SUPREME COURT OF MISSISSIPPI

2014 Annual Report

A MESSAGE FROM CHIEF JUSTICE WILLIAM L. WALLER, JR.

Adequate funding during calendar year 2014 enabled the Judicial Branch to focus its energies on resolving the cases brought before the courts by the citizens of the state of Mississippi and to pursue innovations which improve the administration of justice.

The entire budget of the judicial branch, one of three co-equal branches of state government, represents less than one percent of the annual state general fund. The budget of the judiciary has seen steady but small incremental increases since the extreme fiscal austerity of the 2010 fiscal year. Salaries make up about 64 percent of the judiciary's budget. The total 2015 Fiscal Year appropriations for the judicial branch was $75,950,939. The General Fund appropriation was $42,761,221, or 56.30 percent of the judicial budget. The Special Fund appropriation was $33,189,718, or 43.70 percent.

The Mississippi Supreme Court and the Court of Appeals during calendar year 2014 saw a slight decline in appellate filings. The appellate courts received 926 appeals in 2014, 158 fewer than in 2013. The Supreme Court and Court of Appeals disposed of 916 cases, almost as many cases as were filed. The Supreme Court issued decisions in 400 cases, and the Court of Appeals, 516 cases. Both courts continued to decide cases well within the 270-day time frame. The Supreme Court's average time from end of briefing to case decision was 200 days, and the Court of Appeals' average time was 211 days. In cases on certiorari, the Supreme Court's average decision time was 92 days, half of the 180-day decision maximum time frame.

The Mississippi Judiciary continued to work toward uniformity in the administration of justice. Judicial leaders continued to push for creation of a district county court system. Proposed legislation failed to gain support during the 2014 session. Judicial leaders are committed to pursuing this proposal in the future.

Several major rule revisions are underway. The Supreme Court Rules Committee on Criminal Practice and Procedure since 2012 has devoted extensive study to proposed Rules of Criminal Procedure. The rules, not yet finalized, will comprise a single, uniform set of rules which will address every aspect of criminal proceedings from initiation of criminal charges through post-trial motions. The Supreme Court also adopted an important procedural change in the Mississippi Rules of Civil Procedure. The Court in a June 12, 2014, order repealed the "Comments" section of the Rules of Civil Procedure. The "Comments," which previously had to be approved by the Supreme Court, have been replaced by "Advisory Committee Notes" extensively researched by the Advisory Committee on Rules, a 15-member body made up of trial and appellate judges, attorneys and law professors. The change speeds up the process for revising explanatory material which accompanies the Rules of Civil Procedure.

Forty drug courts with statewide coverage are the judiciary's most far-reaching innovation, producing an estimated $46 million in savings for the state through by avoiding incarceration costs. Concerns about the need for accountability and uniformity among the drug court programs prompted the creation of the Office of Drug Court Compliance in October 2014. A director and three compliance officers work to educate drug court staff and assist them in implementing best practices. Additional reporting requirements also were added for

drug courts in 2014.

An *ad hoc* Reentry Council focused on reducing prison recidivism, protecting public safety and helping former inmates become productive, law abiding citizens. A core group of organizers has worked to address basic needs such as housing, employment, education, transportation and health care. Judicial leaders will seek legislative authority to formalize the Reentry Council in 2015. The Reentry Council, like drug courts, recognizes that longstanding practices in the criminal justice system have been ineffective in reducing recidivism.

Technological improvements continued. A total of 26 trial courts in 15 counties were using the Mississippi Electronic Courts e-filing system at the end of 2014. E-filing became mandatory Jan. 1, 2014, for the filing of appellate briefs and motions before the Supreme Court and Court of Appeals. E-notices were also implemented in 2014, which allows the Clerk's Office to send letters to attorneys electronically. About 55 percent of the actively practicing attorneys in the state are registered to use MEC.

Supreme Court Clerk Kathy Gillis retired June 30, 2014, after 33 years of service to the court. Muriel B. Ellis, a veteran of 23 years of work in the clerk's office, was appointed as the new clerk of the Supreme Court and Court of Appeals. Ellis became the first African-American clerk of the state's highest court. Ellis also was the first African-American deputy clerk and chief deputy clerk of the Supreme Court.

Eleven new trial judges joined the Mississippi judiciary in 2014. Three new Chancellors, four new Circuit Judges and two new County Court judges were elected in November 2014. Two County Court judges were appointed to vacancies created by retirements during 2014. New Chancellors who were elected in 2014 and took office in January 2015 are Robert G. Clark III, 11th Chancery District; Gerald M. Martin, 13th Chancery District; and Michael Fondren, 16th Chancery District. New Circuit Judges who were elected in 2014 and took office in January 2015 are Chris Schmidt, District 2; Kelly Luther, District 3; Carol White-Richard, District 4; and Dal Williamson, District 18. New County Court Judges elected in November 2014 are Adams County Court Judge Walt Brown and Hinds County Court Judge LaRita Cooper-Stokes. Gov. Phil Bryant appointed Hunter Nowell as Bolivar County Court Judge May 1, 2014, after the April 30 retirement of Judge Gwendolyn Thomas. Gov. Bryant appointed C. Kent Haney as Coahoma County Court Judge July 1, 2014, after the June 30 retirement of Judge Thomas Allen. Judges who did not seek re-election at the end of their terms include Chancellor Janace Harvey-Goree, 11th Chancery; Circuit Judge Robert W. Elliott, 3rd Circuit; Circuit Judge Betty W. Sanders, 4th Circuit; Adams County Court Judge John N. Hudson; and Hinds County Court Judge Houston Patton. District 2 Circuit Judge Chris Schmidt was elected to the position previously held by Judge John Gargiulo, who was appointed U.S. Magistrate Judge on Aug. 1, 2014. Retired Harrison County Court Judge Michael H. Ward of Gulfport was appointed as a special judge to handle Judge Gargiulo's caseload for the remainder of 2014.

Three retired trial judges died in 2014. Retired Circuit Judge Mike Smith, 73, of Summit, died Jan. 1, 2014. Retired Circuit Judge William F. Coleman, 84, died May 31, 2014. Retired Chancery Judge Ray H. Montgomery, 79, of Canton, died Dec. 14, 2014. All had continued to hear cases as senior status judges long after retirement.

William L. Waller, Jr.

Chief Justice

SUPREME COURT OF MISSISSIPPI

2014 ANNUAL REPORT

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THE MISSISSIPPI JUDICIAL SYSTEM

The Mississippi Judiciary is made up of Justice and Municipal Courts at the most basic level; County, Chancery, and Circuit Courts comprising the trial courts of record; and two appellate courts, the Court of Appeals and the Supreme Court, Mississippi's court of last resort.

There are 82 Justice Courts with 197 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 213 Municipal Courts with 231 judges. 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.

There are 21 County Courts with 30 judges. These 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 49 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.

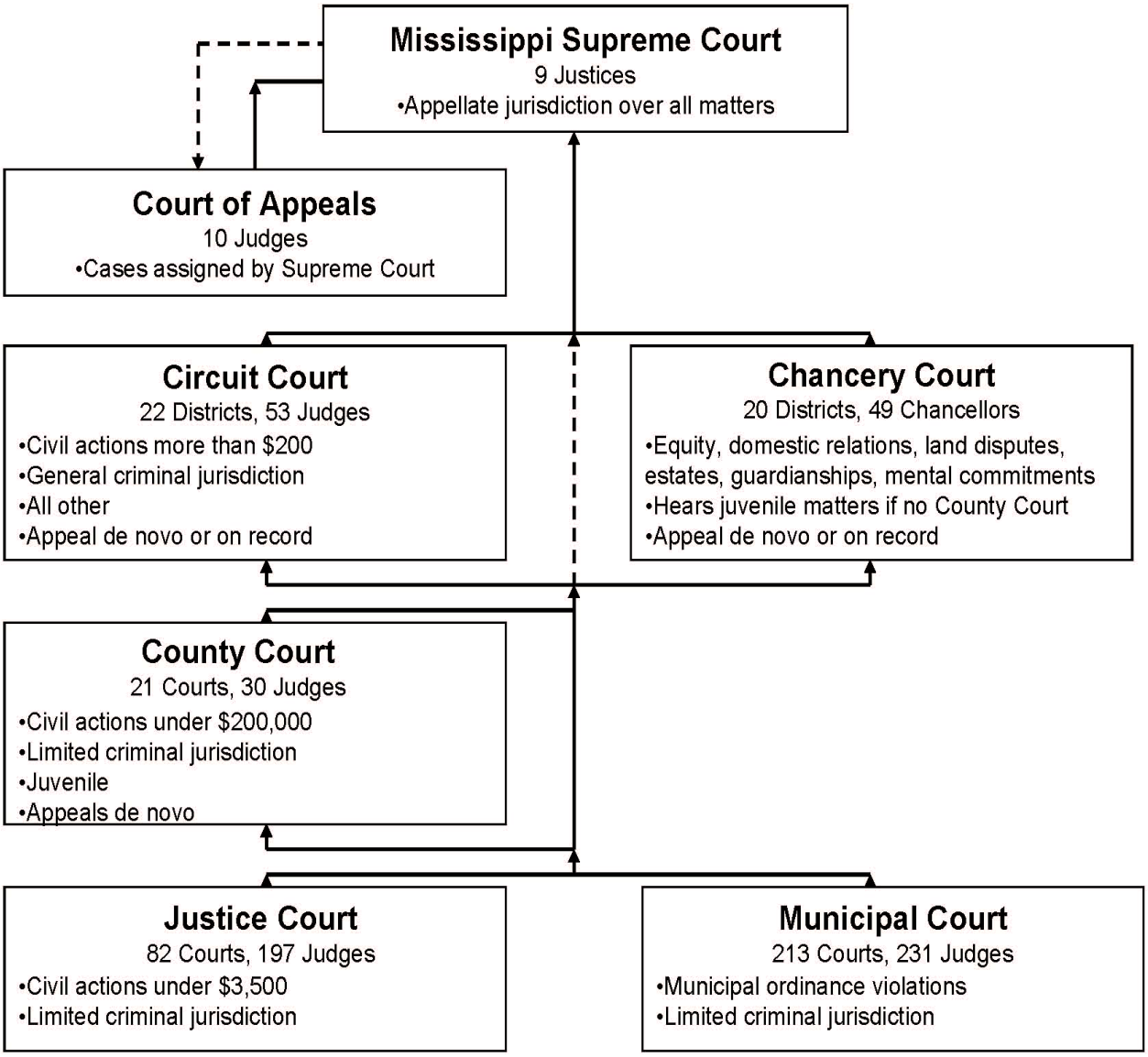
The Circuit Courts are the general jurisdiction trial courts in Mississippi. There are Circuit Courts in each county, organized into 22 districts with 53 judges. They have jurisdiction of all civil actions at law seeking recovery in excess of $200 and of all criminal cases under state law. They receive 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. There are also a few categories of cases which the Supreme Court retains, such as death penalties, utility rates and annexations. The Court or 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.

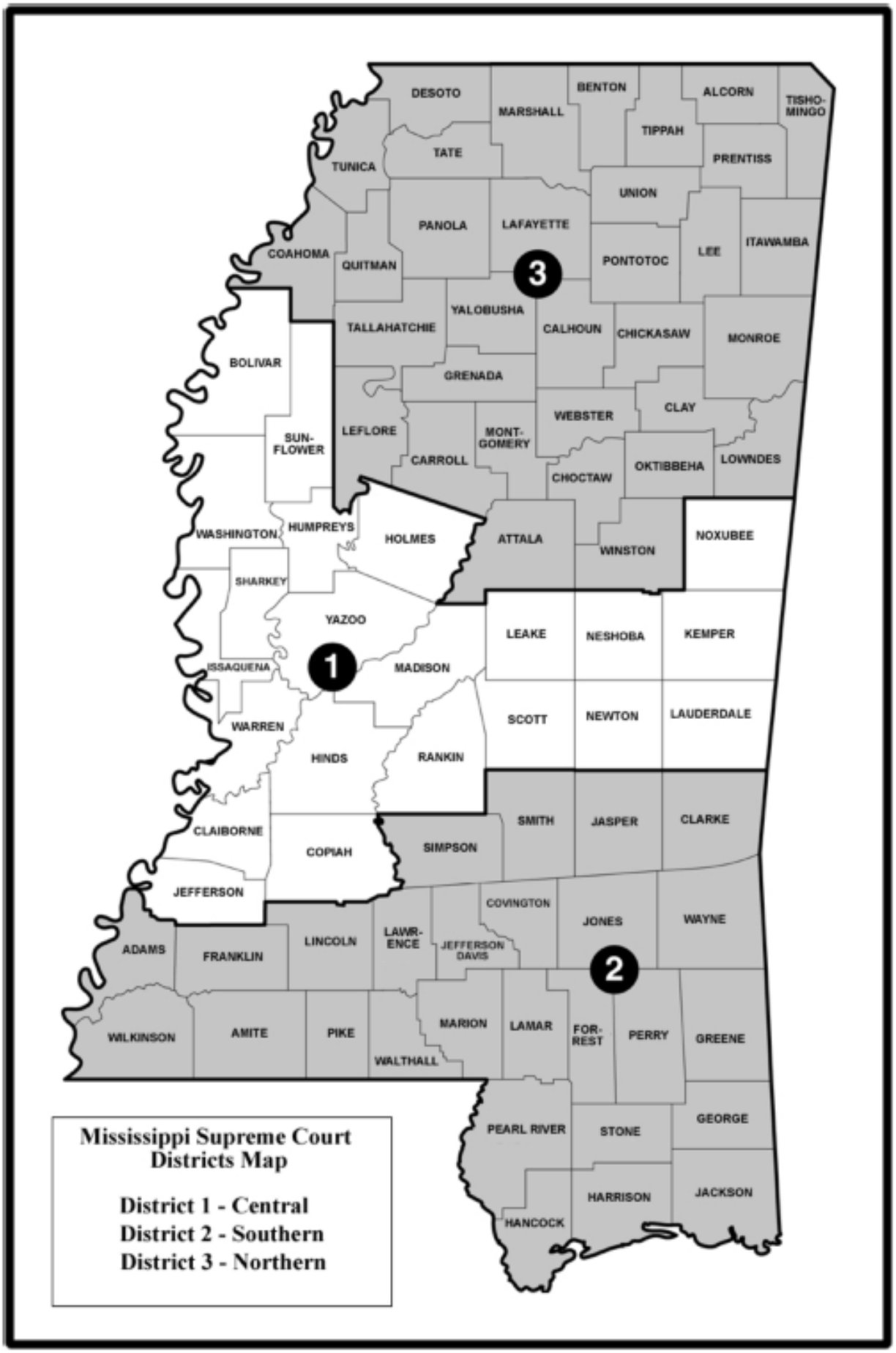
ORGANIZATIONAL CHART

of the

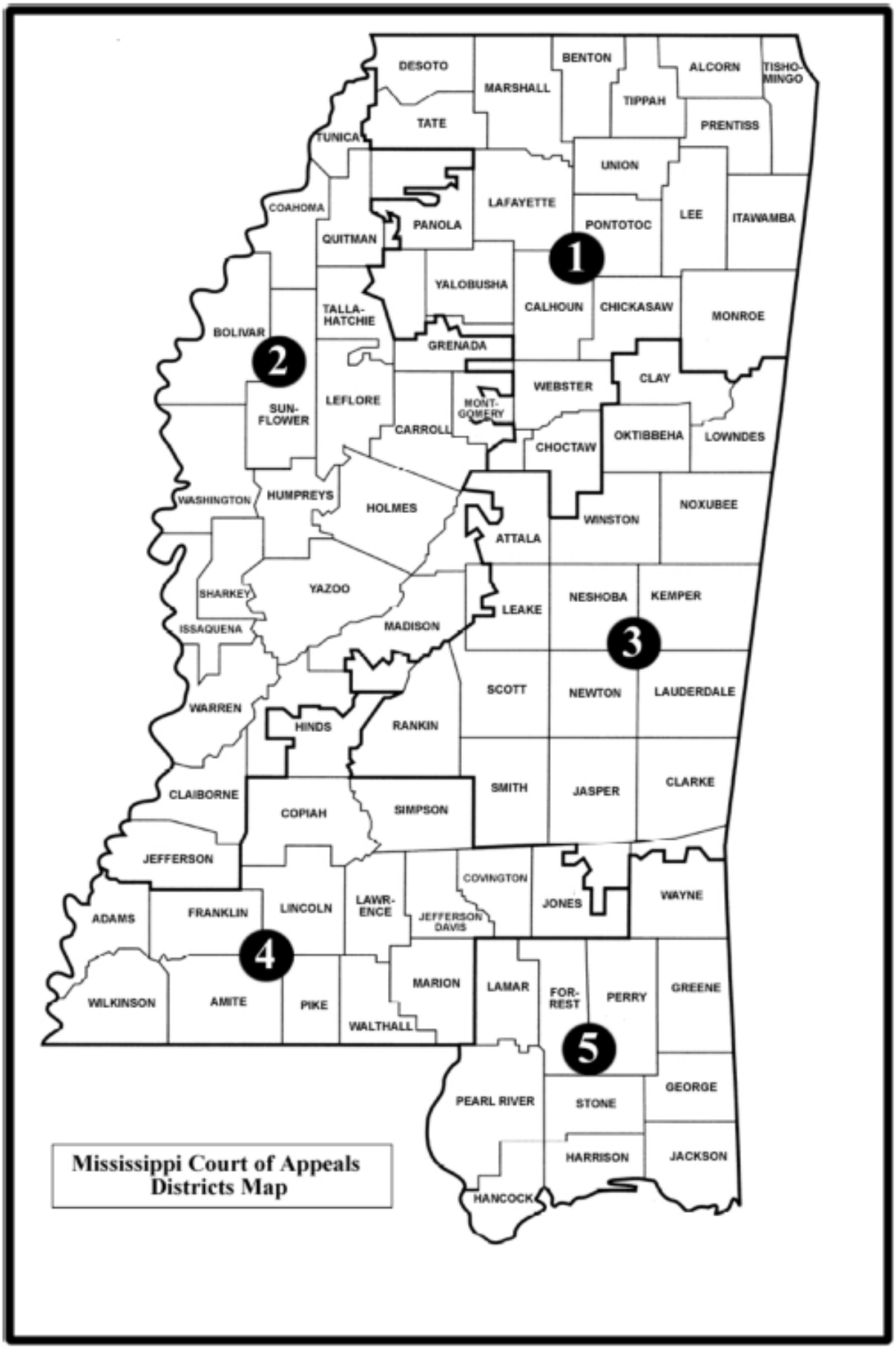
MISSISSIPPI JUDICIARY



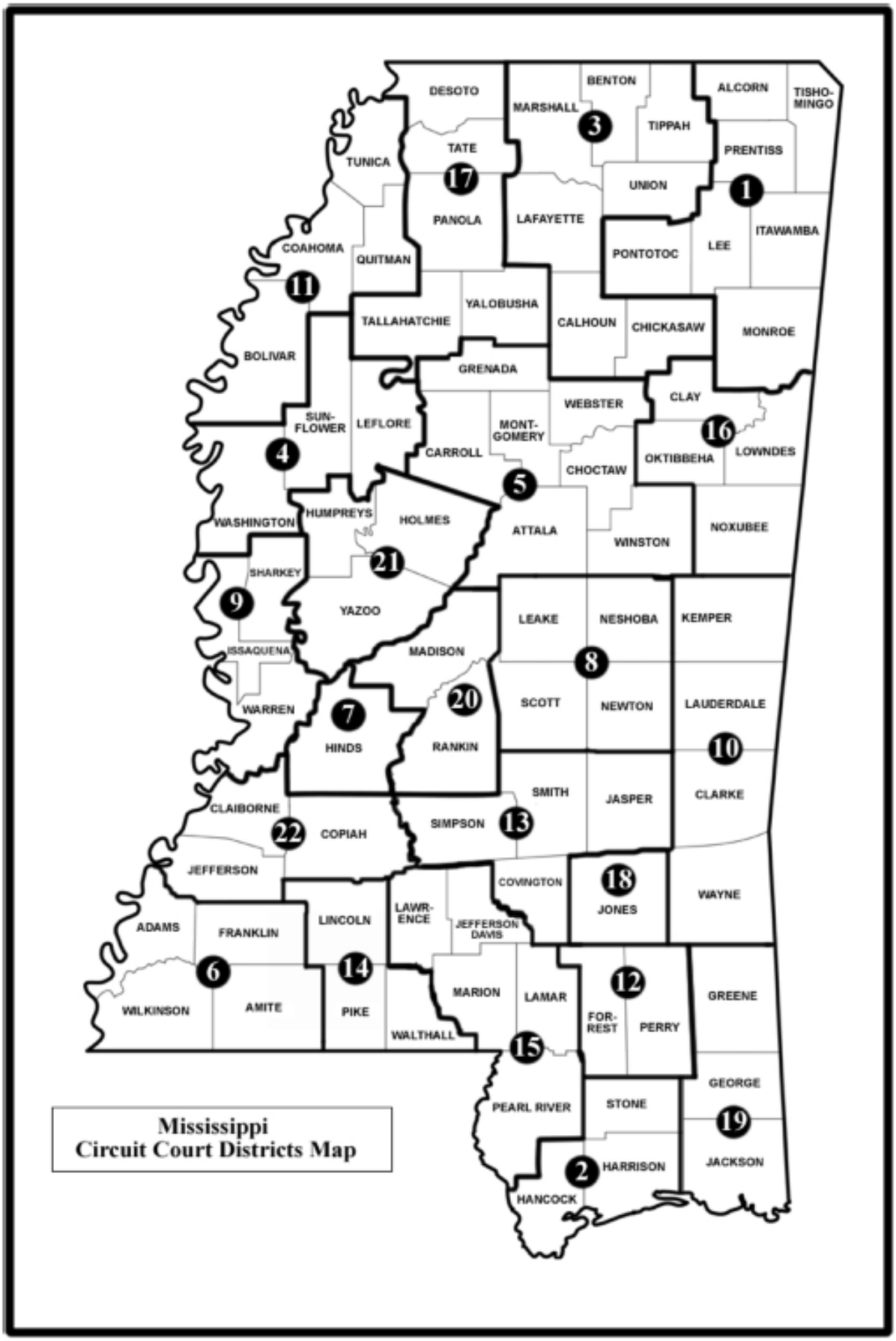
SUPREME COURT DISTRICTS



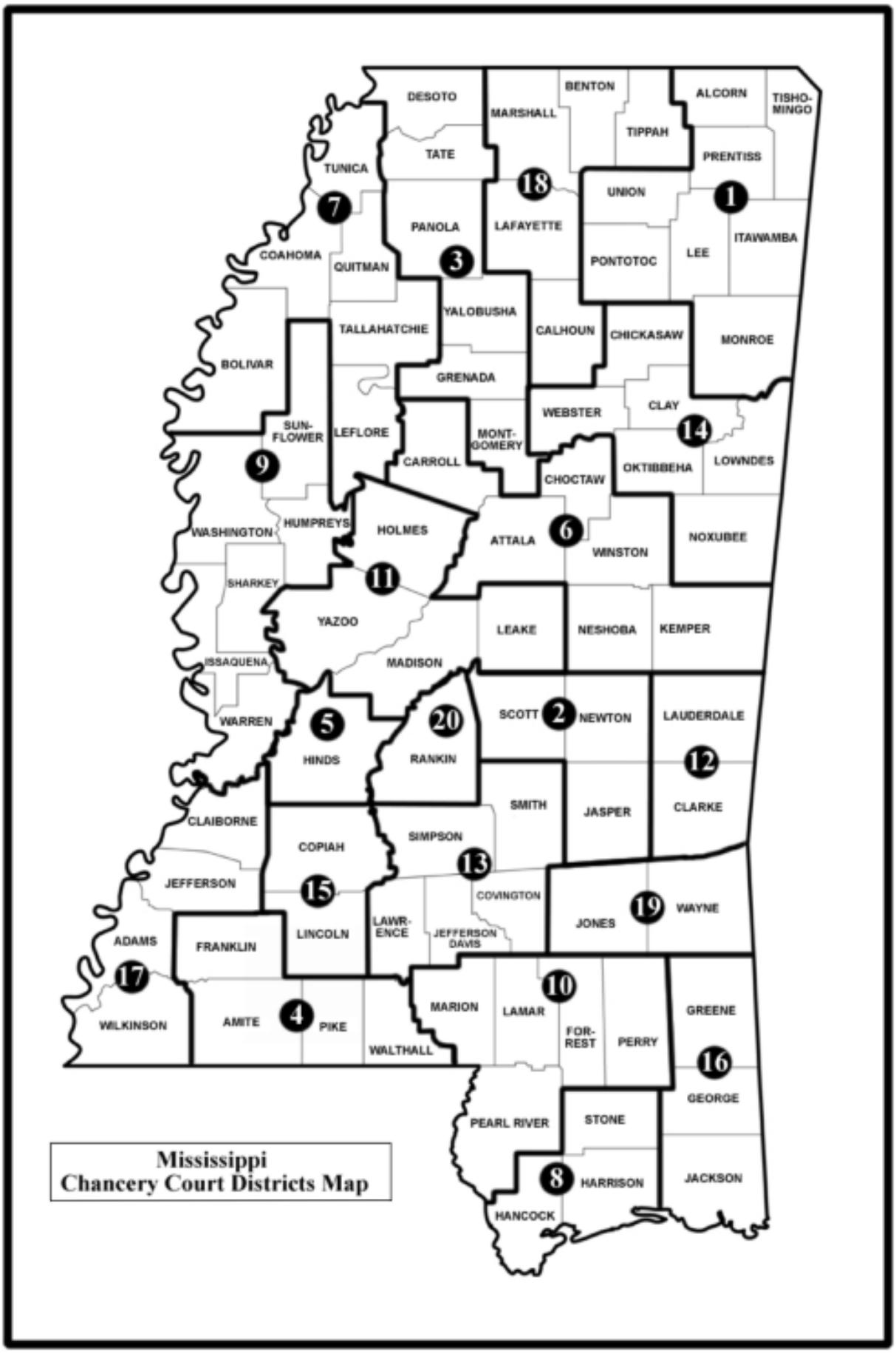
COURT OF APPEALS DISTRICTS



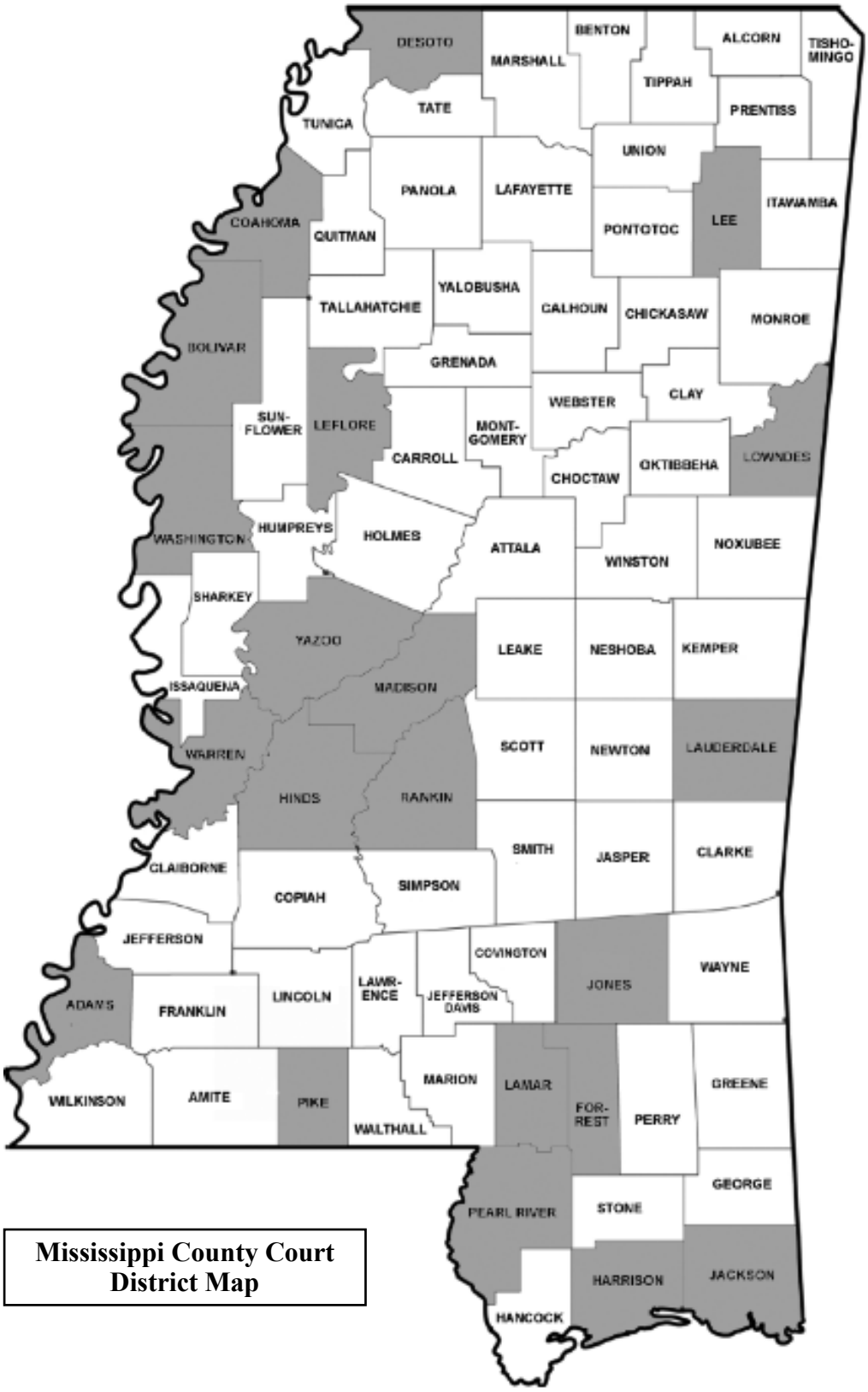
CIRCUIT COURT DISTRICTS



CHANCERY COURT DISTRICTS



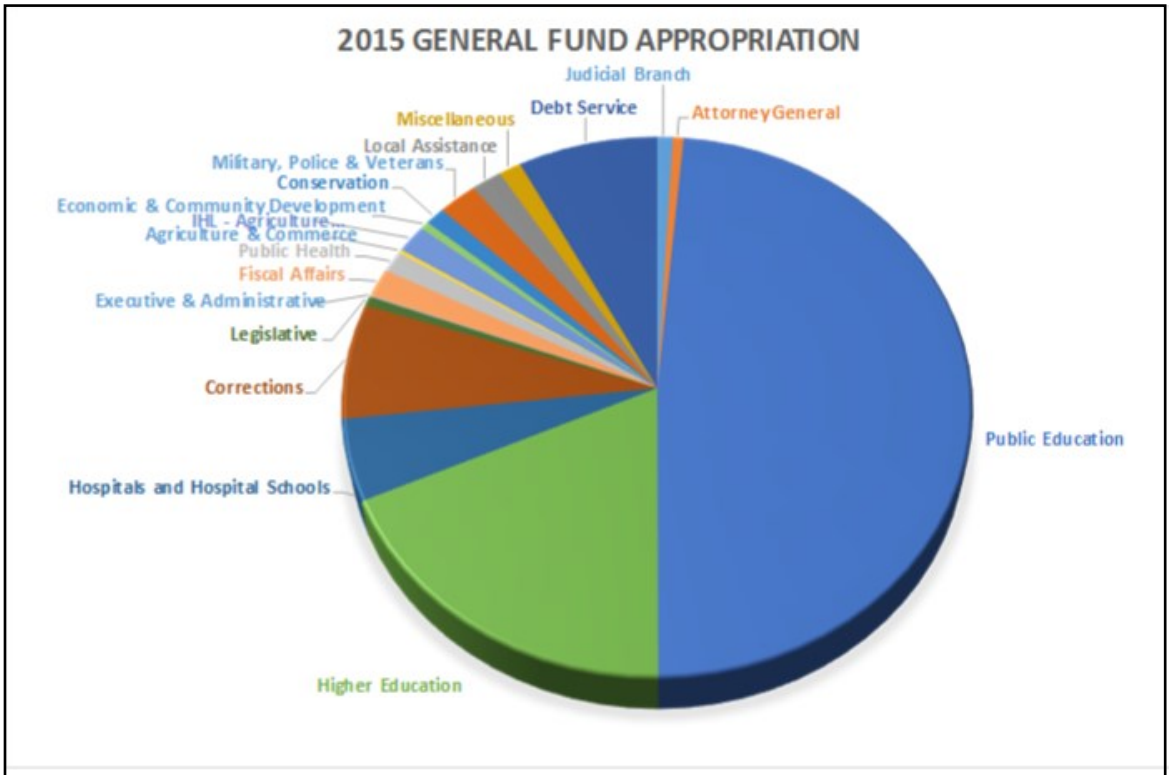
COUNTIES WHICH HAVE COUNTY COURTS



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.



Judicial Branch	42,761,221		0.70%
Attorney General	29,141,878		0.48%
Total Judiciary and Justice per LBO		71,903,099	1.18%
Public Education	2,431,998,243	2,431,998,243	40.04%
Higher Education	920,057,391	920,057,391	15.15%
Hospitals and Hospital Schools	244,570,476	244,570,476	4.03%
Corrections	346,063,329	346,063,329	5.70%
Social Welfare		1,060,902,620	17.47%
Other:			
Legislative	28,554,410		
Executive and Administrative	3,124,348		
Fiscal Affairs	86,779,970		
Public Health	64,223,461		
Agriculture and Commerce	11,162,006		
IHL - Agriculture Units	84,916,645		
Economic and Community Development	24,122,081		
Conservation	55,338,532		
Military, Police and Veterans Affairs	107,739,613		
Local Assistance	84,454,641		
Miscellaneous	61,829,629		
Debt Service	385,628,277		
Total of Other		997,873,613	16.43%
Total General Fund Appropriation for FY 2015		6,073,368,771	100.00%

The total 2015 Fiscal Year appropriation for the judicial branch was $75,950,939. The General Fund appropriation was $42,761,221, or 56.30 percent of the judicial budget. The Special Fund appropriation was $33,189,718, or 43.7 percent.

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 2015 general fund appropriations for all three branches of state government was $6,073,368,771.

The General Fund appropriation for the Administrative Office of Courts and all

courts of record in the state, including the Supreme Court, the Court of Appeals, the 82 circuit courts, the 82 chancery courts, and the 21 county courts, was $42,761,221.

JUDICIAL BRANCH FY 2015 BUDGET

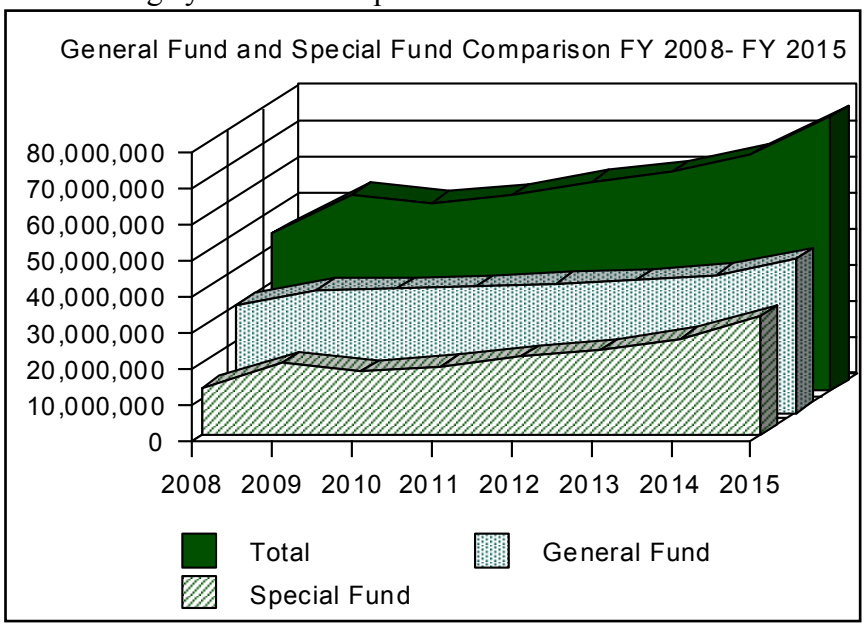
	Supreme	Court of Appeals	Circuit & Chancery	AOC	CLE	Bar	TOTALS
Salaries	5,507,919	4,883,332	24,469,600	13,243,562	66,350	163,725	48,334,488
Travel	342,500	363,400	848,009	54,950	15,000	23,000	1,646,859
Contractual	1,006,900	737,050	92,300	1,460,841	50,621	198,218	3,545,930
Commodities	398,700	19,500	1,026,000	21,425	4,180	16,443	1,486,248
Equipment	10,000	59,850	0	70,000	2,500	1,200	143,550
Subsidies	0	0	759,434	20,034,430	0	0	20,793,864
Totals	7,266,019	6,063,132	27,195,343	34,885,208	138,651	402,586	75,950,939
General Funds	6,618,483	5,646,227	24,394,773	6,101,738	0	0	42,761,221
Special Funds	647,536	416,905	2,800,570	28,783,470	138,651	402,586	33,189,718
Totals	7,266,019	6,063,132	27,195,343	34,885,208	138,651	402,586	75,950,939
No. of PINS	67	58	108	28	1	3	265

The judicial system's largest expenditure is salaries: $48,334,488, or 63.64 percent of the entire judicial branch budget, including General Fund and Special Fund appropriations.

Judicial compensation realignment approved by the 2012 Legislature is funded totally by a $40 fee collected on all civil filings, a $100 increase in appellate filing fees and various other fees charged by the Clerk of the Supreme Court. The judicial salary revisions under Mississippi Code Section 25-3-35(1) went into effect January 1, 2013. Incremental raises followed in 2014. Additional increments will become effective in 2015 and 2016. From and after January 1, 2019, and every four years thereafter, the annual salaries of state judges are to be adjusted to the level of compensation recommended by the State Personnel Board according to the board's most recent report on judicial salaries, as required under Section 25-9-115, to the extent that sufficient funds are available. The annual salaries fixed in accordance with this provision shall not become effective until the commencement of the next immediately succeeding term of office.

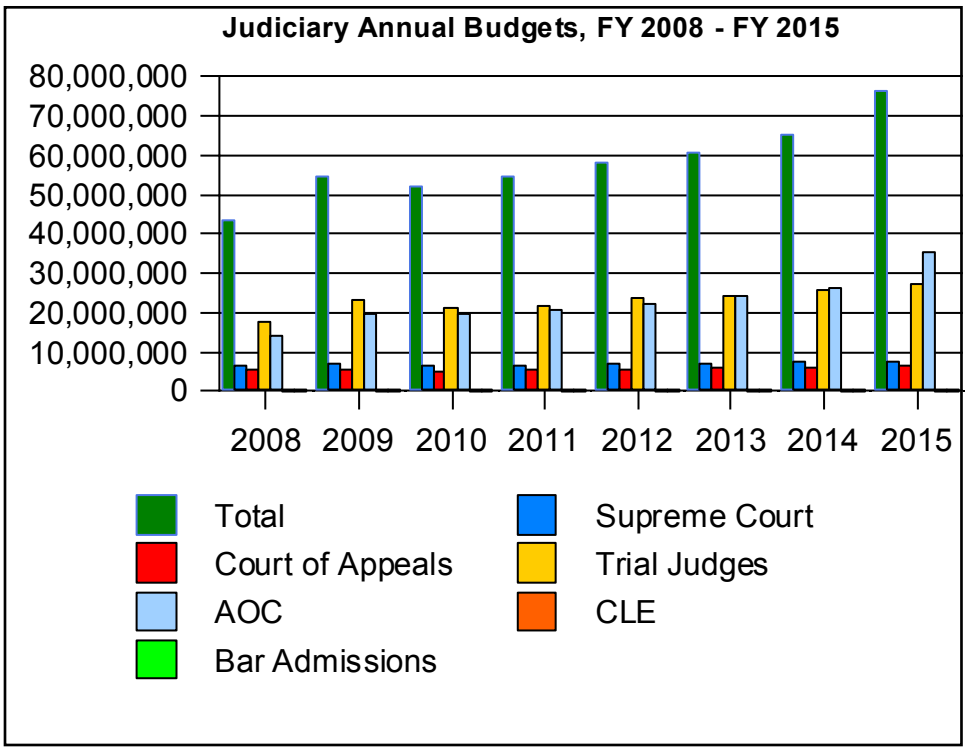
Judicial Salaries	
Effective January 1, 2015	
Supreme Court Chief Justice	148,097.50
Supreme Court Presiding Justices	144,422.25
Supreme Court Associate Justices	142,320.00
Court of Appeals Chief Judge	137,716.00
Court of Appeals Associate Judges	134,882.75
Chancery Judges	128,042.50
Circuit Judges	128,042.50
County Court Judges	County Judge salaries vary by county. The majority are $1,000 less than Chancery and Circuit Judges.

Much of the work of the judicial branch relies on special funds. Mississippi Electronic Courts, an electronic filing system which operated in 26 trial courts in 15 counties at the end of 2014, receives no state General Fund appropriation. MEC is funded by a $10 fee collected on all civil case filings, 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.



Mississippi's drug courts in the past have been mostly funded by special assessments on criminal felonies, misdemeanors and traffic offenses. The special assessments of $8 to $10, authorized by Mississippi Code Section 99-19-73, generated about $4 million a year. The mechanism worked well during the early years of the drug court movement, but by the time drug courts expanded to all 22 circuit courts and numerous youth courts and misdemeanor courts, the special assessments could no longer cover operating costs. Without additional funding, the total statewide drug court budget dropped from $7,955,800.87 in Fiscal Year 2013 to $4,699,313.82 in FY 2014, necessitating closure of programs and reduction of services.

The Legislature made a commitment to fully fund drug courts in FY 2015, giving the Administrative Office of Courts spending authority for $8,199,650 special fund money, appropriating $2.7 million in General Fund monies and providing an additional $1.4 million from the capital expenditures fund. The General Fund appropriation allowed financially struggling drug courts to restore services and continue operations.



The annual budget of the judiciary has grown slightly each year since FY 2010. Drug courts reached statewide coverage in early 2013, and Mississippi Electronic Courts continues to expand into more courts. 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.

OUTREACH AND INNOVATION

Access to Justice

The Access to Justice Commission in 2014 worked to increase funding for programs that provide lawyers for low income people and also to assist people who seek to represent themselves in civil court proceedings. The Commission worked with the Mississippi Volunteer Lawyers Project and the Legal Services programs to obtain Legislative approval for additional funding for the Civil Legal Assistance Fund. A special assessment of $2.77 was added to certain misdemeanor crimes.

Supreme Court Presiding Justice Jess H. Dickinson on May 21, 2014, participated in a briefing before the U.S. House of Representatives Commerce Committee addressing civil legal assistance needs of the poor.

The Commission during 2014 continued work on *pro se* forms which will assist low income people who cannot afford to hire a lawyer. The Commission finalized a *pro se* form for irreconcilable differences divorce with no children and an agreed property settlement. Work began on forms for name change and emancipation of minors.

The Commission began work with the Mississippi Volunteer Lawyers Project on an online legal help resource to allow eligible users to post legal questions to a private messaging system and receive answers from volunteer attorneys. MVLP and the Commission hope to launch the site in fall 2015. The Pro Bono Initiative of the University of Mississippi School of Law is helping sponsor the project.

The Access to Justice Commission partnered with the Public Service Committee of the Mississippi Bar's Young Lawyers Division and the Capital Area Bar Association on a "Lawyers in the Library" event in Jackson on Oct. 23, 2014. Attorney volunteers advised about 40 participants on topics including criminal law and expungements, family law, estate planning, disability and Social Security.

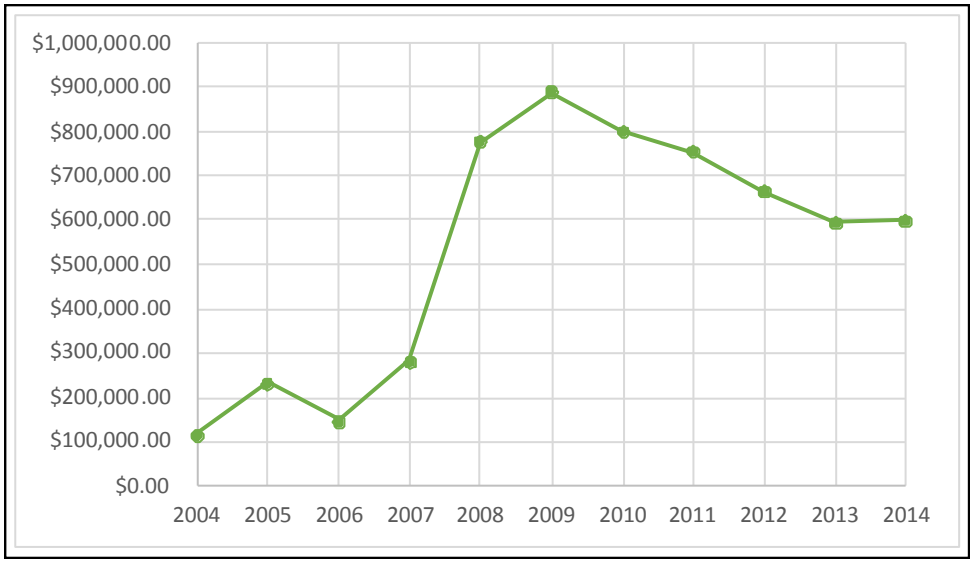
The Access to Justice Commission was created by the Mississippi Supreme Court on June 28, 2006, to develop a unified strategy to improve access to the civil courts for the poor. The Commission is tasked to investigate the need for civil legal services to the poor in Mississippi, and to evaluate, develop and recommend policies, programs and initiatives which will assist the judiciary in meeting needs for civil legal services to the poor.

Civil Legal Assistance Fund

The Supreme Court during Fiscal Year 2014 distributed $597,480.76 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 offices. Since the Civil Legal Assistance Fund was created in 2004, more than $5.8 million has been disbursed to assist poor people to gain access to the legal system to have their civil legal disputes addressed. Civil Legal Assistance Fund distribution are paid from special assessments on court filings and from fees charged to out-of-state attorneys appearing *pro hac vice*. No general fund appropriations are used.

Note: Annual Reports in previous years have included calendar year information for Civil Legal Assistance Fund distributions. The 2014 report utilizes Fiscal Year data covering the entire history of the Civil Legal Assistance Fund.

Year	Funding provided
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
TOTAL	$5,838,762.85



Court Interpreter Credentialing Program

The Administrative Office of Courts during 2014 conducted three seminars to introduce bilingual speakers to the requirements for court interpreting. Seminars were conducted in Jackson, Tupelo and Long Beach. Seminars introduced prospective foreign language interpreters to interpreting in legal settings including the courtroom, depositions and other legal proceedings. Attendance at the seminar is the first step in the program which will train, certify, and test individuals who wish to serve as interpreters in the courtrooms of Mississippi. Court interpreters must understand court proceedings as well as be fluent in English and a second language. Interpreters must be highly skilled in all modes of interpreting.

The AOC developed the Mississippi Court Interpreter Credentialing Program to assist the courts in Mississippi in their endeavors to provide equal access to justice for limited English proficiency individuals. The AOC program provides judges in all state courts with a list of language interpreters who have demonstrated proficiency in oral and written interpretation of court proceedings. The credentialing program provides two levels of proficiency: registered and certified.

At the end of 2014, 12 interpreters were credentialed by AOC. They included 10 Spanish speakers, one Russian speaker, and one Mandarin Chinese speaker. Seven interpreters who were certified earlier were originally trained and credentialed in other states, then accepted through reciprocity in Mississippi. Four live in Tennessee.

AOC officials hope to train and issue credentials to interpreters in many languages. The biggest need is for those who speak Spanish or Vietnamese.

AOC adopted Standards for Court Interpreters and a Code of Ethics for Court Interpreters on Oct. 17, 2011. The rules for court interpreters apply to municipal court, justice court, youth court, county court, circuit court, chancery court and grand jury proceedings. The AOC standards and code of ethics are modeled on standards for language interpretation adopted by the National Center for State Courts' Consortium for Language Access in the Courts. The Mississippi AOC is a member of the Consortium. Court interpreters who are certified in other Consortium member states may seek reciprocity.

Drug Courts

The Mississippi Legislature's commitment to fully fund drug courts in FY 2015 enabled felony adult drug courts to make plans for continued growth, enabled juvenile drug courts to continue operation, and allowed two family drug courts to resume operations. Forty drug courts were in operation at the end of December 2014. They included 22 felony adult drug courts, with 2,995 participants enrolled; 3 adult misdemeanor drug courts in municipal and justice court jurisdictions, with 103 people enrolled; 13 juvenile drug courts, with 361 people enrolled; and two family drug court pilot programs.

Drug court participants represent an estimated $46 million savings in incarceration costs. Felony adult drug court participants also paid $1,146,991.31 in fines – money which was returned to county treasuries. Felony adult drug courts collected $1,403,750.72 in fees from participants. Those funds help offset the costs of operating drug court programs. During calendar year 2014, 646 people graduated from drug court programs, and 68 babies were born drug-free to women enrolled in drug courts.

In addition to tracking monthly enrollment activities, drug courts must report monthly to the Administrative Office of Courts the total number of participants who committed at least one violation resulting in sanctions, were arrested for a new criminal offense while in the drug court program, or were convicted of another crime. The 11-member State Drug Court Advisory Committee will review the information and make recommendations. AOC will submit an annual report to the Joint Committee on Performance Evaluation and Expenditure Review, PEER, with the first report due Aug. 1, 2015.

The Office of Drug Court Compliance was created in October 2014 to address a need for monitoring drug court operations across the state to assure uniformity and adherence to best practices. Director William T. Saul, a veteran law enforcement officer, and three compliance officers work to educate drug court staff and assist them in implementing best practices. Legislation adopted in 2014 requires implementation of evidence-based practices and uniform certification in state drug courts. The legislation was part of the extensive criminal justice reforms in House Bill 585. While all drug courts in the past have been required to be certified by the AOC and follow a framework of treatment, testing and supervision, there has been variation in their operations. The legislation called for uniform certification.

Commission on Children's Justice

The Commission on Children's Justice continued a leading role in seeking policy changes which will improve the lives of abused, neglected and delinquent children.

The Mississippi Supreme Court, in response to the Commission's recommendations in its December 2013 report, and at the request of other advocates for children, created a position of Resident Jurist to assist matters affecting juveniles in Youth Court. Judge John N. Hudson, who retired from the bench in December 2014 after 31 years as Adams County Youth Court Judge, is expected to assume duties as the state's Resident Jurist in April 2015. The Resident Jurist will assist the Mississippi Supreme Court in performing its supervisory role with respect to effective administration of justice in Youth Courts, serve as a liaison to the Department of Human Services and other state agencies involved in child protection and provide training to Youth Court judges and referees. The Resident Jurist is modeled on a program successfully implemented by the Texas Supreme Court.

Commission leaders continue efforts to make permanent and expand pilot programs that provide attorneys for indigent parents facing allegations of abuse and neglect in Youth Court. Youth Courts in Adams, Forrest, Harrison and Rankin counties provide free representation to indigent parents under a pilot program which began in 2012. Attorney representation in Adams, Forrest, Harrison and Rankin counties is funded by a grant from Seattle-based Casey Family Programs and a Court Improvement grant from the Mississippi Administrative Office of Courts. Attorneys providing the representation come from private practice, the Mississippi Center for Legal Services and Mission First Legal Aid. Members of the Commission persuaded Casey Family Programs to extend the original two-year grant for a third year while the Commission seeks government and other funding to sustain and expand the parental representation program. Casey Family Programs has also agreed to match county funding for Hancock County to pilot parent representation in 2015.

Before the pilot programs began, Madison County Youth Court was the only court which appointed attorneys to represent indigent parents. Mississippi is the only state in the nation that does not provide an attorney for indigent parents facing possible termination of parental rights in allegations of abuse and neglect.

Youth Court Judges who preside in pilot program courts observed that cases proceeded faster when parents had the assistance of an attorney. Limited data has been gathered and analyzed. The National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges in its 2014 report did preliminary analysis of Rankin County data. Its findings included:

- Mothers represented by project attorneys received significantly more services than mothers represented by private attorneys and mothers who had no representation.
- The average number of days from petition filing to adjudication was shorter in cases with parent representation (both project and private representation) than in cases without representation.
- The average number of days from petition filing to case closure was shorter in cases with parent representation than in cases without representation.
- The average number of continuances was similar across cases with and without parent representation, suggesting that parent's attorneys did not cause unnecessary delays.
- Cases in which parents were represented by pilot project attorneys were more likely to result in dismissal of the petition than cases in which parents had no representation or were represented by private attorneys.

Four Pilot Counties, Adams, Forrest, Harrison and Rankin, completed two years of parent representation efforts as of December 2014, with funding from Casey Family Programs and the Administrative Office of Courts. According to data collected, reunification occurs more often when parents are represented and understand the steps that are required for their children to return home. Having attorney representation early in the process assists parents who are not fundamentally unfit to understand that services and safety plans are a better option than removal. Research conducted nationwide shows that children who spend extended time in foster care do not function well in society, are at risk of homelessness, incarceration, unemployment and are likely to continue a cycle of generational foster care with their children. Returning children to their parents when possible benefits the child, the family and the State, both in terms of human capital and economic efficiency.

According to data collected, reunification occurs more often when parents are represented and understand the steps that are required for their children to return home. Having attorney representation early in the process assists parents who are not fundamentally unfit to understand that services and safety plans are a better option than removal. Attorneys are able to guide parents toward compliance with court orders, or in cases in which the parent will not be able to retain custody, move cases forward so that children can be timely placed in a permanent setting. Achieving permanency quickly for the child is paramount, whether it be through reunification with parents, placement with relatives, or through removal from the family and termination of parental rights.

The Commission in its 2013 report also recommended creation of a state funded, uniform Youth Court system. Proposed legislation introduced in 2014 called for creation of a statewide system of County Courts which could hear Youth Court and County Court jurisdictional matters. Only 21 counties presently have County Courts. Appointed attorney youth court referees handle youth court matters in 61 counties. The proposed legislation failed to gain support from lawmakers. A similar proposal will be introduced in 2015.

The Mississippi Supreme Court created the Commission on Children's Justice in April 2006, and reestablished it in 2010. After the Commission finalized its 2013 report, it began to undergo another reorganization. The new Commission will be appointed by the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court in 2015.

Electronic Filing and Case Management: Mississippi Electronic Courts

The Mississippi Electronic Courts (MEC) program implemented e-filing systems in five trial courts in three counties during 2014. E-filing was implemented in the Chancery Courts of Lauderdale, Lowndes and Oktibbeha counties and in the Circuit and County Courts of Rankin County. A total of 26 trial courts in 15 counties were using the MEC system at the end of 2014. E-filing trial courts include Chancery Courts in DeSoto, Grenada, Holmes, Lauderdale, Lowndes, Montgomery, Oktibbeha, Webster and Yazoo counties; Chancery and Circuit Courts in Clay County; and all trial courts — Chancery, Circuit and County Courts — in Madison, Harrison, Hinds, Rankin and Warren counties.

In December 2014, 4,994 attorneys were registered to use MEC. There were 2,125 non-attorney registered users. MEC allows attorneys to file and view documents 24 hours a day, seven days a week, in all MEC participating courts. Judges can access documents at any time and location via the Internet, allowing them to prepare for hearings and draft orders and opinions without waiting for paper files. The public has easier access to court records.

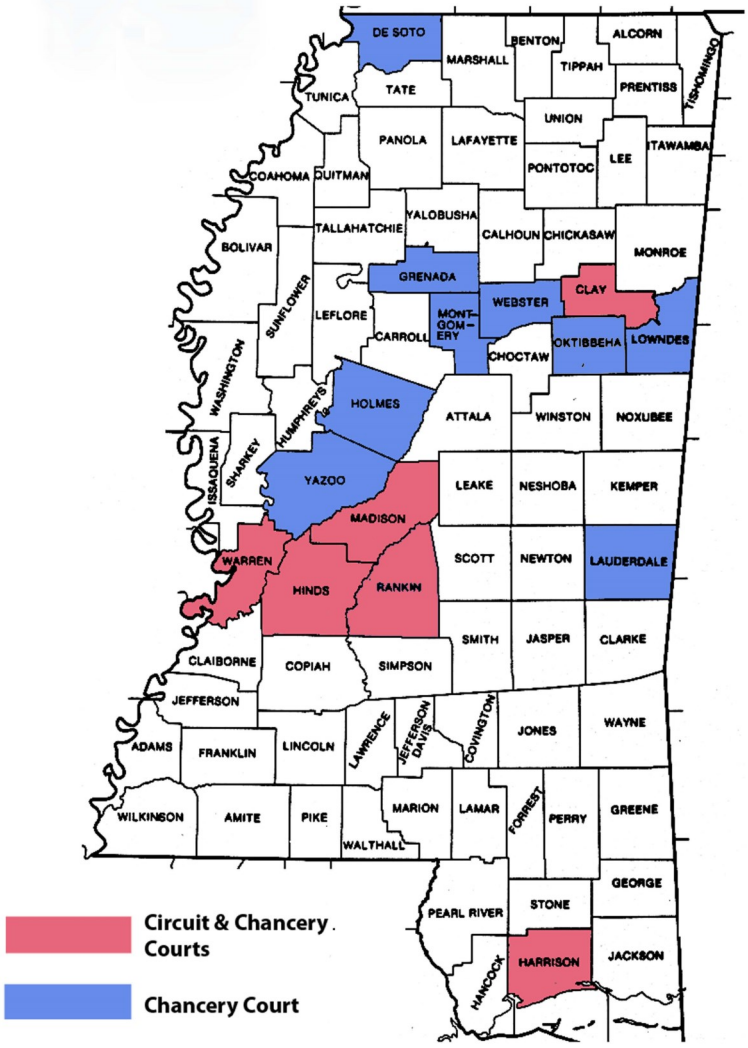
MEC in 2014 added a project director to oversee planning and implementation of e-filing systems for trial courts. The project director implemented stricter methodology in development, testing and implementation, as well as formal written configuration documentation.

MEC implemented changes to improve efficiency and save money. MEC since its inception has relied on state Information Technology Services for data transmission and storage. MEC eliminated unused disk space allocated by ITS for production servers, saving $3,000 per month. MEC also redesigned the configuration of data storage, moving from one based on individual courts to one grouping the courts by districts.

Work began to configure the system so that a chancellor and court staff in a multi-county district may access all case files, dockets and calendars from a centralized point rather than having to log into each court individually. The calendar function will cover the entire district. This will enable judges to more efficiently manage their case dockets across an entire court district. Implementation is expected to begin in 2015. Work continues on a Party Case Index (PCI.) When this tool is completed in 2015, it will allow MEC users to conduct statewide searches to determine whether a party is involved in a case. Work began in 2014 on an Application Programming Interface (API) which will allow MEC to provide selected data to other agencies, such as the Department of Corrections and the Department of Human Services. A batch filing system is under development. This would allow simultaneous docketing of a single event in multiple cases.

An accounting and bookkeeping package was completed in 2014 and offered to all interested Chancery Courts. Courts that utilize the accounting package are able to handle records and accounting functions on one system, MEC, without the expense of maintaining a separate system to document collections.

MEC utilized the electronic filing system of the federal courts and adapted the design to accommodate state trial courts. Mississippi remains the only state to have such an agreement with the Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts. Design and implementation of MEC began in Chancery Courts, and the majority of current MEC users are Chancery Courts. Work was completed in 2014 on customization of the federal court's criminal filing model to accommodate Mississippi laws, rules and procedures. The MEC system is provided free to participating trial courts. MEC implementation is part of a long-range initiative of the Mississippi Supreme Court to provide a uniform electronic case filing and court management system for distribution to the chancery, circuit and county courts and their respective clerks' offices.



Mississippi Youth Court Information Delivery System (MYCIDS)

The Mississippi Youth Court Information Delivery System, MYCIDS, is a technology program for Youth Courts begun in 1999. In 2014, training and implementation for MYCIDS was completed in every youth court in the state. Retraining was underway. The Information Technology Division of the Supreme Court began development of a new module in MYCIDS that will aid court staff in communicating disposition information to Oakley Youth Development Center for student intake. The first phase was scheduled for release in early summer 2015.

MYCIDS is 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 by the Supreme Court at no charge to local courts.

Information Technology

The Information Technology Division of the Supreme Court and Administrative Office of Courts is a small staff of software developers, systems administrators, and training and support specialists. Their responsibilities include purchase, installation and maintenance of all computer and network equipment in the appellate courts and some trial courts; development, training and support of software systems such as the appellate court case management system (CITS), the statewide Youth Court case management system (MYCIDS), and the AOC statistical system (SCATS); and maintenance of the State of Mississippi Judiciary web site.

IT continued development and integration of the Mississippi Electronic Courts system, MEC, into the appellate court case management system of the Supreme Court and Court of Appeals. Electronic filing of briefs, motions, and responses became mandatory for attorneys on January 1, 2014. E-notices were also implemented in 2014, which allow the Clerk's Office to send letters to attorneys electronically.

Audio/video cameras and equipment were upgraded in the Supreme Court and Court of Appeals main courtrooms in October 2014. It was the first upgrade to the system since it was installed in the new Carroll Gartin Justice Building in 2008. Audio and video quality improved greatly. Oral arguments are now being streamed live and archived on YouTube in high definition. The move to YouTube is expected to reduce the cost of live streaming. The video archiving will improve public access to the courts' oral arguments. A local vendor replaced an out-of-state vendor, providing faster response time in case repairs are needed, and saving about $14,000 a year on a maintenance contact.

IT began development of an online bar exam application for the Mississippi Board of Bar Admissions. The first phase was scheduled for release in January 2015 to allow initial applications for the July 2015 bar exam.

Inventory items in the IT data center suffered damage caused by leaks in the ceiling on two different occasions in 2014. A flood in August 2014 rendered more than 50 pieces of equipment unserviceable. Additional new equipment was protected by its packaging.

Reentry Council

A Reentry Council began meeting on an ad hoc basis in December 2013 in an effort to reduce prison recidivism, protect public safety and help former inmates become productive, law abiding citizens. A core group of organizers has worked to address basic needs such as housing, employment, education, transportation and health care. The Reentry Council will seek legislative authorization in 2015 to continue its work.

As an ad hoc group, the Reentry Council facilitated the issuing of identification cards to inmates who are being released from prison. Lack of a Department of Public Safety ID card, a birth certificate and a Social Security card present obstacles to former inmates seeking employment. Prospective employers cannot legally hire someone without ID. The Reentry Council identified those problems, met with the Department of Public Safety and the Department of Corrections, and worked out a way to make the ID application process accessible. The Council also began working on a guide to offender reentry services. The Foundation for the Mid South will publish the resource guide in early 2015 and make it available on the web site www.msreentryguide.com.

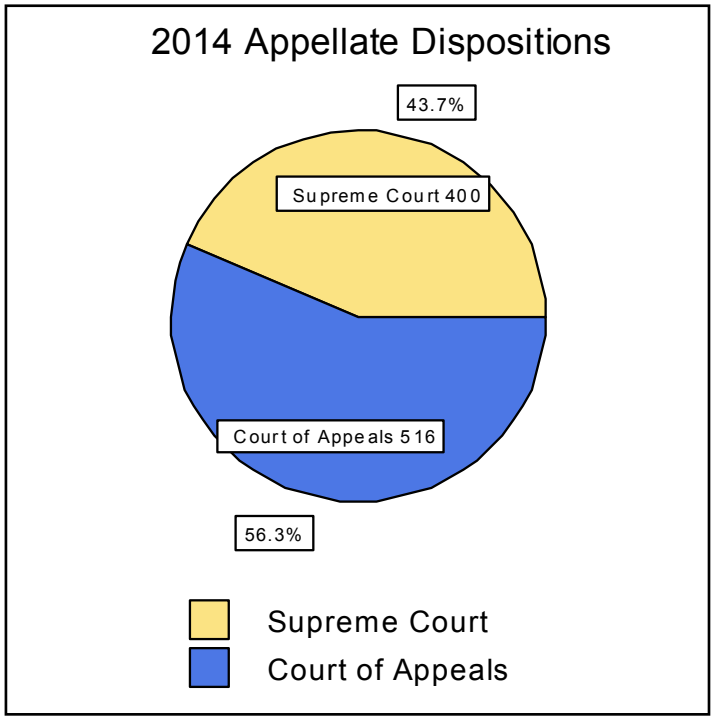
U.S. District Judge Keith Starrett set the program in motion, with assistance from Supreme Court Chief Justice Bill Waller Jr., Attorney General Jim Hood and U.S. Attorney Greg Davis. Officials spanning the spectrum of the criminal justice system as well as religious and civil liberties organizations came together to address difficulties people encounter as they attempt to make the transition from incarceration back into free society. State and federal judges, state and federal prosecutors and public defenders, Department of Corrections and Parole Board leaders, a representative of the Lieutenant Governor, legislators, the Department of Mental Health, the Department of Employment Security, Jackson city officials, church leaders, the American Civil Liberties Union, the Foundation for the Mid South, the NAACP and the Pew Charitable Trust have participated in discussions.

THE APPELLATE COURTS OF MISSISSIPPI

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 those which involve:

(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 responsibili-

ties such as rule making obligations ranging from rules of procedure to Bar admissions.

In 2014, the Supreme Court disposed of 400 cases. Of those, 209 cases received decisions on the merits. The remaining cases were dismissed. Of the 185 appeals decided on the merits, 134 (72.7 percent) were civil, and 51 (27.6 percent) were criminal. Of the 134 civil appeals decided on the merits, 67 (50 percent) were affirmed and 67 (50 percent) were reversed. Of the 51 criminal appeals decided on the merits, 33 (64.7 percent) were affirmed and 18 (35.3 percent) were reversed.

2014 Appellate Case Filings	
Notices of Appeal, General	771
Death Penalty Direct Appeal	2
Death Penalty PCR Applications	8
Bar Discipline Cases	2
Bar Discipline Appeals	0
Bar Reinstatement Cases	2
Judicial Performance Cases	3
Annexation Cases	0
Election Contests	1
Interlocutory Appeals Granted	44
Certiorari Petitions Granted	59
Workers' Compensation Appeals	31
Utility Rate Cases	3
Federally Certified Questions	0
Total New Cases Filed	926

The Supreme Court disposed of a total of 3,771 motions and petitions during 2014. This included 66 motions for rehearing, of which 63 (95 percent) were denied, 2 (3 percent) were granted, and 1 (2 percent) was dismissed. Pursuant to Rule 5 of the Mississippi Rules of Appellate Procedure, the Court disposed of 144 petitions for interlocutory appeal. Of those, 82 (57 percent) were denied, 44 (31 percent) were granted, and 30 (14 percent) were dismissed.

The Supreme Court heard oral arguments in 32 cases in 2014.

2014 Case Dispositions			
	Supreme Court	Court of Appeals	Courts Combined
Dismissed by Clerk's Rule 2 Notice	89	28	117
Dismissed by Order of Court	93	12	105
Certiorari Petitions Dismissed after Grant	9	0	9
Decided by Published Opinion	199	476	675
Per Curiam Affirmed	5	0	5
Decided by Order	5	0	5
Total Case Dispositions	400	516	916

2014 Dispositions of Rehearing Motions, Interlocutory Appeals and Certiorari Petitions			
	Supreme Court	Court of Appeals	Courts Combined
Motions for Rehearing	66	240	306
Petitions for Interlocutory Appeal	144	0	144
Petitions for Certiorari	216	0	216

Court of Appeals of the State of Mississippi

The Court of Appeals does an outstanding job of deciding a large number of direct appeals. The Court of Appeals is sometimes referred to as an error corrections court. Typical cases assigned to the court of appeals are 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 cases are referred to the Court of Appeals.

In 2014, the Court of Appeals disposed of 516 cases. Of this number, 476 received decisions on the merits. The remaining cases were dismissed. Of those decided on the merits, 374 were civil, and 130 were criminal. Of the 374 civil cases decided, 269 were affirmed and 66 were reversed. Of the 130 criminal appeals decided, 105 were affirmed, and 13 were reversed.

The Court of Appeals disposed of a total of 1,776 motions and petitions during 2014. This included 240 motions for rehearing, of which 236 (98.3 percent) were denied, 1 (0.4 percent) was granted and 3 (1.25 percent) were dismissed.

The Court of Appeals heard oral argument in 31 cases in 2014.

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 200 days during 2014, and the Court of Appeals' average time was 211 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 about half that: 92 days. Petitions for interlocutory appeal are generally 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 is the repository of records of the Mississippi Supreme Court and the Mississippi Court of Appeals. The Clerk's Office is responsible for docket management of approximately 1,700 open cases at any given time. The Clerk of Courts and a 12-member staff are responsible for case management that tracks each appeal for timeliness and completeness of the record from the time the case is filed until it is decided by the court.

The year 2014 was the first full year of electronic filing for appellate briefs and motions. E-filing of motions and briefs became mandatory Jan. 1, 2014. A total of 5,598 briefs, motions and responses were e-filed between Jan. 1 and Dec. 31, 2014. The Clerk's Office and the court's Information Technology department did extensive work to implement the e-filing and docket management system and expand filing, retrieval and tracking capabilities to other court records.

The Clerk's Office also began work in October 2014 to digitally archive case files, scanning 613 cases by Dec. 31, 2014. Scanning began with cases which were filed in 1991. The files are available via the Internet. Temporary staff, including a retired former staff member and college students, were hired to scan the records.

Supreme Court Clerk Kathy Gillis led the Clerk's Office through the transition to e-filing. Gillis retired June 30, 2014, after 33 years of service to the Court.

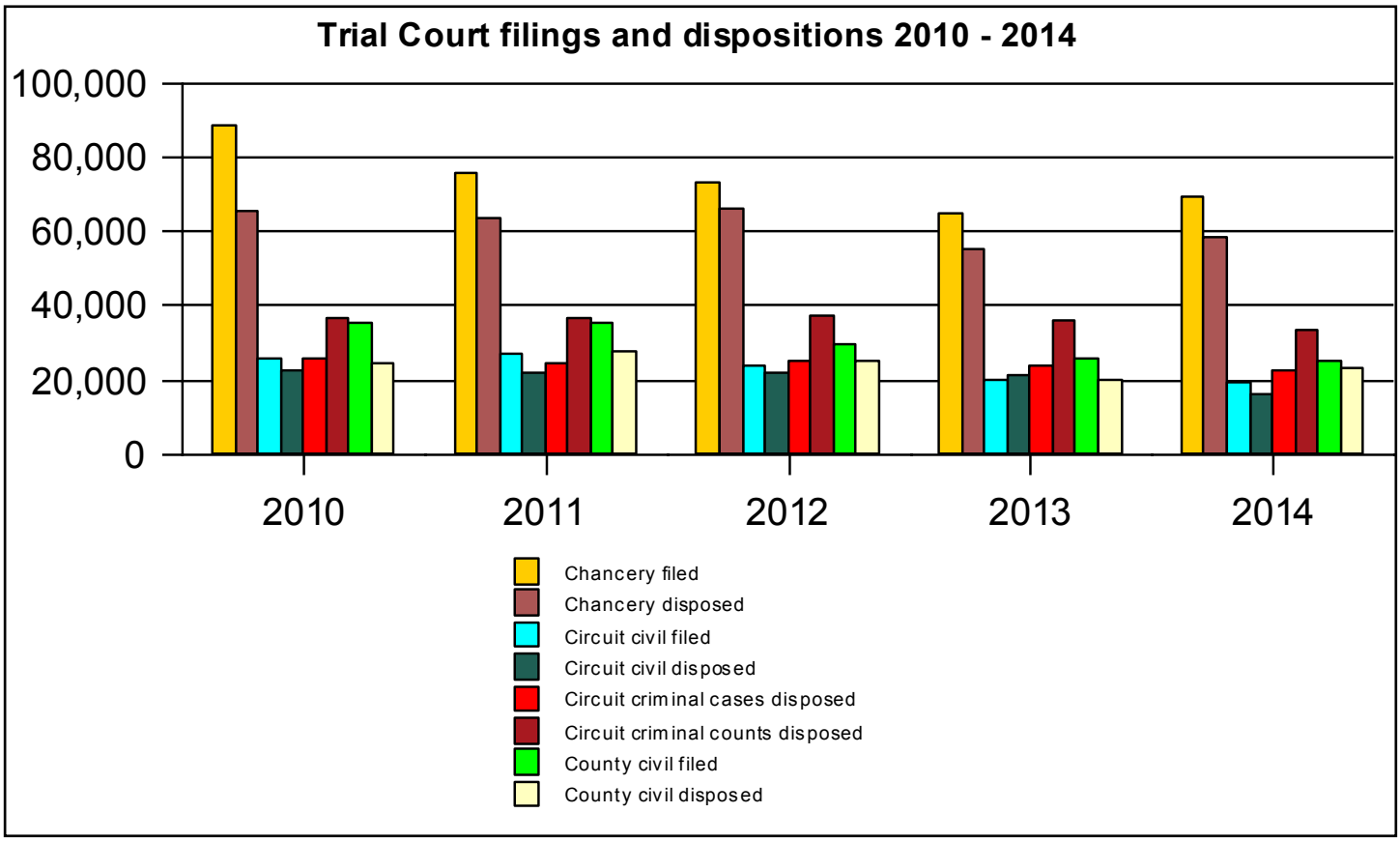
Muriel B. Ellis, a veteran of 23 years of work in the Clerk's Office, became Clerk of the Supreme Court and Court of Appeals on July 1, 2014. Ellis is the first African-American clerk of the state's highest court. Ellis also was the first African-American deputy clerk and chief deputy clerk of the Supreme Court.

MISSISSIPPI TRIAL COURTS OF RECORD

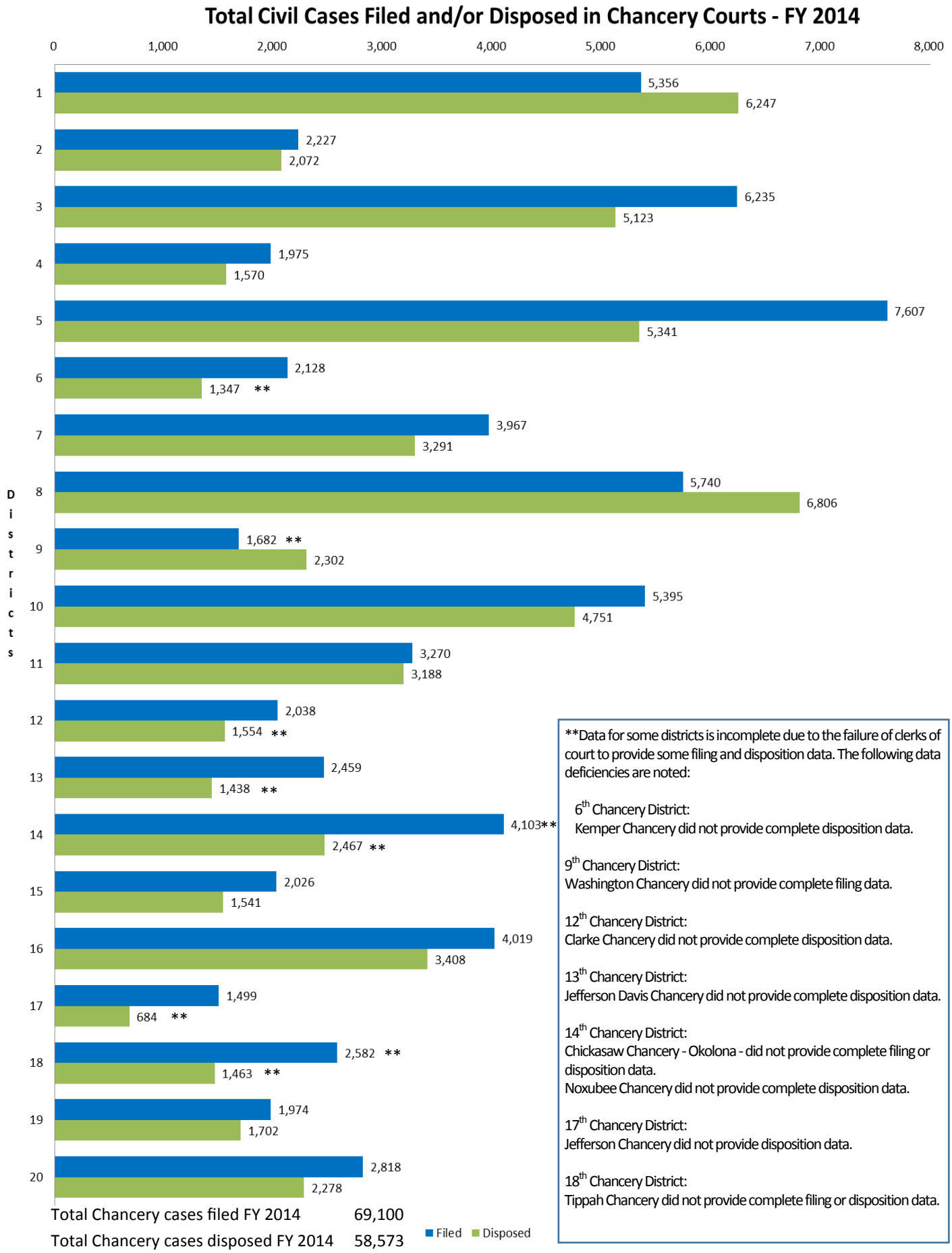
The trial courts in Mississippi without jurisdictional limits on the amounts in controversy are the Chancery and Circuit Courts. The state is divided into 20 Chancery Court Districts and 22 Circuit Court Districts. Each district has from one to four judges, depending on the size of the district and its case load. The courts are served by independently elected chancery and circuit clerks in each county. The chancery and circuit clerks for each district are required by law to report the activities of the courts to the Administrative Office of Courts. It should be pointed out that while the appellate courts report data on a calendar year, the trial court data is by fiscal year. The data, as reported, reflect the following:

Trial Court filings and dispositions 2010 - 2014

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Chancery filed	88,424	75,558	73,268	64,515	69,100
Chancery disposed	64,994	63,349	65,782	54,817	58,573
Circuit civil filed	25,800	26,862	23,553	19,429	19,305
Circuit civil disposed	22,249	21,687	21,441	21,003	16,123
Circuit criminal cases disposed	25,258	24,371	24,917	23,851	22,229
Circuit criminal counts disposed	36,131	36,561	37,366	35,437	33,322
County civil filed	34,950	35,254	29,177	25,761	24,793
County civil disposed	24,032	27,606	24,930	20,038	23,187



CHANCERY COURTS



**Data for some districts is incomplete due to the failure of clerks of court to provide some filing and disposition data. The following data deficiencies are noted:

6th Chancery District:
Kemper Chancery did not provide complete disposition data.

9th Chancery District:
Washington Chancery did not provide complete filing data.

12th Chancery District:
Clarke Chancery did not provide complete disposition data.

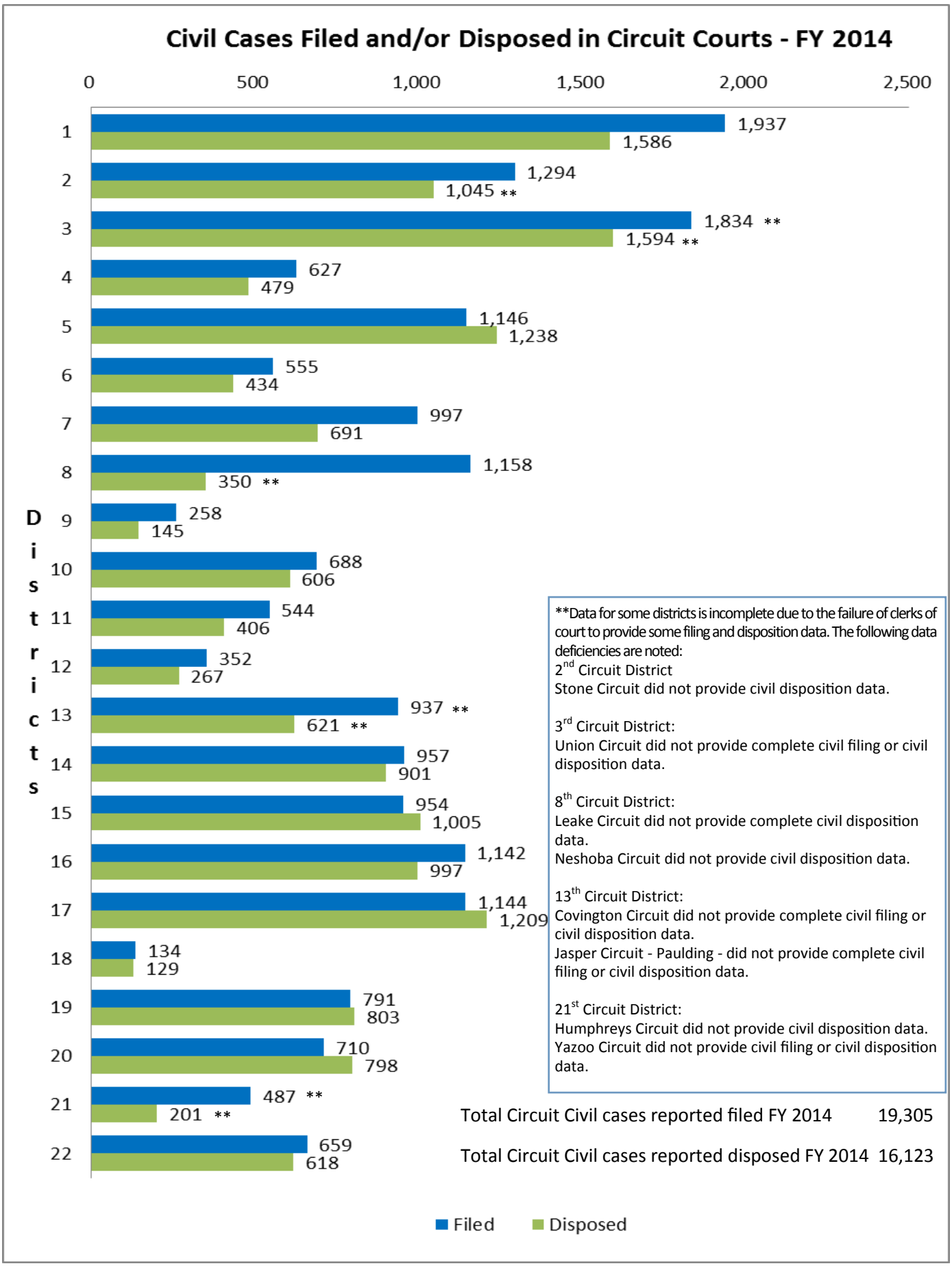
13th Chancery District:
Jefferson Davis Chancery did not provide complete disposition data.

14th Chancery District:
Chickasaw Chancery - Okolona - did not provide complete filing or disposition data.
Noxubee Chancery did not provide complete disposition data.

17th Chancery District:
Jefferson Chancery did not provide disposition data.

18th Chancery District:
Tippah Chancery did not provide complete filing or disposition data.

CIRCUIT COURTS



**Data for some districts is incomplete due to the failure of clerks of court to provide some filing and disposition data. The following data deficiencies are noted:

2nd Circuit District
Stone Circuit did not provide civil disposition data.

3rd Circuit District:
Union Circuit did not provide complete civil filing or civil disposition data.

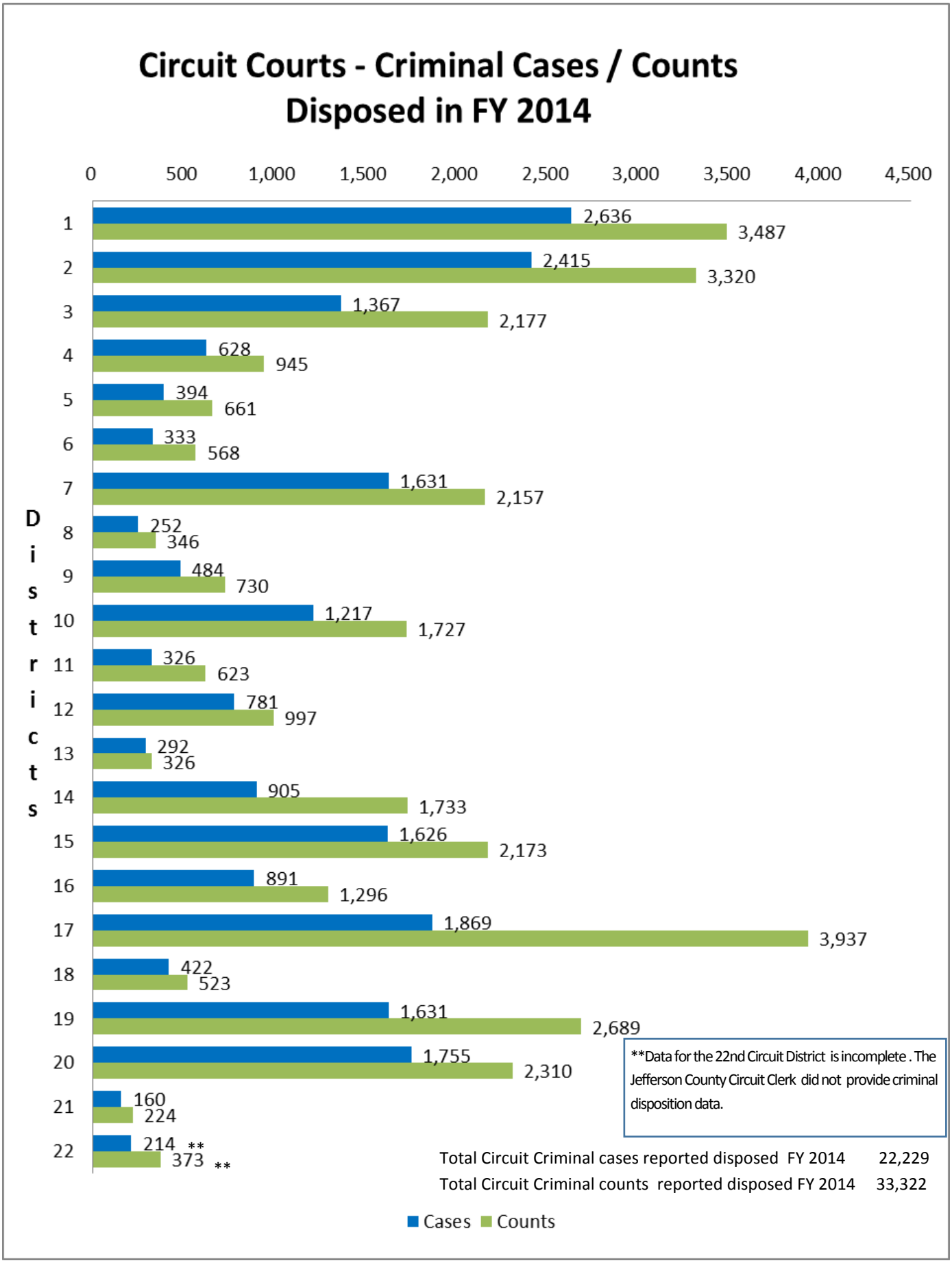
8th Circuit District:
Leake Circuit did not provide complete civil disposition data.
Neshoba Circuit did not provide civil disposition data.

13th Circuit District:
Covington Circuit did not provide complete civil filing or civil disposition data.
Jasper Circuit - Paulding - did not provide complete civil filing or civil disposition data.

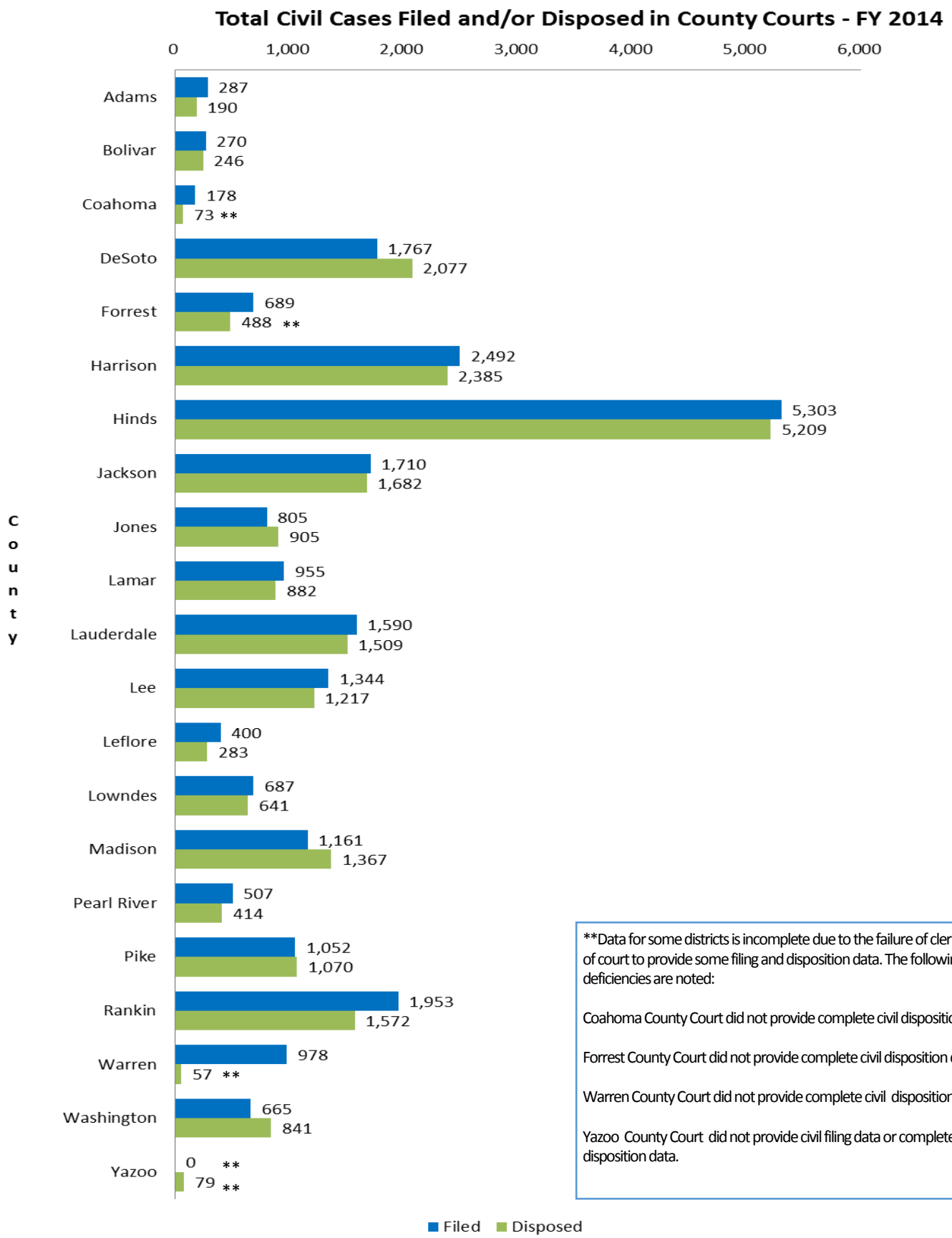
21st Circuit District:
Humphreys Circuit did not provide civil disposition data.
Yazoo Circuit did not provide civil filing or civil disposition data.

Total Circuit Civil cases reported filed FY 2014 19,305

Total Circuit Civil cases reported disposed FY 2014 16,123


Circuit Courts - Criminal Cases / Counts Disposed in FY 2014
0
500
1,000
1,500
2,000
2,500
3,000
3,500
4,000
4,500
Districts
1 2,636 3,487
2 2,415 3,320
3 1,367 2,177
4 628 945
5 394 661
6 333 568
7 1,631 2,157
8 252 346
9 484 730
10 1,217 1,727
11 326 623
12 781 997
13 292 326
14 905 1,733
15 1,626 2,173
16 891 1,296
17 1,869 3,937
18 422 523
19 1,631 2,689
20 1,755 2,310
21 160 224
22 214 ** 373 **
**Data for the 22nd Circuit District is incomplete. The Jefferson County Circuit Clerk did not provide criminal disposition data.
Total Circuit Criminal cases reported disposed FY 2014 22,229
Total Circuit Criminal counts reported disposed FY 2014 33,322
Cases
Counts

COUNTY COURTS



**Data for some districts is incomplete due to the failure of clerks of court to provide some filing and disposition data. The following data deficiencies are noted:

Coahoma County Court did not provide complete civil disposition data.

Forrest County Court did not provide complete civil disposition data.

Warren County Court did not provide complete civil disposition data.

Yazoo County Court did not provide civil filing data or complete civil disposition data.

Total County Court Civil cases reported filed FY 2014	24,793
Total County Court Civil cases reported disposed FY 2014	23,187

YOUTH COURTS

	REFERRALS			FORMAL ADJUDICATIONS			HANDLED INFORMALLY		
	ABUSE	NEGLECT	DELINQUENT	ABUSE	NEGLECT	DELINQUENT	ABUSE	NEGLECT	DELINQUENT
ADAMS	1	38	514	1	30	279	0	6	197
ALCORN	2	27	158	5	26	73	0	1	72
AMITE	1	18	67	1	18	38	0	0	27
ATTALA	0	1	63	0	0	39	0	1	0
BENTON	2	6	35	0	5	22	0	0	7
BOLIVAR	0	7	369	0	0	80	0	7	283
CALHOUN	128	241	75	8	24	65	119	213	5
CARROLL	0	5	68	0	5	30	0	0	6
CHICKASAW	1	23	117	1	17	87	0	0	4
CHOCTAW	0	0	11	0	0	4	0	0	2
CLAIBORNE	3	17	64	2	5	42	0	0	8
CLARK	0	1	44	0	0	28	0	0	12
CLAY	12	5	100	11	5	53	0	0	24
COAHOMA	1	19	304	1	19	150	0	0	154
COPIAH	9	31	265	8	21	149	0	1	88
COVINGTON	7	71	78	7	71	63	0	0	8
DESOTO	1097	1772	2059	9	98	1373	1086	1670	498
FRANKLIN	2	2	37	2	1	20	0	0	14
GEORGE	2	50	164	0	3	119	0	4	40
GREENE	1	7	30	1	2	17	0	0	5
GRENADA	4	24	181	2	14	46	0	1	121
HANCOCK	95	403	333	71	315	147	7	45	83
HARRISON	732	2429	1971	72	575	825	652	1815	960
HINDS	540	634	1595	375	480	460	1	0	638
HOLMES	7	7	84	2	4	32	0	0	4
HUMPHREYS	1	16	50	1	6	25	0	0	1
ISSAQUENA	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
ITAWAMBA	0	15	130	0	15	56	0	0	31
JACKSON	285	885	776	35	184	251	237	683	490
JASPER	3	10	66	2	4	42	0	0	13
JEFFERSON	0	5	62	0	4	31	0	0	20
JEFFERSON DAVIS	1	37	75	1	28	54	0	0	0
JONES	0	26	749	0	16	488	0	4	199
KEMPER	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
LAFAYETTE	69	185	111	7	51	51	62	121	41
LAMAR	1	15	357	1	11	135	0	4	215
LAUDERDALE	1	80	668	1	63	384	0	15	245
LAWRENCE	1	38	61	1	38	54	0	0	0
LEAKE	0	0	13	0	0	0	0	0	3
LEE	8	40	1064	7	38	308	0	1	481

	REFERRALS			FORMAL ADJUDICATIONS			HANDLED INFORMALLY		
	ABUSE	NEGLECT	DELINQUENT	ABUSE	NEGLECT	DELINQUENT	ABUSE	NEGLECT	DELINQUENT
LEFLORE	0	2	429	0	1	181	0	0	203
LINCOLN	9	48	203	6	40	82	1	2	98
LOWNDES	27	54	248	0	3	4	27	51	110
MADISON	5	27	481	4	22	294	0	1	70
MARION	70	304	195	6	112	139	64	190	37
MARSHALL	18	95	264	7	44	164	10	48	39
MONROE	5	20	36	5	18	20	0	2	14
MONTGOMERY	0	8	81	0	8	46	0	0	35
NESHOBA	0	6	322	0	6	287	0	0	28
NEWTON	1	14	105	1	11	76	0	1	18
NOXUBEE	0	5	23	0	5	0	0	0	8
OKTIBBEHA	0	0	93	0	0	0	0	0	36
PANOLA	1	10	288	1	9	131	0	0	119
PEARL RIVER	5	78	437	4	58	209	0	1	177
PERRY	21	106	51	1	23	29	19	77	6
PIKE	11	83	367	6	58	201	2	6	121
PONTOTOC	1	15	153	0	13	107	1	0	11
PRENTISS	0	0	83	0	0	53	0	0	21
QUITMAN	1	10	41	0	8	40	1	2	0
RANKIN	362	958	735	26	447	290	320	456	372
SCOTT	1	8	104	1	4	67	0	0	35
SHARKEY	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
SIMPSON	1	73	106	0	23	84	0	0	0
SMITH	2	13	71	2	11	58	0	0	3
STONE	10	106	30	3	95	18	1	0	1
SUNFLOWER	75	341	648	21	57	504	51	269	45
TALLAHATCHIE	0	0	51	0	0	30	0	0	22
TATE	5	9	107	2	8	72	0	0	9
TIPPAH	16	36	83	15	31	55	0	0	20
TISHOMINGO	0	7	66	0	7	53	0	0	6
TUNICA	0	3	180	0	2	81	0	1	68
UNION	0	0	108	0	0	36	0	0	11
WALTHALL	8	55	129	8	53	68	0	1	61
WARREN	0	5	400	0	2	297	0	0	15
WASHINGTON	103	483	862	54	206	355	44	268	429
WAYNE	0	0	92	0	0	61	0	0	28
WEBSTER	0	3	20	0	3	18	0	0	2
WILKINSON	1	18	50	1	11	41	0	1	3
WINSTON	5	5	76	5	5	61	0	0	11
YALOBUSHA	5	10	31	5	9	22	0	0	6
YAZOO	13	30	184	4	15	59	2	5	121
CITY OF PEARL	18	144	228	9	78	176	0	2	2
Total	3817	10382	21229	832	3702	10689	2707	5976	7420

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. The duties of the AOC, specified in Miss. Code Ann. §§ 9-21-1, -3, -9, -11, -13, -14, -29, -43, -45, -51, -73; §§ 9-23-3, -11, -17 (Rev. 2014), 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;
- collect case statistics from all civil, criminal and youth courts in the state;
- coordinate and conduct studies and projects to improve the administration of justice;
- support the Judicial Advisory Study Committee, including research and clerical assistance;
- require the filing of reports and the collection and compilation of statistical data and financial information;
- 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;
- devise and promulgate youth court tracking forms;
- 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;
- oversee the Mississippi Electronic Courts system under the direction of the Supreme Court;
- establish a program to facilitate the use of language interpreters in all courts of the State of Mississippi;
- operate a uniform certification process for 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, drug courts, 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

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. The Attorney General's Office joined the Workgroup in 2014 to develop a system for tracking the timeliness of termination of parental rights. Four Legal Stakeholders for Permanency for Children Summits were held in October 2014 in Oxford, Meridian, Purvis and Vicksburg to develop strategies for moving children to permanency within prescribed time frames.

The Workgroup during 2014 continue training opportunities for the judiciary, the Division of Family and Children's Services and the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians. Judges from across Mississippi and guests from other states participated in the fourth annual Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) Conference, which was hosted by the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians on Aug. 14, 2014, at Pearl River Resort in Choctaw. Other tribes whose members attended the conference included the Alabama Coushatta of Texas; Coast Miwok, Hoopa Valley and Pomo tribes of California; Tlingit-Tsimpshian of Alaska; and Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma. Notice of Rights Posters were created and mailed to each Youth Court for display advising Native Americans of rights under ICWA. The Choctaw Tribe and the Division of Family and Children's Services, continue to collaborate through a Memorandum of Understanding regarding responsibilities of each party. A video was produced which has been widely viewed at out-of-state tribal conferences and was provided to 10,000 addresses via email. "Bringing Our Children Home" can be viewed at http://courts.ms.gov/trialcourts/youthcourt/youthcourt_ycvideos.html.

Attorney Mary Fuller joined the staff of the Administrative Office of Courts in 2014 as Youth Court Program Director. Fuller worked extensively with CIP in the past as Bureau Director II of the DHS Division of Family and Children's Services. Fuller joined AOC after the retirement of longtime AOC Project Director Dennis Perkins.

State Drug Courts Advisory Committee

The State Drug Courts Advisory Committee oversees the development and operation of Mississippi's drug courts. The Advisory Committee was established by the Mississippi Legislature in 2003 to recommend improvements to drug court policies and procedures. The Advisory Committee sets funding formulas for drug courts, and it is responsible for developing statewide evaluation plans and models for monitoring critical aspects of drug court operations. The Committee was able to restore much of the funding that was cut from drug courts in 2013. The Department of Public Safety secured grants which help sustain minimal programs until the Legislature appropriated additional funding.

The Advisory Committee in 2014 was given the additional task of implementing key aspects of sentencing reform mandated by the Legislature. The Legislature called for recertification of drug courts, additional data collection and adherence to evidence based practices. In response, the Advisory Committee created and staffed a four member Compliance Office to evaluate and assist local drug courts.

Judicial Advisory Study Committee

The Judicial Advisory Study Committee was established by the Legislature in 1993 to make policy recommendations to the Supreme Court and the Legislature to promote improvements to the administration of justice and the operation of the courts. The 21-member statutory body last met on Dec. 6, 2013.

BOARD OF BAR ADMISSIONS

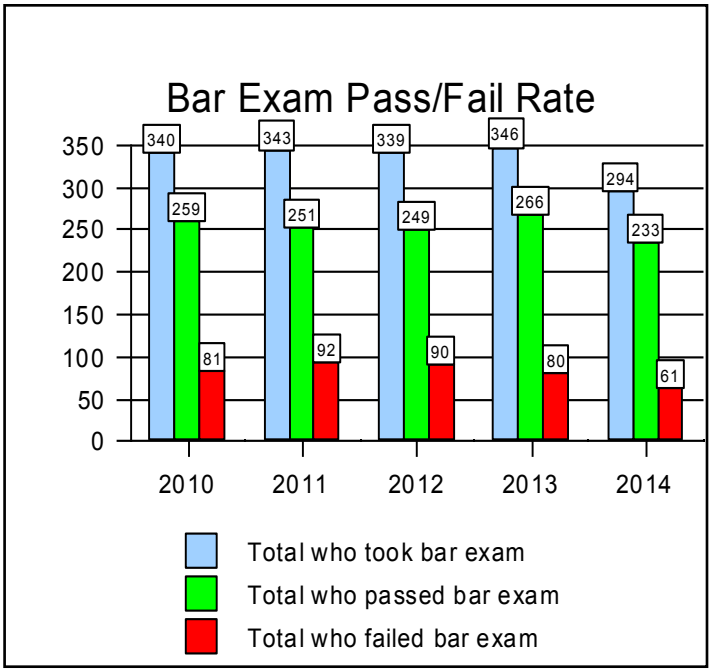
The Board of Bar Admissions has the primary obligation to administer the laws and rules governing admission to practice law in the state of Mississippi. The Board's efforts are primarily focused on the preparation, administration and evaluation of twice yearly Bar admission examinations, which are given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

In 2014, the Board received and processed 92 applications for registration as law students, and 385 applications for examination. Forty-eight fewer applications for examination were submitted in 2014, compared to the previous year. Motions for admission by reciprocity increased; 46 motions for admission by reciprocity were filed in 2014. The Board exempts attorneys licensed in other states from taking the Bar Exam if those attorneys have five years of active practice and are from a state that has a reciprocity agreement.

A total of 294 people took the Bar Exam in 2014. The pass rate was 79.3 percent. People taking the

Bar Exam for the first time had a higher rate of success: 86.7 percent, or 202 of 233, passed. About half of those retaking the exam passed: 31 of 61.

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Bar Exam Applications					
Applications for registration as law student	104	105	69	66	92
Applications for examination	413	420	426	433	385
Admission on motion					46
Total applications processed/ being processed	517	525	495	499	523
Bar Exams					
Took February bar exam	87	101	108	108	111
Passed February bar exam		66	71	76	90
Failed February bar exam		35	37	32	21
Took July bar exam	253	242	231	238	183
Passed July bar exam		185	178	190	143
Failed July bar exam		57	53	48	40
Total who took bar exam	340	343	339	346	294
Total who passed bar exam	259	251	249	266	233
Total who failed bar exam	81	92	90	80	61



COMMISSION ON CONTINUING LEGAL EDUCATION

The 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 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. Twelve (12) hours of approved instruction are required annually of every attorney licensed to practice law in the state of Mississippi. 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.

In 2014, the Commission on CLE approved for credit 594 live programs that were held in the state of Mississippi, 3,014 live programs held outside the state of Mississippi and 5,625 programs that were given by satellite, teleconference or online through live webcasts and on-demand programs.