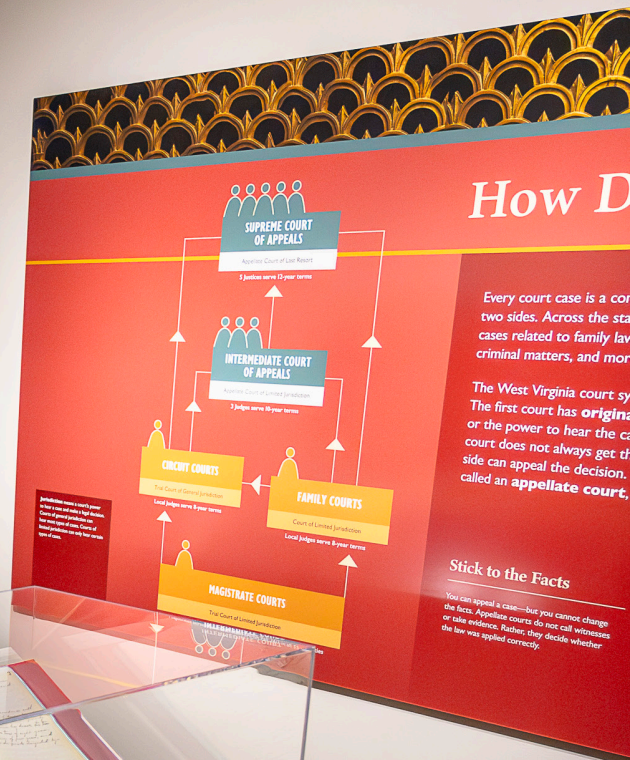


West Virginia Judiciary

2023 Annual Report



West Virginia Judiciary 2023 Annual Report

Chief Justice

Honorable Elizabeth D. "Beth" Walker

Justices

Honorable Tim Armstead

Honorable John A. Hutchison

Honorable William R. "Bill" Wooton

Honorable C. Haley Bunn

Clerk of Court

Edythe Nash Gaiser

Administrative Director

Joseph Armstrong

Produced by the Supreme Court of Appeals of West Virginia Public Information Office

The Public Information Office provides media relations for the judicial system; answers questions from the public; and oversees the West Virginia Judiciary website, social media, emergency communications, and civics education programs. The office consists of a Public Information Officer; Deputy Public Information Officer; and a Multimedia Specialist who is a photographer, videographer, and graphic designer.

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From the Chief

Chief Justice Beth Walker

On behalf of the entire Supreme Court of Appeals of West Virginia, I am pleased to report on the work of the West Virginia Judiciary in 2023. It was a productive year with many notable achievements:

Opening the West Virginia Judicial Learning Center in the West Virginia State Capitol.

Launching a redesign of the West Virginia Judiciary website, www.courtswv.gov.

Surveying stakeholders for the state judiciary's first strategic plan.

Overseeing judicial workload studies for circuit, family and magistrate courts and partnering with the Legislature to determine how to realign judicial circuits and reallocate judicial officers.

Completing work on a statewide electronic magistrate court public records search system that was publicly released in January 2024.



Chief Justice Beth Walker speaks with Girl Scouts who performed a flag ceremony at Buffalo High School in Buffalo, WV, for LAWS (Legal Advancement for West Virginia Students) on October 17.

Civics education and public outreach have been a high priority for the Supreme Court of Appeals of West Virginia since 2018, supporting our efforts to restore public trust and confidence in the integrity of the judicial branch following a difficult period in our court's history. We know that public confidence must never be taken for granted and how crucial it is for all West Virginians to understand how their courts operate.

In 2023, justices, judges and magistrates across the state made frequent personal visits to schools and talked to civic groups. I also continued to shed a light on the excellent work of state courts as a co-host of the podcast called "Lady Justice: Women of the Court" with my friend Arkansas Supreme Court Justice Rhonda Wood.

Both the Supreme Court and the Intermediate Court of Appeals (ICA) heard oral arguments in high schools and colleges around the state and hosted students of all ages in our courtrooms in Charleston.

The ICA celebrated its first full year of operating on July 1, 2023. The ICA initiated its own civics education program

called "ICA On Campus," in which the court heard an argument docket at Concord University on September 21.

In 2023, there were 241,307 new cases filed in lower courts, 577 new filings in the Intermediate Court of Appeals, and 758 new filings in the Supreme Court of Appeals.



As Chief Justice, I knew we could do more to de-mystify our branch and engage the hundreds of students and other visitors to the West Virginia State Capitol each year.

I'm so proud of the new West Virginia Judicial Learning Center, which opened in December 2023 and contains interactive displays, hands-on activities, and court artifacts from West Virginia's unified court system. The learning center teaches visitors of all ages about the rule of law, how courts work, West Virginia history, and careers in the judiciary.

Our branch of government employs 1,500 people who serve our citizens in all 55 counties. We worked together in 2023 to improve and maintain a court system that West Virginians have confidence in and are proud of. It is my honor to present this report highlighting our work.



Chief Justice Beth Walker shows guests around the West Virginia Judicial Learning Center during the ribbon-cutting celebration on December 7.



Chief Justice Beth Walker addresses the Family Court Judges' Education Conference at the Embassy Suites on October 19 in Charleston, WV.



Chief Justice Beth Walker works with fifth grade students at Sissonville Middle School during the West Virginia Girls Rise Up event on September 25.



Chief Justice Beth Walker speaks with students after the Supreme Court heard arguments at West Virginia University College of Law on March 21.



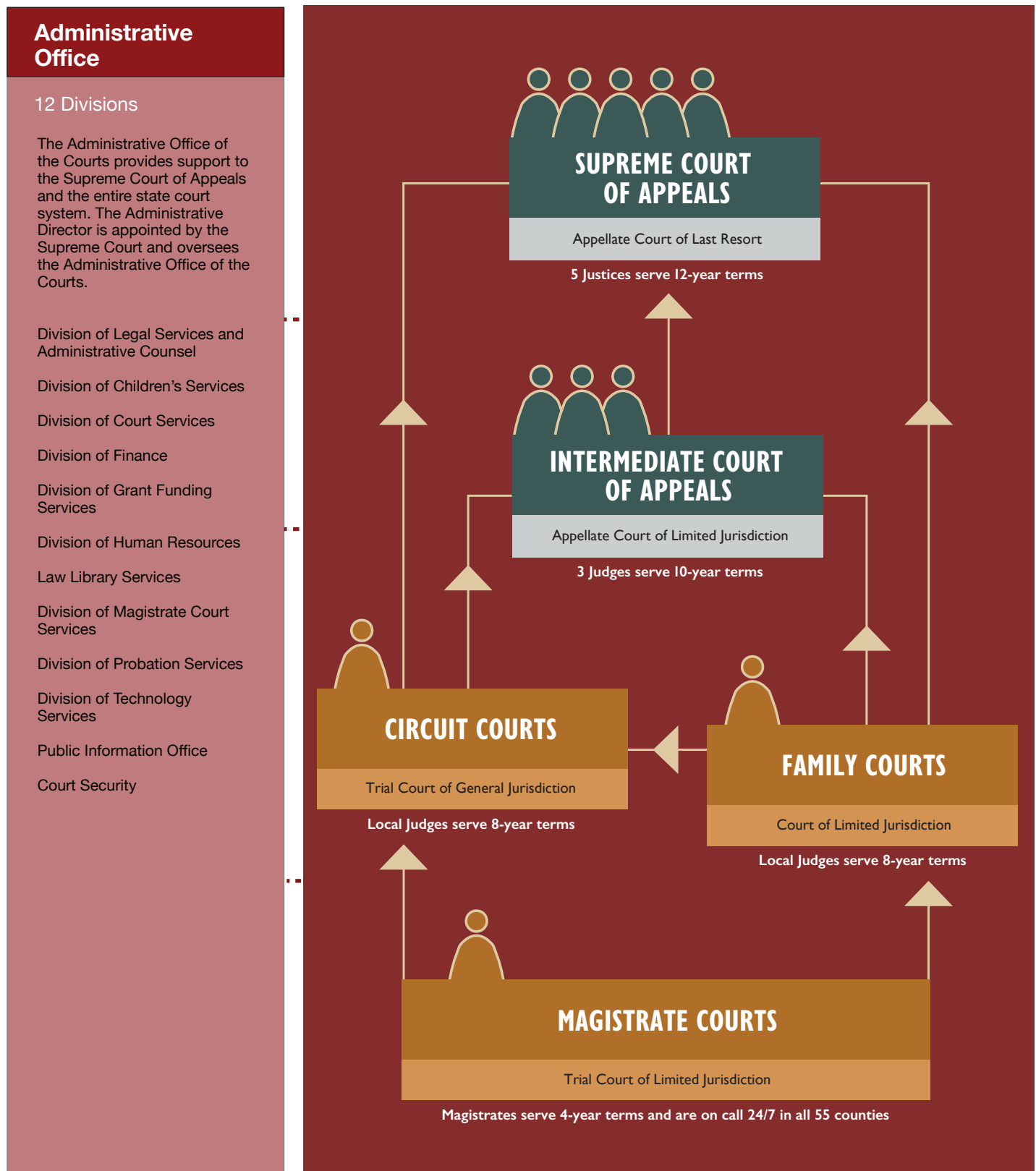
Chief Justice Beth Walker presents "Embracing Well-Being in Law" to judges and lawyers who work for the judiciary as part of their Continuing Legal Education (CLE) on October 13.



On September 25, Chief Justice Beth Walker and Justice Haley Bunn spoke to fifth grade students at Sissonville Middle School for the Girls Rise Up program.

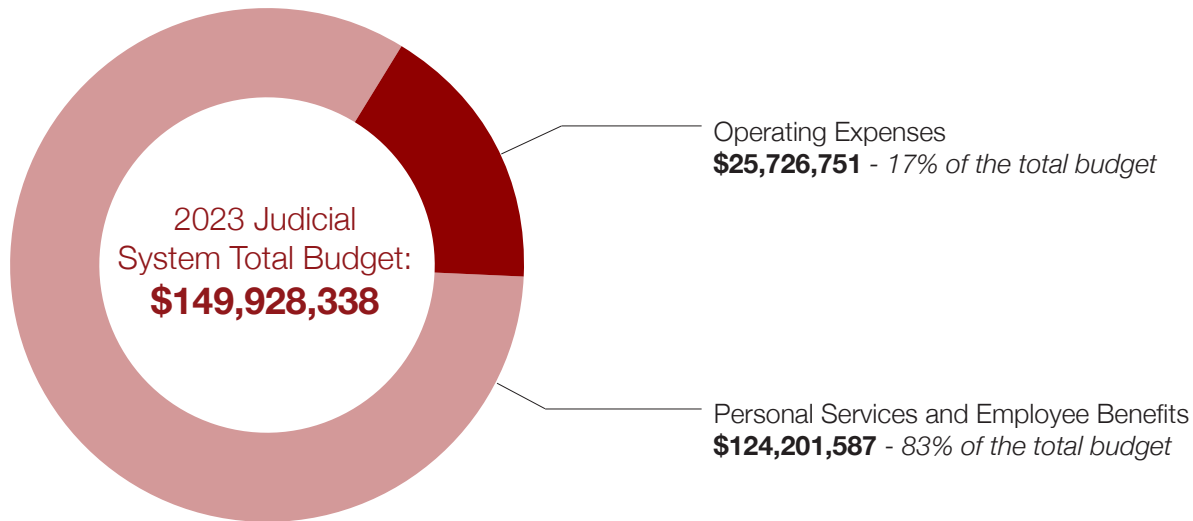
West Virginia Judicial System

Organizational Chart



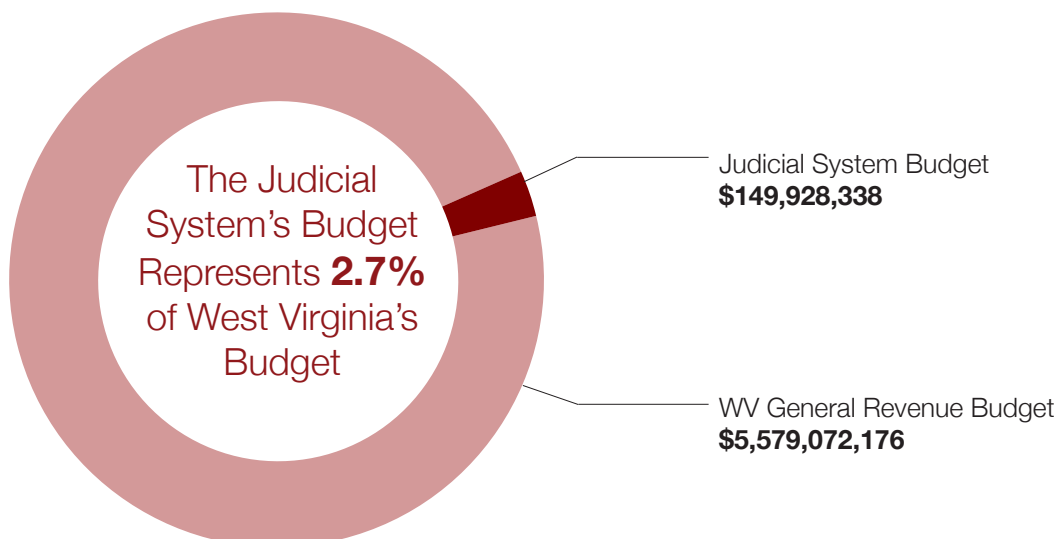
Judicial System Budget

Fiscal Year 2023
July 1, 2022 - June 30, 2023



State of West Virginia Budget

Fiscal Year 2023
July 1, 2022 - June 30, 2023



2023 Year in Review

January

Justices Attend Legislative Meetings

All five Justices of the Supreme Court of Appeals of West Virginia attended the January 11 State of the State address by Governor Jim Justice. Chief Justice Beth Walker presented the judicial system budget request to the House Finance Committee on January 16 and made a similar presentation to the Senate Finance Committee on February 6. ▼



WV Legislative Photography,
Photo by Will Price



Intermediate Court Hears First Remote Argument

The Intermediate Court of Appeals of West Virginia (ICA) held its first remote argument docket on January 11, which was also the ICA's first day of the 2023 Spring Term of Court. Litigants appeared from the Raleigh County Courthouse in one of five ICA satellite courtrooms, while the ICA judges listened from their main courtroom in Charleston.

On March 1, the ICA heard arguments in a case in which attorneys appeared from two different satellite courtrooms during the same argument. One attorney appeared from the Lewis County satellite courtroom, while another attorney appeared from the Wetzel County satellite courtroom. The three ICA judges participated from Charleston. ▼



February

Valentine's Day

Valentine's Day is a popular day for weddings and adoptions in West Virginia. On February 14, Thirteenth Judicial Circuit (Kanawha County) Judge Maryclaire Akers was among those who held adoption proceedings, while Twenty-Fifth Judicial Circuit (Boone and Lincoln Counties) Judge Stacy L. Nowicki-Eldridge was among those who officiated weddings. ▼



March

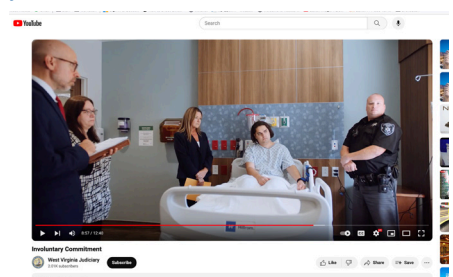
Supreme Court Holds Argument Dockets for Students

The Supreme Court heard arguments two days in a row at the West Virginia University College of Law's Lugar Courtroom. Law students were invited to observe on March 21. The next day, the Supreme Court invited high school students from Monongalia and Preston Counties to attend as part of the Supreme Court's LAWS (Legal Advancement for West Virginia Students) program. Area attorneys visited the high schools in advance to help students study the court system and the cases they would hear argued. After the arguments, students talked with the attorneys who argued the cases. Students from Morgantown High School, Clay-Battelle High School, University High School, and Preston County High School attended. ▼



New Videos Explain Involuntary Commitment

On March 27, the Supreme Court of Appeals of West Virginia released two new videos explaining the civil involuntary commitment process. The videos are available on the West Virginia Judiciary YouTube channel. The extended version is available at <https://youtu.be/FKWcCKixhqs>; a shorter version is available at <https://youtu.be/D9Ti7OUohNU>. ▼



Supreme Court Judges Baker Cup Competition

On March 28, the Supreme Court judged the West Virginia University College of Law Baker Cup Moot Court appellate advocacy competition in the Supreme Court Courtroom in Charleston. The annual competition is between second-year law students who write an appellate brief and present oral arguments on both sides of an issue. The two finalists argue before the Supreme Court. The finalists in 2023 were Anna J. Williams, 23, of Bluefield and Augustus M. Graff, 27, of Ghent. Williams won. ▼



April

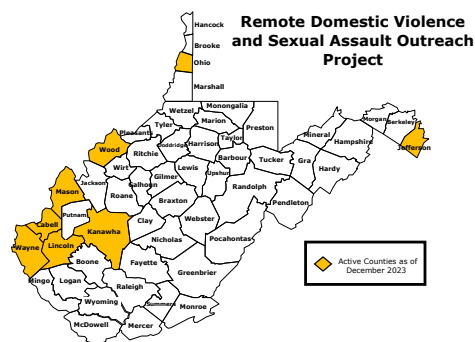
New Family Treatment Courts Open in Raleigh, Putnam Counties

Two new family treatment courts opened in Raleigh and Putnam Counties in April, bringing the number of the courts in West Virginia to 13. The Raleigh County Family Treatment Court opened on April 6 and the Putnam County Family Treatment Court opened on April 11. To learn more about family treatment courts see page 46. ►



Remote Victim Outreach Project Expands

The Remote Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Outreach Project expanded to Lincoln, Mason, and Wayne Counties in April and to Wood County in September. It is also active in Cabell, Jefferson, Kanawha, and Ohio Counties. The program allows victims to appear in court remotely, so they do not have to be in the same room with the people they are accusing of committing violence against them. Previously, victims of domestic violence and sexual assault had to go in person to a magistrate court to seek domestic violence protective orders or personal safety orders, and they had to attend follow-up hearings in person. In the active counties, victims can still go to court, but they have the option of participating remotely from a designated location. ►



May

Law Day Contest Awards

The West Virginia State Bar Women in the Profession Committee organized a Law Day contest for West Virginia students and gave prizes in several categories. Supreme Court Chief Justice Beth Walker and Justice Haley Bunn (below) spoke virtually with the students who participated. ▼



Efforts to Improve Abuse and Neglect Case Processing

On May 12, Fourteenth Judicial Circuit (Fayette County) Judge Thomas H. Ewing held a meeting in his courtroom with about 30 people involved in the child abuse and neglect court process in that community. Judges in other circuits have held similar meetings. "It's important we have these types of things, so we can discuss the issues a little more openly with people in a less adversarial situation," Judge Ewing said. "My goal was for it to be an information-sharing process that involved everybody, so that we could address any deficiencies." ▼



June

West Virginians Attend All Rise (Formerly NADCP) Conference

Thirty-eight West Virginians spent the last week of June at the All Rise annual conference in Houston. About 7,000 people attended. All Rise is the new name of the National Association of Drug Court Professionals. Chair Karen Freeman-Wilson explained the name change in an essay: "All rise. We hear those words every day in treatment courts. I know many of you share an overwhelming feeling of pride in what it conveys about our work. Just as our field continues to evolve, so too must NADCP." The new name, she said, better captures the organization's work. ▼



INTERMEDIATE COURT OF APPEALS CELEBRATES FIRST ANNIVERSARY

The Intermediate Court of Appeals of West Virginia (ICA) celebrated its first anniversary on July 1, 2023. In its first full year, the ICA received more than 670 appeals and issued 226 decisions, including 17 signed opinions. About 33 percent of the cases were workers' compensation appeals, 29 percent were civil appeals, 22 percent were family court appeals, and 16 percent were administrative appeals. The three ICA judges said their family law decisions are bringing uniformity and predictability to the family law legal system. In its first year of operation, the ICA heard 34 oral arguments, including several that used the ICA's satellite courtrooms. ▼



July

FAMILY TREATMENT COURT COMMITTEE MEETS

The Family Treatment Court State Advisory Committee met on July 19. Alexis Balkey with the Center for Children and Family Futures made a presentation. Keith Towery with the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention also attended as part of a site visit. ▼



Putnam Juvenile Court Programs Achieve 100 Percent Graduation Rate

Putnam County juvenile court programs had a 100 percent graduation rate during the 2022-2023 school year. Twenty-Ninth Judicial Circuit (Putnam County) Judge Phillip Stowers announced on July 27. Seventy-five high school students who were under court supervision graduated with a full diploma; none obtained a high school equivalency degree. ▼



August

Raleigh County Veterans Treatment Court Graduation

Tenth Judicial Circuit (Raleigh County) Judge Andrew Dimlich and Chief Raleigh County Adult Probation Officer Chris Houck hosted a graduation for two participants from the Raleigh County Veterans Treatment Court in Beckley on August 24. ►



September

Constitutional Scholar Speaks at University of Charleston

Constitutional scholar Jeffrey S. Sutton, Chief Judge of the United States Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit, spoke at the University of Charleston on September 18 in recognition of Constitution Day. (The U.S. Constitution was signed on September 17, 1787.) Supreme Court Chief Justice Beth Walker introduced Chief Judge Sutton, who is an author and an adjunct professor at The Ohio State University College of Law, where he teaches seminars on State Constitutional Law, the United States Supreme Court, and Appellate Advocacy. He also teaches a class on State Constitutional Law at Harvard Law School. ▼



Intermediate Court of Appeals Hears Arguments at Concord University

The Intermediate Court of Appeals of West Virginia (ICA) held the first ICA On Campus, a new judicial education initiative, at Concord University's Alexander Fine Arts Center on September 21. The ICA invited Concord students to attend. After each case was heard, the ICA's three judges stepped aside so students and the public could have a short question-and-answer session with the attorneys about the cases. After the docket was complete, the judges had an informal lunch with students and talked to them about the judiciary. ▼



Girls Rise Up

On September 25, U.S. Senator Shelley Moore Capito invited Chief Justice Beth Walker and Justice Haley Bunn to speak to fifth grade students at Sissonville Middle School for the senator's West Virginia Girls Rise Up program. The program's goal is to instill confidence and empower girls to be strong and kind leaders. Senator Capito has held more than 20 such events throughout the state and said she tries to bring a variety of female leaders with her to address the variety of goals the girls might have for their futures. ►



Supreme Court Hears Argument Docket at Marshall University

On September 13, the Supreme Court held an argument docket at Marshall University's Joan C. Edwards Performing Arts Center. The Supreme Court has a tradition of visiting Marshall every few years in mid-September in honor of the anniversary of the signing of the U.S. Constitution on September 17, 1787. Marshall University is named for former U.S. Supreme Court Chief Justice John Marshall, who served from 1801 to 1835 and was the longest serving Chief Justice in United States history. ▼



SUPREME COURT HOLDS ARGUMENT DOCKET IN PUTNAM COUNTY

On October 17, the Supreme Court held an argument docket in front of 330 Putnam County high school students as part of the Legal Advancement for West Virginia Students (LAWS) education program. Students from Buffalo, Hurricane, Poca, and Winfield High Schools each heard two cases in the Buffalo High School auditorium. Local attorneys, Twenty-Ninth Judicial Circuit (Putnam County) Judge Phillip Stowers, and employees of Putnam County Schools helped the students learn about the cases and the court system in advance. Chief Justice Beth Walker talked with Girl Scouts from Buffalo Troop 10207 prior to oral arguments. The scouts led a flag ceremony and the Pledge of Allegiance before arguments began. ▼



November

Judge Holds Meeting to Fight Human Trafficking

Third Judicial Circuit (Doddridge, Pleasants, and Ritchie Counties) Judge Timothy Sweeney held a community forum on November 7 about ways to stop human trafficking. Human traffickers use force, fraud, or coercion to make victims engage in commercial sex acts or provide labor against their will. "There is a lack of community awareness of these activities and reporting mechanisms, which is why the initiative is so vital," said Judge Sweeney. He hopes the forum will help the public learn how to report suspicious behavior. ▼



CIP ENCOURAGES LAW STUDENTS TO PRACTICE ABUSE AND NEGLECT LAW

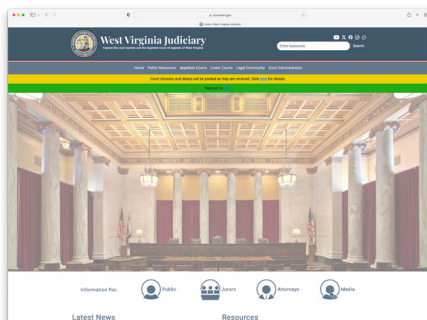
More than 60 students, attorneys, and court-appointed special advocates met at the West Virginia University College of Law in Morgantown on November 14 to discuss practicing law as an abuse and neglect attorney. Panelists included Judge Paul Gwaltney of the Seventeenth Judicial Circuit (Monongalia County), attorney Teresa Lyons, and Marion County Assistant Prosecuting Attorneys Jeni Matko and Ashley Hunt. The Supreme Court of Appeals' Court Improvement Board sponsored the event. ▼



December

West Virginia Judiciary Gets New Website

On December 4, the Supreme Court launched a new www.courtswv.gov website. The site is designed to enhance the public's ability to find information about the state court system and its work. A new "Latest News" feature on the homepage includes information about recent events and important website features. There are eight new resource icons with links to the most frequently visited pages and more thorough search functions on reformatted "Opinion" pages for the appellate courts. Information is now organized by user, as well as by topic. ▼



Supreme Court Opens Judicial Learning Center

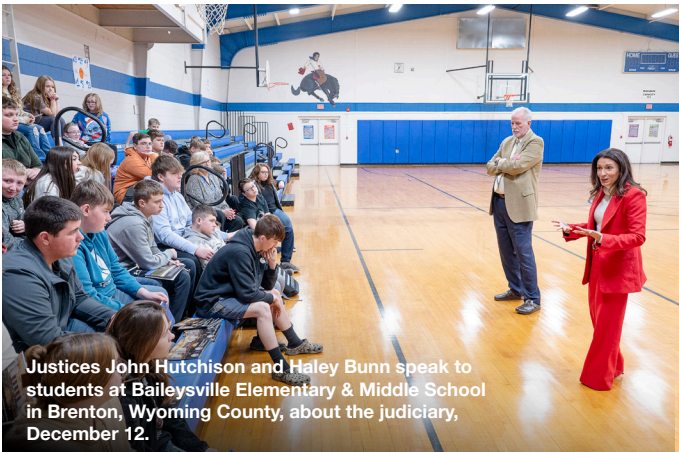
On December 7, the Supreme Court held a grand opening ceremony for the new West Virginia Judicial Learning Center on the third floor of the West Virginia State Capitol's East Wing. The center has informative wall panels and interactive touch screen exhibits that explain basic legal concepts. There is information about careers in the courts, landmark West Virginia cases, and the history and structure of West Virginia courts. For more information on the Judicial Learning Center see page 18. ▼



Civics Education

West Virginia judicial officers are dedicated to civics education because it is a critical element of maintaining public trust and confidence in the court system. Many visit schools to talk about their jobs and the importance of the rule of law. Justices, judges, and magistrates around the state also host student groups who visit their courts for tours and mock trials.

Appellate Courts



Justices John Hutchison and Haley Bunn speak to students at Baileysville Elementary & Middle School in Brenton, Wyoming County, about the judiciary, December 12.



Chief Justice Beth Walker speaks with Girl Scouts before LAWS in Monongalia County on March 22.



Justice Hutchison speaks with students during lunch at Buffalo High School during LAWS on October 17.



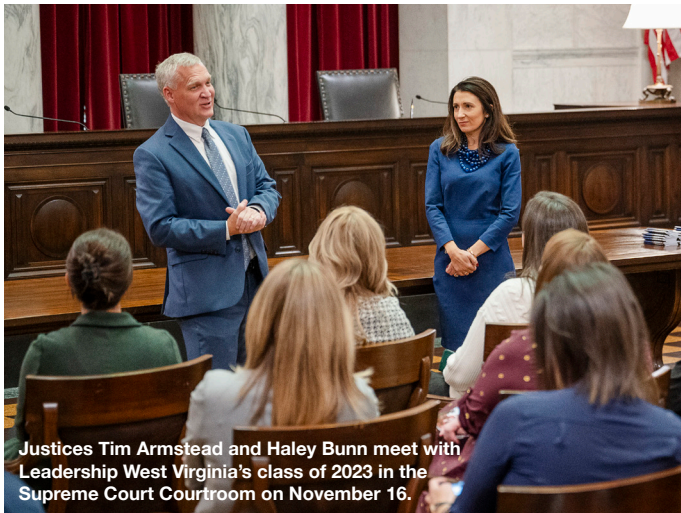
Justice William R. "Bill" Wooton visits Pocahontas County High School in Dunmore, WV, on April 5, to speak with juniors and seniors about the West Virginia court system.



About 40 fourth and fifth graders from St. Francis de Sales School in Beckley visit the Supreme Court on April 18 to watch an oral argument followed by a question-and-answer session with all five justices.



On September 25, Chief Justice Beth Walker and Justice Haley Bunn (pictured here) speak to fifth grade students at Sissonville Middle School.



Justices Tim Armstead and Haley Bunn meet with Leadership West Virginia's class of 2023 in the Supreme Court Courtroom on November 16.



Justice John Hutchison meets with fourth and fifth graders from St. Francis de Sales School on April 18.



The Supreme Court of Appeals of West Virginia heard arguments at West Virginia University College of Law on March 21. Five cases were on the docket as law students watched.



WV Legislative Photography, Photos by Perry Bennett

The Intermediate Court of Appeals of West Virginia (ICA) launched ICA On Campus, a new judicial education initiative, on September 21 at Concord University's Alexander Fine Arts Center. The ICA plans to hold an ICA On Campus program at a college campus somewhere in West Virginia twice a year, once during each term of court. After each case was heard, the ICA's three judges stepped aside so students and the public could have a short question-and-answer session with the attorneys about the cases. After the docket was complete, the judges had an informal lunch with students and talked to them about the judiciary. ▲



Justice Haley Bunn visits Mullens Middle School in Wyoming County on February 3 to participate in its career fair and speak to students about West Virginia's court system.



Justices John Hutchison and Haley Bunn visit Keyser Middle School in Mineral County on January 24 to speak to eighth grade students about the court system.

County Courts



Thirteenth Judicial Circuit (Kanawha County) Judge Louis H. “Duke” Bloom hosted about 50 third grade students from Overbook Elementary School in his courtroom on February 15. The students participated in a mock trial of the Big Bad Wolf. In addition to the mock trial, prosecutors, public defenders, and probation officers talked about their jobs. ▲



Approximately 85 fifth grade students from Brookhaven Elementary School in Morgantown, WV, participated in mock trials titled the *Village of Sheepfold v. Josie/Joey Wolfcryer* on May 19. The script was developed by the American Bar Association and was modified for the number of students. Seventeenth Judicial Circuit (Monongalia County) Chief Judge Perri Jo DeChristopher and Judge Cindy Scott hosted the students in their respective courtrooms for the mock trials. ▲

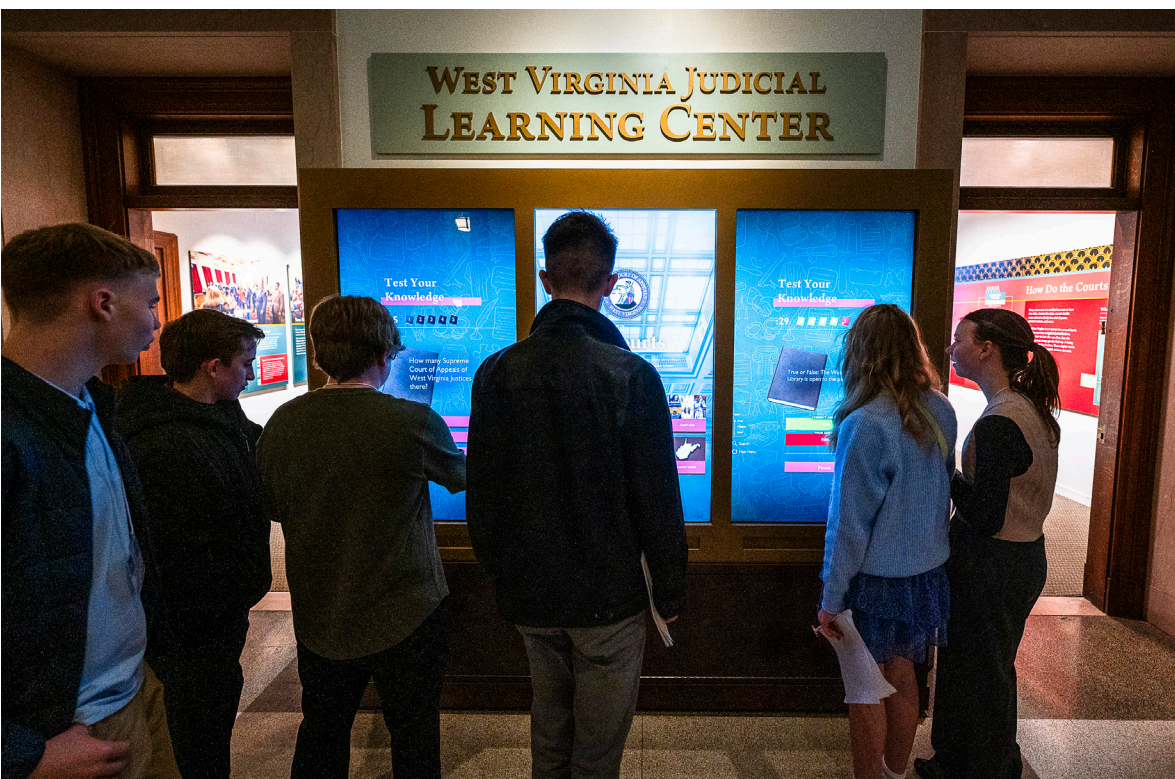
West Virginia Judicial Learning Center

The West Virginia Judicial Learning Center opened in December 2023 and contains interactive displays, hands-on activities, and court artifacts from West Virginia's unified court system. The learning center teaches visitors of all ages about the rule of law, how courts work, and West Virginia court history.

Visitors can try to balance the scales of justice using wooden blocks representing elements such as evidence and witness testimony. Wall panels highlight the structure of the state court system, notable historic events, and what skills are needed to work in the judiciary. Supreme Court decisions regarding school issues are highlighted in lockers that open to reveal the holdings, and students can create their own embossed souvenir of their visit using a seal.



Justice Haley Bunn with a group of homeschooled students.



Innovative digital displays use limited space to great effect. Three large touch screens in the hallway at the entrance of the learning center allow guests to view information about courts, courthouses, and judicial officials. Visitors can also quiz their court knowledge. Inside the learning center, one set of touch screens allows visitors to follow different types of cases through the court system guided by graphics custom-designed for West Virginia. In the second room, another set of screens in the "You Be the Judge" exhibit presents short snippets of audio witness testimony and an opportunity for guests to decide case outcomes (and see how their decisions compare to prior visitors).



Grand opening and ribbon-cutting ceremony on December 7.

West Virginia Judicial Learning Center

A grant from The Greater Kanawha Valley Foundation led to the commission of public art for the space by two local artists. “Justice” by Blake Wheeler features court images familiar to West Virginians. “The Age of Laws” by Michael Teel is a rendering of the foundations of the rule of law.



Judicial Learning Center Timeline

Transforming the space



April 27, 2021



January 17, 2023



October 18, 2023



December 6, 2023

April 27, 2022
Kick off of planning phase with concept meetings and walk through of the space across from the Supreme Court Courtroom.



October 16, 2023
Construction phase begins



November 8, 2023
Soft opening



December 7, 2023
Grand opening and ribbon cutting



Herbert Hoover High School Shop Teacher Tim Meyer and his students built and installed radiator covers for the West Virginia Judicial Learning Center. The covers were built specifically for the rooms and stained to match the historic wood trim in the West Virginia State Capitol. The school previously won the bid to produce the benches, podiums, and tabletops for the Intermediate Court of Appeals (ICA) courtrooms as well as the West Virginia Board of Education meeting room table. Meyer has been teaching shop at Herbert Hoover for about 25 years. After a 2016 flood destroyed the school, his shop became six portable classrooms combined to make one large space. It was the biggest room on the “campus” of Herbert Hoover, a collection of portables next to Elkview Middle School, until the new school opened in August 2023.

The center is open to the public any time the West Virginia State Capitol is open. For more information, contact WVJLC@courtsww.gov.

Scan the QR code to visit the website



Courthouse Facilities Improvement Authority

The West Virginia Legislature created the Courthouse Facilities Improvement Authority (WVCFIA) in 2001 to assist county governments with funding to modify existing courthouse facilities and to construct new courthouse structures. According to W. Va. Code § 29-26-1, the WVCFIA consists of 12 voting members and eight advisory members. Hancock County Assessor Joseph M. Alongi was chair of the board in 2023.

In 2003, the West Virginia Legislature passed additional laws and legislative rules to fund the grants. The grants are funded by fees collected in county courthouse offices, not tax dollars. Each year, the WVCFIA solicits grant applications from all counties. The maximum support provided to each county is \$100,000 annually. The grants require a 20 percent match from county funds.

For further information on the WVCFIA, contact Executive Director Shelly L. Murray at 304-558-5435 or Shelly.Murray@wvcfia.com or visit the website at www.cfia.wv.gov.



Courthouse Facilities Grant Awards:

County	Improvement	Award Amount
Boone	Replace doors and add Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) opening device.	\$17,224
Brooke	Interior Improvement - Repair flooring, remodel two bathrooms & shades.	\$98,800
Calhoun	Repair steps on side entrance and sidewalks.	\$49,600
Fayette	Exterior Improvements: Mortar brick and reinstall cap.	\$36,800
Gilmer	Replace 39 windows and six exterior doors of old jail.	\$100,000
Grant	Accessibility - Renovate restrooms on first and second floors.	\$80,000
Greenbrier	Phase Two of sprinkler project for first and second floors.	\$100,000
Hardy	Replace roof on courthouse annex.	\$18,200
Harrison	Replace two elevators.	\$100,000
Jackson	Phase Four of HVAC replacement.	\$100,000
Kanawha	Repair gutters and downspouts.	\$75,920
Lewis	Replace roof on main courthouse.	\$100,000
Logan	Replace roof on main courthouse.	\$100,000
Marion	Repair stained-glass pieces and ceiling areas that are falling.	\$100,000
Mason	Install new HVAC and filtration system. Gas line work.	\$100,000
McDowell	Phase Three replacing and repairing windows.	\$100,000
Mercer	Restore women's restroom to make ADA compliant.	\$67,760
Mineral	Restore windows on front and side.	\$64,000
Mingo	Phase Two installing fire suppression system.	\$100,000
Monroe	Interior Improvement - Repair floor, ceiling tile, lights of a building.	\$99,795
Ohio	Exterior Improvement - Repair & replace stone column, pavers.	\$100,000
Pleasants	Replace roof on main courthouse.	\$66,240
Preston	Replace interior chiller and exterior refrigerant units.	\$100,000
Putnam	Repoint exterior masonry and repair downspouts.	\$100,000
Raleigh	Add heating system for power outages.	\$100,000
Randolph	Exterior Improvements - Remove and rebuild steps; connector sidewalks.	\$100,000
Roane	New Space - Renovate building for courts.	\$100,000
Summers	Accessibility - Make jury box, witness stand, and jury restroom ADA compliant.	\$100,000
Tucker	Repair interior brick walls of clock tower.	\$28,160
Upshur	Replace entry doors to courthouse and annex.	\$27,728
Wayne	Phase Two elevator upgrade.	\$96,600
Wirt	Install 400-amp transfer switch.	\$35,200
Wood	Sharpen exterior drip edges and stone bands around windows.	\$19,800
Wyoming	Improve main steps and add railing.	\$100,000

Total **\$2,681,827**

Court Security Grant Awards

Court Security Board

The Court Security Board decides how money in the Court Security Fund is spent to enhance the security of West Virginia courts.

“A magistrate court shall deposit \$5 from each of the criminal proceedings fees collected . . . in the Court Security Fund.” W. Va. Code § 50-3-2(a)(3). The fund is used to pay for crucial security needs in county courts. The fund is managed by the West Virginia Division of Administrative Services/Justice and Community Services, and the board is chaired by the Supreme Court Administrative Director. W. Va. Code § 51-3-14-17.

Grant amounts vary each year. In 2023, a total of \$661,228 was awarded to 20 county commissions to enhance the security of court facilities. The Supreme Court of Appeals of West Virginia also received \$66,730 to train bailiffs and provide emergency mass notifications to all 1,500 court employees statewide, bringing the total amount awarded to \$727,958.



2023 board members included the following:

Circuit Judge Kenneth Ballard, Thirteenth Judicial Circuit (Kanawha County)
Family Court Judge Jason Spears, Sixth Family Court Circuit (Cabell County)
Magistrate Carol Wolfe (Gilmer County)
L. David Duffield, Esquire (Cabell County)
Circuit Clerk Brian Gaudet (Upshur County)
Sheriff Thomas J. Howard (Ohio County)
State Police Representative VACANT

The Court Security Board made the following awards in 2023:

Recipient	Amount Approved
Barbour County Commission	\$19,740
Berkeley County Council	\$43,000
Boone County Commission	\$50,000
Braxton County Commission	\$61,000
Cabell County Commission	\$21,136
Fayette County Commission	\$14,846
Jefferson County Commission	\$21,800
Mineral County Commission	\$46,939
Morgan County Commission	\$3,000
Pendleton County Commission	\$30,000
Pleasants County Commission	\$56,240
Pocahontas County Commission	\$41,235
Putnam County Commission	\$23,498
Raleigh County Commission	\$64,000
Randolph County Commission	\$20,219
Roane County Commission	\$22,500
Summers County Commission	\$19,175
Supreme Court of Appeals	\$66,730
Upshur County Commission	\$42,412
Webster County Commission	\$23,147
Wyoming County Commission	\$37,341
Total	\$727,958

Court Boards and Committee Members

Board of Law Examiners

Members are attorneys who evaluate educational background, credentials, character and fitness, and competence of each applicant for admission to the practice of law in West Virginia under the Rules for Admission to the Practice of Law. They are appointed by the Supreme Court of Appeals of West Virginia.

Katherine B. Capito, President (Charleston)
 Lee Murray Hall, Vice-President (Huntington)
 Marc B. Chernenko (Wellsburg)
 Ancil G. Ramey (Huntington)
 Susan R. Snowden (Martinsburg)
 Thomas Truman (Daniels)
 Brent Everett Wear (Wheeling)

Judicial Investigation Commission

The Judicial Investigation Commission determines “whether probable cause exists to formally charge a judge with a violation of the Code of Judicial Conduct promulgated by the Supreme Court of Appeals to govern the ethical conduct of judges or that a judge, because of advancing years and attendant physical and mental incapacity, should not continue to serve.” Rule 1, Rules of Judicial Disciplinary Procedure.

Senior Status Circuit Judge Alan D. Moats, Chair (Taylor County)
 F. Layton Cottrill, public member and vice chair (Huntington)
 Dr. John Barnette, public member (Charleston)
 Circuit Judge Bridget Cohee, Twenty-Third Judicial Circuit
 (Berkeley, Jefferson, and Morgan Counties)
 Magistrate Michael D. Flanigan (Mercer County)
 Family Court Judge Patricia A. Keller, Sixth Family Court Circuit
 (Cabell County)
 Margaret Ann O’Neal, public member (Charleston)
 Senior Status Circuit Judge James J. Rowe (Greenbrier County)
 Circuit Judge Jason Wharton, Fourth Judicial Circuit
 (Wirt and Wood Counties)

Staff Counsel: Teresa A. Tarr
 Staff Deputy Counsel: Brian J. Lanham
 Staff Investigator: David Hudson
 Staff Executive Assistant: Pam Schafer

Judicial Hearing Board

The Judicial Hearing Board has the authority “to conduct hearings on formal complaints filed by the Judicial Investigation Commission and to make recommendations to the Supreme Court of Appeals regarding disposition of those complaints.” Rule 3, Rules of Judicial Disciplinary Procedure.

Circuit Judge Michael D. Lorensen, Chair, Twenty-Third Judicial Circuit (Berkeley, Jefferson, and Morgan Counties)
 William H. “Bill” Baker, public member (Daniels)
 Senior Status Judge Russell M. Clawges, Jr.
 (Monongalia County)
 Circuit Judge Andrew Dimlich, Tenth Judicial Circuit
 (Raleigh County)
 Circuit Judge Paul T. Farrell, Sixth Judicial Circuit (Cabell County)
 Magistrate Richard G. Postalwait (Calhoun County)
 Amber Urso Sellaro, public member (Westover)
 Family Court Judge Brittany Ranson Stonestreet,
 Eleventh Family Court Circuit (Kanawha County)
 Michael Todorovich, public member (Kanawha County)

Staff Counsel: Ancil G. Ramey

Wiretapping and Electronic Surveillance Act

West Virginia Code § 62-1D-7 requires the chief justice to designate five active circuit court judges to individually hear and rule upon applications for orders authorizing the interception of wire, oral, or electronic communications. The terms of the judges listed below ran July 1, 2022, through June 30, 2023.

Circuit Judge Anita Harold Ashley, Fifth Judicial Circuit
 (Calhoun, Jackson, Mason, and Roane Counties)
 Circuit Judge Christopher D. Chiles, Sixth Judicial Circuit
 (Cabell County)
 Circuit Judge Michael D. Lorensen, Twenty-Third Judicial Circuit
 (Berkeley, Jefferson, and Morgan Counties)
 Circuit Judge Michael J. Olejasz, First Judicial Circuit
 (Brooke, Hancock, and Ohio Counties)
 Circuit Judge William J. Sadler, Ninth Judicial Circuit
 (Mercer County)

Division of Probation Services

The Administrative Office of the Court's Division of Probation Services oversees training and establishes policies for 326 probation officers throughout West Virginia and supervises all treatment courts (see pages 42-47), the Interstate Compact for Juveniles, and databases.

Of the 326 probation officers, 24 are school-based probation officers who work in county school systems to assist youth who are having truancy issues. These officers worked, in some capacity, with 7,718 youth during the 2022-2023 school year.

Probation officers provide community supervision and other services to thousands of adult and juvenile offenders, ranging from status offenses (e.g., incorrigibility, truancy) to serious felonies, including sexual offenses. In addition, many provide similar supervision to individuals who are placed on bond prior to the outcome of their case.

Probation officer job responsibilities include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Ensure compliance with probation and treatment requirements;
- Conduct visits with offenders/probationers in their office and/or at the individuals' homes, workplaces, schools, or facilities (e.g., jail, treatment);
- Arrest non-compliant adult probationers;
- Perform drug screens;
- Conduct home searches;
- Serve as members of various treatment or multi-disciplinary teams; and
- Testify in court hearings.

In addition, probation officers write reports for judges. In 2023, officers who supervise adults completed approximately 2,480 pre-sentence investigation reports. Those who supervise juveniles prepared 139 pre-disposition reports, participated in 2,990 multi-disciplinary team meetings, and held 5,697 90-day case reviews.

At the end of 2023, the Division of Probation Services was actively supervising 9,277 individuals. Of those, 6,642 were on regular probation (4,064 adults and 2,578 juveniles). An additional 515 adult drug court and 168 juvenile drug court participants were supervised. Probation officers also supervised 955 sexual and child abuse offenders who are on intensive/extended supervision. In addition to supervising those on probation, extended supervision, and in treatment courts, probation officers supervise many individuals who are out on bond. In 2023, 878 adults and 119 juveniles were released on bond supervision.

Interstate Compact for Juveniles

The Interstate Compact for Juveniles is a contract between the states that regulates the interstate movement of juveniles who are under court supervision or who have run away from home and left their state of residence. The Division of Probation Services administers the compact for West Virginia.

Between July 1, 2022, and June 30, 2023, 26 youths from other states were transferred to West Virginia to be supervised and 21 were sent from West Virginia to other states. During the fiscal year, 14 West Virginia runaways, absconders, and accused delinquents were returned to West Virginia and eight runaway youths were returned to their home states.



Putnam County Juvenile Probation Officer David Hill speaks with a student at a high school in Putnam County.

Judicial Investigation Commission

The Supreme Court of Appeals of West Virginia established the Judicial Investigation Commission (JIC) on December 16, 1982, to investigate complaints against judicial officers. The court recognized that “[t]he ethical conduct of judges is of the highest importance to the people of the State of West Virginia and to the legal profession. Every judge shall observe the highest standards of judicial conduct.”

In preparation for 2024 judicial elections, in 2023, the JIC issued a [2024 West Virginia Judicial Campaign Handbook \(https://www.courtswv.gov/sites/default/pubfiles/mnt/2023-06/2024WVJudicialCampaignHandbook.pdf\)](https://www.courtswv.gov/sites/default/pubfiles/mnt/2023-06/2024WVJudicialCampaignHandbook.pdf) and JIC staff conducted a free three-hour webinar on November 16 entitled [So You Wanna Be a Judge -- Running for Judicial Office \(https://youtu.be/ERGkyG0pws0?si=TtO4gsL5ifJ_MPcv\)](https://youtu.be/ERGkyG0pws0?si=TtO4gsL5ifJ_MPcv).

In 2023, the JIC issued six admonishments involving eight complaints. Formal discipline was issued by the Supreme Court of Appeals of West Virginia in two statements of charges involving three complaints. One formal statement of charges involving one complaint carried over to 2024 and is pending decision by the Supreme Court.

During 2023, the JIC issued 29 advisory opinions. [See Judicial Investigation - Advisory Opinions https://www.courtswv.gov/legal-community/judicial-investigation/advisory-opinions](https://www.courtswv.gov/legal-community/judicial-investigation/advisory-opinions).

JIC staff also conduct confidential investigations and prepare reports for the State Fatality Review Team to consider in efforts to ensure that court processes, procedures, and actions minimize the risk of harm. In 2023, the JIC received eight new fatality review referrals. Two of the eight fell within the JIC’s jurisdiction to investigate.

Staff also investigate sexual harassment claims within West Virginia’s court system. In 2023, the chief counsel conducted one such investigation and presented findings to the Supreme Court’s administrative director.

Counsel also handled more than 1,088 inquiries from judicial officers/candidates/employees and 1,243 telephone calls from the public for a total of 2,331 inquiries for 2023.

The Code of Judicial Conduct is made up of four canons:

Canon 1. A judge shall uphold and promote the independence, integrity, and impartiality of the judiciary, and shall avoid impropriety and the appearance of impropriety.

Canon 2. A judge shall perform the duties of judicial office impartially, competently, and diligently.

Canon 3. A judge shall conduct the judge’s personal and extrajudicial activities to minimize the risk of conflict with the obligations of judicial office.

Canon 4. A judge or candidate for judicial office shall not engage in political or campaign activity that is inconsistent with the independence, integrity, or impartiality of the judiciary.

Specific rules are set forth under each canon. See <https://www.courtswv.gov/legal-community/court-rules/code-of-judicial-conduct>.

Bar Admissions

Throughout the year, the Supreme Court conducts several bar admissions ceremonies. The West Virginia Board of Law Examiners evaluates the educational background, credentials, character and fitness, and competence of each applicant for admission to the practice of law in West Virginia under the Supreme Court Rules for Admission. If approved, the applicants travel to the Supreme Court in Charleston to take the oath before the Justices of the Supreme Court.

182 PEOPLE WERE ADMITTED TO THE
WEST VIRGINIA BAR IN 2023

4 ADMISSIONS CEREMONIES WERE HELD

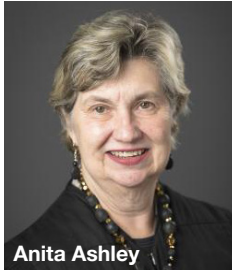
February 8, 2023
May 10, 2023

September 27, 2023
October 18, 2023



2023 Court Association Officers

Judicial Association



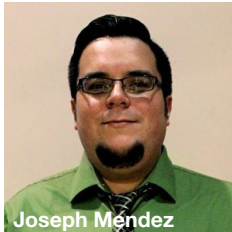
President: Judge Anita Harold Ashley, Fifth Judicial Circuit (Calhoun, Jackson, Mason, and Roane Counties)

Vice President: Judge Paul T. Farrell, Sixth Judicial Circuit (Cabell County)

Secretary: Judge Michael D. Lorensen, Twenty-Third Judicial Circuit (Berkeley, Jefferson, and Morgan Counties)

Treasurer: Judge Joanna Tabit, Thirteenth Judicial Circuit (Kanawha County) until 9/19/23, then Judge Jacob E. Reger, Twenty-Sixth Judicial Circuit (Lewis and Upshur Counties)

Magistrate Association



President: Joseph Mendez (Logan County)

Secretary: Carol L. Wolfe (Gilmer County)

Treasurer: Brenda Marshall (Wood County)

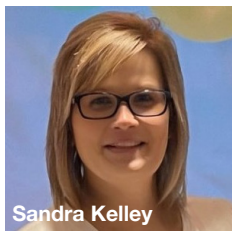
District 1 Vice President: Kevin Miller (Monroe County)

District 1 Board Representatives: Mike Flanigan (Mercer County), Dave Roberts (Wirt County), Jean Ann Luikart (Putnam County), Richard Postalwait (Calhoun County), Jason Bennett (Roane County)

District 2 Vice President: Riley Barb (Tucker County)

District 2 Board Representatives: Patricia Murphy (Ohio County), Donald Harris (Wetzel County), Joe Kuhl (Wood County), Ben Shepler (Randolph County),

Court Reporters Association



President: Sandra Kelley

Vice President: Vacant

Secretary: Allison Kelley

Treasurer: Kathy Davis

Family Court Association



President: Judge Peter Conley, Eighteenth Family Court Circuit (Doddridge and Harrison Counties)

President-Elect: Judge Susan Riffle, Nineteenth Family Court Circuit (Marion County)

Secretary: Judge Jara Howard, Sixth Family Court Circuit (Cabell County)

Treasurer: Judge Patricia Hill, Twentieth Family Court Circuit (Monongalia and Preston Counties)

Association of Probation Officers



President: Jessica Trippett (Wirt and Wood Counties)

Vice President: Cheyenne Willis (Raleigh County)

Secretary: Dane Gould (Wayne County)

Treasurer: Danielle Hofe (Berkeley, Jefferson, and Morgan Counties)

Board Members

Daniel "D.R." Beckner (Wayne County)

Erika Elswick (Kanawha County)

Lon Kelly (Kanawha County)

Alisha Lawson (Calhoun, Jackson, Mason, and Roane Counties)

Lucy Moats (Monongalia County)

Terry Stuck (Brooke, Ohio, and Hancock Counties)

Kevin Runyon (Logan County)

Darren Smith (Hampshire, Hardy, and Pendleton Counties)

Jerry Swanson (Boone and Lincoln Counties)

Jerrold White (Fayette County)

Beth Wood (Putnam County)

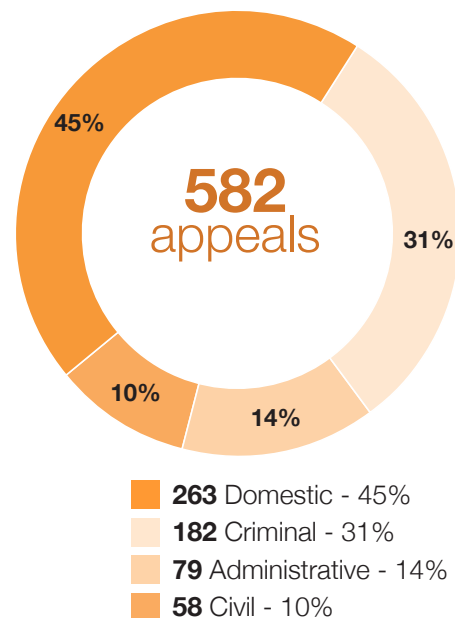
Supreme Court of Appeals of West Virginia

2023 Statistical Report

Appeals by Right

	New Filings	Disposed Cases	Clearance Rate
Administrative	8	29	363%
Administrative - Tax	2	6	300%
Workers' Compensation	69	105	152%
Subtotal Administrative	79	140	177%
Abuse & Neglect	251	196	78%
Family	7	14	200%
Domestic Violence	5	8	160%
Subtotal Domestic	263	218	83%
Criminal - Felony	138	115	83%
Criminal - Misdemeanor	0	2	200%
Criminal - Other	5	5	100%
Post Conviction	39	37	95%
Subtotal Criminal	182	159	87%
Civil - Torts, Contracts, Property	28	96	343%
Civil - Probate	0	0	0%
Civil - Other	30	60	200%
Subtotal Civil	58	156	269%
Total Appeals By Right	582	673	116%

Appeals by Right Distribution



Original Jurisdiction/Other

	New Filings	Disposed Cases	Clearance Rate
Misc Rules, Referrals, Prepetitions	16	14	88%
Lawyer Disciplinary	33	33	100%
Lawyer Admissions	0	0	0%
Judicial Disciplinary	1	3	300%
Subtotal Disc./Admissions	50	50	100%
Certified Question	8	6	75%
Subtotal Certified Question	8	6	75%
Habeas Corpus	9	21	233%
Certiorari	0	0	0%
Mandamus	52	51	98%
Mandamus/Prohibition	2	1	50%
Pets for Bail	2	3	150%
Prohibition	53	57	108%
Subtotal Extraordinary Remedies	118	133	113%
TOTAL OJ/OTHER	176	189	107%
2022 Total Filings	758	862	114%

Decisions/Opinions

Spring 2023 Term	
Memo Decisions	227
Signed Opinions	49
Subtotal	276
Fall 2023 Term	
Memo Decisions	165
Signed Opinions	31
Subtotal	196
2023 Yearly Total	
Memo Decisions	392
Signed Opinions	80
2023 Total	472



Justices of the Supreme Court of Appeals of West Virginia 2023

Justice William R. Wooton

Elected June 2020
Raleigh County

Justice C. Haley Bunn

Appointed April 2022
Wyoming County

Justice Tim Armstead

Appointed August 2018
Elected November 2018
Re-Elected June 2020
Kanawha County

Chief Justice Beth Walker

Elected May 2016
Kanawha County

Justice John A. Hutchison

Appointed December 2018
Elected June 2020
Raleigh County

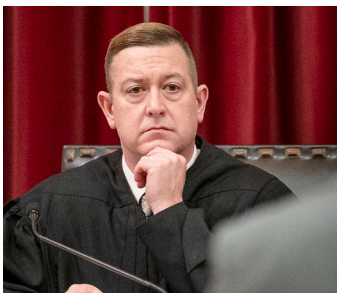
2023 Visiting Judges

When a justice is unable to serve, Article VIII Section 2 of the West Virginia Constitution allows the chief justice to assign a circuit court or intermediate appellate court judge to serve. The visiting judge then participates in all private conferences and votes on that case. The visiting judges in 2023 were as follows:

Judge Shawn D. Nines

Nineteenth Judicial Circuit
(Barbour and Taylor Counties)

January 10, 2023
Rule 20 Argument in *A. Karim Katrib, MD v. Herbert J. Thomas Memorial Hospital Association and Thomas Health System, Inc.*, No. 21-0843.



Chief Judge Daniel W. Greear

Intermediate Court of Appeals of
West Virginia

February 1, 2023
Rule 19 Argument in *State ex rel. ERx, LLC v. Hon. Jeffrey D. Cramer, Judge, Kayla McEldowney, and Devann Doty*, No. 22-0386.



Judge Paul T. Farrell

Sixth Judicial Circuit
(Cabell County)

February 8, 2023
Rule 19 Argument in *State of West Virginia v. Aaron Hoard*, No. 21-0764.



Judge Charles O. Lorensen

Intermediate Court of Appeals of
West Virginia

April 18, 2023
Rule 20 Argument in *Carl J. Martin, II, et al. v. Sherree D. Martin*, No. 22-0417; and *Sherree D. Martin, Executor of the Estate of Shirley A. Martin, Trustee of the Shirley A. Martin Trust, and Trustee of the Carl J. Martin Sr. Trust v. William A. Martin, et al.*, No. 21-0757.



Judge Maryclaire Akers

Thirteenth Judicial Circuit
(Kanawha County)

January 11, 2023
Rule 20 Argument in *West Virginia Land Resources, Inc. and Marion County Coal Resources, Inc. v. American Bituminous Power Partners, LP, West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection, and WV Environmental Quality Board, and American Bituminous Power Partners, LP v. West Virginia Land Resources, Inc., Marion County Coal Resources, Inc., and the West Virginia Environmental Quality Board*, Nos. 21-0885 and 21-0893.



Judge Michael J. Olejasz

First Judicial Circuit (Brooke,
Hancock, and Ohio Counties)

February 7, 2023
Rule 19 Argument in *L&D Investments, Inc., et al. v. Unknown Heirs*, No. 21-0613.



Judge Michael D. Lorensen

Twenty-Third Judicial Circuit
(Berkeley, Jefferson, and Morgan
Counties)

April 18, 2023
Rule 20 Argument in *Carl J. Martin, II, et al. v. Sherree D. Martin*, No. 22-0417; and *Sherree D. Martin, Executor of the Estate of Shirley A. Martin, Trustee of the Shirley A. Martin Trust, and Trustee of the Carl J. Martin Sr. Trust v. William A. Martin, et al.*, No. 21-0757.

Judge Thomas E. Scarr

Intermediate Court of Appeals of
West Virginia

April 19, 2023
Rule 19 Argument in *State ex rel.
Gabriel Devono and the Board
of Education of the County of
Randolph v. Hon. David H. Wilmoth,
Judge, Sherman Arbogast, and
Marlene Arbogast*, No. 22-0480.



**Judge Gregory L.
Howard Jr.**

Sixth Judicial Circuit
(Cabell County)

April 25, 2023
Rule 20 Argument in *Justice
Holdings, LLC v. Glade Springs
Village Property Owners Association,
Inc.*, No. 22-0002.



**Judge Perri Jo
DeChristopher**

Seventeenth Judicial Circuit
(Monongalia County)

September 13, 2023
Rule 19 Argument in *Kanawha
County Board of Education, George
Aulenbacher, Principal, and Brad
Marano, Assistant Principal v. S.D.,
by and through her parent and next
friend, J.D.*, No. 22-0028.



Judge Tera Salango

Thirteenth Judicial Circuit
(Kanawha County)

October 10, 2023
Rule 19 Argument in *Norman Launi,
II v. Hampshire County Prosecuting
Attorney's Office, et al.*, No. 22-
0111.



Judge Bridget M. Cohee

Twenty-Third Judicial Circuit
(Berkeley, Jefferson, and
Morgan Counties)

April 25, 2023
Rule 20 Argument in *Justice
Holdings, LLC v. Glade Springs
Village Property Owners Association,
Inc.*, No. 22-0002.



Judge Joshua D. Butcher

Seventh Judicial Circuit
(Logan County)

May 9, 2023
Rule 19 Argument in *Edward S.,
Administrator of the Estates of T.S.
and A.K., et al. v. Raleigh County
Housing Authority*, No. 21-0888.



Judge Jeffrey D. Cramer

Second Judicial Circuit Judge
(Marshall, Tyler, and Wetzel
Counties)

September 26, 2023
Rule 20 Argument in *State of West
Virginia v. Leslie G.*, No. 22-0210.

Intermediate Court of Appeals of West Virginia

The West Virginia Legislature established the Intermediate Court of Appeals (ICA) in 2021 to hear appeals of civil cases from circuit courts, appeals from family courts (except domestic violence cases), appeals from state agencies or administrative law judges, and workers' compensation appeals.

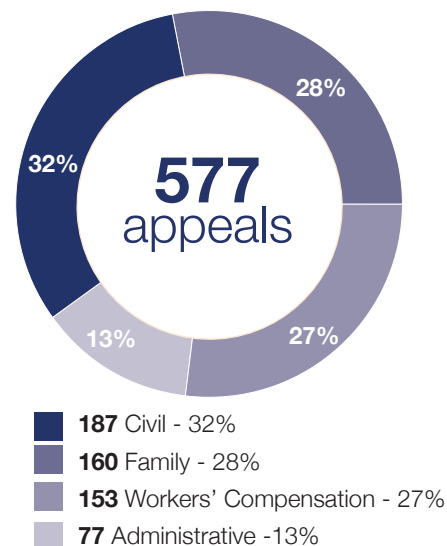
ICA Statistics

The ICA began operating July 1, 2022, making this the first full calendar year of statistics for the ICA.

Appeals by Right

	New Filings	Disposed Cases	Clearance Rate
Administrative	72	63	88%
Administrative - Tax	5	4	80%
Workers' Compensation	153	193	126%
Subtotal Administrative	230	260	113%
Family	160	121	76%
Subtotal Domestic	160	121	76%
Civil - Torts, Contracts, Property	130	63	48%
Civil - Probate	3	1	33%
Civil - Other	54	50	93%
Subtotal Civil	187	114	61%
Total Appeals By Right	577	495	86%

Appeals by Right Distribution



Decisions/Opinions

Spring 2023 Term

Memo Decisions	185
Signed Opinions	15

Subtotal 200

Fall 2023 Term

Memo Decisions	138
Signed Opinions	15

Subtotal 153

2023 Yearly Total

Memo Decisions	323
Signed Opinions	30

2023 Total 353



Judges of the Intermediate Court of Appeals of West Virginia 2023

Judge Thomas E. Scarr

Appointed December 2021
Cabell County

Judge Charles O. Lorensen

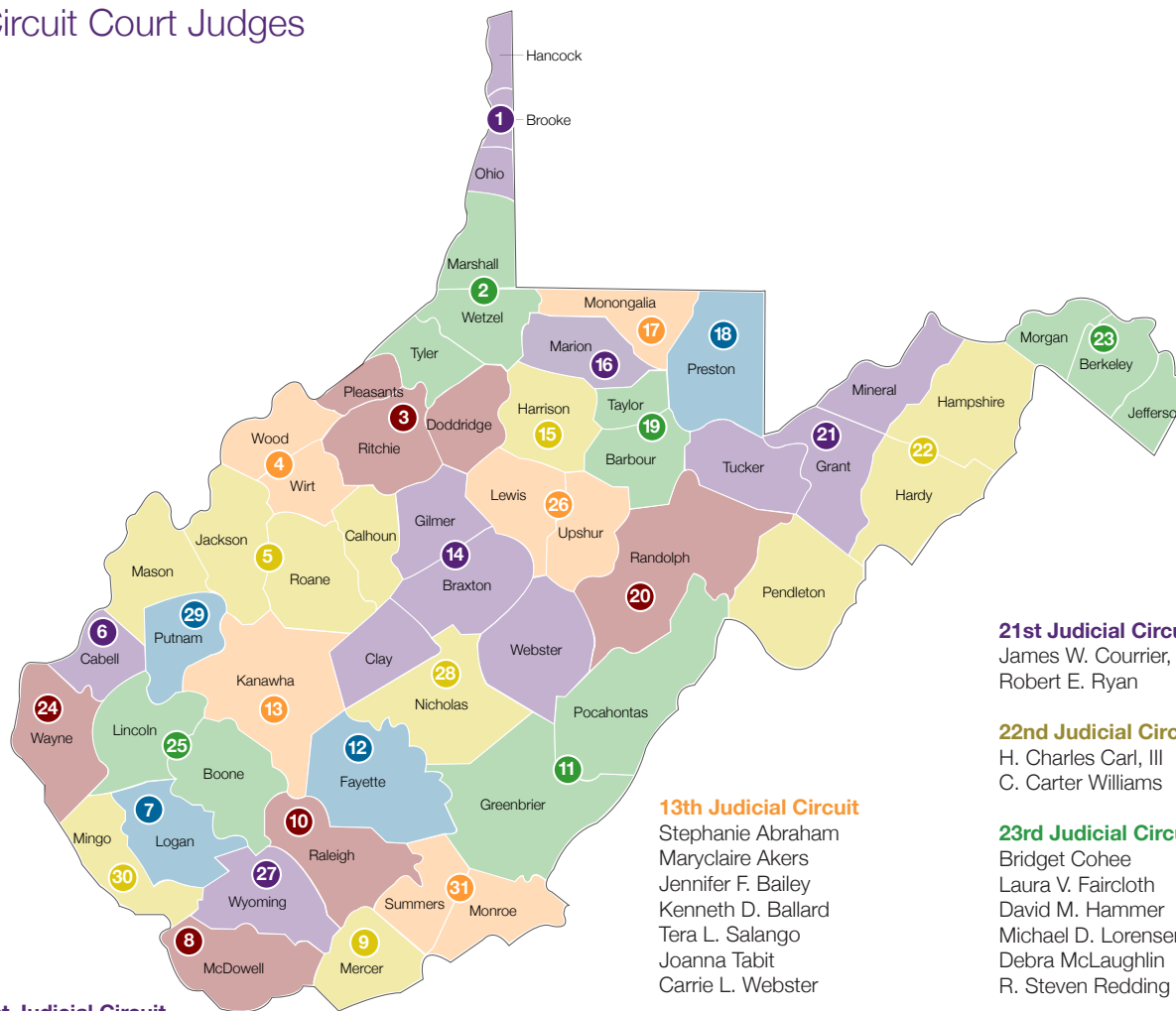
Appointed April 2022
Kanawha County

Chief Judge Daniel W. Greear

Appointed December 2021
Kanawha County

Circuit Courts

Circuit Court Judges



1st Judicial Circuit

Jason A. Cuomo
Michael J. Olejasz
David J. Sims
Ronald E. Wilson

2nd Judicial Circuit

Jeffrey Cramer
C. Richard Wilson

3rd Judicial Circuit

Timothy L. Sweeney

4th Judicial Circuit

John D. Beane
Robert A. Waters
Jason Wharton

5th Judicial Circuit

Anita Harold Ashley
Lora Dyer
Richard Craig Tatterson

6th Judicial Circuit

Christopher Chiles
Paul T. Farrell
Alfred E. Ferguson
Gregory L. Howard

7th Judicial Circuit

Joshua Butcher
Kelly Gilmore Codispoli

8th Judicial Circuit

Edward J. Kornish
Rudolph J. Murensky, II

9th Judicial Circuit

William J. Sadler
Derek C. Swope
Mark Wills

10th Judicial Circuit

Robert A. Burnside, Jr.
Andrew Dimlich
H. L. Kirkpatrick III
Darl W. Poling

11th Judicial Circuit

Jennifer P. Dent
Robert E. Richardson

12th Judicial Circuit

Paul M. Blake, Jr.
Thomas H. Ewing

13th Judicial Circuit

Stephanie Abraham
Maryclaire Akers
Jennifer F. Bailey
Kenneth D. Ballard
Tera L. Salango
Joanna Tabit
Carrie L. Webster

14th Judicial Circuit

Jack Alsop
Michael W. Asbury, Jr.

15th Judicial Circuit

Thomas A. Bedell
James A. Matish
Christopher McCarthy

16th Judicial Circuit

David R. Janes
Patrick N. Wilson

17th Judicial Circuit

Perri Jo DeChristopher
Paul W. Gwaltney, Jr.
Cindy Scott

18th Judicial Circuit

Steven L. Shaffer

19th Judicial Circuit

Thomas B. Hoxie
Shawn D. Nines

20th Judicial Circuit

David H. Wilmoth

21st Judicial Circuit

James W. Courier, Jr.
Robert E. Ryan

22nd Judicial Circuit

H. Charles Carl, III
C. Carter Williams

23rd Judicial Circuit

Bridget Cohee
Laura V. Faircloth
David M. Hammer
Michael D. Lorensen
Debra McLaughlin
R. Steven Redding

24th Judicial Circuit

Jason J. Fry
James H. Young, Jr.

25th Judicial Circuit

Jay M. Hoke
Stacy L. Nowicki-Eldridge

26th Judicial Circuit

Kurt Hall
Jacob E. Reger

27th Judicial Circuit

Micheal M. Cochran

28th Judicial Circuit

Stephen O. Callaghan

29th Judicial Circuit

Joseph Reeder
Phillip M. Stowers

30th Judicial Circuit

Miki J. Thompson

31st Judicial Circuit

Robert A. Irons

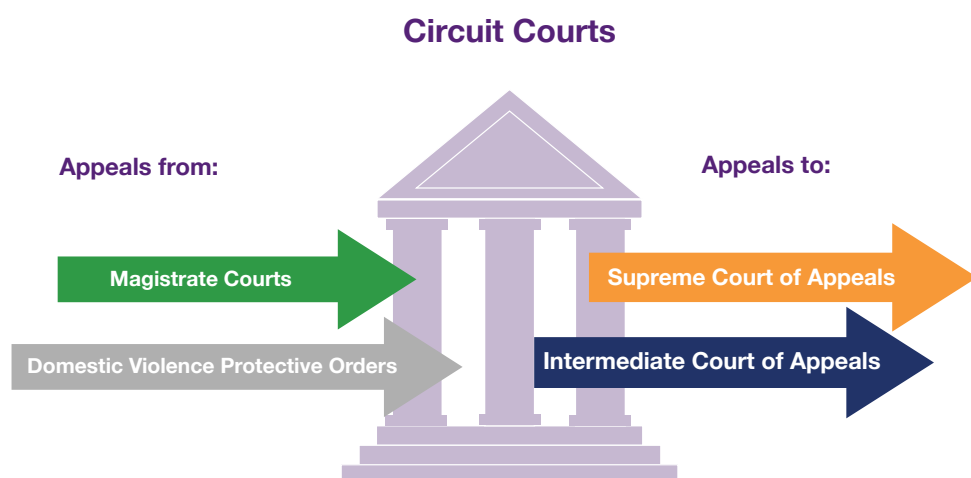
Circuit courts are West Virginia's only general jurisdiction trial courts of record

Circuit courts receive appeals from magistrate courts, municipal courts and family court decisions in domestic violence cases. Circuit courts receive recommended orders from mental hygiene commissioners.

JURISDICTION:

- All civil cases at law over \$7,500 with limited exceptions;
- All civil cases in equity;
- Proceedings in *habeas corpus*, *mandamus*, *quo warranto*, *prohibition*, and *certiorari*; and
- All felonies and misdemeanors.

The Intermediate Court of Appeals (ICA) and the Supreme Court of Appeals receive appeals of circuit court decisions. The ICA receives appeals from circuit courts in cases involving civil matters and those concerning guardianship or conservatorship. The Supreme Court of Appeals receives appeals from circuit courts in cases involving criminal matters, juvenile proceedings, and child abuse and neglect proceedings.



In addition to their regular caseload, circuit judges also serve on the **Mass Litigation Panel**, the **Business Court Division**, the **Court Improvement Board**, and the **Juvenile Justice Commission**. Circuit judges also preside over **adult, juvenile and family treatment courts** and are active in **civic education programs**. They receive no additional compensation for this work.

For more information about circuit courts, see <http://www.courtswv.gov/lower-courts/circuit-courts.html>.

A county-by-county list of circuit court judges in West Virginia, along with their office telephone and fax numbers, is available at <http://www.courtswv.gov/public-resources/court-information-by-county.html>.

2023

CIRCUIT COURT SNAPSHOT

55 | 31

Counties | Circuits

75

Judges

Elected to eight-year
terms in non-partisan
races

Must be attorneys who
have practiced law in
West Virginia for at least
five years

39,800

Total Cases Filed in 2023

51%

20,104 Civil Cases

28%

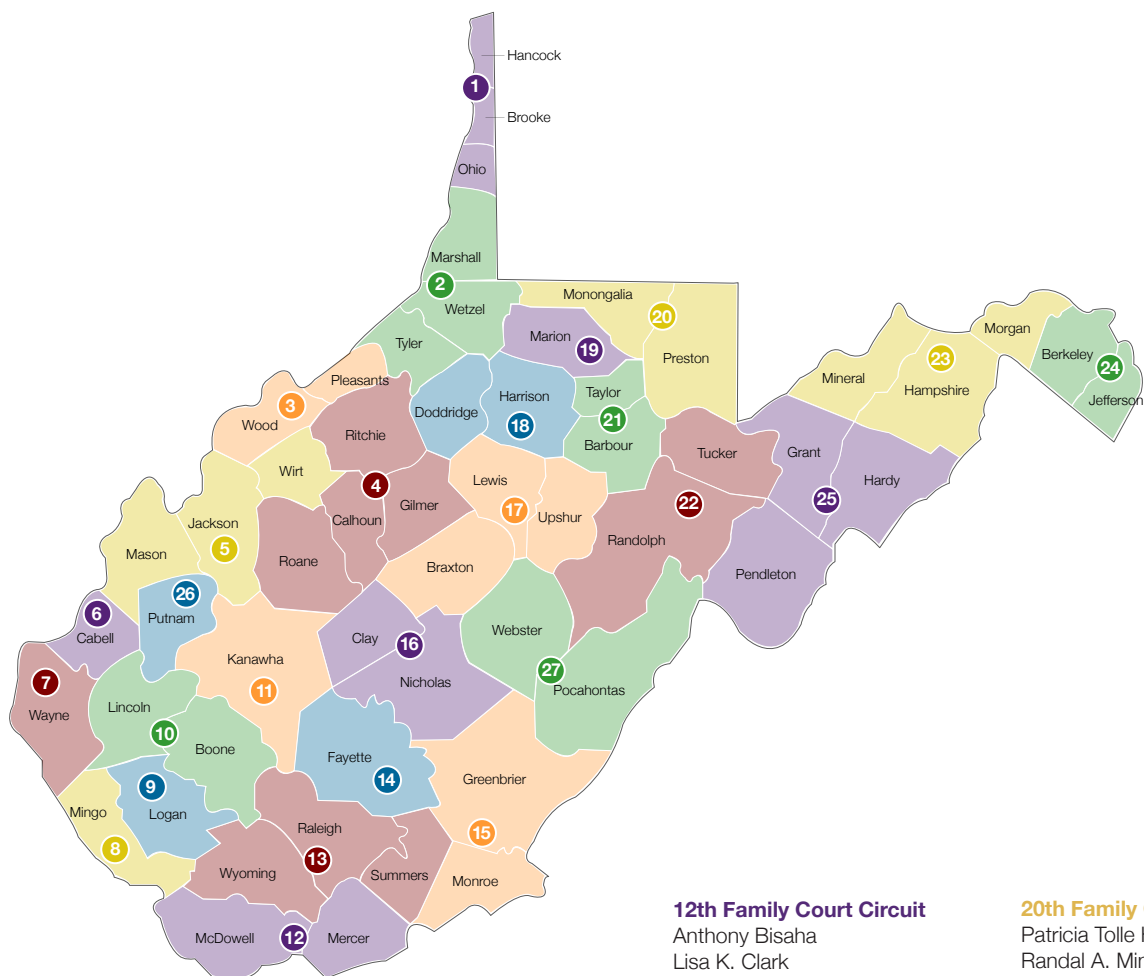
11,217 Criminal Cases

21%

8,479 Juvenile Matters

Family Courts

Family Court Judges



1st Family Court Circuit

Joyce D. Chernenko
Heather Wood

2nd Family Court Circuit

David L. Jackson

3rd Family Court Circuit

Ellen Smith
C. Darren Tallman

4th Family Court Circuit

Steven Jones

5th Family Court Circuit

Bryan Cromley
Constance Fisher Thomas

6th Family Court Circuit

Jara Howard
Patricia A. Keller
Jason Spears

7th Family Court Circuit

Sean Maynard

8th Family Court Circuit

Sabrina Deskins

9th Family Court Circuit

Robert M. Ilderton
Christopher R. Workman

10th Family Court Circuit

Bobby Hale
Ronald G. Salmons

11th Family Court Circuit

Jim Douglas
Robert M. Montgomery
Julie A. Pence
Brittany Ranson Stonestreet
Lera K. VanMeter

12th Family Court Circuit

Anthony Bisaha
Lisa K. Clark
Angela Walters

13th Family Court Circuit

Leigh M. Lefler
H. Suzanne McGraw
Eric Shuck

14th Family Court Circuit

Matthew Dean England

15th Family Court Circuit

David M. Sanders

16th Family Court Circuit

Harley E. Stollings

17th Family Court Circuit

Theresa Cogar Turner

18th Family Court Circuit

Peter Conley
Lori B. Jackson

19th Family Court Circuit

Susan Riffle

20th Family Court Circuit

Patricia Tolle Hill
Randal A. Minor

21st Family Court Circuit

Karen Hill Johnson

22nd Family Court Circuit

Lori Haynes

23rd Family Court Circuit

Deanna Rock
Glen Stotler

24th Family Court Circuit

David A. Camilletti
Lyndsey Matschat
Richard Stephens

25th Family Court Circuit

Jeffrey R. Roth

26th Family Court Circuit

Richard Witt

27th Family Court Circuit

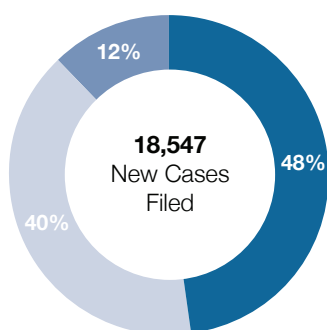
Joyce Helmnick Carpenter

Family courts handle cases involving domestic relationships. Family court judges also hold final hearings in domestic violence civil proceedings. The Intermediate Court of Appeals (ICA) hears appeals of family court decisions except those involving domestic violence, which are appealed to circuit court.

JURISDICTION:

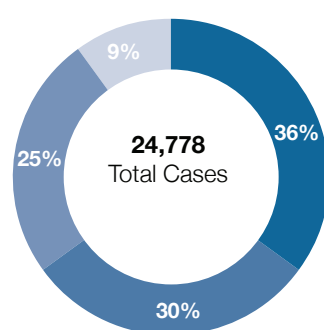
- Divorce and related issues including annulment, separate maintenance, allocation of parental responsibility, and family support;
- Paternity;
- Grandparent visitation;
- Name Change;
- Child Custody;
- Infant Guardianships; and
- Final hearings in domestic violence civil proceedings.

New Cases filed in 2023:



- 8,893 Domestic Violence Cases - 48%
- 7,429 Divorce Cases - 40%
- 2,225 Other Domestic Relations Matters - 12%

Total Cases in 2023:



- 8,893 Domestic Violence Cases - 36%
- 7,429 Divorce Cases - 30%
- 6,231 Modification and Contempt - 25%
- 2,225 Other Domestic Relations - 9%

In addition to their regular caseload, some family court judges also preside over **adult and juvenile treatment courts**, and many are active in civic education programs. They receive no additional compensation for this work.

For more information about family courts, see <http://www.courtswv.gov/lower-courts/family-courts.html>.

A county-by-county list of family court judges in West Virginia, along with their office phone and fax numbers, is available at <http://www.courtswv.gov/public-resources/court-information-by-county.html>.

2023

FAMILY COURT SNAPSHOT

55 Counties | 27 Circuits

47

Judges

Elected to eight-year
terms in non-partisan
races

Must be attorneys who
have practiced law in
West Virginia for at least
five years

18,547

New Cases Filed in 2023

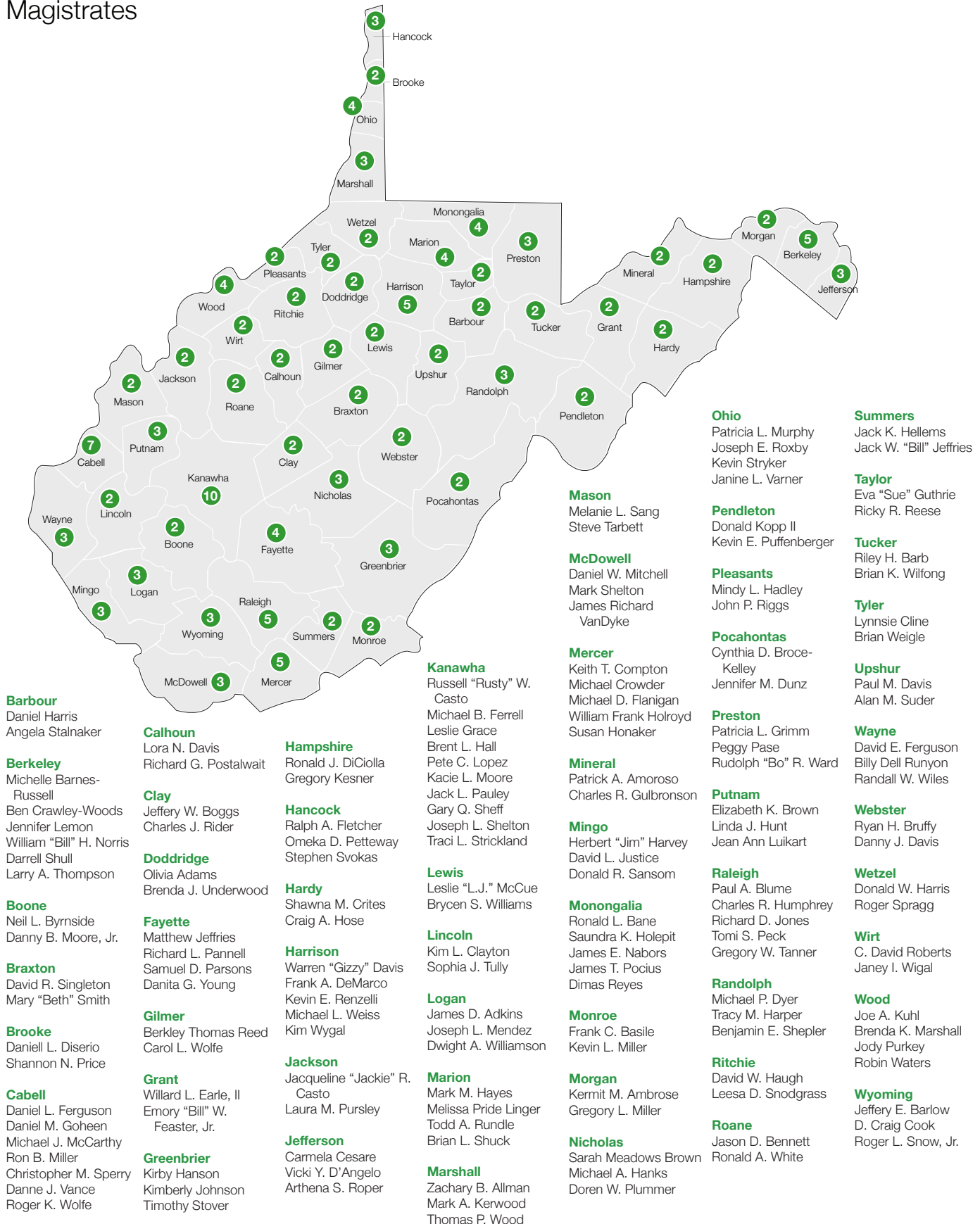
6,231

Modification and
Contempt Proceedings

*not counted as new cases filed

Magistrate Courts

Magistrates

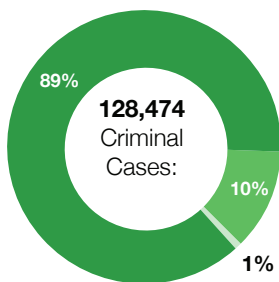


Magistrate court is often called “the people’s court.” There is a magistrate on duty or on call in every county, 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

JURISDICTION:

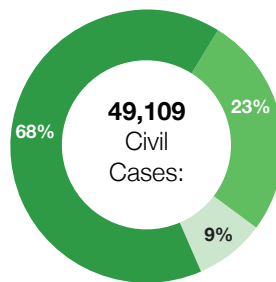
- Misdemeanor criminal cases;
- Traffic violations;
- Landlord-tenant matters;
- Felony preliminary hearings;
- Civil cases in which the financial amount in dispute is less than \$10,000;
- Issue and record affidavits, criminal complaints, arrest and search warrants;
- Set bail in criminal matters;
- Enter domestic violence petitions into the Domestic Violence Database and Registry; and
- Issue emergency protective orders in cases involving domestic violence, personal safety orders, and temporary financial exploitation matters.

2023 Criminal Cases:



- 114,453 misdemeanors - 89%
- 13,290 felonies - 10%
- 731 worthless check charges - 1%

2023 Civil Cases:



- 33,491 small claims - 68%
- 11,095 domestic violence petitions - 23%
- 4,523 petitions for personal safety orders - 9%

If there are no mental hygiene commissioners in a county, the chief circuit judge can designate a magistrate to handle all or part of probable cause involuntary hospitalization cases. Magistrates cannot, however, handle final commitment or guardianship cases. In some counties, both mental hygiene commissioners and magistrates are appointed by the chief circuit judge to conduct mental hygiene matters. Magistrates can enter mental hygiene orders into West Virginia’s Centralized State Mental Health Registry and can issue applications and temporary placement orders after hours and on weekends, when needed.

A county-by-county list of magistrates in West Virginia, along with their office phone and fax numbers, is available at <http://www.courtswv.gov/public-resources/court-information-by-county.html>. The website also has blank magistrate court forms that can be downloaded and printed for the public’s use, rules governing media coverage of magistrate court proceedings, and the *West Virginia Benchbook for Domestic Violence Proceedings*, among other information.

2023 MAGISTRATE SNAPSHOT

55
Counties | There are
at least two
magistrates in
every county

160

Magistrates

Elected to four-year terms
in non-partisan races

182,960

Total Cases Filed in 2023

70%
128,474
Criminal Cases

27%
49,109
Civil Cases

2%
3,196
Special Proceedings

1%
2,181
Juvenile Cases

Specialty Courts and Panels

Many circuit judges and family court judges volunteer to take on additional duties for which they do not receive any extra compensation. Circuit judges serve in the **Business Court Division** and on the **Mass Litigation Panel** and the **Juvenile Justice Commission**. Circuit judges and family court judges serve on the **Court Improvement Program Board** and oversee the state's expanding network of **treatment courts**. These specialty courts and panels perform important functions that enhance judicial services in West Virginia.

PUTNAM COUNTY JUVENILE COURT PROGRAMS ACHIEVE 100 PERCENT GRADUATION RATE

Putnam County juvenile court programs had a 100 percent graduation rate during the 2022-2023 school year, Twenty-Ninth Judicial Circuit (Putnam County) Judge Phillip Stowers announced on July 27. Seventy-five high school students who were under court supervision graduated with a full diploma; none obtained a high school equivalency degree. The students attended either a Putnam County high school, classes in a placement facility, or classes in other counties as a part of their Putnam County court-ordered educational programs. "We worked with them until they graduated," Judge Stowers said.



Business Court

The West Virginia Business Court Division is a specialized court docket within the circuit courts that efficiently manages and resolves litigation involving commercial issues and disputes between businesses. It was established in accordance with West Virginia Trial Court Rule 29 and W. Va. Code § 51-2-15.

Business court judges' mediation training and experience, along with the alternative dispute resolution aspect of Trial Court Rule 29, allow the judges to offer alternative dispute resolution options throughout the litigation process, resolving a considerable number of cases in a timely manner without having to go to trial.

Any party or judge may request referral of a case to the Business Court Division. The chief justice of the Supreme Court of Appeals of West Virginia serves as the gatekeeper and may act directly on a motion to refer a case to the division or may direct the division to conduct a hearing in order to make a recommendation to the chief justice. Business litigation that is transferred to the division by the chief justice is assigned presiding and resolution judges by the chair of the division. The case remains in the county of origin, but the presiding judge may conduct hearings and trials in any circuit courtroom within the assignment region.

Judges

The division consists of six active circuit court judges and one senior status judge appointed by the chief justice. Judges serve seven-year terms and can serve successive terms. The chief justice designates one of the business court judges to serve as chair for a three-year term.

In 2023, the chair was Circuit Judge Michael D. Lorensen, Twenty-Third Judicial Circuit (Berkeley, Jefferson, and Morgan Counties), whose term as chair expires December 31, 2024. His term on the Business Court Division expires December 31, 2026. The other members are as follows:

- Circuit Judge Maryclaire A. Akers, Thirteenth Judicial Circuit (Kanawha County), whose term expires December 31, 2028;
- Circuit Judge Paul T. Farrell, Sixth Judicial Circuit (Cabell County), whose term expired December 31, 2023;
- Circuit Judge David M. Hammer, Twenty-Third Judicial Circuit (Berkeley, Jefferson, and Morgan Counties), whose term expires December 31, 2029;
- Circuit Judge Shawn D. Nines, Nineteenth Judicial Circuit (Barbour and Taylor Counties), whose term expires December 31, 2027;
- Circuit Judge Joseph K. Reeder, Twenty-Ninth Judicial Circuit (Putnam County), whose term expires December 31, 2025; and
- Senior Status Judge Christopher C. Wilkes, whose term expires December 31, 2024.

Division staff include Executive Director Carol A. Miller and Law Clerk Tessa Bowers.

Case Statistics

In 2023, the business court judges disposed of five cases, and the average case age of those disposed cases was 675 days. Four of the five cases were settled by agreement of the parties, resulting in agreed dismissal orders.

There were 10 motions to refer cases to the Business Court Division filed in four counties in 2023. The chief justice decided eight of the 10 motions to refer in an average of 21 days from filing to decision. The other two cases were not ripe for decision by the end of 2023. Two of the motions to refer were filed by defendants, three by plaintiffs, and five by a judge.

In 2023, Business Court Division judges scheduled 37 hearings, entertained 148 motions, and entered 177 orders in 31 cases. There were seven mediations or mediation status hearings, plus numerous follow-up conference calls. There was one bench trial and no jury trials in 2023.

Since the inception of the Business Court Division in October 2012, 249 motions to refer have been filed in 43 counties. Of those, 145 cases have been transferred to the division from 38 counties, so 58 percent of motions to refer were granted. There have been 115 cases disposed of, leaving 30 cases still pending at the end of 2023.

For more information about the Business Court Division and to view the full 2023 Business Court Division Annual Report, see <https://www.courtswv.gov/sites/default/pubfiles/mnt/2024-02/Business%20Court%20Division%27s%202023%20Annual%20Report.pdf>.



Treatment Courts

The Division of Probation Services develops and oversees treatment courts in West Virginia on behalf of the Supreme Court of Appeals of West Virginia.

Adult Drug Courts

West Virginia has 30 active adult drug courts that serve residents of all counties. In 2023, the average annual cost per participant was \$5,453, significantly less than housing an inmate in a regional jail or correctional facility. The cost includes intensive supervision, treatment, case management and drug testing. In 2023, adult drug courts served approximately 870 participants. They received 531 referrals and admitted 387 individuals. During the year, 194 participants graduated (55.7 percent), 153 participants began new employment, and two enrolled in some type of education. Two babies (twins) were born drug-free to a participant. The top five drugs of choice for participants were methamphetamine (32 percent), opiates (30.59 percent), non-synthetic cannabinoids (9.1 percent), alcohol (6.56 percent) and amphetamines (6.29 percent). During the year, 26 participants relapsed. West Virginia's overall recidivism rate for graduates of adult drug courts is approximately 15.9 percent.



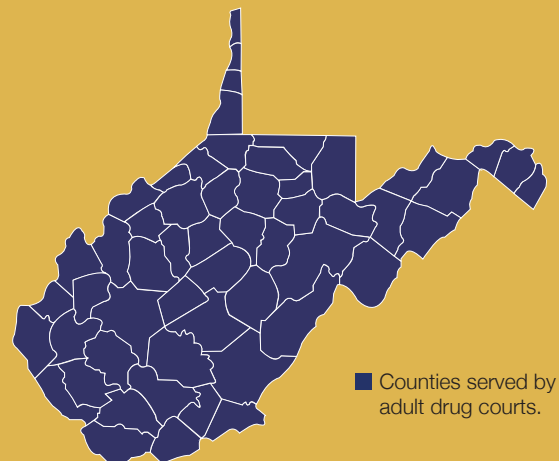
Logan County Family Treatment Court and Adult Drug Court graduation, June 16.

30 ADULT DRUG COURTS
serve residents in all counties

870
participants
served

194
participants
graduated

153
participants
began new
employment



Eleventh Judicial Circuit (Greenbrier and Pocahontas Counties)
Judge Jennifer Dent speaks at the Southeastern Regional Drug
Court Graduation held at Droop Mountain Battlefield State Park in
Droop, WV, August 3.

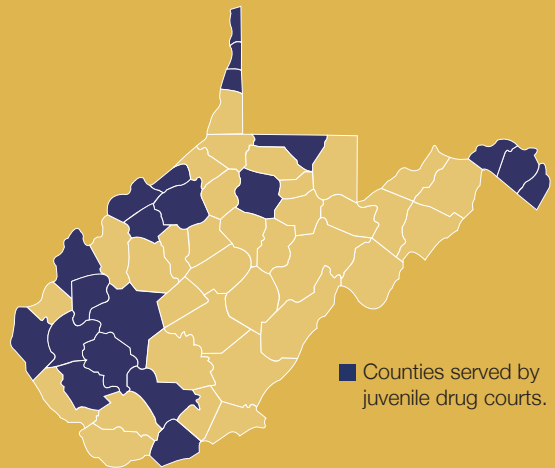
Juvenile Drug Courts

Juvenile drug courts are cooperative efforts of the juvenile justice, social service and education systems. These early intervention programs divert non-violent juvenile offenders exhibiting substance abuse behavior from the traditional juvenile court process to an intensive, individualized and evidence-based treatment process. Juvenile drug courts seek to reduce substance abuse risk and future court involvement for the teens. In 2023, West Virginia had 15 active juvenile drug courts that served 354 participants. Also, during the year, 69 participants (41.32 percent) graduated. Participants gave birth to 19 drug-free babies. During 2023, eight juveniles gained employment and 31 either started or returned to school. The average cost for a juvenile to participate is \$4,094 a year, much less than residential placement, which can exceed \$100,000 a year per person. Juveniles reported their drugs of choice were non-synthetic cannabinoids (57.56 percent), alcohol (27.33 percent) and synthetic cannabinoids (6.2 percent). The remaining drugs of choice were less than 2 percent each.

15 JUVENILE DRUG COURTS
serving **21** West Virginia counties

354
participants
served

69
participants
graduated



Putnam County Juvenile Drug Court graduation at the Putnam County Courthouse in Winfield, WV, April 20. Twenty-Ninth Judicial Circuit (Putnam County) Judge Phillip Stowers supervises the drug court.



Putnam County Juvenile Drug Court graduation at the Putnam County Courthouse in Winfield, WV, April 20.



Thirteenth Judicial Circuit (Kanawha County) Judge Stephanie Abraham and the Kanawha County Juvenile Drug Court staff hold a graduation ceremony for four participants, December 19.

Family Treatment Courts

Family treatment courts were established in 2019 to serve adults with substance use disorders who are also involved in a child abuse and neglect case. The goal is to return children to a safer home environment and achieve permanency faster and more effectively than traditional judicial methods. At the end of 2023, there were 13 family treatment courts serving 16 counties. In 2023, 258 individuals participated in West Virginia's family treatment courts with 53 graduating. Of these participants, 50 percent achieved full-time employment and 50 percent maintained part-time employment. Family treatment courts served 384 children in 2023, with 81 being reunified with their families and 90 achieving permanency. The average time to reunification was 306.8 days and 463.5 days to permanency. In 2023, one baby was born drug-free due to their parents' participation in family treatment courts, and the baby was able to go home instead of to automatic placement. The top five drugs of choice for participants were, in order, methamphetamine (42.4 percent), heroin (15.8 percent), non-synthetic cannabinoids (10.4 percent), opioids (10.4 percent) and fentanyl (9.6 percent).

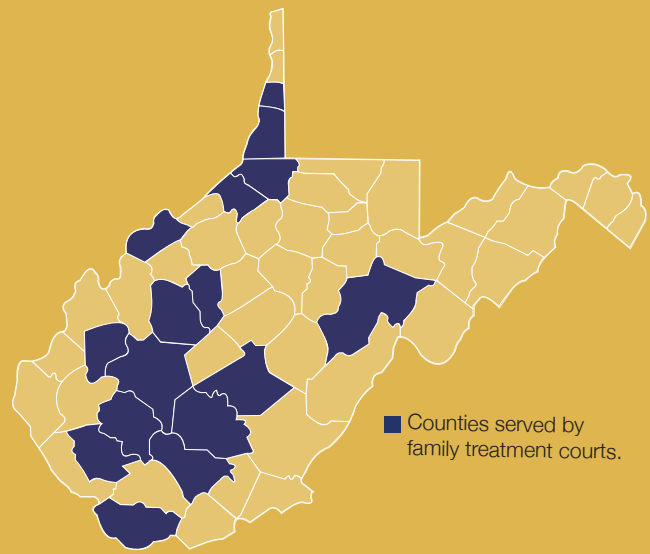


13 FAMILY TREATMENT COURTS
serving **16** West Virginia counties

258 participants
served

53 participants
graduated

384 children served with **81** reunified
with their families



Two new family treatment courts opened in Raleigh and Putnam Counties in April, bringing the number of the courts in West Virginia to 13. The Raleigh County Family Treatment Court opened on April 6. Tenth Judicial Circuit (Raleigh County) Judge Andrew Dimlich oversees the treatment court and Jessica Hilton is the family treatment court coordinator. The Putnam County Family Treatment Court opened on April 11. Twenty-Ninth Judicial Circuit (Putnam County) Judge Joseph Reeder oversees the treatment court and Jilyan "Paige" Harris is the family treatment court coordinator. Both treatment courts were funded by a 2022 grant from the federal Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.

Military Service Members' Treatment Court

The Supreme Court is proud to offer a Military Service Members' Treatment Court in Raleigh County. This court is completely dedicated to working with veterans. West Virginia also has eight adult drug courts with a Military Service Members' Track. In these courts, veterans participate in court and some programs with adult drug court participants. However, a veterans' outreach coordinator works with the veteran participant to ensure that they receive appropriate treatment for any military-specific issues.



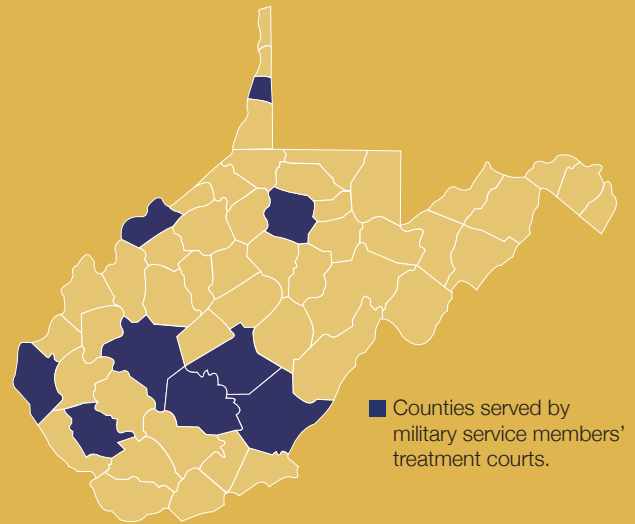
Raleigh County Veterans Court graduation ceremony in Beckley, WV, August 24.

1 MILITARY SERVICE MEMBERS' TREATMENT COURT

- 10th Circuit, Raleigh County

8 adult drug courts with a MILITARY SERVICE MEMBERS' TRACK

- 1st Circuit, Ohio County
- 4th Circuit, Wood County
- 7th Circuit, Logan County
- 11th Circuit, Greenbrier County
- 13th Circuit, Kanawha County
- 15th Circuit, Harrison County
- 24th Circuit, Wayne County
- 28th Circuit, Nicholas County



Raleigh County Veterans Court graduation ceremony in Beckley, WV, August 24.

Court Improvement Program Oversight Board (CIP)

The mission of the CIP is to advance practices, policies and laws that improve the safety, timely permanency and well-being of children and improve due process for families in child abuse/neglect and juvenile cases.

The Supreme Court of Appeals of West Virginia established the West Virginia Court Improvement Program (CIP) Board in 1995 as the body responsible for the oversight of federal CIP grants to the state court system. The purpose of the grants is to improve judicial processes and to develop and implement a plan for systemic improvement. The grants are from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Administration for Children and Families. The Supreme Court Administrative Office's Division of Children's Services implements and manages CIP projects. The board is a multidisciplinary oversight group that evaluates and studies West Virginia's child welfare systems.

In addition to working closely with the court community, it is equally important to forge relationships with child welfare stakeholders across the state. The CIP provides education opportunities and facilitates community outreach. Some examples of those activities for 2023 are outlined below.

- More than 1,450 attendees participated in trainings relevant to child abuse and neglect trends, topics, systems, and services.
- CIP staff provided information on Title IV-E reasonable efforts and other child-related issues as a part of training for new magistrates. Twelve new magistrates were trained in 2023.
- Three judicial juvenile stakeholder meetings were held. These were tailored to individual communities and addressed local issues in abuse and neglect proceedings.
- Virtual and on-site new user trainings were provided to JANIS users and others, as requested.
- Eleven lunch-and-learn sessions were held for child abuse and neglect attorneys.
- The CIP supported conferences provided by the Emergency Shelter Provider Network (ESPN), Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA), and Handle with Care.
- Over 75 West Virginia University College of Law students attended a panel discussion on child abuse and neglect attorney work.
- Five second-year law students participated in the child abuse and neglect externship program.

The CIP is charged with enhancing the quality of hearings for children and parents. Those efforts have included a Multi-Disciplinary Team Project and, during the summer of 2023, the Judicial, Court, and Attorney Measures of Performance (JCAMP) project. CIP staff observed 317 child abuse and neglect court hearings and completed 100 paper case reviews. Staff visited every circuit.

The Parent Resource Navigator (PRN) Project continues to grow. In 2023, 10 counties either implemented or began the process of establishing a PRN. This program is intended to help parents involved in juvenile abuse cases get the support they need to meet the requirements of their improvement plans. The goal is to help parents remediate issues that would otherwise prevent reunification with their children.

For more information about the CIP, see <https://www.courtswv.gov/public-resources/children-juvenile-services/child-abuse-neglect/court-improvement>.



Juvenile Justice Commission

The Juvenile Justice Commission monitors West Virginia's juvenile justice system to ensure it provides safe, nurturing living conditions and rehabilitative services. The commission reviews facilities and programs operated or contracted by the West Virginia Bureau of Juvenile Services and the West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources (DHHR). In addition, the commission looks at strengths, gaps, and needs within juvenile justice processes.

The commission holds quarterly meetings, with at least one meeting per year at a juvenile facility. In 2023, the commission toured the Genesis Youth Crisis Center Laurel Park campus in Harrison County and the Donald R. Kuhn Juvenile Center in Boone County.

In 2023, the commission also held a virtual training session for attorneys who serve as guardians *ad litem* in juvenile competency cases. Dr. Colleen Lillard, DHHR Statewide Forensic Clinical Director, and Twelfth Judicial Circuit (Fayette County) Judge Thomas H. Ewing spoke at the training session.

Members of the Juvenile Justice Commission:

Circuit Judge Phillip Stowers, Chair, Twenty-Ninth Judicial Circuit (Putnam County)
 Molly Arbogast, Executive Director, National Association of Social Workers
 Joseph Armstrong, Administrative Director, Supreme Court of Appeals
 Stephanie Bond, Director of Division of Probation Services
 Nicole Cofer, Director of Division of Magistrate Court Services
 Circuit Judge Jennifer P. Dent, Eleventh Judicial Circuit (Greenbrier and Pocahontas Counties)
 Circuit Judge Thomas H. Ewing, Twelfth Judicial Circuit (Fayette County)
 W. Jesse Forbes, Forbes Law Offices, PLLC
 Jacob Green, Superintendent, West Virginia Schools of Diversion and Transition
 Olubunmi Kusimo-Frazier, Community Member
 Cindy Largent-Hill, Director of Division of Children's Services
 Sophia Mills, Community Attorney
 Circuit Judge Stacy Nowicki-Eldridge, Twenty-Fifth Judicial Circuit (Boone and Lincoln Counties)
 Circuit Judge R. Steven Redding, Twenty-Third Judicial Circuit (Berkeley, Jefferson, and Morgan Counties)

Circuit Judge David Sims, First Judicial Circuit (Brooke, Hancock, and Ohio)

Debra Sullivan, Community Member

Lisa Tackett, Director of Division of Court Services

The Rev. Rue Thompson, Diocese of Wheeling

Kristin Walter, Coordinator of the Office of Student Support and Well-Being, West Virginia Board of Education

The Rev. Matthew Watts, MJ Watts Ministries, Charleston

Circuit Judge C. Carter Williams, Twenty-Second Judicial Circuit (Hampshire, Hardy, and Pendleton Counties), Ex-Officio

Staff:

Jessica Brown, Child Welfare/Juvenile Justice Field Coordinator
 Gabe Conley, Court Improvement Program Field Coordinator
 Brenda Hoylman, Child Welfare/Juvenile Justice Manager
 Amy Sadler, Court Improvement Program Field Coordinator
 Lorri Stotler, Administrative Specialist for the Division of Children's Services

For more information about the commission, see <https://www.courtswv.gov/public-resources/child-welfare-juvenile-services/child-welfare-juvenile-justice/juvenile-justice-commission>.

Mass Litigation

The Supreme Court of Appeals of West Virginia established the Mass Litigation Panel in 1996, making it the first of its type in the United States. “Mass Litigation” is defined in Trial Court Rule 26.04(a). The panel develops and implements case management and trial methods to fairly and expeditiously resolve mass litigation referred to the panel by the chief justice, according to West Virginia Trial Court Rule 26.05(a).

The Mass Litigation Panel consists of seven active or senior status circuit judges who are appointed by the chief justice with the approval of the Supreme Court. The chief justice designates one panel member to serve as its chair, according to W. Va. Trial Court Rule 26.02.

Chair in 2023:

Senior Status Judge Alan D. Moats was chair until his term expired on June 30. He was recalled to active service on July 7 to assist the panel in the Opioid Litigation.

Judge Joanna I. Tabit, Thirteenth Judicial Circuit (Kanawha County), was designated to serve as chair beginning July 1, 2023. She passed away on September 29.

Judge Gregory L. Howard of the Sixth Judicial Circuit (Cabell County) was designated to serve as chair from October 20, 2023, through June 30, 2024.

Panel Members:

Judge Jack Alsop, Fourteenth Judicial Circuit (Braxton, Clay, Gilmer, and Webster Counties)

Judge Jay M. Hoke, Twenty-Fifth Judicial Circuit (Boone and Lincoln Counties)

Judge Christopher J. McCarthy, Fifteenth Judicial Circuit (Harrison County), was a member until his term expired on June 30, 2023.

Judge Derek C. Swope, Ninth Judicial Circuit (Mercer County), was a member until his retirement on December 31, 2023.

Judge Robert E. Ryan, Twenty-First Judicial Circuit (Grant, Mineral, and Tucker Counties), was appointed to the panel on November 22, 2023.

Judge Jason A. Wharton, Fourth Judicial Circuit (Wirt and Wood Counties), was appointed to the panel on June 27, 2023.

Judge Ronald E. Wilson is not a current member of the Mass Litigation Panel; however, he was assigned to the Asbestos Personal Injury Litigation while serving on the panel and continued to preside over that litigation in 2023.



Chair of the Mass Litigation Panel, Judge Alan D. Moats, and Judge Derek C. Swope

Kimberley R. Fields is counsel to the Mass Litigation Panel and Debra K. Brogan is the mass litigation paralegal.

Mass Litigation Panel annual reports are available at <https://www.courtswv.gov/lower-courts/mass-litigation-panel/annual-reports>.



The Mass Litigation Panel meets regarding the anticipated distribution of settlement proceeds from the West Virginia First Qualified Settlement Fund at the Kanawha County Courthouse on October 13.

Court Notes

Awards

Former Justice Wins Spirit Award

Chief Justice **Beth Walker** introduced former Justice **Thomas McHugh** when the Youth Leadership Association and its Youth in Government Program honored him with the 2023 Spirit of the Mountains Lewis N. McManus YLA Service Award at the West Virginia State Capitol on April 26.



Chief Justice, Three Judges Become Bar Foundation Fellows

Supreme Court Chief Justice **Beth Walker** and three circuit judges were recognized as Bar Foundation Fellows at the 25th Annual Fellows Dinner in Charleston on April 20. The judges were Fifth Judicial Circuit (Calhoun, Jackson, Mason, and Roane Counties) Judge **Anita Harold Ashley**; Twenty-Second Judicial Circuit (Hampshire, Hardy, and Pendleton Counties) Judge **H. Charles Carl, III**; and Seventeenth Judicial Circuit (Monongalia County) Judge **Perri Jo DeChristopher**. Every year, the Bar Foundation recognizes attorneys and judges whose professional, public, and private careers have demonstrated outstanding dedication to the legal profession and the welfare of their communities.



NCSC Recognizes Intermediate Court of Appeals' Innovative Court Space

In April 2023, the National Center for State Courts recognized West Virginia for its outstanding submission in the Court Space reDesign Challenge. West Virginia was selected for its Intermediate Court of Appeals (ICA) Satellite Courtrooms Implementation entry. Two representatives were invited to participate in a workshop in Indiana. In June, Ashley Deem, deputy clerk of the Intermediate Court of Appeals, and Thomas "T.J." Morrison, courtroom technology coordinator in the Division of Technology and Facility Services, attended on behalf of the state judiciary.



SANDRA KELLEY NAMED 2023 COURT REPORTER OF THE YEAR



Sandra Kelley was named Court Reporter of the Year in October. She has been a voice writer for Twenty-Third Judicial Circuit (Berkeley, Jefferson, and Morgan

Counties) Judge David Hammer for three years and a court reporter for a total of 12 years. Kelley is a native of Fairmont and now lives in Bunker Hill.

Probation Officer Finalist for National Award



Marion County Juvenile Probation Officer **Brent King** was a finalist for the national Jefferson Awards for public service. King and his wife, Swapna, attended a New York City gala where he was honored for his work with the Marion County Teen Court Program. The Jefferson Awards are given by Multiplying Good, an organization Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis co-founded. In November 2022, Officer King won a monthly Jefferson Award. In the summer of 2023, he learned that he was chosen as a regional winner, making him a finalist for the national Jefferson Award for Outstanding Public Service Benefitting Local Communities.

Show Featuring Treatment Courts Wins Regional Award

A podcast featuring West Virginia treatment courts won a regional Edward R. Murrow award in May. The “Us & Them” podcast segment called “Court of Second Chances” (<https://wvpublic.org/court-of-second-chances>) aired on December 7, 2022. It featured Sixth Judicial Circuit (Cabell County) Judge **Gregory Howard** and Thirteenth Judicial Circuit (Kanawha County) Judge **Joanna Tabit**. “Us & Them” is hosted by Trey Kay and airs on West Virginia Public Broadcasting. The Edward R. Murrow Awards are given by the Radio Television Digital News Association.



THIRD JUDICIAL CIRCUIT OFFICER NAMED PROBATION OFFICER OF THE YEAR

James H. “Jim” Conley, Jr., was named the 2023 Steven P. Gitlin, II, Probation Officer of the Year on December 18. Conley works in the Third Judicial Circuit (Doddridge, Pleasants, and Ritchie Counties). His nomination said he is a dedicated officer who is quick to offer assistance to everyone. Third Judicial Circuit Judge **Timothy Sweeney** and Chief Probation Officer **Crystal Jenks** described him as a well-respected, dedicated professional who is focused on promoting community safety. Conley is photographed with Judge Sweeney and Chief Probation Officer Jenks.



Transitions

Barbour County

Thomas B. Hoxie was sworn in as a judge in the Nineteenth Judicial Circuit (Barbour and Taylor Counties) on February 24. Governor Jim Justice appointed him to replace Judge **Alan D. Moats**, who retired December 31, 2022. Judge Hoxie is a lifelong resident of Barbour County. At the time of his appointment, he was Barbour County prosecuting attorney. He previously practiced law in Barbour and Taylor Counties, primarily focusing on civil litigation.



Angela Stalnaker was appointed magistrate in Barbour County on January 17. She replaced **Howard Benjamin Propst**, who retired. Magistrate Propst had served since November 26, 2018. Magistrate Stalnaker is a former magistrate assistant.

Berkeley County

Pamela Patterson, court reporter for Judge **Laura Faircloth** in the Twenty-Third Judicial Circuit (Berkeley, Jefferson, and Morgan Counties), retired June 30. **Wendy Wesley** began working for Judge Faircloth as an Electronic Recording Operator on July 3.

Helen Lutzow became the new Electronic Recording Operator for Judge Steven R. Redding in the Twenty-Third Judicial Circuit (Berkeley, Jefferson, and Morgan Counties) on June 21. She replaced **Claudette Gaujot-Turner**.

Braxton County



Judge **Richard Facemire** retired June 30. He was elected to the bench in the Fourteenth Judicial Circuit (Braxton, Clay, Gilmer, and Webster Counties) in 2000 and re-elected in 2008 and 2016. Before taking the bench, Judge Facemire was a law clerk for several federal judges, an assistant attorney general (1985), and

Clay County prosecuting attorney (1985-1992). From 1992 until he took the bench, Judge Facemire practiced law in Braxton County and worked as an attorney for the West Virginia Bureau of Child Support Enforcement.

Governor Justice appointed **Michael W. Asbury** to replace Judge Facemire. He was sworn into office in four ceremonies held on September 13 and 14 in the four counties in the Fourteenth Judicial Circuit (Braxton, Clay, Gilmer, and Webster Counties). Judge Asbury is a native of Clay County and a graduate of West Virginia State University and West Virginia University College of Law. He practiced law in Clay County and served clients throughout the area he now serves as a judge.



Cabell County

Dolores Brown began working as a court reporter for Judge **Alfred E. Ferguson** in the Sixth Judicial Circuit (Cabell County) on April 17. She replaced **Amanda Pickens**.



Sixth Judicial Circuit (Cabell County) Judge **Christopher Chiles** retired October 31. Then-Governor Earl Ray Tomblin appointed him to the bench in 2014. He was elected later that year and re-elected in 2016. At the time of his appointment, he was Cabell County prosecuting attorney, a position he had held since 1990. He was also an assistant prosecuting attorney (1982-1990) and maintained a private civil law practice (1980-1990).

Grant County

Twenty-First Judicial Circuit (Grant, Mineral, and Tucker Counties) Judge **Lynn Nelson** retired June 30. Judge Nelson was born in Keyser and raised in Ridgeley.



He was elected to the bench in 2008 and re-elected in 2016. He previously was the Mineral County prosecuting attorney (1989-2008). Judge Nelson was a little league baseball and football coach for many years and, since 2000, has been the lead singer in the band "Public Menace."

Robert Edward "Booter" Ryan was sworn in as a judge in the Twenty-First Judicial Circuit (Grant, Mineral, and Tucker Counties) on July 26. Governor Justice appointed him to replace Judge Nelson. Judge Ryan has a bachelor's degree in political science from West Virginia University (1996)

and a law degree from Washington and Lee University School of Law (2000). He was named Lawyer of the Year in Railroad Law in 2019.

Maria Keplinger, court reporter for Judge **Lynn Nelson** in the Twenty-First Judicial Circuit (Grant, Mineral, and Tucker Counties), retired July 7. **Kelli Jennings** started work as Electronic Recording Operator for Judge Ryan on July 21.

Grant County Circuit Clerk **Angela Van Meter** resigned in September 2023 and deputy clerk **Melanie Biggs** was appointed as the new circuit clerk.

Hampshire County



Twenty-Third Family Court Circuit (Hampshire, Mineral, and Morgan Counties) Judge **Glen R. Stotler** retired December 31. Then-Governor Earl Ray Tomblin appointed him to the bench in 2011.

He was elected in 2012 and re-elected in 2016. Before he became a judge, he practiced law in Berkeley Springs for 20 years. From 1985 until 2008, he also served as a Morgan County commissioner. Before that, he was a member of the Morgan County Board of Education and the Town of Bath Council.

Hancock County

Hancock County Magistrate **Michael White** retired July 31 after more than 10

years of service. He was replaced by Magistrate **Stephen Svokas**, who started work on August 24.

Kanawha County



Circuit Judge **Louis "Duke" Bloom** retired June 30. He was elected to the bench in the Thirteenth Judicial Circuit (Kanawha County) in 2000 and re-elected in 2008 and 2016. He

was a past president of the West Virginia Judicial Association and chair of the Court Improvement Program Behavioral Health Care Committee. He also served as a Kanawha County commissioner (1987-2000), on numerous boards, and was active on West Virginia State Bar committees.

Governor Justice appointed **Stephanie Abraham** to the bench to replace Judge Bloom, and she was sworn in on September 14. Judge Abraham's legal career included

civil litigation, corporate matters, and representing state and county governmental agencies. She was also a solo practitioner engaged in real estate and property law (2017-2023). She was an instructor at Southern West Virginia Community and Technical College in Logan and served on the school's Board of Governors.

Governor Justice appointed **Dave Hardy** to the bench in the Thirteenth Judicial Circuit (Kanawha County) on December 13 to replace Judge **Joanna Tabit**,

who passed away September 29. Judge Hardy previously was a member of the Charleston City Council (1995-2001), the Kanawha County Commission (2001-2017), and was secretary of the West Virginia Department of Revenue (2017-2023). While a cabinet secretary, he was also the governor's designee on several state boards.



Marshall County



C. Richard Wilson was sworn in as a judge in the Second Judicial Circuit (Marshall, Tyler, and Wetzel Counties) on March 13. Governor Justice appointed him to replace Judge **David**

Hummel, Jr., who resigned November 23, 2022. Judge Wilson is a lifelong resident of Marshall County. In his 30-year legal career, he was in private practice and served as a Marshall County assistant prosecuting attorney, a fiduciary commissioner, and a mental hygiene commissioner.

McDowell County

Magistrate **Steve Cox** retired June 30. He was replaced by **Mark Shelton**, who started work on August 14. At the time of his appointment, Magistrate Shelton was chief deputy of the McDowell County Sheriff's Department and had been a law enforcement officer for 33 years.

Carolyn DiLorenzo, court reporter for Judge **Edward Kornish** in the Eighth Judicial Circuit (McDowell County), retired June 30. Judge Kornish has been using freelance court reporters since her retirement.

Twelfth Family Court Circuit (McDowell and Mercer Counties) Judge **Mary Ellen Griffith** retired October 31. Then-Governor Joe Manchin appointed her to the bench in 2006. She was elected in 2008 and re-elected in 2016. She previously worked at the Appalachian Research and Defense Fund in Princeton (1988-1991) and then was in private practice. In 2001, she established Child Law Services, Inc., the state's only legal service program for children.





Angela Alexander Walters was sworn in as a judge in the Twelfth Family Court Circuit (McDowell and Mercer Counties) on December 20. Governor Justice appointed her to replace Judge Griffith.

At that time, she was an assistant attorney general working for the West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources in southern West Virginia. She previously worked for a law firm in Princeton, the Public Defender's Office, and the Mercer County Prosecuting Attorney's Office.

Mercer County



Ninth Judicial Circuit (Mercer County) Judge **Derek C. Swope** retired December 31. Judge Swope was elected to the bench in 2000 and re-elected in 2008 and 2016. He was born and

raised in Baltimore, Maryland. He has a 1975 bachelor's degree from the College of William and Mary and a 1978 law degree from Washington & Lee University School of Law. Before he became a judge, he was in private practice at the law firm of Sanders, Austin, Swope & Flanigan (1978-2000). Judge Swope was a longtime member of the Mass Litigation Panel.

Monongalia County



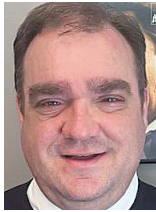
Perri Jo DeChristopher was sworn in as a judge in the Seventeenth Judicial Circuit (Monongalia County) on January 27. Governor Justice appointed her to replace Judge **Phillip D. Gaujot**,

who retired December 31, 2022. Judge DeChristopher was in her second term as Monongalia County prosecuting attorney when she was appointed. She previously was an assistant prosecuting attorney. She has served on numerous boards and committees and was president of the West Virginia Prosecuting Attorneys Institute (2018-2020).



Seventeenth Judicial Circuit (Monongalia County) Judge **Susan Tucker** retired April 28. She was elected to the bench in 2008 and re-elected in 2016.

She previously was the Monongalia County prosecuting attorney (1985-1995) and was director of the Fraud Investigations Unit of the Workers' Compensation Division of the West Virginia Bureau of Employment Programs (1995-1997). She also worked both as a solo practitioner and for law firms.



Paul W. Gwaltney, Jr., was sworn in as a judge in the Seventeenth Judicial Circuit (Monongalia County) on June 2. Governor Justice appointed Judge Gwaltney to replace Judge Tucker. Judge Gwaltney

was an active criminal defense attorney and civil litigator until December 2020 when he opened Gwaltney Law Office to represent individuals in criminal and juvenile abuse cases.

Pleasants County

Dawna M. Taylor began working as a magistrate on November 4. She replaced Magistrate **John Paul Riggs**, who resigned. She had been a magistrate assistant in Pleasants County since August 19, 1996. She assisted three magistrates, as well as special and senior status magistrates, during her tenure. She transferred to the Pleasants County Magistrate Court from the West Virginia State Police, where she served as detachment secretary of the Harrisville and St. Marys detachments for more than 11 years.

Preston County

Peggy Pase was sworn into office as a magistrate on November 3. She was appointed to a seat left vacant by the September 5 death of Magistrate **Cindy Diann McCrobie**. Magistrate Pase graduated from Central Preston Senior High in 1986 and worked as a union laborer for 18 years. She earned her bachelor's degree in legal studies from West Virginia University at Parkersburg and her master's degree in legal studies from Washington University School of Law.

Raleigh County



Thirteenth Family Court Circuit (Raleigh, Summers, and Wyoming Counties) Judge **Louise E. Goldston** retired January 31. Judge Goldston

served as a family law master (1994-2002) and

was elected to the family court bench in 2002. She was re-elected in 2008 and 2016. She served as president of the Family Court Judicial Association in 2005, 2015, and 2016. Before her judicial service, she was a senior law clerk to U.S. District Judge Elizabeth V. Hallanan (1984-1990) and was in private practice (1990-1994).



Leigh M. Lefler was sworn in as a judge in the Thirteenth Family Court Circuit (Raleigh, Summers, and Wyoming Counties) on April 28. Governor Justice appointed her to replace Judge Goldston.

At the time of her appointment, she was a Raleigh County assistant prosecuting attorney. Previously, she served as a guardian *ad litem*, participated in the Raleigh County Juvenile Drug Court, and helped develop the Raleigh County Family Treatment Court.

Tyler County

Magistrates **Mary Dotson** and **Michael Griffin** retired April 30. Magistrate Dotson was appointed magistrate in 2015, elected in 2016, and re-elected in 2020. Magistrate Griffin was a magistrate for 24 years and previously served as sheriff for eight years.

Lynnsie Cline and former Tyler County Sheriff **Brian Weigle** were appointed to replace them.

Wetzel County



Chief Wetzel County Magistrate **Judith P. Goontz** retired May 31 after 42 years of service. Before becoming a magistrate, she worked one year for the Wetzel County

Board of Education, three years for the West Virginia State Road Commission (now the West Virginia Department of Highways), and four years in the Wetzel County Circuit Clerk's Office, for a total of 51 years of public service.

Roger Spragg was appointed to replace Magistrate Goontz and began work July 1. He has a bachelor's degree in criminal justice from Fairmont State University and, at the time of his appointment, he was a probation officer in the Second Judicial Circuit (Marshall, Tyler, and Wetzel Counties) for about a year. He retired from the Wetzel County Sheriff's Office in August 2022 after 24 years as a law enforcement officer. He also previously served as a municipal court judge in Paden City, Sistersville, and Middlebourne.

Wirt County

Emma Zirkle began working as a court reporter for Judge **Robert Waters** in the Fourth Judicial Circuit (Wirt and Wood Counties) on June 12. She replaced **Teresa Noce-Reedy**.

degree from Marshall University, a master's degree in criminal justice administration from West Virginia State University, and a doctorate in criminal justice from Liberty University.



Unified Judicial Application Analyst **Irene Hunt** retired May 31. She was a former deputy magistrate court clerk in Kanawha County and worked 25 years in the judicial system.



Dermond Sigmon, net/communication technician in the Division of Technology Services, retired May 31. He worked for the Supreme Court for 11 years.



Megan Farrell Woodyard became deputy chief counsel to the Intermediate Court of Appeals (ICA) on April 4, 2023. At the time, she was an assistant counsel to the ICA, a job she had held for eight months.

Prior to working for the ICA, she was of counsel to Steptoe & Johnson PLLC (2020-2022) and practiced at Farrell, White & Legg, PLLC (2009-2020).



Deputy Counsel **Alison Chambers**, former director of judicial education, retired May 31. She worked for the Supreme Court for 27 years.

Administrative Office



Nicole A. Cofer began work January 3 as Director of Magistrate Court Services. She replaced **Olubunmi Kusimo-Frazier**, who resigned September 23, 2022. Ms. Cofer is a

native of Princeton and has a law degree, master's degree in business administration, and master of laws (LLM) in forensic justice from West Virginia University. She also has a bachelor's degree in interdisciplinary studies in natural sciences, with a concentration in neuroscience, from the University of Pittsburgh. She previously served as an assistant attorney general, a Kanawha County assistant prosecuting attorney, and a resource prosecuting attorney with the Prosecuting Attorneys Institute. At the time of her hiring, she was chair of the West Virginia Lawyer Disciplinary Board, on which she served for more than eight years.



Dr. Mallory Watkins began work February 13 as the statistical coordinator for the Administrative Office. She previously was a drug court probation officer in Kanawha

County (2019-2020). Most recently, she was a faculty member at West Virginia State University. She has a bachelor's

Criminal Records Specialist **Rhodesa Hardway** retired July 28. She was a former Putnam County magistrate assistant and worked for the court system for 26 years.

Office of Counsel



Amie Langfitt Johnson began work March 13 as chief counsel for the Supreme Court, replacing **Bruce Kayuha**, who retired December 31, 2022. She has worked for

the Supreme Court for more than 20 years: 12 years as deputy counsel and eight years as a staff attorney for justices. She previously worked at the Attorney General's Office and the West Virginia State Bar. She was chief counsel for the Intermediate Court of Appeals (ICA) from its inception in 2022 until her appointment as chief counsel for the Supreme Court.

Rebecca S. Charles became chief counsel for the Intermediate Court of Appeals (ICA) on April 4, 2023. She previously was an assistant counsel to the ICA, a position she had held since July 5, 2022. She also previously served as an administrative law judge for the Workers' Compensation Office of Judges (2004-2022) and was an attorney for the West Virginia Environmental and Air Quality Boards (1995-2004).

Bar Admissions Administrator



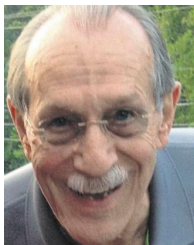
Charleston attorney **Ashton Bias Harrell** became the bar admissions administrator for West Virginia on March 6. A native of Boone County, she attended Marshall University and Florida Coastal School of Law. She previously worked eight years at Lyne Ranson Law Offices.

In Memoriam



Former Tucker County Magistrate **Jane Hamrick Barb** passed away on December 29. She was 90. She was a magistrate (1977-2001), senior status magistrate (2001-2008), and helped

found the Magistrate Association. She was a business owner, led many civic groups, and was the mother of Tucker County Magistrate Riley Barb. She was born July 16, 1933.



Former Cabell County Magistrate **Darrell Gene Black** passed away on November 11. He was 81. Magistrate Black was born March 5, 1942. He served 28 years with the Huntington Police Department,

retiring as a lieutenant. He also owned and operated two small businesses in Huntington. He served as a magistrate for more than 17 years before retiring in July 2018.



Former Ritchie County Circuit Clerk **Rose Ellen Cox** passed away on December 29. She was 82. She worked in the Ritchie County Circuit Clerk's Office for 51 years and five months before her retirement at the end

of 2020. She was born September 28, 1941, in Doddridge County but spent most of her life in Ritchie County.



Marshall County Magistrate Clerk **Christopher Michael DeMuth** passed away on June 25. He was 52. Mr. DeMuth was a deputy magistrate court clerk (2011-2013) and magistrate clerk from 2013

until his death. He was a lifelong resident of Wheeling Island, a 1989 graduate of Wheeling Central Catholic High School, and a 1993 graduate of West Liberty University.



Retired Mineral County Magistrate **David C. Harman** passed away on August 26. He was 74. Magistrate Harman was born and raised in Keyser. He retired in 2016 after serving as a magistrate for 36 years. He was also a member

of the Keyser Volunteer Fire Department for more than 50 years.



Preston County Magistrate **Cindy Diann McCrobie** passed away on September 5. She was 61. Magistrate McCrobie was born November 24, 1961. She taught for many years at Preston High

School, served as a deputy sheriff, and was elected magistrate in 2022.



Former Supreme Court Justice and Wyoming County Circuit Judge **Warren McGraw** passed away on June 14. He was 84. Justice McGraw was born on May 10, 1939. He served in the West Virginia House of Delegates (1968-1972)

and the West Virginia Senate (1972-1985). He also served on the Wyoming County School Board and was the prosecuting attorney there before being elected to the Supreme Court (1999-2004). In 2008, he was elected judge in the Twenty-Seventh Judicial Circuit (Wyoming County) and was re-elected in 2016. He retired on June 21, 2021.



Senior Status Judge **Robert Brand Stone** of Morgantown passed away on November 6. He was 79. He was born on December 18, 1943. He was a law clerk for Chief U.S. District Judge Robert Maxwell, served in the

West Virginia House of Delegates (1971-1974), and was an assistant prosecuting attorney in Monongalia County. In 1985, he was appointed judge and was elected three times. He retired in 2008 and continued as a senior status judge until his death. He helped found the Monongalia County Adult Drug Court and was a member of the Court Improvement Program Oversight Board.



Thirteenth Judicial Circuit (Kanawha County) Judge **Joanna Tabit** passed away on September 29. She was 62. Judge Tabit was born March 15, 1961. She was appointed to the bench in October

2014 and elected in 2016. At the time of her death, Judge Tabit was treasurer of the West Virginia Judicial Association, chair of the Mass Litigation Panel, a member of the Juvenile Justice Commission, and a former member of the Business Court Division. Prior to becoming a judge, she was a law clerk to former Supreme Court Justice Thomas E. McHugh, an assistant and then deputy attorney general, and a partner with Steptoe & Johnson, PLLC.



Former Mercer County Family Court Judge **Edwin "Ed" Buron Wiley** passed away on March 1. He was 81. Judge Wiley was born in 1941. He served in the Air Force and had a private law practice before becoming an

assistant U.S. attorney for the Southern District of West Virginia and an assistant prosecuting attorney in Mercer County. In 1990, he was appointed family law master for Mercer, Summers, and McDowell Counties, and he went on to become the area's first family court judge when that position was created in 2002. He retired in 2008.



Randolph County Courthouse

West Virginia Judiciary 2023 Annual Report



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