

A high-angle photograph of the Supreme Court of Mississippi chamber. The room is circular with a large, dark wood-paneled bench curving around the perimeter. Several justices in black robes are seated at the bench. In the center, a man in a suit stands at a podium, addressing the court. The floor features a large circular seal with an eagle and the text "THE GREAT SEAL OF THE SUPREME COURT OF MISSISSIPPI". The room has high ceilings, large windows with blinds, and wall-mounted lamps. An American flag and a Mississippi state flag are visible in the background.

SUPREME COURT OF MISSISSIPPI

2020 Annual Report

SUPREME COURT OF MISSISSIPPI
2020 ANNUAL REPORT
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THE MISSISSIPPI JUDICIAL SYSTEM

Justice and Municipal Courts are at the most basic level of the Judicial System, and are where the largest number of people encounter the Judicial System. Trial courts of record include County, Chancery, and Circuit Courts. The appellate system is made up of two appellate courts, the Court of Appeals of the State of Mississippi and the Mississippi Supreme Court, which is Mississippi's court of last resort.

There are 82 Justice Courts with 198 judges. Justice Courts have jurisdiction over civil actions involving sums of \$3,500 or less and misdemeanors. They also hold preliminary hearings in felony cases. Appeals from the Justice Courts may be taken to Circuit Courts, or County Courts if available, and the cases appealed are tried de novo.

There are 239 Municipal Courts with 208 judges. Some judges serve more than one local municipality. They have limited criminal jurisdiction and jurisdiction over violations of municipal ordinances. Appeals from the Municipal Courts may be taken to County or Circuit courts, and the cases appealed are tried de novo in the appellate court.

Mississippi has 22 County Courts with 32 judges. County Courts have concurrent civil jurisdiction with the Chancery and Circuit Courts in suits involving \$200,000 or less. They also have limited criminal jurisdiction and appellate jurisdiction from the Justice Courts and Municipal Courts. In counties with County Courts, the Youth Courts function as a division of the County Courts handling juvenile matters.

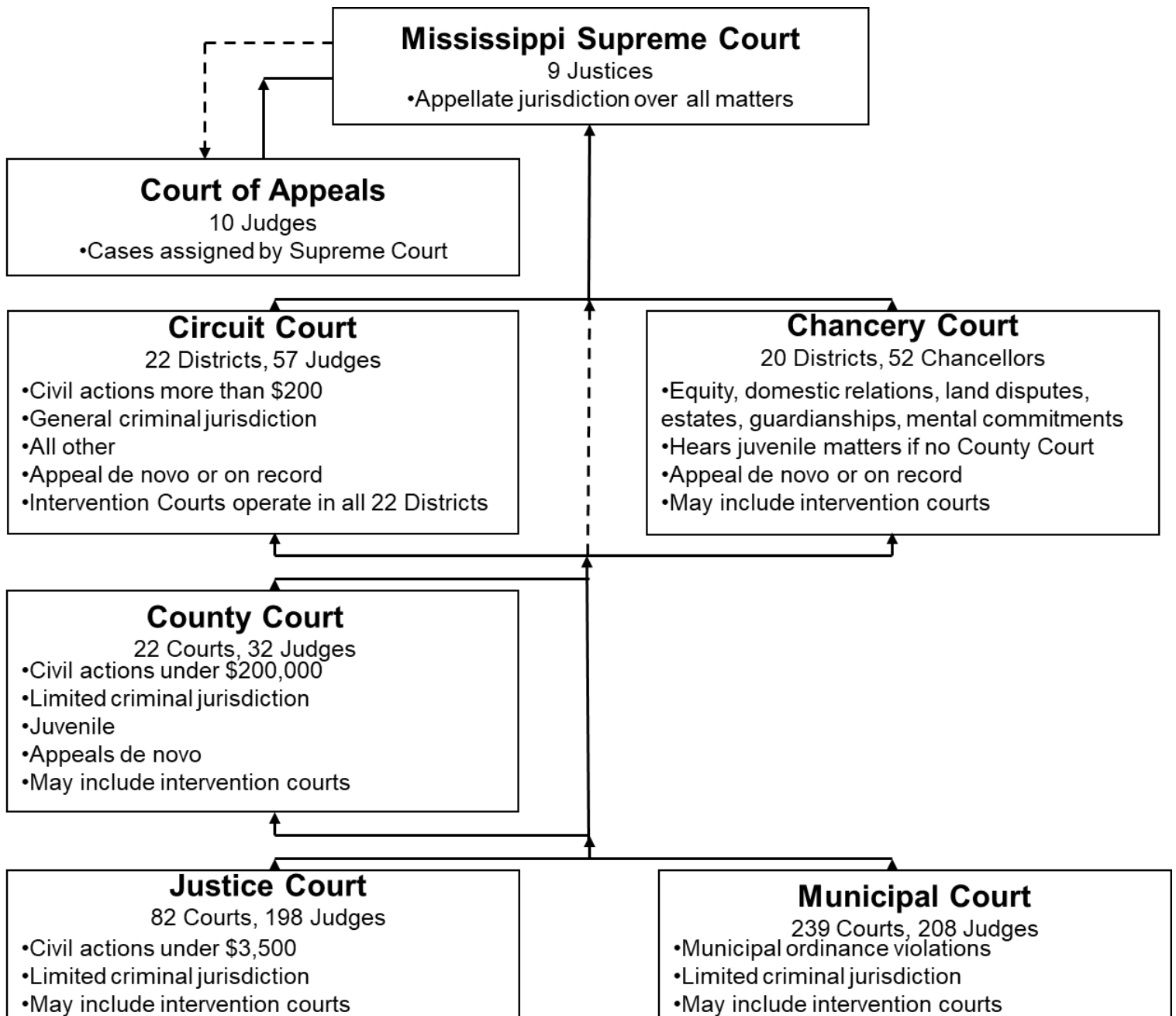
There are Chancery Courts in each county, which are organized into 20 districts with 52 chancellors. They have jurisdiction over matters of equity, domestic relations, land disputes, estates, guardianships and mental commitments. In counties without County Courts, the Chancery Courts handle Youth Court functions. They also receive appeals on the record from County Courts in matters over which the two courts have concurrent subject matter jurisdiction.

The Circuit Courts are the general jurisdiction trial courts in Mississippi. There are Circuit Courts in each county, organized into 22 districts with 57 judges. They have jurisdiction of all civil actions at law seeking recovery in excess of \$200 and of all criminal cases under state law. They receive appeals de novo from the Justice Courts and on the record from County Courts.

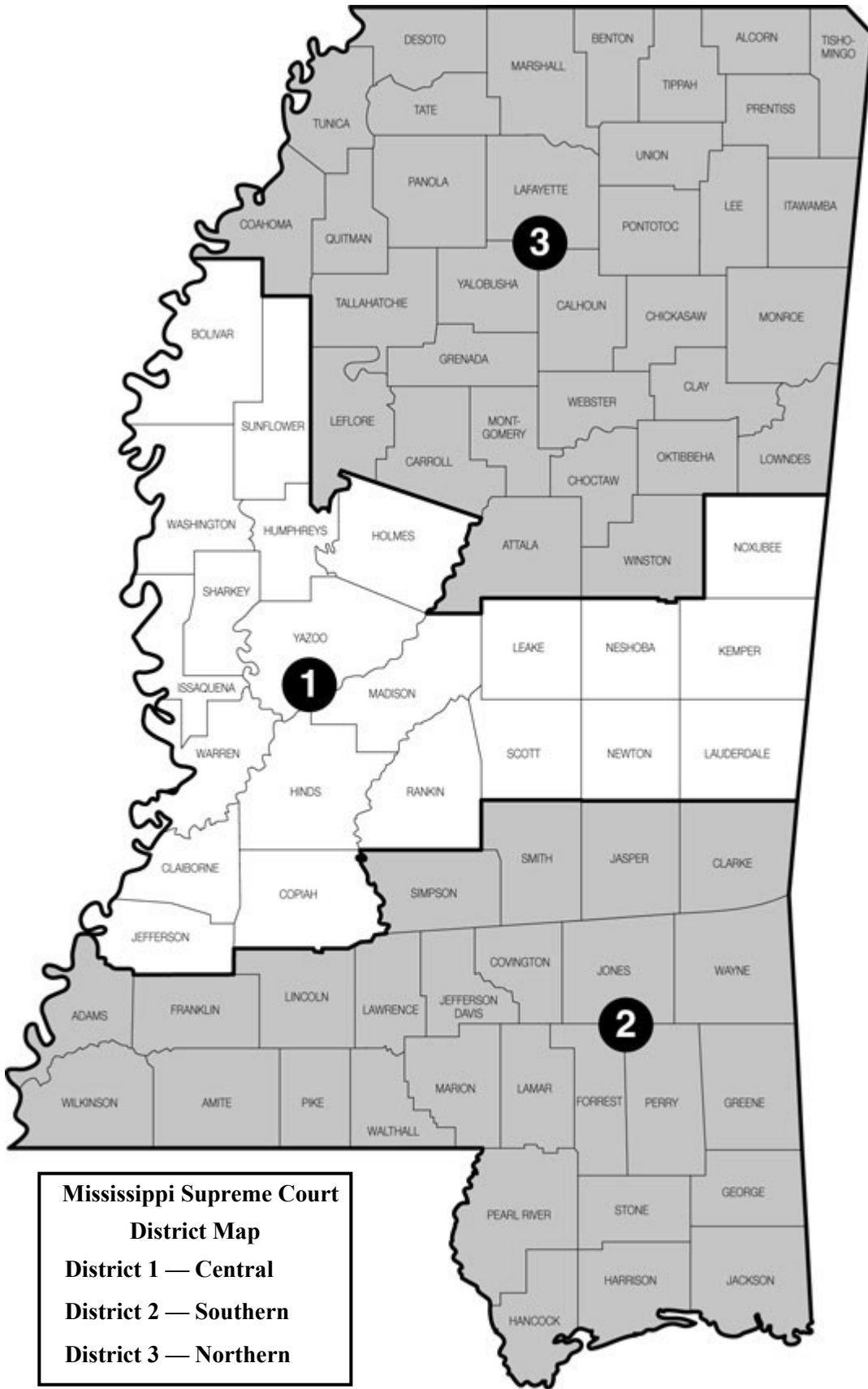
Appeals from the Chancery, Circuit, and, in limited situations, the County Courts are taken to the Supreme Court. The Supreme Court may either retain the appeal or assign it to the Court of Appeals. Generally, the Supreme Court retains cases involving issues of first impression and cases involving interpretation of the Constitution, statutes or regulations. The Supreme Court also retains appeals of death penalties, annexations, bar discipline, bond issues, election contests, judicial performance matters, utility rates, and certified questions from federal court.

The Court of Appeals typically hears cases in which the issues are ones of error correction, such as whether the judgment is supported by the evidence or whether the judge correctly ruled on evidentiary challenges. All decisions of the Court of Appeals are subject to discretionary review by the Supreme Court on petition for writ of certiorari. There are nine justices on the Supreme Court and ten judges on the Court of Appeals.

ORGANIZATIONAL CHART
of the
MISSISSIPPI JUDICIARY
in 2020

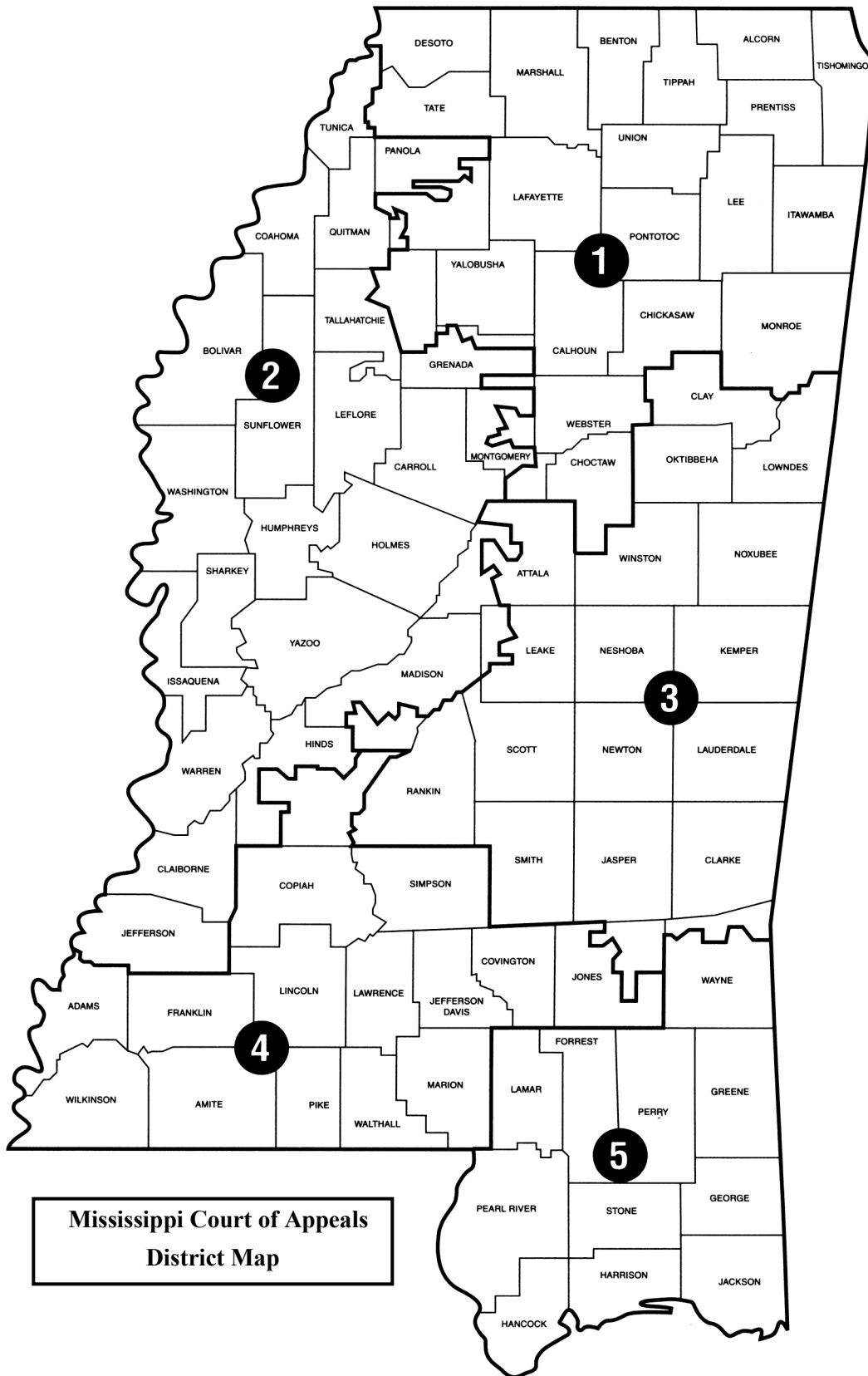


SUPREME COURT DISTRICTS



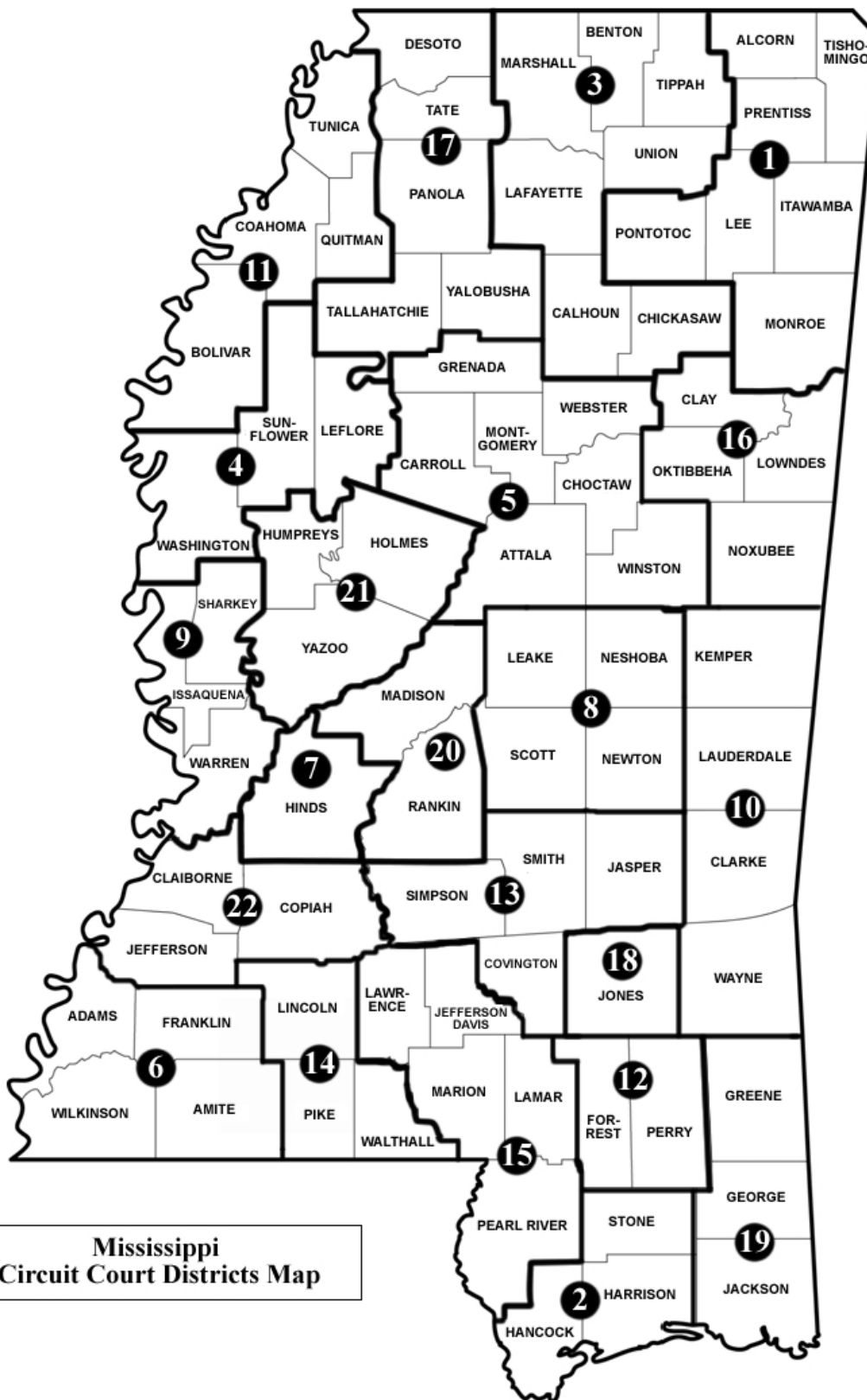
**Mississippi Supreme Court
District Map**
District 1 — Central
District 2 — Southern
District 3 — Northern

COURT OF APPEALS DISTRICTS



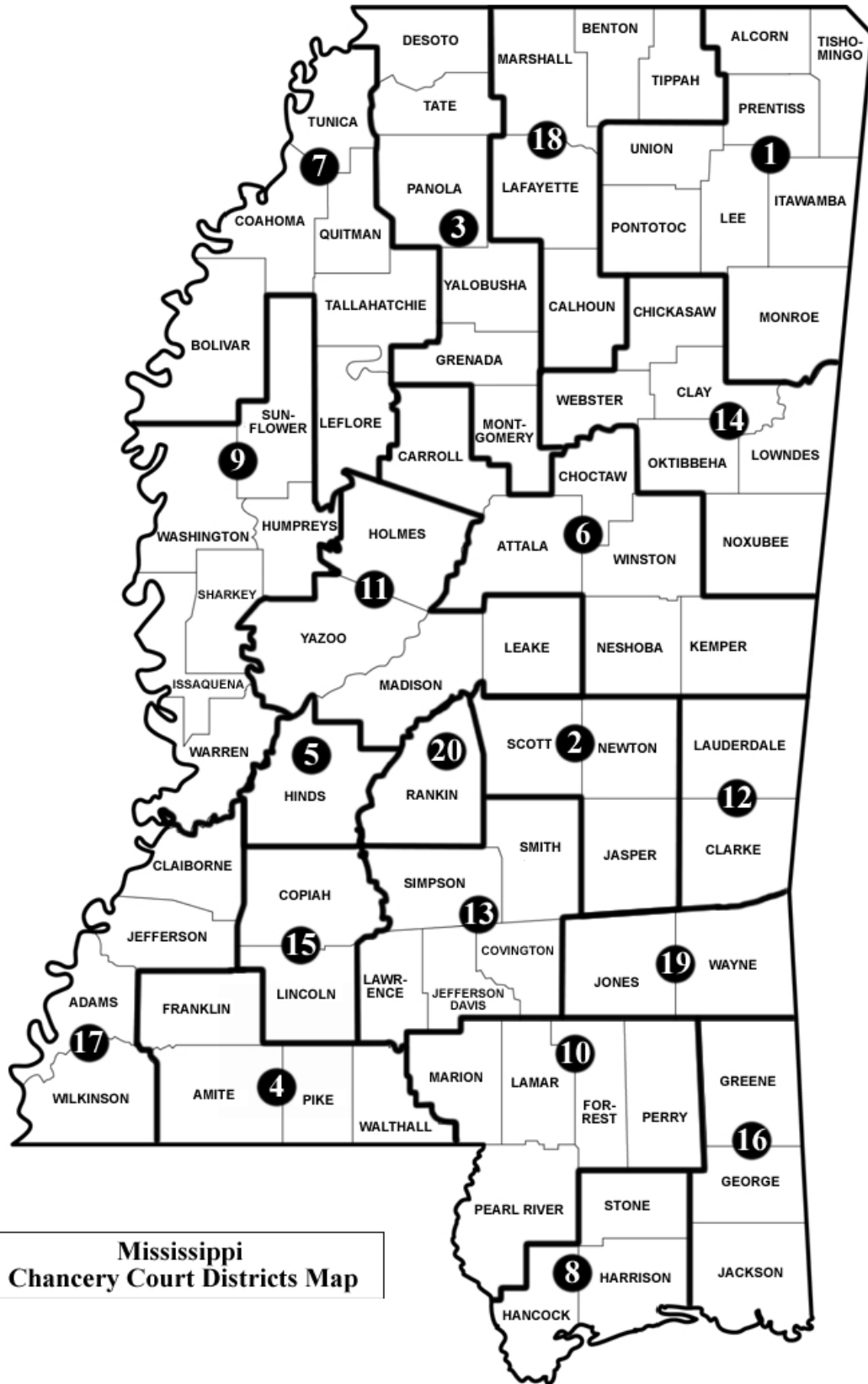
Mississippi Court of Appeals
District Map

CIRCUIT COURT DISTRICTS



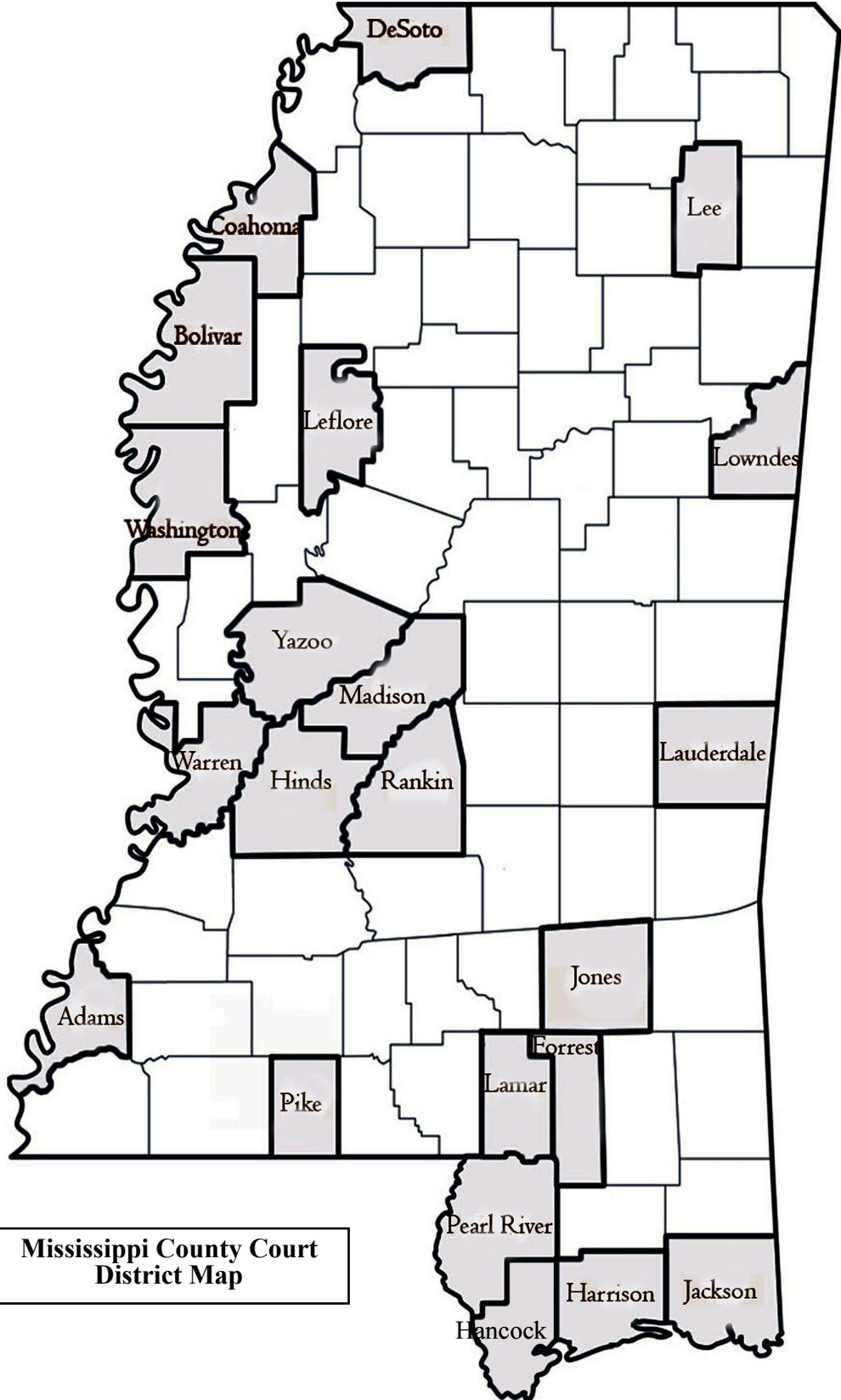
Mississippi
Circuit Court Districts Map

CHANCERY COURT DISTRICTS



Mississippi
Chancery Court Districts Map

COUNTIES WHICH HAVE COUNTY COURTS



Mississippi County Court District Map

FUNDING AND ADMINISTRATION OF THE COURTS

The state judiciary is funded by General Fund appropriations with additional funding for specific mandates by way of grants and special funds.

The total 2021 Fiscal Year appropriation for the judicial branch was \$85,022,319, which consists of \$47,676,181 in general funds, \$280,816 in capital expense funds and \$37,065,322 in special funds. Within the context of General Fund appropriations for all of state government, less than 1 percent of the state's general fund expenditures go to operation of the judicial branch. FY 2021 general fund appropriations for all three branches of state government was \$5,576,886,000.

The General Fund appropriation for the Administrative Office of Courts and all state courts of record, including the Supreme Court, Court of Appeals, 82 circuit courts, 82 chancery courts, and 22 county courts, was \$47,676,181.

The judicial system's largest expenditure is salaries: \$62,312,931, or 73.29 percent of the entire judicial branch budget, including General Fund and Special Fund appropriations.

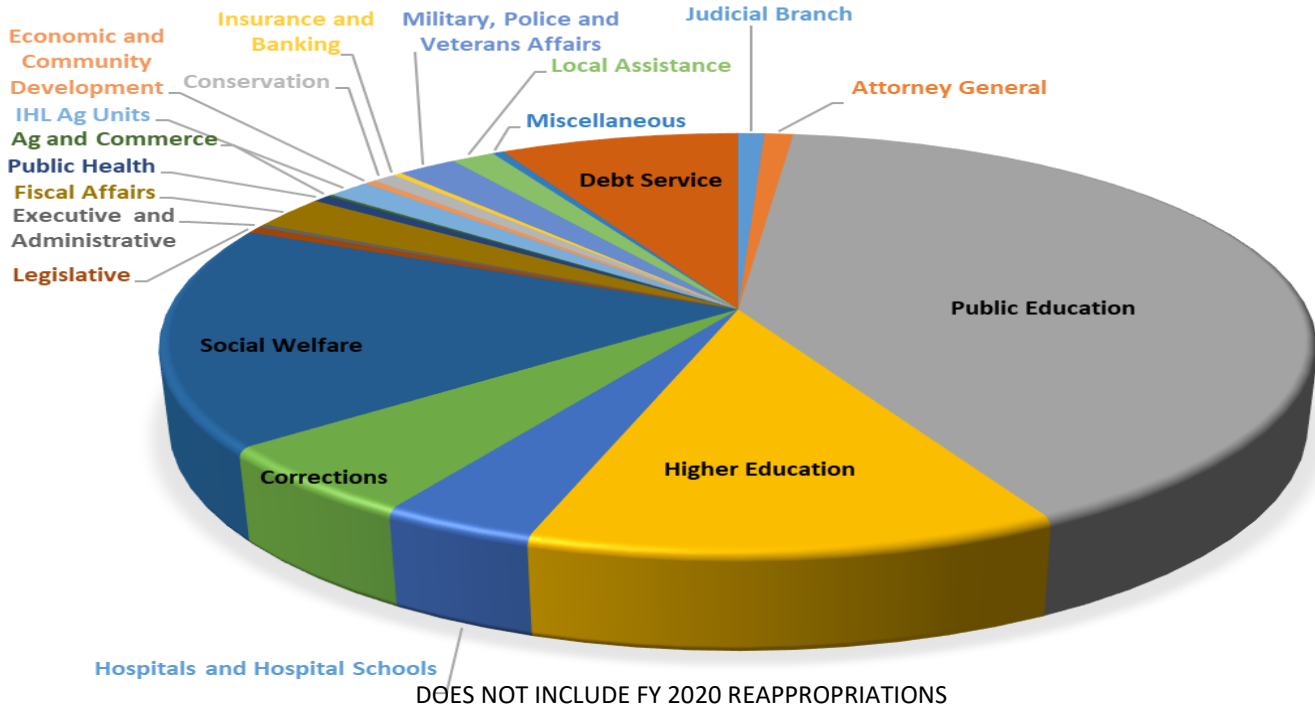
As a result of the difficulties presented by the COVID-19 pandemic, the Judiciary was able to obtain a legislative appropriation of \$2.5 million in CARES Act special funds. Those special funds allowed trial courts to purchase computer equipment, cameras, microphones and other electronics to enable courts to conduct proceedings via remote connections, as well as personal protective equipment, air purifiers and disinfectants. Purchases were approved only for items which were necessary to continue court operations during the pandemic.

Special funds are critical to the work of the judicial branch. Mississippi Electronic Courts, MEC, charges a \$10 annual registration fee for e-filing system users, and viewing fees of 20 cents per page. The viewing fees are shared equally by MEC and the counties. Other judicial branch entities which receive no General Fund appropriations, relying totally on self-sustaining special fund collections, include the Board of Bar Admissions, the Board of Certified Court Reporters, and the Commission on Continuing Legal Education.

Leaders of the judiciary have worked extremely hard to secure adequate funding for the judicial branch of government, while providing an efficient, cost effective system of justice for the people of the state of Mississippi.

JUDICIAL BRANCH FY 2021 BUDGET								
	Supreme Court	Court of Appeals	Trial Judges	Administrative Office of Courts	Continuing Legal Education	Board of Bar Admissions	AOC COVID 19	Totals
Salaries	6,626,931	5,727,250	28,278,022	19,914,083	120,838	185,807	1,460,000	62,312,931
Travel	313,370	166,202	750,583	57,660	13,000	21,500	200,000	1,522,315
Contractual	267,000	93,200	104,700	1,761,856	11,900	100,693	23,800	2,363,149
Commodities	438,052	4,600	1,089,000	166,150	3,600	38,100	-	1,739,502
Equipment	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Subsidies	-	-	-	16,268,222	-	-	816,200	17,084,422
Judicial Branch Appropriation	7,645,353	5,991,252	30,222,305	38,167,971	149,338	346,100	2,500,000	85,022,319
General Funds	6,707,883	4,402,396	26,029,937	10,535,965	-	-	-	47,676,181
Capital Expense Fund	-	-	-	280,816	-	-	-	280,816
Special Funds	937,470	1,588,856	4,192,368	27,351,190	149,338	346,100	2,500,000	37,065,322
Judicial Branch Appropriation	7,645,353	5,991,252	30,222,305	38,167,971	149,338	346,100	2,500,000	85,022,319
No. of PINS	70	58	109	39	2	3	-	281

FY 2021 GENERAL FUND APPROPRIATION



Judicial Branch	47,676,181	0.8549	%
Attorney General	52,382,167	0.9393	%
Total Judiciary and Justice per Legislative Budget Office	100,058,348		
Other:			
Public Education	2,251,825,864	40.3778	%
Higher Education	720,657,745	12.9222	%
Hospitals and Hospital Schools	211,624,656	3.7947	%
Corrections	310,898,986	5.5748	%
Social Welfare	954,659,407	17.1181	%
Legislative	28,513,923	0.5113	%
Executive and Administrative	15,239,250	0.2733	%
Fiscal Affairs	140,059,621	2.5114	%
Public Health	31,552,980	0.5658	%
Ag and Commerce	8,544,052	0.1532	%
IHL Ag Units	79,124,155	1.4188	%
Economic and Community Development	20,106,646	0.3605	%
Conservation	42,965,555	0.7704	%
Insurance and Banking	16,042,284	0.2877	%
Military, Police and Veterans Affairs	109,113,882	1.9565	%
Local Assistance	79,013,472	1.4168	%
Miscellaneous	20,452,350	0.3667	%
Debt Service	436,432,824	7.8257	%
Total Other	5,476,827,652		
Total General Fund Appropriation 2021	5,576,886,000	100	%

FY 2008—FY 2021 JUDICIAL BRANCH SPENDING

Fiscal Year	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Supreme Court	6,453,687	6,546,560	6,191,709	6,504,661	6,688,507	6,804,905	7,088,365	7,266,019	8,982,639	7,658,703	7,418,303	7,512,227	7,678,983	7,645,353
Court of Appeals	5,127,570	5,130,570	4,878,956	5,063,906	5,388,381	5,539,485	5,818,158	6,063,132	6,189,265	5,632,021	5,703,898	5,877,195	6,013,252	5,991,252
Trial Judges	17,406,230	22,799,216	20,811,115	21,451,492	23,446,877	23,776,367	25,482,413	27,195,343	28,346,791	29,762,816	29,762,816	29,950,910	30,353,108	30,222,305
AOC	13,877,210	19,438,559	19,592,868	20,560,547	21,831,819	23,858,746	26,115,394	34,885,208	37,806,442	37,479,253	42,103,854	42,813,752	39,525,722	38,167,971
CLE	125,256	123,978	124,046	139,646	134,968	130,193	135,538	138,651	183,386	144,282	144,282	144,414	149,338	149,338
Bar Admissions	342,680	373,618	373,788	378,088	371,438	351,138	406,515	402,586	401,671	338,493	338,493	338,691	346,100	346,100
AOC CARES Act	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2,500,000
Total	43,332,633	54,412,501	51,972,482	54,098,340	57,861,990	60,460,834	65,046,383	75,950,939	81,910,194	81,015,568	85,471,646	86,637,189	84,066,503	85,022,319

FY 2008—FY 2021 JUDICIAL BRANCH BUDGETS BY FUNDING SOURCES

Fiscal Year	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Special Fund	13,288,817	20,284,966	17,611,903	19,215,654	21,999,397	23,567,580	26,843,343	33,189,718	36,683,401	33,513,116	42,376,804	42,971,615	35,355,322	34,846,138
General	30,043,816	34,127,535	34,360,579	34,882,686	35,862,593	36,893,254	38,203,040	42,761,221	45,226,793	47,502,452	43,094,842	43,665,574	48,711,181	47,676,181
CARES Act														2,500,000
TOTAL	43,332,633	54,412,501	51,972,482	54,098,340	57,861,990	60,460,834	65,046,383	75,950,939	81,910,194	81,015,568	85,471,646	86,637,189	84,066,503	85,022,319

KEEPING COURTS OPEN DURING THE PANDEMIC



COVID –19 affected every aspect of the operation of the Judicial System during 2020. After the President of the United States declared a national emergency on March 13, 2020, court operations in Mississippi became a balancing act of meeting the constitutional mandate of keeping courts open while protecting the health and safety of the judiciary and the public.

Article 3, Section 24 of the Mississippi Constitution says, “All courts shall be open; and every person for an injury done him in his lands, goods, person, or reputation, shall have remedy by due course of law, and right and justice shall be administered without sale, denial, or delay.” From March through December 2020, Chief Justice Mike Randolph in his capacity as chief administrative officer of all courts in the state issued 18 Emergency Administrative Orders, each addressing an aspect of court operations. In the first Emergency Administrative Order, issued on March 13, and in subsequent orders, the Chief Justice emphasized that courts could not simply close their doors. The first Emergency Administrative Order said, “In compliance with the Constitution, all state courts – municipal, justice, county, chancery, circuit, and appellate courts – will remain open for business to ensure courts fulfill their constitutional and statutory duties. See Miss. Const. Art. 3, §§ 24, 25, 26, and 26A. Courts should continue normal business matters as much as possible.”

Limiting the number of people in court facilities was among the first preventative steps. The Chief Justice followed the evolving guidelines issued by the Center for Disease Control and the State Health Officer. An initial limitation of gatherings to no more than 200 people soon dropped to no more than 10. All court proceedings were ordered to be limited to attorneys, parties, witnesses, security officers, members of the press, and other necessary persons, as determined by the trial judge.

Individual judges were given discretion to control their dockets in a manner that took into consideration local conditions. Trial judges were authorized to exercise their sound discretion in extending deadlines, rescheduling hearings and trials and any other matters by case specific actions or by general orders.

Technology was crucial to keeping trial court dockets moving. However, as reliance on technology increased, many courts around the state struggled with inadequate equipment. CARES Act funds enabled courts to make electronic upgrades. Just over \$3 million in CARES Act funds were approved for equipment and materials purchases that included computers, switchers, cameras, microphones and other electronics to enable courts to conduct proceedings via remote connections. Some courts also used CARES Act funds to buy air purifiers, personal protective equipment and disinfectants.

The Legislature provided \$2.5 million in CARES Act funding to the Judiciary via House Bill 1728, and the Governor provided an additional \$2.5 million through Senate Bill 3053. The original federal guidelines for the expenditure of CARES Act Funds stated that the monies had to be obligated by Dec. 30, 2020. However, extensions allowed some of the funds to be carried over to 2021. The Judiciary spent \$1,469,516.11 of the legislatively appropriated \$2.5 million from HB1728. The Judiciary returned to the Department of Finance and Administration the unobligated balance of \$1,030,483.89. The Judiciary spent or obligated with the expectation of spending \$864,992.80 of the Governor’s \$2.5 million provided through Senate Bill 3053. The Judiciary has \$1,635,007.20 remaining of those funds, and has until December 2021 to obligate those funds.

Jury trials were delayed for months. In March, courts were authorized to delay trials and the issuance of jury summonses for a month. As the rate of infection increased, trial delays were extended. The Supreme Court examined epidemiological data in its efforts to resume jury trials. Emergency Administrative Order 11, issued by the Supreme Court on May 7, 2020, authorized trial courts in 41 counties with two or fewer COVID-19 deaths to summons jury pools to report on or after May 18.

Panola County was the first to resume trials. Circuit Judge Smith Murphey tried a case June 1 and 2 in Panola County Circuit Court at the Batesville Civic Center.

One of the obstacles in getting trial dockets moving was providing safe social distancing for the large number of people needed to select a jury. Trial judges and boards of supervisors looked to larger alternative locations, temporarily designating civic centers, coliseums, arenas and gymnasiums as courthouses.

Warren County Circuit Judge M. James Chaney Jr. in June moved jury selection to the Vicksburg City Auditorium, then conducted trials at the Warren County Courthouse.

A jury trial was moved to the Iuka Middle School gymnasium after Circuit Judge Kelly Mims and the Tishomingo



County Board of Supervisors found the courtroom of the Tishomingo County Courthouse to be too small to safely accommodate a large crowd during jury selection. Circuit Judge John R. White tried a case in the Crossroads Arena in Corinth in July. In Lee County, Judge Mims conducted jury selection at The Link Center in Tupelo in late September, then conducted the remainder of the trial of a civil case at the Lee County Justice Center. The former Tad's Pizza Party, a large open commercial space in downtown Corinth, was used by Judge Mims and Circuit Judge Michael P. Mills for two Alcorn County Circuit court trials in October 2020.

Jones County Circuit Court Judge Dal Williamson conducted six trials at South Central Place in Laurel — two each in October, November and December. South Central Regional Medical Center owns the facility, which formerly was a Walmart.

Hinds, Madison and Rankin counties went six months without jury trials. Hinds County did jury qualification at The Westin hotel in August. The Canton Multipurpose Center lived up to its name on Sept. 8 as the venue for the selection of a Madison County Circuit Court jury. The trial moved to the Circuit Courthouse on Sept. 9. In Rankin County, jury qualifying was conducted at the Brandon Municipal Complex on Sept. 8.

Circuit Judge Lillie Blackmon Sanders conducted two trials at the Natchez Convention Center, and Judge Debra W. Blackwell held a trial at the Natchez City Auditorium.

With criminal defendants raising speedy trial demands, criminal cases took priority. But judges also pushed to move their civil dockets. Circuit Judge Lisa P. Dodson tried a five-day civil case at the Hancock County Courthouse in Bay St. Louis starting Aug. 18. If the case had not gone forward, the next available trial setting would have been a year later.



Judges of the Second Circuit conducted jury

selection at the courthouses. Fitting jurors and participants safely into available space meant adding seats to jury boxes and marking seats. In the civil trial in Hancock County Circuit Court, Judge Dodson separated prospective jurors into two groups and did jury qualification in two different courtrooms so that people could maintain six feet of separation.

Keeping sick people out of courthouses was paramount. From the outset, the Chief Justice ordered that prospective jurors who recently traveled to areas with a high concentration of confirmed coronavirus cases, who had been diagnosed with an illness, or who were primary caregivers for a vulnerable person who has been diagnosed with an illness must contact the court by telephone before reporting for jury duty. The Chief Justice on May 7 in Emergency Administrative Order 11 directed that all jury summonses must include a separate document that would alert prospective jurors of recognized grounds for juror excuse and address excuses related to COVID-19. Prospective jurors and others with business in court were screened with temperature checks. Hand sanitizer and masks were made available to those who didn't bring those with them. On July 23, Chief Justice Randolph ordered that masks be worn in all courtrooms in the state.

Delays caused by COVID-19 created a backlog for many courts. Chief Justice Randolph obtained CARES Act funding to pay for special judges assist trial judges in working through the backlog. Between July and October 2020, Chief Justice Randolph appointed 14 senior status judges to preside as special judges to help clear COVID-related backlogs. Appointments included eight special judges to assist the Hinds Chancery, Circuit and County courts and special judges to assist the 8th Circuit Court in Leake, Neshoba, Newton and Scott counties; the 16th Chancery Court in Jackson, George and Green counties; the 21st Circuit Court in Holmes, Humphreys and Yazoo counties; the Warren County Court and Youth Court; the Forrest County Court and Youth Court; and the Harrison County Youth Court.

Intervention Courts

Intervention Courts, formerly known as drug courts, have been in existence in Mississippi for 21 years. The first felony drug court program began in the 14th Circuit Court in 1999, followed by the 7th Circuit Court of Hinds County in 2000. At the end of the 2020 fiscal year in June, 42 programs were operating, and two programs were implemented in August 2020, bringing the total to 44. There are 22 adult felony drug intervention court programs – one in each of the 22 Circuit Court districts. There are four adult misdemeanor intervention court programs, 15 juvenile intervention courts and three family intervention courts.

The newest programs are the juvenile intervention courts in the Chancery Courts of Humphreys and Sunflower counties and the Yazoo County Youth Court. Chancellor Debra Giles presides over Youth Courts and the new Drug Intervention Courts in Humphreys and Sunflower counties. Youth Court Judge Betsy Cotton leads the new program in Yazoo County.

Intervention courts provide an enormous savings to the state budget. Avoided incarceration costs for intervention court participants amounted to an estimated net savings of \$60.6 million during the 2020 fiscal year. Since FY 2008, net savings amounted to an estimated \$531,370,666.

With requirement that participants pay all their fines and fees, intervention courts also return money to the counties by collecting fines. Participants are unable to graduate until outstanding fines and fees are paid in full. Total fines collected for FY2020 was \$1,427,978, and the total fees collected was \$1,972,668. Annual fine collections ranged from \$1.1 million to \$1.5 million during the past five years.

The Administrative Office of Courts General Fund appropriated budget for intervention courts during FY2020 was \$6.5 million for the 42 intervention courts operating as of the end of the fiscal year -- the same level of funding as was provided in FY 2019. The Legislature appropriated an additional \$250,000 for the new drug intervention courts.

The Legislature also appropriated \$540,000 in one-time funding for the purchase of a new case management system to replace an outdated case management system used since 2006. The new case management system, CASEWORX, went live December 30, 2020, after 14 months of work. The new system is designed to handle drug intervention, veterans intervention and mental health intervention courts. The system is expected to improve case tracking and provide more and better data.

Recidivism is a key measure of the success of intervention courts. Only 2.6% of active intervention court participants were charged with a new crime in FY2020. Data shows 122 participants were charged with new crimes while under the supervision of an intervention court in FY 2020, and 38 people were convicted of new crimes.

Each of the intervention court participants marked personal successes: 656 graduated from an intervention court program after having spent as long as three years under court supervision; 427 obtained employment, working to support their families; 75 received their high school equivalency degree; 311 had their criminal records expunged, which means they can qualify for better paying jobs. DUIs cannot be expunged.

A long-term benefit is the 58 drug-free babies born to intervention court participants.. The value of a healthy child is priceless. As for savings to state government, according to a study conducted by the Bureau of Justice Statistics, each healthy, drug-free infant saves the state an average of \$750,000 during the first 18 years of life. The 58 drug free babies born during the past year represent an estimated savings of \$43.5 million in avoided health care costs.

During the past eight fiscal years, intervention courts graduated 6,334 people. Other marks of their successes include:

- 534 attended vocational schools;
- 750 attended traditional schools;
- 1,375 attended post-secondary schools;
- 517 earned GEDs;
- 4,385 gained employment;
- 1,272 obtained driver licenses;
- 577 drug-free babies were born.

Drug Intervention Court Data		
	FY 2019	FY 2020
Total drug intervention court programs	40	42
Total people served by drug intervention courts statewide during year	5292	4934
Total drug intervention court graduates	859	656
Successfully completed and received expungement	N/A	311
Felony adult program graduates	658	433
Misdemeanor adult program graduates	54	52
Juvenile court program graduates	152	139
Family court program graduates	28	32
Total left program before completion	616	473
Charged with new offense while in program	187	122
Convicted of new crime	22	38
Drug-free babies born to participants	52	58
Participants who earned GED or high school equivalency certificate	147	75
Obtained employment	858	427
Fines collected and returned to county general funds	\$1,571,619.78	\$1,427,978
Fees paid by participants	\$2,057,337.15	\$1,972,668
Hours of community service work by participants	30,794.75	23,438.75

FY2020	Intervention Court Program Data							
Adult Felony	Enrolled first day FY2020 July 1, 2019	Enrolled last day FY2020 June 30, 2020	Total new participants in the year	Successful completions in the year	Number who left before successful completion	Number who committed at least one violation	Number arrested for new offense	Number convicted of new crime
1st Circuit	277	259	62	38	39	377	0	4
2nd Circuit	125	97	38	30	29	201	6	1
3rd Circuit	334	324	88	59	30	469	6	0
4th Circuit	116	100	33	29	18	214	13	0
5th Circuit	62	67	18	1	12	74	0	0
6th Circuit	110	114	20	7	1	80	13	9
7th Circuit	167	166	35	19	14	332	11	3
8th Circuit	330	332	69	40	33	55	0	1
9th Circuit	76	92	47	2	6	40	4	1
10th Circuit	66	44	17	30	6	66	3	0
11th Circuit	71	69	15	7	5	93	2	2
12th Circuit	181	192	38	15	11	134	0	0
13th Circuit	51	52	14	6	9	52	0	0
14th Circuit	223	237	46	0	21	171	1	0
15th Circuit	204	245	77	3	5	258	3	0
16th Circuit	49	64	29	6	9	23	3	1
17th Circuit	385	407	101	48	31	248	3	0
18th Circuit	72	85	36	10	9	94	0	0
19th Circuit	202	171	34	30	35	209	3	5
20th Circuit	140	166	71	26	16	172	3	1
21st Circuit	40	34	1	9	2	23	0	0
22nd Circuit	32	27	15	18	5	37	0	1
Total	3313	3344	904	433	346	3422	74	29
Adult Misdemeanor	Enrolled first day FY2020 July 1, 2019	Enrolled last day FY2020 June 30, 2020	Total new participants in the year	Successful completions in the year	Number who left before successful completion	Number who committed at least one violation	Number arrested for new offense	Number convicted of new crime
Columbus Mun.	53	40	19	29	4	32	2	0
Greenwood Mun.	34	30	31	19	5	68	0	0
Hinds Co. Justice	27	31	12	4	5	107	0	0
Indianola Mun.	N/A	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	114	101	62	52	14	207	2	0

The Legislature’s adoption of Mississippi Code Section 9-25-1, effective July 1, 2014, authorized the Veterans Treatment Court Program to provide special services for military veterans. The Legislature authorized the creation of mental health intervention courts in 2017 with changes to Mississippi Code Sections 9-27-1 et. seq. The AOC was authorized to oversee the program. However, no funds were appropriated for operations or oversight, and Mississippi has limited access to federally regulated medically assisted treatment facilities. The 2019 Legislature, as part of the Criminal Justice Reform Act, authorized creation of intervention courts to include veterans drug intervention and mental health intervention courts. Funding was not included in the legislation.

To date, only three special programs for military veterans operate under the direction of the 1st Circuit, 12th Circuit and 19th Circuit intervention courts. The veterans treatment courts address problems unique to veterans and provide retired military veteran mentors. The programs take into account that veterans who suffer from drug and alcohol dependency or addiction and co-occurring mental illness and substance abuse problems may also suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder, traumatic brain injury and depression and other issues related to their military service.

FY2020	Intervention Court Program Data							
Youth	Enrolled first day FY2020 July 1, 2019	Enrolled last day FY2020 June 30, 2020	Total new participants in the year	Successful completions in the year	Number who left before successful completion	Number who committed at least one violation	Number arrested for new offense	Number convicted of new crime
3rd Chancery	39	37	26	12	16	240	0	0
6th Chancery	10	3	1	3	6	1	0	1
Adams	24	20	12	3	12	117	1	0
DeSoto	50	41	48	38	16	16	1	0
Forrest	10	8	3	2	2	41	11	0
Harrison	24	19	29	24	10	64	4	0
Hinds	N/A	2	3	0	1	1	1	1
Jackson	16	14	13	6	3	61	0	1
Madison	37	35	24	21	10	59	8	2
Pike	7	3	2	2	2	32	1	1
Rankin	38	24	20	24	10	201	15	2
Walthall	9	7	5	3	3	11	2	1
Washington	6	3	2	1	3	35	2	0
Total	270	216	188	139	94	879	46	9
Family	Enrolled first day FY2020 July 1, 2019	Enrolled last day FY2020 June 30, 2020	Total new participants in the year	Successful completions in the year	Number who left before successful completion	Number who committed at least one violation	Number arrested for new offense	Number convicted of new crime
Adams Family DC	14	16	13	6	6	51	0	0
Harrison Family DC	7	9	24	12	9	44	0	0
Rankin Family DC	19	7	6	14	4	31	0	0
Total	40	32	43	32	19	126	0	0
All Courts	Enrolled first day FY2020 July 1, 2019	Enrolled last day FY2020 June 30, 2020	Total new participants in the year	Successful completions in the year	Number who left before successful completion	Number who committed at least one violation	Number arrested for new offense	Number convicted of new crime
Total for All Courts	3737	3693	1197	656	473	4634	122	38

State Intervention Courts Advisory Committee

The State Drug Courts Advisory Committee was established by the Mississippi Legislature in 2003 to develop and periodically update proposed statewide evaluation plans and models for monitoring all critical aspects of drug courts. The Advisory Committee is now known as the State Intervention Courts Advisory Committee.

The Advisory Committee may make recommendations for improvements to drug intervention court policies and procedures including the drug intervention court certification process. The committee may make suggestions as to the criteria for eligibility and other procedural and substantive guidelines for intervention court operations. The Advisory Committee sets funding formulas for drug intervention courts and shall act as arbiter of disputes arising out of the operation of drug intervention courts established under Mississippi Code Section 9-23-9. It shall also make recommendations to the Supreme Court necessary and incident to compliance with established rules.

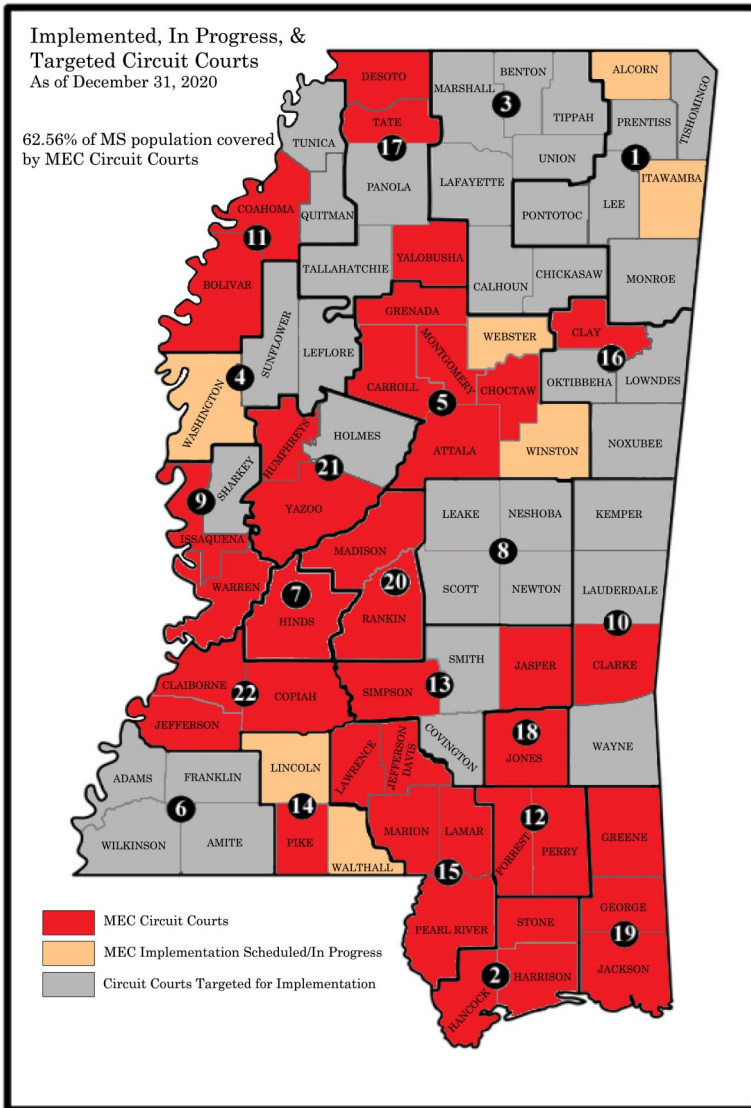
Members of the Advisory Committee in 2020 were Justice Robert Chamberlin, committee chair as designee of the Director of the Administrative Office of Courts; 3rd Circuit Judge Andrew K. Howorth; 7th Circuit Judge Winston Kidd; 11th Circuit Judge Charles Webster; 12th Circuit Judge Robert Helfrich; 14th Circuit Judge Mike Taylor; Jackson County Court Judge Sharon Sigalas; Rep Angela Cockerham; Christy Gutherz, Mississippi Department of Corrections Deputy Commissioner of Community Corrections; and Melody Madaris, Director of Substance Abuse and EAP Services at Communicare, Region II. Judge Howorth and Ms. Gutherz retired in 2020. The Supreme Court appointed 19th Circuit Judge Robert Krebs and Mississippi Department of Corrections Deputy Commissioner Gary Young to the Advisory Committee effective Jan. 1, 2021. Advisory Committee members are appointed by the Supreme Court to two-year terms.

Mississippi Electronic Courts

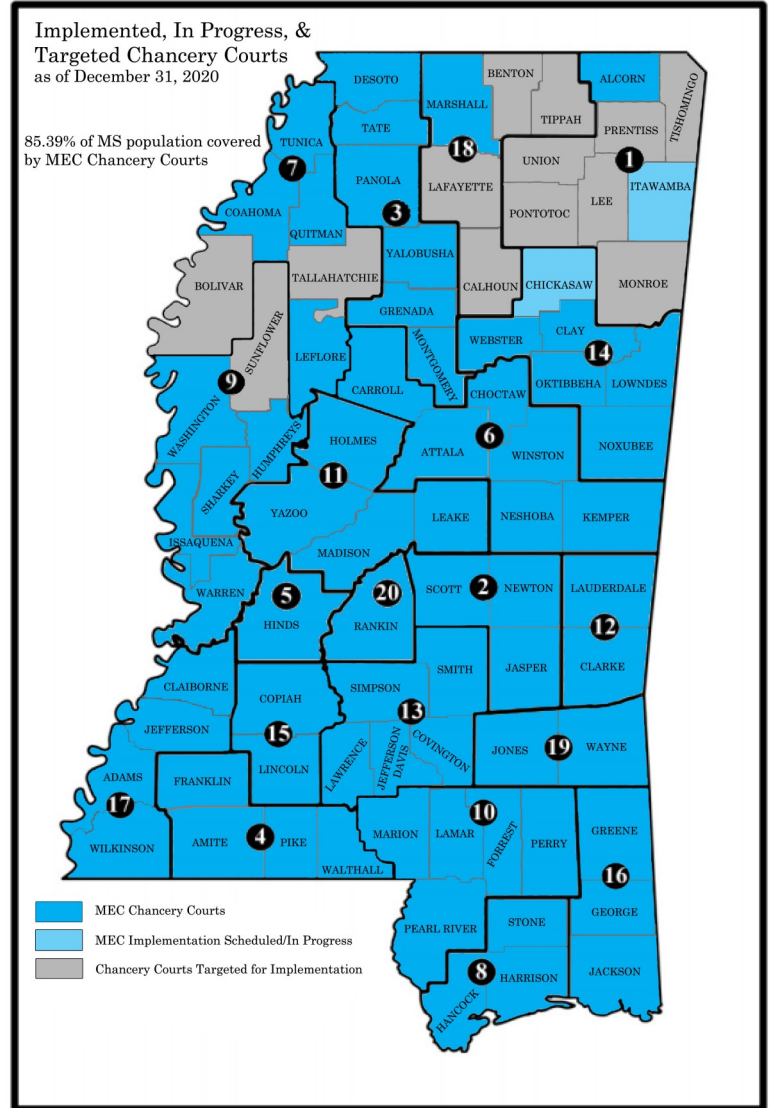
The Mississippi Electronic Courts system, MEC, under the supervision of the Mississippi Supreme Court, is adapted from the electronic filing and case management system used in federal courts. MEC allows courts to file, store and manage case files in an electronic format which is accessible via the Internet to judges, court staff, attorneys, and the public 24 hours a day.

On June 30, 2020, Gov. Tate Reeves signed House Bill 25, which mandates use of the MEC system in all Chancery, Circuit, and County Courts in the state. MEC continues to bring new courts onto the system with the support of the new law.

Mississippi Circuit Courts MEC Implementation Map



Mississippi Chancery Courts MEC Implementation Map



The coronavirus pandemic created challenges for MEC. In-person training programs were re-engineered and taken completely online. MEC was able to continue bringing on new courts in 2020 by providing remote training to court staff, judges, and attorneys. Eleven new Circuit Courts and four new County Courts were brought onto the system. Also, one Circuit and one County court which had previously used MEC only for civil filings implemented criminal case filing in MEC. At the end of 2020, the MEC system was utilized in 67 Chancery Courts that cover 85.39 percent of the state's population, 39 Circuit Courts that cover 62.56 percent of the population, and 16 County Courts. A total of 122 out of the 186 Chancery, Circuit, and County courts were online and being supported by MEC.

The MEC judgment roll pilot program began in October 2019 in the 15th Circuit Court District and continued throughout 2020. Courts of the 15th Circuit provided valuable feedback to MEC, which contributed greatly to the completion of the MEC judgment roll program. In late 2020, the MEC judgment roll was deployed to the first production paper court, Yalobusha Circuit. The first courts with judgment roll legacy system migrations will begin using the MEC judgment roll in the first quarter of 2021.

Courts which implemented MEC in 2020	Date went live
Pike Circuit and County Courts, civil and criminal	1/27/2020
Madison Circuit and County Courts, criminal	2/24/2020
Carroll Circuit Court, civil and criminal	6/22/2020
Copiah Circuit court, civil and criminal Completed MEC district-wide for 22 nd Circuit	7/6/2020
Forrest Circuit and County Courts, civil and criminal Completed MEC district-wide for 12 th Circuit	7/27/2020
Clarke Circuit Court, civil and criminal	8/17/2020
Bolivar Circuit and County Courts, civil and criminal	8/31/2020
Yalobusha Circuit Court, civil and criminal	9/28/2020
Choctaw Circuit Court, civil and criminal	10/12/2020
Coahoma Circuit and County Courts, civil and criminal	10/26/2020
Grenada Circuit Court, civil and criminal	11/23/2020
Montgomery Circuit Court, civil and criminal	12/14/2020

The MEC system is funded solely through civil filing fees, user fees to access documents, and renewal fees. MEC had 7,932 registered attorney users and 8,217 non-attorney users at the end of 2020. Since inception, MEC has generated usage fees totaling \$2,826,539.20, including \$1,548,561.80 from Chancery Courts and \$1,277,977.40 from Circuit Courts. Online page viewing fees are divided equally between the county clerks of the court and MEC.

Information Technology

The Information Technology Division of the Supreme Court and the Administrative Office of Courts consists of a small staff of software developers, systems administrators, business systems analysts/trainers, and a webmaster. Their responsibilities include the purchase, installation and maintenance of all computer and network equipment in the appellate courts and some trial courts; development, training, and support of several software systems including but not limited to the appellate court case management system CITS/Acadia, the appellate court e-filing system, the statewide Youth Court case management system MYCIDS, the AOC statistical system SCATS, the Board of Bar Admissions online bar exam application system BarWeb; and the design and maintenance of the State of Mississippi Judiciary website.

The COVID-19 pandemic created numerous technical and logistical challenges. In March 2020, the Court Complex faced an immediate need for additional portable equipment for remote access in order to be able to keep the appellate court open for business while adhering to CDC recommended health and safety protocols. IT worked quickly with the Finance Division and technology vendors to economically procure quality laptops, mobile printers and other peripherals. A nationwide surge in demand combined with limited distribution from overseas manufacturers made finding these items for purchase a difficult task. Over the next few weeks and weekends, the IT conference room became the emergency remote equipment deployment center as more than 100 new Work From Home kits were issued. Many other existing laptops were repurposed or upgraded.

Most Information Technology employees also began working remotely from home, while continuing all ongoing software development projects as well as providing phone, email, and remote access helpdesk support. Minimal systems administration staff came into the office on rotation for on-hand helpdesk support while following all recommended COVID-19 health and safety protocols. Electronic orders became more widely adopted in the appellate courts during



the pandemic as well. In 2020, 1,790 orders were e-signed, compared to only 605 the year before.

Development of ACADIA, the Appellate Case and Docket Information App, continued in 2020 with several releases focused on Clerk's Office functions as well as limited releases for Court Administration and Central Legal attorneys. In 2021, IT plans to expand ACADIA releases to include functionality for the Supreme Court and Court of Appeals chambers.

Mississippi Youth Court Information Delivery System (MYCIDS)

The Mississippi Youth Court Information Delivery System, MYCIDS, is a technology program designed to help Youth Courts organize work and records efficiently and save staff time and resources. MYCIDS includes electronic docketing and record keeping for delinquency, abuse and neglect cases. Case tracking features assist court staff in scheduling all hearings and

other events required by law to occur within a specific time. Judges and court staff are able to track juveniles' encounters with multiple jurisdictions. Computer hardware, staff training and a help desk are provided at no charge to local courts.

Legislative mandate and the *In re Olivia Y.* lawsuit require extensive and continuous training. Training must continue year round to keep up with the high turnover rate of social workers. MYCIDS staff provided 39 training events in 2020. Onsite and online training sessions totaling 516 hours were conducted in 39 counties. The MYCIDS team also gave online presentations for the Youth Court Judges and Referee's conference.

In 2020, MYCIDS training sessions moved from the usual weeklong regional seminars in various youth courts to online teleconferences. Two new staff members were added to the MYCIDS team in 2020: an additional programmer analyst and trainer business systems analyst were hired in November to assist in future software development projects, training, and support.

Court Interpreter Credentialing Program

The Administrative Office of Courts provides all state courts with a list of language interpreters who have demonstrated proficiency in oral and written interpretation of court proceedings.

AOC adopted Standards for Court Interpreters and a Code of Ethics for Court Interpreters on Oct. 17, 2011. AOC developed the Mississippi Court Interpreter Credentialing Program to assist courts in efforts to provide equal access to justice for limited English proficiency individuals. The program provides judges with a list of language interpreters who have demonstrated proficiency in oral and written interpretation of court proceedings. The rules for court interpreters apply to Municipal Court, Justice Court, Youth Court, County Court, Circuit Court, Chancery Court and grand jury proceedings.

Court interpreters must understand court proceedings and be fluent in English and a second language. AOC during 2020 conducted two seminars in Jackson to introduce bilingual speakers to the requirements for court interpreting. Seminars introduced interpreting in legal settings including the courtroom, depositions and other legal proceedings. Attendance at a seminar is the first step in the program which will train, certify, and test individuals who wish to serve as court interpreters. There are two levels of proficiency: registered and certified. Eleven interpreters are certified, and 15 are registered. Certified interpreters have passed all examinations and criteria promulgated by the AOC for certification. Registered interpreters have begun the credentialing process and are waiting to take the oral performance examination.

Twenty-six credentialed language interpreters were available to assist trial courts across the state at the end of 2020. They included 23 Spanish speakers, one Arabic speaker, one Mandarin Chinese speaker, and one who speaks Portuguese. There is a need for Vietnamese speakers, but none have been credentialed yet. Interpreters live in Bay St. Louis, Biloxi, Clinton, French Camp, Gulfport, Hazlehurst, Meridian, Newton, Ocean Springs, Oxford, Pass Christian, Pontotoc, Ridgeland, Tupelo and Vicksburg as well as Cordova, Goodlettsville, Memphis and Nashville, Tenn., and New Orleans.

Mississippi Access to Justice Commission

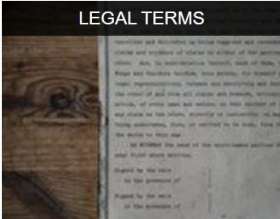



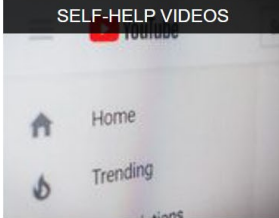
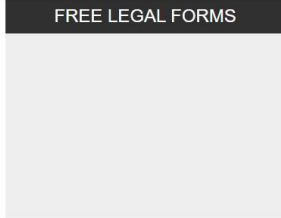

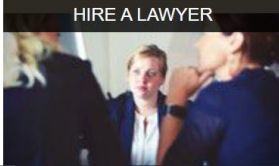
The Mississippi Supreme Court created the Access to Justice Commission on June 28, 2006, to develop a unified strategy to improve access to the civil courts for the poor. The Commission is tasked with investigating the need for civil legal services to the poor in Mississippi, and evaluating, developing and recommending policies, programs and initiatives that will

assist the judiciary in meeting needs for civil legal services to the poor. The Commission is made up of 21 voting members and 15 ex-officio members. Co-Chairs are Chancery Judge Jacqueline Mask of Tupelo and former Mississippi Bar President Rodger Wilder of Gulfport. Nicole McLaughlin of Tupelo is executive director.

The Commission was awarded the 2020 American Bar Association E. Smythe Gambrell Professionalism Award on October 3, 2020, in a virtual awards ceremony. The Commission shared the award with the Mississippi Bar for work on the statewide legal clinics conducted during the two previous years. One of the Commission's primary objectives is to expand and improve the state's civil legal services delivery system.

After providing very successful free family law clinics across the state in 2018 and 2019, the COVID-19 pandemic forced the Commission, the Mississippi Volunteer Lawyers Project, Chancery Courts and local bar associations to cancel most in-person free legal clinics in 2020. The Commission conducted *pro se* clinics in all First Chancery District courts of Alcorn, Itawamba, Lee, Monroe, Prentiss, Pontotoc, Tishomingo and Union counties

[Self Representation Resources](#)

and assisted with an expungement and reentry fair in Bolivar County. Most legal clinics were virtual presentations. Before restrictions on large gatherings went into effect, the Commission conducted a GAP Act CLE in Tupelo to discuss new statutes for guardianships and conservatorships and co-sponsored an immigration CLE for attorneys in Tupelo.

The Commission worked diligently to assist the courts, clerks, legal aid community and the public during the COVID-19 pandemic. The Commission hosted weekly Zoom meetings for legal aid providers and provided information through frequent social media posts. As virtual visitation replaced in-person visits for children under the supervision of the Youth Court system, the Commission provided a guide of low cost internet and cellular phone services.

With in-person presentations curtailed, the Commission intensified efforts to provide resources which could be delivered by means of its website, <http://www.msatjc.org>, and as printed handouts. The Mississippi Department of Human Services, the Commission and the University of Mississippi School of Law worked together to produce a series of self-help videos. The videos are intended to assist individuals represented by counsel and self-represented litigants prepare for court and navigate the legal system. The videos were filmed in February 2020 and distributed in spring 2020. The videos are accessible on the Commission's website and are available as links on other provider and partner websites. Titles include:

- Representing Yourself: How to file a lawsuit;
- Steps to Schedule Your Day in Court;
- What is a Subpoena:
- Getting Documents and Witnesses to Court;
- How to Dress for Court;
- Your Day in Court: What to Expect;
- Testimony: Telling Your Side of the Story;
- This is Not TV: What Court is Really Like.

To address legal problems which were exacerbated by the pandemic, the Commission partnered with the Mississippi Center for Justice to produce videos on eviction law for self-represented litigants. The videos are available at <http://www.msatjc.org/self-help-videos>. Topics include:

- COVID-19 Eviction Issues;
- Facing Eviction for Breach of Lease;
- Facing Eviction for Nonpayment of Rent;
- Repairs by Tenants: When the Landlord Fails to Make Repairs;
- Security Deposits;
- The Federal Fair Housing Act.

The Commission began work on videos to assist parents in the Youth Court system. Production is expected in early 2021. The Commission also worked with the Commission on Children's Justice to produce Parents' Rights pamphlets for Youth Court. The Commission on Children's Justice paid for printing 20,000 pamphlets. The Access to Justice Commission paid for the postage to distribute the pamphlets to courts, Department of Child Protection Services staff, parent representation attorneys and legal aid providers.

Pro se litigants struggle to understand and comply with court rules. The Commission worked with a law student from Mississippi College School of Law to complete "An Overview of the Mississippi Rules of Evidence" pamphlet. The Commission created resource cards for court clerks and librarians to hand out to patrons who need legal assistance. A survey of self-represented litigants was begun to determine resources they are using and other resources that could be helpful.

The Commission added a new page on www.msatjc.org to provide resources and information for judges, court clerks and court staff. Information includes bench cards, COVID-19 signs, the Pro-Bono Toolkit and clerks' can/cannot handouts. The Commission also worked with its website developer to update the www.expungemississippi.com website.

The Commission partnered with Disability Rights MS to create a pilot program to complete disability access site evaluations of courthouses across the state. The pilot began in the First Chancery District and is expected to expand.

Civil Legal Assistance Fund

YEAR	DISTRIBUTION AMOUNT
2004	\$115,000.00
2005	\$230,000.00
2006	\$145,000.00
2007	\$280,000.00
2008	\$774,663.00
2009	\$887,000.00
2010	\$800,000.00
2011	\$753,000.00
2012	\$662,500.00
2013	\$594,119.09
2014	\$597,480.76
2015	\$797,192.69
2016	\$785,254.03
2017	\$727,075.77
2018	\$717,325.07
2019	\$742,295.55
2020	\$757,013.14
TOTAL	\$10,364,919.10

The Supreme Court in Fiscal Year 2020 distributed \$757,013.14 for civil legal assistance to low income people. The funds are provided to the Mississippi Volunteer Lawyers Project, North Mississippi Rural Legal Services and the Mississippi Center for Legal Services. Funds are disbursed quarterly. Civil Legal Assistance Fund distributions are paid from special assessments on court filings and from fees charged to out-of-state attorneys appearing *pro hac vice*.

The Supreme Court added the Access to Justice Commission to those entities receiving funding on May 10, 2018. The Court directed the Mississippi Bar to retain one-third of *pro hac vice* fees to be used by the Access to Justice Commission, and to forward two-thirds to the Administrative Office of Courts for the Civil Legal Assistance Fund. The two Legal Services entities, North Mississippi Rural Legal Services and the Mississippi Center for Legal Services, collectively receive one-third, and MVLP receives one-third.

Since the Civil Legal Assistance Fund was created in 2004, more than \$10.3 million has been disbursed to help poor people to gain access to the legal system.

The Civil Legal Assistance Fund provides much needed assistance to promote access to the courts for low income people. There aren't enough Legal Services lawyers to handle the estimated 200,000 to 250,000 people who need legal aid each year but can't afford it. MVLP takes some of the cases referred by Legal Services. Legal Services offices are funded primarily by federal appropriations to the Legal Services Corporation. Money provided through the Civil Legal Assistance Fund is a significant supplement to Legal Services providers.

Commission on Children’s Justice

The Mississippi Supreme Court charged the Commission on Children’s Justice with developing a statewide comprehensive approach to improving the child welfare system; coordinating the three branches of government in assessing the impact of government actions on children who are abused or neglected; and recommending changes to improve children’s safety, strengthen and support families and promote public trust and confidence in the child welfare system. Co-chairs are Supreme Court Justice Dawn Beam, 10th District Chancellor Rhea Shelton and Rankin County Youth Court Judge Thomas Broome.

Collaborative efforts between the Department of Child Protection Services and the courts, with assistance from national and community partners, have moved Mississippi toward systemic change in child welfare practices. The strongest evidence of that change is a significant reduction in the number of children in the custody of the courts and the Department of Child Protection Services. On March 31, 2017, there were 5,986 children in foster care, the most since 2003, the earliest data available. On Dec. 31, 2020, there were 3,766 children in foster care. That decrease represents a 37 percent reduction in the number of children in foster care.

This reduction of children in custody is a result of strategies that focus on preventing abuse and neglect, avoiding unnecessary disruption of families and system-induced trauma, pursuing safe and lasting permanent family connections, and ensuring Mississippi’s children live healthy, supported, and productive lives. Availability of parent representation for indigent

parents facing loss of custody in 34 counties has been a significant factor in reducing the numbers of children in custody in many of those counties.

In 2020, work continued to focus on child abuse prevention. Objectives included strengthening families and avoiding removal of children to foster care. Five areas identified as most pressing for families included:

- Housing and Transportation;
- Opportunities for Treatment;
- Parent, Child, and Family Supports;
- Economic Security;
- Identification of Resources.

Leaders of the efforts work to identify and recommend actions that can fill gaps, strengthen opportunities, and lift up families to a place where they can see a path toward a brighter future. Hope is at the center of this work.

In September 2020, the Commission created a “Children’s Hope Blueprint for

Mississippi.” The Blueprint seeks to clarify and prioritize what Mississippians want to see and commit to concerning the well-being of vulnerable children and youth. This Blueprint is intended as a vehicle to bring together diverse constituencies in a collective process to establish shared priorities, align strategies, and expand collective impact at the state and community levels.

In October 2020, the Commission on Children’s Justice began a statewide campaign to create a culture of hope and train leaders in child welfare to rethink how the state’s system responds to allegations of child neglect rooted in poverty. The idea is to give hope to parents and children who encounter the Department of Child Protection Services and the Youth Courts.

The Commission conducted three days of meetings and virtual training with a leading proponent of hope-centered programs, psychologist Chan Hellman, Ph.D., of Tulsa, Oklahoma, on Oct. 20, 21 and 22. Hellman defines hope as “the belief that the future will be better, and you have the power to make it so.” His approach includes teaching people to do three things: set desirable goals; identify viable pathways to goals, finding solutions to the problems that stand in the way; and maintain the willpower to pursue those goals.

Indigent Parent Representation

A Parent Representation Committee grew out of the work of the Commission on Children’s Justice in 2012. The Parent Representation Task Force is a collaborative effort between the judiciary, Child Protection Services, Casey Family Programs, the Kellogg Foundation, the University of Mississippi School of Law, the Mississippi College School of Law, the American Bar Association, the Mississippi Center for Legal Services and the Mississippi Judicial College. Members of the Committee continue to seek public and private funding to maintain and expand programs that provide attorneys for indigent parents facing allegations of abuse and neglect in Youth Court.

As of 2020, 34 counties reported some level of parent representation, with 26 counties participating in the Parent Representation projects funded by the Mississippi Legislature appropriation, grants from Casey Family Programs and the Kellogg Foundation, and Federal Court Improvement Basic Grant funds.



Not all parents are represented in these counties, but there is an increased awareness that parent representation must be available statewide to all indigent parents at risk of their children being removed due to allegations of abuse or neglect.

COUNTY	Year Parent Rep Began	COUNTY	Year Parent Rep Began
Adams	2012	Lee	2019
Alcorn	2019	Lowndes	2019
Bolivar	2017	Madison	early 1980s
DeSoto	2016	Marion	2019
Forrest	2012	Monroe	2019
Hancock	2015	Pearl River	2018
Harrison	2013	Perry	2019
Hinds	2017	Pontotoc	2019
Itawamba	2019	Prentiss	2020
Jackson	2018	Rankin	2012
Lafayette	2016	Tishomingo	2019
Lamar	2019	Union	2019
Lauderdale	2019	Warren	2019
Lee	2019	Yazoo	2019

The Mississippi Legislature in 2020 provided \$278,500.00 to the Office of State Public Defender for Fiscal Year 2021 (July 1, 2020-June 30, 2021) to pay for certified attorneys to represent indigent parents or guardians in abuse, neglect or termination of parental rights proceedings as provided under Sections 43-21-201 and 99-18-13, Mississippi Code of 1972. The legislative funding, authorized through House Bill 1696 during the 2020 Session, was the same as for FY 2020.

Casey Family Programs, which has supported parent representation from the program's inception, provided \$195,000 in 2020. Casey's focus continued to be expansion of parent representation into new counties and deepening of the services offered, including adding social workers to assist attorneys representing indigent parents. Casey provided \$51,902.50 for a Resource Counsel; \$25,296.54 for a social worker in Rankin County; \$27,000 for a social worker to assist parent representation attorneys in north Mississippi; \$45,050.96 for deepening services in Forrest County, expanding services from the 0-3 age group to children of all ages; \$16,250 for parent representation in Hinds County; \$15,000 each for parent representation in Pearl River, Warren and Yazoo counties; \$9,000 each for parent representation in Lamar and Marion counties; \$3,000 for parent representation in Prentiss County; and \$18,000 for Programs of Hope.

The Kellogg Foundation Grant ended Aug. 31, 2020.

The grant had supported the Hinds County Parent Attorney project at \$45,000 a year and the Bolivar County Parent Attorney project at \$12,000 a year. These funds will need to be replaced by other funding sources in 2021.

Funding for Indigent Parent Representation	
County contributions	\$512,000
State contribution	\$278,500
Grants/CIP funds	\$312,000
Total	\$1,102,500

The Court Improvement Grant provided \$60,000. All grants, including from Casey, Kellogg and CIP, totaled \$312,000. County contributions totaled \$512,000. Those funds along with \$278,500 appropriated by the Legislature, made a total of \$1,102,500 spent on indigent parent representation during the past year.

The number of children in foster care declined significantly in most counties which provide parent representation. Parent representation and a policy shift that strongly emphasizes reunification are among the factors that have driven down the number of children in foster care. Mississippi has seen a 34 percent decline statewide in the number of children in Child Protection Services custody in the past three years. A total of 5,728 children were in CPS custody on Jan. 2, 2018. The number declined to 4,867 as of Jan. 1, 2019, and decreased to 4,256 by Jan. 1, 2020. As of Jan. 1, 2021, there were 3,766 children in CPS custody.

The 12 pilot counties where parent representation has been provided continuously since July 2017 experienced a dramatic drop in children in foster care. The counties include Jackson, Harrison, Hancock, Forrest, Lamar, Pearl River, Marion, Adams, Hinds, Bolivar, DeSoto, and Rankin. In July 2017, children in foster care totaled 3,247. That number has dropped to 1,336 in those 12 counties — a 59 percent reduction, or 1,911 fewer children living away from their parents. It is estimated that the cost of providing foster care for those 1,911 children for a year would have been at least \$16,052,400. After taking into account federal reimbursement, savings to the state was an estimated \$11,236,680 in the pilot counties.

Jurist in Residence

Former Adams County Court and Youth Court Judge John N. Hudson, who became Resident Jurist in April 2015, is a resource person to the judicial system and to local courts on issues such as child abuse reporting, termination of parental rights, general child protection services issues of competency in court proceedings, indigent parent representation, truancy/education neglect and crossover youth.

Judge Hudson worked to increase funding to maintain and expand parent representation programs. He worked with the Indigent Parental Representation Task Force to continue the pilot sites that provide attorney representation to indigent parents, implement new pilot sites, to expand multi-disciplinary court teams and secure additional funding to operate the programs.

Judge Hudson coordinated and participated in the training of every Mississippi Youth Court Judge on the importance of and the art of making Reasonable Efforts findings in child protection cases. Federal law requires youth court oversight of the



mission of the Department of Child Protection Services by requiring a court finding that the department had made reasonable efforts to maintain a child at home before removal and later to ensure that the department is conducting reasonable efforts to complete the permanent plan when the child is removed. The preferred permanent plan is reunification. If reunification is not possible, durable legal custody with a relative or other person and adoption are considered. The training sessions educated judges on the essentials of conducting this process.

Title IV-E of the Social Security Act provides for federal reimbursement for a portion of the maintenance and administrative costs of foster care for children who meet specified federal eligibility requirements. Judge Hudson has worked extensively to train CPS workers and judges in correctly documenting Title IV-E eligibility requirements. This work has substantially increased federal funding to MDCPS for the support of children in foster care. He conducts monthly reviews of MDCPS records which advise when this process has not occurred in individual courts and works with those courts to ensure future compliance.

He has worked with Information Technology personnel at the Supreme Court to draft new court order language in MYCIDS, the statewide youth court data system, to conform with eligibility requirements and require proper documentation. The new orders provide instruments for statewide tracking of compliance. He is a regular advisor to the IT staff on MYCIDS and continues to make recommendations to improve the data system.

Judge Hudson met with legislators and participated in legislative committee meetings to educate legislators on the needs of youth courts and child welfare. He created position papers on legislative proposals to advise of the impact of pending legislation. Much of his legislative focus has been to educate legislators on the need for expansion of parent's representation in Mississippi counties and its beneficial impact on Mississippi families and fiscal propriety. Throughout the legislative session, Judge Hudson followed legislation impacting youth courts and provided periodic reports to the youth court judiciary.

He presented at various conferences on youth court issues, including Statewide School Security Officers, Child Advocacy Centers, the Youth Court Judges annual conference, and the Mississippi Youth Court Prosecutor's Conference. On the national level, Judge Hudson participated as faculty in a Reasonable Efforts Academy for west coast judges.

Judge Hudson worked closely with the Commissioner of the Mississippi Department of Child Protection services to identify and address emerging issues in area of child welfare and the courts. He worked with the Department of Public Safety to review sex offender registry entries on juveniles to determine legitimacy of filings.

Judge Hudson serves on boards and committees including Kid's Count, Children's Advocacy Centers of Mississippi, the Methodist Children's Home, the Parent's Parent Representation Task Force and the Attorney General's Mental Health Task Force. He also works with local leaders to develop task forces in local communities addressing issues which relate to the fair, effective and efficient administration of courts.

Judge Hudson works closely with Casey Family Programs to bring scientific based practices to improve judicial engagement in child welfare systems in our state and across the nation.

In cooperation with the Children's Justice Commission, Judge Hudson participated in programs to bring the science of hope to Mississippi and specifically to the youth courts. He began working with other entities to research and propose revisions to Mississippi statute relating to the definition of neglect to develop an alternate system to assist and bring hope to families who are within the system for poverty related issues and other circumstances outside their control.

Judge Hudson worked closely with courts to assist with dealing with the COVID-19 crisis and its impact. He created visitation and other orders to assist courts in ensuring family involvement and prevent unnecessary prolonged stays in custody.

In August 2020, Judge Hudson was appointed to assist the Hinds County Youth Court in addressing serious backlogs caused in part by the COVID crisis. He served in this role for the remainder of the year and his involvement has brought permanency to numerous children and families long awaiting resolution.

Judge Hudson served as an available resource to professionals in the youth court system assisting with emerging issues, questions and other circumstances. He participated throughout the year in numerous resolution conferences to address conflicts arising between local courts and other entities.



Members of the Mississippi Supreme Court are, seated, left to right, Presiding Justice James W. Kitchens, Chief Justice Mike Randolph, and Presiding Justice Leslie D. King. Standing are Justices Robert P. Chamberlin, T. Kenneth Griffis, David M. Ishee, Josiah D. Coleman, James D. Maxwell II, and Dawn H. Beam.

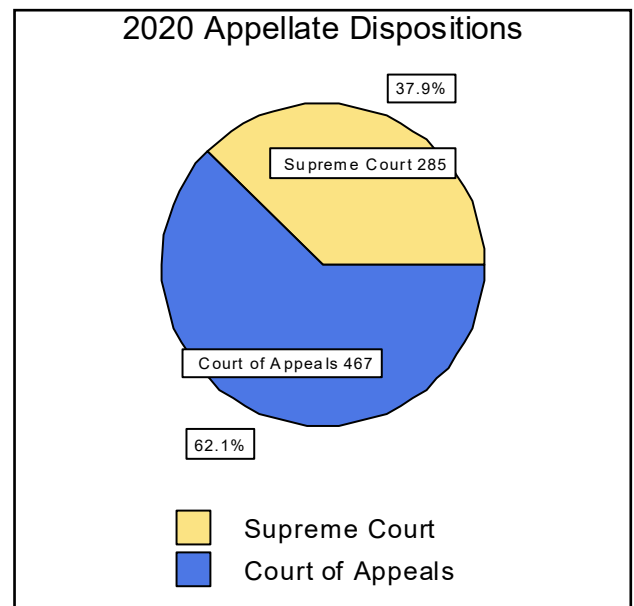
The Mississippi Supreme Court

All appeals from the Circuit, Chancery and Youth Courts of the state come to the Supreme Court. Appeals from the Justice Courts go to the Circuit Courts or to the County Courts where available. County Court appeals are to either the Circuit Courts, the Chancery Courts, or the Supreme Court, depending on the subject matter and type of case.

Certain appeals are, as a class, retained and decided by the Supreme Court. Others may be assigned by the Supreme Court to the Court of Appeals. In deciding whether to retain a case, the Supreme Court considers the uniqueness of the case, the likelihood that its decision will be of important precedential value, whether it raises issues of first impression or interpretation, and the relative workloads of the two appellate courts.

Cases which must be retained by the Supreme Court are:

- (a) imposition of the death penalty;
- (b) utility rates;
- (c) annexations;
- (d) bond issues;
- (e) election contests;
- (f) a trial court’s holding a statute unconstitutional;
- (g) bar discipline matters;
- (h) judicial performance matters;
- (i) certified questions from federal court.



In addition to its workload of retained cases, the Supreme Court decides all interlocutory appeals and all petitions for writ of certiorari from the Court of Appeals, and has significant administrative responsibilities such as rule making obligations ranging from rules of procedure to Bar admissions.

In 2020, the Supreme Court disposed of 285 cases. Of those, 148 cases were decided on the merits. The remaining cases were dismissed. Of the 134 appeals decided on the merits, 103 (76.9 percent) were civil, and 31 (23.1 percent) were criminal. Of the 103 civil appeals decided on the merits, 59 (57.3 percent) were affirmed, and 44 (42.7 percent) were reversed, vacated or remanded. Of the 31 criminal appeals decided on the merits, 28 (90.3 percent) were affirmed, and 3 (9.7 percent) were reversed.

The Supreme Court disposed of a total of 2,914 motions and petitions during 2020. This included 39 motions for rehearing, all of which were denied or dismissed. Pursuant to Rule 5 of the Mississippi Rules of Appellate Procedure, the Court disposed of 161 petitions for interlocutory appeal. Of those, 93 (57.8 percent) were denied, 46 (28.6 percent) were granted, and 22 (13.7 percent) were dismissed or had other dispositions.

In 2020, the Supreme Court disposed of 154 petitions for writ of certiorari. Of those, 17 (11 percent) were granted; 133 (86.4 percent) were denied; and 4 (2.6 percent) were dismissed or had other dispositions.

The Supreme Court heard oral arguments in 13 cases in 2020.

Appellate Case Filings	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Notices of Appeal, General	863	732	770	637	492
Death Penalty Direct Appeal	0	1	0	1	1
Death Penalty PCR Applications	7	2	6	2	4
Bar Discipline Cases	4	1	9	8	5
Bar Discipline Appeals	1	4	0	1	1
Bar Reinstatement Cases	2	4	4	1	5
Judicial Performance Cases	4	0	3	2	1
Annexation Cases	0	1	1	2	1
Election Contests	6	1	2	1	9
Interlocutory Appeals Granted	44	37	22	29	43
Certiorari Petitions Granted	27	40	12	14	17
Workers' Compensation Appeals	24	27	25	17	17
Utility Rate Cases	1	0	0	0	0
Federally Certified Questions	0	1	1	1	0
Total New Cases Filed	983	824	830	697	579

2018 — 2019 — 2020 Appellate Case Dispositions									
	Supreme Court			Court of Appeals			Courts Combined		
	2018	2019	2020	2018	2019	2020	2018	2019	2020
Dismissed by Clerk's Rule 2 Notice	50	63	54	21	25	18	71	88	72
Dismissed by Order of Court	144	133	81	22	23	31	166	156	112
Cert Petitions Dismissed after Grant	3	1	2	NA	NA	NA	3	1	2
Decided by Published Opinion	160	142	147	410	413	417	570	655	564
Per Curiam Affirmed	2	1	0	1	0	0	3	1	0
Decided by Order	6	4	1	0	0	1	6	4	2
Total Case Dispositions	365	344	285	454	461	467	819	805	752

2018 — 2019 — 2020 Dispositions of Rehearing Motions, Interlocutory Appeals and Cert Petitions									
	Supreme Court			Court of Appeals			Courts Combined		
	2018	2019	2020	2018	2019	2020	2018	2019	2020
Motions for Rehearing	63	42	39	208	177	214	271	219	253
Petitions for Interlocutory Ap-	170	149	161	0	0	0	170	149	161
Petitions for Certiorari	173	148	154	0	0	0	173	148	154



Members of the Court of Appeals of the State of Mississippi are, seated, left to right, Presiding Judge Virginia C. Carlton, Chief Judge Donna M. Barnes, and Presiding Judge Jack L. Wilson. Standing are Judges David Neil McCarty, Deborah A. McDonald, Latrice A. Westbrooks, Jim M. Greenlee, Sean J. Tindell, Anthony N. Lawrence III and Cory T. Wilson. Judge Tindell left the Court on May 31, 2020, when the Governor appointed him as Commissioner of the Department of Public Safety. Judge Cory Wilson left the Court on July 2, 2020, when the President appointed him to the Fifth U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals.

Court of Appeals of the State of Mississippi

The Court of Appeals handled 62.1 percent of the appeals decided in 2020 — 467 cases. Despite having two judicial vacancies, the Court of Appeals maintained its productivity, deciding six more cases than the previous year and shortening the average time to decision by five days. The Court of Appeals is an error corrections court. Typical cases assigned to the Court are

Average days, final brief to decision					
	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Supreme Court	200	192	200	174	187
Court of Appeals	228	213	211	211	206

those in which the law is already settled. These cases may deal with evidentiary issues which arose during the trial and with the weight and sufficiency of the evidence supporting the judgment. Also, all workers' compensation appeals are referred to the Court of Appeals.

Of the 467 cases decided in 2020, 417 were decided on the merits. The remaining cases were dismissed. Of those decided on the merits, 291 were civil and 121 were criminal. Of the 291 civil cases decided, 220 (75.6 percent) were affirmed and 71 (24.4 percent) were reversed or vacated. Of the 121 criminal appeals decided, 102 (84.3 percent) were affirmed and 19 (15.7 percent) were reversed. The Court of Appeals disposed of a total of 1,589 motions and petitions during 2020. This included 214 motions for rehearing, of which 213 (99.5 percent) were denied or dismissed, and 1 (0.5 percent) was granted. The Court heard oral arguments in 29 cases in 2020. The Court was unable to continue the Court on the Road program on college campuses in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Both appellate courts strive to decide cases within 270 days following completion of briefing, and in most cases, decisions are made more expeditiously. The Supreme Court's average time from end of briefing to case decision was 187 days during 2020, and the Court of Appeals' average time was 206 days. All petitions for writ of certiorari from the Court of Appeals are either granted, denied or dismissed by the Supreme Court within 90 days following the filing of the responses to the petitions. Cases on review by certiorari must be decided within 180 days after the petitions are granted. The Supreme Court's average time was 85 days. Petitions for interlocutory appeal are usually granted, denied, or dismissed within 45 days after the responses are filed.

Office of the Clerk of the Mississippi Supreme Court and Court of Appeals

The Office of the Clerk operates within the framework of various statutes enacted by the Legislature, and rules, regulations and orders promulgated by the Mississippi Supreme Court. The office consists of a total of 12 full-time members, with Jeremy Whitmire serving as the Clerk of Court. The office itself serves both the Mississippi Supreme Court and the Mississippi Court of Appeals. It is tasked with providing numerous administrative and other court-related services which encompass essential and critical functions in organizing, promoting, managing and maintaining the effective operations of the state’s appellate judiciary.

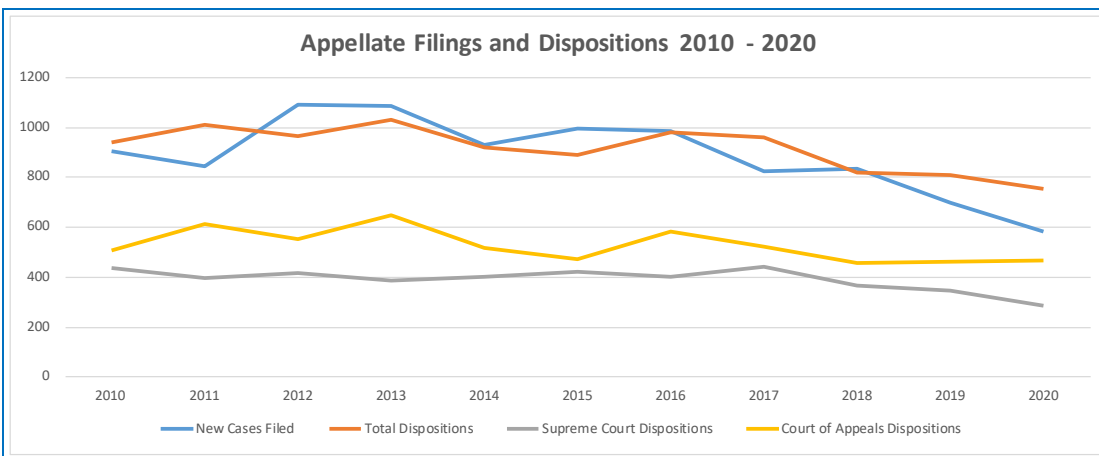
In addition to serving as the point of contact for attorneys, litigants and the general public with respect to all case-related matters, the Clerk’s office serves as the primary repository for appellate cases and other matters before each Court. The office continues to be the hub for the state’s Judiciary, working closely with the Mississippi Electronic Courts, the Appellate Courts’ Information Technology Department and Court Administration to suggest and implement enhancements to the existing systems as the needs of trial courts, appellate courts, attorneys, litigants and the public evolve. The synergy between the departments ensures the coordination of court processes and resources to provide the most effective flow and management of a large volume of appellate and other matters.

In 2020, the Clerk’s office processed 458 appellate records, 4,347 motions, 642 responses, and addressed a total of 1,796 procedural motions. There were a total of 1,565 briefs processed, a total of 2,703 orders, and 769 mandates issued from both Courts. At present, the Clerk’s office is accountable for a total of approximately 900 open and active case files.

The year 2020 brought about many unique challenges for the Clerk’s office and for court clerks across the state. The COVID-19 pandemic created an opportunity for the state’s Judiciary to meet the challenge of ensuring that all courts – municipal, justice, county, chancery, circuit and appellate courts – remain open to fulfill constitutional and statutory duties during a national emergency. This critical obligation was balanced with the safety protocols implemented by the Mississippi Department of Health and other agencies to protect not only court personnel but Court visitors as well. Every tool in the playbook was utilized to ensure the continuity of the state’s Judiciary from enhanced cleaning measures, socially distanced courtrooms, plexiglass barriers and mask mandates, to temperature checks and virtual meetings. The State’s Judiciary, under the guidance of the Chief Justice, met this challenge and has done a tremendous job for the state of Mississippi.

The Clerk’s office in conjunction with Mississippi Electronic Courts, the Appellate Court’s Information Technology Department, and the Chief Justice in his capacity as chief administrative officer of all courts, worked in unison to forge innovative solutions to meet the ever-changing, and ever-challenging needs of our Judiciary. Building from the existing technology infrastructure of the Court, the Clerk’s office developed new electronic procedures that would allow the Court to continue full, unaltered operation as efficiently and effectively as possible all while meeting the guidelines of medical professionals to keep everyone safe.

In addition to the challenges presented by the pandemic, the Clerk’s office has been heavily involved in designing the Court’s new appellate case management system. This exciting project is designed to update and streamline the Court’s existing database platform which will better support the needs of our appellate courts. The goal of this project is to improve upon the existing system, update notifications, improve processing time and efficiency, all while increasing productivity and reporting to ensure that all appellate matters are handled as expeditiously as possible.



Appellate Filings and Dispositions, 2010 — 2020											
	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
New Cases Filed	904	844	1,091	1,084	926	995	983	824	830	697	579
Total Dispositions	938	1,006	964	1,030	916	890	980	958	819	805	752
Supreme Court Dispositions	433	396	412	386	400	419	401	441	365	344	285
Court of Appeals Dispositions	505	610	552	644	516	471	579	521	454	461	467

MISSISSIPPI TRIAL COURTS OF RECORD

Mississippi courts in 2020 experienced the most challenging circumstances ever to beset the judiciary in modern times. As the spread of COVID-19 became a pandemic in March 2020, court operations became a balancing act of meeting the constitutional mandate of keeping courts open while protecting the health and safety of the judiciary and the public.

Supreme Court Chief Justice Mike Randolph at the outset reminded judges of the mandate of Article 3, Section 24 of the Mississippi Constitution: “All courts shall be open; and every person for an injury done him in his lands, goods, person, or reputation, shall have remedy by due course of law, and right and justice shall be administered without sale, denial, or delay.” From March through December 2020, Chief Justice Randolph in his capacity as chief administrative officer of all courts in the state issued 18 Emergency Administrative Orders, each addressing an aspect of court operations. In the first Emergency Administrative Order, issued on March 13, and in subsequent orders, the Chief Justice emphasized that courts could not simply close their doors. The first Emergency Administrative Order said, “In compliance with the Constitution, all state courts – municipal, justice, county, chancery, circuit, and appellate courts – will remain open for business to ensure courts fulfill their constitutional and statutory duties. See Miss. Const. Art. 3, §§ 24, 25, 26, and 26A. Courts should continue normal business matters as much as possible.”



Limiting the number of people in court facilities was among the first preventative steps. The Chief Justice followed the evolving guidelines issued by the Center for Disease Control and the State Health Officer. An initial limitation of gatherings to no more than 200 people soon dropped to no more than 10. All court proceedings were ordered to be limited to attorneys, parties, witnesses, security officers, members of the press, and other necessary persons, as determined by the trial judge.

Individual judges were given discretion to control their dockets in a manner that took into consideration local conditions. Trial judges were authorized to exercise their sound discretion in extending deadlines, rescheduling hearings and trials and any other matters by case specific actions or by general orders. Jury trials were delayed for months. In March, courts were authorized to delay trials and the issuance of jury summonses for a month. As the rate of infection increased, trial delays were extended. At the outset of the pandemic, what is believed to be the last trial conducted in the state got underway with jury selection on March 16 in Clay County Circuit Court. Circuit Judge James Kitchens ordered safety precautions, starting with temperature checks before people entered the courthouse. Two days later, the defendant pleaded guilty. It would be two and a half months before another jury trial would commence anywhere in the state.



The Supreme Court examined epidemiological data in its efforts to resume jury trials. Emergency Administrative Order 11, issued by the Supreme Court on May 7, authorized trial courts in 41 counties with two or fewer COVID-19 deaths to summons jury pools to report on or after May 18. Panola County was the first to resume jury trials. Circuit Judge Smith Murphey tried a case June 1 and 2 in Panola County Circuit Court at the Batesville Civic Center. Prospective jurors had their temperatures taken as they entered the sprawling facility, and they were asked to use hand sanitizer at the door. Masks were provided to anyone who didn't bring one. Jury selection was done with prospective jurors spread out across six sections of theater style seats.



Keeping sick people out of courthouses was paramount. From the outset, the Chief Justice ordered that prospective jurors who recently traveled to areas with a high concentration of confirmed coronavirus cases, who had been diagnosed with an illness, or who were primary caregivers for a vulnerable person who has been diagnosed with an illness must contact the court by telephone before reporting for jury duty. The Chief Justice on May 7 in Emergency Administrative Order 11 directed that all jury summonses must include a separate document that would alert prospective jurors of recognized grounds for juror excuse and address excuses related to COVID-19.

Prospective jurors and others with business in court were screened with temperature checks. Hand sanitizer and masks were made available to those who didn't bring those with them. On July 23, Chief Justice Randolph ordered that masks be worn in all courtrooms in the state.

One of the obstacles in getting trial dockets moving and resuming the work of grand juries was providing safe social distancing for the large number of people needed to select a petit jury and grand jury. Trial judges and boards of supervisors looked to larger alternative locations, temporarily designating civic centers, coliseums, arenas and gymnasiums as courthouses. Grand juries were selected in courtrooms, then those courtrooms were closed so that the panel could conduct its business, as traditional grand jury rooms were too small.



A jury trial was moved to the Iuka Middle School gymnasium after Circuit Judge Kelly Mims and the Tishomingo County Board of Supervisors found the courtroom of the Tishomingo County Courthouse to be too small to safely accommodate a large crowd required for jury selection. Judge Mims and the Board of Supervisors issued orders on June 18, 2020, designating the Iuka Middle School Activity Building as the temporary courthouse. Circuit Judge John R. White tried a case in the Crossroads Arena in Corinth in July 2020. In Lee County, Judge Mims conducted jury selection at The Link Center in Tupelo in late September, then conducted the remainder of the trial of a civil case at the Lee County Justice Center. The former Tad's Pizza Party, a large open commercial space in downtown Corinth, was used by Judge Mims and Circuit Judge Michael P. Mills for two Alcorn County Circuit court trials in October.

Warren County Circuit Judge M. James Chaney Jr. in June moved jury selection to the Vicksburg City Auditorium, then conducted trial at the Warren County Courthouse. The Warren County Board of Supervisors lent the boardroom for use by the jury to take breaks and for deliberations.



Jones County Circuit Court Judge Dal Williamson conducted six trials at South Central Place in Laurel — two each in October, November and December 2020. South Central Regional Medical Center owns the facility, which formerly was a Walmart.

Hinds, Madison and Rankin counties went six months without jury trials. Hinds County prospective jurors were summoned to The Westin hotel for jury qualification starting Aug. 31. In two days, judges qualified enough prospective jurors to serve during the six-week term of court. By mid-September, three jury trials got underway during the same week as Hinds Circuit Judges began to settle into special arrangements for holding jury trials during the pandemic. It was a coordinated effort among four judges as three of them took turns using the largest courtroom at the Hinds County Courthouse to select juries.

The Canton Multipurpose Center lived up to its name on Sept. 8, 2020, as the venue for the selection of a Madison County Circuit Court jury. The trial moved to the Circuit Courthouse on Sept. 9. In Rankin County, jury qualifying was conducted at the Brandon Municipal Complex on Sept. 8.



Circuit Judge Lillie Blackmon Sanders conducted two trials at the Natchez Convention Center, and Judge Debra W. Blackwell held a trial at the Natchez City Auditorium.

With criminal defendants raising speedy trial demands, criminal cases took priority. But judges also pushed to move their civil dockets. Circuit Judge Lisa P. Dodson tried a five-day civil case at the Hancock County Courthouse in Bay St. Louis starting Aug. 18. If the case had not gone forward, the next available trial setting would have been a year later.

Judges of the Second Circuit conducted jury selection at the courthouses. Fitting jurors and participants safely into available space meant adding seats to jury boxes and marking seats. In the civil trial in Hancock County Circuit Court, Judge Dodson separated prospective jurors into two groups and did jury

qualification in two different courtrooms so that people could maintain six feet of separation.

Delays caused by COVID-19 created a backlog for many courts. Chief Justice Randolph obtained CARES Act funding to pay for special judges assist trial judges in working through the backlog. Between July and October 2020, Chief Justice Randolph appointed 14 senior status judges to preside as special judges to help clear COVID-related backlogs. Appointments included eight special judges to assist the Hinds Chancery, Circuit and County courts and special judges to assist the 8th Circuit Court in Leake, Neshoba, Newton and Scott counties; the 16th Chancery Court in Jackson, George and Green counties; the 21st Circuit Court in Holmes, Humphreys and Yazoo counties; the Warren County Court and Youth Court; the Forrest County Court and Youth Court; and the Harrison County Youth Court.

Technology was crucial to keeping trial court dockets moving. However, as reliance on technology increased, many courts around the state struggled with inadequate equipment. CARES Act funds enabled courts to make electronic upgrades. Just over \$3 million in CARES Act funds were approved for equipment and materials purchases that included computers, switchers, cameras, microphones and other electronics to enable courts to conduct proceedings via remote connections. Some courts also used CARES Act funds to buy air purifiers, personal protective equipment and disinfectants.

The Legislature provided \$2.5 million in CARES Act funding to the Judiciary via House Bill 1728, and the Governor provided an additional \$2.5 million through Senate Bill 3053. The original federal guidelines for the expenditure of CARES Act Funds stated that the monies had to be obligated by Dec. 30, 2020. However, extensions allowed some of the funds to be carried over to 2021. The Judiciary spent \$1,469,516.11 of the legislatively appropriated \$2.5 million from HB1728. The Judiciary returned to the Department of Finance and Administration the unobligated balance of \$1,030,483.89. The Judiciary spent or obligated with the expectation of spending \$864,992.80 of the Governor's \$2.5 million provided through Senate Bill 3053. The Judiciary has \$1,635,007.20 remaining of those funds, and has until December 2021 to obligate those funds.

Courts utilized Zoom and other video conferencing programs to conduct hearings in Chancery, Circuit, County and Youth Courts. Civil motions went forward via video conferences or conference calls. Judges, court reporters, attorneys and litigants connected from multiple locations via video conference, sometimes with none of them actually in a courtroom. Some trial judges have said that video conferencing for some proceedings will continue after the pandemic subsides.

Jails in Hinds, Harrison, Hancock and Stone counties are among those that have video conference capabilities that allow judges to conduct hearings remotely with prisoners at the jails. Arraignments, bond hearings and some motion hearings were conducted remotely with prisoners at the jails. On March 25, 2020, the Mississippi Attorney General and the State Public Defender filed a joint motion requesting the Supreme Court to adopt a temporary rule suspension that would allow felony plea hearings, sentencing hearings and probation violation hearings to be done by way of interactive audiovisual equipment. The request was made in an effort to prevent the introduction of COVID-19 into jails. The Supreme Court on March 26, 2020, agreed to temporarily suspend Rule 1.8(c) of the Mississippi Rules of Criminal Procedure to allow sentencing hearings and probation violation hearings to be conducted by video conference, but declined to allow plea hearings to be done by video conference. The President of the United States signed the CARES Act the next day, March 27. The CARES Act authorized federal courts to use video conferencing, under certain circumstances, for various criminal proceedings during the COVID-19 emergency, including felony pleas. The Mississippi Supreme Court reconsidered the issue of guilty plea hearings, and on Sept. 4, 2020, issued an order allowing plea hearings in felony cases to be conducted by video conference to reduce the spread of COVID-19 in jails.



When COVID-19 forced courts to limit the number of people in courtrooms, Hinds Circuit Judge Faye Peterson turned to livestreaming to make court proceedings available to interested parties and the public. Court proceedings were livestreamed from Judge Peterson's courtroom via the court's own website for the first time on July 15. Since then, she has livestreamed most criminal proceedings except those involving sexual assault. Hinds County's Information Technology department was able to modify the video conferencing equipment already used by the court.

Judicial Conference Leadership



The Conference of Chancery Court Judges elected officers on Oct. 29, 2020, during the Fall Trial and Appellate Judges Conference. Chancellor Rhea Sheldon of Purvis was elected chair of the Conference, Chancellor Robert G. Clark III of Lexington was elected vice-chair, and Chancellor Larry Little of Oxford was re-elected secretary-treasurer.

The Mississippi Judicial College conducted the program as a virtual conference due to the pandemic.

Chancellor Sheldon was appointed to the 10th Chancery Court bench in February 2016. Chancellor Clark has served on the bench of the 11th Chancery District since January 2015, and Chancellor Little has served on the 18th Chancery Court since January 2019.



County Court Judges during the conference in October 2020 re-elected Madison County Court Judge Ed Hannan as chairman, Washington County Court Judge Vernita King Johnson as vice-chair, and Lauderdale County Court Judge Veldore Young Graham as secretary of the Conference of County Court Judges. Judge Hannan has served as chairman of the Conference of County Court Judges since 2015. Judge Johnson has been vice-chair since October 2004. Judge Young Graham began her service as Conference secretary in April 2012.

Judge Hannan, of Madison, began his service as Madison County Court Judge in January 2007. Judge Johnson, of Greenville, has served as Washington County Court Judge since 1999. Judge Young Graham, of Meridian, has served on the Lauderdale County Court bench since January 2007.



The Conference of Circuit Judges did not conduct elections in 2020. Conference leaders elected on April 25, 2019, during the Spring Trial and Appellate Judges Conference remained in office. Circuit Judge Lisa P. Dodson of Gulfport is chair. Judge Dodson has served as a Circuit Judge of the Second Circuit District since January 2007.

Circuit Judge Kelly Luther of Ripley is vice-chair. He has served as a Third District Circuit Judge since January 2015. Circuit Judge Tony Mazingo of Oak Grove is secretary-treasurer. He has served as a Circuit Judge of the Fifteenth Circuit Court since January 2011.



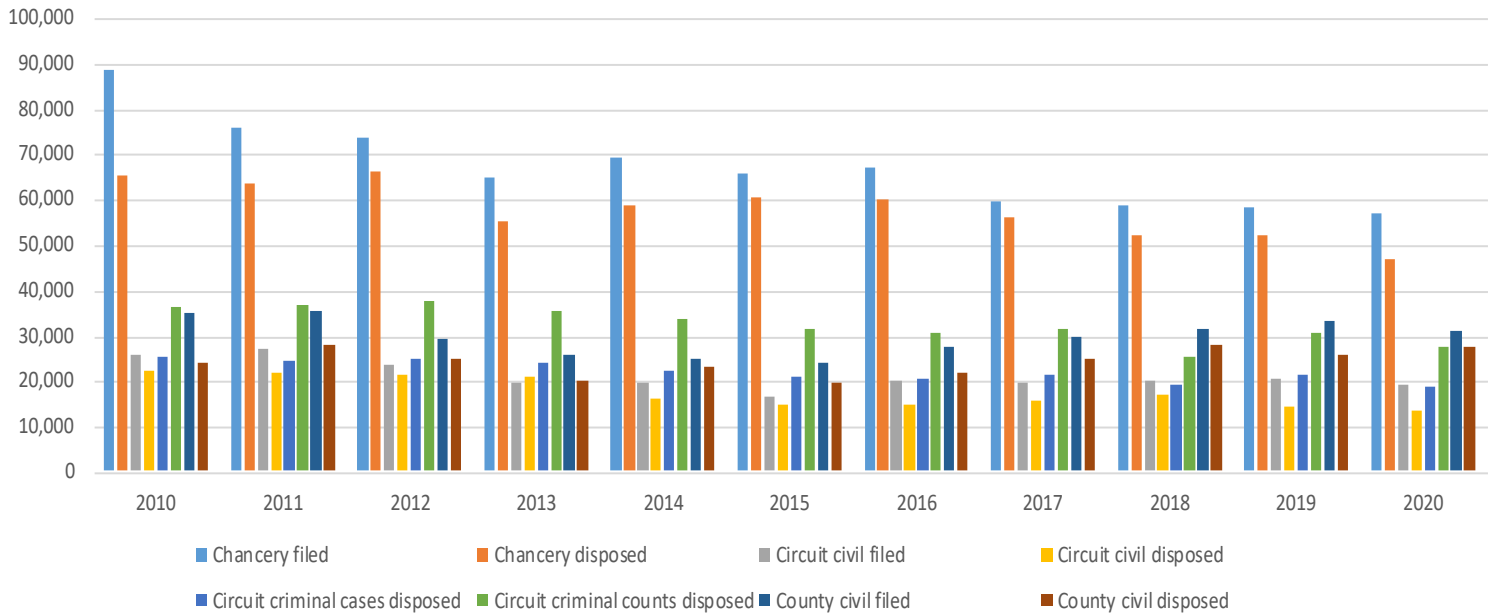
Rankin County and Youth Court Judge Thomas Broome is chair of the Council of Youth Court Judges, a position which he has held since September 2011. Judge Broome has served as Youth Court Judge of Rankin County since January 2003. Tishomingo County Youth Court Referee Joey Cobb has served as vice-chair since September 2011. Lauderdale County Youth Court Judge Veldore Young Graham has served as secretary-treasurer since September 2017.

Retired Hinds County Court Judge James Bell is chairman of the Conference of Senior Status Judges. Retired Hinds Circuit Court Judge William Gowan as vice-chair, and retired Hinds Chancery Judge Patricia Wise is secretary-treasurer. They were elected as Conference officers in 2019 and continue to serve. Judge Bell served as a Hinds County Court Judge 1983-1989. Judge Gowan was a Hinds Circuit Court Judge 2011-2018. Judge Wise served as a Hinds Chancery Judge 1989-2018.



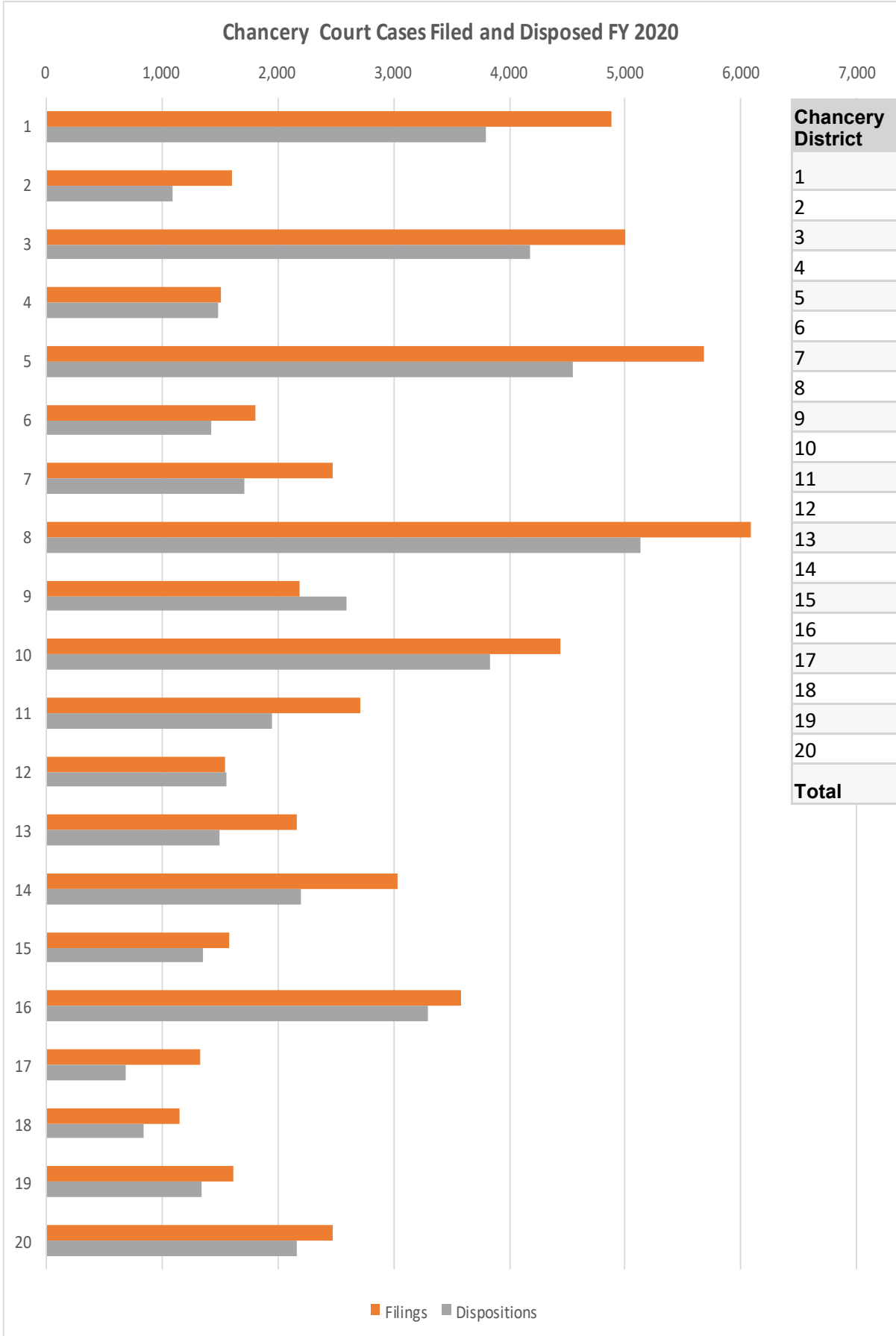
In December 2020, Senior Status judges included 68 retired judges. Senior Status judges serve a critical function, hearing cases by appointment of the Supreme Court when all judges in a district recuse themselves. In 2020 the Supreme Court made 376 special judge appointments. All except three were Senior Status judges.

Trial Court Filings and Dispositions FY 2010 - 2020



FISCAL YEAR	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Chancery filed	88,424	75,558	73,268	64,515	69,100	65,589	66,999	59,221	58,346	58,099	56,754
Chancery disposed	64,994	63,349	65,782	54,817	58,573	60,192	59,780	56,079	52,132	52,042	46,621
Circuit civil filed	25,800	26,862	23,553	19,429	19,305	16,236	19,907	19,328	19,789	20,235	18,984
Circuit civil disposed	22,249	21,687	21,441	21,003	16,123	14,874	14,467	15,557	16,974	14,288	13,340
Circuit criminal cases disposed	25,258	24,371	24,917	23,851	22,229	20,703	20,188	21,182	19,000	21,171	18,581
Circuit criminal counts disposed	36,131	36,561	37,366	35,437	33,322	31,174	30,284	31,361	25,009	30,644	27,367
County civil filed	34,950	35,254	29,177	25,761	24,793	24,055	27,366	29,417	31,307	32,915	30,791
County civil disposed	24,032	27,606	24,930	20,038	23,187	19,552	21,861	24,933	27,602	25,665	27,581

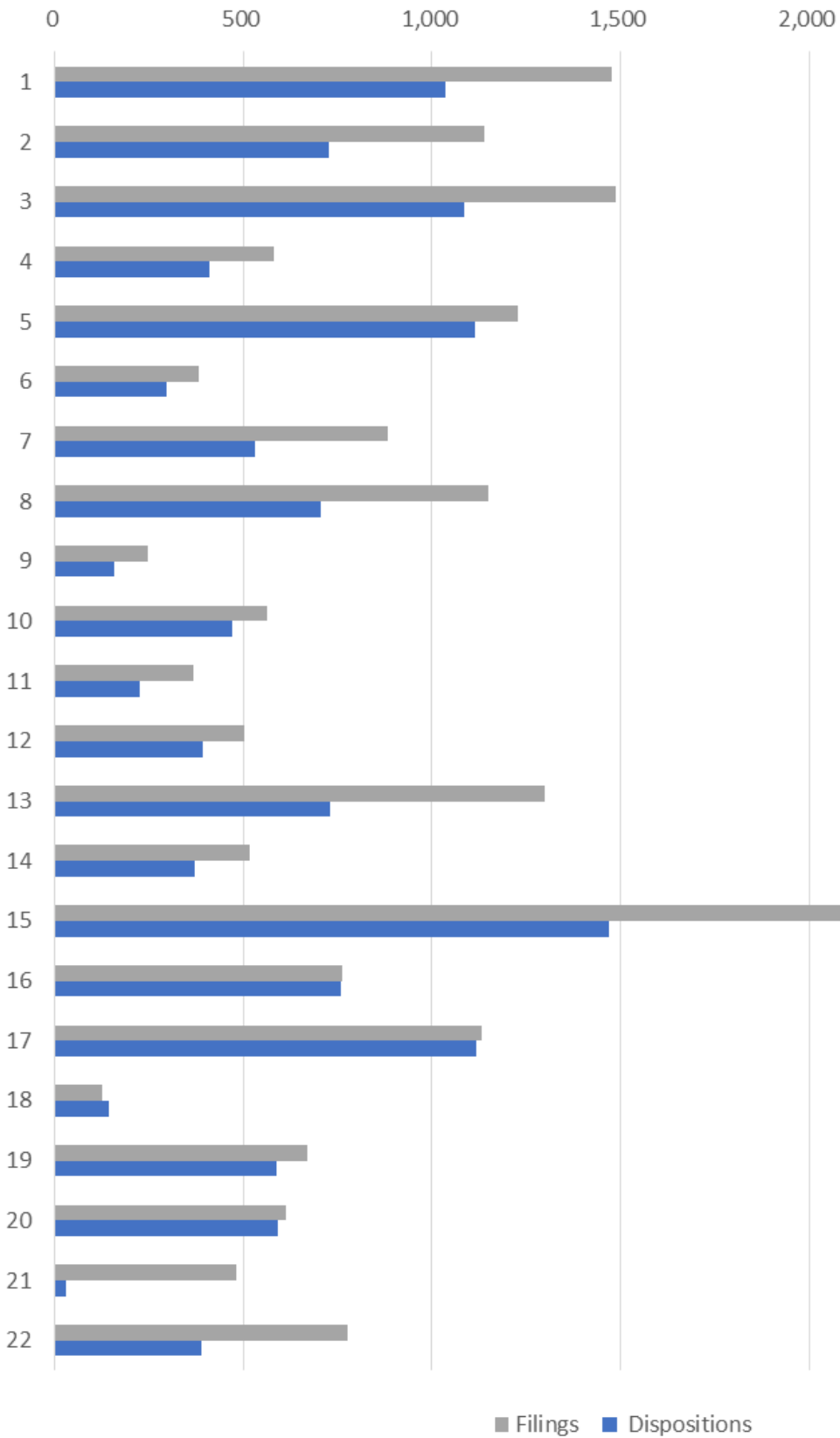
CHANCERY COURTS



Chancery District	Filings	Dispositions
1	4,875	3,791
2	1,594	1,083
3	5,002	4,181
4	1,499	1,484
5	5,680	4,549
6	1,801	1,418
7	2,465	1,702
8	6,084	5,136
9	2,179	2,585
10	4,439	3,830
11	2,706	1,949
12	1,537	1,556
13	2,155	1,498
14	3,028	2,193
15	1,580	1,353
16	3,578	3,295
17	1,322	684
18	1,147	831
19	1,614	1,342
20	2,469	2,161
Total	56,754	46,621

CIRCUIT COURTS

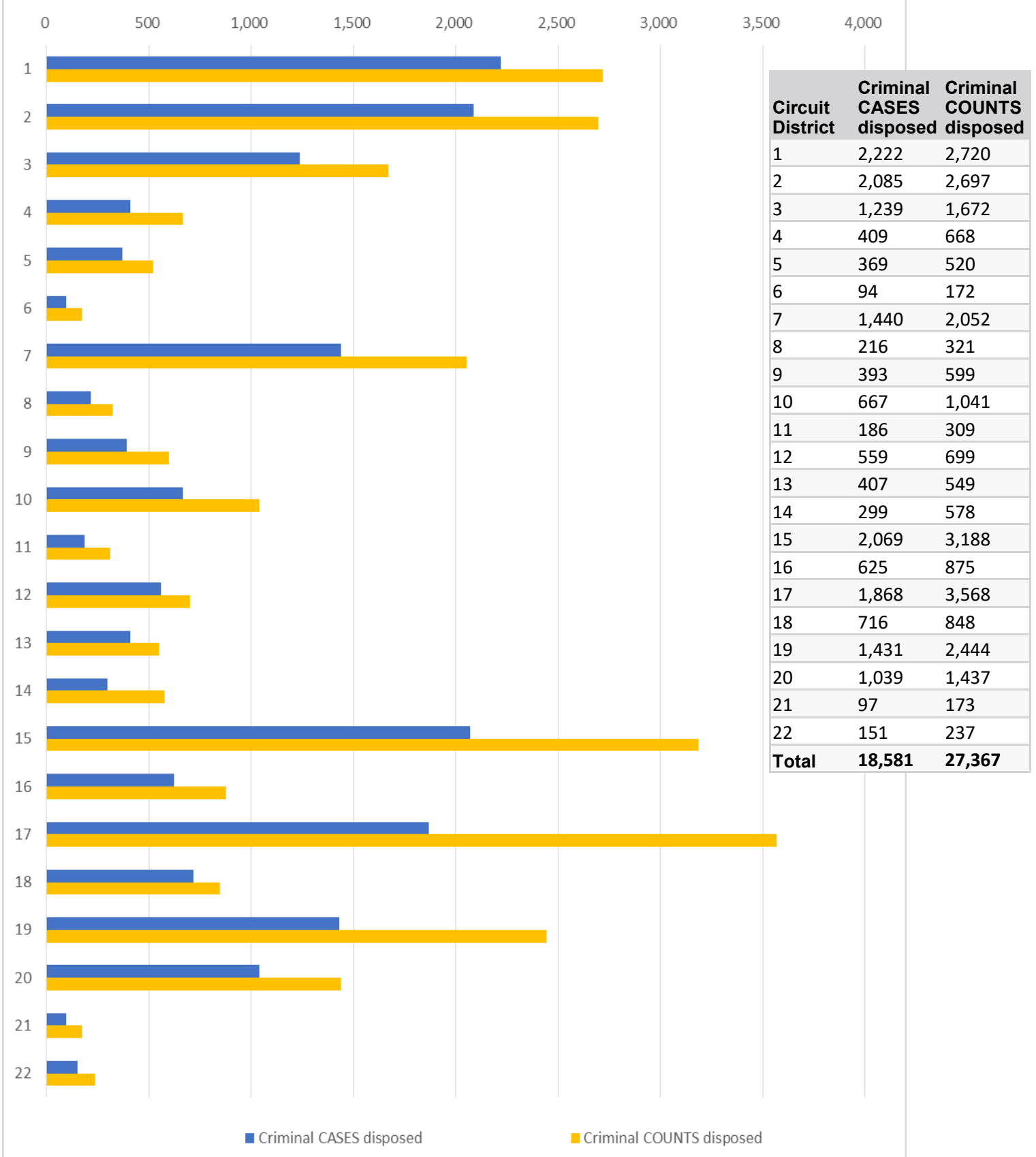
Circuit Civil Cases Filed/Disposed FY 2020



Circuit District	Civil Filings	Civil Dispositions
1	1,475	1,037
2	1,137	728
3	1,486	1,087
4	579	409
5	1,226	1,112
6	382	298
7	882	530
8	1,148	706
9	245	158
10	564	471
11	366	224
12	503	391
13	1,300	730
14	515	371
15	2,616	1,469
16	763	759
17	1,131	1,118
18	125	142
19	668	587
20	614	593
21	482	31
22	777	389
Total	18,984	13,340

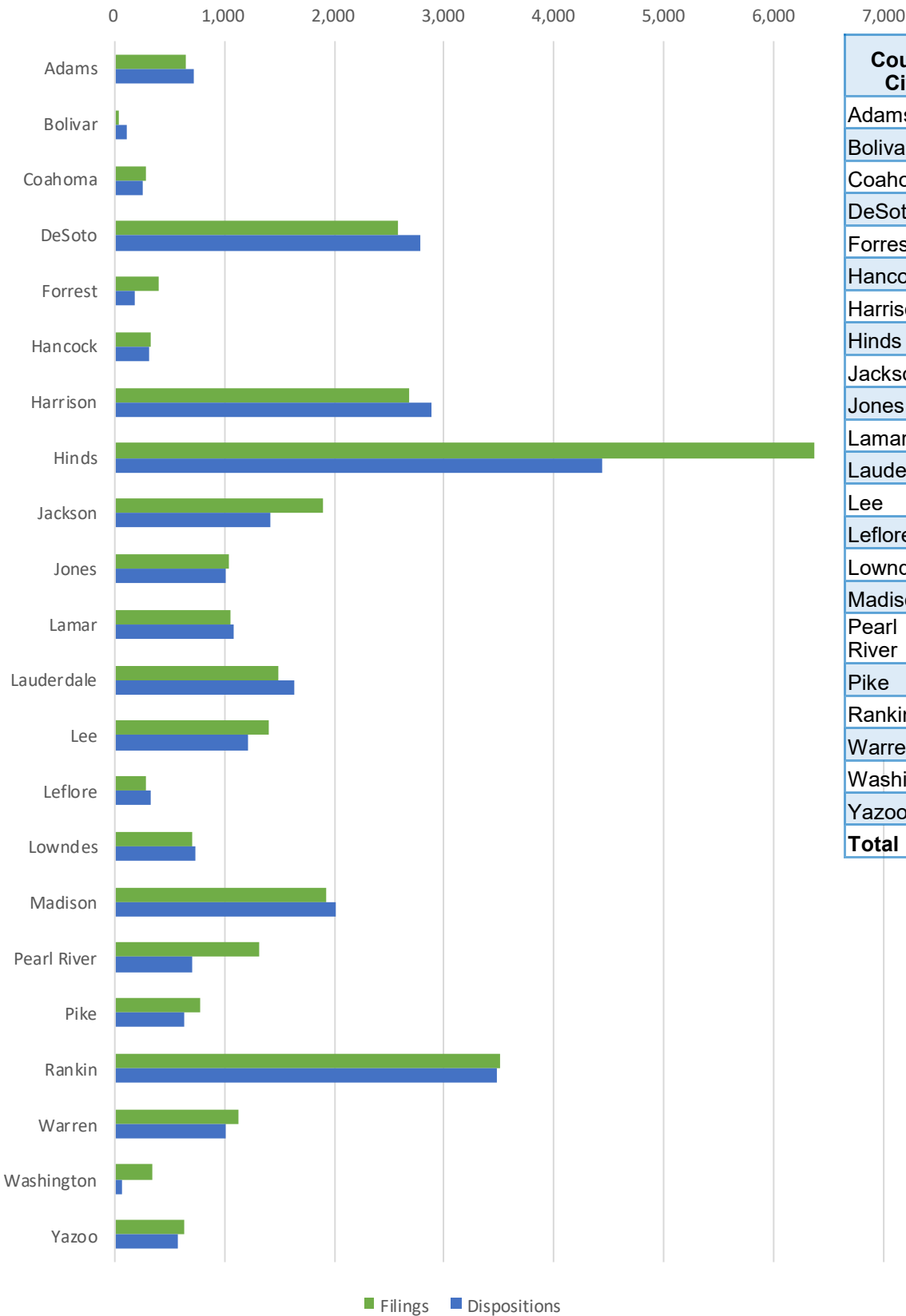
CIRCUIT COURTS

Circuit Criminal Cases/Counts Disposed FY 2020



COUNTY COURTS

County Court Civil Cases Filed/Disposed FY 2020



County Civil	Filings	Dispositions
Adams	650	723
Bolivar	31	114
Coahoma	276	246
DeSoto	2,575	2,788
Forrest	392	183
Hancock	327	308
Harrison	2,686	2,879
Hinds	6,368	4,446
Jackson	1,900	1,421
Jones	1,034	1,016
Lamar	1,052	1,081
Lauderdale	1,490	1,632
Lee	1,397	1,215
Leflore	282	328
Lowndes	709	738
Madison	1,926	2,008
Pearl River	1,316	697
Pike	770	636
Rankin	3,509	3,482
Warren	1,132	1,004
Washington	338	65
Yazoo	631	571
Total	30,791	27,581

YOUTH COURTS, CALENDAR YEAR 2020

	Total Referrals			Formal Adjudicated Referrals			Referrals Handled Informally		
	Abuse	Neglected	Delinquent	Abuse	Neglected	Delinquent	Abuse	Neglected	Delinquent
ADAMS	62	247	173	10	40	145	52	207	28
ALCORN	391	763	97	6	30	42	385	733	55
AMITE	20	63	12	6	29	11	14	34	1
ATTALA	8	138	80	4	14	44	4	124	36
BENTON	24	47	10	0	13	9	24	34	1
BOLIVAR	24	62	160	6	25	82	18	37	78
CALHOUN	54	179	25	3	14	24	51	165	1
CARROLL	32	25	12	4	11	9	28	14	3
CHICKASAW	88	49	35	6	8	34	82	41	1
CHOCTAW	3	10	5	0	2	3	3	8	2
CLAIBORNE	11	43	11	1	11	9	10	32	2
CLARKE	174	30	36	0	4	30	174	26	6
CLAY	33	128	43	3	10	37	30	118	6
COAHOMA	39	140	125	5	19	69	34	121	56
COPIAH	4	36	63	1	19	46	3	17	17
COVINGTON	3	33	39	1	21	36	2	12	3
DESOTO	992	1611	1132	21	82	660	971	1529	472
FORREST	6	44	219	4	38	145	2	6	74
FRANKLIN	18	65	23	5	29	16	13	36	7
GEORGE	30	70	46	2	42	21	28	28	25
GREENE	1	25	9	0	25	0	1	0	9
GRENADA	38	143	194	10	31	132	28	112	62
HANCOCK	278	1016	306	18	66	219	260	950	87
HARRISON	1782	3612	1198	14	84	486	1766	3528	712
HINDS	174	418	512	134	318	498	40	100	14
HOLMES	13	10	48	1	0	32	12	10	16
HUMPHREYS	32	73	68	11	24	58	21	49	10
ISSAQUENA	0	0	22	0	0	22	0	0	0
ITAWAMBA	69	212	40	0	20	15	69	192	25
JACKSON	159	463	426	24	148	165	135	315	261
JASPER	22	83	33	0	5	27	22	78	6
JEFFERSON	2	21	30	1	15	21	1	6	9
JEFFERSON DAVIS	8	35	14	0	11	12	8	24	2
JONES	141	462	443	18	235	361	123	227	82
KEMPER	19	51	3	1	3	0	18	48	3
LAFAYETTE	2	30	171	2	30	119	0	0	52
LAMAR	266	386	249	7	42	155	259	344	94
LAUDERDALE	157	488	354	10	50	191	147	438	163
LAWRENCE	35	99	29	1	20	27	34	79	2
LEAKE	5	8	12	2	5	11	3	3	1
LEE	378	925	423	14	96	254	364	829	169

	Total Referrals			Formal Adjudicated Referrals			Referrals Handled Informally		
	Abuse	Neglect	Delinquent	Abuse	Neglect	Delinquent	Abuse	Neglect	Delinquent
LEFLORE	61	149	126	7	35	98	54	114	28
LINCOLN	176	198	98	17	9	71	159	189	27
LOWNDES	19	79	197	17	76	132	2	3	65
MADISON	119	218	358	3	17	349	116	201	9
MARION	46	206	75	13	35	73	33	171	2
MARSHALL	134	406	90	27	55	71	107	351	19
MONROE	2	45	60	0	25	41	2	20	19
MONTGOMERY	1	2	60	0	1	34	1	1	26
NESHOBA	146	245	71	0	18	70	146	227	1
NEWTON	2	7	28	0	1	22	2	6	6
NOXUBEE	0	0	2	0	0	2	0	0	0
OKTIBBEHA	3	27	153	0	24	144	3	3	9
PANOLA	9	196	88	0	10	51	9	186	37
PEARL RIVER	449	638	196	8	52	130	441	586	66
PERRY	13	46	15	0	19	15	13	27	0
PIKE	126	344	166	25	93	87	101	251	79
PONTOTOC	297	390	97	3	55	75	294	335	22
PRENTISS	37	88	115	2	33	96	35	55	19
QUITMAN	1	1	13	1	1	12	0	0	1
RANKIN	666	1065	873	27	262	331	639	803	542
SCOTT	21	88	88	4	28	61	17	60	27
SHARKEY	0	2	6	0	2	5	0	0	1
SIMPSON	17	40	104	1	22	93	16	18	11
SMITH	6	9	22	6	9	22	0	0	0
STONE	46	160	33	2	28	25	44	132	8
SUNFLOWER	59	147	176	10	37	148	49	110	28
TALLAHATCHIE	26	72	18	0	2	16	26	70	2
TATE	37	57	116	4	24	70	33	33	46
TIPPAH	9	70	52	2	39	33	7	31	19
TISHOMINGO	86	243	41	1	37	32	85	206	9
TUNICA	16	49	90	4	14	48	12	35	42
UNION	25	123	43	3	41	40	22	82	3
WALTHALL	48	120	68	16	57	37	32	63	31
WARREN	104	159	131	83	94	125	21	65	6
WASHINGTON	89	388	326	28	57	164	61	331	162
WAYNE	1	6	60	1	6	38	0	0	22
WEBSTER	18	136	15	3	8	14	15	128	1
WILKINSON	3	18	26	1	15	19	2	3	7
WINSTON	37	118	54	2	6	54	35	112	0
YALOBUSHA	55	116	14	0	8	5	55	108	9
YAZOO	65	162	202	4	18	116	61	144	86

ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE OF COURTS

The Administrative Office of Courts was created on July 1, 1993, to support the judicial system by providing efficient administration of the non-judicial business of the state's courts. The AOC offices are located in Jackson in the Carroll Gartin Justice Building at 450 High Street.

J. Kevin Lackey, J.D., retired on June 30, 2020, as Director of AOC after 19 years as Director and more than 30 years of state service. Lisa A. Counts, J.D., is Interim Director of AOC.



Duties of the AOC, specified in Miss. Code Ann. §§ 9-21-1, -3, -9 (Rev. 2015), -11 (Rev. 2015), -13, -14, -29, -43, -45, -51, -73; and §§ 9-23-3, -7, -11, -17 include:

- assist the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court with his duties as the chief administrative officer of all of the courts in the state;
- assist in the prevention of unnecessary delay in the conduct of trials of the state courts;
- promulgate standards, rules and regulations for computer and/or electronic filing and storage of all court records and court-related records maintained throughout the state in courts and in offices of circuit and chancery clerks;
- oversee the Mississippi Electronic Courts system under the direction of the Supreme Court;
- collect case statistics from all civil, criminal and youth courts in the state;
- require the filing of reports and the collection and compilation of statistical data and financial information;
- devise, promulgate and require use of a uniform youth court case tracking system, including a youth court case filing form for filing with each individual youth court matter, to be utilized by the Administrative Office of Courts and the youth courts in order that the number of youthful offenders, abused, neglected, truant and dependent children, as well as children in need of special care and children in need of supervision, may be tracked with specificity through the youth court and adult justice systems. The director shall require that all youth courts utilize the Mississippi Youth Court Information Delivery System, MYCIDS.
- AOC also must develop and require use of a statewide docket numbering system and uniform youth court orders and forms;
- coordinate and conduct studies and projects to improve the administration of justice;
- make recommendations regarding the state of the dockets and the effective number of judges and other court personnel;
- prescribe uniform administrative and business records, forms and systems;
- prepare budget recommendations necessary for maintenance and operation of the judicial system;
- administer the Civil Legal Assistance Fund under the direction of the Supreme Court;
- administer the Judicial System Operation Fund under the direction of the Supreme Court;
- serve as an agency to apply for and receive grants or other assistance;
- develop and implement personnel policies for non-judicial court employees;
- investigate, make recommendations concerning and assist in the securing of adequate physical accommodations for the judicial system;
- procure, distribute, exchange, transfer and assign equipment, books, forms and supplies as are acquired for the court system;
- prepare and submit an annual report on the work of the judicial system;
- make recommendations for the improvement of the operations of the judicial system;
- take necessary steps in the collection of unpaid fines and court costs;
- establish a program to facilitate the use of language interpreters in all courts of the State of Mississippi;
- certify and monitor drug courts;
- collect monthly data reports from certified drug courts, and compile an annual data summary; and
- perform any additional administrative duties assigned by the Supreme Court.

The AOC processes payroll for the support staff of the Chancery and Circuit judges, as well as the official court reporters; administers the office and rent allowances for the trial judges; maintains inventory records for equipment purchased with state funds; approves the trial judges' travel reimbursements for in-state and out-of-state travel; collects statistical data from the Chancery, Circuit, County and Youth Courts; collects data on cases handled by family masters; administers special funds for civil legal assistance, comprehensive electronic court systems, judicial system operations and the Board of Certified Court Reporters; and oversees several federal grants awarded to the AOC for the benefit of the judiciary.

The AOC works closely with study groups created to improve the administration of justice. Groups and their work are:

Court Improvement Program (CIP) Workgroup/ CIP Multidisciplinary Committee

The Court Improvement Program (CIP) Workgroup was established in 2007 as a collaborative effort between the Administrative Office of Courts and the Department of Human Services-Division of Family and Children's Services. That cooperation continues with the Department of Child Protection Services, MDCPS. Problem-solving groups that have grown out of the CIP Workgroup include the Parent Representation Task Force, Jurist in Residence meetings with the MDCPS Commissioner, the 2020 Judicial Engagement Teams, the Three Branch Government Convening, the courts engagement team and the Hope Initiative to plan the Hope Focused and Trauma Informed Youth Courts statewide training in 2021. Members of the CIP Workgroup were participants in the Mississippi Commission on Children's Justice.

A CIP Multidisciplinary Committee was appointed to develop and implement the CIP Strategic Plan in 2018, when CIP came under the Mississippi Commission on Children's Justice. Members of the Committee in 2020 included MDCPS state and regional staff, Jurist in Residence, County Youth Court judges, representatives of the Attorney General's office, Mississippi College School of Law Mission First Legal Aid Office, AOC staff, the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians, Children's Advocacy Centers of Mississippi and MDHS state office staff from the Division of Child Support.

Child and Family Services Review Program Improvement Plan (PIP)

Throughout 2019, Supreme Court Justice Dawn Beam, Youth Court judges, CIP Director Mary Fuller and Jurist in Residence John N. Hudson participated in development and revisions of the Court Collaboration section of the Mississippi Department of Child Protection Services' Program Improvement Plan with Children's Bureau Region IV representatives. In 2020 those persons actively participated in the implementation of the plan. The Court Collaboration part of MDCPS' Program Improvement Plan includes:

- roll out the Practice Model to Chancery District 1, which includes Alcorn, Itawamba, Lee, Monroe, Pontotoc, Prentiss, Tishomingo and Union counties, to complement the roll out of parent representation in those same counties. Current Practice Model sites are in Forrest, Hancock, Harrison, Jackson, and Jones counties in south Mississippi. The expansion included Alcorn, Itawamba, Lee, Monroe, Pontotoc, Prentiss, Tishomingo and Union counties in north Mississippi. Further expansion of parent representation occurred in Perry, Marion, Pearl River and Lamar counties.
- members collaborate with the Commission on Children's Justice to begin planning for multidisciplinary court team trainings in north, central and south Mississippi on Hope Focused, Trauma Informed Courts. The Court CIP Director summarized the Action Plans and continued to work with counties on their county plans developed in the May 2019 trainings. The CIP Director received updates from the counties on progress toward the goals.
- continue to develop resources and access to resources through MDCPS' My Resources computer program, the Navigator Program for primary prevention in the community and the Court's Hope Focused Court Initiative to develop community services and support to stabilize families.
- serve as Faculty for the Reasonable Efforts Academy which trained all youth court judges in the state on the art and importance of the Congressional mandate to make case specific reasonable efforts findings. Reasonable efforts findings document whether the Agency has made reasonable efforts to maintain the family together before removal, and later when removal occurs, to complete the permanent plan. Failure to make reasonable efforts results in a loss of federal reimbursement to the state.
- add Hinds County in the second year of the MDCPS PIP.

The Program Improvement Plan was approved by the Children's Bureau and included action steps for the judiciary as well as the agency.

CIP training events

CIP training events in 2020 included:

- Three Branch Government Convening sponsored by the Kellogg Foundation;
- National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges (NCJFCJ) training for several local judges to be trained by national experts in the best practices of child welfare and juvenile justice courts;
- One LOUD Voice, a multi-disciplinary approach to child abuse sponsored by Children's Advocacy Centers of Mississippi. CIP assisted with recruitment and compensation of some speakers;
- National Interdisciplinary Parent Defense Conference for judges and parent attorneys;
- Annual CIP Grantees' Meeting and Five Year Planning Conference;
- Annual Youth Court Judges and Referees Conference—which this year was the Reasonable Effort Academy noted above;
- 2020 Indian Child Welfare Act Conference was planned but cancelled due to the COVID pandemic. The conference, hosted annually by the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians, began 10 years ago as an effort to educate state judges and social workers on the requirements of ICWA.

COMMISSION ON CONTINUING LEGAL EDUCATION

The Mississippi Commission on Continuing Legal Education (CLE) has the primary responsibility to exercise general supervisory authority over the administration of the Rules for Mandatory Continuing Legal Education and to adopt, repeal, and amend regulations consistent with these rules. The objective of the Mississippi Commission on CLE is to ensure that each member of the Mississippi Bar complies with the rules and regulations established by the Commission and meets the mandatory CLE requirements in a timely and efficient manner.

CLE staff are, at left, left to right, Administrator Tracy Graves and Administrative Assistant Casey Byrd.



Twelve (12) hours of approved instruction are required annually of every attorney licensed to practice law in the state of Mississippi. Newly admitted attorneys are required to attend a specific new lawyer program within the first two years of practice, then comply with the annual requirement thereafter.

The Commission strives to meet the needs of the members of the Mississippi Bar regarding continuing legal education by keeping abreast of national changes in programming formats and topics. Members of the Commission and its administrator are active in the national organization of regulatory CLE boards, CLereg.

Due to restrictions for attendance at live CLE programs caused by COVID-19, the Mississippi Commission on CLE petitioned the Mississippi Supreme Court to temporarily amend Rule 3 of the Rules and Regulations for Mandatory Continuing Legal Education and waive the in-person requirements for attorneys' CLE obligation for the 2019-2020 reporting year. This would allow attorneys to earn CLE credits in the method of their choosing. The Commission also petitioned the Court for an automatic deadline extension to September 30, 2020, for any attorney not able to meet the CLE requirement during the compliance period. The Mississippi Supreme Court granted the Commission's petition and attorneys were allowed to complete their CLE requirement through online programs, webinars or live in-person programs. The CLE deadline was extended to Sept. 30, 2020, and the reporting deadline was extended to Oct. 15, 2020. Further, the Mississippi Supreme Court ordered that any newly admitted attorney who had to complete the new lawyer program by July 31, 2020, could complete that program online, and the deadline to complete it was also extended to Sept. 30, 2020.

In 2020, the Mississippi Commission on CLE approved for credit 120 live programs that were held in the state of Mississippi, 684 live programs held outside the state of Mississippi and 5397 programs that were given by satellite, teleconference or online through live webcasts and on-demand programs.

BOARD OF BAR ADMISSIONS

The Board of Bar Admissions has the primary obligation to administer the laws and rules governing admission to practice law in Mississippi. The Board's efforts are primarily focused on the preparation, administration and evaluation of twice yearly Bar admission examinations, which are given in February and July, and on the investigation and evaluation of the character and fitness of each person seeking admission to practice law in the state of Mississippi.

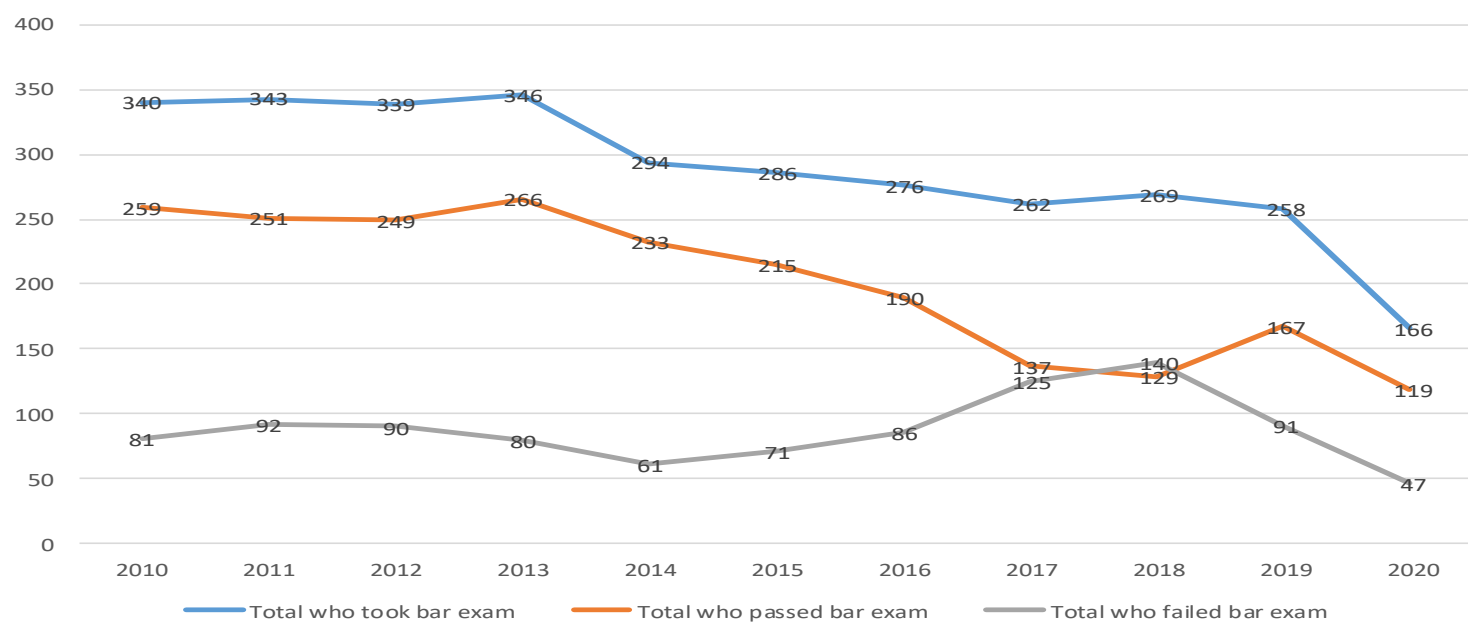
Linda Knight, seated at right, retired from the Board of Bar Admissions on April 30, 2020, after more than 38 years of service. She had been Administrator to the Board since 1991. Wendy Smith, at left, became Acting Administrator to the Board of Bar Admissions. Ms. Knight joined the Board staff in October 1981 as an administrative assistant responsible for processing Bar applications and working with the Committee on Character and Fitness. Bar applications of most people who sought to practice law in Mississippi in the past 38 years crossed her desk.

Ms. Smith joined the Board of Bar Admissions staff in September 2015. She earned a Bachelor of Science degree in paralegal studies and a Master of Science degree in Health Services Administration from Mississippi College.

In 2020, the Board of Bar Admissions processed nine applications for registration as law students, and 263 applications for examination. There were 33 motions for admission by reciprocity. Attorneys licensed in other states and having five years of active practice are exempt from taking the bar exam if the licensing state has a reciprocity agreement.



Bar Exam Pass Rate 2010-2020



	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Total took Bar Exam	340	343	339	346	294	286	276	262	269	258	168
Total passed Bar Exam	259	251	249	266	233	215	190	137	129	167	119
Total failed Bar Exam	81	92	90	80	61	71	86	125	140	91	49
Percentage pass rate	76%	73%	73%	76%	79%	75.00%	68.00%	52.00%	48.00%	64.70%	71.7%

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Bar Exam Applications											
Applications for registration as law student	104	105	69	66	92	61	27	29	16	10	9
Applications for examination	413	420	426	433	385	318	343	343	323	279	263
Admission on motion					46	30	46	33	56	57	33
Total applications processed/ being processed	517	525	495	499	523	409	416	405	395	346	166
Bar Exams											
Took February bar exam	87	101	108	108	111	98	95	88	91	102	49
Passed February bar exam		66	71	76	90	70	62	36	37	62	27
Failed February bar exam		35	37	32	21	28	33	52	54	40	22
Took July bar exam	253	242	231	238	183	188	181	174	178	156	117
Passed July bar exam		185	178	190	143	145	128	101	92	105	92
Failed July bar exam		57	53	48	40	43	53	73	86	51	25
Total who took bar exam	340	343	339	346	294	286	276	262	269	258	166
Total who passed bar exam	259	251	249	266	233	215	190	137	129	167	119
Total who failed bar exam	81	92	90	80	61	71	86	125	140	91	47

A total of 166 people took the bar exam in 2020 — 49 took the bar exam in February and 117 took the bar exam in July. Ninety fewer people took the exam than the previous year, reflecting the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. Compared to 10 years ago, only half as many people took the bar exam.

The 2020 pass rate for the bar exam was 71.7 percent, a continuing improvement over the 64.7 percent pass rate for 2019 and the 48 percent pass rate for 2018.

The July 2020 bar exam required special arrangements because of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Board of Bar Admissions sought and received permission from the Mississippi Supreme Court to proceed with the bar exam. Board of Bar Admissions Chair Marcie Baria said in a letter to the court that polling of applicants and discussions with deans of both law schools indicated that applicants wanted to proceed with the bar exam as soon as possible. Emergency Administrative Order 12, issued on May 14 by the Supreme Court, allowed the exam to go forward and approved safety protocols. The test site was the Jackson Convention Center, which provided adequate space for social distancing. The Convention Center did deep cleaning and sanitization before each exam and at the end of each day. Masks and hand sanitization stations were provided. Four medical professionals were hired to screen examinees by taking temperatures. Young lawyers were recruited to serve as proctors and received pro bono credit hours. The people who usually serve as proctors are older individuals whose health would have been at risk. Examinees and proctors were required to sign a hold-harmless agreement.