

JULY 1, 2020 – JUNE 30, 2021

2020 – 2021

NORTH CAROLINA JUDICIAL BRANCH
ANNUAL REPORT



NCCOURTS.GOV

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OUR MISSION



TO PROTECT AND PRESERVE THE RIGHTS AND LIBERTIES OF ALL THE PEOPLE AS GUARANTEED BY THE CONSTITUTIONS AND LAWS OF THE UNITED STATES AND NORTH CAROLINA BY PROVIDING A FAIR, INDEPENDENT, AND ACCESSIBLE FORUM FOR THE JUST, TIMELY, AND ECONOMICAL RESOLUTION OF THEIR LEGAL AFFAIRS



A SPECIAL MESSAGE FROM CHIEF JUSTICE PAUL NEWBY

I am so grateful for the members of the Judicial Branch who dedicated themselves to ensuring that our courts were open to administer justice during the pandemic. They persevered in the face of uncertainty. Our steadfast members worked tirelessly to ensure the health and safety of our citizens and employees all while balancing our constitutional mandates of keeping our courts open and administering justice without favor, denial, or delay.

Throughout our state, the COVID-19 pandemic has affected some counties more severely than others. Some counties experienced waves of impact at different times. Beginning in January, our leadership team adopted the common-sense approach of empowering local officials to make decisions about their respective courthouses. Knowing that our pending cases represent real people with real issues that need resolution, I encouraged our Judicial Branch stakeholders to open courts to the extent feasible. My team's task shifted to ensuring that these locales had the resources they needed to continue to meet our constitutional mandate. The Administrative Office of the Courts committed "to assist and equip" the local courthouses in fulfilling our constitutional mandate to timely dispensing equal justice under the law and to lead the way in customer service for state government. Thanks to everyone at AOC who is answering that call to service.

It has been a joy to meet members of the Judicial Branch across the state through my 100-county courthouse tour. I began my 100-county tour of North Carolina courthouses in May 2021 in the western part of our state—Murphy in Cherokee County. The visits have given me a chance to thank our court personnel in person for their dedicated hard work and to get to know everyone better. From May 2021 to November 2021, I visited 46 of the 100 counties. By the end of 2022, I hope to have visited all 100 counties from Murphy to Manteo. On my most recent stops, I have been happy to report that the Branch secured the largest budget ever from the General Assembly. By speaking with one unified voice, the Branch stakeholders received a budget that benefits everyone. I am grateful for long-awaited salary adjustments and the resources to help address the COVID case backlog.

The new budget will also allow us to successfully implement the new eCourts system. Our current system depends on outdated mainframes and paper. It is critical that we move our court system into the 21st Century. The new eCourts initiative will have cloud-based storage that everyone in the state will

be able to access instantly. This needed innovation will enhance the public's access to the courts and provide law enforcement with more real-time information at their fingertips. Whether it is a traffic stop or other situation, police officers will be able to have critical information that keeps everyone safe.

As we move our court system into the 21st Century, we are reminded that the children of North Carolina are our future. During my first year as Chief Justice, it has been a privilege to launch the Chief Justice's Task Force on ACEs-Informed Courts. The mission of the Task Force is to enable Branch stakeholders to understand the impact of exposure to adverse childhood experiences and adverse community environments on children. We hope to develop strategies to address these adverse consequences. Our hope is that our work will provide judges and court administrators with practical education on the effects of ACEs. We want to equip juvenile court officials to recognize offenders and victims impacted by ACEs. This initiative also includes identifying existing programs and designing new programs that intervene in the lives of young ACEs offenders and victims, providing a platform from which court officials can offer feedback to policymakers regarding their experiences.

As we concluded the year, the Judicial Branch remained committed to serving all the citizens of North Carolina and, as our mission statement says, "to provide a fair, independent and accessible forum for the just, timely and economical resolution of their legal affairs." I look forward to our continued work together in this new year.



Sincerely,

Chief Justice Paul Newby
Supreme Court of North Carolina

LETTER FROM NCAOC DIRECTOR ANDREW HEATH

This is a challenging time for our court system. All the "routine" issues that naturally occur in a court system that serves the population of a medium-sized European country have been exacerbated by COVID. For example, the Judicial Branch has not been immune from national trends such as the "Great Resignation." Not only are our vacancy rates much higher than usual, but vacancies are becoming difficult to fill with qualified applicants. The eCourts project, which would have been difficult to manage in the best of circumstances, is delayed at least partially due to the COVID environment within which we are operating. The biggest disruption, however, has been in our core function: court operations.

Over the past fiscal year, Lady Justice was not only blindfolded, she was masked and socially distanced. But because of the hard work of our court officials and their staff, North Carolina courts have remained open throughout the pandemic. With the threat of the virus looming, Clerks and their loyal staffs continued to serve the public face-to-face. Magistrates continued to perform their front-line duties. Judicial support staff kept cases moving. District Attorneys and their teams continued to prosecute crimes. Judges held court in theaters, vacant schools, and even churches.

Despite the courageous efforts of dedicated Judicial Branch employees, it was apparent that Raleigh-issued one-size-fits-all statewide COVID mandates were holding back local court officials' ability to perform important court functions such as jury trials. These impediments contributed to delays and negatively impacted the lives of the people we serve. 2021 ushered in new leadership, and a new approach. Days after taking office, Chief Justice Paul Newby entered an administrative order restoring substantial decision-making authority regarding when and how to conduct jury trials and other in-person court proceedings where it belongs – in the hands of local judicial officials. He worked with the Governor to ensure that Judicial Branch employees were recognized as essential workers, making them among the first to have access to vaccinations.

Funding and hard work can only go so far, and the pandemic has caused the statewide pending case backlog to increase in every major case category. These backlog increases have caused cases to be delayed and are negatively impacting the public that we serve. Under Chief Justice Newby's leadership, we have worked collaboratively across Judicial Branch stakeholder groups to try to make the best of a bad situation. Our focus has been on using resources as

efficiently as possible and equipping our court leaders with available data to make informed decisions about how to manage their teams.

Throughout the past year, the Administrative Office of the Courts made pending case reports available to all 100 counties to enable local leaders to identify problem areas in their districts and prioritize limited resources.

We are poised to make great strides in 2021 – 2022. In addition to improving court operations through process improvement and best practices, we are also making real progress on the eCourts front. In partnership with our vendors, Guide & Print and Brazos eCitation applications have been successfully rolled out statewide. We anticipate that the NCAWARE replacement, eWarrants, will go live statewide this spring or summer followed by the Odyssey integrated case management system in the pilot counties shortly thereafter. This will be a major milestone completed in the midst of a global pandemic – one that should be celebrated and is a testament to the committed Judicial Branch employees.

It is a privilege and an honor to serve you and the Judicial Branch. My team and I are here to assist and equip you, so that you can provide equal justice without favor, denial, or delay. I pray for God's wisdom and favor as we undertake this important work.

Sincerely,



Director Andrew Heath
North Carolina Administrative Office of the Courts

BUDGET & OPERATIONS

Overseeing the Budgeting Services
for the State's Judicial Branch

JUDICIAL BRANCH BUDGET

North Carolina's court system is a unified statewide and state-operated system. The state pays the majority of operating expenses of the Judicial Branch. By state statute, G.S. 7A-302, counties and municipalities are responsible for the physical facilities occupied by court personnel across the state. G.S. 7A-343 sets forth the duties of the NCAOC director (appointed by the Chief Justice), which include identifying staffing needs and managing and authorizing expenditures for the judicial budget. Detailed budget information is in the Budget Management and Financial Services Statistical and Operational Report at [NCcourts.gov](https://nccourts.gov).



2.44%

Judicial Branch budget as a
percentage of the State General Fund

HOW THE BUDGET IS SPENT

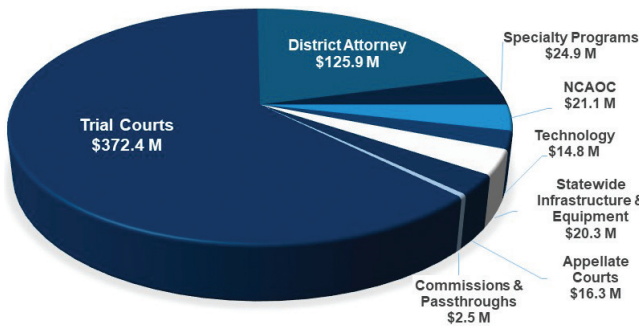
89.2% SALARIES & BENEFITS

28.6% (\$173M) for elected
judicial officials, magistrates,
and appointed officials

10.8% OPERATIONS

- 87% local court operations
- 4% central administration
- 6% technology services, equipment,
and statewide infrastructure
- 3% appellate courts, commissions,
and passthrough appropriations

FY 2020-21 STATE GENERAL FUND APPROPRIATIONS CERTIFIED BUDGET TOTAL: \$24.5B JUDICIAL CERTIFIED: \$598.2M



MONIES COLLECTED BY COURTS

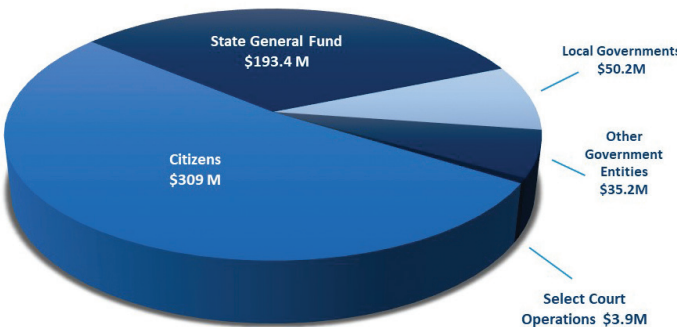
<1% STAYS WITH COURT SYSTEM

(Fines, Fees, Forfeitures, Restitution,
and Civil Judgments)

\$591.7M DISBURSED BY CLERKS

- 39% to state treasurer, state agencies,
law enforcement retirement
- \$309 million to citizens
- \$193.4 million to State General Fund
- \$50.2 million to local governments
- \$26.7 million fine and forfeiture revenue
- \$3.9 million to select court operations

FY 2020-21 CLERK OF SUPERIOR COURT DISBURSEMENTS \$591.7M TOTAL DISBURSED



BUDGET AND PERSONNEL

NCAOC partners with the National Center for State Courts to develop methodology that is used to determine staffing needs for district court judges, superior court judges, clerks of superior court staff, magistrates, assistant district attorneys, and legal assistants. Using the same case weight based approach, NCAOC has conducted workload studies for family court case coordinators and custody mediators.

This information is used to advise the General Assembly about needs for staffing and other resources. Whenever the fiscal situation does not permit the filling of all vacancies, this information is the basis of the vacancy management system. In addition, the workload information is used to reassign vacant resources to needier offices throughout the state.

Certified Appropriations	Budget
Total certified appropriations, 2020–21	\$598,191,793
Percent increase from 2019–20	3.42%
Total certified appropriations as a percent of total state General Fund appropriations	2.44%

89.2%

of the total budget
pays employees.
Remaining funds are for
Judicial Branch operations.

EXPANSION NEEDS

The Judicial Branch continues to have core services (including foreign language access, juror and witness fees, and technology advancements) that are unfunded or underfunded as determined by workload formulas. Per the expansion budget summary, the total number of new positions needed for the Judicial Branch to address workload needs is 379.5.

Personnel (All Funding Sources)

Position	Total
JUSTICES AND JUDGES	
*Supreme Court Justices	7
*Court of Appeals Judges	15
*Superior Court Judges	109
*District Court Judges	282
AUTHORIZED PERSONNEL	
*District Attorneys	42
Assistant District Attorneys	695.5
District Attorney Support Staff	678.5
*Clerks of Superior Court	100
Clerk Personnel	2,657.10
Guardian ad Litem Personnel	193.75
Magistrates	672.6
Indigent Defense Services Staff	576
Administrative Office of the Courts Staff	385.90
Court Support Staff	429
Court Reporters	99
Trial Court Administrators	8
Foreign Language Court Interpreters	9
**Other	66.25
TOTAL	7025.60

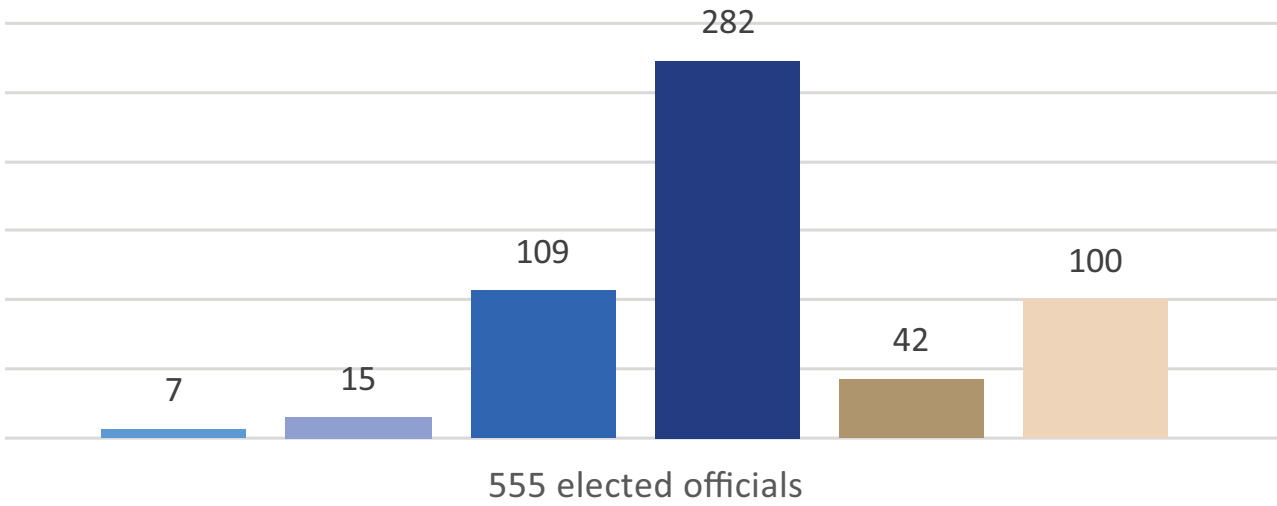
*Independently elected judicial officials; the North Carolina Judicial Branch has 555.

**Chief Justice's Commission on Professionalism, Conference of Clerks of Superior Court, Conference of District Attorneys, Dispute Resolution Commission, Equal Access to Justice Commission, Human Trafficking Commission, Innocence Inquiry Commission, Judicial Standards Commission, Pro Bono Resource Center, and Sentencing and Policy Advisory Commission.

JUDICIAL BRANCH PERSONNEL

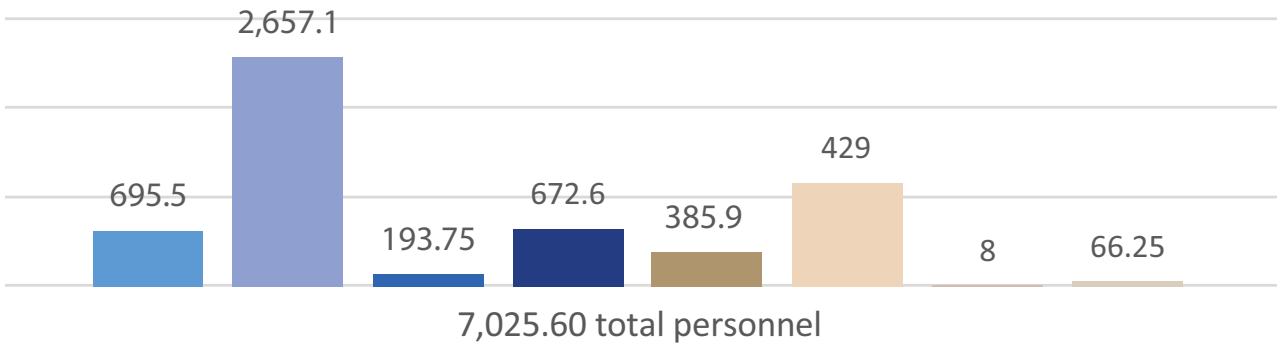
ELECTED OFFICIALS

- Supreme Court Justices
- Court of Appeals Judges
- Superior Court Judges
- District Court Judges
- District Attorneys
- Clerks of Superior Court

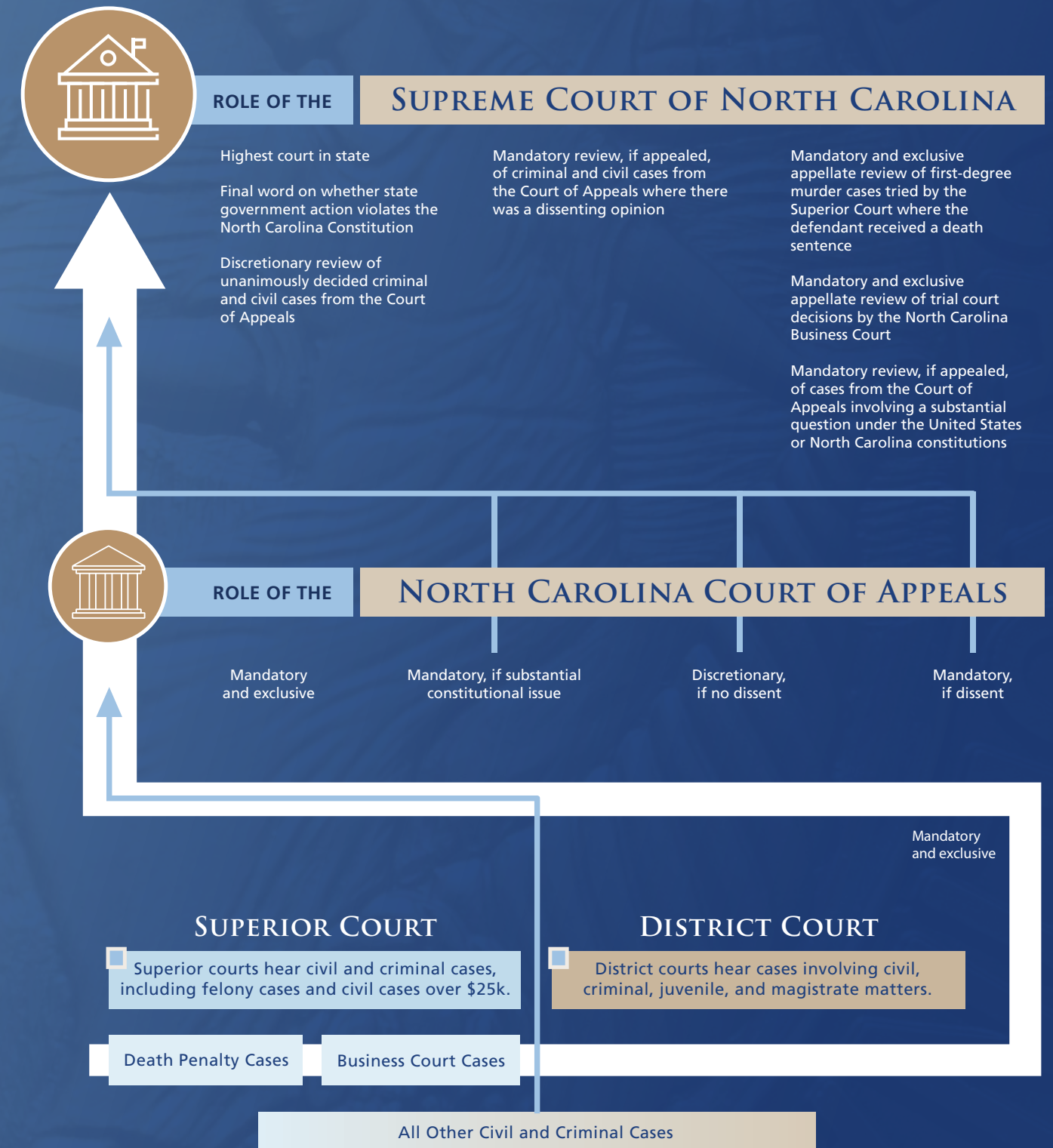


TOTAL PERSONNEL

- Assistant District Attorneys
- Clerk Personnel
- Guardian ad Litem Personnel
- Magistrates
- Administrative Office of the Courts Staff
- Court Support Staff
- Trial Court Administrators
- Other



ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE AND ROUTES OF APPEAL



THE COURTS

Protecting and Preserving
the Rights and Liberties of All People

SUPREME COURT OF NORTH CAROLINA

The Supreme Court of North Carolina is the state’s highest court, and there is no further appeal from its decisions on matters of state law. The Supreme Court has no jury and makes no determinations of fact. It considers whether error occurred at trial or in judicial interpretation of the law. The court consists of the Chief Justice, who also serves as the head of the Judicial Branch, and six associate justices. Each justice serves an eight-year term.

7

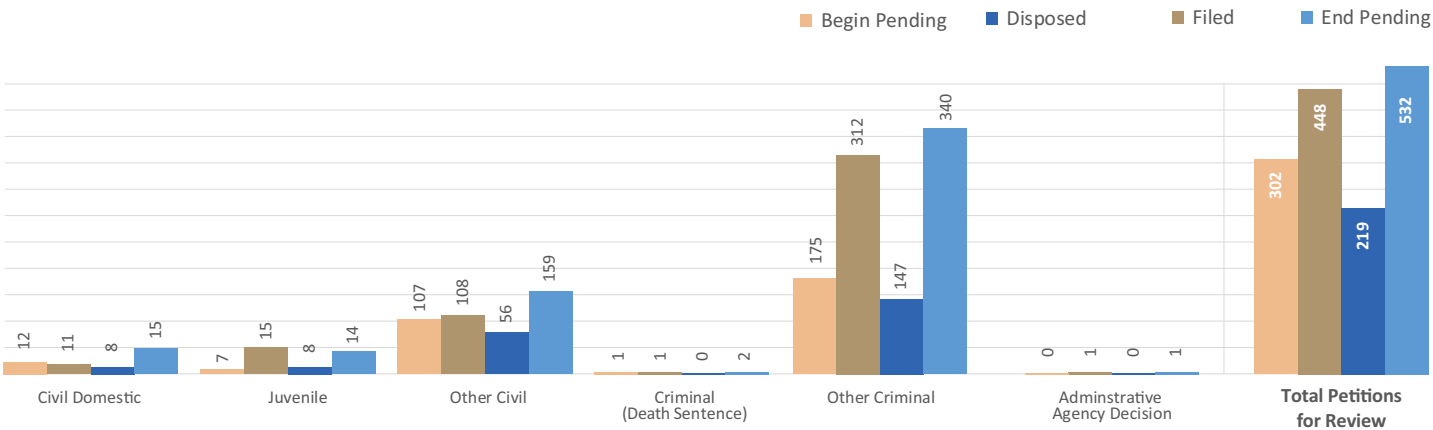
justices who serve eight-year terms

- 196 appeals docketed
 - 141 appeals disposed
- 475 petitions docketed
 - 419 petitions disposed

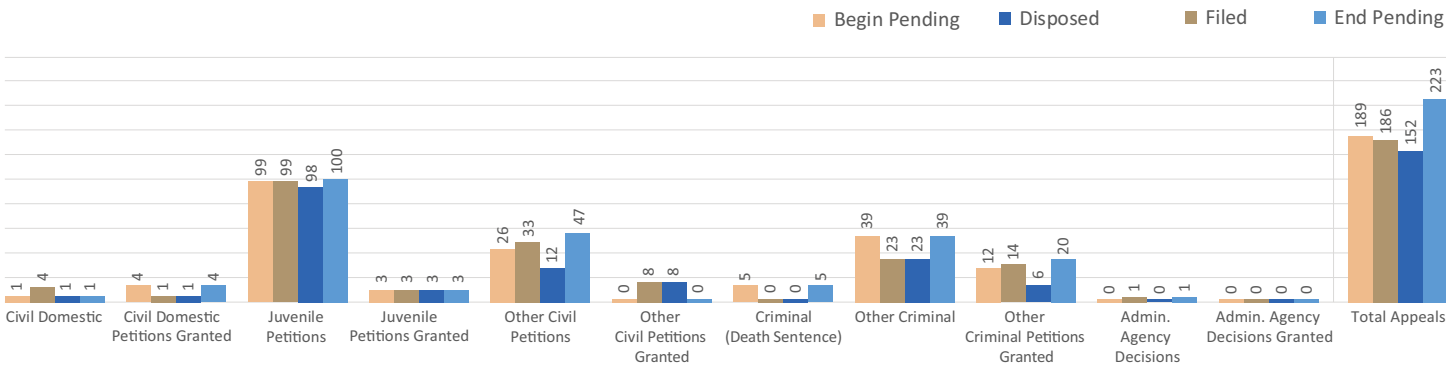
The Supreme Court of North Carolina, located in Raleigh, was established in

1819

CASELOAD FY 2020 – 21 (PETITIONS)



CASELOAD FY 2020 – 21 (APPEALS)



NORTH CAROLINA COURT OF APPEALS

Established in 1967, the North Carolina Court of Appeals is the state’s intermediate appellate court. The court is led by a chief judge, who is appointed by the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of North Carolina. The Court of Appeals reviews the proceedings that occurred in the trial courts for errors of law or legal procedure; it decides only questions of law – not questions of fact. The court decides if the trial court correctly applied the law, or if there was prejudicial error in the conduct of the trial.

Hears cases in panels of

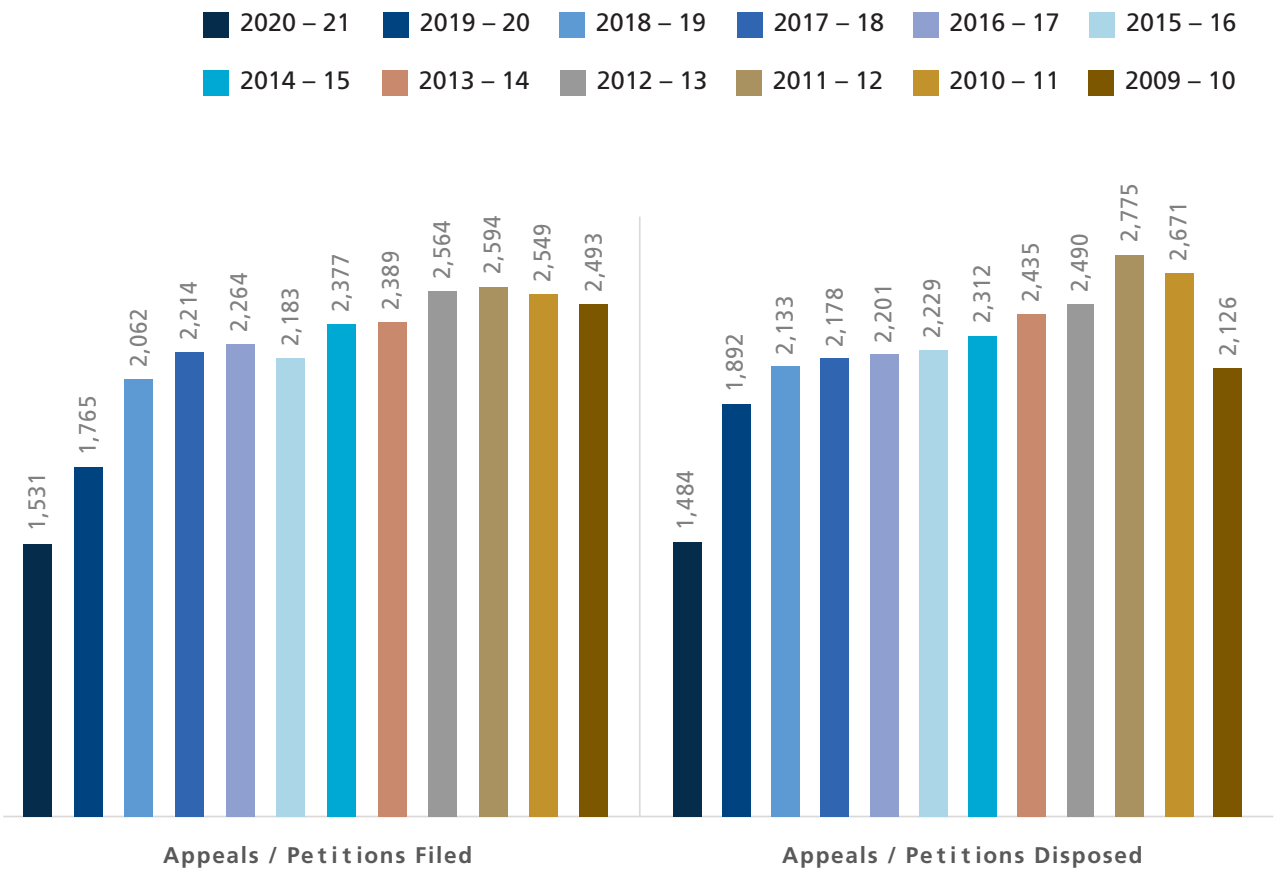
3

- 1,531 appeals/petitions filed
- 1,484 appeals/petitions disposed

15 JUDGES

who serve eight-year terms

CASELOAD FY 2020 – 21

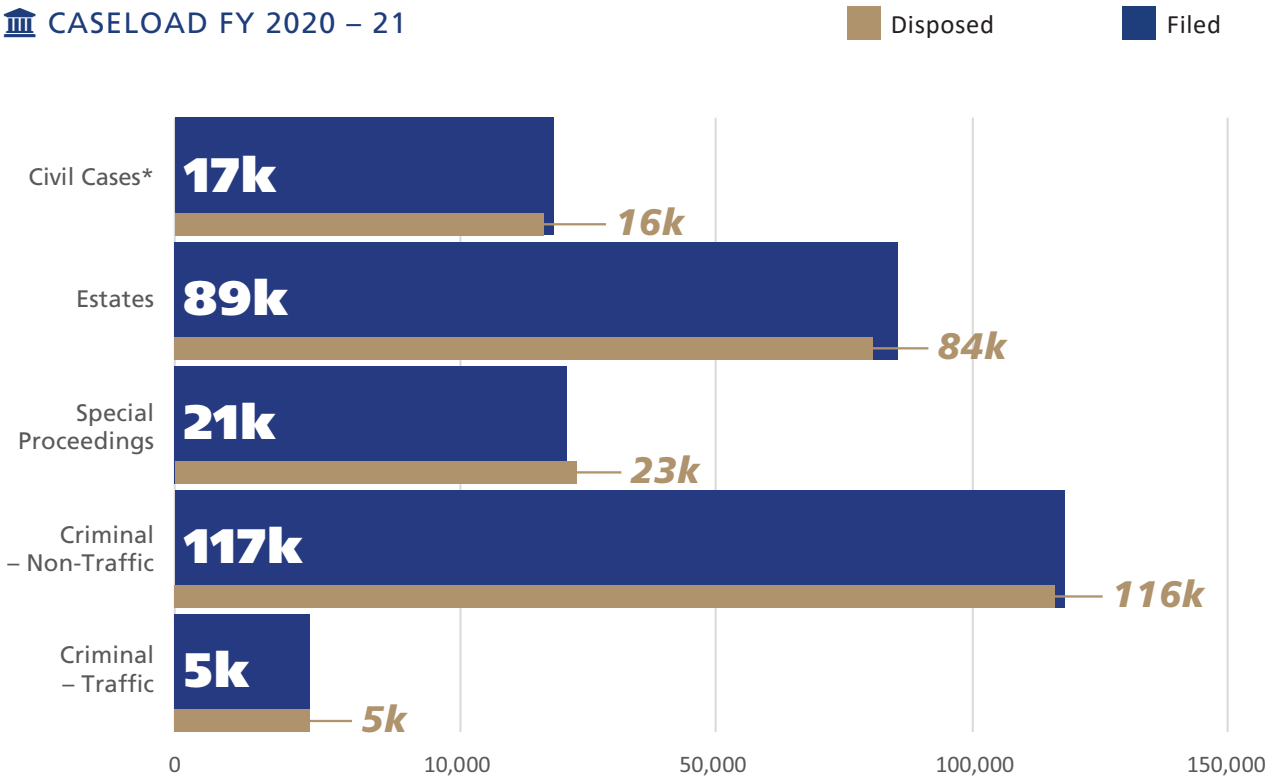


SUPERIOR COURTS

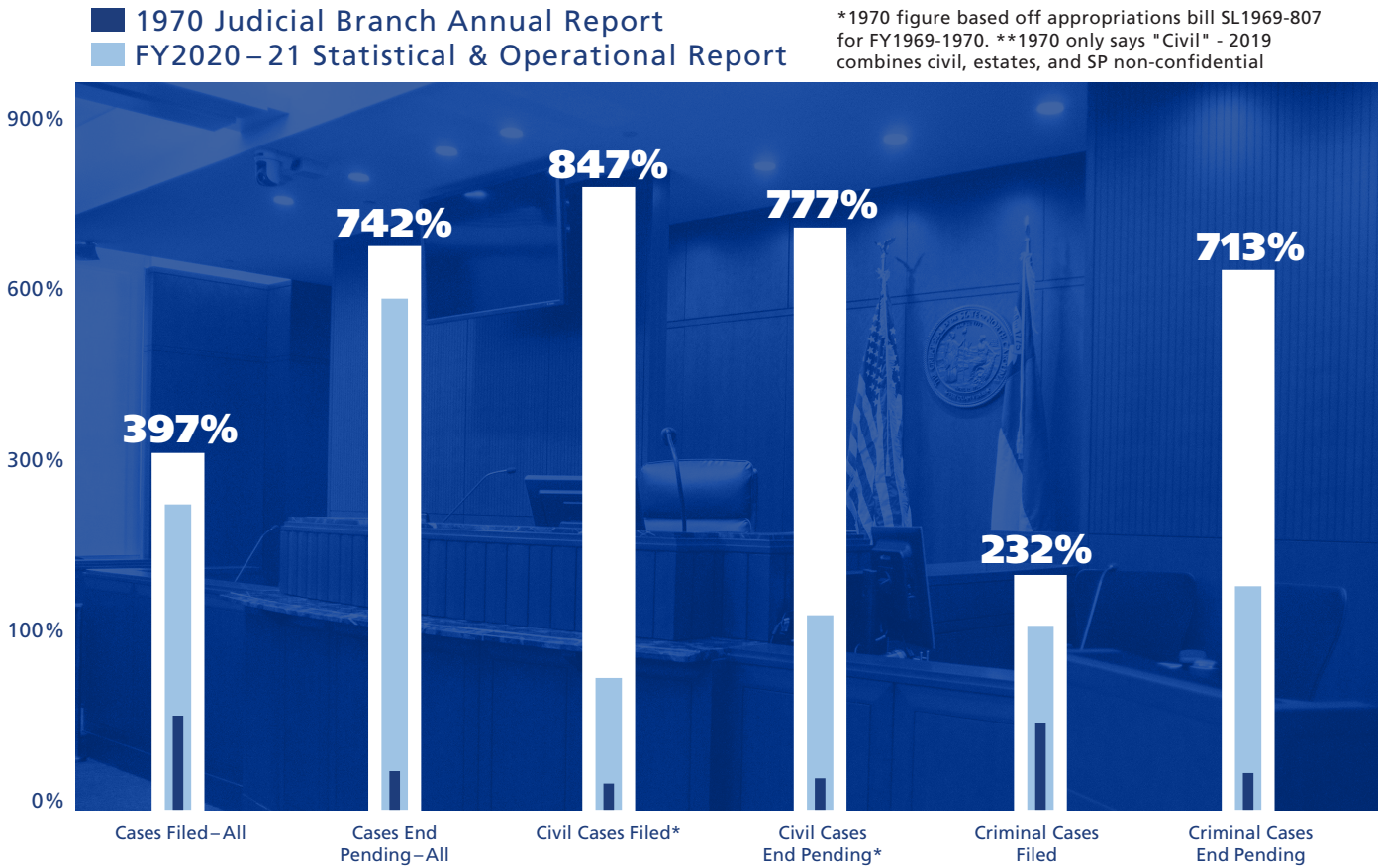
Established in 1777 and North Carolina’s oldest courts, the superior court division hears civil cases involving more than \$25,000, all felony criminal cases, and misdemeanor and infraction appeals from the district court. Superior court is divided into five divisions and 48 districts across the state.

Judges rotate every six months among the districts within their divisions. The senior resident superior court judge manages the administrative duties of the court. The clerk of superior court is responsible for all clerical and record keeping functions and serves as the judge of probate.

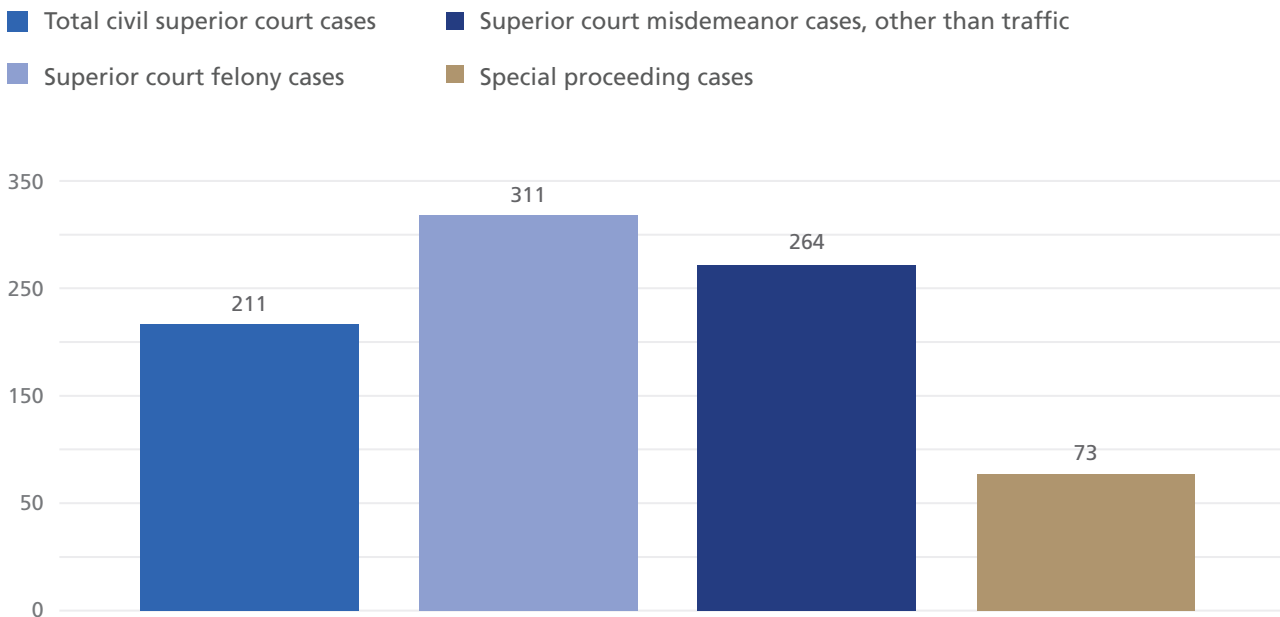
- 251,644 total cases filed
- 245,213 total cases disposed



SUPERIOR COURTS CASELOAD



SUPERIOR COURT — TIME TO DISPOSITION (IN DAYS) FY 2020 – 21



DISTRICT COURTS

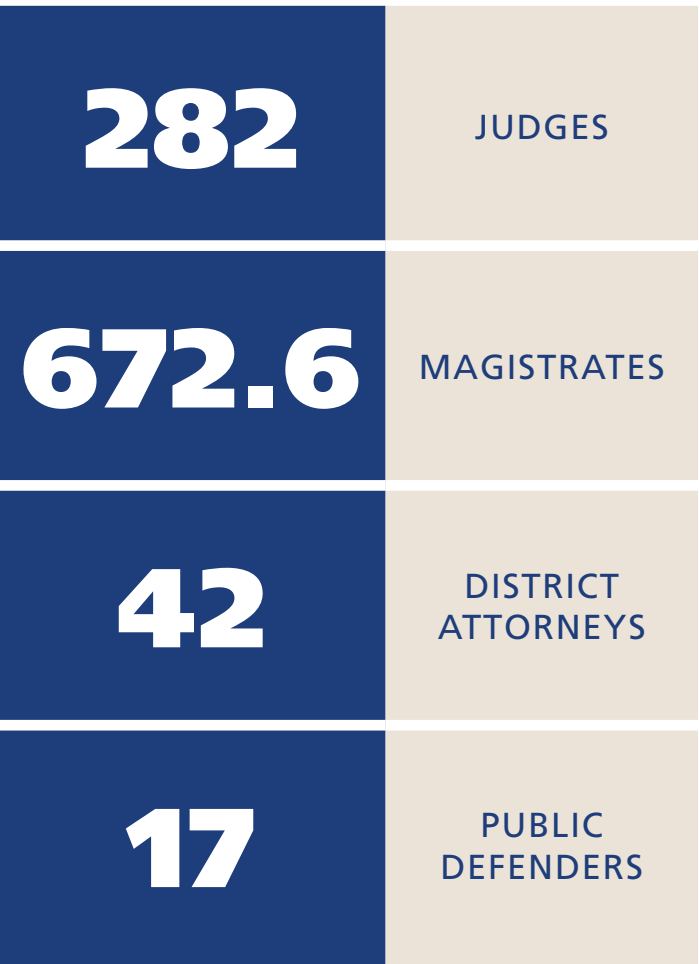
Established in 1966, district courts hear civil and criminal cases including all matters of family law, as well as all infractions and misdemeanors. District courts are divided into 41 districts across the state, but not grouped into larger judicial divisions. District courts sit in the county seat of each county.

The Chief District Court Judge manages the administrative duties of the court. Magistrates perform numerous duties in both civil and criminal matters, issuing warrants and presiding over small claims cases.

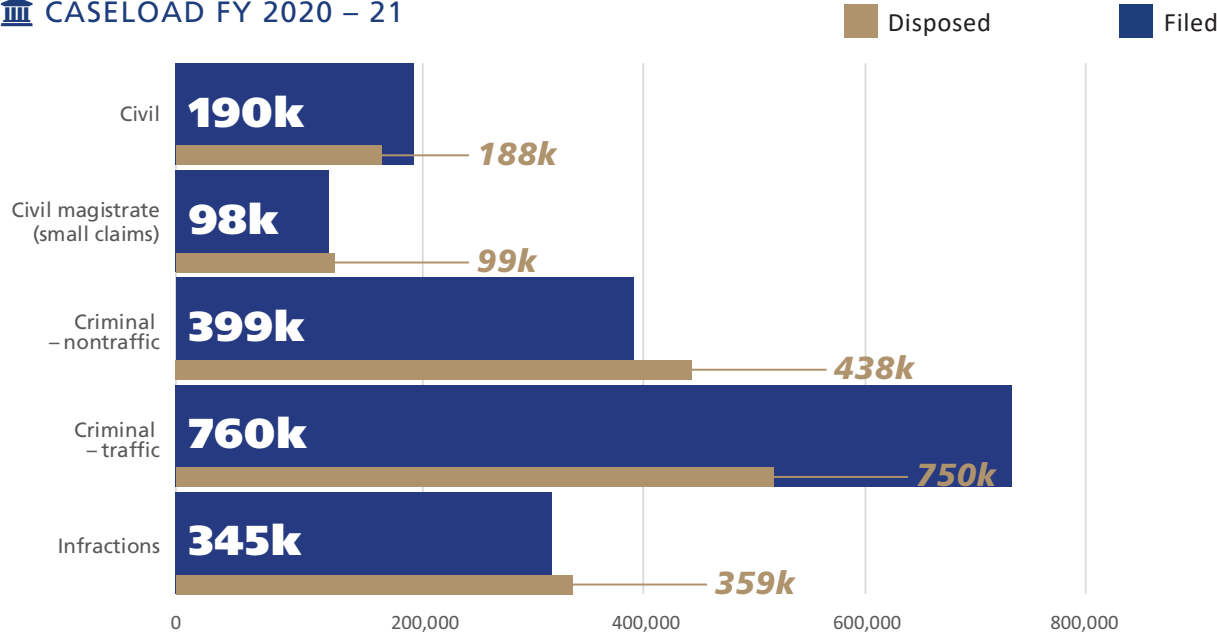
- 1,794,782 total cases filed
- 1,836,050 total cases disposed

As the Judicial Branch continues to prepare for eCourts, and implementation of the Integrated Case Management System (ICMS), the NCAOC announced the launch of the Data Integrity Initiative in 2018.

The goal of this initiative is a widespread "clean-up" of pending cases to ensure that data in Judicial Branch legacy systems reflect the most current information available. Among other things, this process may impact statistics for dispositions and pending cases during the fiscal year, and is also noteworthy for comparisons with previous fiscal years.



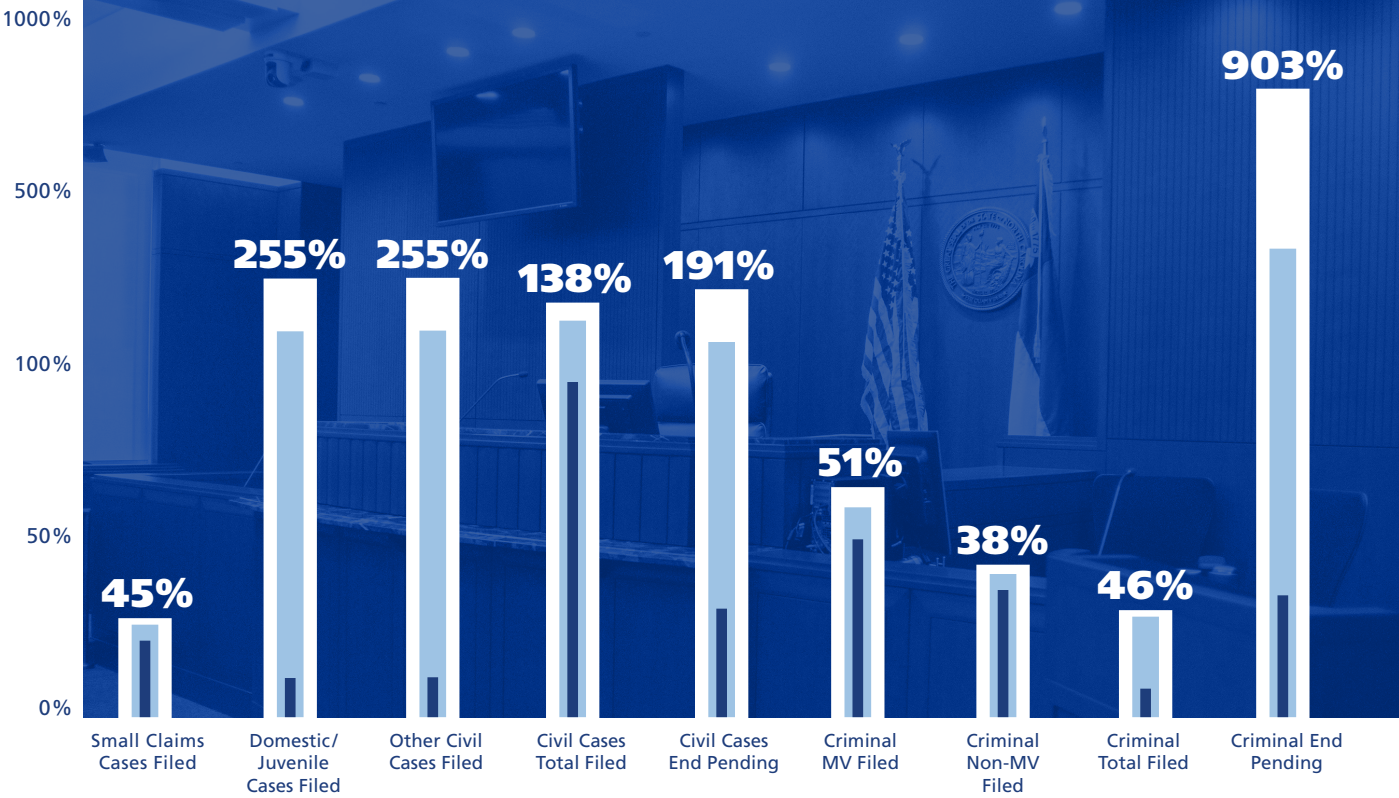
CASELOAD FY 2020 – 21



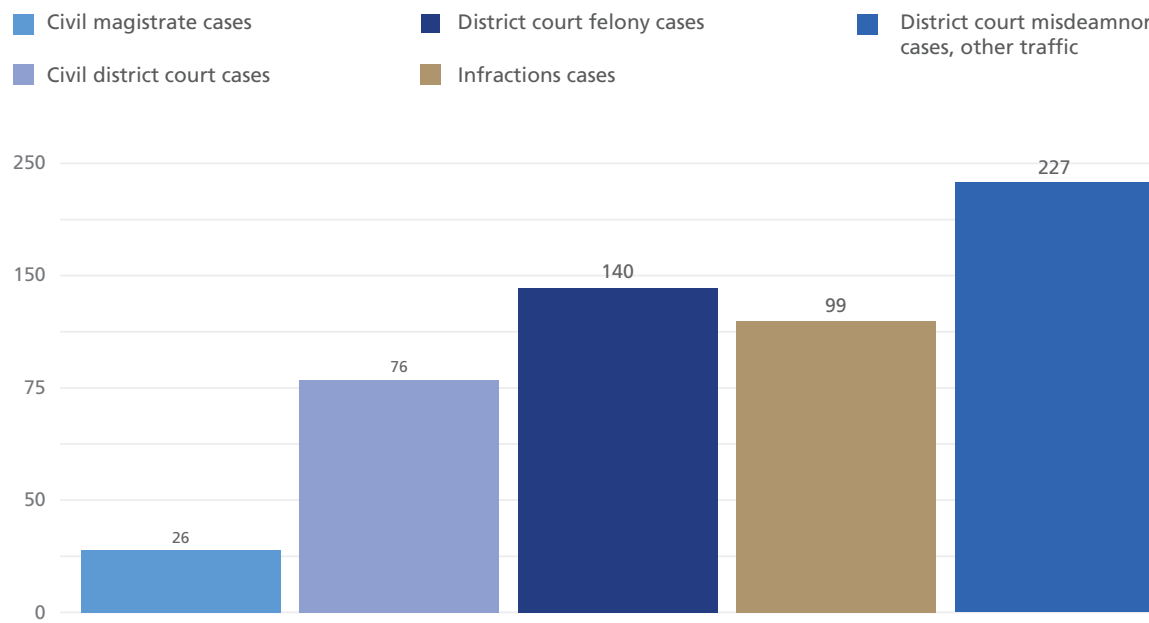
DISTRICT COURTS CASELOAD

1970 Judicial Branch Annual Report
FY2020 – 21 Statistical & Operational Report

*1970 figure based off appropriations bill SL1969-807 for FY1969-1970. **1970 only says "Civil" - 2019 combines civil, estates, and SP non-confidential



DISTRICT COURT — TIME TO DISPOSITION (IN DAYS) FY 2020 – 21



BUSINESS COURT

Established in 1996, the North Carolina Business Court is a specialized forum of the superior court division. Cases involving complex and significant issues of corporate and commercial law in our state are assigned by the Chief Justice to a Special Superior Court Judge for complex business cases.

Appeals from Business Court decisions go directly to the Supreme Court. The Business Court has four locations across the state in Charlotte, Greensboro, Raleigh, and Winston-Salem. The chief business court judge manages the administrative duties of the court.

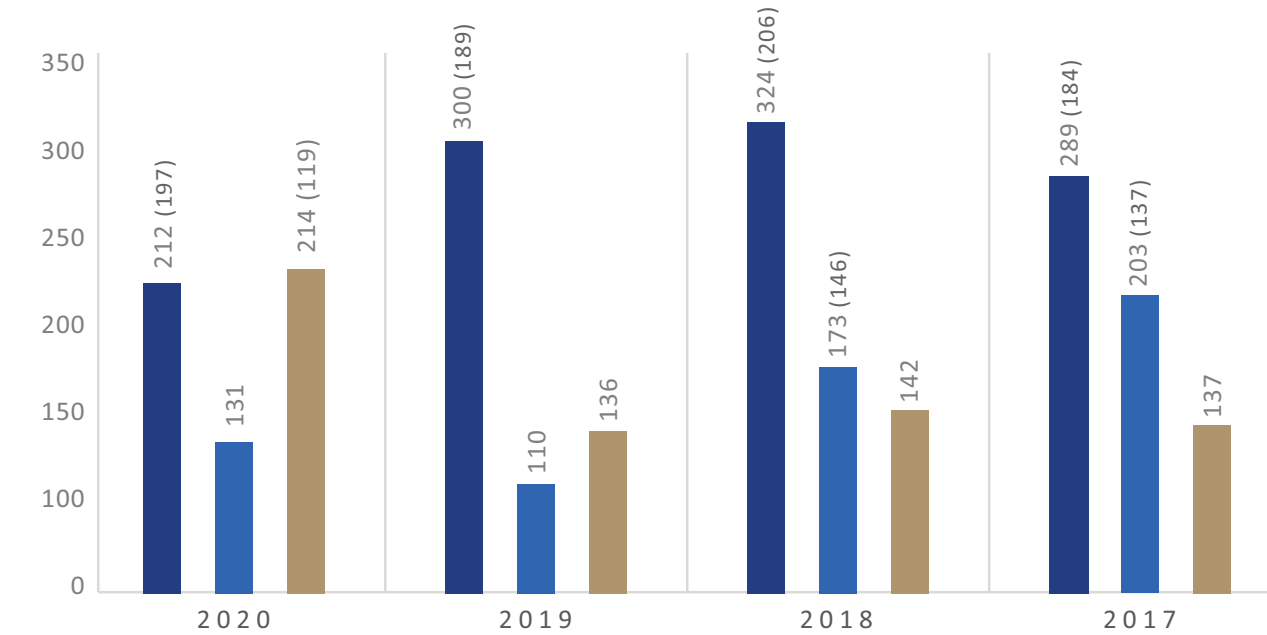
For more information, please see the Business Court’s annual reports found at: [NCcourts.gov/courts/business-court](https://nccourts.gov/courts/business-court).



FREQUENCY OF CASE TYPES FROM JULY 1, 2020 TO JUNE 30, 2021	
*NOTE — A party’s Notice of Designation may indicate more than one dispute type.	
43	Corporations
15	Trade Secrets
4	Intellectual Property
13	Contracts
6	Securities
4	Antitrust
5	Trademark
6	\$5M Amount in Controversy
3	Contested Tax
1	Receivership of \$5M

CASELOAD (CALENDAR YEAR)

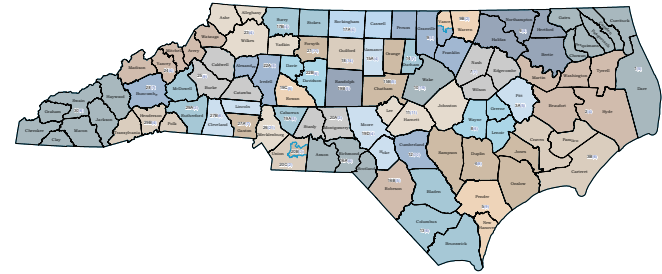
■ Pending Cases* ■ New Cases ■ Closed Cases



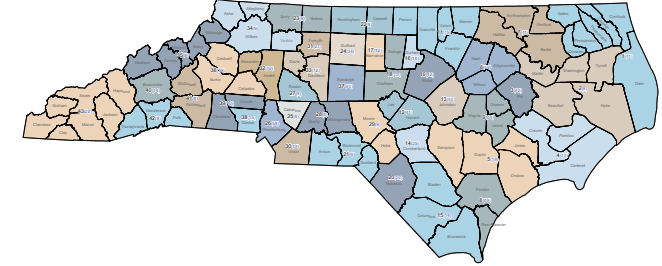
* Parenthetical figures represent when a consolidated group of cases is counted as one case.

2.5 MILLION CASES FILED

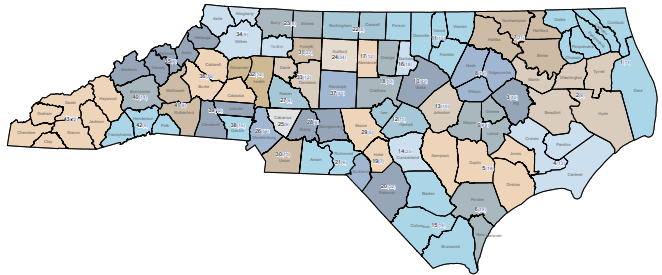
DISTRICT COURT DISTRICTS



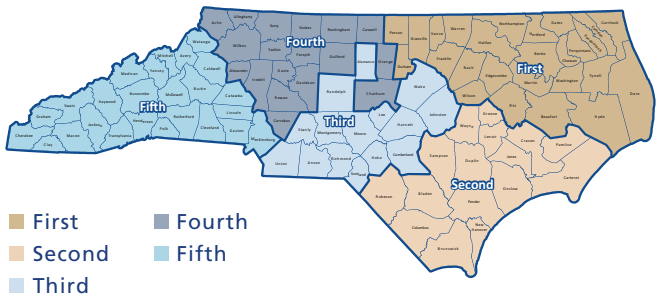
PROSECUTORIAL DISTRICTS



SUPERIOR COURT DISTRICTS



SUPERIOR COURT DIVISIONS



213
judicial sites,
2 appellate courts,
100 counties, and an
Administrative Office
of the Courts

555
elected officials
(more than the Executive
Branch and the Legislative
Branch combined)

7,025
public servants

<1%
monies collected and
receipted by the courts
stays with the courts

INCREASING ACCESS TO JUSTICE THROUGH PROGRAMS & SERVICES

ALTERNATIVE DISPUTE RESOLUTION (ADR)

helps parties resolve disputes outside of court. ADR services include family financial settlement, court-ordered arbitration, mediated settlement conferences, and the clerk's mediation program, all of which offer a less adversarial, more expeditious process for settling legal disputes.

CHILD CUSTODY MEDIATION offers a “family-friendly” way to resolve custody and visitation actions filed with the district court. Mediators provide neutral, non-adversarial court-ordered services in cases involving custody and visitation of minor children, including preparing parenting agreements. Custody mediation creates an opportunity for parents to focus on the best interests and needs of their children.

FAMILY COURT provides a forum that resolves family-related issues in a manner that respects the rights of each individual family member, promotes the best interest of the family, and helps families structure their own solutions. Family court currently serves 27 counties that comprise 47% of North Carolina's population. The median pending age of cases in non-family court districts is nearly two and a half times longer than in family court districts.

GUARDIAN AD LITEM (GAL) PROGRAM

provides an attorney advocate and community volunteers to serve abused and neglected children in every North Carolina county by advocating for their best interests in court. The GAL volunteer represents and promotes the best interest of children in court to help the courts work efficiently toward safety and permanence and provide the children with a voice.

5,258

district court cases
settled in mediation

8,739

child custody cases mediated

47,178

civil domestic cases filed
in family court districts

518,592

hours of GAL volunteer
service to children

COURT PROGRAMS

Providing Information,
Advice, Support, and Solutions



JUVENILE COURT IMPROVEMENT program works to improve the performance of North Carolina’s juvenile courts in abuse and neglect cases so that safety, permanence, and well-being for each child are achieved in a fair and timely manner.

The work of this program helps ensure children are placed in permanent homes within one year, each family receives the individual attention necessary to make effective decisions for the child, and each child and each parent are afforded due process and effective legal representation.

LANGUAGE ACCESS SERVICES provide court interpreters who speak more than 68 different languages. Court interpreters are an essential public service, giving direct assistance to those who are limited English proficient or deaf or hard of hearing.

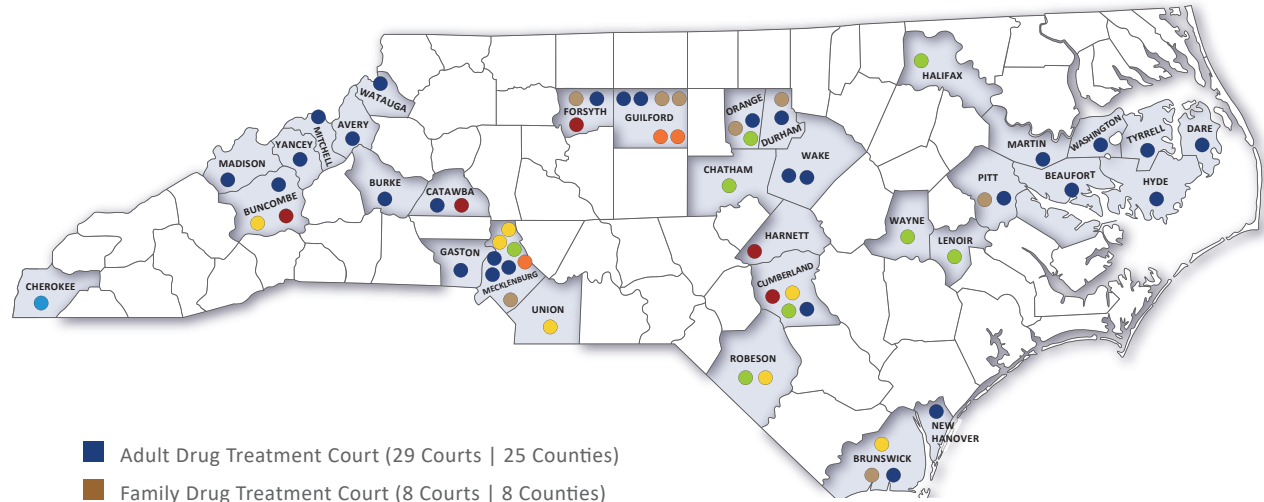


41,116

interpreting events of more than 68 different languages

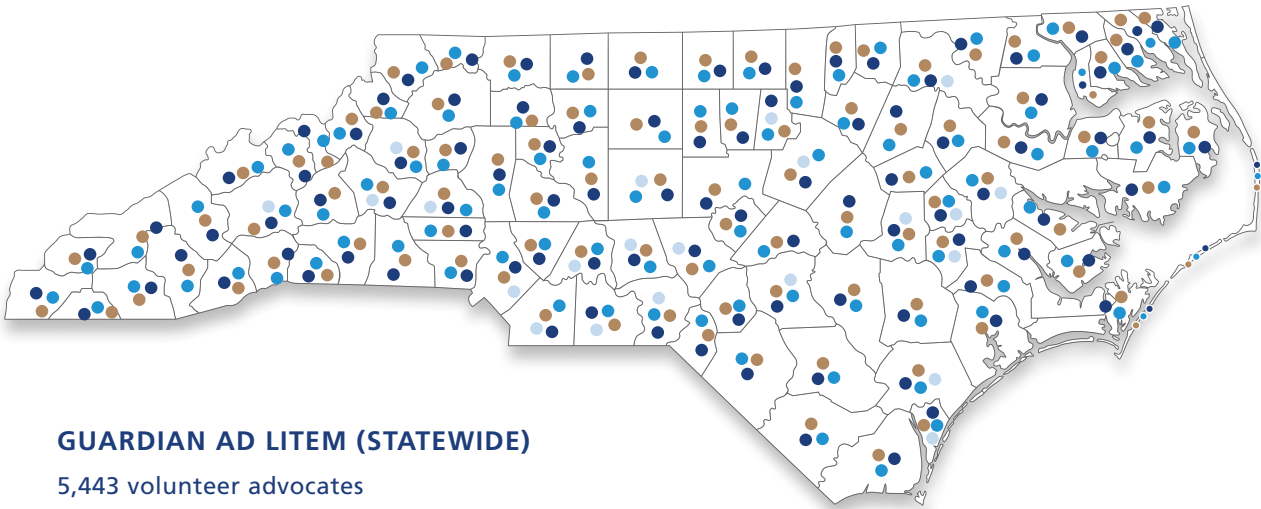
RECOVERY COURTS AVAILABLE IN NORTH CAROLINA

61 COURTS 32 COUNTIES



- Adult Drug Treatment Court (29 Courts | 25 Counties)
- Family Drug Treatment Court (8 Courts | 8 Counties)
- Mental Health Court (8 Courts | 8 Counties)
- DWI Court (7 Courts | 7 Counties)
- Veterans Treatment Court (5 Courts | 5 Counties)
- Youth Drug Treatment Court (3 Courts | 2 Counties)
- Tribal Court (1 Court)

COURT PROGRAMS AND SERVICES AVAILABLE BY COUNTY



GUARDIAN AD LITEM (STATEWIDE)
5,443 volunteer advocates
64,070 child abuse and neglect hearings
17,923 children received legal representation

ALTERNATIVE DISPUTE RESOLUTION

2,190 family financial cases completed
4,465 arbitration cases completed
4,906 mediated settlement cases completed

CHILD CUSTODY MEDIATION

16,891 people attended orientation
8,993 child custody cases mediated
9,523 mediation sessions held
4,521 parenting agreements drafted

FAMILY COURT

42,671 domestic cases filed
72.1% of pending domestic cases < 1 year

LANGUAGE ACCESS INTERPRETERS

Spanish	80	Bosnian/Serbian/Croatian	2
Russian	11	Polish	2
Mandarin	9	Tagalog	2
Portuguese	6	Lao	2
Vietnamese	6	Haitian Creole	2
Arabic	5	Cantonese	1
French	4	Somali	1
Hmong	3	Turkish	1
Korean	3		

**Includes certified and conditionally qualified interpreters available from in and out of state.*

NOT ALL PROGRAMS ARE AVAILABLE IN EACH COUNTY

The North Carolina Judicial Branch needs funding to expand these programs and services statewide.

JUDICIAL BRANCH HIGHLIGHTS

CUSTOMER SERVICE AWARD

The North Carolina Administrative Office of the Courts (NCAOC) Customer Service Award is a new initiative launched in January 2021 by Chief Justice Paul Newby and Director Judge Andrew Heath. Each month, an NCAOC employee who demonstrates outstanding performance and exemplifies excellent customer service while performing work for the courts is honored and recognized.



"From day one, Chief Justice Newby has emphasized the importance of going above and beyond in our mission to serve the needs of the North Carolina court system," Judge Heath said. "This is a way to recognize individuals who set a high bar in this area."

Recipients are recognized in the following ways:

- Presented a certificate during the monthly Extended Management Team meeting
- Name and photo displayed in the lobby area of the North Carolina Judicial Center
- Congratulated with an article in an NCJC Building Bulletin email, which is also published on Juno

The initial award was presented to Chris Moody of the Technology Services Division at the February monthly NCAOC Extended Management Team meeting. Moody earned the first award because of his collaborative and quick work with the Supreme Court IT team over the holidays to prepare for the transition of the incoming justices and their staff members. Others to earn the award this year were Andrew Breedlove, Jason Dallin, Megan Lively, Sara Phillips, and Jared Rundell as well as the warehouse staff.



ALL THINGS JUDICIAL

February 2021 marked the beginning of a new and exciting communications tool for the Judicial Branch: the All Things Judicial podcast. Since its launch, the Branch has released 31 episodes with more than 7,000 downloads. Podcast episodes have covered recognizable figures, new and established programs and commissions, and it has celebrated important monthly themes like Black History Month in February and Women's History Month in March.

From its inaugural episode which focused on the Human Trafficking Commission, All Things Judicial has been a podcast about the important role of the North Carolina Judicial Branch in state government. The podcast follows a bi-monthly release schedule with each new episode available for download every other Wednesday. All Things Judicial is available on all of the major podcast players and is available to stream on [NCcourts.gov/podcast](https://nccourts.gov/podcast).



CHIEF JUSTICE COURTHOUSE TOURS

Chief Justice Paul Newby launched a courthouse tour in May 2021 during which he will visit courthouses in all of North Carolina's 100 counties. Newby will be the first chief justice to visit all of North Carolina's courthouses from Murphy to Manteo. The first phase of the tour began in the far-western part of the state and has reached counties in the Piedmont, Triad, Triangle, Sandhills, and the eastern and coastal regions. The primary purpose of the tour is for the chief justice to visit with judges and court personnel, listen to their concerns, and thank them for their dedication in keeping our courthouses open and accessible for all North Carolinians.

The tour is expected to have visited 50 counties by the end of 2021 and conclude in Dare County at the end of 2022. Judicial Branch personnel are encouraged to follow along with the tour on Juno and NCCourts, and take the opportunity to meet Chief Justice Newby when the tour visits their county courthouse.



CHIEF JUSTICE COURTHOUSE TOURS



CHIEF JUSTICE NEWBY ANNOUNCES TASK FORCE ON ACES-INFORMED COURTS

The Chief Justice's Task Force on ACEs-Informed Courts launched in May 2021. The mission of the Task Force is to enable Judicial Branch stakeholders to understand the impact on children of exposure to ACEs (adverse childhood experiences; adverse community environments); and to develop strategies for addressing adverse consequences within our court system.

"These traumas increase the likelihood that these children will end up in the courtroom" said Chief Justice Paul Newby. "I look forward to the positive outcomes this group will produce for our children and our communities."

To accomplish this mission, the Task Force will:

- Provide judges and court administrators with practical education on the effects of ACEs;
- Equip juvenile court officials to recognize young offenders and victims impacted by ACEs;
- Identify existing programs and design new programs that intervene in the lives of young ACEs offenders and victims affected by ACEs to put them on a path away from the courthouse and into a successful adult life; and
- Provide a platform from which court officials can offer feedback to educators regarding their experiences, with the hope of creating further avenues for research on this important topic.

The Task Force is co-chaired by Judge Andrew T. Heath, director of the North Carolina Administrative Office of the Courts, and District Attorney Ben David for New Hanover and Pender counties. Task Force members are appointed by Chief Justice Newby and are representative of all stakeholder groups within our court system: judges, prosecutors, defense attorneys, clerks,

law enforcement, private attorneys, and child-representatives, as well as academic leaders. View the Task Force members at [NCcourts.gov/ACEs](https://nccourts.gov/ACEs). This talented, experienced, and diverse group is supplemented with an advisory group made up of subject matter experts as well as representatives from law schools, universities, the Executive Branch, and private foundations.

Pictured from left to right:

- NCDPS Deputy General Counsel LaToya Powell
- GAL District Administrator Nalini Joseph
- District Attorney Spencer Merriweather
- District Court Judge Quintin McGee
- Chief Public Defender Robert (Bert) Kemp
- District Attorney Ben David
- CMPD Chief Johnny Jennings
- Chief Justice Paul Newby
- Attorney Jack Marin
- NCAOC Director Judge Andrew Heath
- District Attorney Robert (Seth) Banks
- District Court Judge Mario Perez
- Elder John Amanchukwu
- Clerk of Superior Court Meredith Edwards
- Chief District Court Judge Angelica McIntyre
- NCAOC Training and Services Director Mike Silver
- Sr. Resident Superior Court Judge Phyllis Gorham
- David Levi (Levi Family Professor of Law and Judicial Studies and Director of the Bolch Judicial Institute)
- Sheriff David Mahoney
- Amelia Thorn (Bolch Judicial Institute Assistant Director of Special Projects and Articles Editor at Judicature)
- Superior Court Judge Charles (Casey) Viser
- Bishop Patrick Wooden

CHIEF JUSTICE PAUL NEWBY APPOINTS JUDGE ANDREW T. HEATH AS DIRECTOR OF THE NORTH CAROLINA ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE OF THE COURTS (NCAOC)



Chief Justice Paul Newby appointed Superior Court Judge Andrew T. Heath as director of the North Carolina Administrative Office of the Courts (NCAOC) effective January 8, 2021. His role is to manage and oversee the administrative services provided to the Judicial Branch's more than 6,400

employees and hundreds of courthouses and facilities in every county of the state.

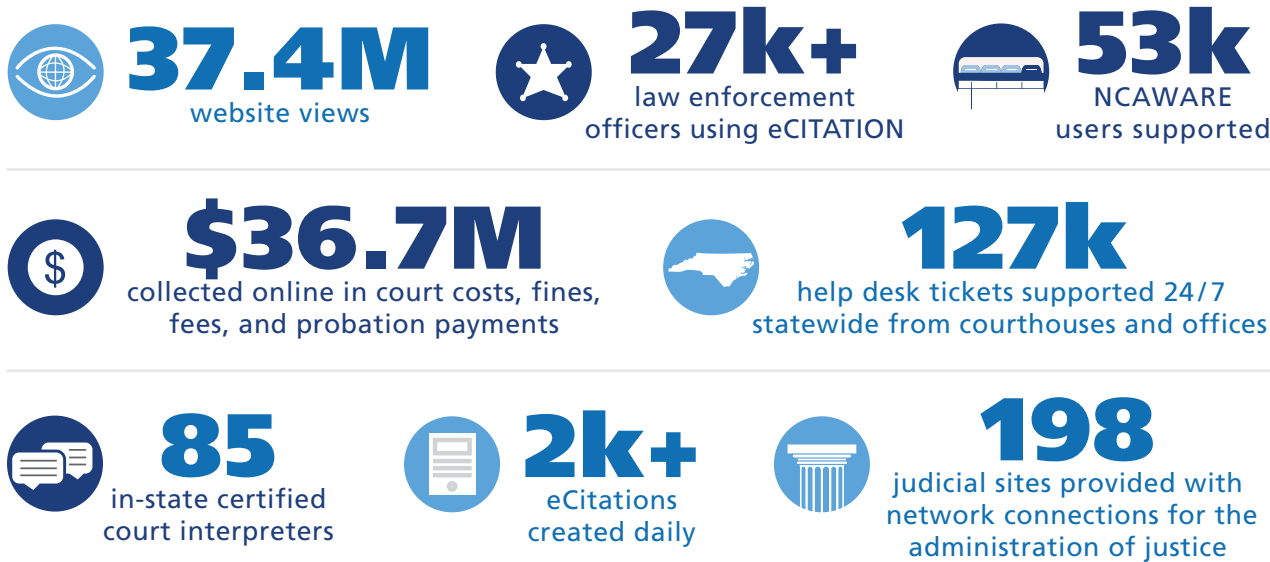
"His broad experience and in-depth wisdom gained in the Judicial Branch and throughout state government make him an excellent choice for this important work," said Chief Justice Newby. "Judge Heath stands ready to work with courts statewide to assist and equip them with the resources and equipment they need to administer equal justice for all."

"It is an honor to be of service in this capacity to the Judicial Branch and this great state."
– Judge Heath

"I look forward to working with the courts and our many stakeholders as we continue to work through the pandemic." Judge Heath's most recent experience was serving as a superior court judge with statewide jurisdiction where he presided over bench and jury trials in civil and criminal matters. His prior professional experience includes having served as budget director for the Office of the Governor, leading the Office of State Budget and Management, having served as chairman of the North Carolina Industrial Commission, and having worked in private practice with Hedrick, Gardner, Kincheloe, and Garofalo, LLP, in Wilmington, North Carolina. Judge Heath earned a Juris Doctor from the Indiana University Robert H. McKinney School of Law in 2006, and earned a Bachelor of Science from the University of North Carolina at Asheville in 2003.

NCAOC SERVICES

The North Carolina Administrative Office of the Courts (NCAOC) provides services to help North Carolina's unified court system operate more efficiently and effectively, taking into account each courthouse's diverse needs, caseloads, and available resources. The NCAOC's approach is to apply professional expertise consistently and uniformly in the best interest of the court system. NCAOC is intently focused on expanding court programs and services to provide equal access to justice. Following are a few highlighted areas of NCAOC's services. Learn more at [NCcourts.gov](https://nccourts.gov).



CONFERENCES AND COMMISSIONS

Chief Justice's Commission on Professionalism (CJCP) provides ongoing attention and assistance to ensure the practice of law remains a high calling, dedicated to the service of clients and the public good. CJCP was established in 1998 to enhance professionalism among North Carolina's lawyers.

Chief Justice's Rules Advisory Commission focuses on rule changes that are necessary for a statewide electronic-filing and case-management system. Established in 2019, the commission monitors the North Carolina Rules of Civil Procedure and the General Rules of Practice for the Superior and District Courts and to recommend amendments to those rule sets as needed.

Conference of Clerks of Superior Court serves as the primary point of contact between the 100 elected clerks of superior court, the General Assembly, the NCAOC, and other state, local, and public entities to ensure the effective and efficient exchange of information.

Conference of District Attorneys established in 1983 to improve criminal justice in North Carolina by coordinating the prosecution efforts of the various district attorneys. The conference serves the 43 elected district attorneys in their pursuit of justice and improvement of the administration of criminal law through training, research, and monitoring criminal legislation.

Commission on Indigent Defense Services established in 2001 to safeguard individual liberty and the Constitution by equipping the public defense community with the resources it needs to achieve fair and just outcomes.

Dispute Resolution Commission established in 1995 to certify and regulate private mediators who serve the courts of this State. It recommends policy, rules, and rule revisions relating to dispute resolution in North Carolina's courts; provides support to court-based mediation programs and more.

Equal Access to Justice Commission charged with expanding access to the civil justice system for people of low income and modest means in North Carolina.

Human Trafficking Commission serves as the legislatively mandated leader of anti-human trafficking efforts across the state. Established in 2013, the commission not only continuously examines the issue, but also recommends solutions to gaps and suggests new policies, procedures, and legislation to combat it.

Innocence Inquiry Commission charged with providing an independent and balanced truth-seeking forum for credible post-conviction claims of innocence. The commission was established in 2006 by the General Assembly to investigate and evaluate post-conviction claims of factual innocence.

Judicial Standards Commission established in 1973 to uphold high standards of professional and ethical judicial conduct. The commission reviews and investigates complaints of judicial misconduct that would violate the Code of Judicial Conduct.

Sentencing and Policy Advisory Commission makes recommendations to the General Assembly for the modification of sentencing laws and policies.

EXPANDING ACCESS TO JUSTICE

Since announcing in mid-2019 a 10-year contract with Tyler Technologies to help fulfill the vision of a 21st century courthouse, where technology is used to enhance efficiency, effectiveness, and timeliness of process, the North Carolina Judicial Branch in the past year has initiated a host of technical projects to configure the new system, known as the Integrated Case Management System (ICMS), on the standardized rules and practices of North Carolina's courts. Learn more at [NCcourts.gov/eCourts](https://nccourts.gov/eCourts).





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All Things Judicial Podcast

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**The cover image on the front and back is the Davidson County Courthouse.*

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