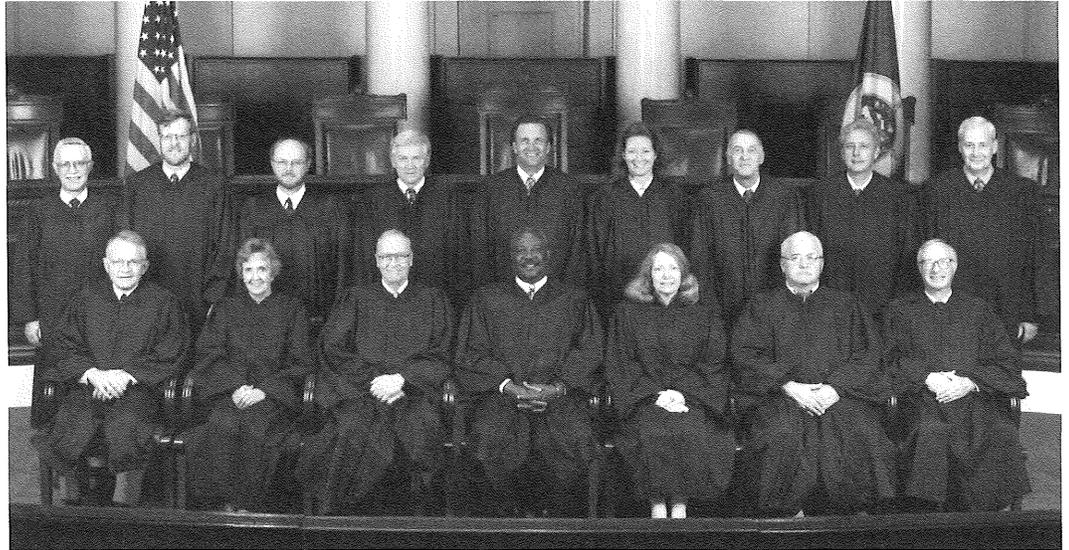
A second access initiative addresses the physical accessibility of the courtrooms in the Minnesota Judicial Center to ensure that there are no barriers that might impede communication with and observation of the Court. The third element of access is the Court's continued commitment to traveling throughout Minnesota to hear oral arguments. Three-judge panels hear cases in 11 locations throughout the year. To further develop access to

the Court, the use of interactive television technology is being explored so that more citizens may observe public hearings at school sites and elsewhere.

The Court also has developed a technology-based issues tracking system that will allow for the identification of issues so that cases may be consolidated for more efficient and consistent handling. The tracking system also will keep all of the Court apprised of the cases presently under review.

STANDING: Honorable James C. Harten, Honorable Randolph W. Peterson, Honorable Roger M. Klaphake, Honorable Robert H. Schumacher, Honorable Thomas J. Kalitowski, Honorable Marianne D. Short, Honorable Jack Davies, Honorable Roland C. Amundson, Honorable Bruce D. Willis.

SEATED: Honorable Gary L. Crippen, Honorable Doris Ohlsen Huspeni, Honorable Edward J. Parker, Chief Judge Edward Toussaint, Jr., Honorable Harriet Lansing, Honorable R.A. (Jim) Randall, Honorable Fred C. Norton.

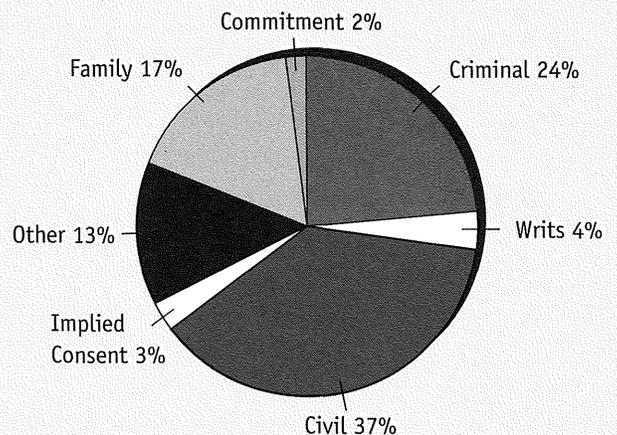


Court of Appeals Disposition Summary

	No. of Cases
Disposition by Option	
• Affirmed	1102
• Affirmed as Modified	31
• Affirmed in part & remanded	17
• Affirmed in part, reversed in part	70
• Affirmed in part, reversed in part & remanded	73
• Certified question of law answered	1
• Vacated	3
• Dismissed	8
• Reversed	117
• Reversed & remanded	115
• Summary Affirmation	2
• Withdrawn	3
Total, by opinion	1542
Order Opinion	113
Denied/Discharged	189
Dismissed	599
Certified/Transferred	3
Stayed, remanded	10
Total dispositions	2456

Court of Appeals 1996 Case Filings

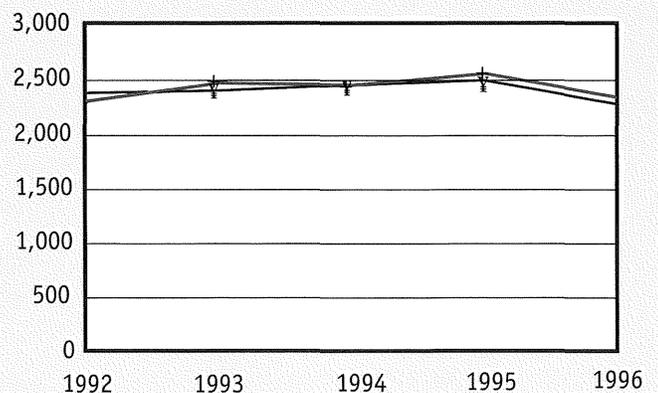
Criminal cases, which are about 24 percent of the Court of Appeals' filings, include felony, gross misdemeanor and petty misdemeanor cases. Civil cases make up 37 percent of the Court's caseload.



Court of Appeals Case Flow

1992-1996

The relationship of filings to dispositions remained stable in 1996. Cases continue to be disposed of within the statutory 90-day limit.



∇ Filings + Dispositions

Fundamental Changes in the Court System Direct Resources to Families

Minnesota's demographic and societal shifts are being met with fundamental changes within the court system. The judiciary is applying modern business practices to court processes. Judges and court staff are putting additional focus on troubled families.

Juvenile cases, especially, must be handled promptly and thoughtfully if courts are going to be successful in reinforcing society's limits and if a whole generation is going to have confidence in the system. However, if courts are so overloaded that they can't deal with an October school truancy until May, no matter what the consequence is, the impact is lost. It also is possible that more truancy and trouble have gone on in the intervening months.

Courts Act as Catalysts for Community Involvement with Juveniles

One example of how courts are acting as catalysts in addressing community problems is in Pope County where greater involvement by justice-system representatives is credited with stabilizing and reducing the juvenile crime rate. The county has a juvenile diversion program that offers first-time offenders counseling, education and consequences as a deterrent to future offenses. In the area of alcohol-related offenses, first-time youthful alcohol offenders and their parents go through an educational program that has a 68 percent success rate for

at least the following 12 months. A shoplifting diversion program for juveniles has a 95 percent success rate. Of those in a diversion program for a property-damage offense, none has repeated. The Sentence to Serve program allows juveniles and adults to do such community service work as painting city buildings, cleaning roadway ditches or working on county roads.

The outreach to young people in Pope County goes beyond the criminal justice system. The local judge has been instrumental in activating churches and civic organizations to develop programming and support systems for teenagers. The local Rotary club sponsors a mentoring and scholarship program for students who need extra motivation to stay in school, improve their grades and graduate from high school. Schools are offering peer mediation and conflict-resolution training to provide young people with the tools to resolve problems without violence.

One Family/One Judge Program Centralizes System's Response

In Ramsey County, the family court is testing a new approach to dealing with the complicated issues of troubled families. The judges have initiated a program called "One Family — One Judge." The pilot program allows one judge to handle all of the issues of a particular family ranging from domestic violence to dissolution and from children in need of protection to termination of

parental rights. This approach has many benefits, including: consistency of response from the courts; greater efficiencies with one computerized record of all court activity with a particular family; and more convenient scheduling for family members who must make court appearances on several different matters. "One Family — One Judge" provides a better perspective for the judge to deal with systemic family issues. It also provides for conservation of judicial resources by reducing the number of steps involved in addressing the needs of a family. In addition, this approach gives greater flexibility in dealing with a range of problems that are better served with integrated information about a family.

Review of Foster Care and Adoption System Puts Children First

The Supreme Court Task Force on Foster Care and Adoption has reviewed and recommended reforms to improve decisions regarding children in need of protection or services. The recommendations focused on every aspect of the system from the standpoint of six themes: accountability, lack of resources, training of the professional participants, reorganization of court policies and procedures, putting the child's interests first and reducing the adversarial aspects of the system.

Foster Care Pilot Program Aims to Speed Response

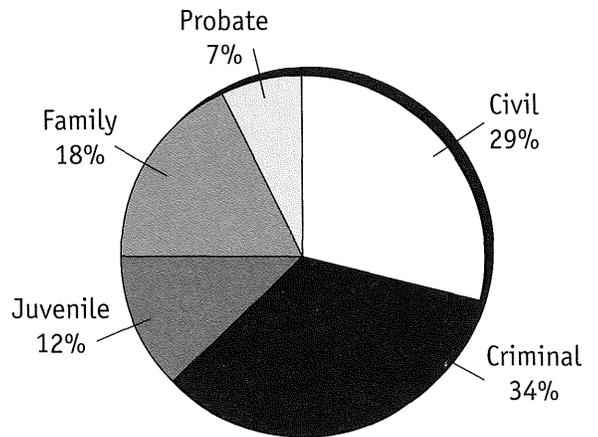
As an adjunct to this effort, Hennepin County judges and other justice system professionals from across disciplines that deal with foster care developed an innovative approach. The goal is to move children out of the foster care system and into permanent placements more quickly. Central to this approach is the assignment of one child to one judge for the duration of that child's case in the court system. The system is asking what is the most effective form of intervention with the expectation that if the parent(s) does not follow court-ordered guidelines for improvement, the Court will take action expeditiously to protect the child's best interests.

The approach has five major goals:

- ▼ Reducing delay.
- ▼ Establishing a working relationship between the field worker and the judge on each case.
- ▼ Providing more judicial oversight to get a resolution to the case and to provide reviews every 60 days on the parents' plans for improvement.
- ▼ Focusing on immediate, temporary placement and providing emergency licensing with other family members.
- ▼ Reducing the backlog of cases in the system.

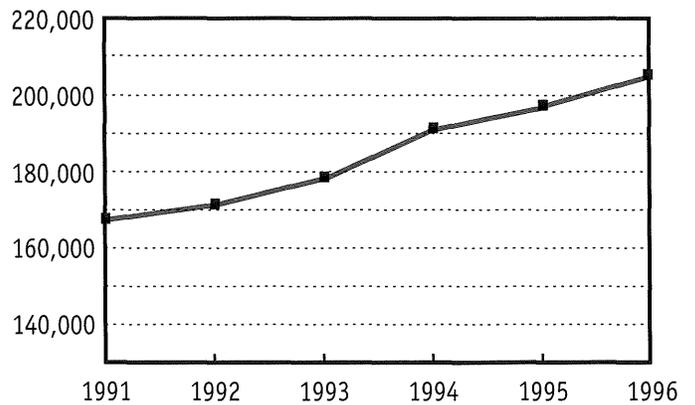
Judicial Workload

Judicial workload is a measure of how much time the judiciary spends on a particular type of case.



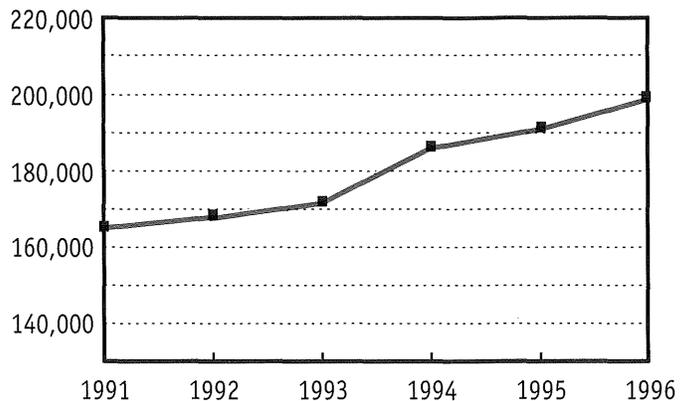
Major Case Filings

The number of major case filings increased 22 percent since 1991.



Major Case Dispositions

Despite the shortage of financial and human resources, judges continue to dispose of more cases each year.



Family Law ADR Offers Options for Some Divorcing Couples

One of the ways in which the court system is making efforts to reduce the adversarial aspects of divorce is through the use of alternative methods of dispute resolution. Effective July 1, 1997, rules for alternative dispute resolution apply to family law matters. If there are no allegations of domestic violence, trial court judges now ask divorcing couples to consider using any of the many different types of ADR methods to resolve such issues as visitation and property settlements. Participating couples choose from a roster of qualified neutrals who must have achieved court-approved standards of training and experience. In addition, all family law neutrals are required to take six hours of certified domestic violence education.

Connection Between Visitation and Child Support Studied

At the request of the Minnesota Legislature, the Minnesota Supreme Court created the Visitation and Child Support Enforcement Task Force to pursue four areas of study including the extent to which (1) custodial parents deny noncustodial parents court-ordered visitation and other parental rights; (2) non-custodial parents fail to exercise their court-ordered visitation; (3) lack of access to the court prevents timely resolution of visitation matters; and (4) visitation has an impact on noncustodial parents' compliance with court-ordered child support. The

study includes recommendations on the methods for resolving visitation matters in an efficient, nonadversarial setting that is accessible to parties at the lowest possible cost. It also suggests statutory changes to encourage compliance with court-ordered visitations.

Drug Court Gets Users into Treatment, Working and Paying Child Support

It is a widely accepted fact that drug use drives up the crime rate and affects law-abiding citizens in terms of the quality of life in their neighborhoods, communities and inner cities. Many of the property crimes, drug offenses, prostitution and other neighborhood liveability offenses result from the actions of individuals who have chemical dependency problems. With that in mind, the Hennepin County bench has established a drug court to get at the core problem.

The drug court is an essential step toward dealing with neighborhood liveability issues. It also is proving to be a wise use of scarce justice system resources. Judges give defendants the opportunity for rehabilitation, but also hold defendants accountable if they do not cooperate with the terms of their probation. Defendants also must be employed and pay child support, if appropriate, to be in the program.

The court is designed to move cases through the system more quickly and to hasten intervention and drug treatment for offenders. While circumstances vary by case, prior to the establishment of the drug court three to nine

months might elapse from the time of arrest for drug possession to the time the case got through the courts. It was not until the end of the court process that defendants were eligible for treatment. In the meantime, offenders were likely to continue using drugs — and committing other crimes to support their habit. Now that the drug court is operational, offenders who are eligible for court-ordered treatment can be in treatment within a week of their arrest.

Courts Involve Families, Employers in Community Collaboration on DWIs

In Dakota County and the suburban ring south of the metro area judges have collaborated with other justice system representatives to establish the Safe Streets program. When a person is convicted of a DWI this program involves family, friends and employers and makes them part of the offender's system of accountability. The offender's support system gets training and assistance in how not to enable drunk driving. The offender is held to well-articulated standards of behavior to prevent relapses. The program has resulted in a recidivism rate of less than 5 percent.

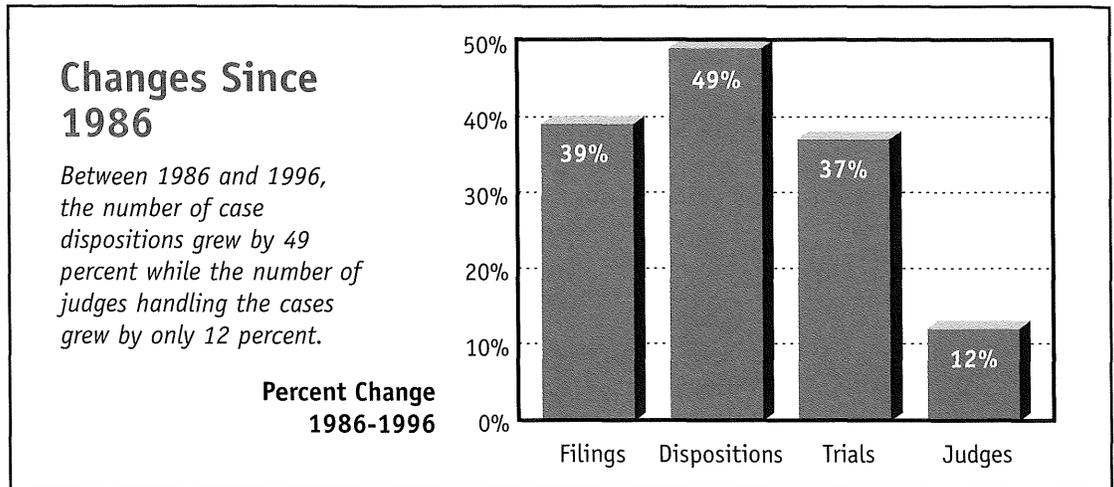
Restorative Justice Builds Sense of Community and Accountability

In its ongoing effort to adopt new and effective ways to resolve conflict, especially for repeat offenders, Minnesota trial court judges are working with communities to implement restorative justice methods. On the Mille Lacs Reservation

in the Seventh Judicial District, judges and court staff have been working with the Department of Corrections and with community members on a concept that gives citizens a role in determining the fate of someone who has committed a crime. Called a sentencing circle, a group of interested community members participate in a process resulting in a sentence that must be approved by the trial court judge. This is the first court in the United States to use sentencing circles. The circles often bring the offender and the victim together in the same circle after each has met with a support circle. At the sentencing circle interested persons express their feelings about the offense and determine together what would make the victim and community whole. Often members of the circle hold the offender accountable and they follow up with the offender to ensure that the sentence is abided by. Each circle stays intact until all of the parties involved are satisfied with the outcome. The use of sentencing circles has been so well received that the concept now is expanding to become a county-wide option in Mille Lacs County. Other communities around the state are investigating how restorative justice methods might be adapted to their needs.

Court Personnel Make Strides in Marathon to Racial Fairness

The creation of Racial Fairness Implementation Committees around the state



is an outgrowth of the work of the original Minnesota Supreme Court Task Force on Racial Bias in the Judicial System. Under the auspices of the Implementation Committee on Multicultural Diversity and Racial Fairness chaired by Justice Alan C. Page, these district committees in 1996 addressed issues specific to their communities. Examples include:

- ▼ In the First Judicial District (the seven counties south of the Twin Cities metro) the committee collaborated with other agencies to present seminars to court personnel on issues faced by migrant workers in LeSueur County. The district also is planning a continuing legal education seminar on Latino family issues.
- ▼ The Second Judicial District (Ramsey) is taking action to increase the diversity of its workforce.
- ▼ The Fourth Judicial District is developing a diversity plan for the court system.
- ▼ The Ninth Judicial District (the 17 counties in northwestern Minnesota) is

planning three initiatives (1) a forum for judges and court personnel on issues regarding out-of-home placement of Native American children; (2) training for judges and court personnel on Hispanic-Latino-Chicano cultures; and (3) increasing communication with the Hmong community within the district.

- ▼ The Tenth Judicial District (the eight counties north of the Twin Cities metro) has finalized its process for receiving and processing complaints of bias involving the court system.

Court Interpreter Program Certifies 20 Interpreters

One of the key recommendations of the Minnesota Supreme Court Task Force on Racial Bias in the Judicial System was to establish a court interpreter training and certification program. The program provides training in interpretive techniques, legal terminology and process. It also administers competency-based testing, and requires

adherence to a professional code of conduct and ethics. The training program was created and is overseen by the Court Interpreter Advisory Committee chaired by Justice Paul H. Anderson. The committee has developed a code of professional responsibility; created rules on certification; and amended court rules regarding interpreters. The program has offered orientation sessions attended by more than 400 interpreters throughout Minnesota. The committee developed advanced skills training for interpreters of Spanish, Russian and Vietnamese in simultaneous, consecutive and sight translation. Proficiency exams for these language interpreters also have been produced and administered. In addition, the committee has sponsored training of judges, court administrators and lawyers throughout the state. The program continues to provide orientation sessions, advanced skills training and certification exams throughout the year. The goal is to increase the pool of qualified court interpreters throughout Minnesota.

Courts Use a Cross-Disciplinary Approach to Strategic Planning

The state court system could need a substantially larger number of new judges by the year 2005 if significant changes are not made in the way the justice system does business. The judiciary believes there is a better way for the system to function. To identify such ways, the courts convened a group of individuals inside and outside the system to undertake a comprehensive review of the delivery of services and to make recommendations for the future. The group came to the consensus that Minnesota's state court system needs:

- ▼ To be more customer focused and connected to the community, more responsive to community needs;
- ▼ To be more focused on a systems approach to the delivery of services;
- ▼ To be more integrated with other social service agencies.
- ▼ To devote more time and existing resources to families, children and crime.

Judges and court personnel want a cutting-edge court system that is providing public service the way that the public expects it. There are no simple solutions — no sound-bite public policy. The courts are making a serious commitment. The plan is based on a consensus arrived at by a significant number of people across disciplines in the justice system. Each judicial district is developing initiatives to implement the strategic plan at the local level.

Penalties Evaluated for Proportionality and Best Use of Resources

The Nonfelony Enforcement Advisory Committee (NEAC) was established in 1993 to recommend necessary changes in Minnesota law to achieve proportionality in penalties and effective prosecution of gross misdemeanors, misdemeanors, and petty misdemeanors. The committee also explored more efficient uses of criminal justice system resources. The committee members are a cross section of the criminal justice community including legislators, judges, crime victim advocates, city and county attorneys, criminal defense attorneys, probation officers, law enforcement and law professors. The committee recommended, and is pursuing, a complete revision of nonfelony penalties and a restructuring of the criminal and traffic codes. The objective is to make those codes more functional and accessible for the entire criminal justice community.

Technology Enhances Management of a Complex System

The statewide court system is developing a technology infrastructure that will enhance the management of this complex, statewide function. The courts are an information-intensive enterprise. The next advances in the technological infrastructure will provide access to information from the desktop, the judges' chambers and the bench. The courts are well on the way to greater efficiencies by collaborating

with other state agencies. Together they are expanding the state computer criminal history files by including targeted misdemeanors, DWIs, juvenile criminal histories and a statewide order for protection (OFP) data base. A pilot program is underway that makes OFPs statewide in police squad cars, law enforcement dispatch units and on the benches of judges throughout Minnesota. The courts also have computer access to court and criminal justice data, i.e., driving records and expanded criminal history data as well as information from law enforcement agencies. The data can be used in the preparation of orders and other court documents.

Court System's Home Page Offers Appellate Opinions and Consumer Information

In 1996, the state court system introduced its home page on the worldwide web at the address www.courts.state.mn.us. The page provides general information about the trial courts, the Minnesota Court of Appeals and the Minnesota Supreme Court. In addition, the opinions of each of the appellate courts are released every week. Court of Appeals opinions are released on the home page every Tuesday at 1 p.m. Supreme Court opinions are released every Thursday at 1 p.m. The annual report also is available on the home page. Educators and interested citizens who work with young people also should watch the page for information and access to law-related educational materials and programs.

Adult Gun Policy Aims at Probation Violators

The Hennepin County bench adopted a policy in 1996 directed at convicted felons who violate probation by possessing or using a gun. The policy presumes that such violations will result in probation revocation and imprisonment. Additionally, it presumes that such offenders will be held without bail until

the probation revocation hearing, which will be held promptly. Finally, it authorizes the judge to hold the revocation hearing before the trial on the new charge. The previous procedure permitted the revocation matter to be delayed until the new charges were resolved by trial or plea, a process that often takes months. The policy is expected to significantly increase criminal sanctions available to

judges and deter dangerous behavior. The policy also is expected to resolve most of these cases in days rather than months. It also may save jail space and reduce the demand for prosecutorial and police resources. By adopting the policy the Hennepin County bench is sending a message to convicted felons that gun possession and use will not be tolerated.

Commitment to Accessibility

Total Quality Management in Three Districts Puts Citizen-Customers First

Total Quality Management (TQM) initiatives adapted from the business community are making citizen interaction with the courts easier and more efficient. Three judicial districts have implemented applicable TQM concepts that have resulted in reorganizing how services are delivered. The First District, which is seven counties south of the metropolitan core; the Fourth District, which is Hennepin County; and the Eighth District, which is the 13 counties in south central Minnesota; have made court-related services more accessible in a variety of ways. The districts' commitment to TQM is providing additional customer-service training for counter personnel, revising court forms for easier use, and reorganizing public areas to provide one-stop service for most transactions.

Service Center Helps Pro Se Litigants

Judges and staff throughout the state court system know that the consumers of court services are used to interacting with businesses that are becoming more customer driven and offering self-service opportunities. That experience drives up citizens' expectations of how the courts should respond to their needs. Also, increasing numbers of people want to represent themselves in the court system. These pro se litigants, as they are called in the courts, need special assistance in preparing their cases because disputes increasingly involve serious and complex issues. The courts have recognized this need and are committed to assisting pro se litigants, to the extent that is appropriate, in being better prepared.

A major statewide initiative is underway to improve services and to develop more useful educational materials for pro

se litigants. One feature of this initiative is the development of user-friendly court-related forms and documents. The state courts are committed to being proactive in meeting the needs of self-represented litigants.

Juror Business Center Reduces Inconvenience to Jurors

As part of its ongoing Total Quality Management initiative, the Fourth Judicial District has opened a juror business center to assist jurors in maintaining contact with their office or home. This separate room is in the jury assembly area of the Hennepin County Government Center. The center is furnished with computer work stations that are equipped with word processing/spreadsheet applications, FAX machines, a printer, scanner, photocopier, modem phone line and several telephones.

Minnesota Supreme Court

Appeals from:

Court of Appeals

Trial court decisions if Supreme Court chooses to bypass the Court of Appeals

Tax Court and Workers' Compensation Court of Appeals

Original Actions:

First-degree murder convictions

Writs of prohibition**, habeas corpus*** and mandamus****

Legislative election contests

Minnesota Court of Appeals

Appeals from:

Administrative agency decisions except Tax Court and Workers' Compensation

All trial court decisions except first-degree murder

Decisions of Commissioner of Economic Security

Original Actions:

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

Minnesota District Courts

Civil actions

Criminal actions

Family

Juvenile

Probate (dealing with wills)

Violations of city ordinances

Appeals from Conciliation Court*

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Conciliation Division

(Civil disputes up to \$7,500)

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

** Writ of prohibition – asks that a governmental body or official be prevented from doing something that might cause harm.

*** Habeas corpus – a complaint alleging that someone has been unlawfully confined and is asking for release.

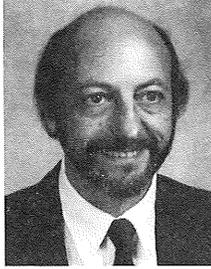
**** Mandamus – asks that a government body or official be prevented from doing something that might cause harm.

Roster of Chief Judges

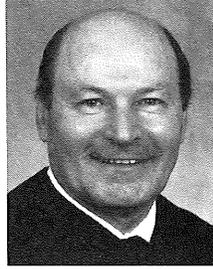
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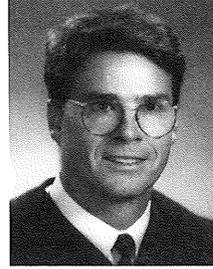
Judge Leslie Metzen
First District



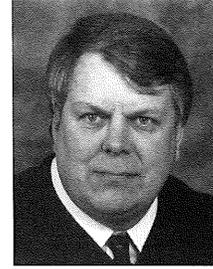
Judge Gordon W. Shumaker
Second District



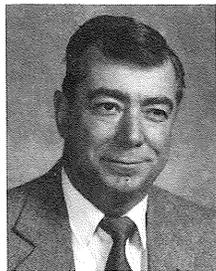
Judge Gerald Wolf
Third District



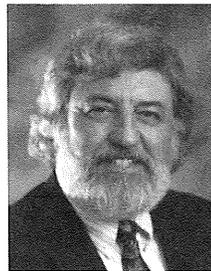
Judge Daniel H. Mabley
Fourth District



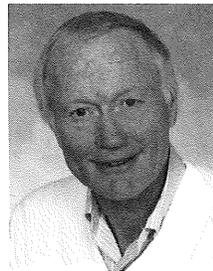
Judge Bruce Gross
Fifth District



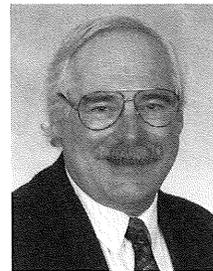
Judge John T. Oswald
Sixth District



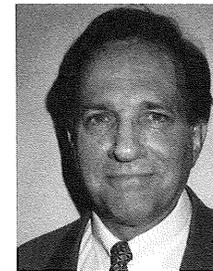
Judge William E. Walker
Seventh District; Chairman,
Conference of Chief Judges



Judge Bruce Christopherson
Eighth District

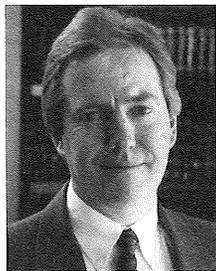


Judge Dennis Murphy
Ninth District

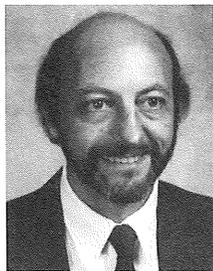


Judge Gary J. Meyer
Tenth District

1996



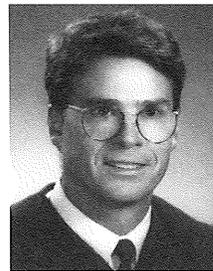
Judge Edward I. Lynch
First District



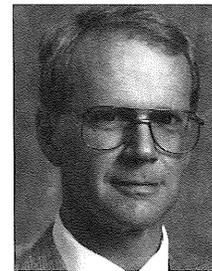
Judge Gordon W. Shumaker
Second District



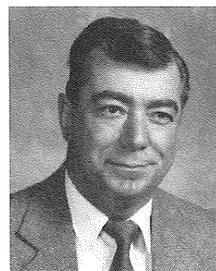
Judge Gerald Wolf
Third District



Judge Daniel H. Mabley
Fourth District



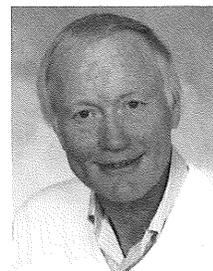
Judge Jeffrey L. Flynn
Fifth District



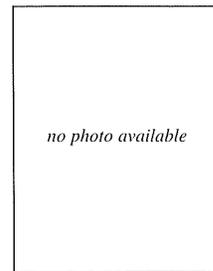
Judge John T. Oswald
Sixth District



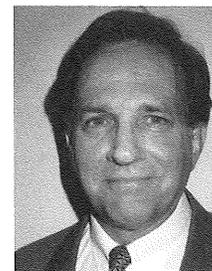
Judge Bernard E. Boland
Seventh District



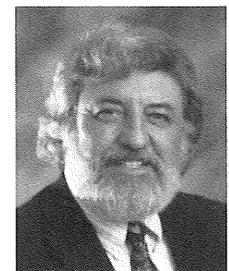
Judge Bruce Christopherson
Eighth District



Judge Peter N. Hemstad
Ninth District



Judge Gary J. Meyer
Tenth District



Judge William E. Walker
Seventh District; Chairman,
Conference of Chief Judges