

JULY 1, 2015 – JUNE 30, 2016



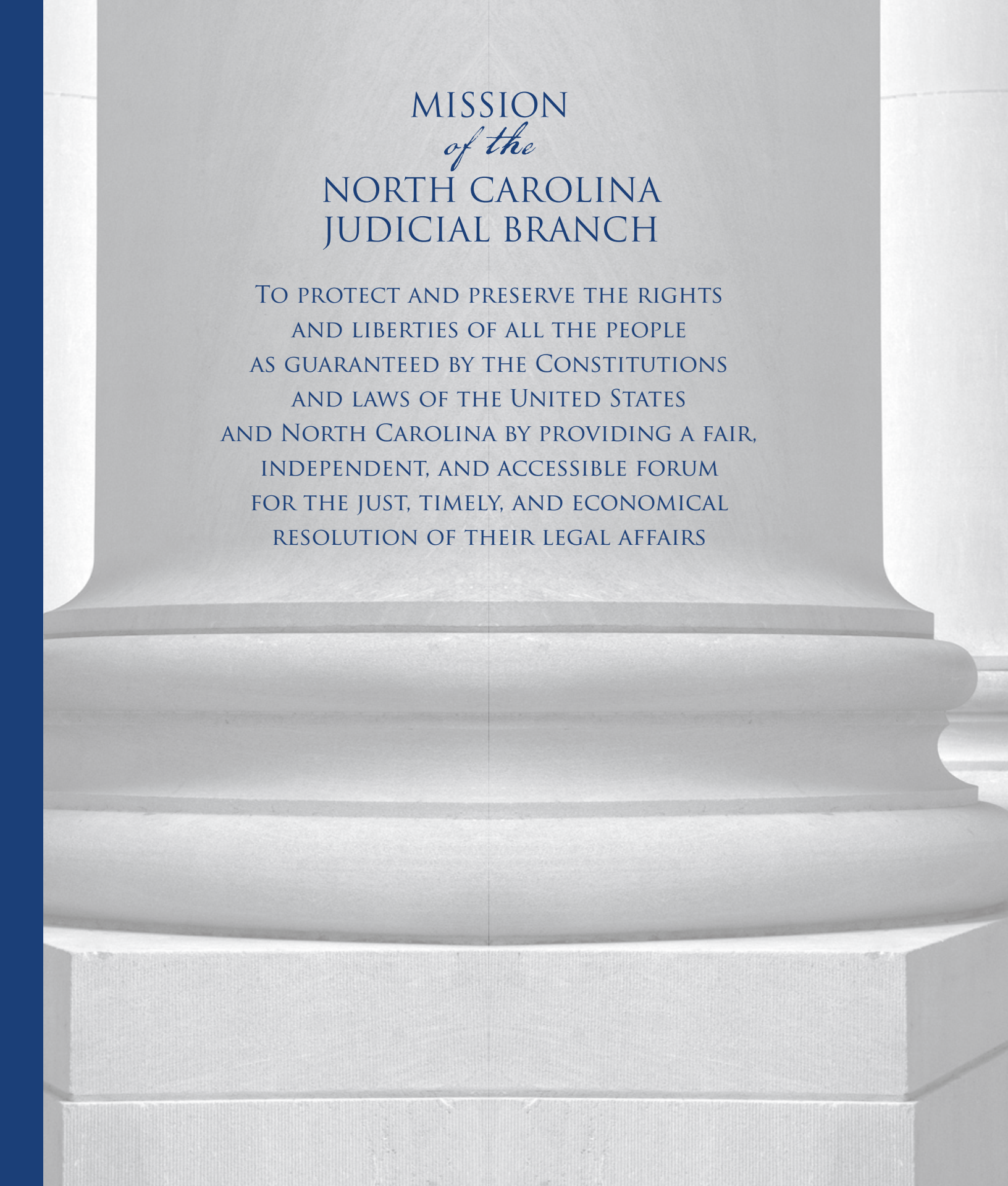
ANNUAL REPORT

of the

NORTH CAROLINA
JUDICIAL BRANCH



justice for all



MISSION
of the
NORTH CAROLINA
JUDICIAL BRANCH

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



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A SPECIAL MESSAGE
from the
CHIEF JUSTICE OF NORTH CAROLINA
and the
DIRECTOR OF THE NORTH CAROLINA
ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE OF THE COURTS

Dear Friend of the Court,

We are pleased to provide this fiscal year 2015 – 16 Annual Report of the North Carolina Judicial Branch. We continue to be very proud of the North Carolina court system and its employees, and we thank you for this opportunity to share our successes, as we continue to serve the citizens and great state of North Carolina.

This report features noteworthy updates and accomplishments about the component parts and offices of the North Carolina Judicial Branch and during the fiscal year.

For further details and information, visit our website at www.NCcourts.org, and see the section, “Judicial Branch Data and Information,” which will provide you with annual statistical and operational reports, activities of the North Carolina business courts, fact sheets, and other court-related data.

We appreciate your interest in the North Carolina Judicial Branch.

Sincerely,



Mark Martin

Mark Martin, Chief Justice
Supreme Court of North Carolina



Marion Warren

Judge Marion Warren, Director
North Carolina Administrative Office
of the Courts

SPECIAL NOTE

Chief Justice Martin appointed Judge Marion Warren to serve as the director of the North Carolina Administrative Office of the Courts, effective Nov. 3, 2015.

ABOUT THE COVER

This year’s annual report cover features an iconic column, as well as the three stars, which is symbolic of the three co-equal branches of North Carolina’s state government. The cover also includes the new Judicial Branch seal, which is explained on page 2. The theme “Justice For All” reflects the mission of the North Carolina court system.

This annual report is published online at www.NCcourts.org/Citizens/JData. Twenty copies of this public document were printed at a cost of \$24.00 total, or about \$1.20 per copy. This annual report was printed in-house by the North Carolina Administrative Office of the Courts’ Printing Services.

CHIEF JUSTICE MARK MARTIN APPOINTS STUDY COMMISSION TO STRENGTHEN STATE'S COURT SYSTEM



The North Carolina Commission on the Administration of Law and Justice (NCCALJ) was convened by Chief Justice Mark Martin in September 2015 to conduct a comprehensive review of the state's judicial system and make recommendations for strengthening our courts.

The independent, multidisciplinary commission is comprised of judicial stakeholders, as well as national and state leaders from the private and public sectors, appointed by Chief Justice Martin. It is the third such commission convened to study possible improvements in the courts; the first was in 1958 and the second in 1996. NCCALJ's work will ensure the Judicial Branch meets the needs of North Carolinians and their expectations for a modern court system.

"Our court system stretches across 100 counties, both rural and urban, and serves the people of the ninth most populous state in the nation," said Chief Justice Martin. "The size and diversity of our state's population demands a court system that is both innovative and flexible enough to deliver justice in a fair, balanced, and efficient manner."



NCCALJ was tasked with examining five areas of inquiry within North Carolina's Judicial Branch: civil justice, criminal investigation and adjudication, legal professionalism, public trust and confidence, and technology. The NCCALJ's five committees have conducted research, consulted with numerous experts and court officials, and engaged in collaborative discussions to identify areas for improvement in North Carolina's court system. During the summer, the commission produced interim reports and gathered public input through online comments and public meetings held across the state.

NCCALJ's committees will finalize recommendations for a final written report, which is expected to be released in early 2017. The final written report will be available at www.nccalj.org where the public can also access materials from the entire commission process.



JUDICIAL BRANCH UNVEILS NEW SEAL

The Judicial Branch unveiled a new seal in January 2016 to coincide with the launch of the Celebrate NC Courts initiative, commemorating milestone anniversaries for the Judicial Branch. Based on the the Supreme Court's seal, the new seal features Lady Justice and various other elements to symbolize the unified court system and its commitment to the fair and impartial administration of justice. Symbolism includes:

- **LADY JUSTICE** symbolizes the moral force in judicial systems.
- **BALANCED SCALES** represent the impartiality with which justice is served.
- The **SWORD** symbolizes the power of justice and reason.
- The **BLINDFOLD** on Lady Justice shows that justice is not subject to influence.
- **THREE STARS** symbolize three co-equal branches within North Carolina's state government – legislative, executive, and judicial.
- **GENERAL COURT OF JUSTICE** refers to a unified court system.
- **SUUM CUIQUE TRIBUERE** is Latin for "To render to everyone his own."



- The **DARK BLUE** color symbolizes authority, confidence, dignity, intelligence, stability, trust, and truth.
- The **GOLD** color represents courage, illumination, knowledge, and wisdom. Gold also solidifies the Judicial Branch as a co-equal branch of high value and worth.

EXECUTIVE AND JUDICIAL BRANCHES CO-CHAIR TASK FORCE ON MENTAL HEALTH AND SUBSTANCE USE



In July 2015, an executive order signed by Governor Pat McCrory created the first-of-its-kind task force made up of leaders from all three branches of government and the private and non-profit sectors charged with studying issues pertaining to mental health and substance use in North Carolina.

The full task force, led by Supreme Court Chief Justice Mark Martin and Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) Secretary Rick Brajer, convened five times between Sept. 15, 2015, and April 7, 2016, and workgroups met separately between those sessions to discuss progress.

The task force was comprised of North Carolinians from the judicial system, legislators, health care providers, county leaders, non-governmental entities, private sector providers, and consumers and was charged with studying the network of state entities involved with mental health and substance use issues and developing

recommendations on how to improve the delivery of services, prevent crises, and reduce stigma.

Improving mental health resources within our courts is one of the seven points in Chief Justice Martin's comprehensive plan to strengthen our justice system, as these issues have a dramatic effect on our courts. The task force's recommendations focused on better use of existing resources, improved interagency collaboration, and encouragement of public-private partnerships to benefit our youth and adults with mental health and substance use disorders.

The task force submitted its recommendations to Governor McCrory in a report that represents a roadmap for both short- and long-term solutions for each branch of state government, including a comprehensive look at what is needed to provide a system where people receive the care or treatment needed regardless of their entry point.



JUDGE MARION WARREN APPOINTED DIRECTOR OF NORTH CAROLINA ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE OF THE COURTS

Chief Justice Mark Martin appointed Judge Marion Warren as director of the North Carolina Administrative Office of the Courts (NCAOC) in November 2015. In this role, Judge Warren oversees the administrative services for the Judicial Branch's more than 6,000 employees and hundreds of courthouses and facilities in 100 counties.

"During our process, it was clear that Judge Warren possesses not only the qualifications necessary for this important responsibility, but also a genuine passion for helping people and improving the administration of justice," said Chief Justice Martin. Judge Warren's work ultimately helps North Carolina's unified court system operate more efficiently and effectively, taking into account each courthouse's diverse needs and resources.

Previously, Judge Warren served as a district court judge in Judicial District 13 (Bladen, Brunswick, and Columbus

counties) and as an assistant district attorney. He earned his juris doctor from Campbell University School of Law in 1991, after also receiving his undergraduate degree from Campbell University.



BUDGET AND PERSONNEL QUICK FACTS

WORKLOAD FORMULAS

The North Carolina Administrative Office of the Courts (NCAOC) partners with the National Center for State Courts to develop methodology that is used to determine staffing needs for district court judges, clerks of superior court staff, magistrates, assistant district attorneys, and victim witness legal assistants.

Using extensive time-study information, a case weight based approach was employed to determine staffing shortfalls. Using the same approach, NCAOC has conducted workload studies for family court case coordinators and custody mediators.

This information is used to advise the General Assembly as to 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.

EXPANSION NEEDS

The Judicial Branch continues to have constitutionally mandated services that are either unfunded or underfunded. These services include foreign language

access, juror and witness fees, pay plan restoration for assistant and deputy clerks and magistrates, technology advancements, and adding employees based on needs as determined by workload formulas.

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	270
AUTHORIZED PERSONNEL	
*District Attorneys	44
Assistant District Attorneys	640
*Clerks of Superior Court	100
Clerk Personnel	2,528.10
Guardian ad Litem Personnel	148.50
Magistrates	674.60
Administrative Office of the Courts Staff	376.25
Court Support Staff	1,178.725
Trial Court Administrators	8
**Other	52.50
TOTAL	6,151.675

Certified Appropriations	Budget
Total certified appropriations, 2015–16	\$484,931,217
*Percent increase from 2014–15	3.10%
Total certified appropriations as a percent of total state General Fund appropriations	2.23%

*Includes legislative increases due to inflation.

*Independently elected judicial officials; the Judicial Branch has 533.

**Judicial Standards Commission, Conference of District Attorneys, Dispute Resolution Commission, Conference of Clerks of Superior Court, Innocence Inquiry Commission, Chief Justice's Commission on Professionalism, Sentencing and Policy Advisory Commission, Pro Bono Resource Center, and the North Carolina Commission on the Administration of Law and Justice.



The North Carolina General Assembly meets in the Legislative Building located at 16 West Jones Street in Raleigh. Outside the doors leading into the building is the state seal of North Carolina, containing its motto: *Esse Quam Videri* — "To Be Rather Than to Seem."

JUDICIAL BRANCH BUDGET

Detailed budget information is in the Budget Management and Financial Services Statistical and Operational Report in the Data and Information section on www.NCcourts.org.

BACKGROUND

The North Carolina Constitution establishes the Judicial Branch as an equal branch of government, along with the legislative and executive branches. North Carolina’s court system, called the General Court of Justice, is a unified statewide and state-operated system.

The state pays the majority of operating expenses of the Judicial Branch, including salaries and travel expenses of all court officials, juror and witness fees, and equipment and office supplies for the judicial system. By state statute, G.S. 7A – 302, counties and municipalities are responsible for the physical facilities occupied by court personnel across the state.

The Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of North Carolina appoints the Director of the North Carolina Administrative Office of the Courts (NCAOC). G.S. 7A – 343 sets forth the duties of the director, which include identifying staffing needs, and managing and authorizing expenditures for the judicial budget.

APPROPRIATIONS FOR FISCAL YEAR 2015–16 BUDGET

The Judicial Branch began FY 2015 – 16 with \$484.9 million in appropriations from the General Assembly; this appropriation represents 2.23 percent of the state’s overall General Fund of \$21.7 billion.

HOW THE BUDGET IS SPENT

Of the Judicial Branch’s \$484.9 million adjusted budget as approved by the General Assembly, 91.3 percent of it was used for employee salaries and benefits; this includes \$143 million (30 percent) used to pay salaries and benefits for elected judicial officials, magistrates, and appointed officials whose offices are constitutionally based.

The remaining 8 percent of the Judicial Branch FY 2015 – 16 budget supported operations. More than 83 percent of this operations budget was devoted to local court operations; central administration accounted for 3 percent; and technology services, equipment, and statewide infrastructure together accounted for 6 percent. Appellate courts, independent commissions, and passthrough appropriations accounted for the remaining 3 percent (Chart 1).

Chart 1

FY 2015 – 16 State General Fund Appropriations

Statewide Certified Budget Total: \$21.7 billion
Judicial Branch Certified Budget: \$484.9 million (2.23 percent of the State General Fund) (figures shown in millions)

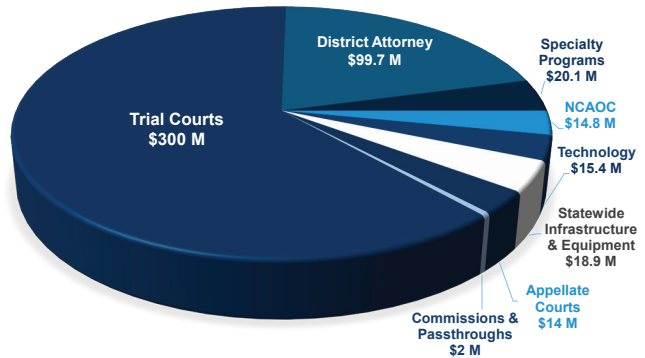
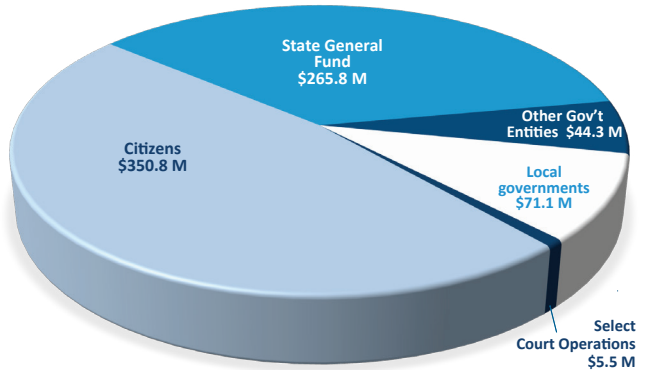


Chart 2

FY 2015 – 16 Clerk of Superior Court Disbursements

Total disbursed: \$737.6 million (figures shown in millions)



MONIES COLLECTED BY THE COURTS DO NOT STAY WITH THE COURTS

Monies disbursed — such as fines, fees, forfeitures, restitution, and civil judgments that are paid to the courts — come through clerk of superior court offices. Although the monies are collected and receipted by the courts, less than 1 percent of these monies stays with the court system. Monies are remitted to citizens, counties, the state treasurer, and other state agencies.

[continued on next page]

For FY 2015 – 16, \$737.6 million was disbursed by clerks of superior court — nearly 42 percent went to the state treasurer, other state agencies, and law enforcement retirement (Chart 2). Of the General Court of Justice monies remitted to the state treasurer, funds equivalent to 55 percent were appropriated by the General Assembly to the Judicial Branch.

Counties and municipalities receive payments for fines, forfeitures (i.e., bond forfeitures), facilities fees, officer fees, pretrial civil revocation fees, service of process fees, and jail fees. City crime labs receive fees paid by

offenders for lab work conducted at their facilities. Fines and forfeitures, which are required by the State Constitution to go to local schools, make up the largest sum of money received by counties. Facilities fees, which are paid as part of court costs in both criminal and civil cases, are the next largest source of revenue.

In FY 2015 – 16, the court system disbursed \$71.1 million to counties and municipalities, of which \$38.1 million was fine and forfeiture revenue and \$13.3 million was facility fee revenue, and \$350.8 million was distributed to citizens.



PERSONNEL: LOSS OF JUDICIAL BRANCH INSTITUTIONAL KNOWLEDGE

The Judicial Branch personnel budget has been reduced significantly.

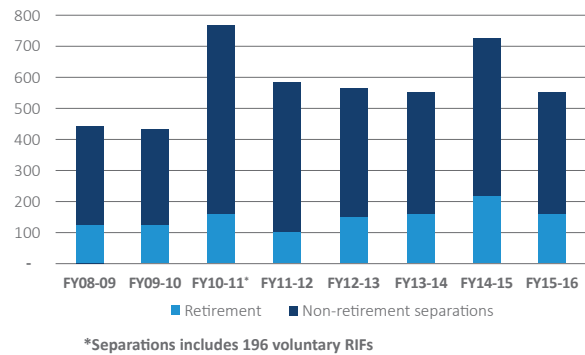
In 2012, North Carolina ranked 45th out of the 50 states in terms of per capita spending on the Judicial Branch, only four places higher than 2007 based on source data provided by the National Center for State Courts.

- In the past five years, the Judicial Branch had nearly 10% of its positions eliminated due to budget cuts.
- The Judicial Branch has 6,000+ positions statewide. During the past eight years, 4,630 employees have separated from the Judicial Branch. Separation has been in the form of retirement, a voluntary reduction in force, and other attrition.
- More than 840 employees, or 13%, will be eligible to retire between July 2016 and June 2019 (based on a three-year estimate in June 2016).

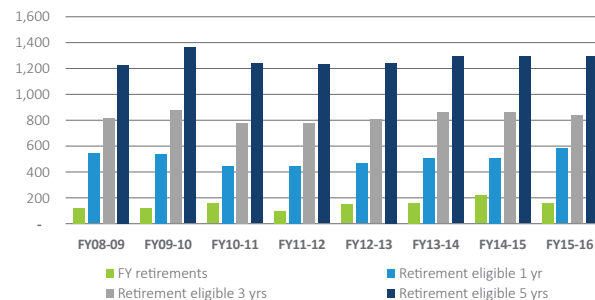
Grand Total for All Eight Years: 4,630 Employee Separations

Altogether, this erosion leaves the Judicial Branch in a unsustainable position; thus, critical funding is needed to sustain the remaining specialized workforce.

Number of Personnel Loss 2008 – 2016



Number of Personnel Loss 2008 – 2016
(#s based on total employees per FY)



MILESTONES



1966-2016



1966-2016



1966-2016



1967-2017



1777-2017



1819-2019

justice for all

ANNIVERSARIES

JUDICIAL BRANCH CELEBRATES COURT ANNIVERSARIES AND MILESTONES

In January 2016, Chief Justice Mark Martin announced the upcoming milestone anniversaries of the Judicial Branch and encouraged citizens from across North Carolina to join the Judicial Branch in celebrating each one between 2016 and 2019.

Anniversaries within this time period include the 50th anniversaries of the unified court system, District Court, Court of Appeals, and North Carolina Administrative Office of the Courts. Additional anniversaries between 2016 and 2019 include the 200th anniversary of the Supreme Court; and the 240th anniversary of the Superior Court.

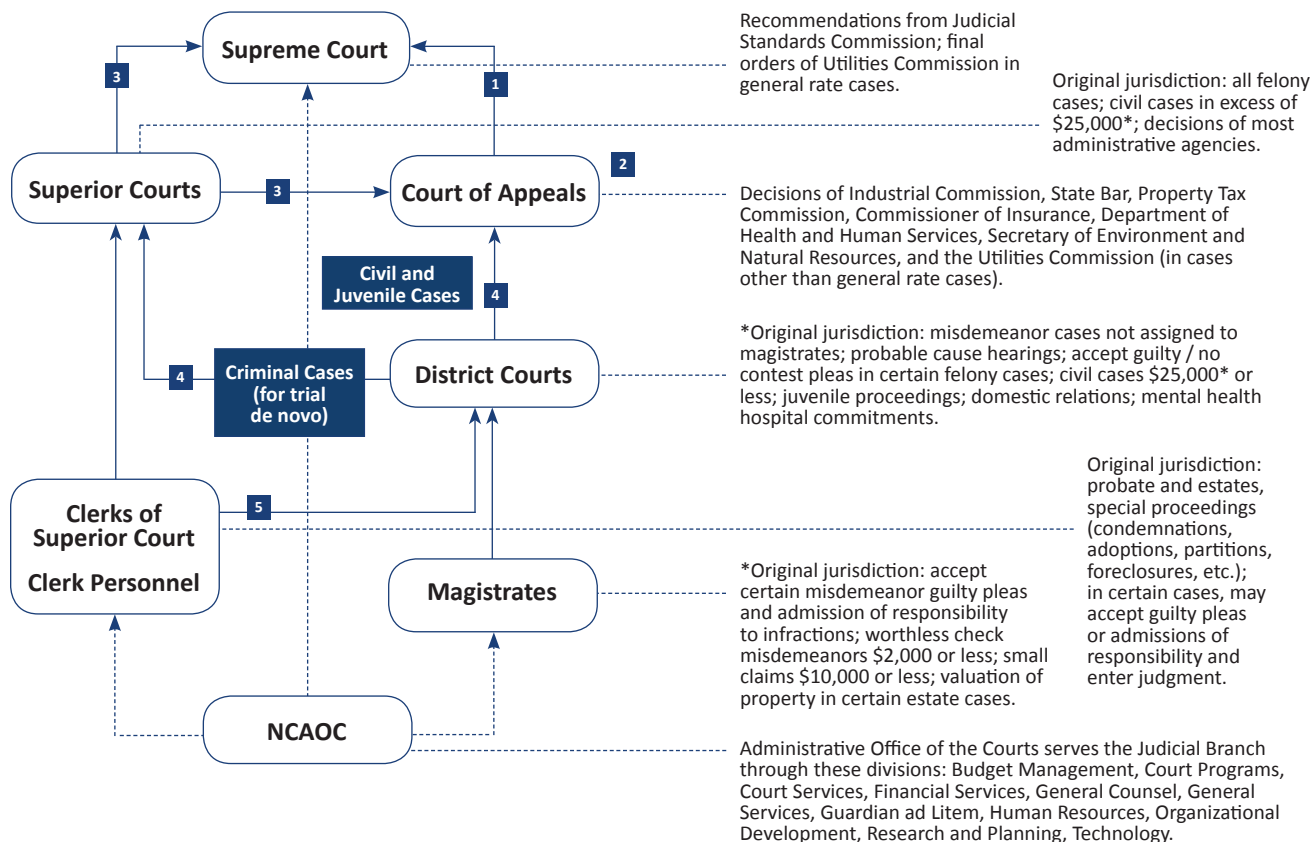
Such anniversaries provide an opportunity for North Carolinians to reflect on the importance of the rule of law, as well as the fair and impartial administration of justice. During this time of celebration, events will occur across the state to educate North Carolinians on the history of our court system, to engage them in the celebration of these momentous milestones, and to encourage them to join with court officials and staff in thinking strategically about the future of our courts and the pursuit of justice.

This year marked 50 years since the birth of the District Court system to the North Carolina Judicial Branch in 1966. Over the last five decades, the North Carolina District Courts have worked to improve uniformity and structure in the court system as they hear more than 2 million civil, criminal, juvenile, and appellate cases each year. The 50th anniversary of the District Courts was celebrated statewide, bringing together key court system stakeholders and its citizens.

“EACH OF THESE DATES ARE IMPORTANT MILESTONES FOR NORTH CAROLINA, AS OUR STATE COURTS PROCESS NEARLY THREE MILLION CASES EACH YEAR, WHICH KEEP OUR CITIZENS SAFE, OUR ECONOMY VIBRANT, AND OUR RIGHTS AND LIBERTIES SECURE.”

— CHIEF JUSTICE MARK MARTIN

COURT ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE AND ROUTES OF APPEAL



- 1** Appeals from the Court of Appeals to the Supreme Court are by right in certain cases involving constitutional questions and cases in which there has been dissent in the Court of Appeals. In its discretion, the Supreme Court may review Court of Appeals decisions in cases of significant public interest or cases involving legal principles of major significance, and in cases in which the decision of the Court of Appeals appears to be in conflict with a decision of the Supreme Court.
- 2** Appeals from these agencies go directly to the Court of Appeals.
- 3** As a matter of right, appeals go directly to the Supreme Court in first degree capital murder cases in which the defendant has been sentenced to death, in Utilities Commission general rate cases, in redistricting cases, in cases designated for

business court, and cases in which a lower court holds that a statute is facially unconstitutional or in violation of federal law. In all other cases appeal as of right is to the Court of Appeals. In its discretion, the Supreme Court may hear appeals directly from the trial courts in cases of significant public interest, in cases involving legal principles of major significance, where delay would cause substantial harm, or when the Court of Appeals docket is unusually full.

- 4** Criminal cases proceed to the superior court for trial de novo. Civil and juvenile cases proceed to the Court of Appeals.
- 5** Most appeals from judicial proceedings before the clerk are to the superior court. A few matters, such as adoptions, are appealed to the district court.

*The district and superior courts have concurrent original jurisdiction in civil actions (G.S. 7A-240). The small claims court is the proper division for the trial of civil actions in which the amount in controversy is \$10,000 or less, and the district court division for matters of \$25,000 or less (G.S. 7A-243); the superior court division is the proper division for matters exceeding \$25,000 in controversy.

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. It comprises the Chief Justice, who also serves as the head of the Judicial Branch, and six associate justices, each serving eight-year terms. The Supreme Court has no jury and makes no determinations of fact, but considers whether error occurred at trial or in judicial interpretation of the law. Read more in the 2015 – 16 Statistical and Operational Report for the Appellate Courts, available on www.NCcourts.org.

SPRING TERM 2016



Seated (from left to right): *Justice Robert H. Edmunds, Jr., Chief Justice Mark Martin, Justice Paul M. Newby*

Standing (from left to right): *Justice Cheri Beasley, Justice Robin Hudson, Justice Barbara A. Jackson, Justice Sam J. Ervin, IV*

SPECIAL SESSION IN MORGANTON

The Supreme Court of North Carolina held a special session of court on May 17 – 18 at the Historic Burke County Courthouse in Morganton. Historically, Burke County was the seat of one of the state's eight early judicial divisions, and the Supreme Court held summer sessions of court in the courthouse from 1847 to 1862. This session, made possible by last year's ratification of Senate Bill 161, was the first time the court traveled to Burke County since the start of the Civil War.

The court heard five appeals during a the two days in Morganton. Chief Justice Mark Martin presided over the session, and was joined by the six associate justices of the court, including Justice Sam J. Ervin, IV, who is a native of Burke County.

In holding these special sessions of court outside of Raleigh, the court sought to promote civics education and increase understanding of the rule of law and the importance of courts to our communities.

Caseload Inventory

Cases Filed	Begin Pending (7/1/15)	Filed	Disposed	End Pending (6/30/16)
Petitions For Review*				
Civil domestic	6	6	7	5
Juvenile	4	8	10	2
Other civil	75	167	149	93
Criminal (including death sentences)	126	384	372	138
Administrative agency decision	0	2	1	1
TOTAL PETITIONS FOR REVIEW	211	567	539	239
Appeals**				
Civil domestic	1	3	3	1
Petitions for review granted that became civil domestic appeals	0	1	0	1
Juvenile	2	2	3	1
Petitions for review granted that became juvenile appeals	2	1	3	0
Other civil	26	32	40	18
Petitions for review granted that became other civil appeals	20	18	18	20
Criminal, defendant sentenced to death	11	1	2	10
Other criminal	17	24	24	17
Petitions for review granted that became other criminal appeals	31	29	34	26
Administrative agency decision	0	0	0	0
Petitions for review granted that became appeals of administrative agency decision	0	0	0	0
TOTAL APPEALS	110	111	127	94
Other Proceedings				
Rule 16(b) additional issues	4	2	5	1
Motions	8	664	661	11
TOTAL OTHER PROCEEDINGS	12	666	666	12

*Petitions for review are cases in which the court is asked to accept discretionary review of decisions of the Court of Appeals and other tribunals.

**The Appeals category comprises cases within the court's appellate jurisdiction.

COURT OF APPEALS

The Court of Appeals is the state’s intermediate appellate court. The court has 15 judges who serve eight-year terms and hear cases in panels of three. The court is led by a Chief Judge who is appointed by the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court.

The Court of Appeals decides only questions of law in cases appealed from superior and district courts and from some administrative agencies of the executive branch. Appeals range from infractions to non-capital murder cases.

If there has been a dissent in an opinion of the Court of Appeals, the parties to the case have the right to have the Supreme Court review the decision. If there is no dissent, then the Supreme Court may still review the case upon a party’s petition.

Read more in the 2015 – 16 Statistical and Operational Report for the Appellate Courts, which is available on www.NCcourts.org in the Data and Information section.

Filings and Dispositions of Appeals and Petitions

Fiscal Year	Filings	Dispositions
2015–16	2,183	2,229
2014–15	2,377	2,312
2013–14	2,389	2,435
2012–13	2,564	2,490
2011–12	2,549	2,775
2010–11	2,549	2,671
2009–10	2,493	2,126
2008–09	2,502	2,307
2007–08	2,424	2,567
2006–07	2,484	2,634
2005–06	2,707	2,973

Filings and Dispositions

Cases Filed	Number Of Cases
Cases on appeal	1,314
Petitions	869
Motions	3,657

These tables summarize filing and disposition activity in the Court of Appeals.

In addition to trend data for the past 10 years, these tables provide filings and dispositions for cases on appeal, petitions, and motions during fiscal year 2015 – 16. “Cases on appeal” include cases appealed from district courts, superior courts, and administrative agencies. They are counted as appeals only after a record is filed with the clerk’s office and a docket number is assigned.

The “petition” category includes petitions involving only the four “extraordinary” writs set out in Article V of the Rules of Appellate Procedure: certiorari, mandamus, prohibition, and supersedeas. “Motions” encompass any type of relief sought from the Court of Appeals, either in a case already filed with the Court of Appeals or one on its way to the Court of Appeals but not yet filed.

Cases on appeal represent the largest portion of the Court of Appeals’ workload, since most are disposed of by written opinion. The other methods of disposition include the court’s dismissal of the appeal and an appealing party’s withdrawal of the appeal.



The Court of Appeals is North Carolina’s intermediate appellate court. Fifteen judges hear cases in panels of three. The building is located at 1 West Morgan Street in Raleigh.

SUPERIOR COURTS

The Superior Court division has original jurisdiction over all felony criminal cases, civil cases involving more than \$25,000, and misdemeanor and infraction appeals from the district court. However, due to an amendment, from August 1, 2013, through June 30, 2015, both the district court and the superior court have jurisdiction over the trial of civil actions in which the amount in controversy is between \$10,000 and \$25,000.

The constitution stipulates that a jury of 12 renders the verdict for any criminal defendant who pleads not guilty. In civil cases, a judge generally will decide the case without a jury, unless a party to the case requests one.

Superior court is divided into eight divisions and 50 districts across the state. Every six months, superior court judges rotate among the districts within their divisions. The rotation system is provided for by the state constitution and designed to minimize conflicts of interest that might result from having a permanent judge in one district.

The North Carolina Business Court is a specialized forum of the North Carolina state courts' superior court

division. Cases involving complex and significant issues of corporate and commercial law in our state are assigned by the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of North Carolina to a special superior court judge who oversees resolution of all matters in the case through trial.

Read more in the 2015 – 16 Statistical and Operational Report for Trial Courts, which is available online at www.NCcourts.org in the Data and Information section.

Caseload Inventory

Case Type	Filed	Disposed
Civil cases*	16,532	16,514
Estates	71,480	76,467
Special proceedings	44,580	44,289
Criminal–nontraffic	123,138	143,465
Criminal–traffic	7,952	8,280

***Civil cases* include cases heard by Business Court.*

Manner of Disposition

Case Type	Jury Trial	Judge Trial	Voluntary Dismissal	Final Order/ Judgment W/O Trial	Clerk	Other*
Civil cases	167	2,639	8,398	2,471	1,148	1,691
Estates	—	1	14	12	76,168	272
Special proceedings**	8	130	12,392	105	30,262	1,392

**Other* includes magistrate trial, dismissal on order of the court, and discontinued.*

***The number of special proceedings cases filed and disposed reflects those cases that are non-confidential.*

Case Type	Trial	Plea	Dismissal With Leave	Dismissal Without Leave	Dismissal After Deferred Prosecution	Other*
Criminal–nontraffic	2,658	76,640	1,326	46,787	1,078	14,885
Criminal–traffic	438	1,978	189	3,019	0	2,747

**Other* includes speedy trial dismissals.*

DISTRICT COURTS

District courts hear cases involving civil, criminal, and juvenile matters, as well as appeals from the magistrate. District courts are divided into 43 districts across the state and sit in the county seat of each county. They may also sit in certain other cities and towns specifically authorized by the General Assembly.

Civil cases such as divorce, custody, child support, and cases involving less than \$25,000 are heard in district court, along with criminal cases involving misdemeanors and infractions. However, due to an amendment, from August 1, 2013, through June 30, 2015, both the district court and the superior court have jurisdiction over the trial of civil actions in which the amount in controversy is between \$10,000 and \$25,000.

Civil cases are heard by a jury if a party requests one, but certain cases are always decided by a judge without a jury, such as child custody disputes. The district court also hears juvenile cases (age 16 and under) that involve delinquency issues, and it has the authority to hear juvenile undisciplined cases (ages 16 and 17). It also considers abuse, neglect, and dependency cases involving children younger than 18.

Read more in the 2015 – 16 Statistical and Operational Report for Trial Courts, which is available on www.NCcourts.org in the Data and Information section.

Manner of Disposition

Case Type	Jury Trial	Judge Trial	Magistrate Trial	Voluntary Dismissal	Final Order / Judgment W / O Trial	Clerk	Other*
Civil cases	119	60,796	63	29,765	41,710	25,538	25,826
Civil magistrate (small claims)	0	140	139,228	48,809	383	26	19,871

*"Other" includes dismissal on order of the court and discontinued dispositions.

Case Type	Trial	Plea	Dismissal With Leave	Dismissal Without Leave	Dismissal After Deferred Prosecution	Other*
Criminal–nontraffic	17,047	157,463	17,191	259,371	15,531	90,162
Criminal–traffic	11,185	110,109	100,458	485,002	1,370	259,861

*"Other" includes felony heard and bound over, probable cause not found, probable cause waived, worthless check waiver, and felony superseding indictment.

Case Type	Waiver	Nonwaiver
Infractions	293,210	321,147

MAGISTRATES

Magistrates are appointed by the senior resident superior court judge from nominations provided by the clerk of superior court. Magistrates are supervised by chief district court judges.

Magistrates accept guilty pleas for minor misdemeanors and infractions, such as for hunting or fishing violations or for traffic violations, and may accept waivers of trial for certain worthless check cases if authorized by the chief district court judge to do so. In civil cases, the magistrate is authorized to try small claims cases (\$10,000 or less), landlord eviction cases, and suits for recovery of personal property and motor vehicle mechanics' liens.

Caseload Inventory

Case Type	Filed	Disposed
Civil	184,399	183,817
Civil magistrate (small claims)	206,682	208,457
Criminal–nontraffic	517,712	584,631
Criminal–traffic	887,504	967,985
Infractions	581,274	614,357

COURT PROGRAMS, CONFERENCES, AND COMMISSIONS

Program	Description
Alternative dispute resolution services	Offers a less adversarial, more expeditious process for settling legal disputes
Child custody mediation services	Provides neutral, non-adversarial court-ordered mediation services in cases involving custody/visitation of minor children
Family court	Coordinates the management of family law cases to ensure timely and efficient resolution of legal matters within established time standards
Foreign language interpreting services	Helps facilitate equal access to justice for limited English proficient (LEP) speaking and/or deaf and hard of hearing people involved in court proceedings
Guardian ad Litem	Team representation model consisting of attorney advocates, volunteers, and staff appointed to protect and promote the best interest of abused and neglected children under the jurisdiction of North Carolina juvenile courts
Juvenile Court Improvement Project	Coordinates the management of child abuse, neglect, and dependency cases to ensure timely, efficient, and effective resolution of cases
Problem solving courts and other services	Local special courts and initiatives managed and operated by superior and district courts that attempt to address challenges before them
Conference	Description
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	Serves the 44 elected district attorneys in their pursuit of justice and improvement of the administration of criminal law by providing training, materials, research, technical support, and monitoring criminal legislation
Commission	Description
Chief Justice's Commission on Professionalism	Enhances professionalism among North Carolina's lawyers while providing ongoing attention and assistance to ensure that practice of law remains a high calling, dedicated to the service of clients and the public good
Dispute Resolution Commission	Certifies and regulates private mediators who serve North Carolina's courts. Also recommends dispute resolution policy, provides support to court-based mediation programs, and certifies mediation training programs
Innocence Inquiry Commission	Reviews, investigates, and hears post-conviction innocence claims if new evidence of innocence comes to light by providing an independent and balanced truth-seeking forum
Judicial Standards Commission	Considers complaints against state district, superior, and appellate court judges and justices and, where appropriate, makes recommendations for discipline
Sentencing and Policy Advisory Commission	Makes recommendations to the General Assembly for the modification of sentencing laws and policies, and for the addition, deletion, or expansion of sentencing options as necessary to achieve policy goals
State Judicial Council	Advisory and oversight body for the Judicial Branch of government, chaired by the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court and consisting of representatives from every component of the court system and the bar, and from public, non-attorney members, to fulfill its duties as described in G.S. 7A-409.1

SIGNIFICANT NCAOC SERVICE AREA HIGHLIGHTS

July 1, 2015 – June 30, 2016

The North Carolina Administrative Office of the Courts (NCAOC) is the administrative services provider that the North Carolina judicial community can rely on as a partner to help our unified court system operate more efficiently and effectively. The NCAOC's approach is to apply professional expertise consistently and uniformly in the best interest of the court system, which includes a personnel base of more than 6,000, of whom 533 are independently elected judicial officials. This section highlights the NCAOC's support of the court system, judicial officials, and staff statewide.

BUDGET SERVICES

Court funds management

\$901 million resources and fees managed
\$486 million appropriations
\$32 million special funds and grants
\$256 million pass-through fees
\$126 million other funds

Budget alignments

225 general fund
319 special revenue
6 safe roads
32 technology fund
12 appellate

COURT PROGRAMS AND MANAGEMENT SERVICES

Alternative dispute resolution

3,600 family financial cases completed
3,508 court-ordered arbitration cases completed
5,843 mediated settlement cases completed

Child custody mediation

20,318 people attended orientation
10,985 child custody cases mediated
11,714 mediation sessions held
5,731 parenting agreements drafted

Family courts

45,414 domestic cases filed
78.9% of pending domestic cases were less than one year old

Language Access Services

10 NCAOC Spanish court interpreters
85 certified Spanish court interpreters
1 certified French court interpreter
2 certified Mandarin court interpreters
1 certified Vietnamese court interpreter

COURT SERVICES

Computer applications supported

Child support enforcement system (SES)
Civil case management (CaseWise)
Civil, estates, and special proceedings index (VCAP)
Criminal and infractions case index (ACIS, CCIS-CC)

Criminal case management system (CCIS-DA, CCIS-PD)

Discovery automation system (DAS)

eFiling

Judgment abstracting

Juvenile index and case management system (JWise)

Leave tracking system (BEACON)

Microsoft Windows® applications

North Carolina warrant repository system (NCAWARE)

payNticket®

Outlook email application

Worthless check program

Technical needs supported

Digital recording of court sessions

Scanning / microfilming of paper files

Fingerprint tracking

Evidence handling

Disaster preparedness

Interfacing with other North Carolina agencies

Division of Motor Vehicles (DMV)

State Bureau of Investigation (SBI)

Department of Social Services (DSS)

State Archives

Clerk of superior court procedural matters

Improved workflow and file security

Jury management support

FINANCIAL SERVICES

Accounting functions

\$119.8 million fixed assets management

85,574 payroll payments completed

89,301 vendor payments completed

16,120 employee travel forms processed

3,032 IRS 1099 – MISC forms processed

3,023 IRS 1099 – MISC forms processed for clerks of superior court offices

347 electronic transfers

2,833 deposits

GENERAL COUNSEL

Legislative tracking during the 2015 – 16 legislative session

2,053 bills reviewed for applicability

560 bills actively monitored, effect of summarized, forms and procedures drafted for, or amendments sought for

Quality assurance (satisfaction scores)

97% education and training

99% legal advice

98% procedural advice

96% legislative tracking

GENERAL SERVICES

Quick facts

1,773 transactions processed monthly, including:

Open market solicitations through various bid processes

Purchase orders for goods and services

Supply orders via the Online Store

Printing requests submitted through the Online Store and in hard-copy format

476 deliveries for supplies and equipment made statewide monthly

3,780 estimated number of boxes delivered per month (for a total weight exceeding 132,000 pounds)

45,000 pounds of material from Judicial Branch offices statewide shredded monthly by NCAOC Warehouse personnel

1,258,180 impressions generated monthly by NCAOC Printing Services for stationery, training material, and other print requests

GUARDIAN AD LITEM

Staff

3 regional administrator positions

137 field staff positions working in 69 offices

1 administrative, training, and legal staff position

Attorneys

67 paid attorneys

91 pro bono attorneys

10 staff attorney advocate positions

76 conflict attorneys

Volunteers

4,866 volunteer advocates

467,136 hours of service

\$10.78 million saved due to volunteer efforts

Volunteers donate on average 8 hours of service monthly. Independent Sector valued volunteer time during 2014 at \$23.07 per hour.

Program statistics

62,274 child abuse and neglect hearings
16,698 abused and neglected children received legal representation
235 juvenile appellate cases filed

HUMAN RESOURCES

Quick facts

22 HR positions, serving an average of 304 Judicial Branch positions
91.3% of the total Judicial Branch budget is allocated for salaries and benefits.

Judicial Branch FTE positions supported (total 6,696.40)

291 hiring authorities
285 judges
5,177.925 court staff
43.5 commissions and conferences staff
524.725 Indigent Defense Services
374.25 NCAOC managers and staff

Number of personnel transactions

9,301

Number of position change transactions

3,801

Number of benefit actions

302 leave of absence notices
21 new short-term disability cases
162 retirements

Unemployment insurance claims (total \$209,175)

50 claims paid out
\$4,184 average cost per claim

Workers' Compensation Claims (total \$936,654)

54 injuries or 0.83% of employee population

Employee Assistance Program utilization

301 online service users
68 program referrals
7 management referrals

CIRS retirement eligible

25% 1 year

TSERS retirement eligible

9% 1 year
13% 3 year
20% 5 year

Employee turnover (total 8.5%)

7% voluntary (includes retirements)
1.5% involuntary
551 total separations (excludes temporaries)

Employee recognition

1,079 service awards
872 service awards processed
162 retirement certificates

Highest pre-tax benefit participation rates

42% supplemental retirement plans
65% NCFlex Dental
67% NCFlex Vision
94% State Health Plan
76% NCFlex AD&D Core

Voluntary shared leave

51 recipients
12,961 total hours received
254 average hours received
4-400 range of hours received
403 donors
12,458 total hours donated
31 average hours donated
4-389 range of hours donated

Recruitment

501 job postings
45,604 total applicants
91 average applicants per posting
1,164 web hits per posting
26,478 applicant notices

ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Recent projects

Electronic Compliance and Dismissal (ECAD)
NCAWARE for Law Enforcement
Public Records
Introduction to VCAP

Current / ongoing projects

Estates Tracking
Discovery Automation System (DAS)
Domestic Violence Awareness
Writs of Execution
Digital Recording

Resources developed

How to Use Online Compliance and Dismissal (OCAP)
VCAP Inquiry for DSS

LMS usage (July 1, 2015 – June 30, 2016)

Of the 12,056 training objects completed in the LearningCenter:
846 Judicial employees received credit for completing instructor-led training sessions
4,520 online learning objects completed by employees

RESEARCH AND PLANNING

Contracts

19 counties and municipalities
87 positions
\$5.1 million

Grants

59 federal and local entities
21.75 positions
\$13.8 million

TECHNOLOGY SERVICES

Criminal

1.14 million transactions daily
43.8 million criminal cases
4.4 million infraction cases

Civil

484,201 daily transactions
20.5 million civil cases

Discovery Automation System (DAS)

273,571 total number of DAS case folders
1,515,382 total number of DAS documents
277,029,541 estimated number of DAS pages

eCITATION

3,488 eCITATIONs created daily
21,566 law enforcement officer users
456 law enforcement agencies implemented

Email

36 million inbound spam messages blocked
28 million emails securely delivered

NCAWARE

11,894,619 processes (served / unserved)
45,469 court and law enforcement users
874,151 processes available to be served
1,907 processes served daily

payNCticket®

773,052 citations disposed
More than \$173 million collected

Note: Monies collected are disbursed to state and local government agencies as directed by the North Carolina General Assembly.

Credit card payments in courthouses

361,483 payments processed
More than \$62 million collected

Help Desk

91,124 call tickets processed
20,930 passwords reset via self-service

Security

12,572 system / application security requests processed

PREPARED BY



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