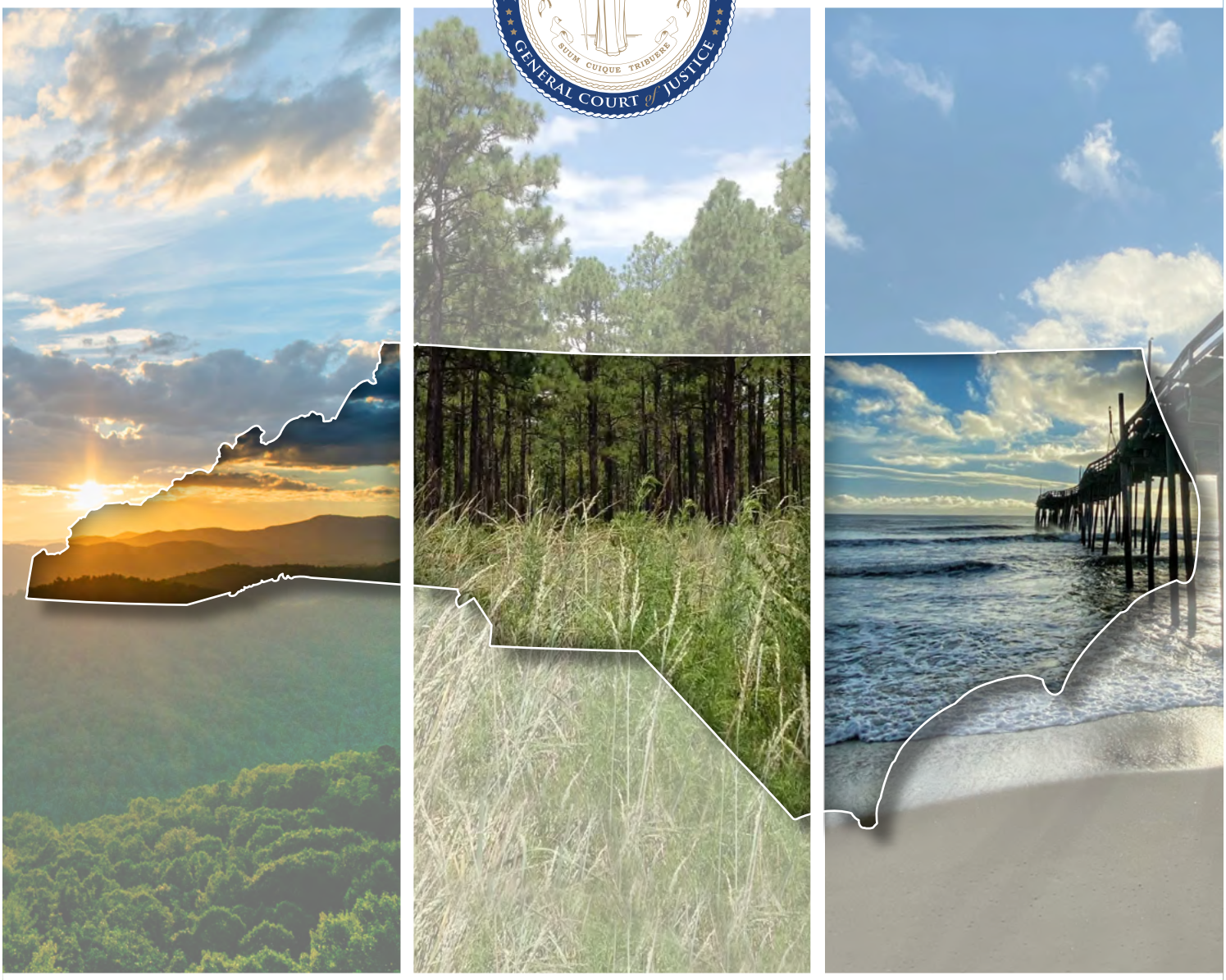
From the peaks to the tides

100 COUNTIES STRONG



2024 - 2025

North Carolina Judicial Branch Annual Report

www.NCcourts.gov

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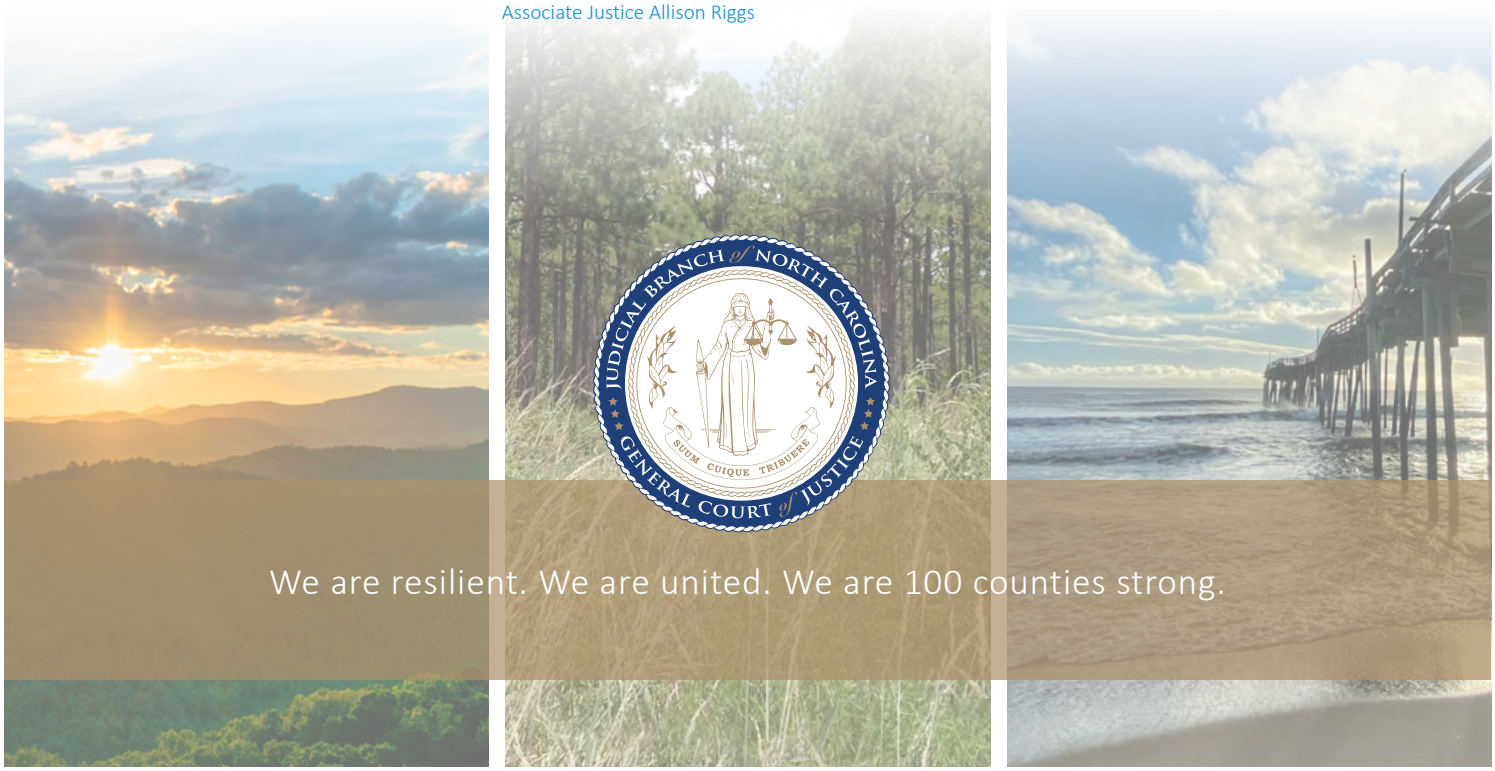
26 Safe Babies Court

27 eCourts Kiosks

28 Judge Tom Murry
Judge Christopher Freeman
Associate Justice Allison Riggs

29 2024 Professionalism Awards

30 North Carolina Business Court Changes



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

★★★

justice for all

A SPECIAL MESSAGE FROM

Chief Justice Paul Newby

I am pleased to present the Annual Report for the North Carolina Judicial Branch fiscal year 2024-25.

When I look back at our last fiscal year, I am amazed by the resilience of our courthouse personnel, and I am proud of the hard work of all the dedicated and talented members of the Judicial Branch.

In September 2024, Hurricane Helene had a devastating impact on western North Carolina, including the courts. Local courthouse personnel worked tirelessly to find ways to keep the courts open and accessible in the aftermath of terrible flooding of historical proportions. The North Carolina Administrative Office of the Courts (NCAOC) stood ready to assist and equip our local courthouses as they navigated these unprecedented challenges.

The NCAOC Technology Services Division (TSD) monitored the hurricane's impact on the network infrastructure in real time. At peak, nine core data center infrastructure circuits and the Asheville data center were offline. In addition, 27 judicial office locations were offline, including 11 courthouses.

Maneuvering around downed power lines, washed-away bridges, and impassible roads, TSD focused on finding a solution- Starlink satellite internet service and a small generator. Within six days, TSD procured and successfully tested this solution and readied it for deployment at any site regardless of power or internet connectivity. Five days later, the Mitchell County Courthouse became the first courthouse to return to full operation during Helene using the Starlink satellite system.

During this fiscal year, the Judicial Branch has continued the work of the Chief Justice's Task Force on ACEs-Informed Courts, an effort launched in 2021 to better understand the impact of adverse childhood experiences and environments of children who engage with our court system. I am pleased to report that our efforts have garnered national interest, and North Carolina has already partnered with the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania to conduct ACEs training for Pennsylvania.

We have also recently implemented another recommendation from the ACEs Task Force, "Safe Babies Court," a comprehensive approach to reducing the time children spend in foster care by expediting permanency outcomes for infants and toddlers. Safe Babies Court connects children ages 0-3 and their families involved in the child welfare court system with intensive support and services designed to promote healthy child development while working to ensure a safe and timely permanency placement.

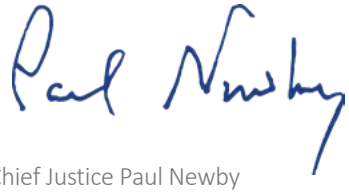
North Carolina's Safe Babies Court pilot program officially began accepting families this summer in Mitchell, New Hanover, and Yancey counties. This rollout is part of a three-year, five-pilot site initiative. The pilot sites include Brunswick County, Durham County, Mitchell and Yancey counties, New Hanover County, and a fifth site to be determined.

Over this fiscal year, we have continued our work to modernize our courts by fully implementing eCourts across all 100 North Carolina counties. By April 2025 we had completed the conversion in 73 counties with expansion into western, southern and coastal North Carolina, with plans to be entirely statewide by October 2025. In just a few years, we will have moved the North Carolina court system ahead in remarkable ways. As of October 2025, we will reach a historic milestone: North Carolina will lead the nation with electronic filing in all courts in every county, becoming the first state in the nation to do so.

This year we will celebrate more historic milestones – most notably, the 250th birthday of our nation and North Carolina's part in our founding history. On October 25, 1774, fifty-one women in Edenton pledged to boycott British tea, making the Edenton Tea Party one of the earliest organized women's political actions in our nation's history. On May 20, 1775, North Carolinians become the first early Americans to declare their independence from Great Britain in the Mecklenburg Declaration of Independence. The Judicial Branch looks forward to more celebrations in the upcoming year and the occasion to reflect upon on our founding principles.

Over the year I have had the opportunity to travel throughout the state and continue to be inspired by the public servants in the Judicial Branch. None of these accomplishments would be possible without each of them. I am grateful for the opportunity to serve them and to serve our state.

Sincerely



Chief Justice Paul Newby
Supreme Court of North Carolina



A MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

This year, the North Carolina Judicial Branch celebrates a theme that reflects both the scope of our work and the ambition of our mission: "100 Counties Strong." From the peaks of the Blue Ridge to the tides of the Outer Banks, the 7,600 officials and staff of our Branch have worked tirelessly to deliver fair, independent, and accessible justice to every corner of our state. That work reflects a simple but vital promise: that the law and our courts will serve every North Carolinian. I am proud to report on a year defined by meaningful progress, expanded access, and an unwavering commitment to the citizens we serve.

No account of this year would be complete without recognizing the extraordinary courage and resilience displayed by Judicial Branch officials and staff in the wake of Hurricane Helene. When the storm struck western North Carolina in September 2024, it left devastation across entire communities by destroying homes, severing roads, and disrupting every aspect of daily life in the very counties our courts serve. Yet in the face of that destruction, the men and women of our Branch rose with remarkable resolve. Clerks, judges, magistrates, district attorneys, public defenders, law enforcement, and other courthouse staff worked in extraordinarily difficult conditions, many having suffered personal losses of their own, to ensure that justice did not stop. Their dedication in those darkest hours exemplifies the highest ideals of public service, and on behalf of the entire Judicial Branch, I extend our deepest gratitude and admiration to each of them.

Modernizing our courts for the digital age remains the most significant undertaking of the Judicial Branch. We expanded electronic court access to 46 additional counties, connecting the mountains to the coast. In May 2025, Guide & File celebrated a landmark achievement: more than 100,000 court filings generated through the platform since its launch. This free, user-friendly tool has become a vital resource for self-represented litigants seeking access to our courts. We also completed the Courtroom Audio Visual Experience (CRAVE) project, which provides state-of-the-art videoconferencing technology in over 200 courtrooms across our state. This technology allows detainees, expert witnesses, and other parties to make virtual court appearances to expedite adjudications and increase public safety.

Addressing the needs of our most vulnerable citizens remains a cornerstone of our work. Safe Babies Court, a comprehensive initiative to reduce the time infants and toddlers spend in foster care, has expanded to seven counties, with new sites in Brunswick, Durham, McDowell, and Rutherford counties. This program stems from the recommendations of the Chief Justice's Task Force on ACEs-Informed Courts, whose final report charted a path toward trauma-informed practices throughout our system. North Carolina's 84 recovery courts, now operating across 45 counties, continue to provide critical pathways for individuals whose challenges with behavioral health and substance use have brought them into contact with the justice system. We remain focused on these issues knowing that early, effective intervention can change the trajectory of a life.

This year also brought noteworthy changes in judicial leadership, including the appointment of Judge Michael L. Robinson as Chief Business Court Judge and the investiture of three new appellate jurists. The Chief Justice's Commission on Professionalism recognized five outstanding recipients of the 2024 Professionalism Award — a fitting tribute to the culture of excellence that defines our Judicial Branch.

Indeed, the strength of the North Carolina Judicial Branch resides in its people. The combined effort of all Branch officials and staff in every one of our 100 counties make it possible to administer justice without favor, denial, or delay. We are grateful for their dedication and honored to serve alongside them in fulfilling the promise of equal justice under the law.



Director Ryan S. Boyce
North Carolina Administrative Office of the Courts



BUDGET & OPERATIONS

Overseeing the Budgeting Services for the State's Judicial Branch

JUDICIAL BRANCH BUDGET

2.49%

Judicial Branch budget as a percentage of the State General Fund

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 North Carolina Administrative Office of the Courts 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.

HOW THE BUDGET IS SPENT

90.4% SALARIES & BENEFITS

- 31% ($212.1M) for elected judicial officials, magistrates, and appointed officials

9.6% OPERATIONS

- 41.5% local court operations
- 8.5% central administration
- 47.7% technology services, equipment, and statewide infrastructure
- 2.3% appellate courts, commissions, and pass-through appropriations

MONIES COLLECTED BY COURTS

1% STAYS WITH COURT SYSTEM

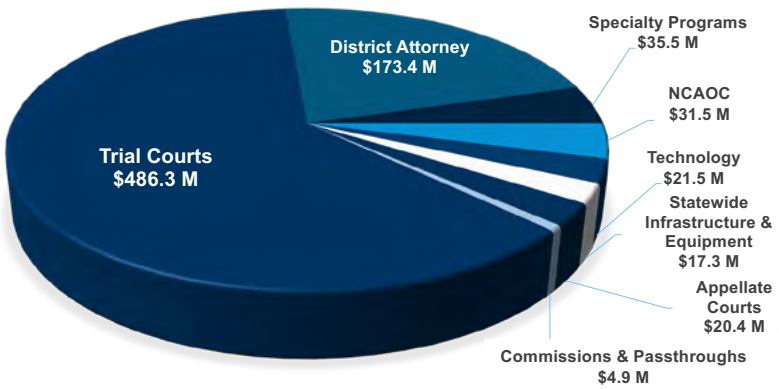
- (Fines, Fees, Forfeitures, Restitution, and Civil Judgments)

$1.00B DISBURSED BY CLERKS

- 21.98% to state treasurer, state agencies, law enforcement retirement
- $668.3 million to citizens
- $221.1 million to State General Fund
- $60.4 million to local governments
- $44.2 million to other government entities
- $11.9 million to select court operations

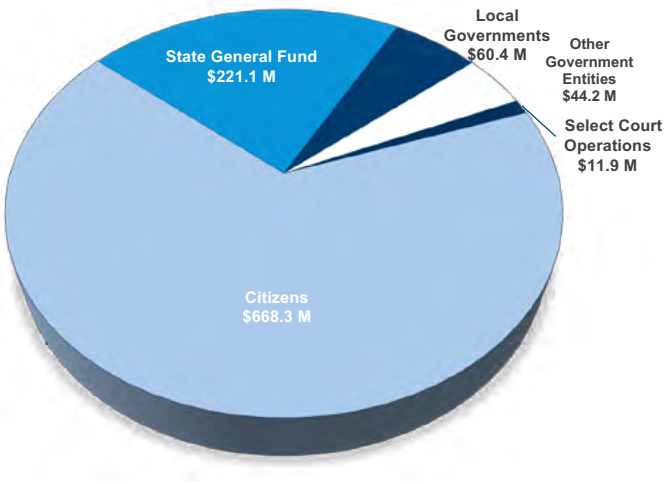
FY 2024 – 25 STATE GENERAL FUND APPROPRIATIONS

CERTIFIED BUDGET TOTAL: $31.7B
JUDICIAL CERTIFIED: $790.7M



FY 2024 – 25 CLERK OF SUPERIOR COURT DISBURSEMENTS

$1.006B TOTAL DISBURSED



Odyssey/Enterprise Justice includes investment amounts in the same account as the disbursements, affecting the distribution amount to citizens.

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, 2024 – 25	$790,733,404
Percent increase from 2022 – 23	3.4%
Total certified appropriations as a percent of total state General Fund appropriations	2.49%

90.4%

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

PERSONNEL (ALL FUNDING SOURCES)

Position	Total
JUSTICES AND JUDGES	
*Supreme Court Justices	7
*Court of Appeals Judges	15
*Superior Court Judges	125
*District Court Judges	289
AUTHORIZED PERSONNEL	
*District Attorneys	42
Assistant District Attorneys	729
District Attorney Support Staff	694
*Clerks of Superior Court	100
Clerk Personnel	2,756.825
Guardian ad Litem Personnel	208
Magistrates	699.60
Indigent Defense Services Staff	760
Administrative Office of the Courts Staff	475
Court Support Staff	510.275
Court Reporters	90
Court Administrators	10
Foreign Language Court Interpreters	9
**Other	92.375
TOTAL	7,612.075

**Independently elected judicial officials; the North Carolina Judicial Branch has 578.*

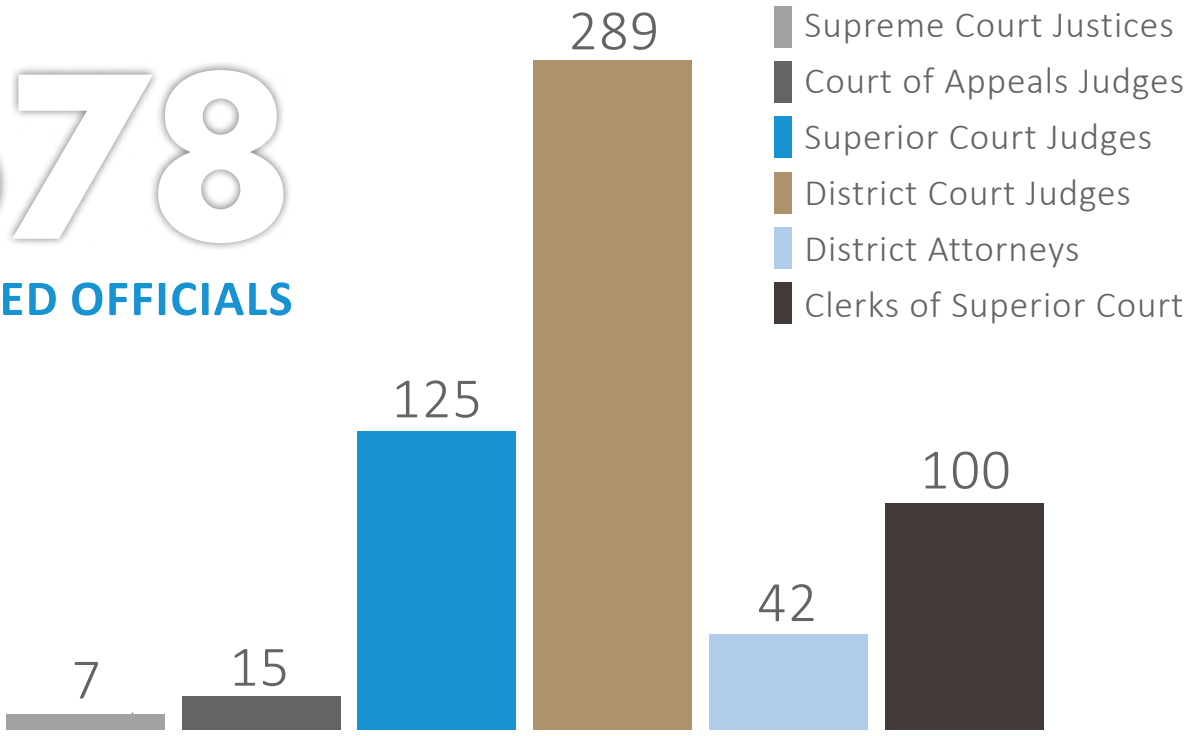
***Chief Justice's Commission on Professionalism, Conference of Clerks of Superior Court, Conference of District Attorneys, Dispute Resolution Commission, Equal Access to Justice Commission, Human Trafficking Commission, Innocence Inquiry Commission, Judicial Standards Commission, Pro Bono Resource Center,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

EXPANSION NEEDS

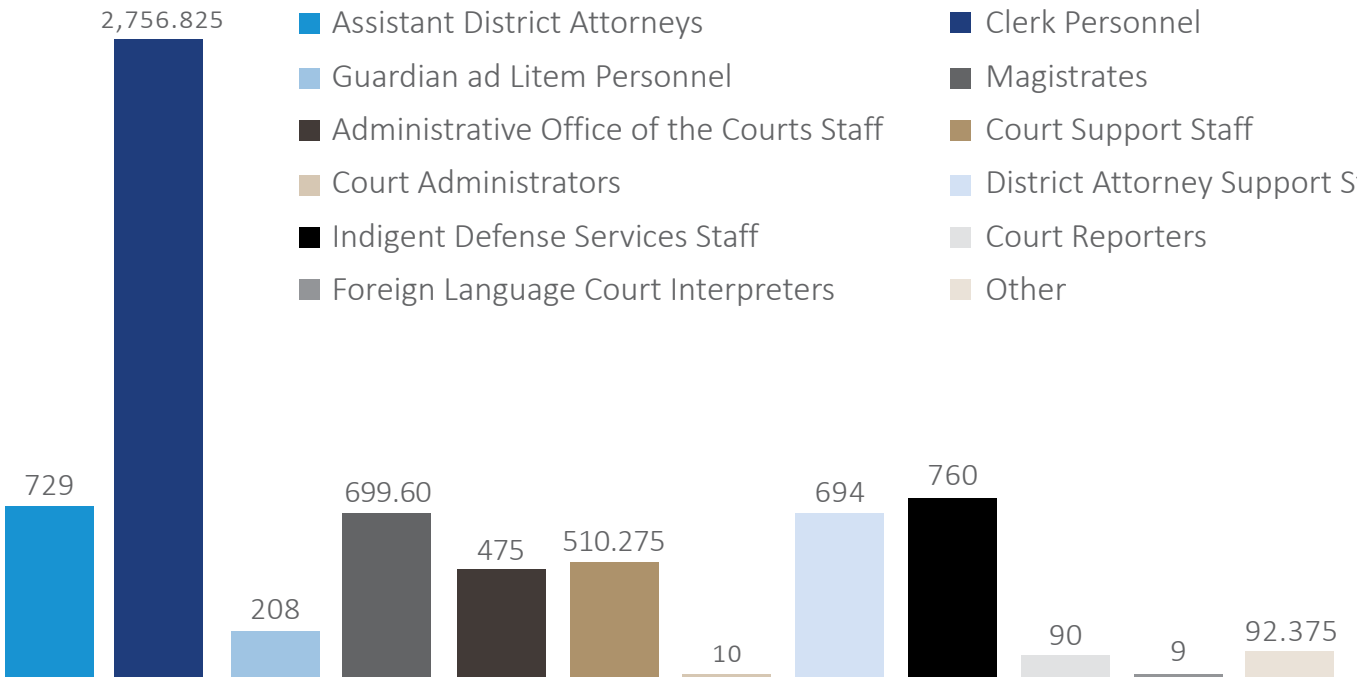
The Judicial Branch continues to have core services (including foreign language access, juror and witness fees, and technology advancements) that are unfunded or underfunded as determined by workload formulas. Per the expansion budget summary, the total number of new positions needed for the Judicial Branch to address workload needs is 520.725.

JUDICIAL BRANCH PERSONNEL

578
ELECTED OFFICIALS



7,612.075
TOTAL PERSONNEL





THE COURTS

Protecting and Preserving the Rights and Liberties of All People

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE AND ROUTES OF APPEAL

Role of the Supreme Court of North Carolina

- Highest court in state
- Final word on whether state government action violates the North Carolina Constitution
- Discretionary review of criminal and civil cases from the Court of Appeals
- Mandatory and exclusive appellate review of first-degree murder cases tried by the Superior Court where the defendant received a death sentence
- Mandatory and exclusive appellate review of trial court decisions by the North Carolina Business Court
- Mandatory review, if appealed, of cases from the Court of Appeals involving a substantial question under the United States or North Carolina constitutions

Role of the North Carolina Court of Appeals

- Mandatory and exclusive
- Mandatory, if substantial constitutional issue
- Discretionary

Superior Court

Superior courts hear civil and criminal cases, including felony cases and civil cases over $25k.

Mandatory and exclusive

District Court

District courts hear cases involving civil, criminal, juvenile, and magistrate matters.

Death Penalty Cases

Business Court Cases

All Other Civil and Criminal Cases

SUPREME COURT OF NORTH CAROLINA

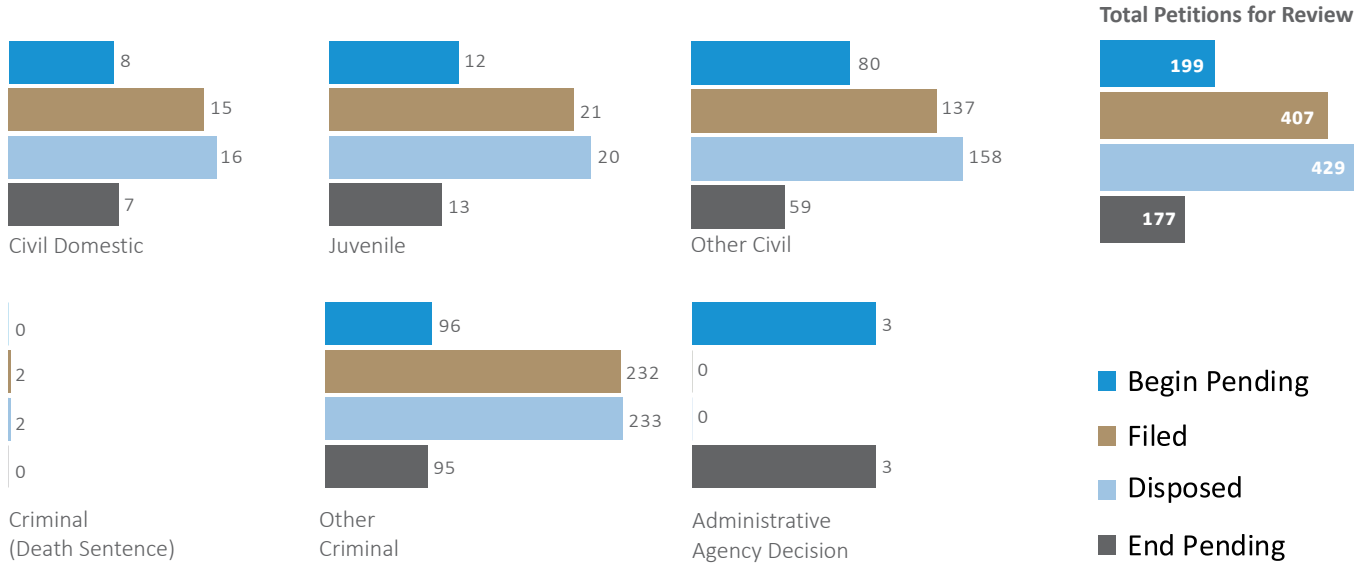


7
justices who serve eight-year terms

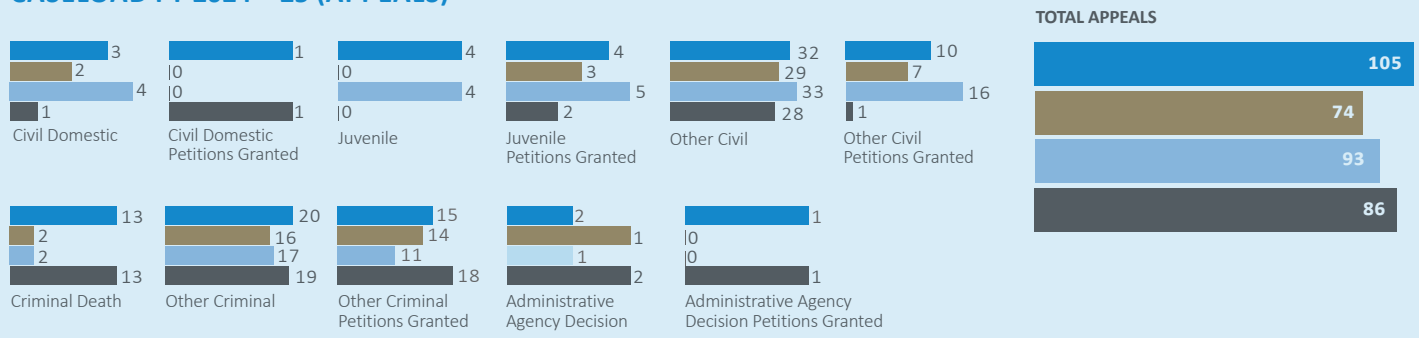
- 74 appeals docketed
- 93 appeals disposed
- 443 petitions docketed
- 421 petitions disposed

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.

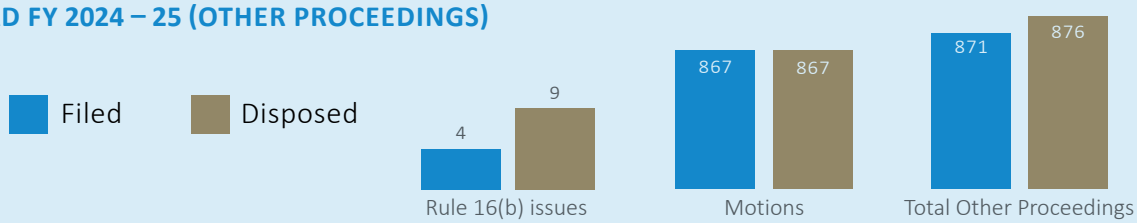
CASELOAD FY 2024 – 25 (PETITIONS)



CASELOAD FY 2024 – 25 (APPEALS)



CASELOAD FY 2024 – 25 (OTHER PROCEEDINGS)



NORTH CAROLINA COURT OF APPEALS



Hears cases in panels of 3

2,001 appeals / petitions filed

1,860 appeals / petitions disposed

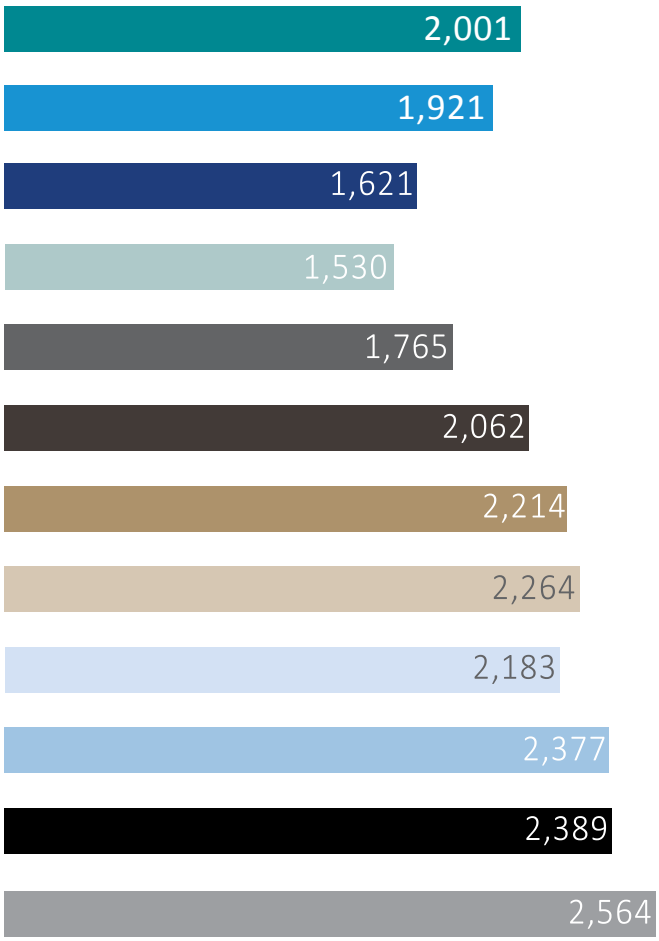
Established in 1967, the North Carolina Court of Appeals is the state's intermediate appellate court. The court is led by a chief judge, who is appointed by the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of North Carolina. The Court of Appeals reviews the proceedings that occurred in the trial courts for errors 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.

CASELOAD FY 2024 – 25

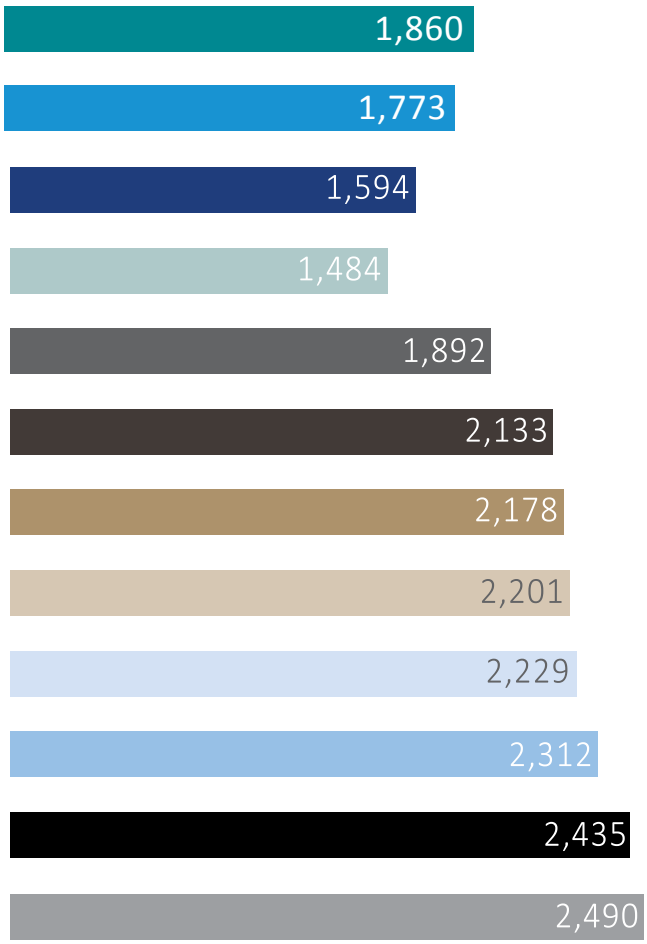
2024 – 25 | 2022 – 23 | 2021 – 22 | 2020 – 21 | 2019 – 20 | 2018 – 19

2017 – 18 | 2016 – 17 | 2015 – 16 | 2014 – 15 | 2013 – 14 | 2012 – 13

APPEALS / PETITIONS FILED



APPEALS / PETITIONS DISPOSED



SUPERIOR COURTS

121
JUDGES

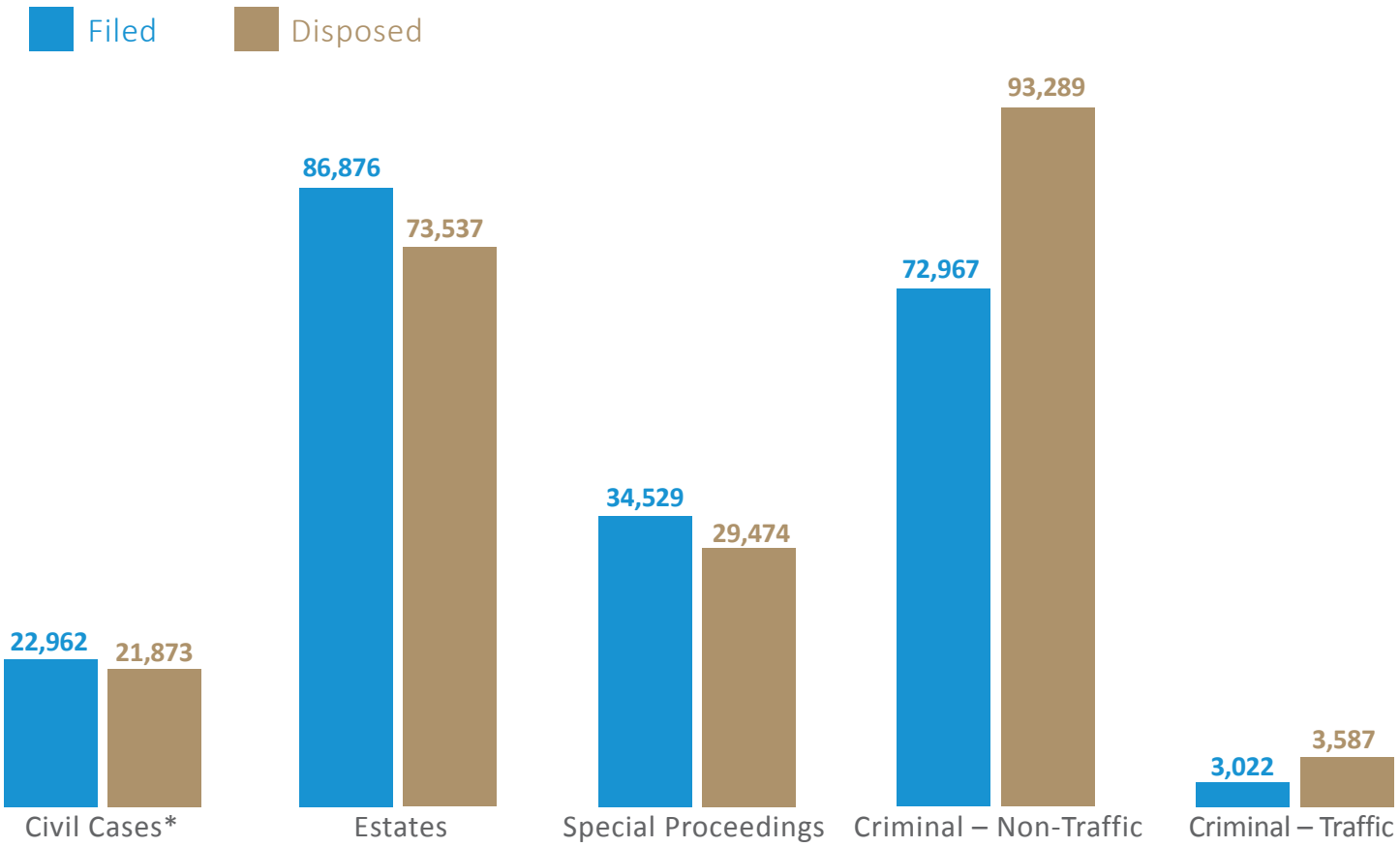
100
CLERKS OF SUPERIOR COURT

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.

- 217,356 total cases filed
- 221,760 total cases disposed

CASELOAD FY 2024 – 25



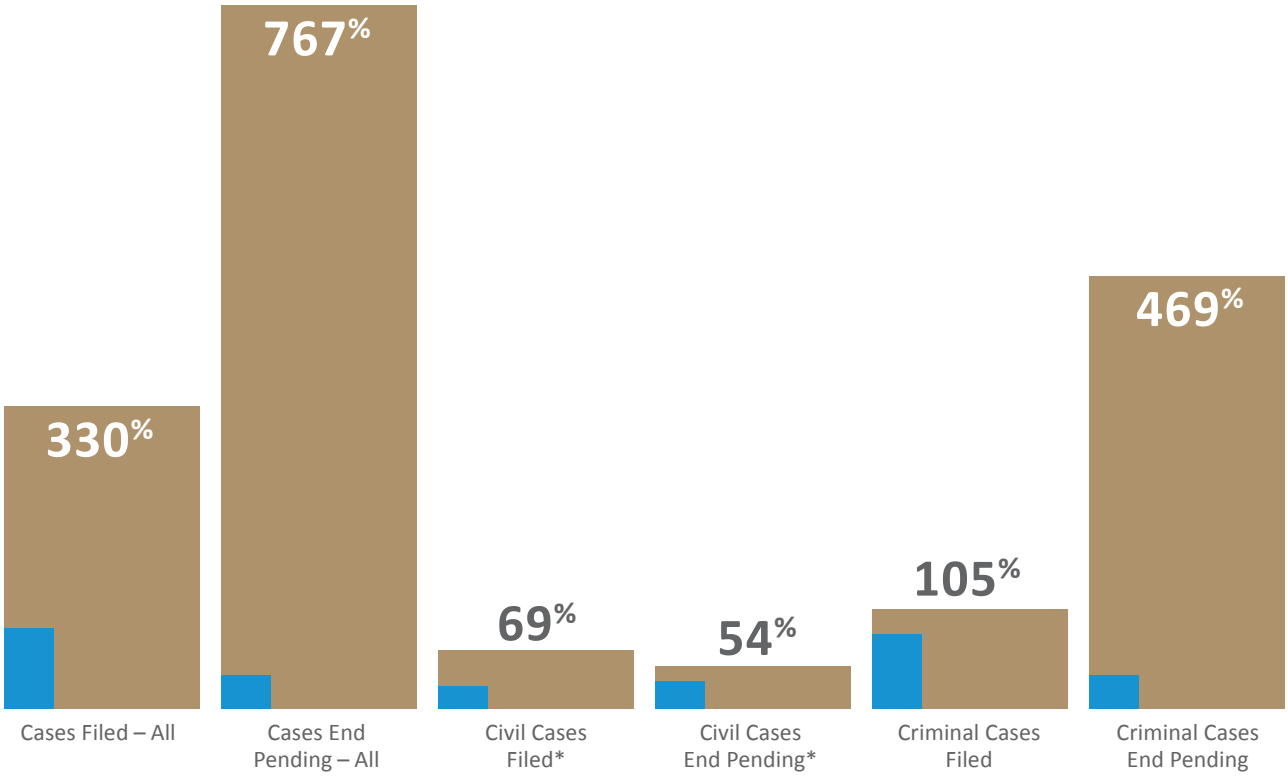
*"Civil" Cases includes cases heard by Business Court

SUPERIOR COURTS CASELOAD

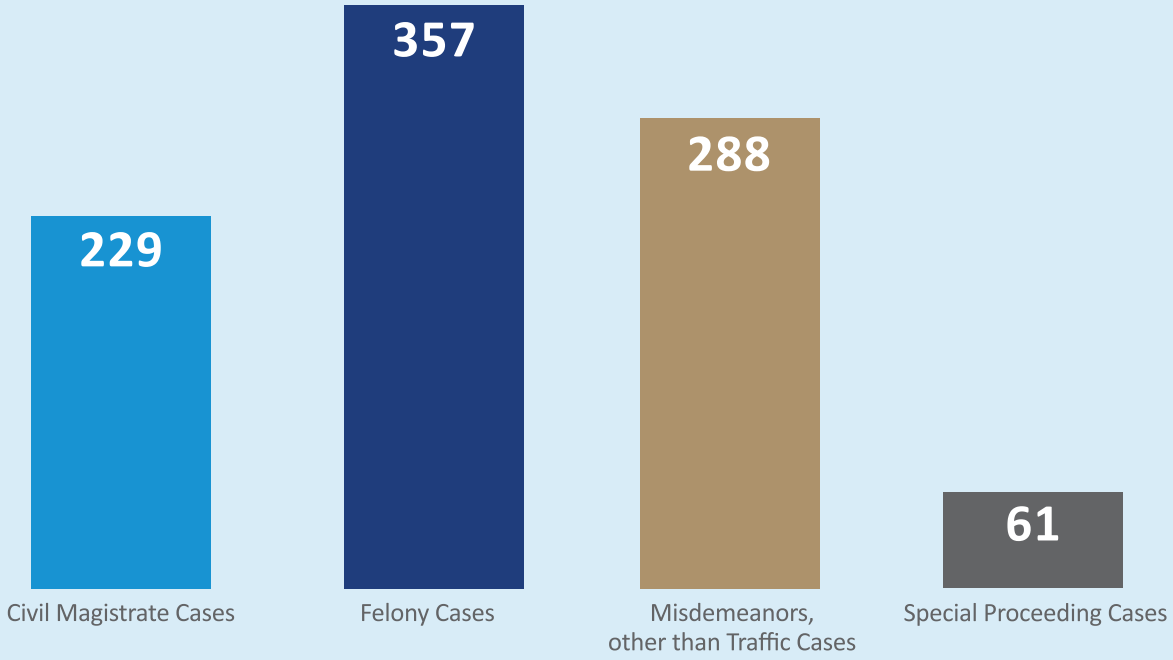
1970 Judicial Branch Annual Report

FY 2024 – 25 Statistical & Operational Report

*1970 figure based off appropriations bill SL1969-807 for FY 1969-1970.
**1970 only says "Civil"- FY 2021 combines civil, estates, and SP non-confidential



SUPERIOR COURT – MEDIAN DAYS TO DISPOSITION FY 2024 – 25



DISTRICT COURTS

289
JUDGES

699.6
MAGISTRATES

42
DISTRICT ATTORNEYS

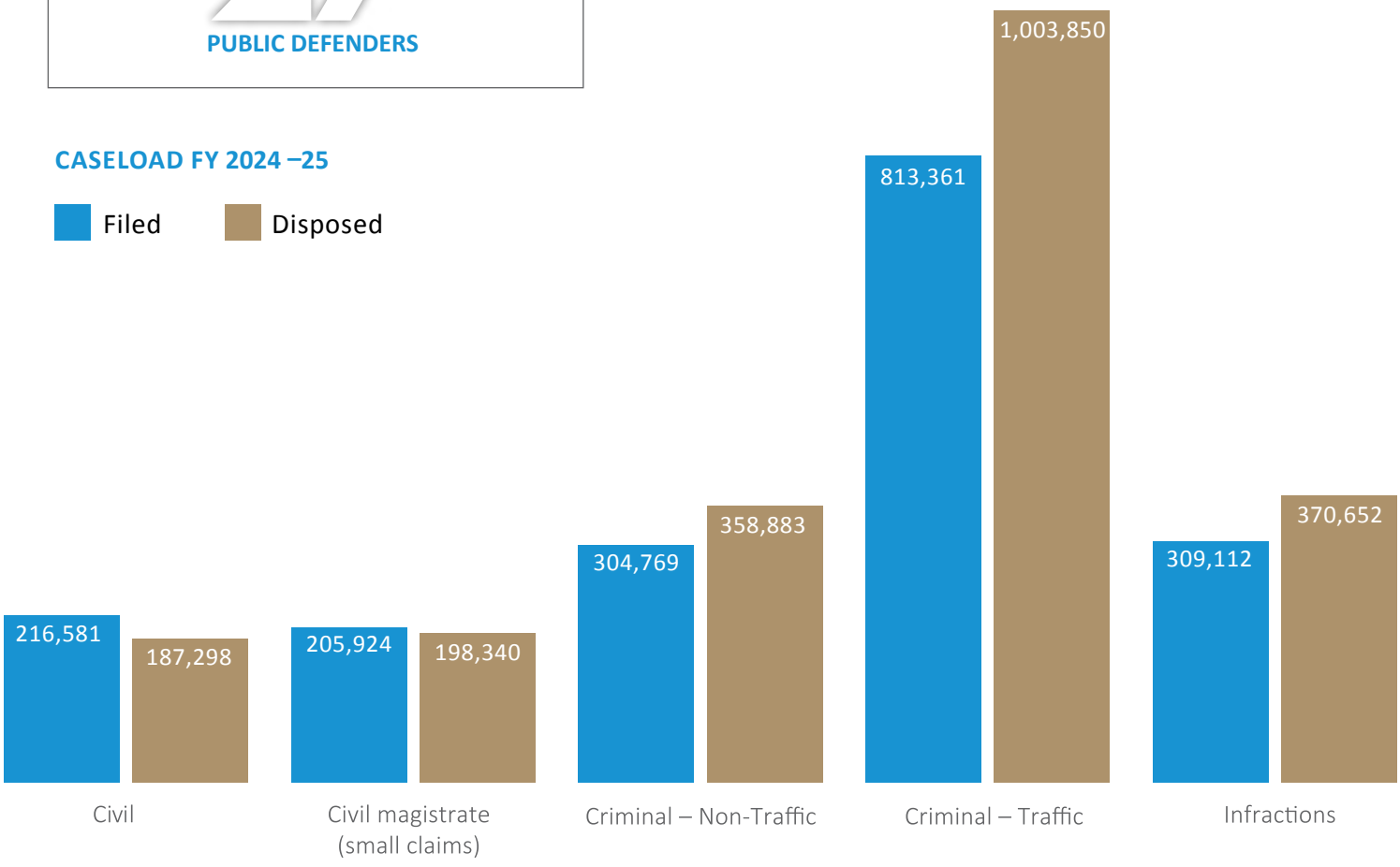
27
PUBLIC DEFENDERS

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 43 districts across the state, but not grouped into larger judicial divisions. District courts sit in the county seat of each county.

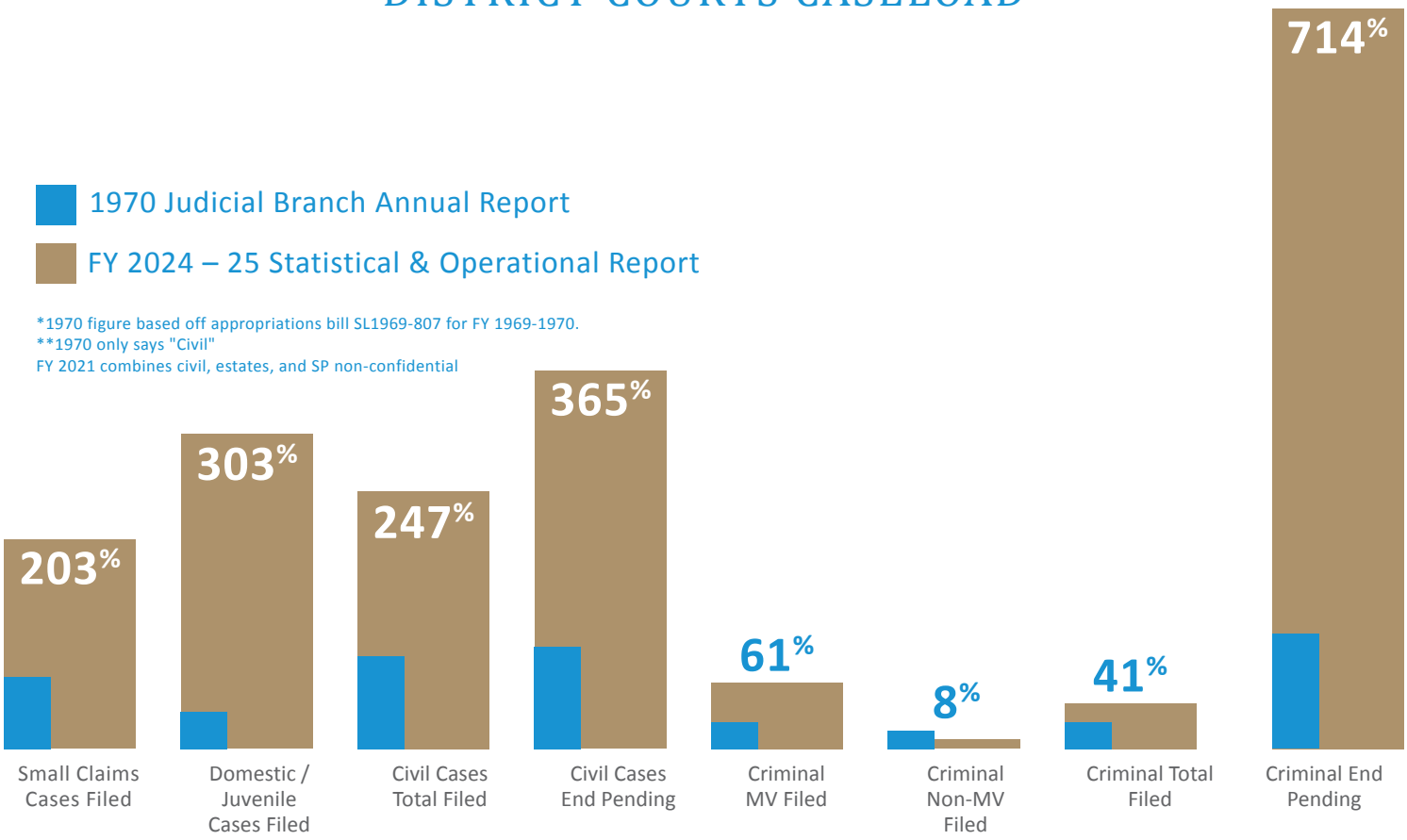
The chief district court judge manages the administrative duties of the court. Magistrates perform numerous duties in both civil and criminal matters, issuing warrants and presiding over small claims cases.

- 1,849,747total cases filed
- 2,119,023 total cases disposed

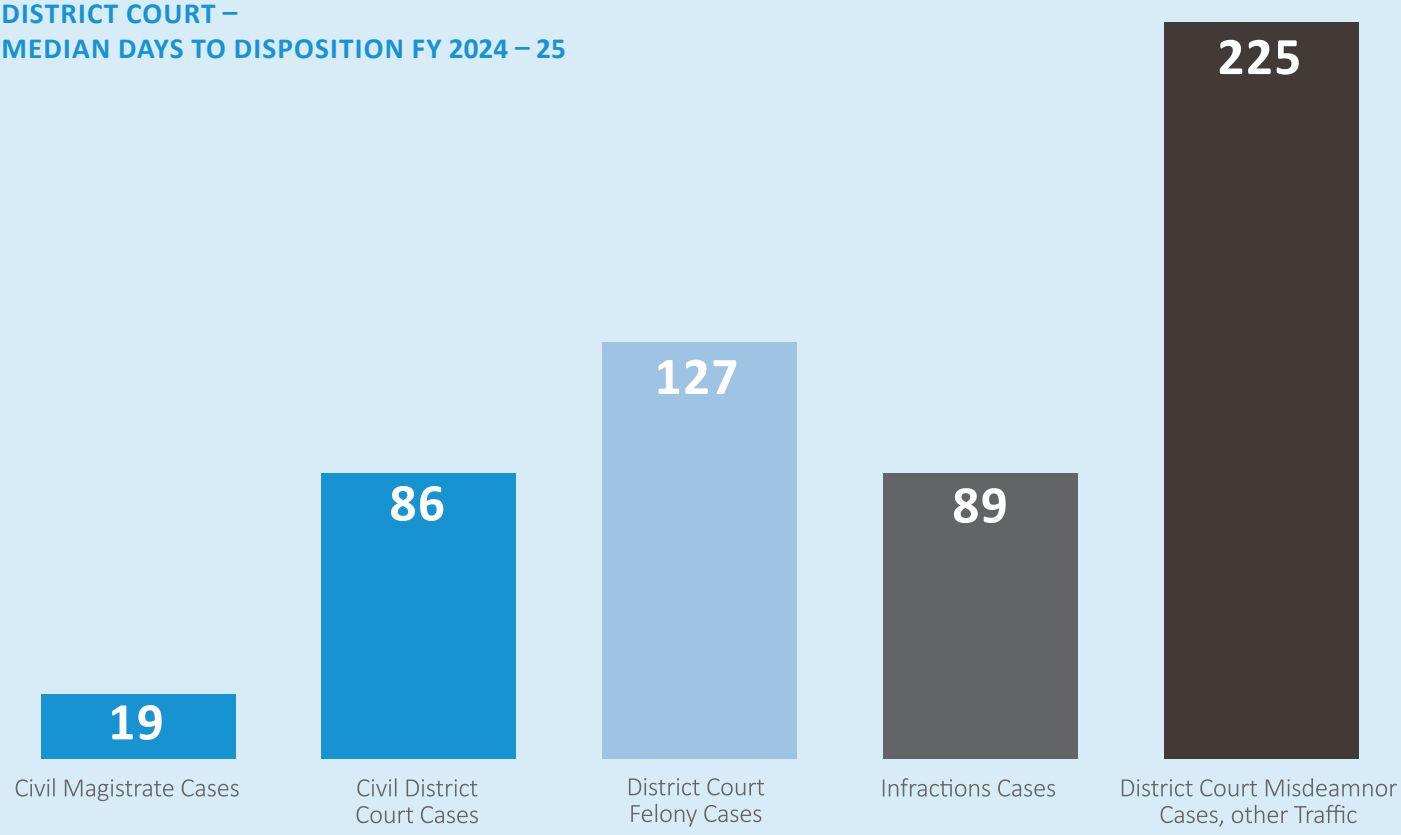
CASELOAD FY 2024 –25



DISTRICT COURTS CASELOAD



DISTRICT COURT – MEDIAN DAYS TO DISPOSITION FY 2024 – 25



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 designated by the Chief Justice as mandatory complex business cases for assignment to a Business Court judge.

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 and a full caseload.

For more information, please see the Business Court's annual reports found at: **www.NCcourts.gov/courts/business-court**.

4 LOCATIONS

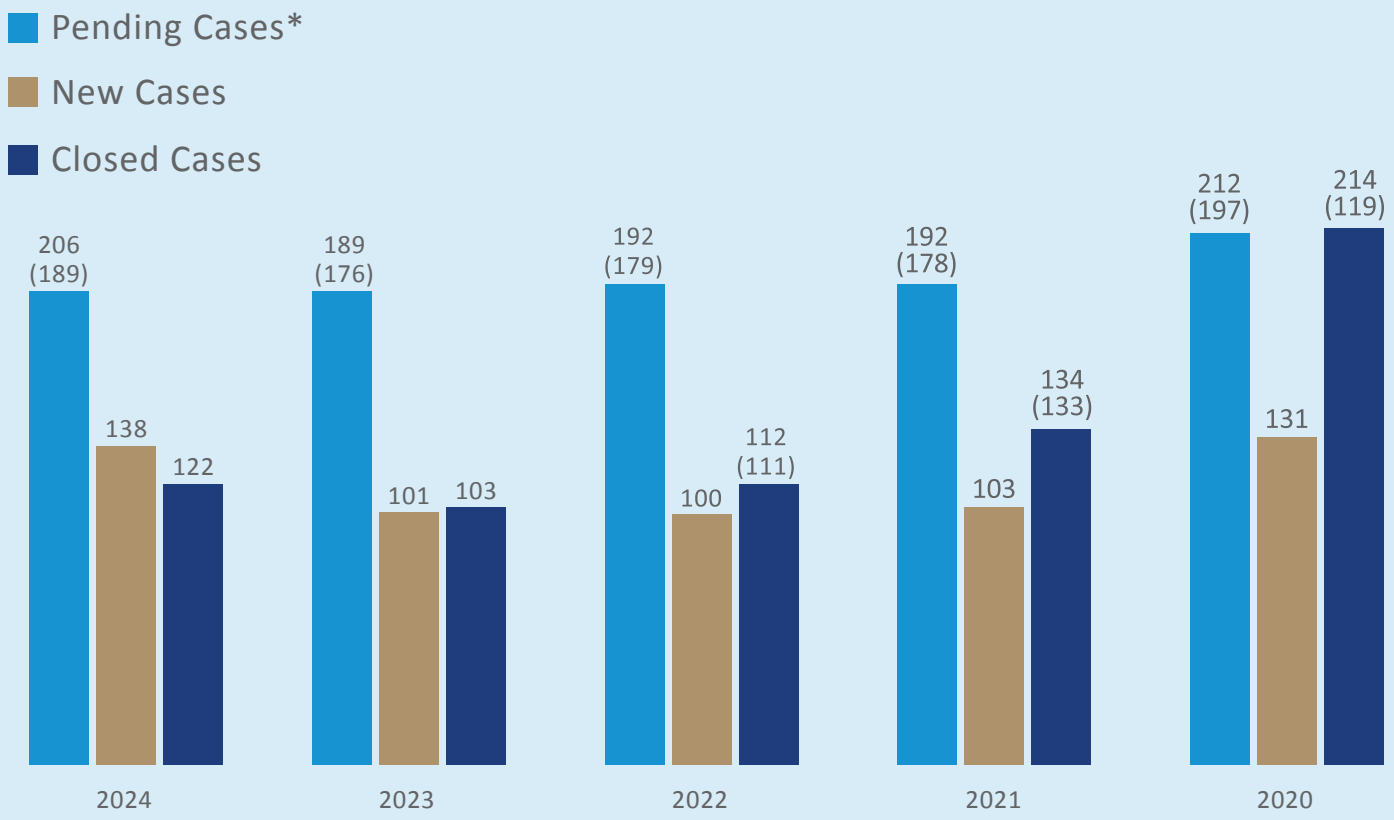
6 JUDGES

FREQUENCY OF CASE TYPES FROM JULY 1, 2024 TO JUNE 30, 2025	
68	Corporations, Partnerships, LLCs
34	Trade Secrets
31	Intellectual Property
11	Contract Dispute over $1M
5	Controversy over $5M
8	Securities
8	Trademark
5	General Receiver
2	Antitrust
1	Contested Tax Case

*NOTE — A party's Notice of Designation may indicate more than one dispute type.

CASELOAD (2024)

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



578

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

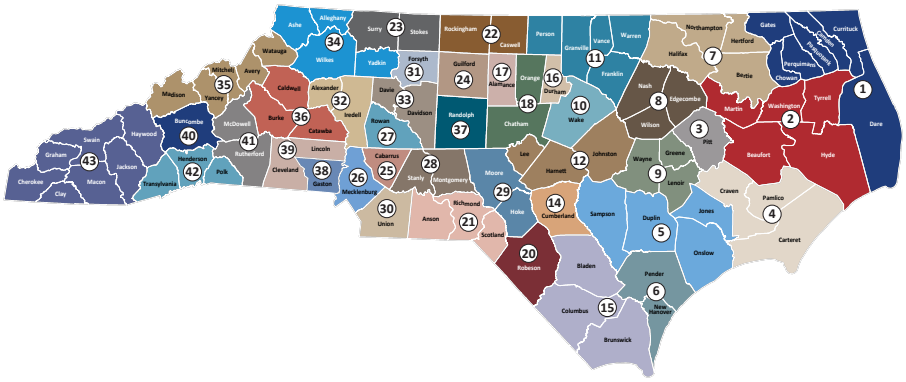
7,612

public servants

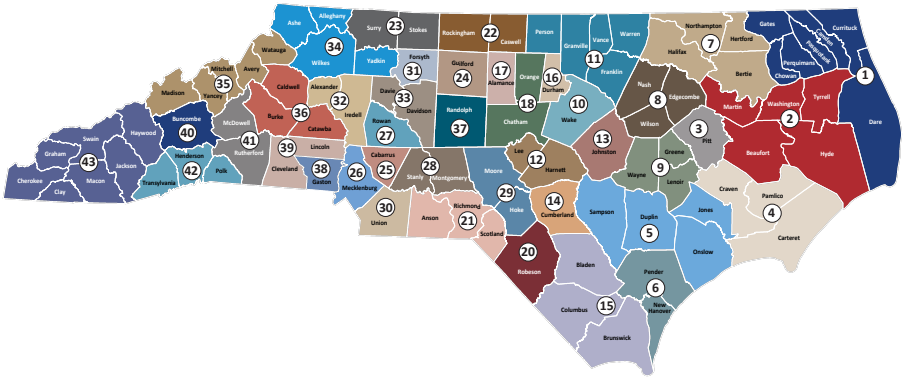
1%

monies collected and receipted by the courts stays with the courts

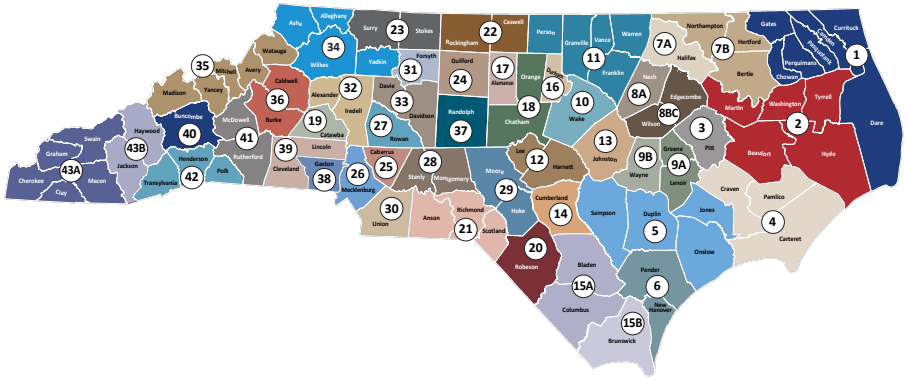
DISTRICT COURT DISTRICTS



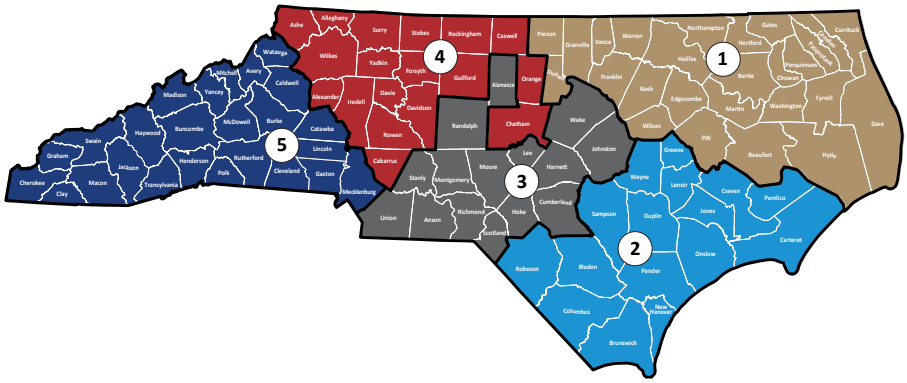
PROSECUTORIAL DISTRICTS



SUPERIOR COURT DISTRICTS



SUPERIOR COURT DIVISIONS





COURT PROGRAMS

Providing Information, Advice, Support, and Solutions

INCREASING ACCESS TO JUSTICE THROUGH PROGRAMS & SERVICES

8,582
district court cases settled in mediation and arbitration

9,303
child custody cases mediated

16,526
children represented by the NCGAL Program



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.

SCHOOL JUSTICE PARTNERSHIPS
Provide technical assistance and support to counties with existing School Justice Partnerships. Assist in the development, implementation, and promotion of counties that are in the planning stages of creating a School Justice Partnership.

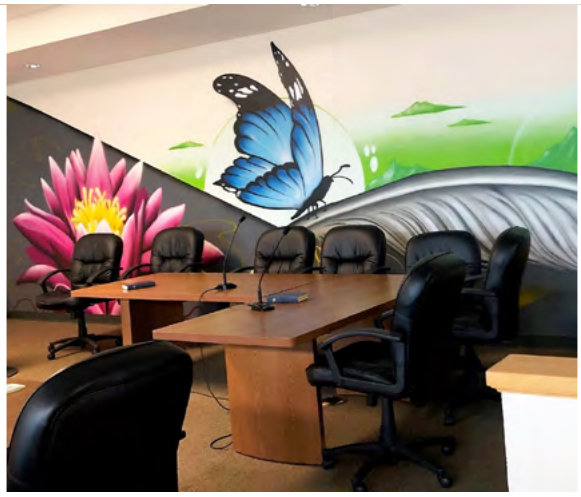
CHILD CUSTODY MEDIATION
Offers a "family-friendly" way to resolve custody and visitation actions filed with the district court. Mediators provide neutral, non-adversarial court-ordered services in cases involving custody and visitation of minor children, including preparing parenting agreements. Custody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

DISABILITY ACCESS
Assist court staff and officials to ensure that individuals with disabilities have equal access to all court functions. Process, analyze and fulfill reasonable accommodation requests, including American Sign Language and / or Certified Deaf Interpreter services for Deaf/hard of hearing consumer. Create, coordinate, and provide training about disability access in the courts.

JURY SUPPORT
Provide technical assistance to clerks of superior court, judges, and court managers regarding administrative issues related to jury management, such as summoning jurors, juror payment, public records requests, and grand jury selection. Coordinate with the Division of Motor Vehicles regarding the development of master jury lists.

NC GUARDIAN AD LITEM (GAL) PROGRAM
Provides attorney advocates, staff and trained child advocate volunteers to represent the best interests of children in abuse and neglect cases in every North Carolina county. They represent the children in trial and appellate courts to ensure their rights are protected and their voices are heard. They strive to identify safe, permanent homes for abused and neglected children in accordance with applicable case law and statutory requirements.







Rowan County's child friendly courtroom includes a colorful mural and free books for children to take and keep.

COURT PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

TOP MOST REQUESTED LANGUAGES FOR COURT INTERPRETERS:

- Spanish
- Arabic
- Haitian/French Creole
- Mandarin
- Russian

RECOVERY COURTS AVAILABLE IN NORTH CAROLINA

84 COURTS

45 COUNTIES

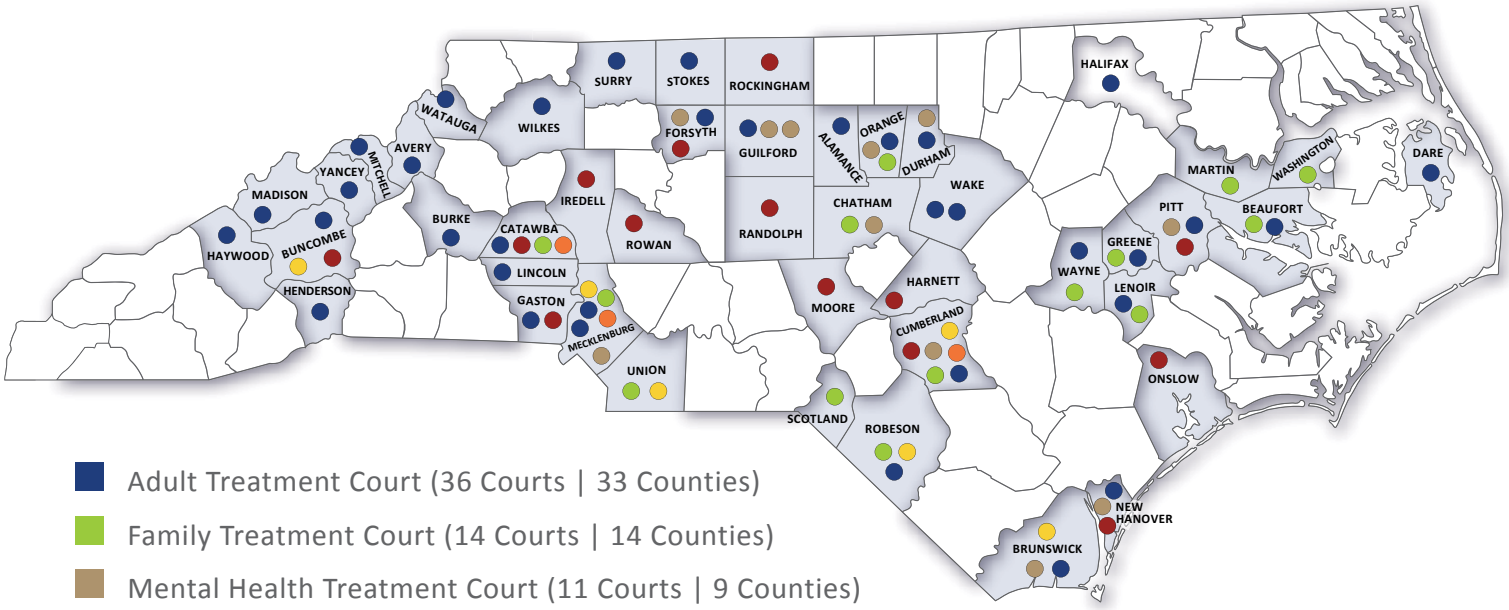
JUVENILE COURT IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM works to improve the performance of North Carolina's juvenile courts in abuse and neglect cases so that safety, permanence, and well-being for each child are achieved in a fair and timely manner.

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 for 92 different languages. Court interpreters are an essential public service, assuring due process for limited English proficient individuals.

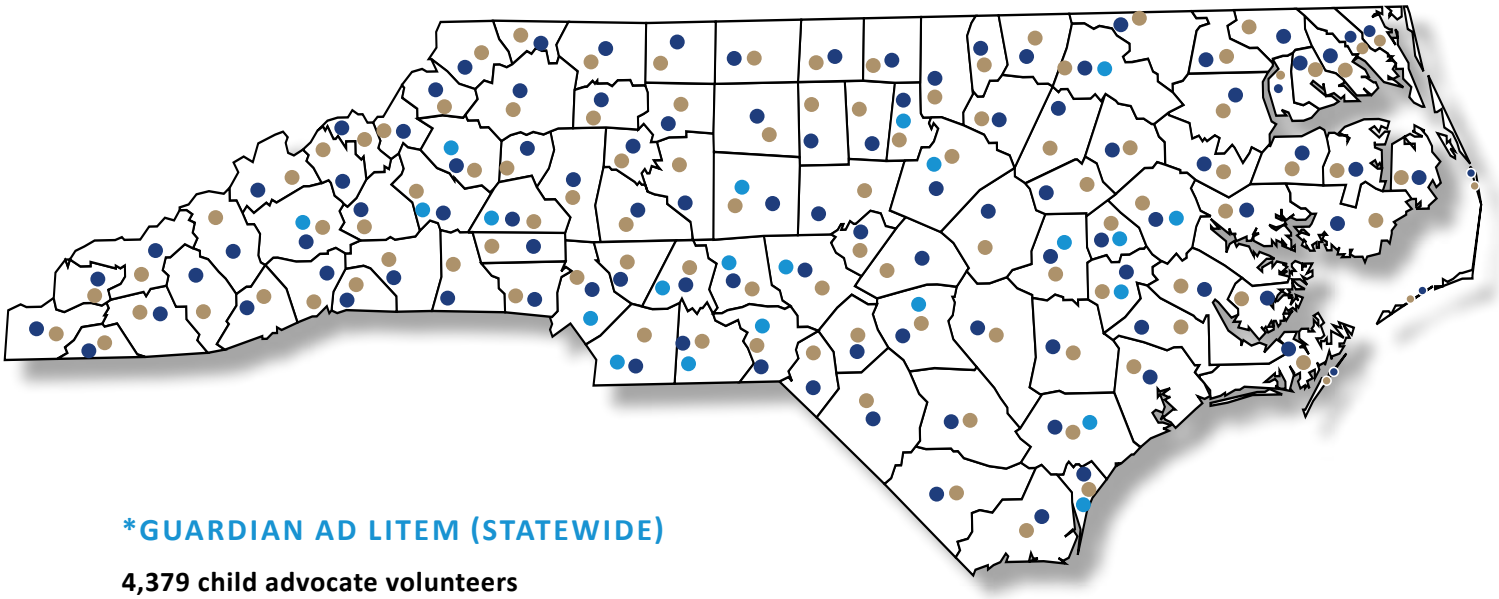
SAFE BABIES COURT

Safe Babies Court (SBC) aims to reduce the time a child spends in foster care before reaching a permanent, safe home, preferably through reunification. The approach seeks to improve the long-term well-being of children and families involved with the child welfare court system by providing (1) information about the unique mental health and developmental needs of infants and toddlers and (2) case oversight. SBC connects babies, toddlers, and their families with intensive support and monitors services designed to promote healthy child development while working to ensure a safe and timely permanence. SBC includes frequent judicial status conferences and family team meetings to provide additional oversight and ensure the family's needs are met and the case is not lingering in the court system. The goals of SBC are to improve timeliness to permanence, reduced recurrence of maltreatment, and enhanced child well-being.



- Adult Treatment Court (36 Courts | 33 Counties)
- Family Treatment Court (14 Courts | 14 Counties)
- Mental Health Treatment Court (11 Courts | 9 Counties)
- DWI Treatment Court (6 Courts | 6 Counties)
- Veterans Treatment Court (14 Courts | 14 Counties)
- Youth Treatment Court (3 Court | 3 Counties)

COURT PROGRAMS AND SERVICES AVAILABLE BY COUNTY



*GUARDIAN AD LITEM (STATEWIDE)

4,379 child advocate volunteers

59,428 child abuse and neglect hearings and conferences held

16,526 children received legal representation

ALTERNATIVE DISPUTE RESOLUTION

1,752 family financial cases completed

4,226 arbitration cases completed

1,752 mediated settlement cases completed

CHILD CUSTODY MEDIATION (Statewide)

18,268 people attended orientation

8,582 child custody cases mediated

9,303 mediation sessions held

3,923 parenting agreements drafted

NOT ALL PROGRAMS ARE AVAILABLE IN EACH COUNTY

LANGUAGE ACCESS INTERPRETERS

Spanish	78	Bosnian /Serbian / Croatian	3
Arabic	8	Hmong	3
Vietnamese	8	Lao	2
French	7	Polish	2
Russian	6	Tagalog	2
Portuguese	5	Khmer	1
Cantonese	4	Somali	1
Haitian Creole	4	Turkish	1
Korean	4	*Includes certified and conditionally qualified interpreters available from in and out of state.	
Mandarin	4		

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

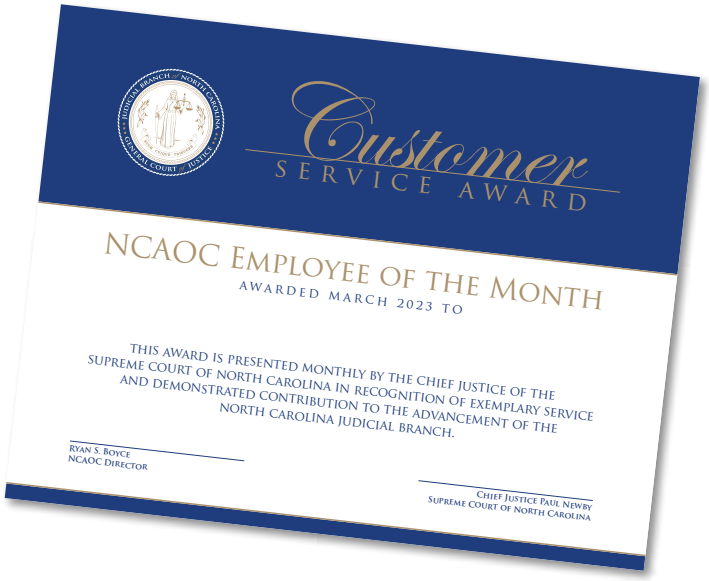


JUDICIAL BRANCH HIGHLIGHTS

NCAOC CUSTOMER SERVICE AWARD

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

"Chief Justice Newby has always stressed service and how important it is to serve the needs of the North Carolina court system," said NCAOC Director Ryan Boyce. "This award is one way to recognize individuals who go above and beyond in their service."



Recipients are recognized in the following ways:

- **Presented a certificate of recognition by the NCOAC Director**
- **Name and photo displayed in the lobby area of the North Carolina Judicial Center**
- **Congratulated with an article in a staff-wide email and employee intranet.**

This fiscal year the following were recognized for their service with the award: **Kurt Miller, Bert Barber, Tracie Hembrick, Samuel Tant, Scott McMurray, Nicole Welsh, Tim Whitehead**.

Congratulations to all of this year's recipients.

★★★

JUDICIAL BRANCH PODCAST
NCCOURTS.GOV/PODCAST

All Things Judicial
All Things Judicial is a podcast about the important role of the North Carolina Judicial Branch in state government. With each episode, you'll hear interviews from recognizable figures in our judicial communities and learn about topics you may not have realized were related to what we do every day — human trafficking prevention, civics education, and the modernization of our courts, just to name a few.



eCOURTS GUIDE & FILE REACHES 100,000 FILINGS IN MAY

eCourts
EXPANDING ACCESS TO JUSTICE

In May 2025 eCourts Guide & File had helped the public generate more than 100,000 court filings. The application allows users to create and file the most common legal actions through assisted interviews.

Guide & File launched statewide in August 2020 and eFiling options began in February 2023. The free online service is available to help self-represented litigants and attorneys prepare court documents online to file for certain case types. Working much like popular tax preparation software, this online tool guides users through a series of questions (an interview) to generate court forms that are ready to be filed.

As more counties went live with eCourts, users were able to eFile these forms for certain case types. The forms may also be printed and filed at any courthouse. Civil domestic matters, complaints in summary ejectment (eviction), and small claims complaints were the most frequently generated Guide & File case types across the state.



SAFE BABIES COURT OFFICIALLY BEGAN ACCEPTING FAMILIES IN MITCHELL, NEW HANOVER, AND YANCEY COUNTIES

Safe Babies Court, a comprehensive new approach in North Carolina to reducing the time children spend in foster care by improving permanency outcomes for infants and toddlers, officially began accepting families in Mitchell, New Hanover, and Yancey counties.

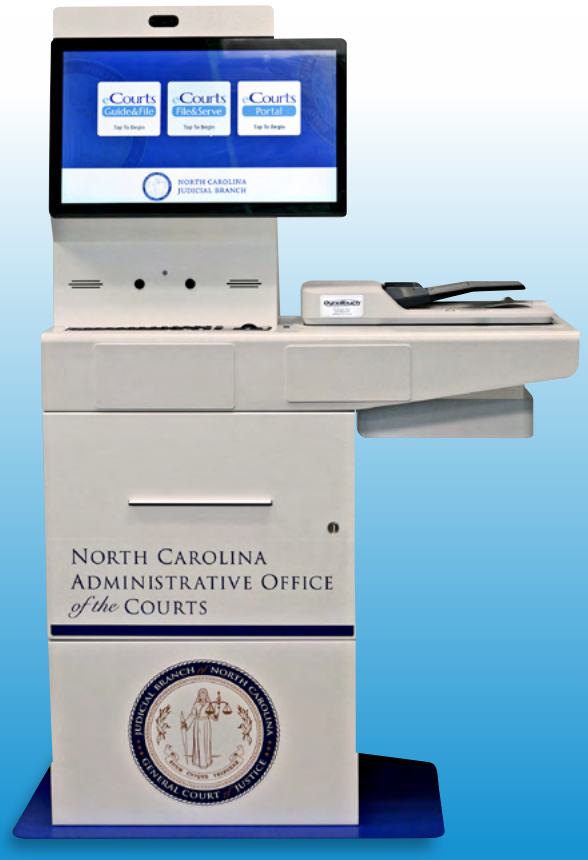
Establishing a Safe Babies Court program in North Carolina was a recommendation of the Chief Justice's Task Force on ACEs-Informed Courts in its final report issued in December 2023. Specifically, the Task Force recommended implementing Safe Babies Court through a three-year, five-pilot site initiative. The pilot sites included Brunswick County, Durham County, Mitchell and Yancey counties, New Hanover County, and a fifth site to be determined.

Safe Babies Court connects children ages 0-3 and their families involved in the child welfare court system with intensive support and services designed to promote healthy child development while working to ensure a safe and timely permanency placement. There are frequent judicial status conferences and family team meetings to provide additional oversight and ensure the family's needs are met and the case is not unnecessarily delayed in the court system.

"Safe Babies Court presents an incredible opportunity to significantly reduce time to permanence for children in foster care ages 0-3, to positively impact the brain development of the youngest children in foster care by strengthening supportive relationships and providing therapeutic services, and to reduce the risk of further trauma in the child's life. We have the opportunity to reshape child welfare practices for how we respond not only to the youngest children in care, but for all children in care," said Chief District Court Judge Jay Corpening.



eCOURTS KIOSKS DEPLOYED TO N.C. COURTHOUSES WITH SCANNERS, PRINTERS, PAYMENT SERVICES FOR THE PUBLIC





eCourts kiosks are now available at courthouses in Alamance, Buncombe, Cabarrus, Cumberland, Durham, Guilford, Harnett, Johnston, Lee, Mecklenburg, New Hanover, Onslow, Union and Wake counties. The kiosks will provide on-site access to eCourts applications for users to search court dates and case events, file documents electronically, make payments, and use a scanner, printer, or other service available through the Judicial Branch's digital case management system.

In addition to printers, scanners, and payment services, the kiosks provide public access to eCourts' primary applications for search (Portal), filing (File & Serve), and user-assisted interviews to help create common legal filings (Guide & File).

In the counties using eCourts, the public can file and access court records and make payments online from anywhere with an internet connection. Prior to eCourts, most North Carolinians could only access court records and case events at a clerk's office or at public computer terminals located inside courthouses.

"These kiosks are the next step in ensuring robust public access to the court system," For those without internet access, kiosks are a convenient way to access the court system and take advantage of the tools that eCourts provides."

- NCAOC Director Ryan S. Boyce

ALLISON RIGGS SWORN IN AS ASSOCIATE JUSTICE OF THE SUPREME COURT OF NORTH CAROLINA



Associate Justice Allison Riggs

Associate Justice Allison Riggs was officially sworn in on May 13, 2025. On June 12, 2025 she was officially installed to the Supreme Court of NC as the 104th Associate Justice.

She previously served as a judge on the North Carolina Court of Appeals before Governor Roy Copper appointed her to the Supreme Court in September 2023. Riggs filled the vacancy created by Justice Michael Morgan's resignation from the Supreme Court. Riggs received her Bachelor's Degree, Master's Degree, and Juris Doctor from the University of Florida.

TOM MURRY AND CHRISTOPHER FREEMAN SWORN IN AS JUDGES OF THE NORTH CAROLINA COURT OF APPEALS



Judge Tom Murry

Judge Tom Murry was formally sworn in as a Judge of the North Carolina Court of Appeals during an investiture ceremony on January 16, 2025.

In addition to his judicial and legislative experience, Judge Murry is both an attorney and a licensed pharmacist. He earned his Doctor of Pharmacy degree from the University of Arkansas College of Pharmacy and his Juris Doctor degree from Campbell University School of Law. Judge Murry also serves in the North Carolina National Guard as a Judge Advocate General.



Judge Christopher Freeman

Judge Christopher Freeman was sworn in on January 1, 2025. His investiture ceremony was held on April 29, 2025.

Judge Freeman received a bachelor's degree from High Point University and a J.D. from the Regent University School of Law. He has served as a Judge Advocate General in the U.S. Air Force Reserve. He previously served as a District Court judge and as an Assistant District Attorney.

CHIEF JUSTICE PAUL NEWBY PRESENTS 2024 PROFESSIONALISM AWARDS TO FIVE RECIPIENTS IN APRIL

The Chief Justice's Commission on Professionalism presented its 2024 Awards to five recipients during its annual awards dinner Wednesday, April 23, 2025. This award is presented annually to an individual or individuals whose contributions have demonstrated the highest commitment to genuine professionalism and the highest standards of legal ethics. The award is presented in cooperation with the N.C. State Bar and N.C. Bar Association.

The recipients were:

Benjamin David, Andrew T. Heath, Judge Angelica Chavis McIntyre, Judge Regina Parker, and Elizabeth Star.

The Chief Justice's Commission on Professionalism (CJCP) was established on September 22, 1998, by order of the Supreme Court of North Carolina. The order established the Commission's membership and major responsibilities. It serves to enhance professionalism among North Carolina lawyers, judges, and law students.



Pictured left to right: Judge Angelica Chavis McIntyre, Elizabeth Star, Ben David, Chief Justice Paul Newby, Judge Regina Parker, and Andrew Heath.

NORTH CAROLINA BUSINESS COURT CHANGES ANNOUNCED BY JUDICIAL BRANCH

JUDGE MICHAEL L. ROBINSON BECAME CHIEF BUSINESS COURT JUDGE IN JANUARY 2025

Changes to the composition of the North Carolina Business Court, a division of the General Court of Justice that hears complex and significant cases arising in corporate and commercial law, took effect in January 2025.

Chief Business Court Judge Louis A. Bledsoe, III, of Charlotte, N.C., announced his retirement effective January 1, 2025. Judge Bledsoe had served as a Business Court judge since 2014, and as Chief Judge since 2018.

Chief Justice Paul Newby appointed Judge Michael L. Robinson of Winston-Salem, N.C., who has served on the North Carolina Business Court since 2016, as Chief Business Court Judge effective January 1, 2025.

Earlier the General Assembly confirmed Charlotte attorney A. Todd Brown to a Special Superior Court judgeship. Brown had served as the President of the North Carolina State Bar. Chief Justice Newby designated Brown as a Business Court Judge when he assumed office.

"Congratulations to Todd Brown on his confirmation to the Superior Court bench," said Chief Justice Paul Newby. "I am proud to designate him as a Business Court Judge. I am grateful for the service of experienced attorneys and judges on North Carolina's Business Court in furtherance of its mission to provide an appropriate forum for complex cases. I appreciate Chief Judge Bledsoe's years of committed service and have confidence that Judge Robinson will maintain the effective administration of justice in complex cases as our next Chief Judge of the Business Court."









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