

West Virginia Judiciary

2024 Annual Report



West Virginia Judiciary 2024 Annual Report

Chief Justice

Honorable Tim Armstead

Justices

Honorable Elizabeth D. “Beth” Walker

Honorable John A. Hutchison

Honorable William R. “Bill” Wooton

Honorable C. Haley Bunn

Clerk of Court

C. Casey Forbes

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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On the Cover: Ornate stained glass ceiling of the Marion County Courthouse in Fairmont, WV.

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From the Chief

Chief Justice Tim Armstead

On behalf of the Supreme Court of Appeals of West Virginia, I am pleased to report on the work of the West Virginia judiciary in 2024.

In 2024, there were 39,833 cases filed in West Virginia circuit courts, a less than 1 percent increase from 2023. There also were 18,079 cases filed in family courts, a 2.6 decrease from 2023, and there were 175,454 cases filed in magistrate courts, a 4.1 percent decrease from 2023.

The Supreme Court received 787 case filings, a 5.7 percent increase from 2023, and issued 520 merits decisions, a 9.2 percent increase over the previous year. The Intermediate Court of Appeals (ICA) received 519 case filings, about a 10 percent decrease from 2023. The ICA also issued 408 merits decisions, a 13.5 percent increase from 2023.

Since I joined the Supreme Court in September 2018, the court's goal has been to decide cases fairly and expeditiously, to increase access to courts and to improve transparency and accountability. In 2024 we achieved several milestones.

Addressing Abuse and Neglect

In the past decade, West Virginia has experienced an exponential increase in the number of child abuse and neglect cases. Concurrently, there has been an alarming decrease in the number of attorneys performing guardian *ad litem* (GAL) services in these cases. While there are only about 165 attorneys who are trained and permitted to accept

appointments as GALs or respondent attorneys, there were 5,472 child abuse and neglect cases filed in circuit courts in 2024, about 13.7 percent of the total case filings. At the Supreme Court, there were 190 abuse and neglect appeals filed in 2024, slightly over 24 percent of the total filings, compared to 251 abuse and neglect appeals in 2023, about 33.8 percent of total filings that year.

The Supreme Court offers free virtual training to become a GAL. The Court Improvement Program (CIP) also offers free monthly virtual lunch-and-learn opportunities and facilitates in-person meetings with circuit judges and attorneys and other stakeholders in individual circuits to discuss and resolve local challenges. The CIP also has partnered with the West Virginia University College of Law to train law students how to handle child abuse and neglect appointments. For more information on the work of the CIP on this issue, see page 48.

In 2024 the CIP and the Supreme Court Administrative Office produced a video to educate parents about the abuse and neglect court process. Protecting children is the highest priority of our court system. We know that – if they are safe – children are happiest growing up in their own homes. Unfortunately, there are many cases, such as those involving physical or sexual abuse, where that is not possible. For those cases in which it may be possible to reunify families, this video is a tool to help educate parents about what they need to do to retain or regain custody of their children. The video is available online here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w6sQov7rF1U>.



The Supreme Court of Appeals of West Virginia heard arguments on the first day of its Spring 2024 term on January 9, 2024. It marked Justice Tim Armstead's first day as the 2024 chief justice.

Technology Advancements

On January 25, 2024, the Supreme Court announced that docket information about public cases filed in West Virginia magistrate courts was being made available online for free: <https://MCRSearch.courtswv.gov>. Search results typically include birthdates of defendants, case filing dates, charges and dispositions, and a list of documents in the court file. To obtain case documents, users must call or visit the magistrate court clerk's office where the case was filed.

In July the court announced the completion of the statewide WV CourtPLUS/E-File. The electronic filing and case management system for circuit and family courts is the culmination of more than a decade of work by hundreds of judicial employees. West Virginia is one of a handful of states that maintains a standardized statewide case management system for lower courts, and we will complete the appellate courts project in mid-2025.

The Supreme Court in 2024 also carefully reviewed bids to provide an electronic court case management solution that will combine case, document, and e-file management for circuit, family, and magistrate courts into one system. The statewide implementation of WV CourtPLUS/E-File means that, until that next project is complete, we have a system in place that provides better access to records in each of our 55 counties.

Civics Education

In 2024 the Court also worked to expand public understanding and confidence in the court system. My fellow justices and I want to ensure

that students throughout West Virginia understand how our courts work. We want them to know how courts protect Constitutional rights and that citizens can rely on courts to obtain justice and seek legal redress from harm. Those are the goals of our longest-running civics education program, LAWS (Legal Advancement for West Virginia Students).

For LAWS, the Supreme Court holds an argument docket outside of the Capitol twice a year and invites high school students to attend. The Intermediate Court of Appeals (ICA) has a similar program, called ICA

On-Campus, in which it hears oral arguments on college campuses throughout the state. In both programs, local attorneys or judges visit classrooms before the argument docket day to help students understand the court process and the cases they will hear. Those students then attend the arguments for the case or cases they have studied. After the argument is over, the students have an opportunity to talk to the attorneys who argued the cases. During lunch, the justices talk with them informally about how our court operates. In 2024, the Supreme Court heard an argument docket at Kanawha County's Herbert Hoover High School and at Wood County's Williamstown Middle-High School. The ICA heard arguments at Fairmont State University and at Davis and Elkins College.



Our commitment to civics education led the Supreme Court to create the Judicial Learning Center. In its first full year of operation in 2024, about 1,000 people visited, including people from 29 states and seven other countries. The center occupies two rooms across the hall from the Supreme Court Courtroom and the hallway itself. It has exhibits geared toward adults and children. There are informative wall panels, interactive electronic games, and a judicial scale and document stamp that children can play with.



Chief Justice Tim Armstead spoke to students after Supreme Court arguments at Williamstown Middle/High School in Wood County, WV, on October 8, 2024, as part of the LAWS program.



The Supreme Court held an admission ceremony in the Supreme Court Courtroom on June 4, 2024, welcoming lawyers being admitted into West Virginia State Bar.



Chief Justice Tim Armstead met with second- and third-grade students from Alban Elementary in St. Albans on April 25, 2024.



Chief Justice Tim Armstead spoke with students when the Supreme Court heard arguments at Herbert Hoover High School in Kanawha County on March 13, 2024, as part of the LAWS program.



Chief Justice Tim Armstead addressed the media at the launch of the Magistrate Case Record Search system.

Statewide Transition of Judicial Officers, Staff

The Supreme Court Administrative Office spent the bulk of 2024 preparing for a major transition in judicial personnel across the state. The West Virginia Constitution authorizes the Legislature to create circuit and family courts and allocate the number of judges in each circuit. Likewise, the Legislature has the authority to determine the allocation of magistrates. In 2023, the Legislature used that authority to add a net gain of five new circuit judge positions, one new family court judge, and ten new magistrates. It also redrew the boundaries of several judicial circuits and one family court circuit.

As a result of those changes and the May 2024 judicial elections, approximately one-fourth of the circuit court judges and family court judges and about one-fifth of the magistrates will be new to their positions when they take office on January 1, 2025. In 2024 the Administrative Office and current judges trained the new judges and magistrates, helped them hire staff, and provided needed furniture and equipment.

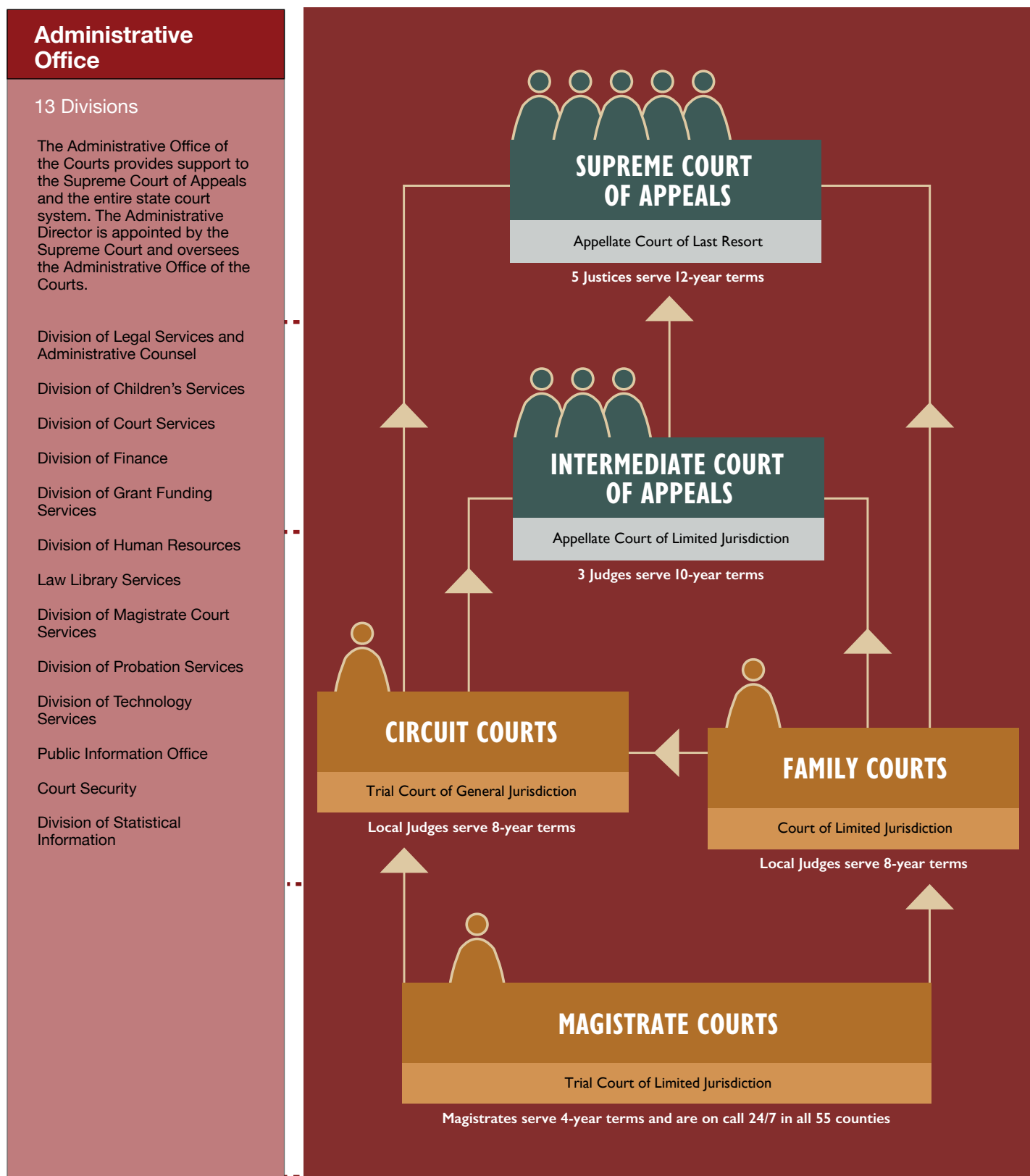
On January 1, 2025, we also will welcome a new Supreme Court Justice and a new judge on the Intermediate Court of Appeals (ICA). Morgan County attorney Charles S. Trump IV was elected in May 2024 to replace retiring Justice John Hutchison, and Charleston attorney Ryan White was elected to replace retiring ICA Chief Judge Tom Scarr.

We also transitioned to new leadership in the Administrative Office in 2024. Administrative Director Joe Armstrong notified us of his planned retirement in 2025 and Deputy Administrative Director Keith Hoover was promoted to Administrative Director. Although the change will take effect on January 1, 2025, Hoover spent the fall reorganizing and streamlining the work of the Administrative Office.

I invite you to read more about these programs – as well as other work of the West Virginia court system – in this annual report. It has been a pleasure and an honor to serve as Chief Justice in 2024.

West Virginia Judicial System

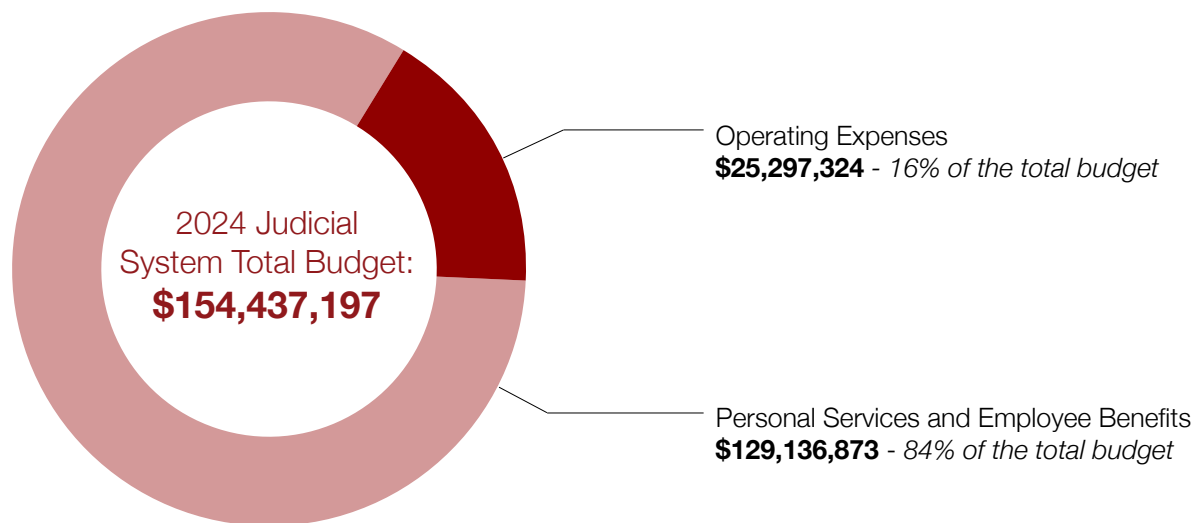
Organizational Chart



Judicial System Budget

Fiscal Year 2024

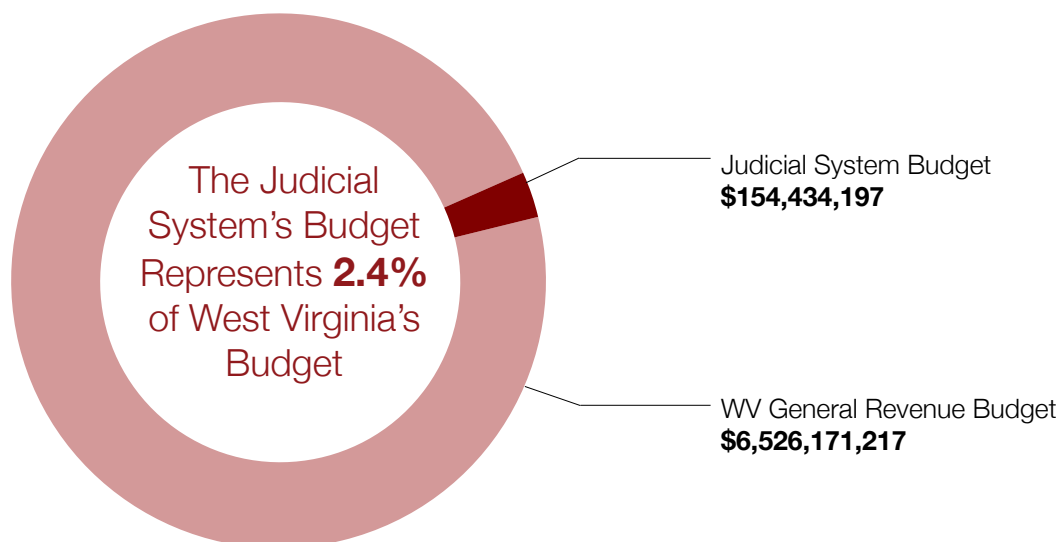
July 1, 2023 - June 30, 2024



State of West Virginia Budget

Fiscal Year 2024

July 1, 2023 - June 30, 2024



2024 Year in Review

January

Justices Attend Legislative Meetings

Supreme Court of Appeals justices and Intermediate Court of Appeals judges attended Gov. Jim Justice's final State of the State address in the House of Delegates Chamber in the West Virginia State Capitol on January 10, 2024. The annual speech kicks off the 60-day legislative session. During the session, Chief Justice Tim Armstead presented the Supreme Court's 2024 budget request to the House Finance Committee on January 15 and to the Senate Finance Committee the next day. He was accompanied by Justices Beth Walker, John Hutchison, William R. Wooton and Haley Bunn. ▼



Magistrate Court Case Information Available Online for Free

The Supreme Court of Appeals announced January 25 that docket information about magistrate court cases statewide was available online to the public for free for the first time through the link <https://MCRSearch.courtsww.gov>. Users can search by name or case number, and the system will generate a filing date, birthday of a defendant, and status of a case, among other information. Users must call or visit a magistrate court clerk to see documents and get copies. Public access terminals also are available in clerk offices. ▼



February

Weddings on a Day Easy to Remember

Sixth Judicial Circuit (Cabell County) Judge Gregory L. Howard, Jr., Thirteenth Judicial Circuit (Kanawha County) Judge Maryclaire Akers and Seventeenth Judicial Circuit (Monongalia County) Judge Paul W. Gwaltney were among the judges who decorated their courtrooms and opened them to couples for weddings on Valentine's Day and Leap Day, February 29.



Students visit Supreme Court

Several student groups visited the Supreme Court Courtroom and West Virginia Judicial Learning Center in 2024. Eighth graders from Braxton, Marion, McDowell and Putnam Counties visited on February 12 and eighth graders from Barbour, Grant, Marshall, Preston and Raleigh Counties visited on February 26 as part of the Youth Leadership Association's (YLA) Youth in Government program. On February 20, West Virginia University College of Law externs watched oral arguments and talked to the justices. The externship trains and encourages law students to work on child abuse and neglect cases.



March

ICA Hears Arguments at Fairmont State University

The Intermediate Court of Appeals (ICA) heard arguments in four cases at Fairmont State University on March 19 as part of its ICA On Campus program. After listening to the arguments, students had an opportunity to talk to the attorneys who argued each case. At the conclusion of the docket, ICA judges answered questions about the judiciary. The ICA hears an argument docket twice a year on a college or university campus.



Justices Focus on Civics Education

Chief Justice Tim Armstead and Justice Haley Bunn met with students from Weirton Madonna High School in the Supreme Court courtroom on March 7. Chief Justice Armstead and Justices Beth Walker and John Hutchison participated in the first annual Civics Education Day at the Culture Center on March 11 in a program which was organized by the West Virginia Civics Coalition. ►



Supreme Court Hears Arguments at Herbert Hoover High School

The Supreme Court of Appeals heard an argument docket at Kanawha County's Herbert Hoover High School on March 13 as part of its Legal Advancement for West Virginia Students (LAWS) civics education program. Students from Herbert Hoover, Capital High School, Roane County High School and Sissonville High School watched arguments in real cases, debriefed the attorneys who argued and had lunch and a question-and-answer session with the justices. Since LAWS was established in 1999, more than 7,000 students from 37 counties have participated.



April

Supreme Court Hosts Legislature

On April 15 the Supreme Court of Appeals held an open house and information session for members of the West Virginia Legislature in the Supreme Court Courtroom. Lawmakers also were able to tour the West Virginia Judicial Learning Center, which opened in December 2023. The Legislature was in Charleston for interim meetings. ▼



SUPREME COURT HEARS ARGUMENTS AT WVU COLLEGE OF LAW

The Supreme Court of Appeals heard arguments in four cases on April 17 at the West Virginia University College of Law. The Supreme Court holds an argument docket at the state's only law school once a year. Chief Justice Tim Armstead and Justices John Hutchison, William R. Wooton and Haley Bunn are alumni. ►



SUPREME COURT JUDGES WVU MOOT COURT COMPETITION

The Supreme Court of Appeals judged the West Virginia University College of Law Baker Cup Moot Court on April 16 in the Supreme Court Courtroom in Charleston. In the competition, second-year law students write appellate briefs and present oral arguments. Two finalists argue before the Supreme Court, and the justices choose a winner. The 2024 winner was Katherine Whittington from Sissonville, and the runner-up was Tyler Keller from Moundsville. ▼



Spanish Translations of Emergency Court Forms

In April, the Supreme Court of Appeals issued Spanish-language versions of forms used in domestic violence, personal safety and mental health cases. The West Virginia judiciary has long provided translated forms and telephone interpreters on a case-by-case basis, but litigants in domestic violence, sexual violence, and mental hygiene cases need such forms quickly. They now don't



have to wait for translation. The Spanish forms are available at <https://www.courtsww.gov/public-resources/court-forms>

May

Family Treatment Court Participants Run Rim to Rim Race

Two Fayette County Family Treatment Court participants, one of their sons, and Family Treatment Court Coordinator Heather Lucas participated in the New River Gorge Rim to Rim Race on May 4. "To say they were proud of themselves would be an understatement – absolutely made my day!" Lucas said. "[The son] placed second in his age group!" The six-mile race started on the south side of Fayette Station Road, followed a road 1,300 feet down to the bottom of the New River Gorge, across the river, and back up 1,300 feet to the other side of the gorge, with a short trail section to the finish line. The steepest incline is 20 percent. ►



Pictured are Angie Willis and her son, Family Treatment Court Coordinator Heather Lucas, and Lanna Massey.

Law Day Celebration

To celebrate Law Day on May 1, the Supreme Court hosted an awards ceremony for the West Virginia State Bar's Women in the Profession Committee's annual contest for students in grades K-12. This year's Law Day theme was "Voices of Democracy." The program opened with remarks from State Bar President Shannon Smith, and a history of the Law Day program was presented by Circuit Judge Bridget Cohee of the Twenty-Third Judicial Circuit (Berkeley, Jefferson, and Morgan Counties). Justice Beth Walker presented the elementary student awards, Justice Haley Bunn presented the middle school awards, and Justice John Hutchison presented the high school awards. Justice Bill Wooton announced the overall winner, Preston County homeschool student Natalie Bolyard, who then performed her original song entitled "Let Not Your Voice be Silenced."



June

Lawyers Admitted to Practice in West Virginia

One of the duties of the Supreme Court of Appeals is to admit attorneys to the practice of law in West Virginia. The court holds several admission ceremonies throughout the year in the Supreme Court Courtroom. In 2024 there were three admission ceremonies, on January 24, June 4 and October 22. ►



July

Raleigh County Treatment Court Graduations

The Raleigh County Family Treatment Court celebrated the graduation of its first family on July 10 in the Raleigh County Courthouse in Beckley. On August 1, the Raleigh County Veterans Treatment Court celebrated the graduation of three participants. The Raleigh County Day Report Center is the primary service provider for both programs and works with the Beckley Veterans Affairs on the veterans' treatment court. ▼



August

REMOTE DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND SEXUAL ASSAULT PROGRAM EXPANDS

The West Virginia Judiciary's Remote Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Program allows domestic violence and sexual assault victims to file petitions and make court appearances remotely from a shelter, so they do not have to be in the same room with those they allege harmed or threatened them. The program became available in Harrison County on August 15, in Marion and Monongalia Counties on November 19 and in Greenbrier County on December 13. It also is available in Cabell, Harrison, Jefferson, Kanawha, Lincoln, Mason, Ohio, Wayne and Wood Counties. Court Service Director Lisa Tackett explained the program at the opening events in each county. ►



Fourteen Graduate from Nicholas Treatment Courts

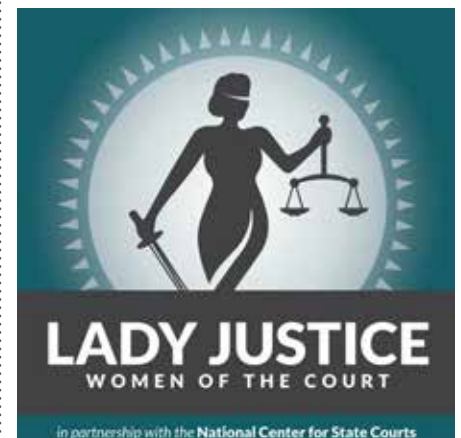
The Nicholas County Adult Drug Court and Family Treatment Court held a combined graduation ceremony for 14 people on August 21. Six of those graduates were in the adult drug court and eight participated in the family treatment court. The graduation was held in Circuit Judge Stephen O. Callaghan's courtroom in the Nicholas County Courthouse in Summersville. ▼



September

Lady Justice Podcast Begins Season Five

Supreme Court Justice Beth Walker launched Season Five of Lady Justice: Women of the Court, the podcast she does with Arkansas Supreme Court Justice Rhonda Wood. In the Sept. 16 episode, they talked with Constitutional Law Professor Randy Barnett about the U.S. Constitution and state constitutions. In other 2024 episodes, the justices and guests talked about civics education and the legacy of the late U.S. Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O'Connor, judicial ethics, artificial intelligence, use of social media by public officials, equal access to justice and reforming legal education. See <https://ladyjustice.podbean.com>.



ICA HEARS ARGUMENTS AT DAVIS AND ELKINS COLLEGE ON CONSTITUTION DAY

The Intermediate Court of Appeals of West Virginia (ICA) heard an argument docket at Davis and Elkins College as part of its ICA On Campus program. The event was held on Constitution Day, which is recognized annually on September 17 as the anniversary of the signing of the U.S. Constitution. The ICA hears an argument docket outside of Charleston twice a year. Because this visit coincided with Constitution Day, the three ICA judges and members of their staff also presented lectures and led discussions in the college's political science and criminology classes during that week. They also visited West Virginia Wesleyan College, Elkins High School, and Tygarts Valley High School, and those students were invited to watch the arguments at Davis and Elkins College.



October

Supreme Court Hears Arguments at Williamstown Middle-High School

The Supreme Court of Appeals heard an argument docket at Wood County's Williamstown Middle/High School on October 8 as part of its Legal Advancement for West Virginia Students (LAWS) civics education program. Students from Jackson County's Ripley and Ravenswood High Schools and Wood County's Parkersburg, Parkersburg South, and Williamstown High Schools heard arguments in three cases. Local attorneys visited the schools to explain the appellate process and to help students study the cases beforehand. On the day of the court visit, students had an opportunity to question the attorneys who argued each case and talk to the justices. Parkersburg High School ROTC opened the day with a flag ceremony.



November

Justices Meet with Groups Studying Leadership

Justices Beth Walker and Haley Bunn met with Leadership West Virginia's class of 2024 in the Supreme Court Courtroom at the Capitol in Charleston on November 21. Justice Bunn also spoke with a group from Generation West Virginia in the Supreme Court Courtroom on December 6. ►



December

New Justice Charles Trump Takes Oath of Office

Morgan County attorney Charles S. Trump, IV, resigned from the West Virginia Senate on the afternoon of December 10 and was sworn in as a justice on the Supreme Court about an hour later. The private ceremony in the Supreme Court Courtroom was attended by close family and staff. Justice Trump had served as chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee for 10 years. He previously served in the House of Delegates (1993-2006), where he was minority leader and minority whip, and as Morgan County Prosecutor (1989-1992). He was elected in May to a 12-year term beginning January 1, 2025. He replaced Justice John Hutchison, who did not run for re-election. ►



Justice Haley Bunn Sworn in For New Term

Supreme Court Justice Haley Bunn was sworn in for a 12-year term on the Supreme Court on December 30. She was elected in May 2024, after having been appointed to an unexpired term in April 2022. Senior U.S. District Court Judge John Copenhaver, Jr., delivered the oath of office during a small ceremony with her family in attendance. In 2012, Judge Copenhaver also swore in Justice Bunn for her first public appointment, as assistant U.S. attorney for the Southern District of West Virginia. ▼



Advisory Committee To Review Code Of Judicial Conduct

Supreme Court Chief Justice Tim Armstead on December 30 announced the appointment of an eight-member advisory committee to review the West Virginia Code of Judicial Conduct and make recommendations for updates. The code establishes ethical standards for the conduct of judges and judicial candidates. The committee may also propose changes to ethics rules for attorneys, if it deems them necessary. See page 23 for a list of committee members.

AMENDMENTS TO WV RULES OF CIVIL PROCEDURE

On January 31, 2024, the Supreme Court of Appeals of West Virginia entered a 164-page order adopting extensive amendments to the West Virginia Rules of Civil Procedure that will go into effect on January 1, 2025. The rules were initially adopted in 1959; the last substantial update was in 1998. In 2019 then-Chief Justice Beth Walker appointed a committee to look at whether and how the rules should be revised. Then-Circuit Judge Joseph Reeder led the panel, which also included attorneys Anthony Majestro, Tom Hurney, Zak Ritchie, Amanda Taylor and Marc Williams. The committee submitted proposed changes to the Supreme Court in 2021, they were published for public comment in 2022, and the court heard oral arguments on the proposals in 2023. ▼



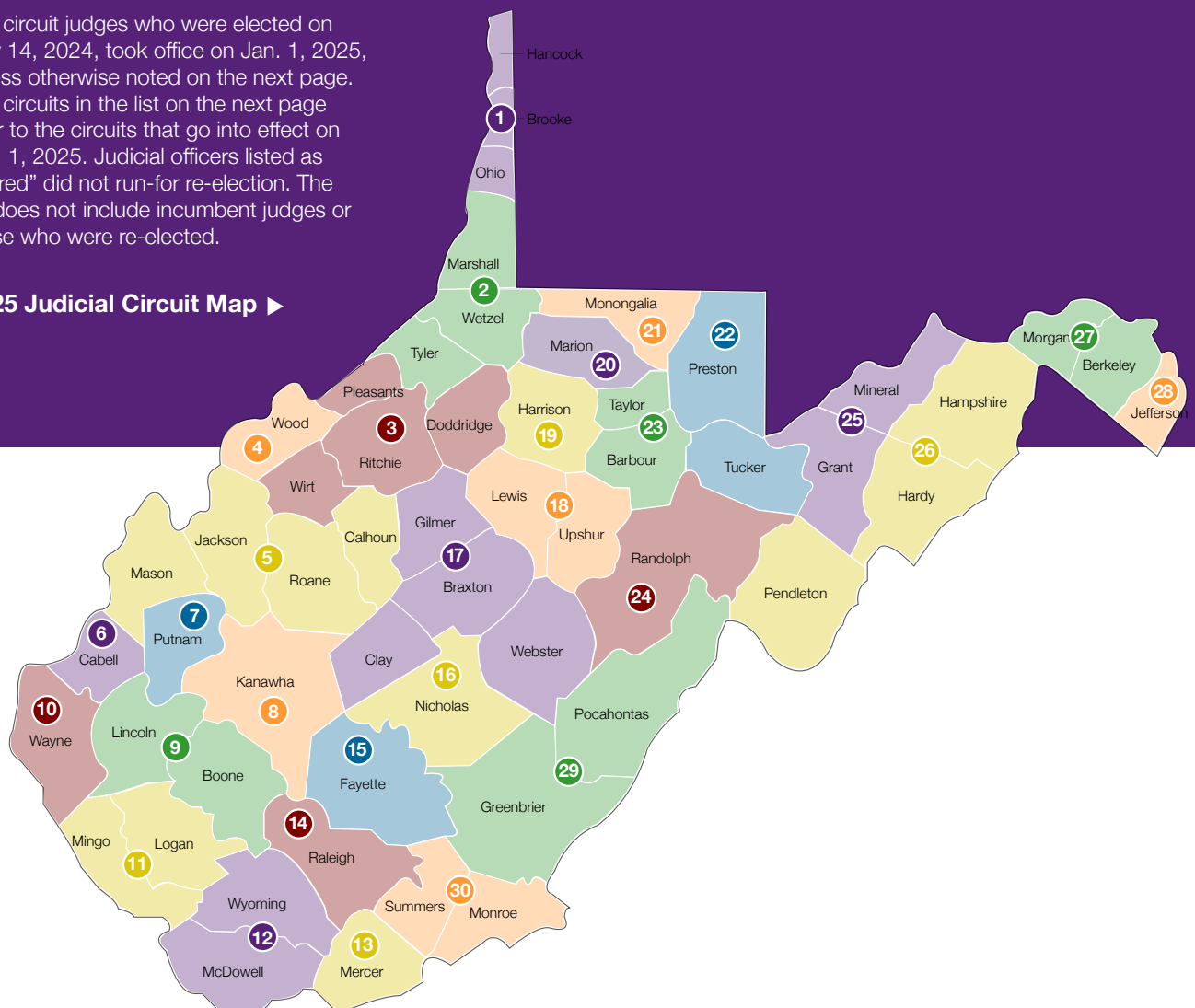
West Virginia Judicial Realignment

The West Virginia Constitution gives the Legislature the power to create and realign circuit boundaries for circuit courts and family courts as well as to determine the number of judges in each circuit and the number of magistrates in each county. (W.Va. Constitution Article 8, Sections 5, 10 and 16). In 2023 the Legislature passed HB 3332, which realigned circuit court and family court boundaries. The law also increased the number of circuit judges by five to 80, the number of family court judges by one to 48 and the number of magistrates by 10 to 169 (including one added in 2023). The changes went into effect with the 2024 election.

Circuit Court Judges

The circuit judges who were elected on May 14, 2024, took office on Jan. 1, 2025, unless otherwise noted on the next page. The circuits in the list on the next page refer to the circuits that go into effect on Jan. 1, 2025. Judicial officers listed as “retired” did not run-for re-election. The list does not include incumbent judges or those who were re-elected.

2025 Judicial Circuit Map ▶



Joseph Barki defeated First Judicial Circuit (Brooke, Hancock and Ohio Counties) Judge **Ronald Wilson**, who served 44 years on the bench.

Sean “Corky” Hammers was elected in the Sixth Judicial Circuit (Cabell County). He previously had been appointed to fill the seat when Judge **Christopher Chiles** retired on Oct. 31, 2023. Judge Hammers took the bench on Jan. 2, 2024.

Chad Lovejoy was elected to replace Sixth Judicial Circuit (Cabell County) Judge **Alfred Ferguson**, who retired after 47 years on the bench.

Judge **Joseph Reeder** was re-elected in the Seventh Judicial Circuit (Putnam County) but resigned on Aug. 30, 2024, when he was appointed to be a federal magistrate judge. He had been a circuit judge for 12 years. **Mark Sorsaia** was appointed to fill the seat and started work on Nov. 6, 2024.



New judges attending the Fall Judicial Conference in Wheeling, WV

Family Court Judge **Sabrina Deskins** defeated incumbent Circuit Judge **Miki Thompson** in the Eleventh Judicial Circuit (Logan and Mingo Counties). Judge Thompson then retired after 16 years combined on both the family and circuit benches in Mingo County.

Joshua J. Miller was elected to replace Judge **Micheal Cochrane** in the Twelfth Judicial Circuit (McDowell and Wyoming Counties). Judge Cochrane had been on the bench in Wyoming County for three years and did not run for re-election. The realignment combined the Wyoming County circuit with the McDowell County circuit, where there were two judges: Judge **Rick Murensky** and Judge **Edward J. Kornish**. Judge Murensky was re-elected. Judge Kornish, who had been a judge for five years, did not run.

Ryan Flanigan was elected in the Thirteenth Judicial Circuit (Mercer County). His predecessor, Judge **Derek Swope**, retired Dec. 31, 2023. Judge Flanigan was appointed to serve the remainder of the term and he was sworn in on Aug. 16, 2024.

Michael Froble was elected to replace Judge **H.L. Kirkpatrick** in the Fourteenth Judicial Circuit (Raleigh County). Judge Kirkpatrick retired after 29 years on the bench.

Todd A. Kirby was elected to replace Judge **Robert Burnside** in the Fourteenth Judicial Circuit (Raleigh County). Judge Burnside retired May 31, 2024, after 36 years on the bench. Judge Kirby was appointed to serve the remainder of the term, and he took office on July 23, 2024.

Tom Fast was elected to replace Judge **Paul Blake** in the Fifteenth Judicial Circuit (Fayette County). Judge Blake retired after more than 19 years on the bench.

Jasmine R.H. Morton was elected to replace Judge **Jack Alsop** in the Seventeenth Judicial Circuit (Braxton, Clay, Gilmer and Webster Counties). Judge Alsop retired after more than 28 years on the bench.

D. Andrew McMunn was elected to replace Judge **James Matish** in the Nineteenth Judicial Circuit (Harrison County). Judge Matish retired after 24 years on the bench.

Joseph F. Shaffer, Jr., was elected to replace Judge **Thomas Bedell** in the Nineteenth Judicial Circuit (Harrison County). Judge Bedell retired after 32 years on the bench.

Matthew S. Delligatti was elected to replace Judge **David Janes** in the Twentieth Judicial Circuit (Marion County). Judge Janes retired after 24 years on the bench.

Michael Simms defeated **Paul W. Gwaltney, Jr.**, in the Twenty-First Judicial Circuit (Monongalia County). Judge Gwaltney had been on the bench for more than one year.

Cody Pancake defeated **Robert Ryan** in the Twenty-Fifth Judicial Circuit (Grant and Mineral Counties). Judge Ryan had been on the bench for more than one year.

John H. Treadway, Jr. defeated Judge **C. Carter Williams** in the Twenty-Sixth Judicial Circuit (Hampshire, Hardy, and Pendleton Counties). Judge Williams was a judge for eight years.

Patrick I. Via was elected to replace Judge **Jennifer Dent** in the Twenty-Ninth Judicial Circuit (Greenbrier and Pocahontas Counties). Judge Dent was a judge for eight years and did not run for re-election.

Amy L. Mann was elected to replace Judge **Robert Irons** in

the Thirtieth Judicial Circuit (Monroe and Summers Counties). Judge Irons retired after 32 years on the bench.

New circuit judge seats:

Leslie L. Maze was elected in the Third Judicial Circuit (Doddridge, Pleasants, Ritchie, and Wirt Counties).

Richard Lindsay II was elected in the Eighth Judicial Circuit (Kanawha County).

Greg Tucker was elected in the Sixteenth Judicial Circuit (Nicholas County).

Hilary M. Bright was elected in the Twenty-Second Judicial Circuit (Preston and Tucker Counties).

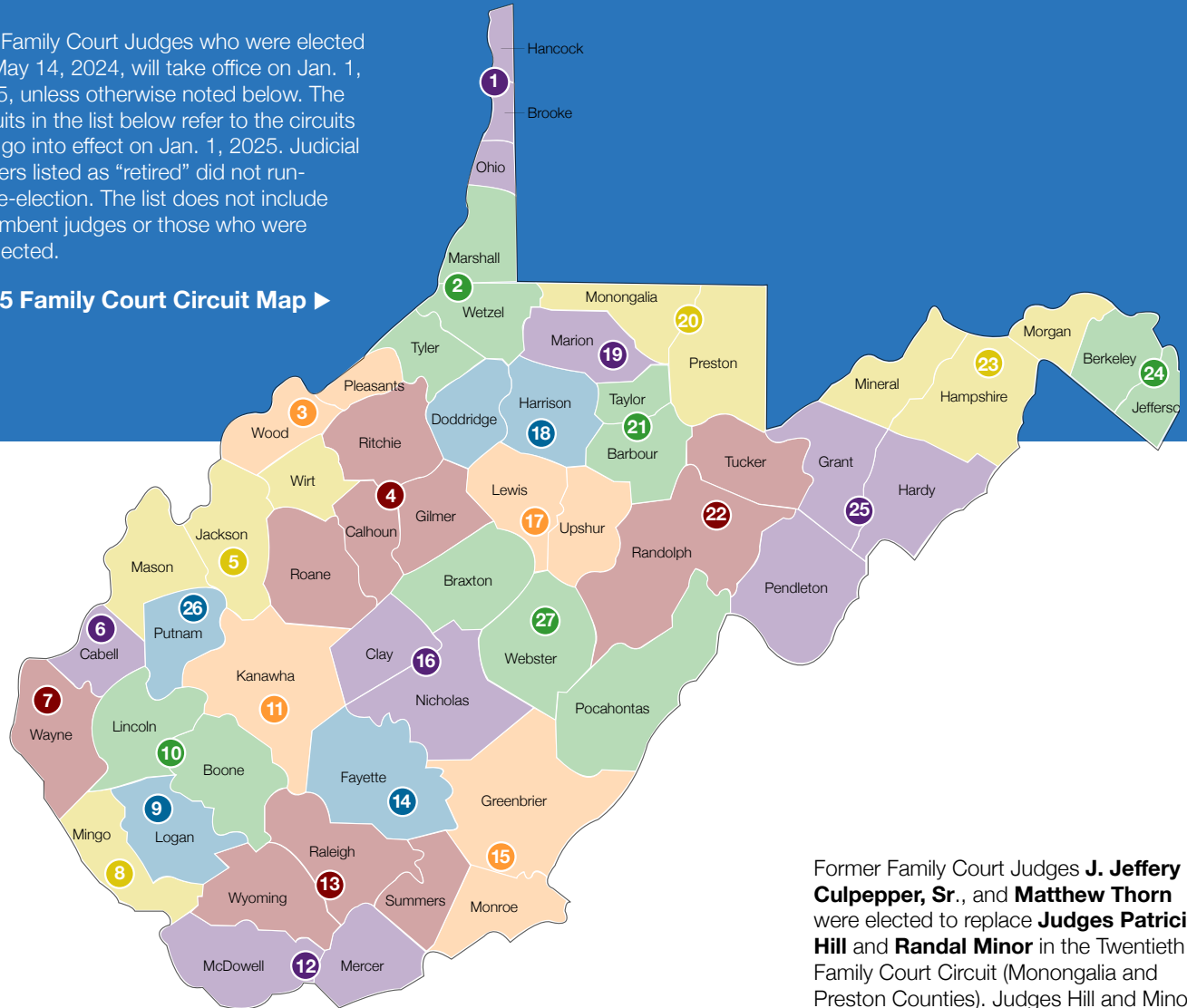
Former Circuit Judge **Jaymie Godwin Wilfong** was elected in the Twenty-Fourth Judicial Circuit (Randolph County).

Catie Wilkes Delligatti was elected in the Twenty-Seventh Judicial Circuit seat left vacant when Judge **Bridget Cohee** ran for and won the new seat in the Twenty-Eighth Judicial Circuit (Jefferson County).

Family Court Judges

The Family Court Judges who were elected on May 14, 2024, will take office on Jan. 1, 2025, unless otherwise noted below. The circuits in the list below refer to the circuits that go into effect on Jan. 1, 2025. Judicial officers listed as “retired” did not run for re-election. The list does not include incumbent judges or those who were re-elected.

2025 Family Court Circuit Map ►



Debra L. Steed defeated **Ellen Smith** in the Third Family Court Circuit (Wood and Pleasants Counties). Judge Smith resigned in September 2024 after almost eight years on the bench. Judge Steed was appointed to fill the seat early and took office on October 21.

Betty Clark Gregory was elected to replace Judge **Steven Jones** in the Fourth Family Court Circuit (Calhoun, Gilmer, Ritchie, and Roane Counties). Judge Jones, who had been on the bench for eight years, did not run.

Sixth Family Court Circuit (Cabell County) Judge **Jason Spears** was appointed Cabell County Prosecutor in January 2024 after seven years on the bench. **Sarah E. Dixon**, who won the election, was appointed to fill the remainder of the term and took office on July 10, 2024.

Jonathan “Duke” Jewell was elected in the Eighth Family Court Circuit (Mingo County). Incumbent **Sabrina Deskins** successfully ran for circuit court judge.

Kelly Pritt defeated Eleventh Family Court Circuit (Kanawha County) Judge **Lera VanMeter**, who had been on the bench for eight years.

Adam B. Wolfe defeated Judge **Angela Alexander Walters** in the Twelfth Family Court Circuit (McDowell and Mercer Counties). Judge Walters resigned July 12, 2024. Judge Wolfe was appointed to serve the remainder of the term and took office on Sept. 4, 2024.

Richard Grady Ford was elected to replace Judge **David Sanders** in the Fifteenth Family Court Circuit (Greenbrier and Monroe Counties). Judge Sanders retired after 18 years on the bench.

Former Family Court Judges **J. Jeffery Culpepper, Sr.**, and **Matthew Thorn** were elected to replace Judges **Patricia Hill** and **Randal Minor** in the Twentieth Family Court Circuit (Monongalia and Preston Counties). Judges Hill and Minor retired, and each had served on the bench for 16 years.

Meredith L. Haines was appointed to a seat in the Twenty-Third Family Court Circuit (Hampshire, Mineral and Morgan Counties) and took office on January 19, 2024, then was elected to a full term in May 2024. She replaced Judge **Glen Stotler**, who retired Dec. 31, 2023, and had been a judge for 12 years.

Chris Glover defeated Twenty-Fourth Family Court Circuit (Berkeley and Jefferson Counties) Judge **David Camilletti**, who had been a judge for 10 years.

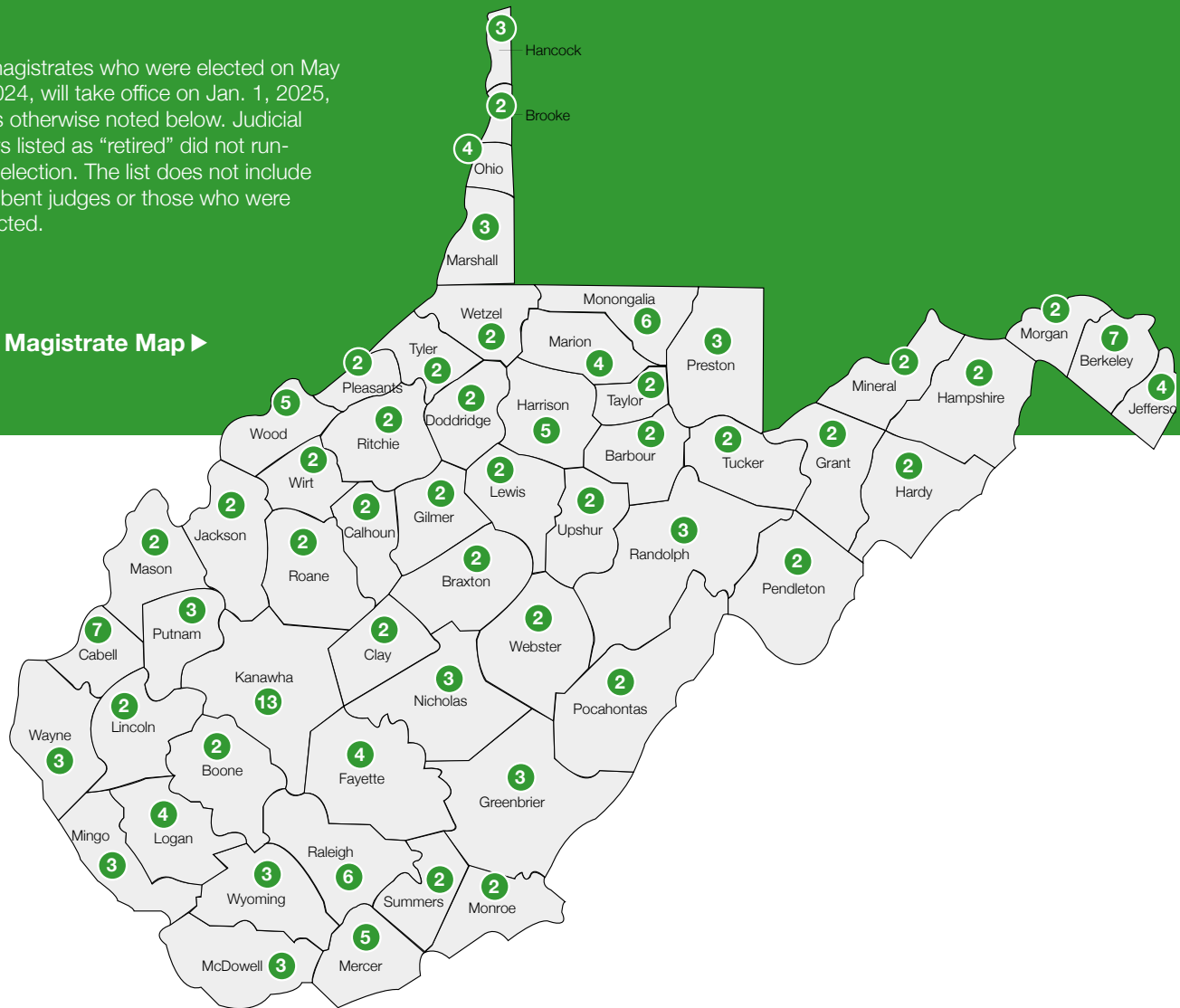
New Family Court Seat:

Laura Sutton was elected to fill the new seat in the new Twenty-Fourth Family Court Circuit (Berkeley and Jefferson Counties).

Magistrates

The magistrates who were elected on May 14, 2024, will take office on Jan. 1, 2025, unless otherwise noted below. Judicial officers listed as “retired” did not run for re-election. The list does not include incumbent judges or those who were re-elected.

2025 Magistrate Map ▶



Berkeley County: **David DeHaven** defeated Magistrate **Jennifer Lemon**, who had been a magistrate since 2022. She resigned on Sept. 20, 2024. Magistrate DeHaven was appointed to serve the remainder of her term and took office on Sept. 23, 2024.

Braxton County: **John Skidmore** was elected to replace Magistrate **David Singleton**, who retired after serving 10 years.

Brooke County: **Robert C. Catlett** was elected to replace Magistrate **Daniell Diserio**, who then resigned June 7, 2024. Diserio had been a magistrate for seven years. Catlett was appointed to serve the remainder of Diserio's term and started work July 1.

Cabell County: **Kim Rice-Preece** defeated Magistrate **Winfred Dale Enochs II**. Magistrate Enochs had been appointed to fill a vacancy on Jan. 16, 2024. He resigned Nov. 29, 2024.

Clay County: **Wesley Armes** was elected to replace Magistrate **Jeff Boggs**, who had been a magistrate for 32 years. **Scott Bass** was elected to replace Magistrate **Charles Rider**, who served 10 years. Boggs and Rider retired.

Fayette County: **Richard Pannell, Jr.** was elected to replace his father, Magistrate **Richard Pannell, Sr.**, who retired after serving six years.

Hampshire County: **Loretta Spencer** was elected to replace Magistrate **Ron DiCiolla**, who retired after serving 12 years.

Hancock County: **Jon Phillips** defeated Magistrate **Ralph Fletcher**, who served four years. Magistrate Phillips resigned Jan. 7, 2025, after one week in office, and was replaced by appointee **Matthew Harvey**, who started work Feb. 8, 2025.

Hardy County: **William Keplinger, Jr.** was elected to replace Magistrate **Shawna Crites**, who retired after serving 35 years.

Jackson County: **Tamra Milhoan** was elected to replace Magistrate **Jackie Casto**, who retired after serving 31 years.

Jefferson County: **Lisa Shirley-Fraley** was elected to replace **Carmela Cesare**, who served four years. Cesare, who ran unsuccessfully for family court judge, resigned Sept. 6. Shirley-Fraley was appointed to fill the remainder of the term and took office on Sept. 7.

Kanawha County: Former Magistrate **Mike Ferrell** was elected to replace Magistrate **Earl Whittington**. Whittington had been appointed to replace Ferrell after Ferrell resigned Jan. 19, 2024. In May 2024 Whittington ran for magistrate in another division and lost.

Lincoln County: **Gary Linville** was elected to replace **Ollie Hunting**. Hunting started work June 24, 2024, after being appointed to serve the remainder of the term of **Kim Clayton**. Clayton served seven years before resigning Feb. 3, 2024.

Logan County: Magistrate **Dwight Williamson** was re-elected but retired Dec. 31, 2024. He had been a magistrate for 24 years. Magistrate **Burley Ferrell** was appointed to fill the position and began work Jan. 1, 2025.

Marion County: **Carrie Biddle** was elected to replace Magistrate **Mark Hayes**, who retired after serving 12 years.

Marshall County: **Kevin W. Cecil** defeated Magistrate **Mark A. Kerwood**, who then retired Aug. 23. Cecil was appointed to fill the remainder of the term and took office on Sept. 3, 2024.

Mason County: Senior Status Magistrate **Gail Roush** defeated incumbent Magistrate **Steve Tarbett**, who served four years.

McDowell County: Magistrate **Ronald Blevins** was elected to replace Magistrate **Daniel W. Mitchell**, who passed away on May 30, 2024, after serving as a magistrate for 12 years. Mitchell had been re-elected earlier in May. **Sarah N. Hall** was appointed to serve in the position from July 1, 2024, to Dec. 31, 2024.

Monongalia County: **William Tennant** was elected to replace Magistrate **James E. Nabors**, who retired after serving 18 years.

Morgan County: **Kim C. Bohrer** was elected to replace Magistrate **Kermit Ambrose**, who retired after serving 20 years. Bohrer resigned and was replaced by appointee Magistrate **Vincent Shambaugh** before the term began on Jan. 1, 2025.

Putnam County: **Sarah Weaver** was elected to replace Magistrate **Ronald Stone**, who had been appointed Jan. 22, 2024, to replace Magistrate **Kylene Brown** after she resigned Dec. 29, 2023. Magistrate Stone did not run and resigned July 5. Magistrate Weaver was appointed early and took office on July 27.

Raleigh County: **John P. Humphrey** was elected to replace Magistrate **Charles R. Humphrey**, who retired after serving 20 years. **Timothy P. Deems** was elected to replace Magistrate **Patsy Lamp**, who served nine months after he was appointed to replace **Richard T. Jones** (who resigned Feb. 16, 2024). Magistrate Lamp also served a four-month appointment as magistrate in 2020. He did not run to retain the seat after either appointment.

Taylor County: **Bobbie Jo Miller** defeated Magistrate **Eva Guthrie**, who served five years. **Donn Paul Kitzmiller** was elected to replace Magistrate **Ricky Reese**, who retired after serving 32 years.

Wayne County: Magistrate **Gary Thompson** was elected to replace Magistrate **Randy Wiles**, who retired June 30 after serving more than

15 years. Magistrate Thompson was appointed to fill the remainder of the term and started work on July 22.

The following people were elected to magistrate seats that were new, effective January 1, 2025.

Berkeley County: **Dottie Yost**
 Jefferson County: **Ralph Lorenzetti**
 Kanawha County: **Lisa Good**, **Todd Chevalier**, and **John Luoni**
 Logan County: **Harold Ray Porter, Jr.**
 Monongalia County: **Tonya Rachelle Rogers**
 Raleigh County: **Matthew Epling**
 Wood County: **Donald Wayne Lindsey, Jr.**



New Magistrate Conference
December 2024

Nicholas County: **Elizabeth Ann Boso** was elected to replace **Sarah Meadows Brown**, who retired after serving 23 years. Brown resigned June 13 and Boso was appointed to serve the remainder of the term, starting July 13. **Bobby J. Holdren** was elected to replace Magistrate **Doren Plummer**, who retired after serving 15 years.

Ohio County: **Thomas J. Howard** was elected to replace Magistrate **Joe Roxby**, who retired after serving 16 years.

Pendleton County: **Morgan M. Basagic** was elected to replace Magistrate **Donald Kopp II**, who retired after serving 24 years.

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 2024.

In 2003, the Legislature passed additional law and legislative rules to fund the grants for courthouses. 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 cfia.wv.gov.



Ohio County
Repaired exterior column covers.



McDowell County
Replaced old windows.

Courthouse Facilities Grant Awards:

County	Improvement	Award Amount
Barbour	Renovate HVAC outdoor unit.	\$100,000
Calhoun	Provide air conditioning to second floor.	\$100,000
Fayette	Replace roof on judicial annex.	\$100,000
Grant	Update communications cabling.	\$74,000
Hancock	Replace roof on magistrate building.	\$88,240
Hardy	Address bat infestation in attic.	\$34,840
Jackson	Replace components on air handler.	\$100,000
Kanawha	Update elevator.	\$100,000
Lincoln	Repair exterior brick.	\$78,311
Logan	Update elevators.	\$100,000
Mason	Repoint masonry of exterior stone fixture.	\$100,000
McDowell	Replace old windows.	\$99,554
Mercer	Restore eight doors.	\$100,000
Mingo	Install fire suppression system.	\$100,000
Nicholas	Replace, upgrade plumbing.	\$100,000
Ohio	Repair exterior column covers.	\$100,000
Preston	Renovations to accommodate new judge.	\$100,000
Putnam	Improve exterior facades, downspouts.	\$12,800
Raleigh	Remove boilers, add dehumidification.	\$16,896
Roane	Upgrade plumbing system.	\$74,880
Summers	Make jury box, restroom and witness stand compliant with ADA.	\$100,000
Tucker	Replace HVAC system in phases.	\$36,000
Upshur	Rehabilitate slate stair treads.	\$70,280
Wayne	Improve portions of two existing roofs.	\$97,869
Wood	Replace three HVAC units on annex roof.	\$100,000
Wyoming	Repair crumbling steps and add railing.	\$82,417

Total \$2,166,085

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 proceeding 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 Section, and the board is chaired by the Supreme Court Administrative Director. W. Va. Code § 51-3-14-17.

2024 board members included the following:

- Circuit Judge Kenneth Ballard, Thirteenth Judicial Circuit (Kanawha County)
- Family Court Judge Jim Douglas, Eleventh Family Court Circuit (Kanawha 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: Major James W. Mitchell (Kanawha County)

Grant amounts vary each year. In the fiscal year that began July 1, 2024, a total of \$317,306 was awarded to 17 county commissions to enhance the security of court facilities.



2024 Staff:

- Evan Lynch, Deputy Director, Supreme Court of Appeals Administrative Office (SCA AO)
- Arthur Angus, Director of Court Security, SCA AO
- Donnie Frye, Deputy Director of Court Security, SCA AO
- Laura Sarver, Grants Accountant, SCA AO
- Jeff Estep, Deputy Director, Justice and Community Services (JCS) Section, West Virginia Division of Administrative Services
- Marty Hatfield, Assistant Director, JCS
- Ellen Vance, Justice Programs Manager, JCS
- Tammy Lemon, Justice Specialist, JCS

The Court Security Board made the following awards in 2024:

Recipient	Amount Approved
Barbour County Commission	\$16,686
Berkeley County Commission	\$16,875
Cabell County Commission	\$2,292
Jefferson County Commission	\$31,000
Kanawha County Commission	\$20,000
Logan County Commission	\$18,796
Mineral County Commission	\$12,638
Mingo County Commission	\$4,387
Monroe County Commission	\$19,500
Morgan County Commission	\$25,000
Nicholas County Commission	\$20,375
Ohio County Commission	\$25,000
Putnam County Commission	\$16,158
Raleigh County Commission	\$19,500
Randolph County Commission	\$25,750
Roane County Commission	\$20,000
Upshur County Commission	\$23,349
Total	\$317,306

2024 Court Boards and Committee Members

Advisory Committee on the Judicial Code of Conduct

The Code of Judicial Conduct in West Virginia was adopted in 1992 and became effective January 1, 1993. The Supreme Court approved revisions in 2015. On December 27, 2024, Chief Justice Tim Armstead created an advisory committee and charged it with reviewing the Code of Judicial Conduct and making recommendations for changes that would improve the integrity and effectiveness of the West Virginia judiciary.

Law Professor Emeritus Forrest “Jack” Bowman, Chair
(Monongalia County)
Senior Status Judge Alan D. Moats (Taylor County)
Circuit Judge Anita Ashley, Fifth Judicial Circuit
(Calhoun, Jackson, Mason and Roane Counties)
Family Court Judge Heather A. Wood, First Judicial Circuit
(Brooke, Hancock and Ohio Counties)
Magistrate Riley Barb (Tucker County)
State Senator Joey Garcia (Parts of Marion and Monongalia Counties)
House Speaker Roger Hanshaw (Clay, Calhoun and Part of Gilmer Counties)
David Sachar, Advisory Member, Director for the Center for Judicial Ethics at the National Center for State Courts

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.

Lee Murray Hall, President (Huntington)
Marc B. Chernenko, Vice President (Wellsburg)
Katherine B. Capito, (Charleston)
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)
Circuit Judge Bridget Cohee, Vice Chair, Twenty-Third Judicial Circuit (Berkeley, Jefferson, and Morgan Counties)
Circuit Judge Jason Wharton, Fourth Judicial Circuit

(Wirt and Wood Counties)
Senior Status Circuit Judge James J. Rowe (Greenbrier County)
Family Court Judge Patricia A. Keller, Sixth Family Court Circuit (Cabell County)
Magistrate Michael D. Flanigan (Mercer County)
Alex Weld, public member (Brooke County)
Margaret Ann O’Neal, public member (Kanawha County)
Dr. John Barnette, public member (Kanawha County)
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 (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 Urtso Sellaro (Westover)
Magistrate Gary Sheff (Kanawha County)
Family Court Judge Brittany Ranson Stonestreet, Eleventh Family Court Circuit (Kanawha County)
Michael Todorovich (Clendenin)
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 run July 1, 2024, through June 30, 2025.

Circuit Judge Maryclaire Akers, Thirteenth Judicial Circuit (Kanawha County)
Circuit Judge Anita Harold Ashley, Fifth Judicial Circuit (Calhoun, Jackson, Mason, and Roane Counties)
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 Robert E. Richardson, Eleventh Judicial Circuit (Greenbrier and Pocahontas Counties)

Division of Probation Services

The Administrative Office of the Court's Division of Probation Services oversees training and establishes policies for 343 probation officers throughout West Virginia and operates all treatment courts (see pages 44-47), the Interstate Compact for Juveniles, and probation databases.

Of the 343 probation officers in West Virginia, 22 are School-Based Probation Officers who work in county school systems to assist truant youth. These officers worked, in some capacity, with more than 9,000 youth during the 2023-2024 school year.

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

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 2024, officers who supervise adults completed approximately 2,735 pre-sentence investigation reports. Those who supervise juveniles prepared 123 pre-disposition reports, participated in 3,077 multi-disciplinary team meetings, and held 5,629 90-day case reviews.

At the end of 2024, the Probation Division was actively supervising 11,264 individuals. Of those, 9,476 were on regular probation (6,088 adults and 3,388 juveniles). An additional 495 were participating in adult drug courts and 153 in juvenile drug courts. Probation officers also supervised 1,140 sexual and child abuse offenders who are on intensive/extended supervision. In 2024, approximately 200 sexual and child abuse offenders were released from the Division of Corrections and Rehabilitation to be supervised by probation officers on extended supervision. Probation officers also supervise many individuals who are out on bond. In 2024, 1,758 adults and 656 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, 2023, and June 30, 2024, 39 youths from other states were transferred to West Virginia to be supervised, and 36 were sent from West Virginia to other states. During the fiscal year, 11 West Virginia runaways, absconders, and accused delinquents were returned to West Virginia and 16 runaway youth were returned to their home states.



Photographed with her family, Stacie Cook was presented the 2024 Probation Officer of the Year Award during a 2024 conference held in Charleston, WV.

Judicial Investigation Commission

The Supreme Court of Appeals of West Virginia established the Judicial Investigation Commission (JIC) in 1982 to investigate complaints against judicial officers. The court recognized that “The 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.”

On December 27, 2024, the Supreme Court appointed an advisory committee to review and propose changes to the Code of Judicial Conduct and Rules of Judicial Disciplinary Procedure. West Virginia University Law Professor Jack Bowman was appointed to lead the committee and JIC Chairman Alan Moats, a senior status judge, is a member. One circuit judge, one family court judge, one magistrate, one member of the House of Delegates and one state senator also were appointed to the committee. The director of the Center for Judicial Ethics at the National Center of State Courts was named an advisory member (see list on page 23). The committee was charged with submitting recommendations to the Supreme Court Administrative Director by December 31, 2025.

The JIC itself consists of nine members (see list on page 23).

The JIC held six regular meetings in 2024. During the calendar year, the JIC

- Received 242 new complaints, of which 62 required formal investigation. Another 31 complaints remained pending from 2023. Of the total 273 complaints handled during the year, 198 were dismissed by the JIC, the commission had no jurisdiction in 17, two were withdrawn by the complainant with the permission of the commission, and one case was not docketed because it was not verified.
- Issued seven admonishments involving eight complaints.
- Filed two formal statements of charges involving eight complaints.
- Issued two probable cause complaints (formal statements of charges) to go to the Judicial Hearing Board for hearing.
- Carried over 46 complaints into 2025.
- Formal discipline was issued by the Supreme Court of Appeals of West Virginia in one statement of charges involving one complaint.

During 2024, the JIC issued 26 advisory opinions. See [Judicial Investigation - Advisory Opinions web page](#).

JIC staff also conduct confidential investigations and prepared reports for the State Fatality Review Team to consider. The team reviews the reports to ensure that court processes, procedures, and actions minimize the risk of harm. In 2024, the JIC received two new fatality review referrals, one of which fell within the JIC's jurisdiction to investigate. The JIC has six fatality review cases pending before regional boards, which last met in 2019.

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>.

Staff also investigate sexual harassment claims within West Virginia's court system. In 2024, the chief counsel conducted two such investigations and presented findings to the Supreme Court's administrative director.

Each year the staff teaches classes in ethics, sexual harassment awareness and prevention, and other topics to groups of judicial officers, mental hygiene commissioners, probation officers, law clerks, prosecutors, public defenders, victim advocates and law enforcement officers.

In 2024, counsel also handled more than 1,483 inquiries from judicial officers/candidates/employees and 1,517 telephone calls from the public for a total of 3,000 inquiries.

Bar Admissions

Throughout the year, the Supreme Court conducts several bar admission 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.

201 INDIVIDUALS WERE ADMITTED TO
THE WEST VIRGINIA BAR IN 2024

3 ADMISSION CEREMONIES WERE HELD

January 24, 2024 October 22, 2024
June 4, 2024



2024 Court Association Officers

Judicial Association



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

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

Secretary: Judge Jacob E. Reger, Twenty-Sixth Judicial Circuit (Lewis and Upshur Counties)

Treasurer: Judge Bridget M. Cohee, Twenty-Third Judicial Circuit (Berkeley, Jefferson and Morgan Counties)

Magistrate Association



President: Joseph L. Mendez (Logan County)

Secretary: Carol L. Wolfe (Gilmer County)

Treasurer: Brenda K. Marshall (Wood County)

District 1 Vice President: Kevin L. Miller (Monroe County)

District 1 Board Representatives: Michael D. Flanigan (Mercer County), C. David Roberts (Wirt County), Jean Ann Luikart (Putnam County), Richard G. Postalwait (Calhoun County) and Jason D. Bennett (Roane County).

District 2 Vice President: Riley Barb (Tucker County)

District 2 Board Representatives: Patricia L. Murphy (Ohio County), Donald W. Harris (Wetzel County), Joe A. Kuhl (Wood County), Benjamin E. Shepler (Randolph County), and one vacant position.

Court Reporters Association



President: Sandra Hickman

Vice President: Vacant

Secretary: Allison Kelley

Treasurer: Kathy Davis

Family Court Association



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

President-Elect: Judge Heather Wood, First Family Court Circuit (Brooke, Hancock and Ohio Counties)

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

Treasurer: Judge Richard Stephens, Twenty-Fourth Family Court Circuit (Berkeley and Jefferson Counties)

Association of Probation Officers



President: Jessica Trippett (Wirt and Wood Counties)

Vice President: Kenneth "Dave" Sales (Nicholas 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)

Lucy Moats (Monongalia County)

Terry Stuck (Brooke, Ohio, and Hancock Counties)

Kevin Runyon (Logan and Mingo Counties)

Darren Smith (Hampshire, Hardy, and Pendleton Counties)

Jerry Swanson (Boone and Lincoln Counties)

Jerrold White (Fayette County)

Heidi Hawkins (Randolph County)

Matt Meadows (Cabell County)

Tracy Newsome (Berkeley County)

Supreme Court of Appeals of West Virginia

2024 Statistical Report

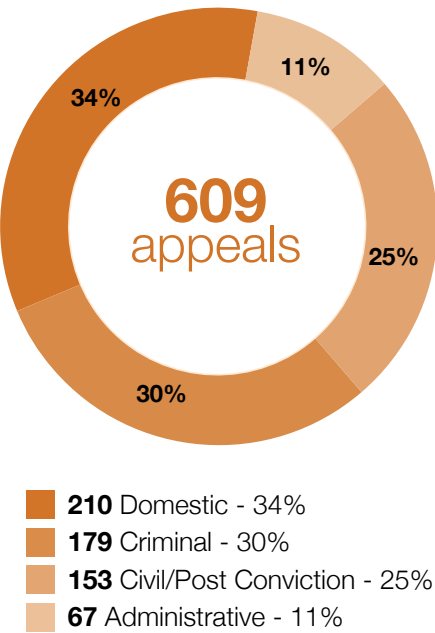
Appeals by Right

	New Filings	Disposed Cases	Clearance Rate
Administrative	7	5	71%
Administrative - Tax	1	1	100%
Workers' Compensation	59	122	207%
Subtotal Administrative	67	128	191%
Abuse & Neglect	190	258	136%
Family	16	9	56%
Domestic Violence	4	3	75%
Subtotal Domestic	210	270	129%
Criminal - Felony	166	114	69%
Criminal - Misdemeanor	9	7	78%
Criminal - Other	4	1	25%
Post Conviction	51	38	75%
Subtotal Criminal	230	160	70%
Civil - Torts, Contracts, Property	54	41	76%
Civil - Probate	1	0	0%
Civil - Other	47	41	87%
Subtotal Civil	102	82	80%
Total Appeals By Right	609	640	105%

Original Jurisdiction/Other

	New Filings	Disposed Cases	Clearance Rate
Misc Rules, Referrals, Prepetitions	22	19	86%
Lawyer Disciplinary	24	31	129%
Lawyer Admissions	0	0	0%
Judicial Disciplinary	2	1	50%
Subtotal Disc./Admissions	48	51	106%
Certified Question	8	7	88%
Subtotal Certified Question	8	7	88%
Habeas Corpus	15	16	107%
Certiorari	1	0	0%
Mandamus	49	40	82%
Mandamus/Prohibition	2	1	50%
Pets for Bail	3	3	100%
Prohibition	52	48	92%
Subtotal Extraordinary Remedies	122	108	89%
TOTAL OJ/OTHER	178	166	93%
2024 Total Filings	787	806	102%

Appeals by Right Distribution



Decisions/Opinions

Spring 2024 Term	
Memo Decisions	349
Signed Opinions	41
Subtotal	390
Fall 2024 Term	
Memo Decisions	106
Signed Opinions	24
Subtotal	130
2024 Yearly Total	
Memo Decisions	455
Signed Opinions	65
2024 Total	520



Justices of the Supreme Court of Appeals of West Virginia 2024

Justice William R. Wooton

Elected June 2020
Raleigh County

Justice C. Haley Bunn

Appointed April 2022
Elected May 2024
Wyoming County

Justice Beth Walker

Elected May 2016
Kanawha County

Chief Justice Tim Armstead

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

Justice John A. Hutchison

Appointed December 2018
Elected June 2020
Raleigh County

2024 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 2024 were as follows:

Judge H. Charles Carl, III

Twenty-Second Judicial Circuit
(Hampshire, Hardy, and Pendleton Counties)

January 10, 2024
Rule 19 Argument in *WV Department of Health and Human Resources v. A.R.*, No. 22-0389.



Judge Thomas H. Ewing

Twelfth Judicial Circuit
(Fayette County)

January 10, 2024
Rule 20 Argument in *Eldercare of Jackson County, LLC v. Rosemary Lambert and Carolyn Hinzman, individually and Co-Executors of the Estate of Delmer Fields*, No. 22-0362.



Judge R. Steven Redding

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

January 23, 2024
Rule 20 Argument in *Thomas B., individually and as parent and next friend of A.B. v. U.S. Hotels and Resort Management, Inc. and Regency Hotel Management, LLC*, No. 22-0468.



Judge Stephanie Abraham

Thirteenth Judicial Circuit
(Kanawha County)

January 24, 2024
Rule 20 Argument in *Bryan Frye v. Erie Insurance Co.*, Case No. 22-0378.



Judge Robert A. Waters

Fourth Judicial Circuit (Wirt and Wood Counties)

April 16, 2024
Rule 19 Argument in *Office of Lawyer Disciplinary Counsel v. James W. Keenan*, No. 23-619.



Judge Richard Craig Tatterson

Fifth Judicial Circuit (Calhoun, Jackson, Mason, and Roane Counties)

September 4, 2024
Rule 19 Argument in *Lawyer Disciplinary Board v. Greer*, Case No. 23-82



Judge Michael W. Asbury, Jr.

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

September 17, 2024
Rule 20 Argument in *WV Department of Human Services v. David B.*, No. 23-275.



Judge Robert E. Ryan

Twenty-First Judicial Circuit
(Grant, Mineral, and Tucker Counties)

September 17, 2024
Two cases consolidated for Rule 19 Argument in *ACE American Insurance Company and ACE Property and Casualty Insurance Company v. AmerisourceBergen Drug Corp. and Bellco Drug Corp.*, Case No 22-564; and *St. Paul Fire and Marine Insurance Co. v. AmerisourceBergen Drug Corp. and Bellco Drug Corp.*, No. 22-575; and Rule 19 Argument in *WVSSAC v. David D.*, No. 22-0390.

Judge Jason A. Wharton

Fourth Judicial Circuit (Wirt and Wood Counties)

February 6, 2024

Two cases consolidated for Rule 20 Argument: *Jay Longerbeam v. Shepherd University*, Case No. 22-609, and *Donald Buracker v. Shepherd University*, Case No. 22-610.



Judge Gregory L. Howard Jr.

Sixth Judicial Circuit (Cabell County)

February 7, 2024

Rule 20 Argument in *SER Ravelo v. WV Board of Dentistry*, Case No. 23-431



Judge Shawn D. Nines

Nineteenth Judicial Circuit (Barbour and Taylor Counties)

March 12, 2024

Rule 20 Argument in *Michael D. Ruble and Brenda K. Ruble v. Matrix Chemical, LLC*, No. 22-0329.



Judge Cindy Scott

Seventeenth Judicial Circuit (Monongalia County)

April 16, 2024

Rule 19 Argument in *Office of Lawyer Disciplinary Counsel v. James W. Keenan*, No. 23-619.



Judge David J. Hardy

Thirteenth Judicial Circuit (Kanawha County)

Sept. 18, 2024

Rule 20 Argument in *Francis Kaess v. BB Land, LLC*, No. 23-522; and Rule 20 Argument in *Jacklin Romeo, et.al. v. Antero Resources*, No. 23-589.



Judge Thomas B. Hoxie

Nineteenth Judicial Circuit (Barbour and Taylor Counties)

September 18, 2024

Rule 19 Argument in *WVSSAC v. Hon. Fry*, No. 24-32.



Judge Sean K. "Corky" Hammers

Sixth Judicial Circuit (Cabell County)

October 23, 2024

Rule 20 Argument in *Jonathan Frame, Superintendent v. Johnny Ray Miller*, No. 22-720.

Intermediate Court of Appeals of West Virginia

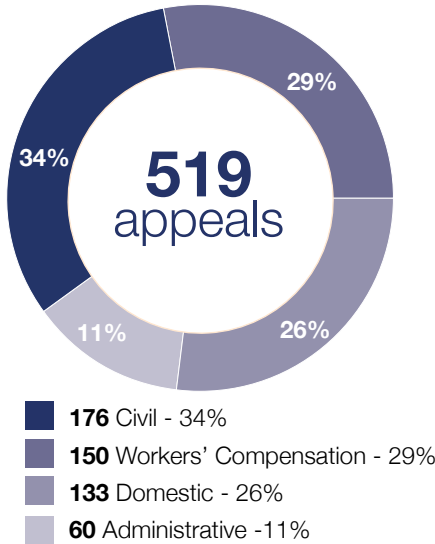
The West Virginia Legislature established the Intermediate Court of Appeals (ICA) in 2021 to hear appeals of civil cases from circuit courts, appeals from family courts (except domestic violence cases), appeals from state agencies or administrative law judges, and workers’ compensation appeals.

2024 ICA Statistics

Appeals by Right

	New Filings	Disposed Cases	Clearance Rate
Administrative	50	57	114%
Administrative - Tax	10	9	90%
Workers' Compensation	150	126	84%
Subtotal Administrative	210	192	91%
Family	133	147	111%
Subtotal Domestic	133	147	111%
Civil - Torts, Contracts, Property	90	112	124%
Civil - Probate	1	4	400%
Civil - Other	85	74	87%
Subtotal Civil	176	190	108%
Total Appeals By Right	519	529	102%

Appeals by Right Distribution



Decisions/Opinions

Spring 2024 Term	
Memo Decisions	210
Signed Opinions	23
Subtotal	233
Fall 2024 Term	
Memo Decisions	162
Signed Opinions	13
Subtotal	175
2024 Yearly Total	
Memo Decisions	372
Signed Opinions	36
2024 Total	408



Judges of the Intermediate Court of Appeals of West Virginia 2024

Judge Charles O. Lorensen

Appointed April 2022
Kanawha County

Judge Daniel W. Greear

Appointed December 2021
Kanawha County

Chief Judge Thomas E. Scarr

Appointed December 2021
Cabell County

2024 Visiting Judges

When a judge is unable to serve, the chief justice assigns a circuit court judge to serve. The visiting judge then participates in all private conferences and votes on that case. The visiting judges in 2024 were as follows:

Judge Joseph K. Reeder

Twenty-Ninth Judicial Circuit
(Putnam County)

January 9, 2024
Rule 19 Argument in *Alliance Coal, LLC v. Richard Heath*, No. 23-ICA-339;
and
Rule 19 Argument in *CCBCC, Inc. v. Erick S. Boles*, No. 23-ICA-256.



Judge Michael J. Olejasz

First Judicial Circuit (Brooke, Hancock and Ohio Counties)

January 10, 2024
Rule 20 Argument in *CONSOL of Kentucky, Inc. v. Terry Bentley*, No. 23-ICA-321.



Judge Robert E. Ryan

Twenty-First Judicial Circuit (Grant, Mineral, and Tucker Counties)

February 6, 2024
Two cases consolidated for Rule 20 Argument in *Brian Cunningham, in his capacity as Director of the Public Employees Insurance Agency, and Mark D. Scott, Geoff S. Christian, Amanda D. Meadows, Jared Robertson, Damita Johnson, Jason Myers, Michael Cook, William Milam, and Michael T. Smith, in their capacities as members of the Public Employees Insurance Agency Finance Board, v. Air Evac EMS, Inc.*, No. 23-ICA-127; and *Air Evac EMS, Inc. v. Brian Cunningham, in his capacity as Director of the Public Employees Insurance Agency, and Mark D. Scott, Geoff S. Christian, Amanda D. Meadows, Jared Robertson, Damita Johnson, Jason Myers, Michael Cook, William Milam, and Michael T. Smith, in their capacities as members of the Public Employees Insurance Agency Finance Board*, No. 23-ICA-135.



Judge Maryclaire Akers

Thirteenth Judicial Circuit (Kanawha County)

May 22, 2024
Rule 19 Argument in *Barry Barr v. Brent Jackson, Lynn Perkins, Hedgesville Real Estate, LLC, VIP Gentlemen's Club LLC d/b/a Lust Gentlemen's Club, and West Virginia Sports Promotions, Inc.*, No. 23-ICA-337.



Judge C. Richard Wilson

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

May 22, 2024
Rule 19 Argument in *Barry Barr v. Brent Jackson, Lynn Perkins, Hedgesville Real Estate, LLC, VIP Gentlemen's Club LLC d/b/a Lust Gentlemen's Club, and West Virginia Sports Promotions, Inc.*, No. 23-ICA-337.



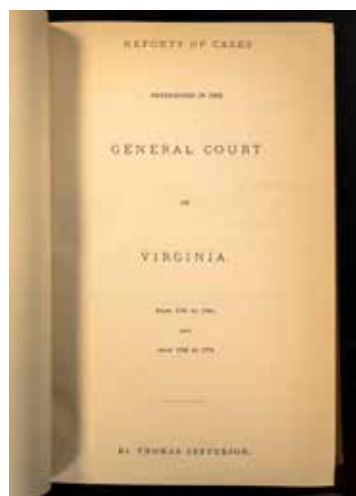
Judge Robert E. Richardson

Eleventh Judicial Circuit (Greenbrier and Pocahontas Counties)

October 29, 2024
Rule 20 Argument in *Deborah Beheler Baldwin v. Scott A. Adkins, in his official capacity as Acting Commissioner of WorkForce West Virginia, and WorkForce West Virginia Board of Review*, No. 24-ICA-39.

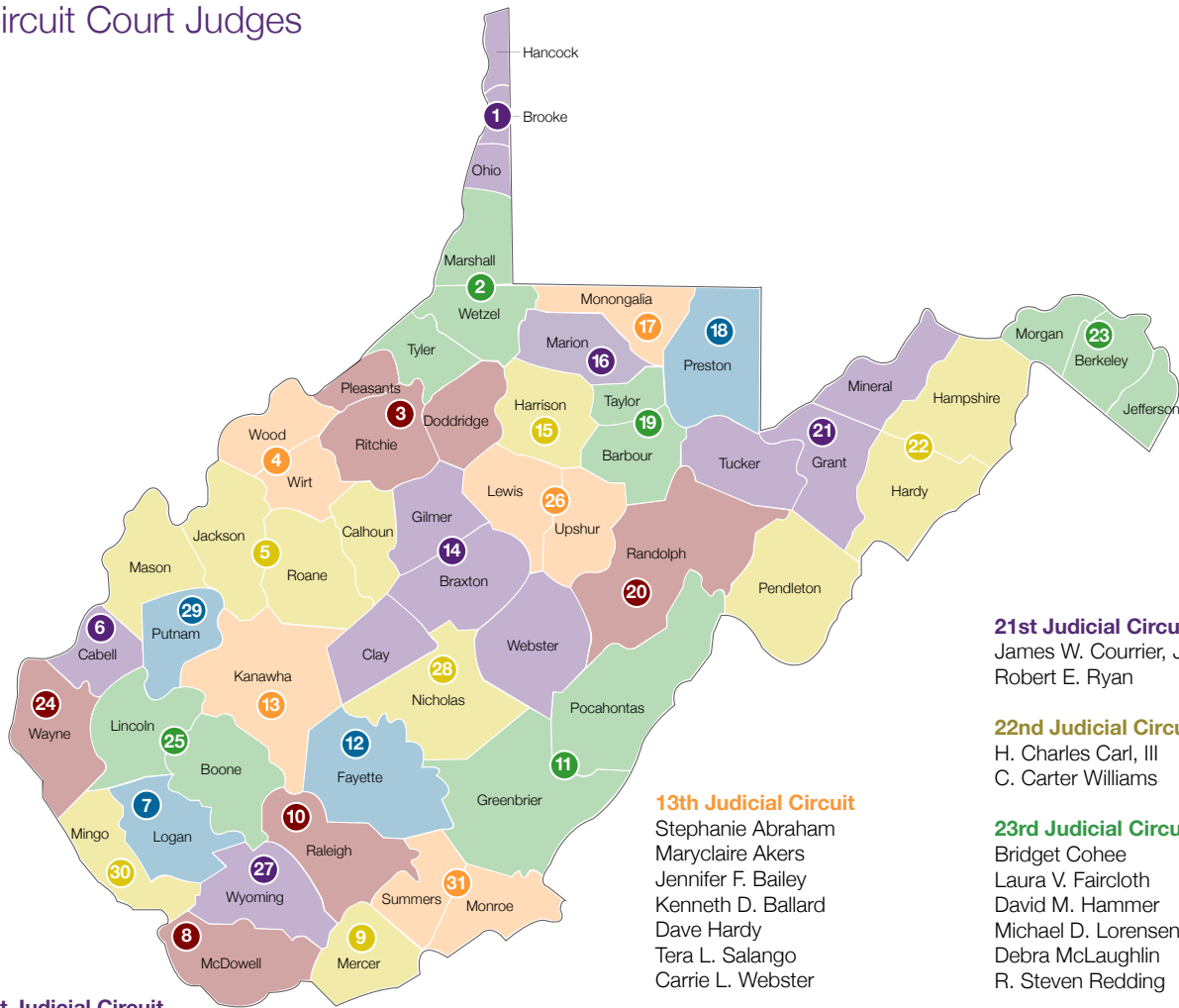
ICA Celebrates Donation

Intermediate Court of Appeals (ICA) Chief Judge Tom Scarr and Judges Dan Greear and Charlie Lorensen hosted a reception on January 18 for retiring attorney Orton Jones and members of the Spencer law firm of Hedges, Jones, Whittier & Hedges to thank them for the donation of law books to the ICA. Most of the books are housed in the ICA conference room, and the rest are housed elsewhere in the ICA office suite. The donation includes books holding opinions from Virginia as early as 1730, when Virginia was still a British colony.



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

Paul T. Farrell
Alfred E. Ferguson
Sean K. "Corky" Hammers
Gregory L. Howard

7th Judicial Circuit

Joshua Butcher
Kelly Gilmore Codispoti

8th Judicial Circuit

Edward J. Kornish
Rudolph J. Murensky, II

9th Judicial Circuit

Ryan Flanigan
William J. Sadler
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
Dave Hardy
Tera L. Salango
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. Cochrane

28th Judicial Circuit

Stephen O. Callaghan

29th Judicial Circuit

Mark Sorsaia
Phillip M. Stowers

30th Judicial Circuit

Miki J. Thompson

31st Judicial Circuit

Robert A. Irons

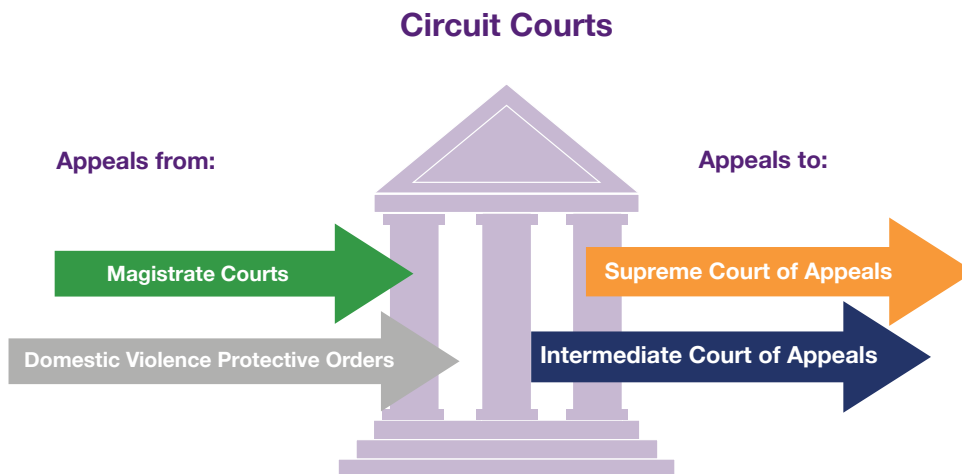
Circuit courts are West Virginia's only general jurisdiction trial courts of record

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.

County-specific statistical information is available in the West Virginia Court System Annual Statistical Report for 2024
<https://www.courtsww.gov/sites/default/pubfiles/mnt/2025-04/2025AnnualReport.pdf>

For more information about circuit courts, see
<http://www.courtsww.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.courtsww.gov/public-resources/court-information-by-county.html>.

2024
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

39,833
Total Cases Filed in 2024

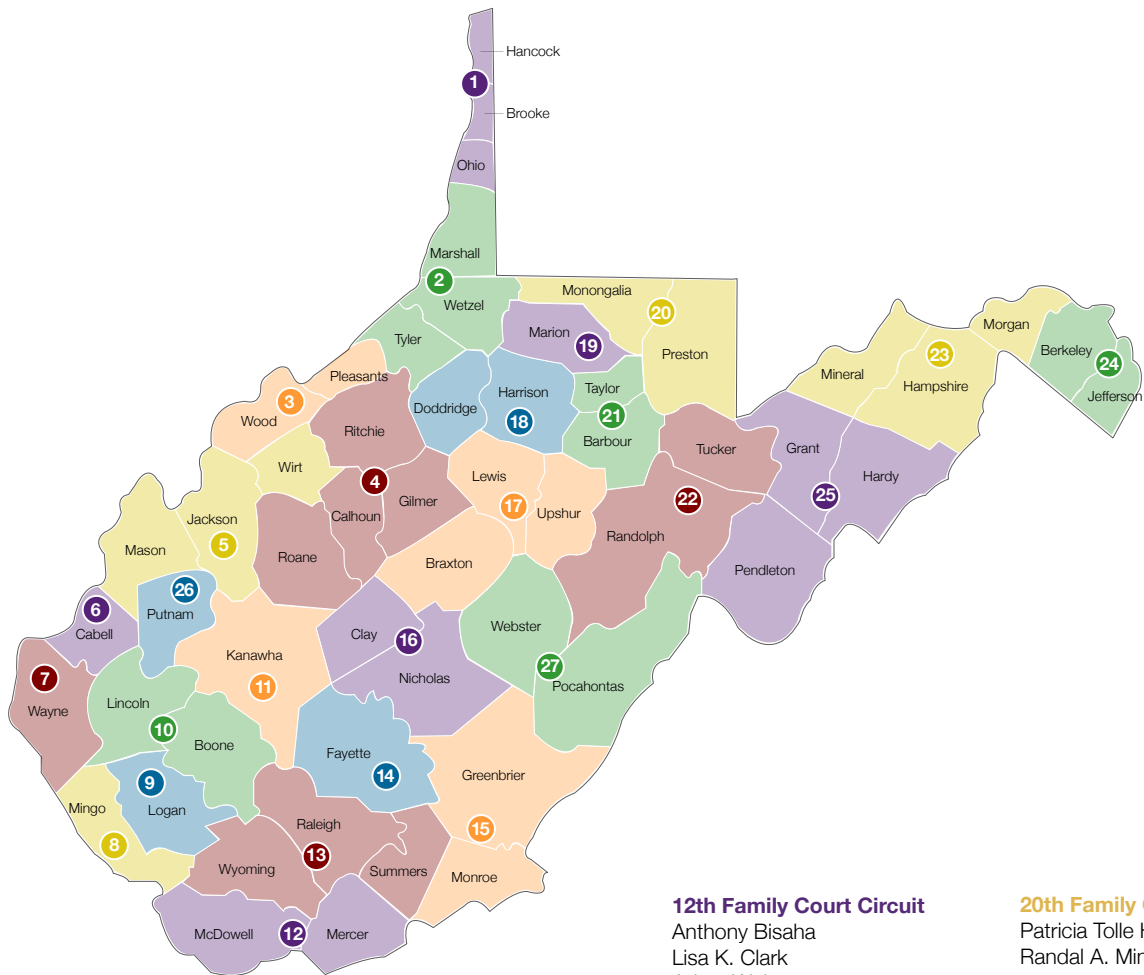
51%
20,297 Civil Cases

26%
10,530 Criminal Cases

23%
9,006 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

Debra Steed
C. Darren Tallman

4th Family Court Circuit

Steven Jones

5th Family Court Circuit

Bryan Cromley
Constance Fisher Thomas

6th Family Court Circuit

Sarah Dixon
Jara Howard
Patricia A. Keller

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
Adam Wolfe

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

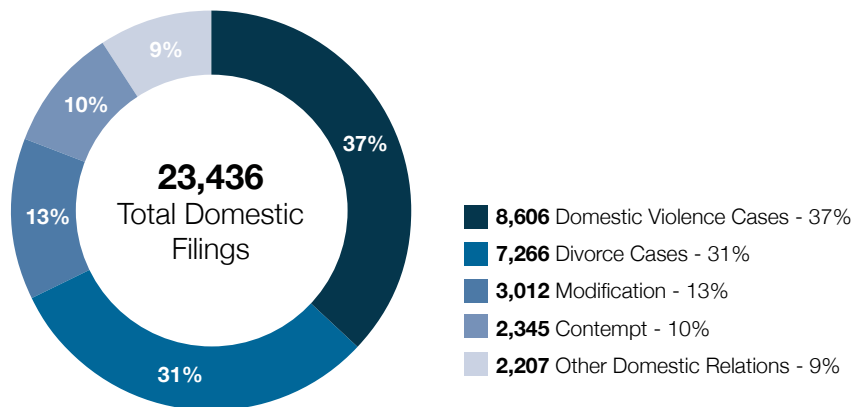
Joyce Helmick Carpenter

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.

Family Court Domestic Filings in 2024:



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.

County-specific statistical information is available in the West Virginia Court System Annual Statistical Report for 2024

<https://www.courtswv.gov/sites/default/pubfiles/mnt/2025-04/2025AnnualReport.pdf>

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>.

2024

FAMILY COURT SNAPSHOT

55 | **27**
Counties | 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

18,079

New Cases Filed in 2024

5,357

Modification and
Contempt Proceedings

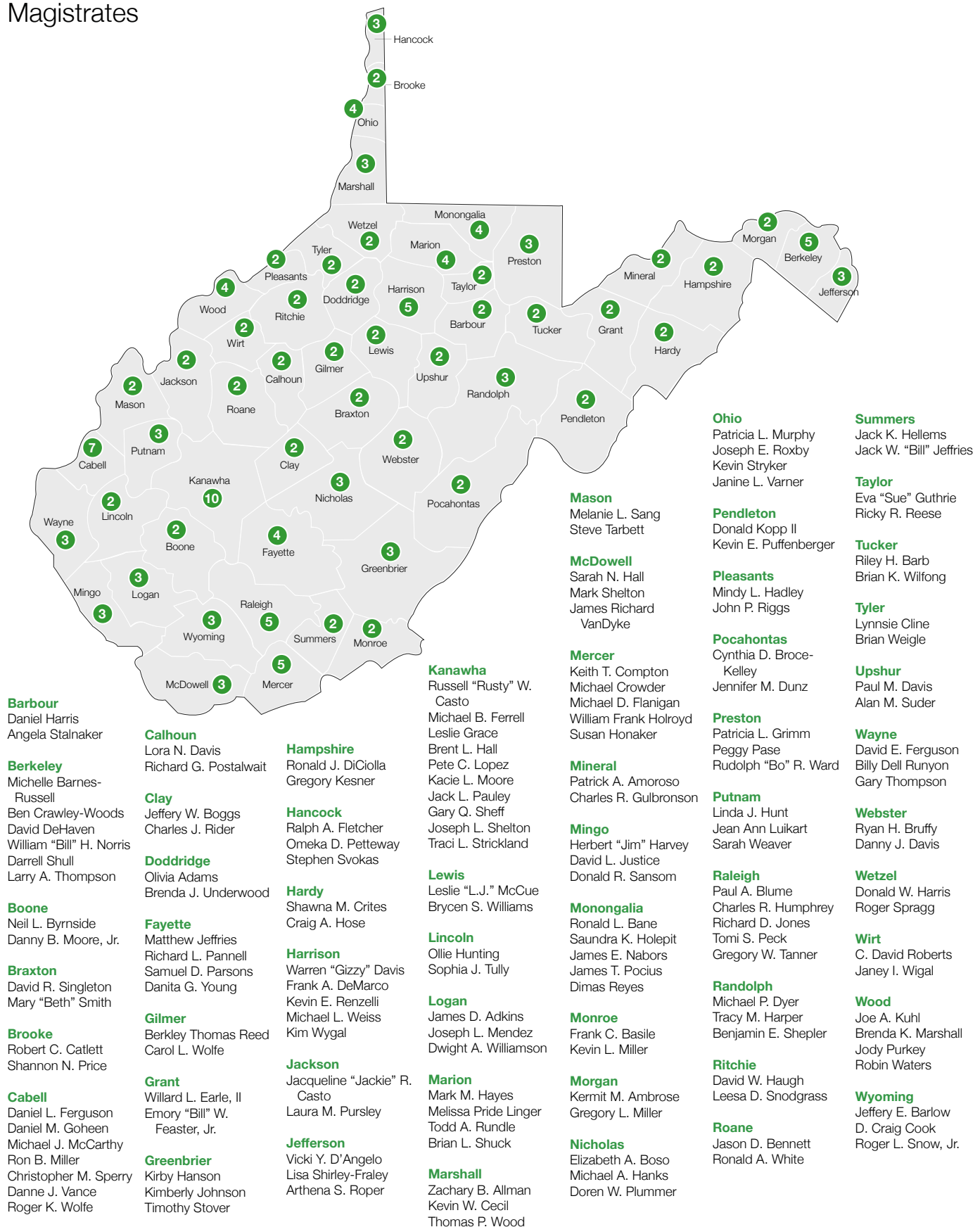
*not counted as new cases filed

1,723

Marriages Conducted by
Circuit Court and Family
Court Judges

Magistrate Courts

Magistrates

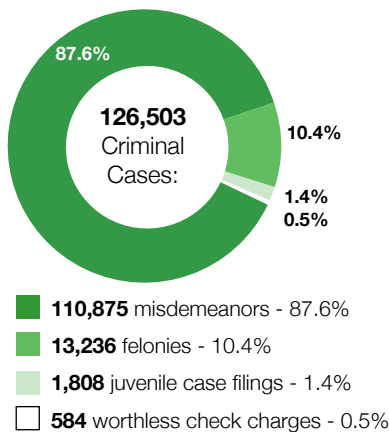


Magistrate court is often called “the people’s court.” There is a magistrate on duty or on call in every county, 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

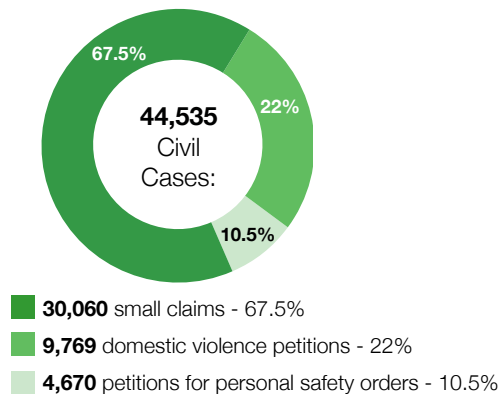
JURISDICTION:

- 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.

2024 Criminal Cases:



2024 Civil Cases:



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.

County-specific statistical information is available in the West Virginia Court System Annual Statistical Report for 2024

<https://www.courtswv.gov/sites/default/pubfiles/mnt/2025-04/2025AnnualReport.pdf>

2024 MAGISTRATE SNAPSHOT

55
Counties

There are
at least two
magistrates in
every county

159

Magistrates

Elected to four-year terms
in non-partisan races

175,454

Total Cases Filed in 2024

72%
126,503
Criminal Cases

25%
44,535
Civil Cases

2.5%
4,416
Special Proceedings

3%
4,769
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.

HARRISON COUNTY CELEBRATES ITS GRADUATES

The Harrison County Adult Drug Court held its annual picnic at the 4-H complex in Clarksburg on May 30. The picnic included a graduation ceremony for two people, and many past graduates attended.



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 2024, the chair was Circuit Judge Michael D. Lorensen, Twenty-Third Judicial Circuit (Berkeley, Jefferson and Morgan Counties). His term on the Business Court Division and as its chair 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 **Andrew G. Dimlich**, Tenth Judicial Circuit (Raleigh County), who was appointed December 3, 2024, to replace Circuit Judge **Joseph K. Reeder** (Twenty-Ninth Judicial Circuit (Putnam County). Judge Reeder resigned August 30, 2024, to become a federal magistrate judge. Judge Dimlich will serve until the end of Judge Reeder's term, December 31, 2025.
- 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 **Robert E. Richardson**, Eleventh Judicial Circuit (Greenbrier and Pocahontas Counties), who was appointed effective Oct. 15, 2024, to replace Judge **Paul T. Farrell**. Judge Farrell's term ended December 31, 2023. Judge Richardson's term ends December 31, 2030; and
- Senior Status Judge **Christopher C. Wilkes**, whose term ends December 31, 2031.



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

Case Statistics

There were six motions to refer cases to the Business Court Division filed in six counties in 2024, one each in Harrison, Kanawha, Monongalia, Preston, Upshur and Wood Counties. The chief justice decided all six of the motions to refer and one that was filed in 2023. Four were granted and transferred to the division and three were dismissed. The seven motions to refer were decided

in an average of 69 days from filing to decision. Three of the motions to refer were filed by plaintiffs, two by petitioners, and two by judges.

In 2024, Business Court Division judges scheduled 35 hearings, entertained about 94 motions, and entered 197 orders in 37 cases. There were six mediations or mediation status hearings. Fifteen cases were disposed of in 2024, with an average case age of 789 days from the date the case was transferred to the Business Court Division to the date the final order was entered. Twelve cases were resolved by agreement and entry of dismissal orders. Two cases went to trial; one was a bench trial and one was a jury trial.

Since the inception of the Business Court Division in October 2012, 255 motions to refer have been filed in 43 counties. Of those, 149 cases have been transferred to the division from 38 counties, so 58 percent of motions to refer were granted. There have been 130 cases disposed of, leaving 21 cases still pending at the end of 2024.



Scan for more information about the Business Court Division

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

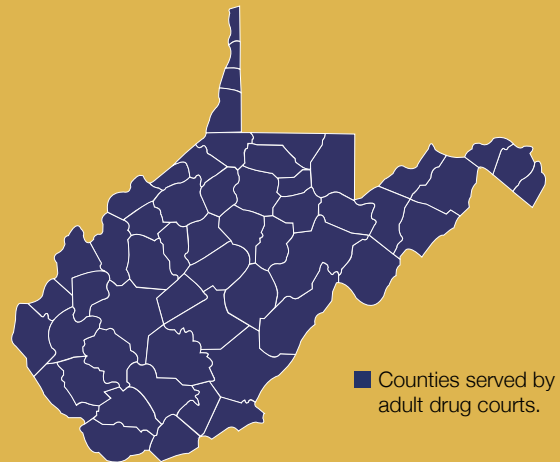
West Virginia has 30 active adult drug courts that serve residents of all counties. In 2024, the average annual cost per participant was \$4,471, significantly less than the cost of housing an inmate in a regional jail or correctional facility. The cost includes intensive supervision, treatment, case management, and drug testing. In 2024, adult drug courts served approximately 851 participants. They received 474 referrals and admitted 290 individuals. During the year, 185 participants graduated (59.5 percent), 84 began new employment, and three enrolled in some type of education. The top five drugs of choice for participants were methamphetamine (39.2 percent), opiates (34.5 percent), amphetamines (5.5 percent), alcohol (6.56 percent), and cocaine and non-synthetic cannabinoids (tied at 3.6 percent each). During the year, seven participants relapsed. West Virginia's overall recidivism rate for graduates of adult drug courts is approximately 15.6 percent.

30 ADULT DRUG COURTS
serve residents in all counties

851
participants
served

185
participants
graduated

84
participants
began new
employment



The Nicholas County Adult Drug Court and Family Treatment Court held a combined graduation ceremony for 14 graduates (six in Adult Drug Court and eight in Family Treatment Court) on August 21, 2024, at the Nicholas County Courthouse in Summersville, WV.



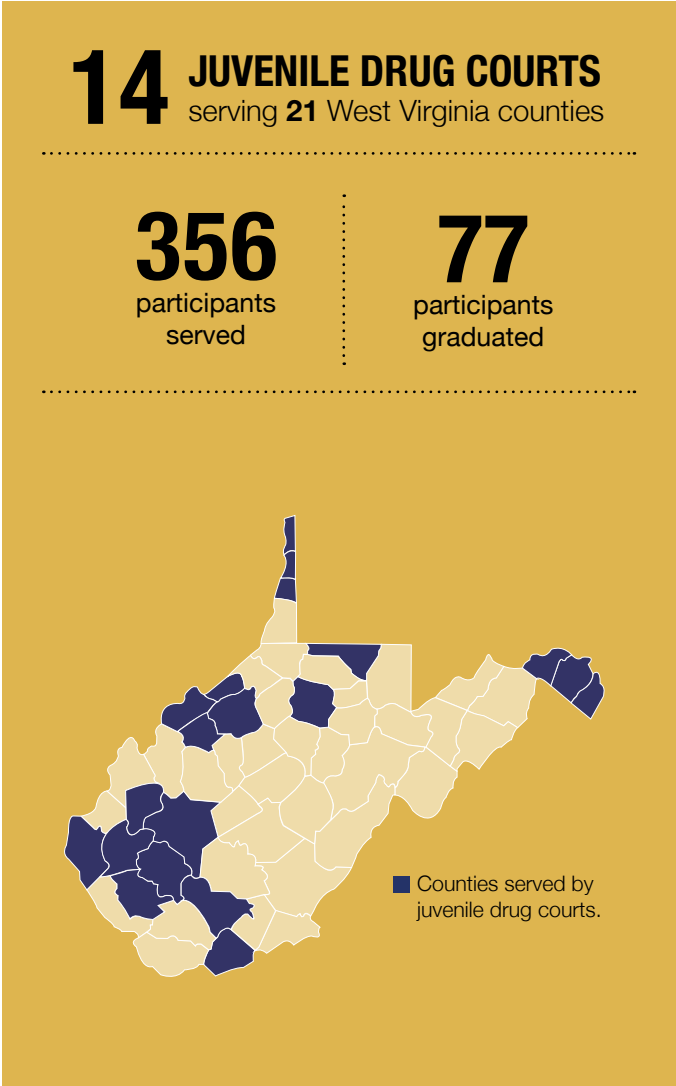
The Marion County Adult Drug Court had a graduation ceremony for two people on May 16 in Judge Patrick N. Wilson's courtroom in the Marion County Courthouse in Fairmont, WV.

Juvenile Drug Courts

Juvenile drug courts are cooperative efforts of the juvenile justice, social service, and education systems. These early/earlier intervention programs divert non-violent juvenile offenders exhibiting substance abuse behavior from the traditional juvenile court process to an intensive, individualized, evidence-based treatment process. Juvenile drug courts seek to reduce substance abuse risk and future court involvement for the teens. In 2024, West Virginia had 14 active juvenile drug courts that served 356 participants. Also, during the year, 77 participants (39.5 percent) graduated. During 2024, 10 juveniles obtained employment and 21 either started or returned to school. The average cost for a juvenile to participate is \$3,392 a year, much less than the cost of residential placement, which can exceed \$200,000 a year per person. Juveniles reported their drugs of choice were non-synthetic cannabinoids (69.9 percent), alcohol (21.1 percent), and synthetic cannabinoids (4.5 percent). The remaining drugs of choice were less than 2 percent each.



File Photo: Putnam County Juvenile Drug Court graduation at the Putnam County Courthouse in Winfield, WV.



File Photo: Judge Stephanie Abraham of the Thirteenth Judicial Circuit (Kanawha County) oversees the circuit's Juvenile Drug Court.

Family Treatment Courts

Family treatment courts were established in 2019 to serve adults with substance use disorders who are also involved child abuse and neglect cases. 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 2024, there were 14 family treatment courts serving 17 counties in West Virginia. In 2024, 284 individuals participated in West Virginia's family treatment courts with 88 graduating. Of the 284 participants, 41 (14.4 percent) achieved full-time employment and 25 (8.8 percent) maintained part-time employment. Family treatment courts served 482 children in 2024, with 85 being reunified with their families and 39 child abuse/neglect cases being closed. The average time to reunification was 288 days and 404 days to permanency. In 2024, six babies were born drug-free due to their parents' participation in family treatment courts. Those babies were able to go home instead of to automatic out-of-home placements. The top five drugs of choice for family treatment court participants were, in order, methamphetamines (40 percent), heroin (14.9 percent), fentanyl (12 percent), non-synthetic cannabinoids (11.4 percent), and opioids (9.5 percent).

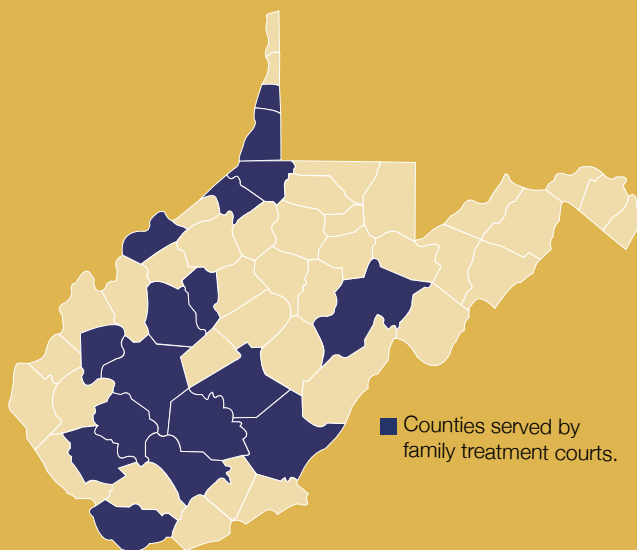


14 FAMILY TREATMENT COURTS
serving **17** West Virginia counties

284 participants served

88 participants graduated

482 children served with **85** reunified with their families

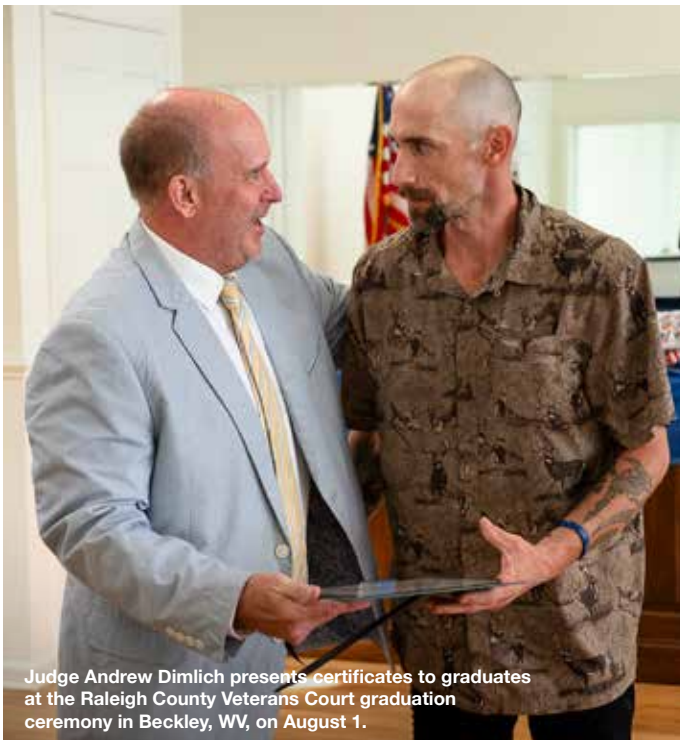


McDowell County Family Treatment Court & Adult Drug Court held a graduation ceremony at the McDowell County Courthouse in Welch, WV, on April 24, 2024.



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 veteran participants to ensure that they receive appropriate treatment for any military-specific issues.

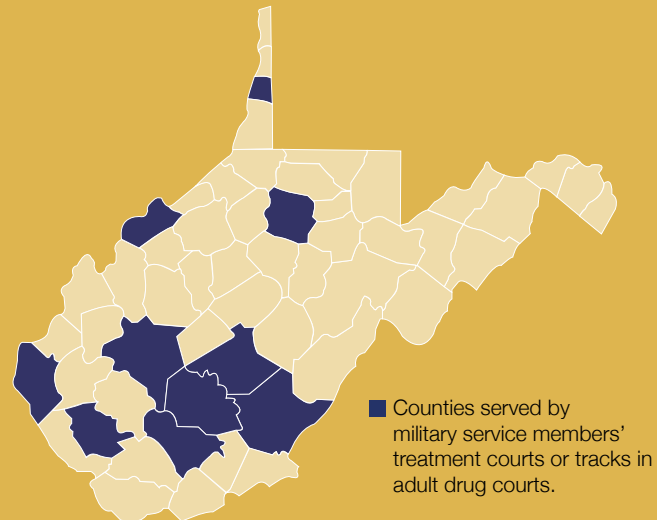


1 MILITARY SERVICE MEMBERS' TREATMENT COURT

- 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



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 2024 are outlined below.

- More than 1,500 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. Sixty-five new magistrates were trained in 2024, the majority during the new magistrate training conference.
- Four juvenile stakeholder meetings were held. These were led by a judge, tailored to an individual community and addressed local issues in abuse and neglect proceedings.
- Fifteen virtual and eight in-person new user trainings were provided to JANIS users and others.
- Nine lunch-and-learn sessions were held for child abuse and neglect attorneys.
- The CIP supported conferences provided by the Emergency Shelter Provider Network (ESPN) and Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA).
- More than 50 West Virginia University College of Law students attended a panel discussion on child abuse and neglect attorney work.

The CIP is charged with enhancing the quality of hearings for children and parents. Those efforts have included the Title 4E/ Reasonable Efforts project and the Social Necessary Service project partnering with the West Virginia Department of Human Services (DoHS). In 2024 the division moved New View into the general practice of the division under a new name: Case Assist. Also in 2024, CIP staff observed 214 child abuse and neglect court hearings. Staff visited every circuit.

The Parent Resource Navigator (PRN) Project continues to grow. The program is intended to assist 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. At the end of 2024, eight counties were established with 14 counties waiting to start the onboarding process. In 2025, the Division of Children Services plans to implement a new position, the Parent Resource Navigator Development Coordinator for the PRN program. The division also plans to adapt new policies and practices within the PRN.



2024 Juvenile Justice Commission (JJC)

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 Human Services (DoHS). In addition, the commission looks at strengths, gaps and needs within juvenile justice processes.

The commission meets quarterly. In 2024 the commission focused on two areas: juvenile competency and out-of-home placements for youth in the juvenile justice system. The Rules for Juvenile Procedure were reviewed and will be updated to include juvenile competency rules specific to West Virginia law. The commission also invited public and private stakeholders to talk about processes and procedures. The commission wants to get a better grasp on where youth who are placed out-of-home and out-of-state are going.

The commission also recognized the commitment of a long-time member, late Kanawha County Circuit Judge Joanna Tabit. The commission installed a plaque honoring her 10 years of service in the room where commission meetings are held in the West Virginia Judicial Tower in Charleston.

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

Stephanie Bond, director of the Division of Probation Services, Supreme Court Administrative Office

Nicole Cofer, director of the Division of Magistrate Court Services, Supreme Court Administrative Office

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 the Division of Children's Services, Supreme Court Administrative Office

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 Counties)

Debra Sullivan, community member

Lisa Tackett, director of the Division of Court Services, Supreme Court Administrative Office

The Rev. Rue Thompson, Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston

Kristin Walter, coordinator of the Office of Student Support and Well-Being, West Virginia Board of Education
Circuit Judge C. Carter Williams, Twenty-Second Judicial Circuit (Grant, Mineral and Tucker Counties), Ex-Officio

Staff:

Jessica Brown, child welfare/juvenile justice field coordinator

Tim Harper, youth project coordinator

Brenda Hoylman, child welfare/juvenile justice manager

Amy Sadler, court improvement program field coordinator

Lorri Stotler, administrative specialist



For more information about the commission, visit its page on the on the [West Virginia Judiciary website](https://www.wvjudiciary.org/).



At the Juvenile Justice Commission meeting in Charleston on March 12, a plaque was dedicated at West Virginia Judicial Tower honoring Judge Joanna Tabit.



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. See Trial Court Rules at <https://www.courtsww.gov/legal-community/court-rules/wv-trial-court-rules-contents>.

Panel Chair in 2024:

The 2024 panel chair was Judge Gregory L. Howard, Jr., of the Sixth Judicial Circuit (Cabell County). He initially was appointed to serve as chair from October 20, 2023, to June 30, 2024. Judge Howard was re-appointed to serve as chair from July 1, 2024, through June 30, 2027.

2024 Panel Members:

Judge Stephanie Abraham, Thirteenth Judicial Circuit (Kanawha County) through June 30, 2025.
Judge Perri Jo DeChristopher, Seventeenth Judicial Circuit (Monongalia County) through June 30, 2025.
Judge Jason A. Wharton, Fourth Judicial Circuit (Wirt and

Wood Counties) through June 30, 2026.

Judge Chad Lovejoy, Sixth Judicial Circuit (Cabell County) through June 30, 2026.

Judge Jack Alsop, Fourteenth Judicial Circuit (Braxton, Clay, Gilmer, and Webster Counties), until he retired on December 31, 2024. Effective January 1, 2025, the Supreme Court approved Judge Alsop for admission to senior status and appointed him to continue to serve on the panel through June 30, 2027.

Judge Jay M. Hoke, Twenty-Fifth Judicial Circuit (Boone and Lincoln Counties), was a member of the panel until his term expired on June 30, 2024.

Judge Robert E. Ryan, Twenty-First Judicial Circuit (Grant, Mineral, and Tucker Counties) was a member of the panel until his term as a circuit court judge ended on December 31, 2024.

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



Mass Litigation Panel annual reports are available at

<https://www.courtsww.gov/lower-courts/mass-litigation-panel/annual-reports>.



Mass Litigation Panel members Judge Jason A. Wharton, Judge Stephanie Abraham, Judge Gregory L. Howard, Judge Robert E. Ryan and Judge Jack Alsop.

Court Notes

Awards

U.S. Attorney Gives Award To Supreme Court

All five Justices were on hand at the Robert C. Byrd U.S. Courthouse on April 18 to accept the Excellence in Victim Advocacy and Justice Award for the Supreme Court's Victim Outreach Project. The project allows domestic violence and sexual assault victims to file petitions and attend follow-up hearings without having to be in the same building with the people they are seeking protection from. The event at the federal courthouse was part of the 2024 Operation Reach Out, and the award was presented by **Will Thompson**, U.S. attorney for the Southern District of West Virginia, who is a former circuit judge in Boone and Lincoln Counties.



2024 Bar Foundation Fellows

Supreme Court Justice **Haley Bunn**, former Justice **John McCuskey**, and Lawyer Disciplinary Counsel **Rachael Fletcher Cipoletti** were among the 2024 West Virginia Bar Foundation Fellows. The Bar Foundation is the philanthropic organization for the legal profession in West Virginia. The foundation names fellows whose professional, public, and private careers have demonstrated outstanding dedication to the welfare of their communities and honorable service to the legal profession. About 400 individuals have been named fellows out of more than 7,000 judges and lawyers in West Virginia. The 18 fellows for 2024 were honored at a dinner on April 25 at the Four Points by Sheraton Charleston hotel.



Judge Sims Named Judge of the Year

First Judicial Circuit (Brooke, Hancock and Ohio Counties) Judge **David J. Sims** was named Judge of the Year by West Virginia Court Appointed Special Advocates. The group's award honors the collaborative efforts and extraordinary work of those serving West Virginia's children and families. Judge Sims was born in Bedford, Ohio, in 1961 and graduated from The Linsly School in 1979. He has a 1983 degree in history from Georgetown University and a 1987 law degree from West Virginia University College of Law. He was an Ohio County Commissioner from 1995 to 2012 and the owner of Sims Law Offices in Wheeling from 1987 to 2012. He was appointed to the bench in 2012, elected in 2014 and re-elected in 2016 and 2024.



THIRD JUDICIAL CIRCUIT OFFICER NAMED PROBATION OFFICER OF THE YEAR

Probation Officer **Stacie Cook**, who works in the Twenty-Seventh Judicial Circuit (Wyoming County), received the 2024 Probation Officer of the Year award during a September conference in Charleston. Chief Probation Officer Angela Johnson described Cook as dedicated and well respected. Cook is compassionate about her colleagues and charges and dedicated to serving her community; she often participates in food drives, Shop with a Cop, and other church activities.



Transitions

Clerk's Office

Appellate Court Clerk Retires, New Clerk Appointed

Deputy Clerk **C. Casey Forbes** became clerk of court for the Supreme Court of Appeals and the Intermediate Court of Appeals on Jan. 1,



2024. His predecessor, **Edythe "Eydie" Nash Gaiser**, retired. Gaiser was born in Pittsburgh, Pa., but grew up in West



Virginia. She worked in private practice and then at the Florida Supreme Court Office of State Court Administration. She became West Virginia's deputy supreme court clerk in 2003 and clerk in 2017. Forbes began working in the Clerk's Office in 2018. He previously was a staff attorney for the West Virginia Legislature, a law clerk in the Supreme Court Office of Counsel, and an attorney in private practice. He also served as a mental hygiene commissioner and an assistant attorney general.

Administrative Office

Administrative Director Retires, New Director Appointed



Deputy Administrative Director **Keith Hoover** became Administrative Director on Jan. 1, 2025. He replaced



Joe Armstrong, who retired. Armstrong had nearly 30 years of experience in administration and human resources management before becoming the Supreme Court Administrative

Office's human resources director in 2018. He was named interim administrative director on January 2, 2019, and director on April 15, 2019. Hoover practiced law for ten years in Charleston before becoming the Supreme Court Administrative Office counsel in March 2019. He was promoted to co-deputy administrative director in January 2021.

Administrative Office Restructuring

In December 2024, incoming Administrative Director Keith Hoover announced several changes in the Administrative Office organizational structure. Numerous divisions that previously all reported to the director were consolidated into three groups. Deputy Administrative Director



Evan Lynch was named chief of court services, supervising the Court Services Group, which includes circuit courts, family courts, magistrate courts, probation, grants and special projects. Administrative Office Counsel **Bradley Schmalzer** was named chief of court operations, overseeing technology, facilities, finance, legal issues, human resources, security and the Law Library. Hoover directly oversees the policy and strategic implementation group, which includes policy development, legislative affairs, judicial education, statistics and communications.

Several new positions were established. **Liz Schindzielorz** was named policy counsel. She had been counsel to the Senate Judiciary Committee since 2020 and before that spent seven years in private practice.



Jared Hunt was named communications director. He previously worked in the same role for the State Treasurer's Office, the House of Delegates and the Attorney General's Office.

Marty Hatfield was

named director of grants and special projects. He previously worked in the Division of Administrative Services and the Division of Justice and Community Services within the West Virginia Department of Homeland Security.



New Human Resources Director Joins Administrative Office

Luke Harvey started work as the Administrative Office human resources director on Feb. 12. Harvey spent the bulk of his career in the military; he was a U.S. Marine from 1998 to 2006, then joined the U.S. Army in 2008, retiring as a first lieutenant in 2013. A native of Arnett, in Raleigh County, he worked in human resources in the military, for Amazon and for an environmental testing company.



In Memoriam

Administrative Office Hires Wellness Coordinator



Stephan Brooks began work Dec. 16 as the Wellness Coordinator in the Administrative Office. Brooks has a doctorate in health science from California University of Pennsylvania and a master's degree in public health in social and behavioral science from West Virginia University (WVU). He previously worked with WVU Research Corp., Clarion University of Pennsylvania, WVU Medicine and WVU School of Public Health. In those locations he worked to improve healthcare and provided health education as well as drug prevention and intervention services.

Supreme Court establishes a new Division of Statistics

The Supreme Court established a new Division of Statistics in 2024 to enhance data collection and analysis across the court system. Led by Director Dr.



Mallory Watkins, the division focuses on improving data available to West Virginia citizens, state and federal organizations and others. The division implemented new technology and methods to streamline data processes, ensuring policymakers have access to more accurate and timely information. The division also aims to improve transparency and foster a data-driven culture within the judiciary.



Senior Status Judge **Herman G. Canady, Jr.**, passed away on June 11. He was 87. Judge Canady was born Dec. 18, 1936, and raised in Kanawha County. He had a bachelor's degree from

Northwestern University and a law degree from West Virginia University College of Law. He was the only African American enrolled during his time in law school and was the second African American graduate. He worked at the Legal Aid Society of Charleston (its first African American attorney) and then as an assistant Kanawha County prosecutor. He was appointed to the circuit court bench in 1982, becoming the first African American circuit judge in Kanawha County. He was elected later in 1982 and re-elected in 1984, 1992 and 2000. He was chief circuit judge in 1989 and 1998 and was president of the West Virginia Judicial Association in 2001. He retired in 2002.



Former Supreme Court Justice and state Attorney General **Darrell Vivian McGraw Jr.** passed away Dec. 7. He was 88. Justice McGraw was born Nov. 8, 1936, in McGraws-Tipple, Wyoming

County. Justice McGraw served in the U.S. Army for three years before attending West Virginia University, where he was student body president in 1960. He graduated from West Virginia University College of Law and then served as counsel to Governor Hulett Smith and the West Virginia Legislature. He was elected to the Supreme Court in 1976, where he served a 12-year term that included service as chief justice in 1987. He was elected West Virginia Attorney General in 1992 and served 20 years in that office.



McDowell County Magistrate **Daniel "Danny" Wayne Mitchell** passed away on May 30. He was 62. Magistrate Mitchell was born Dec. 16, 1961, in Welch. He began working as a McDowell County deputy sheriff in

the 1980s. He was the county's elected sheriff for two terms beginning January 1, 2005, and then served as a magistrate for 12 years. He was re-elected earlier in May to serve a fourth term as magistrate. He was active in his community and helped coordinate the DARE program and Shop With a Cop.



Jean Friend, the longtime circuit clerk of Monongalia County, passed away Aug. 14 in Morgantown. She was 95. Friend began working as a full-time deputy circuit clerk on April 5, 1959. She was elected circuit clerk in

1962, re-elected several times, and retired at the end of 2022, for a total of 63 years working in the Monongalia County Circuit Clerk's Office.



The West Virginia Judicial Learning Center

In 2024 – its first full year of operation – the West Virginia Judicial Learning Center welcomed more than 1,000 visitors from West Virginia, 29 other states and seven other countries. The center has interactive electronic exhibits, activity stations, and wall panels that explain basic legal concepts and terms. There is also information on careers in the courts, landmark West Virginia cases, and the history and structure of state courts.

The center opened on Dec. 7, 2023, and occupies 462 square feet on the third floor of the East Wing of the West Virginia Capitol in Charleston. It takes up two rooms across the hall from the Supreme Court Courtroom and the hallway itself.

The center is part of the Supreme Court of Appeals of West Virginia's commitment to civics education and to making the judicial system accessible and transparent. Several other state supreme courts and federal district courts have or are building learning centers to help make legal concepts more relatable and understandable.

The Annenberg Public Policy Center's 2024 Constitution Day Civics Survey reveals that 35 percent — over a third of the adult population — cannot identify all three branches of government. According to the National Assessment of Educational Programs, the average civics score for eighth graders in 2022 was below the proficient level.



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RALEIGH COUNTY
COURT HOUSE
ELEVATION 2422



Raleigh County Courthouse

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