



SUPREME COURT  
OF  
MISSISSIPPI  
2022 Annual Report



# 2022 ANNUAL REPORT

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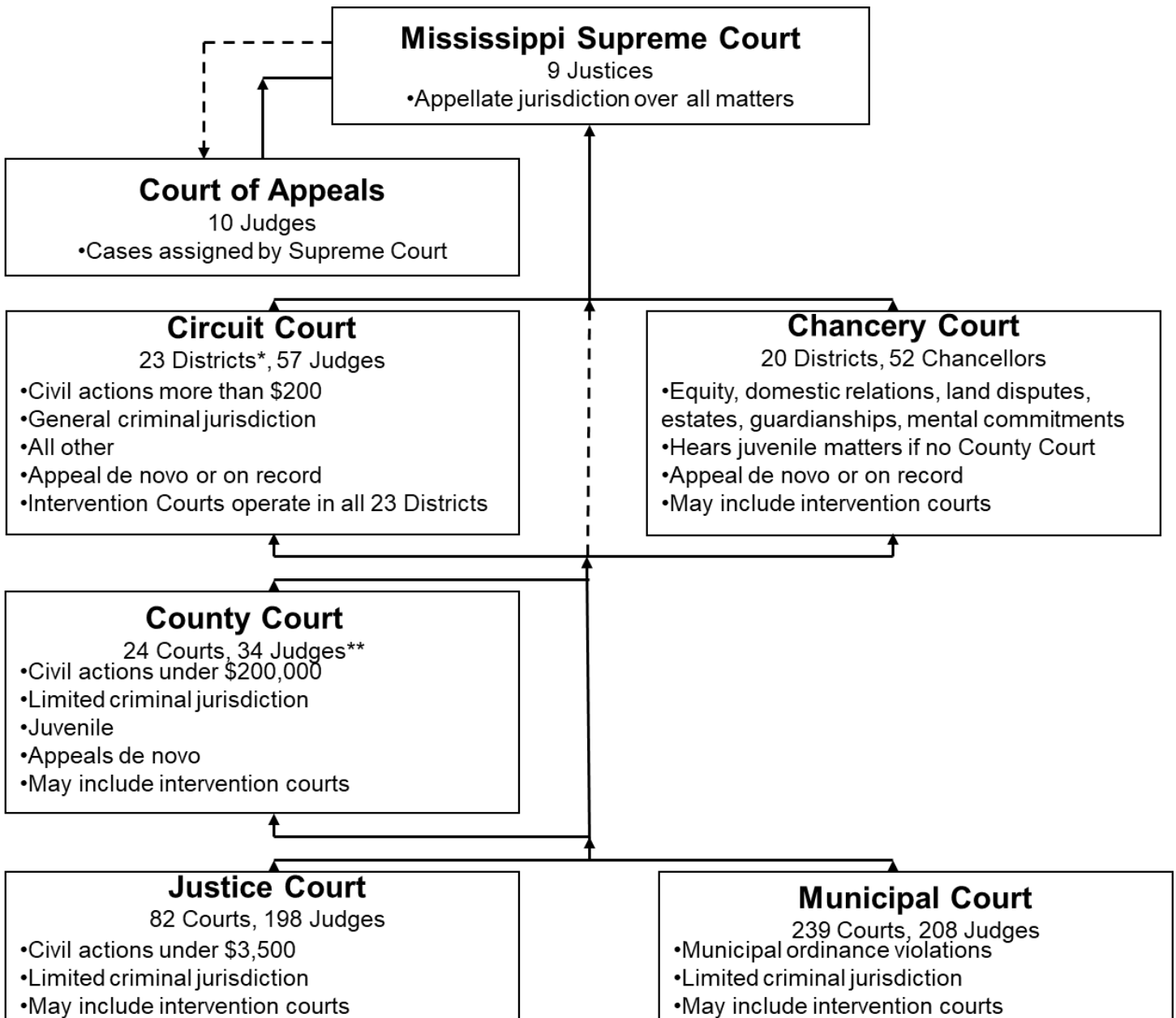
# THE MISSISSIPPI JUDICIAL SYSTEM

At the most basic level of the Judicial System, Justice Courts and Municipal Courts are where the largest number of people encounter the Judicial System. Trial courts of record are the 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.

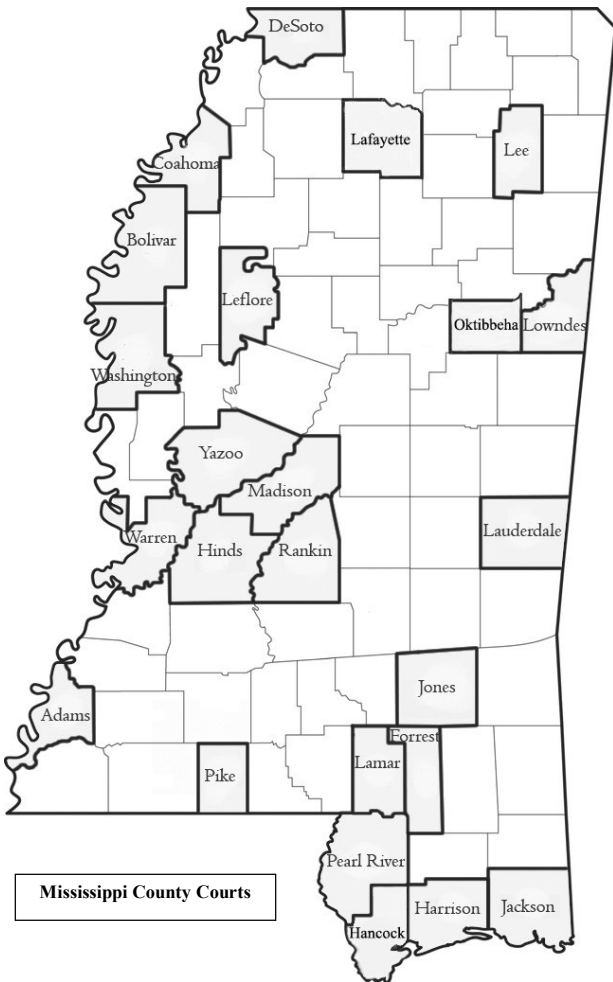
There are 239 Municipal Courts, and 208 judges. Some judges serve more than one local municipality. They have limited criminal jurisdiction and jurisdiction over violations of municipal ordinances. Appeals from the Municipal Courts may be taken to County or Circuit courts, and the cases appealed are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

## ORGANIZATIONAL CHART



\*The 23rd Circuit Court District of DeSoto County was created effective January 1, 2023.

\*\* New County Courts were created in Lafayette and Oktibbeha Counties effective January 1, 2023.

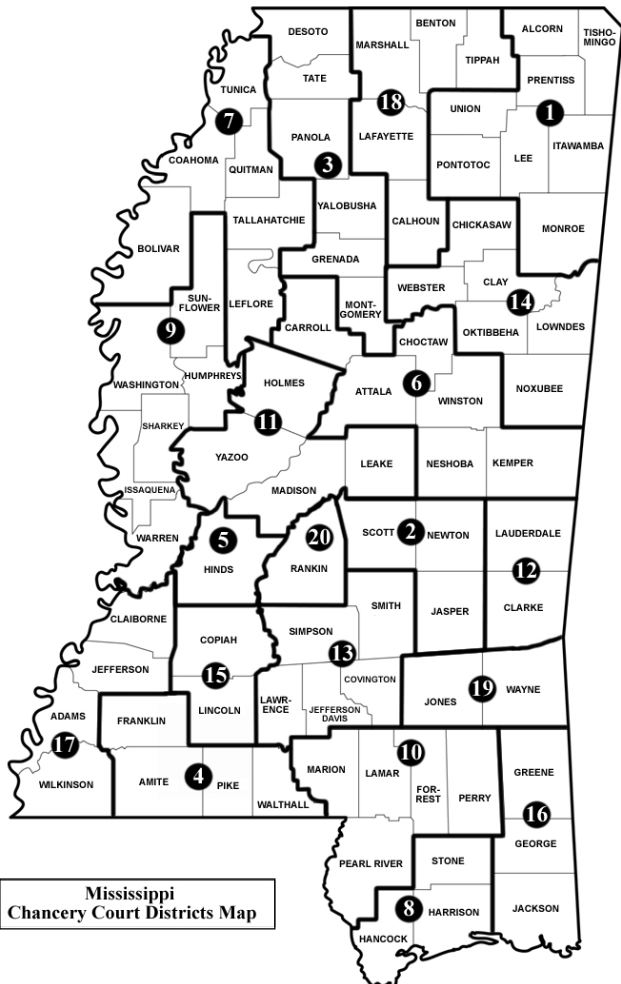


Mississippi County Courts

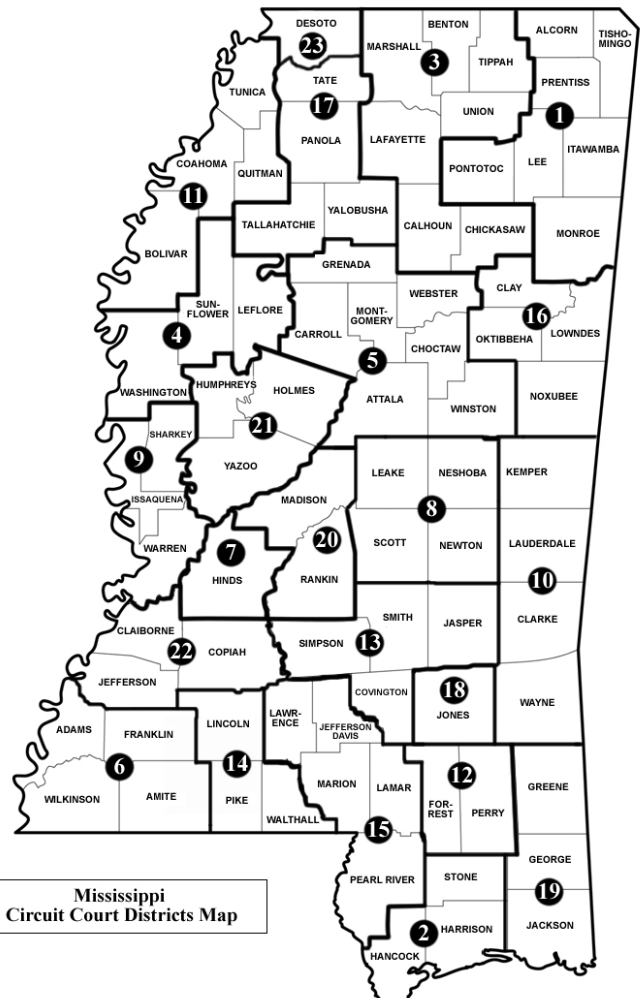
Mississippi through the end of 2022 had 22 County Courts with 32 judges. Jurisdictions and judges grew to 24 County Courts with 34 judges in January 2023 when Lafayette and Oktibbeha counties began operating County Courts. Gov. Tate Reeves issued proclamations creating the new County Courts on Jan. 18, 2022, as Lafayette and Oktibbeha counties' populations each exceeded 50,000. 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 a County Court, the Youth Court functions as a division of the County Court handling juvenile matters.

The 82 Chancery Courts are organized into 20 districts with 52 chancellors. Chancery Courts have jurisdiction over matters of equity, domestic relations, land disputes, estates, guardianships and mental commitments. In counties without County Courts, 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. The state through the end of 2022 had 22 Circuit Courts. The Mississippi Legislature created the new 23rd Circuit District of DeSoto County effective in January 2023. DeSoto County previously was part of the 17th Circuit Court District. There are 57 Circuit Judges. Circuit Courts 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.



Mississippi Chancery Court Districts Map



Mississippi Circuit Court Districts Map



**Members of the Mississippi Supreme Court are, seated, left to right, Presiding Justice James W. Kitchens, Chief Justice Michael K. 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.**

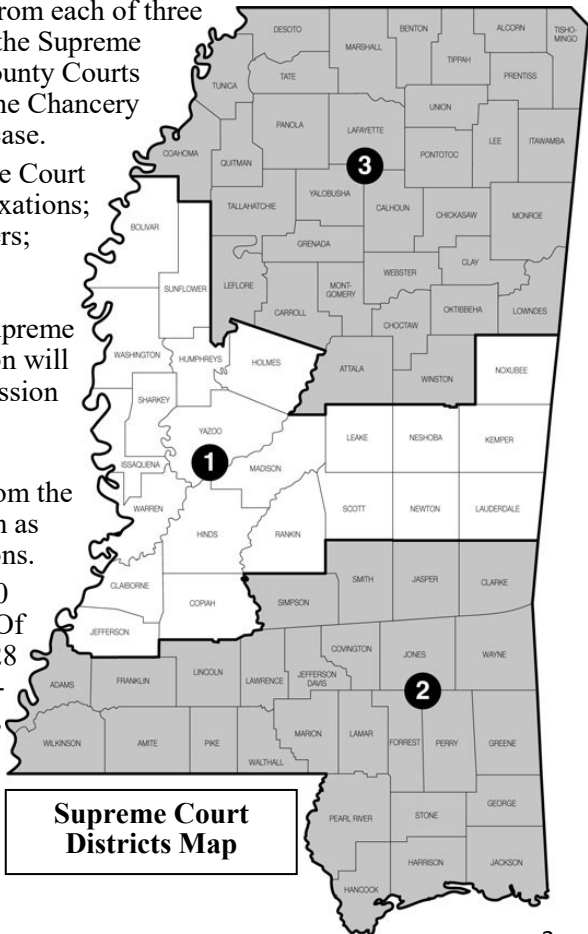
The Supreme Court has nine justices; three justices are elected from each of three districts. All appeals from Circuit, Chancery and Youth Courts come to the Supreme Court. Appeals from Justice Courts go to the Circuit Courts or to the County Courts where available. County Court appeals are to either the Circuit Courts, the Chancery Courts, or the Supreme Court, depending on subject matter and type of case.

The Supreme Court may either retain an appeal or assign it to the Court of Appeals. The Supreme Court retains appeals of death sentences; annexations; bar discipline; bond issues; election contests; judicial performance matters; utility rates; cases involving issues of first impression; cases involving interpretation of the Constitution, statutes or regulations; and certified questions from federal court. 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.

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 2022, the Supreme Court disposed of 270 cases. Of those, 120 cases were decided on the merits. The remaining cases were dismissed. Of the 109 appeals decided on the merits, 81(74.3 percent) were civil, and 28 (25.7 percent) were criminal. Of the 81 civil appeals decided on the merits, 36 (44.4 percent) were affirmed, and 45(55.6 percent) were reversed, vacated or remanded. Of the 28 criminal appeals decided on the merits, 25 (89.3 percent) were affirmed, and 3 (10.7 percent) were reversed.

The Supreme Court disposed of 2,865 motions and petitions during 2022. This included 33 motions for rehearing; one was granted. Pursuant to Rule 5 of the Mississippi Rules of Appellate Procedure, the Supreme Court disposed of 151 petitions for interlocutory appeal.





**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 Joel Smith, Anthony N. Lawrence III, Latrice A. Westbrooks, Jim M. Greenlee, Deborah A. McDonald, David Neil McCarty, and John H. Emfinger.**

Of the interlocutory appeals, 101 (66.9 percent) were denied, 33 (21.9 percent) were granted, and 17 (11.3 percent) were dismissed or had other dispositions.

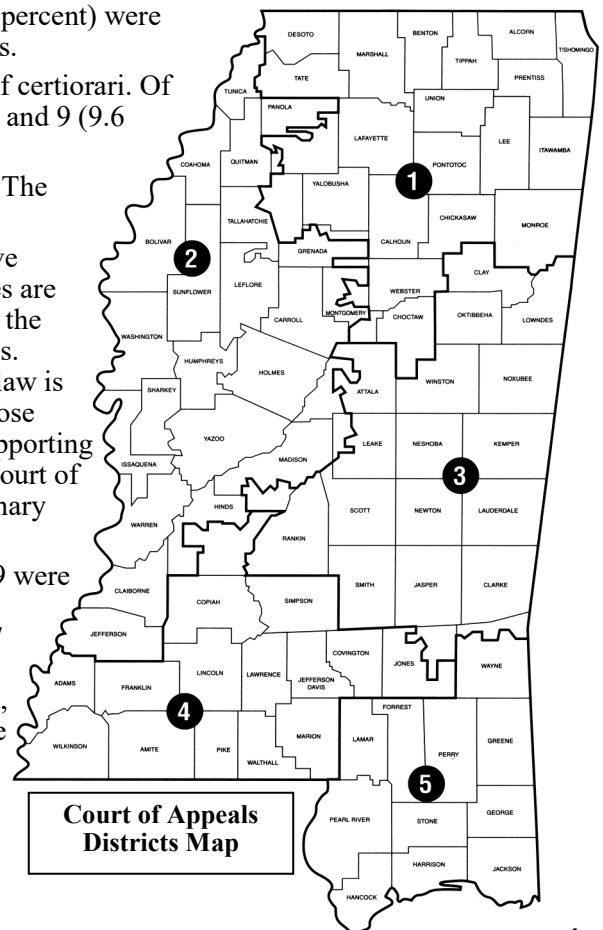
In 2022, the Supreme Court disposed of 94 petitions for writ of certiorari. Of those, 16 (17.02 percent) were granted; 69 (73.4 percent) were denied; and 9 (9.6 percent) were dismissed or had other dispositions.

The Supreme Court heard oral arguments in 10 cases in 2022. The majority of appeals were decided on briefs without oral argument.

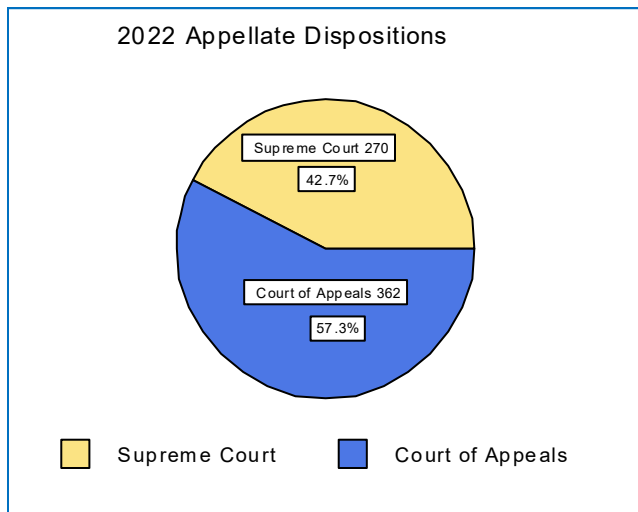
The Court of Appeals is made up of 10 judges elected from five districts. The Court of Appeals typically hears cases in which the issues are ones of error correction, such as whether the judgment is supported by the evidence or whether the judge correctly ruled on evidentiary challenges. Typical cases 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. All workers' compensation appeals are referred to the Court of Appeals. All decisions of the Court of Appeals are subject to discretionary review by the Supreme Court on petition for writ of certiorari.

Of 362 cases disposed of by the Court of Appeals in 2022, 309 were decided on the merits. The remaining cases were dismissed. Of those decided on the merits, 217 were civil and 79 were criminal. Of the 217 civil cases decided, 170 (78.3 percent) were affirmed and 47 (21.7 percent) were reversed or vacated. Of the 79 criminal appeals decided, 77 (97.5 percent) were affirmed and 2 (2.5 percent) were reversed. The Court of Appeals disposed of 1,371 motions and petitions. This included 129 motions for rehearing, of which 128 (99.2 percent) were denied or dismissed, and 1 (0.8 percent) was granted.

The Court of Appeals heard oral arguments in 25 cases in 2022.



Appellate courts strive to decide cases within 270 days of completion of briefing, and in most cases, decisions are made sooner. The Supreme Court's average time from end of briefing to case decision was 202 days during 2022. The Court of Appeals' average time was 192 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 filing of responses to the petitions. Cases on certiorari review must be decided within 180 days after the petitions are granted. The Supreme Court's average time was 126 days. Petitions for interlocutory appeal are usually granted, denied, or dismissed within 45 days after the responses are filed.



The Court of Appeals resumed the Court on the Road program on college campuses in 2022 for the first time since early 2020, when the COVID-19 pandemic halted the program. While the Supreme Court is required by the Mississippi Constitution to sit in Jackson, the Court of Appeals, legislatively created by statute, may convene at other locations around the state. The Court on the Road program schedules oral arguments on college campuses and occasionally at other locations as a teaching tool to give students and the public opportunities to watch proceedings in cases on appeal. During September, October and November 2022, three-judge panels heard oral arguments at the University of Mississippi School of Law, Alcorn State University, Mississippi State University and Rust College.

Average days, final brief to decision							
	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
<b>Supreme Court</b>	200	192	200	174	187	168	202
<b>Court of Appeals</b>	228	213	211	211	206	197	192

2020 — 2021 — 2022 Appellate Case Dispositions									
	Supreme Court			Court of Appeals			Courts Combined		
	2020	2021	2022	2020	2021	2022	2020	2021	2022
Dismissed by Clerk's Rule 2 Notice	54	71	68	18	18	27	72	89	95
Dismissed by Order of Court	81	102	81	31	32	26	112	134	107
Cert Petitions Dismissed after Grant	2	1	1	NA	NA	NA	2	1	1
Decided by Published Opinion	147	121	117	417	322	307	564	443	424
Per Curiam Affirmed	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Decided by Order	1	4	3	1	1	2	2	5	5
<b>Total Case Dispositions</b>	<b>285</b>	<b>299</b>	<b>270</b>	<b>467</b>	<b>373</b>	<b>362</b>	<b>752</b>	<b>672</b>	<b>632</b>

2020 — 2021 — 2022 Dispositions of Rehearing Motions, Interlocutory Appeals and Cert Petitions									
	Supreme Court			Court of Appeals			Courts Combined		
	2020	2021	2022	2020	2021	2022	2020	2021	2022
Motions for Rehearing	39	30	33	214	147	129	253	177	162
Petitions for Interlocutory Appeal	161	123	151	0	0	0	161	123	151
Petitions for Certiorari	154	149	94	0	0	0	154	149	94

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

The Office of the Clerk is maintained within the framework of various statutes enacted by the Legislature, rules, regulations, and orders promulgated by the Mississippi Supreme Court. The office has 12 full-time staff, with Jeremy Whitmire serving as the Clerk of Court since his appointment by the Court in July 2018. The Office of the Clerk serves both the Mississippi Supreme Court and the Mississippi Court of Appeals. The Office of the Clerk 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.



**Jeremy Whitmire**

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 judiciary of the state of Mississippi, working closely with the Administrative Office of Courts, Mississippi Electronic Courts, the Appellate Court’s Information Technology Department and Court Administration to suggest and implement enhancements to existing systems as the needs of trial courts, appellate courts, attorneys, litigants and the public evolve. The collaboration between these 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 a timely, efficient manner.

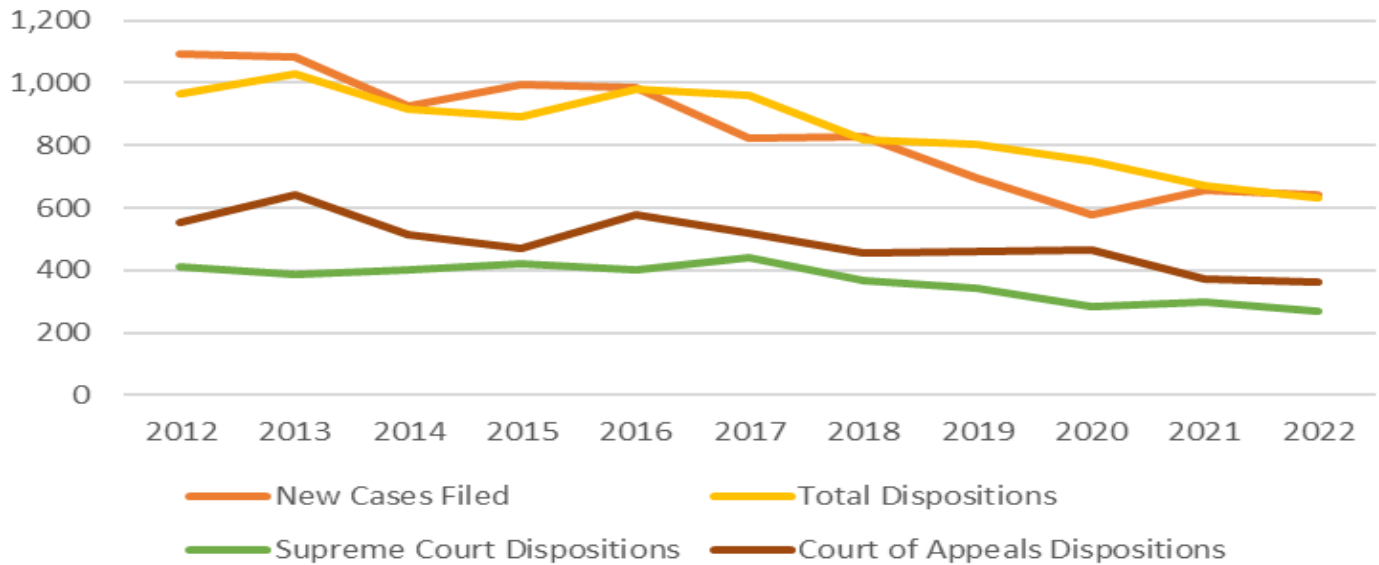
The Clerk’s office in 2022 processed and docketed a total of 482 appellate records with the average turnaround time from receipt of record to the start of briefing being less than 24 hours. With more trial courts utilizing MEC, many appellate records are being sent to the Court electronically, which reduces cost and processing time for both appellate courts as well as the trial courts. The office processed and docketed 3,709 motions, 531 responses, 1,355 appellate briefs and 2,354 orders from each Court. A total of 2,038 procedural motions were timely addressed by the office and 580

Appellate Case Filings	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Notices of Appeal, General	863	732	770	637	492	576	565
Death Penalty Direct Appeal	0	1	0	1	1	0	0
Death Penalty PCR Applications	7	2	6	2	4	4	4
Bar Discipline Cases	4	1	9	8	5	7	3
Bar Discipline Appeals	1	4	0	1	1	1	1
Bar Reinstatement Cases	2	4	4	1	5	1	3
Judicial Performance Cases	4	0	3	2	1	1	1
Annexation Cases	0	1	1	2	1	0	0
Election Contests	6	1	2	1	9	4	0
Interlocutory Appeals Granted	44	37	22	29	43	26	32
Certiorari Petitions Granted	27	40	12	14	17	23	16
Workers' Compensation Appeals	24	27	25	17	17	14	16
Utility Rate Cases	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Federally Certified Questions	0	1	1	1	0	0	0
<b>Total New Cases Filed</b>	<b>983</b>	<b>824</b>	<b>830</b>	<b>697</b>	<b>579</b>	<b>657</b>	<b>642</b>

Appellate Filings and Dispositions, 2012 — 2022											
	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
<b>New Cases Filed</b>	1,091	1,084	926	995	983	824	830	697	579	657	642
<b>Total Dispositions</b>	964	1,030	916	890	980	958	819	805	752	672	632
<b>Supreme Court Dispositions</b>	412	386	400	419	401	441	365	344	285	299	270
<b>Court of Appeals Dispositions</b>	552	644	516	471	579	521	454	461	467	373	362



## Appellate Filings and Dispositions 2012-2022



mandates were issued during the year. At present, the office is responsible for approximately 887 open and active case files.

In 2022, the office appointed a new deputy clerk, with the approbation of the Mississippi Supreme Court. Mrs. Johnnie McKee became Deputy Clerk on Dec. 1, 2022, serving both the Mississippi Supreme Court and Court of Appeals. She took the place of Mrs. Cynthia Pepper-Smith, who retired in November 2022 after more than 23 years of service. Mrs. McKee has worked in the Clerk's office since May 2005. During her tenure, she has advanced in many different roles within the office and assisted in training and mentoring new assistant-deputy clerks.

## MISSISSIPPI TRIAL COURTS OF RECORD

### Judicial Conference Leadership

The Conference of Circuit Court Judges elected officers on April 28, 2022, at the Spring Trial and Appellate Judges Conference in Biloxi. Circuit Judge Tony Mozingo of Oak Grove was elected chairman of the conference, Circuit Judge Dal Williamson of Laurel was elected vice-chair, and Circuit Judge Tomika Irving of Fayette was elected secretary-treasurer. After Judge Mozingo's Oct. 4, 2022, announcement that he would retire from the bench at the end of December 2022, the Conference held another election on Oct. 27. At the special election, Judge Williamson was elected chair, Judge Irving was elected vice-chair, and Circuit Judge Christopher Schmidt of Pass Christian was elected secretary-treasurer.



Judge Mozingo previously served as vice-chair and secretary-treasurer of the Conference. He served as a Circuit Judge of the 15th Circuit Court from January 2011 through December 2022. Judge Williamson previously served as conference secretary-treasurer. He has served since

January 2015 as Circuit Judge of the 18th District of Jones County. Judge Irving has served as judge of the 22<sup>nd</sup> Circuit Court District since January 2019. Judge Schmidt has served since January 2015 in the 2nd Circuit District.

Chancery Court Judges elected officers on Oct. 27, 2022, during the Fall Trial and Appellate Judges Conference in Biloxi. Chancellor Gerald Martin of Raleigh was elected chair of the Conference. Chancellor Cynthia Brewer of Madison was elected vice-chair, and Chancellor Larry Little of Oxford was re-elected secretary-treasurer.



**Judge Gerald Martin**



**Judge Cynthia Brewer**



**Judge Larry Little**

Judge Martin previously served as vice-chair of the Conference. He has served on the 13<sup>th</sup> Chancery Court since January 2015. Judge Brewer previously served as chair of the Conference of Chancery Judges in 2012, and as vice-chair in 2011. She has served on the 11<sup>th</sup> Chancery Court since January 2007. Judge Little took office in January 2019 in the 18th Chancery Court.

County Court Judges re-elected Madison County Court Judge Edwin 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 on Oct. 27, 2022.

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.



**Judge Edwin Hannan**



**Judge Vernita King Johnson**



**Judge Veldore Young Graham**



**Judge Thomas Broome**



**Referee Joey Cobb**

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 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 Court of Appeals Judge Joe Lee of Brandon is chairman of the Conference of Senior Status Judges. Retired Chancellor Patricia Wise of Jackson is vice-chair, and retired Circuit Judge Steve Simpson of Gulfport is secretary-treasurer. They were elected to two-year terms at the 2021 Spring Trial and Appellate Judges Conference.

Judge Lee served on the Mississippi Court of Appeals 1999-2018. He was Chief Judge 2011-2018. Judge Wise served as a Hinds Chancery Judge 1989-2018. Judge Simpson was a 2nd Circuit judge 2000-2008.

In December 2022, Senior Status judges included 67 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 2022, the Supreme Court made 298 special judge appointments. Only five of those were not Senior Status judges.



**Judge Joe Lee**

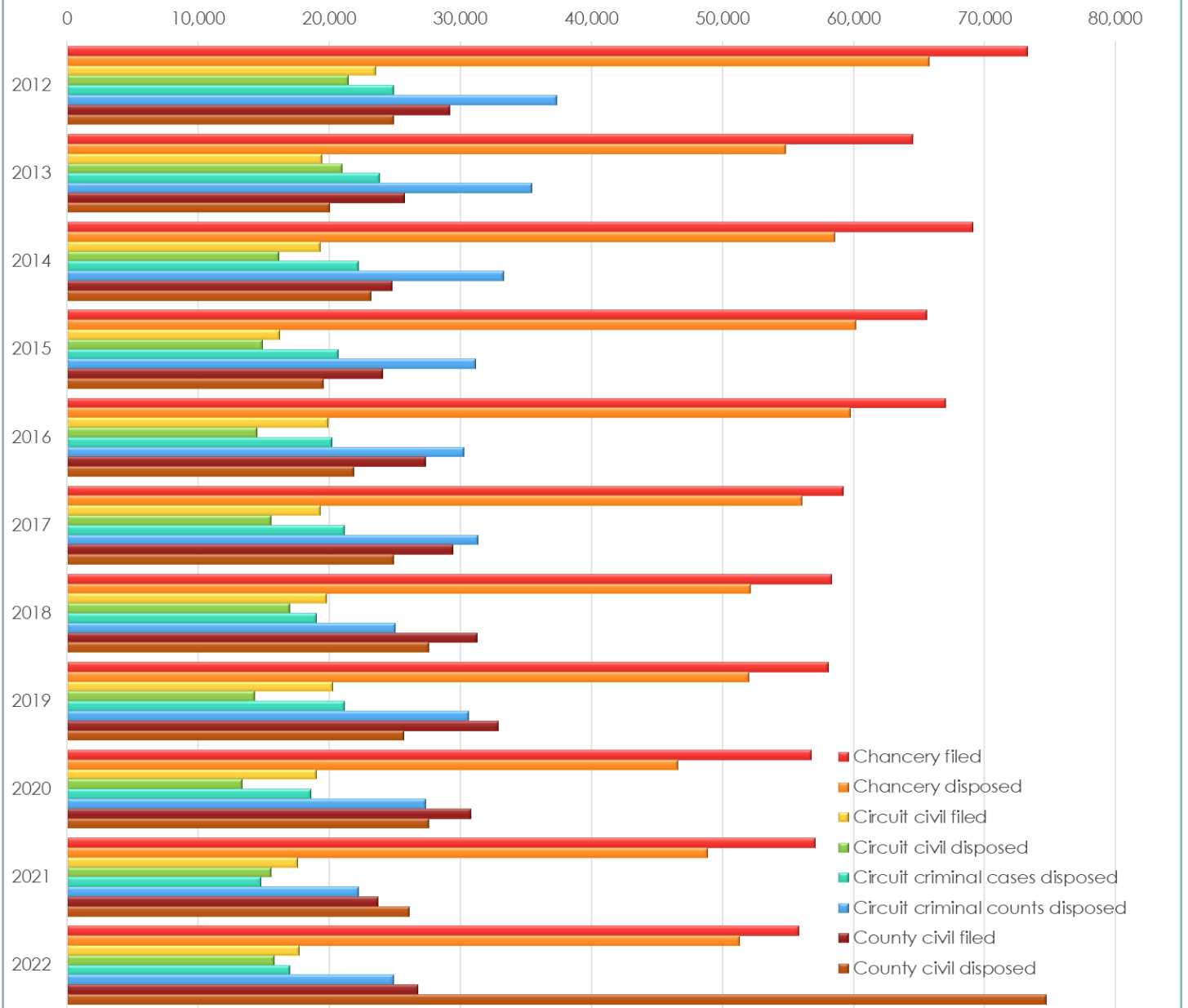


**Judge Patricia Wise**



**Judge Steve Simpson**

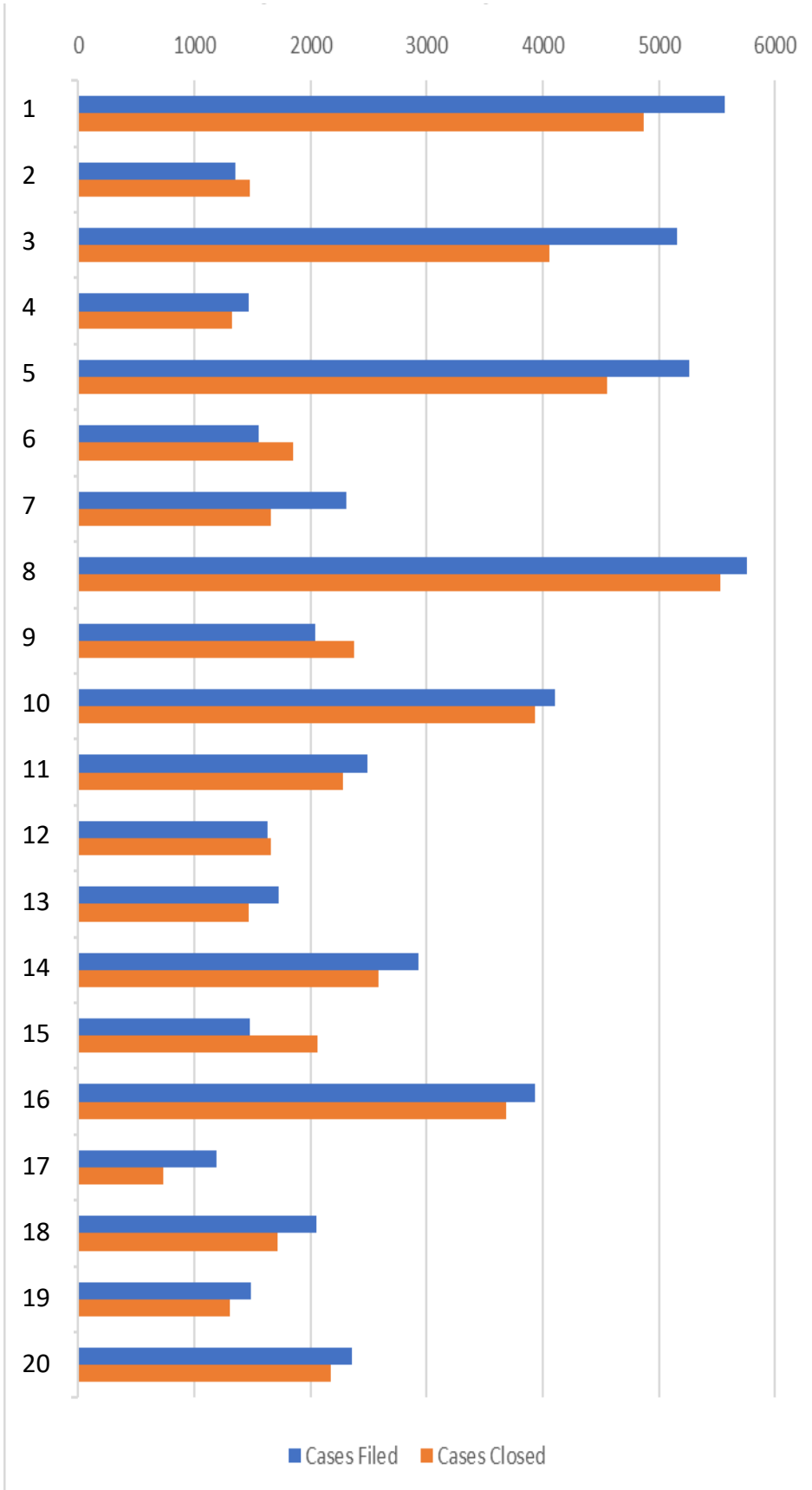
## Trial Court Filings and Dispositions FY 2012-2022



FISCAL YEAR	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Chancery filed	73,268	64,515	69,100	65,589	66,999	59,221	58,346	58,099	56,754	57,050	55,839
Chancery disposed	65,782	54,817	58,573	60,192	59,780	56,079	52,132	52,042	46,621	48,852	51,291
Circuit civil filed	23,553	19,429	19,305	16,236	19,907	19,328	19,789	20,235	18,984	17,561	17,676
Circuit civil disposed	21,441	21,003	16,123	14,874	14,467	15,557	16,974	14,288	13,340	15,529	15,765
Circuit criminal cases disposed	24,917	23,851	22,229	20,703	20,188	21,182	19,000	21,171	18,581	14,781	16,961
Circuit criminal counts disposed	37,366	35,437	33,322	31,174	30,284	31,361	25,009	30,644	27,367	22,212	24,880
County civil filed	29,177	25,761	24,793	24,055	27,366	29,417	31,307	32,915	30,791	23,696	26,725
County civil disposed	24,930	20,038	23,187	19,552	21,861	24,933	27,602	25,665	27,581	26,120	74,694*

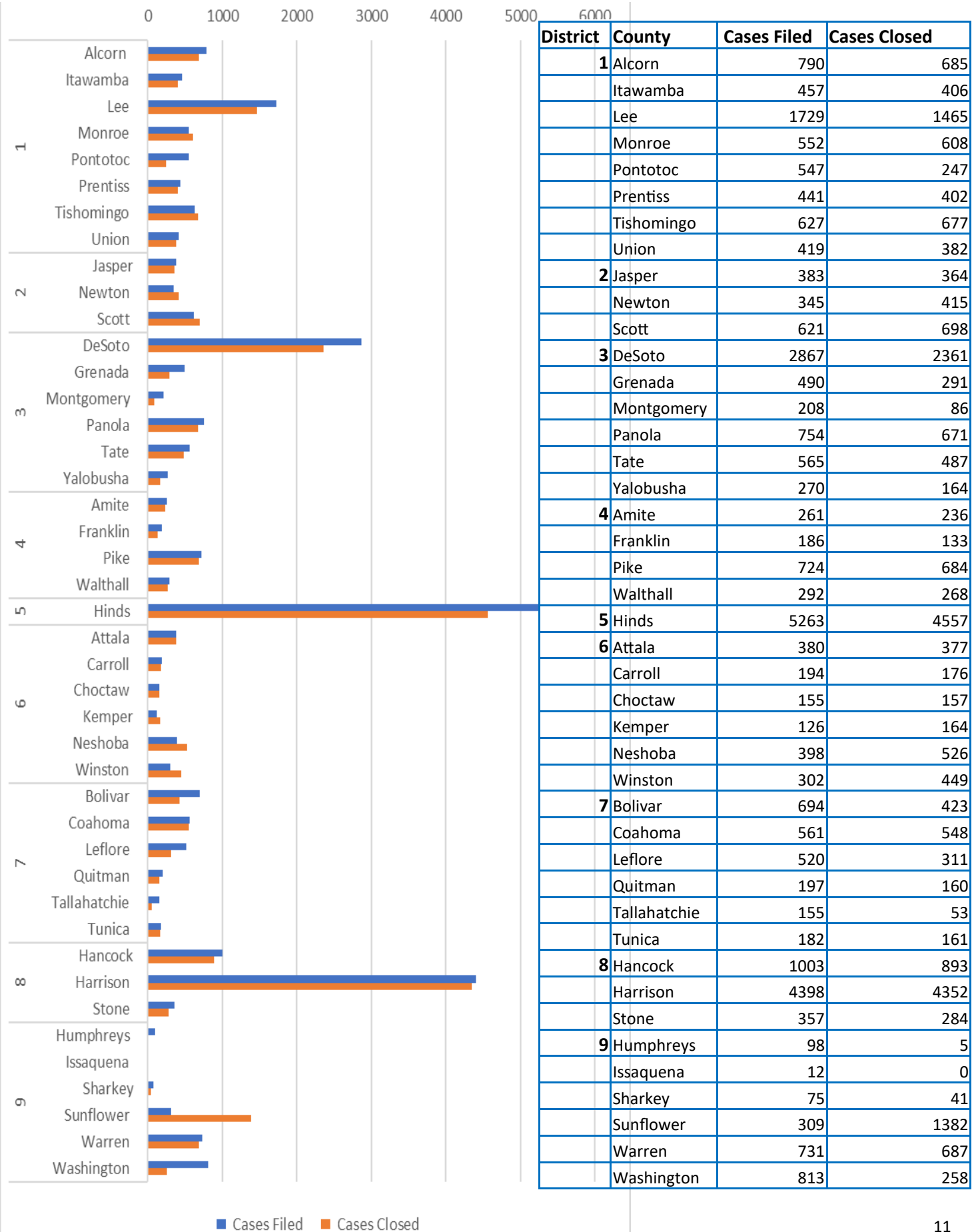
\* A backlog of civil cases in Hinds County Court was resolved in 2022. Thousands of cases were filed but not pursued by litigants in previous years. Those cases are recorded as closed in 2022.

## Chancery Cases Filed/Disposed FY 2022

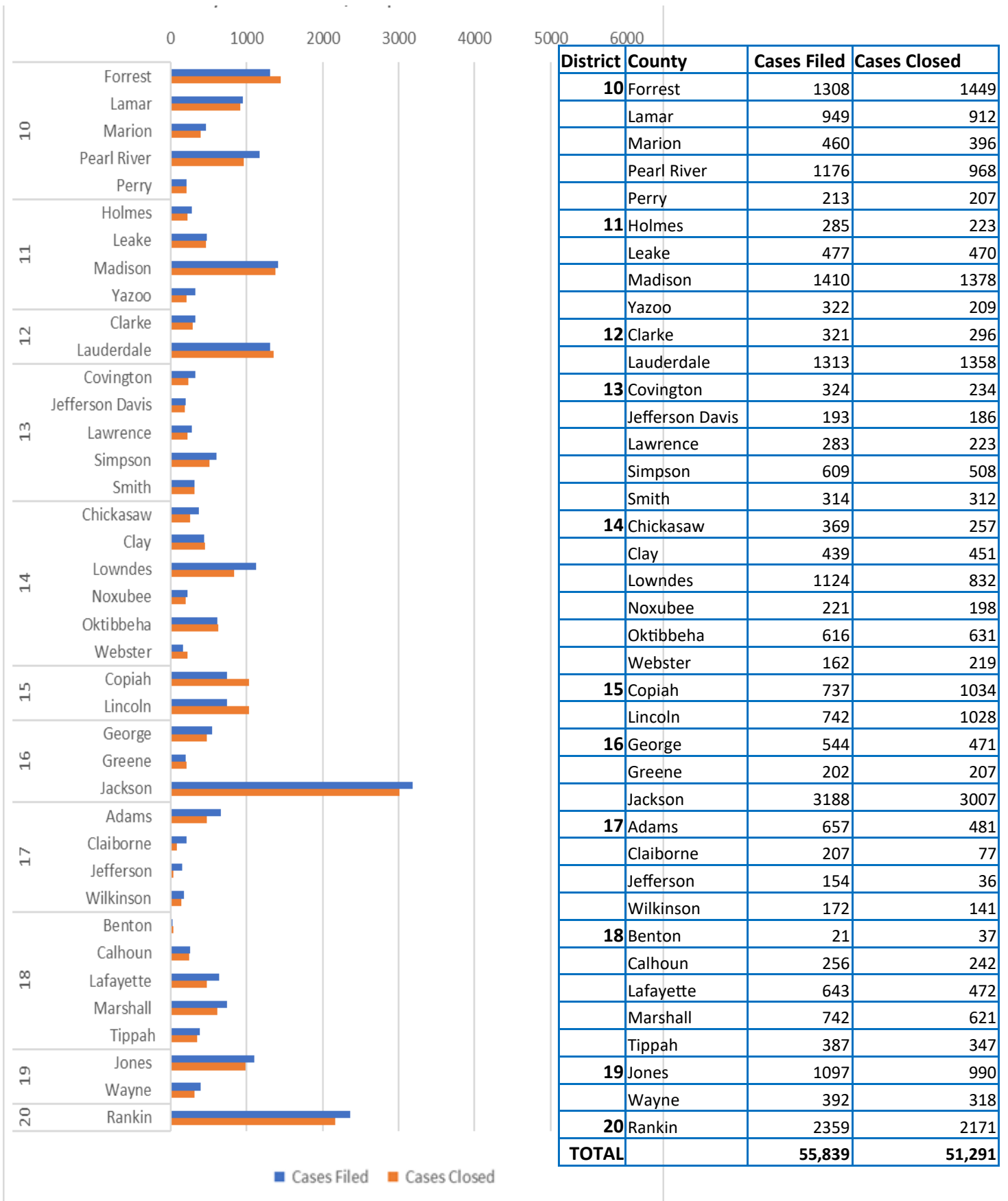


District	Cases Filed	Cases Disposed
1	5562	4872
2	1349	1477
3	5154	4060
4	1463	1321
5	5263	4557
6	1555	1849
7	2309	1656
8	5758	5529
9	2038	2373
10	4106	3932
11	2494	2280
12	1634	1654
13	1723	1463
14	2931	2588
15	1479	2062
16	3934	3685
17	1190	735
18	2049	1719
19	1489	1308
20	2359	2171
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>55,839</b>	<b>51,291</b>

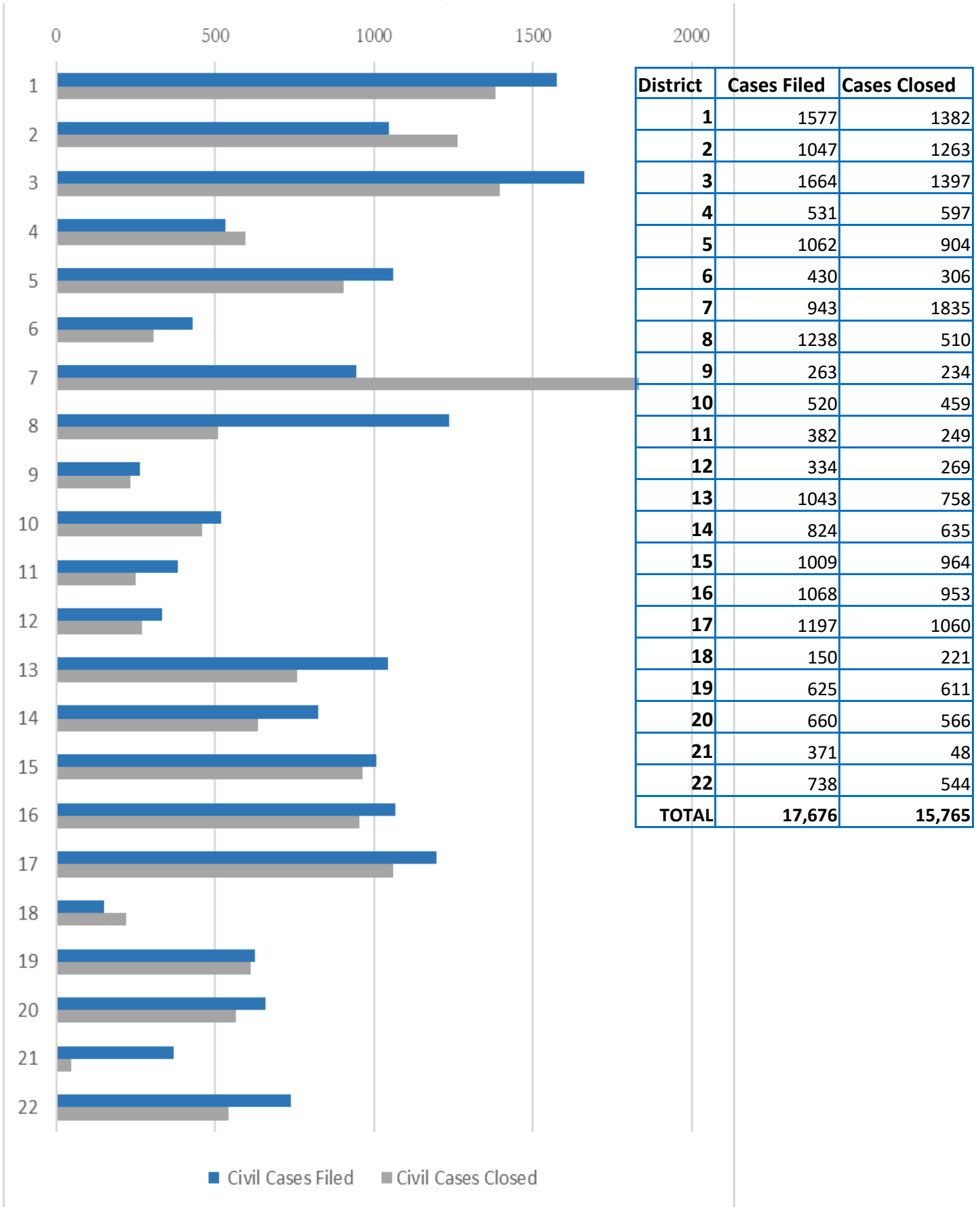
## Chancery Cases Filed/Disposed FY 2022



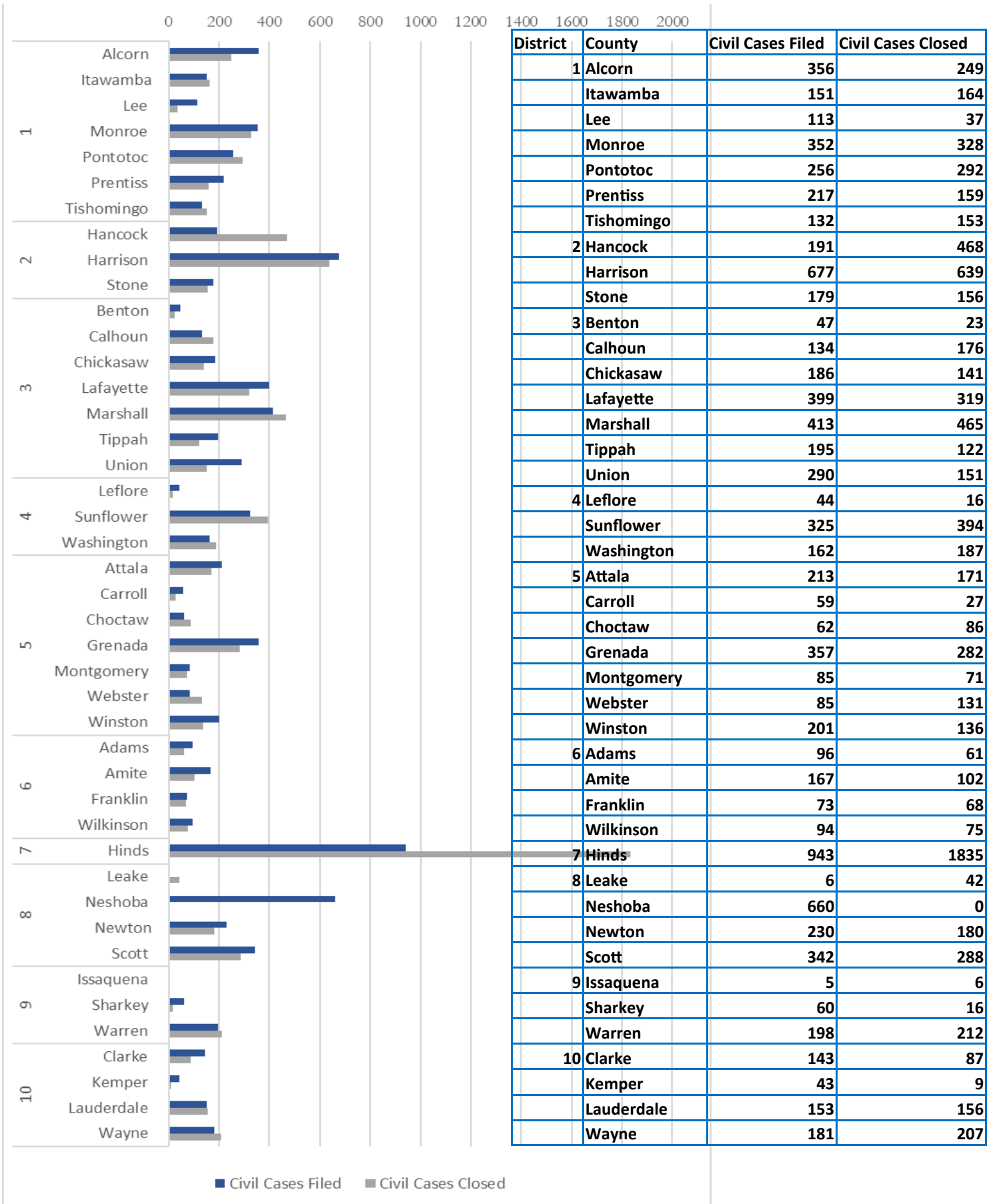
## Chancery Cases Filed/Disposed FY 2022



## Circuit Civil Cases Filed/Disposed FY 2022

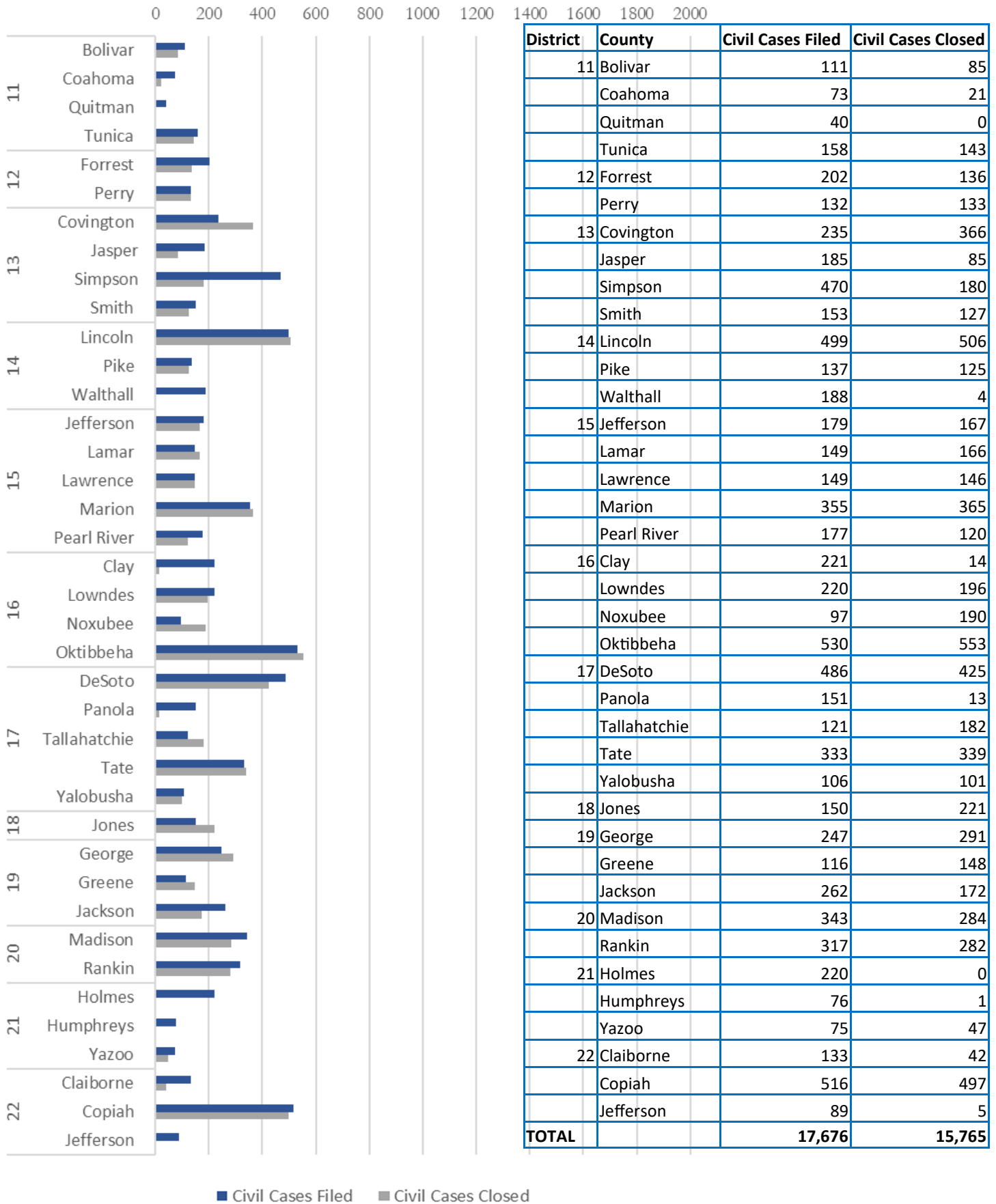


## Circuit Civil Cases Filed/Disposed FY 2022

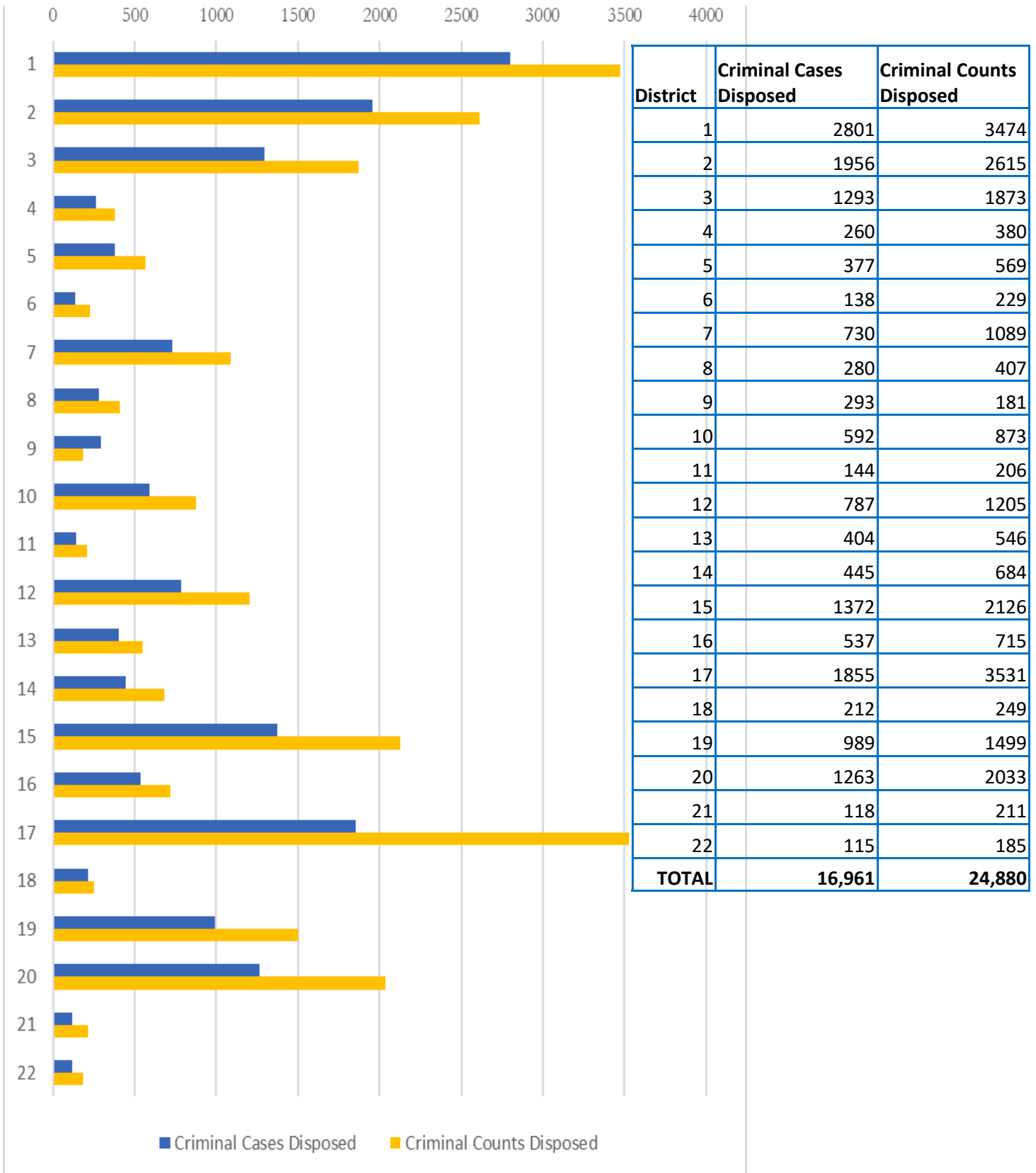




## Circuit Civil Cases Filed/Disposed FY 2022

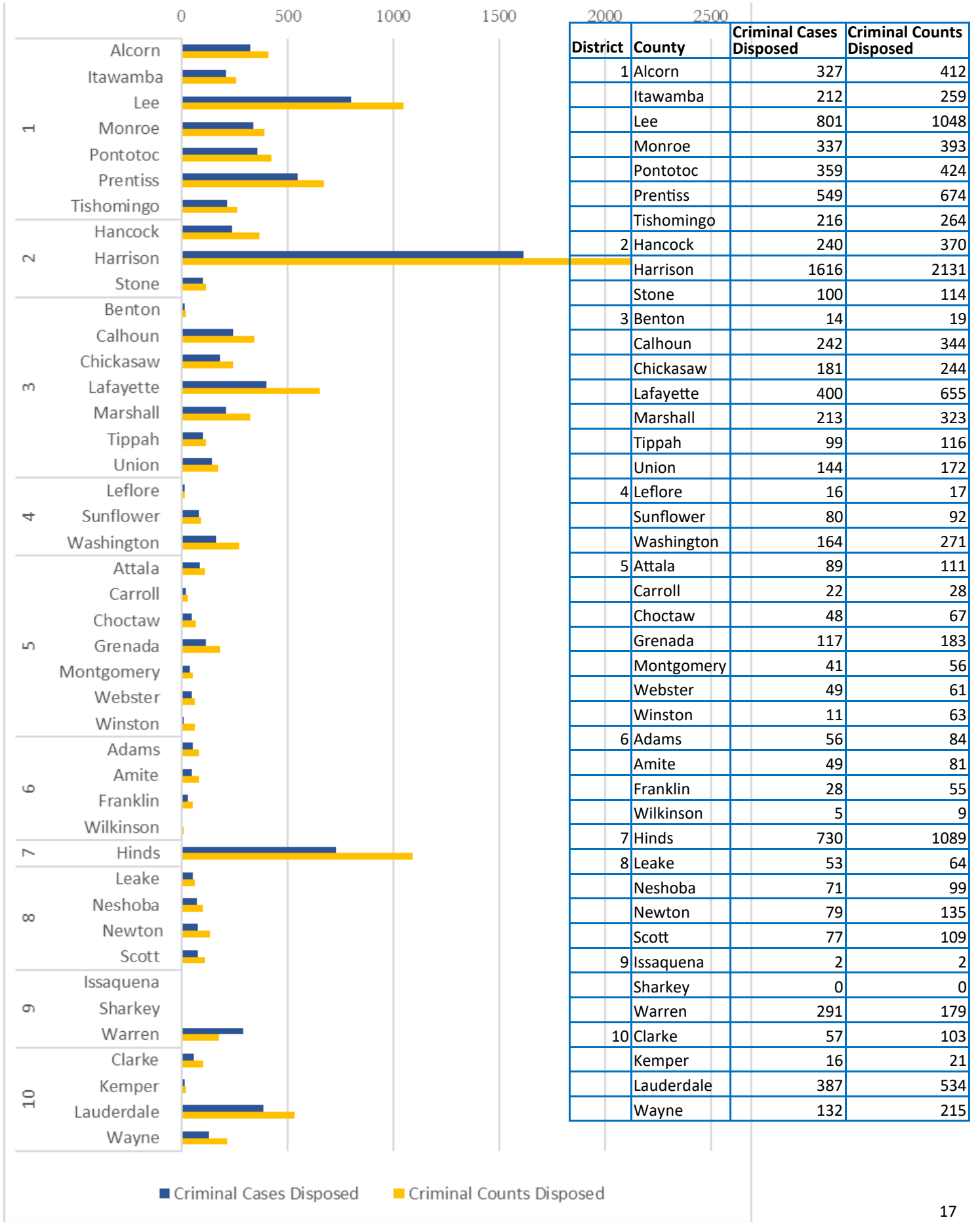


## Circuit Criminal Cases/ Counts Disposed FY 2022

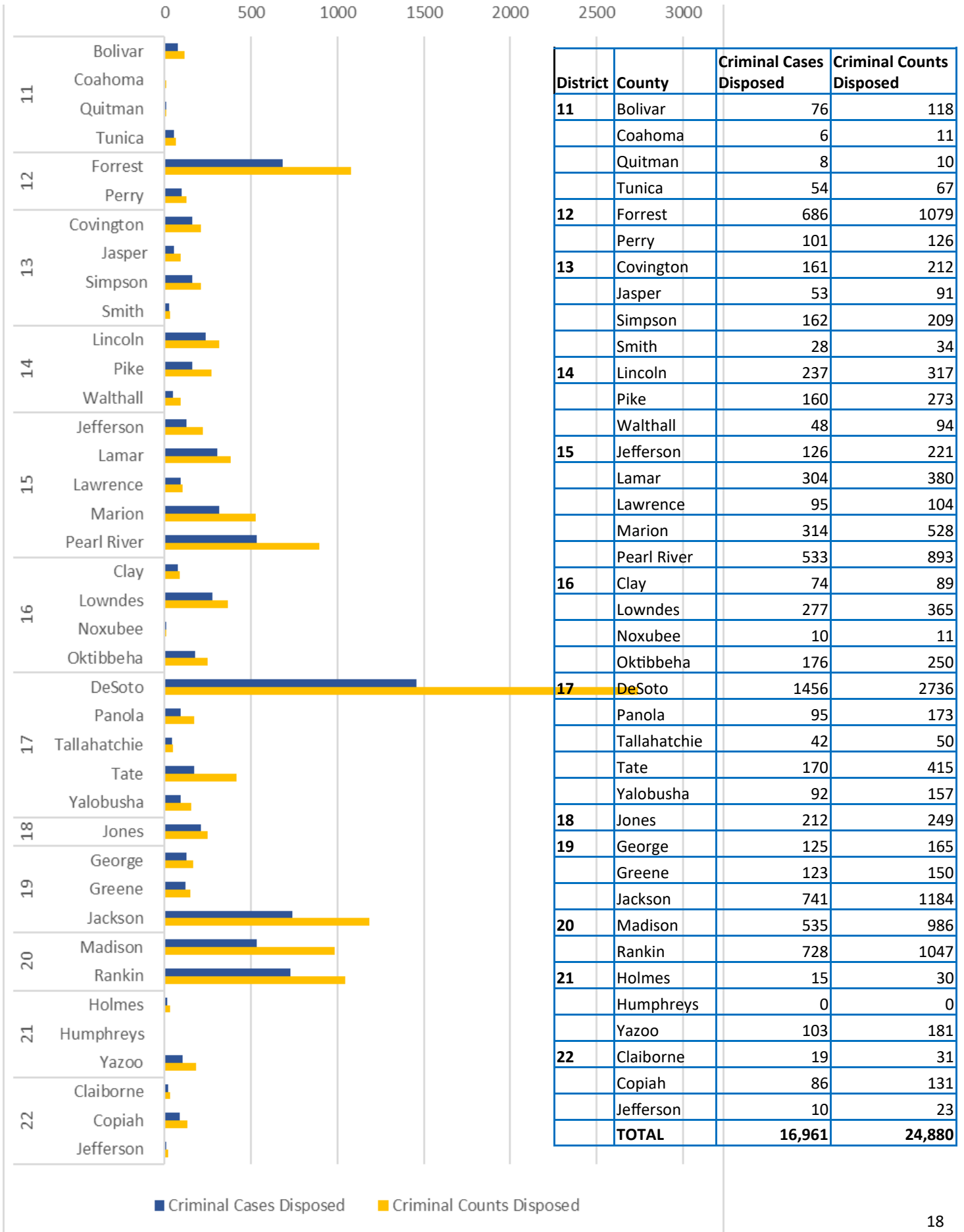


Note: Complete data on criminal cases **filed** is not yet available statewide. Mississippi Electronic Courts tracks criminal cases from the time charges are filed in the 53 Circuit Courts which utilize electronic filing. However, 29 Circuit Courts had not yet implemented MEC at the end of 2022. Those courts not yet on MEC provide criminal case data to the Administrative Office of Courts when the case is concluded.

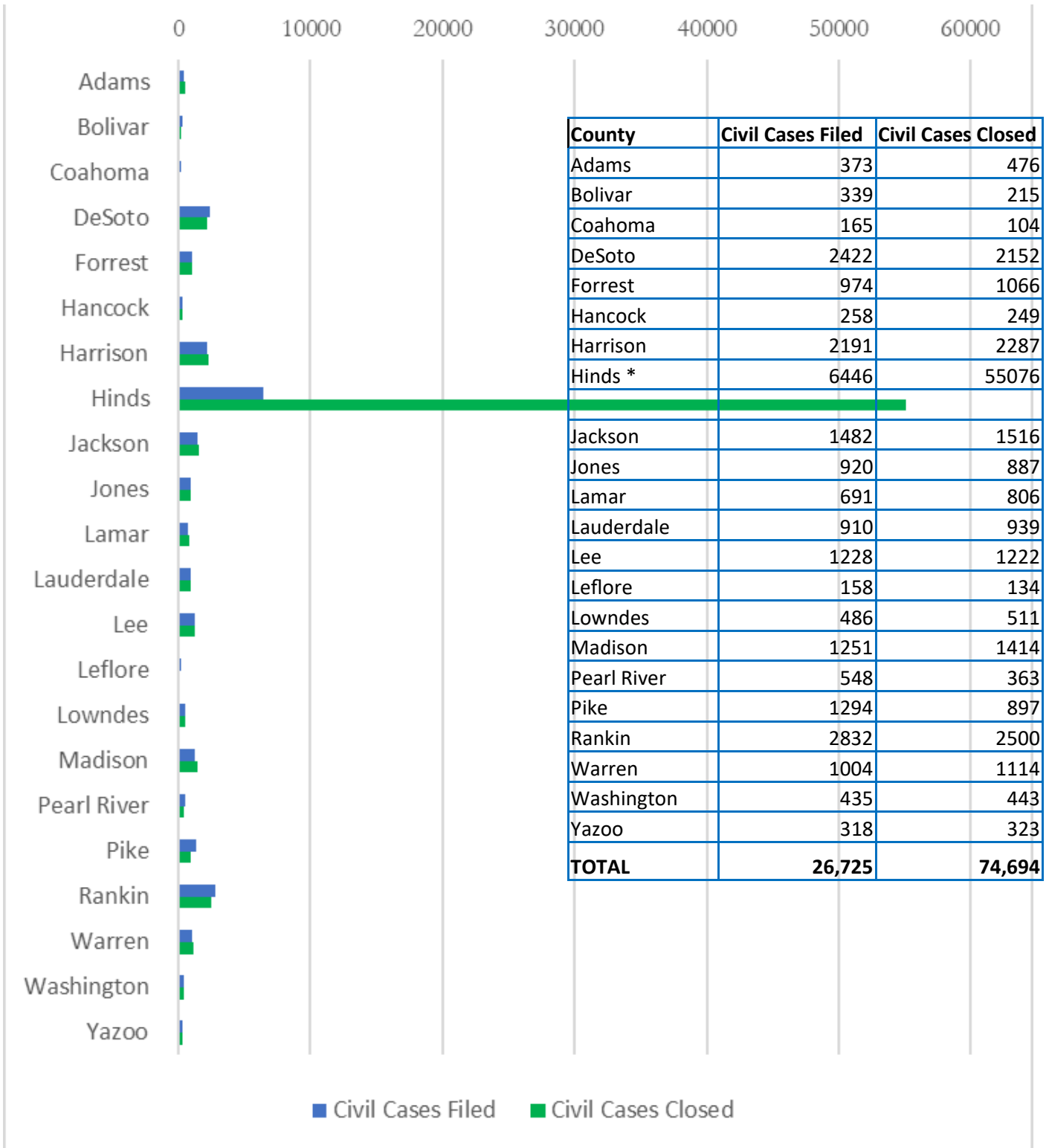
## Circuit Criminal Cases/ Counts Disposed FY 2022



## Circuit Criminal Cases/ Counts Disposed FY 2022



## County Court Civil Cases Filed/Disposed FY 2022



\* A backlog of civil cases in Hinds County Court was resolved in 2022. Thousands of cases had been filed but not pursued by litigants in previous years. Those cases are recorded as closed in 2022.

## YOUTH COURTS, CALENDAR YEAR 2022

	Total Referrals			Formal Adjudicated Referrals			Referrals Handled Informally		
	Abuse	Neglected	Delinquent	Abuse	Neglected	Delinquent	Abuse	Neglected	Delinquent
ADAMS	103	298	97	15	62	71	88	236	26
ALCORN	125	436	145	1	20	59	124	416	86
AMITE	9	57	14	3	14	11	6	43	3
ATTALA	32	185	37	1	9	20	31	176	17
BENTON	13	35	17	2	16	16	11	19	1
BOLIVAR	85	145	216	11	93	118	74	52	98
CALHOUN	34	153	69	2	15	47	32	138	22
CARROLL	28	46	14	3	3	12	25	43	2
CHICKASAW	10	44	96	7	30	95	3	14	1
CHOCTAW	0	5	0	0	5	0	0	0	0
CLAIBORNE	22	52	42	2	15	27	20	37	15
CLARKE	55	57	31	4	4	28	51	53	3
CLAY	74	129	61	15	27	53	59	102	8
COAHOMA	37	128	159	3	28	76	34	100	83
COPIAH	117	375	65	4	13	47	113	362	18
COVINGTON	61	320	45	0	50	33	61	270	12
DESOTO	911	1357	1851	23	87	1342	888	1270	509
FORREST	220	763	271	18	115	140	202	648	131
FRANKLIN	14	64	44	2	19	33	12	45	11
GEORGE	9	42	80	9	42	14	0	0	66
GREENE	5	27	28	5	27	23	0	0	5
GRENADA	16	44	104	11	41	79	5	3	25
HANCOCK	215	1201	236	26	130	146	189	1071	90
HARRISON	1953	3653	1546	22	110	567	1931	3543	979
HINDS	106	288	544	91	273	527	15	15	17
HOLMES	2	2	44	1	2	38	1	0	6
HUMPHREYS	23	54	63	5	15	55	18	39	8
ISSAQUENA	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
ITAWAMBA	120	436	82	1	28	46	119	408	36
JACKSON	88	441	526	11	219	272	77	222	254
JASPER	39	155	44	0	5	36	39	150	8
JEFFERSON	0	25	24	0	24	13	0	1	11
JEFFERSON DAVIS	14	57	32	1	22	32	13	35	0
JONES	307	683	769	88	406	626	219	277	143
KEMPER	5	23	2	0	4	2	5	19	0
LAFAYETTE	2	10	94	2	8	55	0	2	39
LAMAR	231	459	300	6	55	166	225	404	134
LAUDERDALE	146	723	418	6	49	300	140	674	118
LAWRENCE	24	93	43	5	25	41	19	68	2
LEAKE	15	24	15	15	14	13	0	10	2
LEE	355	1004	613	7	123	405	348	881	208

	Total Referrals			Formal Adjudicated Referrals			Referrals Handled Informally		
	Abuse	Neglect	Delinquent	Abuse	Neglect	Delinquent	Abuse	Neglect	Delinquent
LEFLORE	160	287	180	17	58	128	143	229	52
LINCOLN	112	217	98	9	31	68	103	186	30
LOWNDES	444	816	311	21	69	198	423	747	113
MADISON	153	248	316	3	29	308	150	219	8
MARION	99	273	235	21	47	230	78	226	5
MARSHALL	60	129	120	13	29	95	47	100	25
MONROE	15	44	56	3	22	21	12	22	35
MONTGOMERY	7	18	27	4	16	21	3	2	6
NESHOBA	110	200	110	5	17	110	105	183	0
NEWTON	0	18	73	0	18	68	0	0	5
NOXUBEE	5	18	6	5	18	6	0	0	0
OKTIBBEHA	1	70	91	1	67	88	0	3	3
PANOLA	18	317	218	0	31	153	18	286	65
PEARL RIVER	387	673	106	17	54	79	370	619	27
PERRY	55	139	28	6	16	26	49	123	2
PIKE	219	567	189	21	103	83	198	464	106
PONTOTOC	227	777	300	1	33	281	226	744	19
PRENTISS	63	243	64	3	37	62	60	206	2
QUITMAN	4	14	36	0	8	30	4	6	6
RANKIN	745	1127	1047	15	240	343	730	886	704
SCOTT	5	39	110	2	27	90	3	12	20
SHARKEY	1	5	6	1	5	6	0	0	0
SIMPSON	137	265	136	18	23	103	119	242	33
SMITH	0	27	53	0	22	51	0	5	2
STONE	64	172	21	1	35	10	63	137	11
SUNFLOWER	51	174	213	19	43	166	32	131	47
TALLAHATCHIE	21	117	42	0	7	22	21	110	20
TATE	150	220	197	4	36	150	146	184	47
TIPPAH	53	285	84	1	50	71	52	235	13
TISHOMINGO	67	192	65	6	42	46	61	150	19
TUNICA	101	253	141	28	76	83	73	177	58
UNION	198	436	104	0	33	87	198	403	17
WALTHALL	67	90	67	4	21	49	63	69	18
WARREN	172	475	297	48	137	270	124	338	27
WASHINGTON	131	445	659	33	115	398	98	330	261
WAYNE	68	144	162	2	32	108	66	112	54
WEBSTER	8	89	10	2	13	9	6	76	1
WILKINSON	0	12	54	0	10	23	0	2	31
WINSTON	87	11	71	6	5	68	81	6	3
YALOBUSHA	47	164	19	5	16	19	42	148	0
YAZOO	19	69	252	1	30	122	18	39	130



### Intervention Courts

Intervention Courts, formerly known as drug courts, have been in existence in Mississippi for 23 years. The first felony drug court program began in the 14<sup>th</sup> Circuit Court in 1999, followed by the 7<sup>th</sup> Circuit Court of Hinds County in 2000. The state had 43 drug intervention courts in 2022. There were 22 adult felony drug intervention court programs – one in each of the 22 Circuit Court districts, as of the end of December 2022. (The creation of the 23rd Circuit Court District in January 2023 will add another intervention court.) There were three adult misdemeanor intervention court programs, 14 juvenile intervention courts and four family intervention courts. The newest is the Madison County Family Intervention Court, which opened in July 2022. An updated list of all intervention courts is at this link: <https://courts.ms.gov/trialcourts/interventioncourts/2022%20Intervention%20Courts%20database%20for%20website.pdf>.

Intervention courts provide an enormous savings to the state budget. Avoided incarceration costs for intervention court participants amounted to an estimated savings of \$57.6 million during the 2022 fiscal year. Since FY 2006, savings generated by intervention court participants working and being productive citizens while remaining out of

Fiscal Year	Estimated gross savings of incarceration costs
FY 2006	\$13,356,373
FY 2007	\$17,843,713
FY 2008	\$23,469,080
FY 2009	\$30,807,854
FY 2010	\$37,764,166
FY 2011	\$41,748,670
FY 2012	\$45,113,788
FY 2013	\$47,379,543
FY 2014	\$69,872,000
FY 2015	\$74,171,610
FY 2016	\$54,753,425
FY 2017	\$58,033,724
FY 2018	\$64,081,427
FY 2019	\$66,133,706
FY 2020	\$63,266,280
FY 2021	\$57,603,700
FY 2022	\$57,619,100
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$823,018,159</b>

Fiscal Year	County Fines Paid by Drug Intervention Court Participants	Drug Intervention Court Fees Paid by Participants
FY 2017	\$1,260,476	\$1,649,771
FY 2018	\$1,279,860	\$1,719,567
FY 2019	\$1,569,446	\$2,006,986
FY 2020	\$1,427,625	\$1,932,708
FY 2021	\$1,500,641	\$2,037,256
FY 2022	\$1,387,715	\$1,832,758
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$8,425,763</b>	<b>\$11,179,046</b>





prison are estimated to be more than \$1 billion. Gross savings to Mississippi taxpayers from avoided incarceration costs from FY 2006 through FY 2022 is an estimated \$823,018,811. Savings calculations are based on a PEER Committee estimate of an average annual cost of \$19,607 per inmate to house inmates in the Department of Corrections. The average estimate dropped to \$18,479.95 per inmate in December 2020, according to PEER Report No. 650.



With requirements 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. Total fines collected for FY2022 was \$1,387,715, and total fees collected was \$1,832,758. Fine collections from FY 2006 through FY 2022 amounted to \$17,013,684; fees paid by adult drug intervention court participants from FY 2006 through FY 2022 amounted to \$21,640,834.

Intervention courts are expected to soon surpass the 10,000 mark for program graduates. From FY 2006 through FY 2022, all Mississippi intervention courts statewide graduated 9,371 participants. This includes adult felony, misdemeanor, juvenile and family courts. A total of 3,548 participants were enrolled in all intervention courts statewide at the end of FY 2022 on June 30, 2022.

Another measure of the success of the intervention courts is that 928 drug-free babies were born to program participants statewide in FY 2006 through FY 2022. The value of a healthy life is precious. Drug intervention courts have saved the State of Mississippi an estimated \$696 million for the 928 drug-free babies born to participants since FY 2006. The estimate assumes that without the care provided by intervention courts, drug addicted mothers would have given birth to babies with health issues that would require long-term medical care. According to a study conducted by the U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics, each healthy, drug-free infant saves the state \$750,000 during the first 18 years of life.



Intervention court success also is measured in graduates' personal accomplishments. From FY 2015 — FY 2022:

- 5,543 were employed;
- 772 attended vocational schools;
- 1,449 attended traditional schools;
- 1,548 attended post-secondary schools;
- 843 earned high school equivalency diplomas;
- 1,524 obtained driver licenses.

Recidivism is another key measure of the success of intervention courts. Mississippi's adult felony drug intervention courts had a recidivism rate of 2.9 percent, compared to the Mississippi Department of Corrections' recidivism rate of 35.4 percent for Fiscal Year 2018. Between 2006 and 2018, there were 133 repeat offenders among the 4,439 adult felony drug intervention court graduates.

The Legislature authorized the creation of mental health treatment courts in 2017 with changes to Mississippi Code Sections 9-27-1 et seq. The 2022 Legislature provided funding for five pilot mental health treatment courts, with the funds becoming available at the start of FY 2023, which began July 1, 2022. The Administrative Office of Courts is authorized to oversee the programs. AOC and local courts spent July through December

2022 organizing the new programs, hiring staff as needed and developing operational materials so that the mental health treatment courts could begin enrolling participants in early 2023.

The pilot programs include:

- 1st Circuit District, supervised by Judge John White. The district includes Alcorn, Itawamba, Lee, Monroe, Pontotoc, Prentiss and Tishomingo counties.

<b>Drug Intervention Court Data FY 2019 — FY 2022</b>				
	FY 2019	FY 2020	FY 2021	FY 2022
Total drug intervention court programs	40	42	43	43
Total people served by drug intervention courts statewide during year	5,292	4,934	4,828	4,803
Total drug intervention court graduates	859	656	677	617
Successfully completed and received expungement	N/A	311	192	81
Felony adult program graduates	658	433	543	504
Misdemeanor adult program graduates	54	52	28	34
Juvenile court program graduates	152	139	94	117
Family court program graduates	28	32	15	16
Total left program before completion	616	473	526	603
Charged with new offense while in program	187	122	90	71
Convicted of new crime	22	38	17	2
Drug-free babies born to participants	52	58	21	21
Earned high school equivalency certificate	147	75	70	99
Obtained employment	858	427	186	180
Fines collected and returned to county general funds	\$1,571,619.78	\$1,427,978	\$1,500,641	\$1,387,715
Fees paid by participants	\$2,057,337.15	\$1,972,668	\$2,037,256	\$1,832,758
Hours of community service work by participants	30,794.75	23,438.75	25,224	21,099

<b>FY 2022</b>	<b>Intervention Court Program Data</b>							
<b>Adult Felony Intervention Courts</b>	Enrolled first day FY2022 July 1, 2021	Enrolled last day FY2022 June 30, 2022	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	244	237	73	41	46	570	0	0
2nd Circuit	105	109	69	40	10	181	0	0
3rd Circuit	253	254	73	66	16	296	0	0
4th Circuit	91	88	23	17	0	228	3	0
5th Circuit	51	52	22	10	13	50	0	0
6th Circuit	115	119	11	3	2	56	0	1
7th Circuit	154	157	38	46	6	359	0	0
8th Circuit	271	271	86	59	71	285	0	0
9th Circuit	94	88	33	8	9	160	0	0
10th Circuit	41	37	9	11	7	132	4	0
11th Circuit	69	71	7	11	2	95	0	0
12th Circuit	139	143	58	17	20	192	0	0
13th Circuit	62	60	28	8	17	107	0	0
14th Circuit	214	217	58	19	2	472	0	0
15th Circuit	272	267	102	10	50	233	0	0
16th Circuit	72	72	19	16	2	30	0	0
17th Circuit	392	391	87	84	23	479	2	0
18th Circuit	71	75	24	18	10	87	0	0
19th Circuit	186	184	82	14	39	334	0	0
20th Circuit	170	174	85	41	19	458	0	0
21st Circuit	36	36	0	0	2	0	1	0
22nd Circuit	31	31	10	3	8	16	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,133</b>	<b>3,133</b>	<b>997</b>	<b>542</b>	<b>374</b>	<b>4,820</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Adult Misdemeanor Intervention Courts</b>	Enrolled first day FY2022 July 1, 2021	Enrolled last day FY2022 June 30, 2022	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.	32	39	22	17	2	0	0	0
Greenwood Municipal	30	30	20	10	15	67	0	0
Hinds County Justice	16	17	15	7	3	44	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>111</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>

- 4th Circuit District, supervised by Judge Margaret Carey-McCray in Washington County.
- 6th Circuit District, supervised by Judge Debra Blackwell. The district includes Adams, Amite, Franklin and Wilkinson counties.
- 7th Circuit District, supervised by Judge Faye Peterson in Hinds County.
- 14th Circuit District, supervised by Judge Michael Taylor in Pike County.

Mental health treatment courts use a treatment approach in lieu of more traditional court procedures for non-violent offenders who have been screened and diagnosed with mental illnesses. The program includes screening, clinical assessment, education, referral for treatment, counseling and rehabilitative care, service coordination and case management.

<b>FY 2022</b>	<b>Intervention Court Program Data</b>							
<b>Youth Intervention Courts</b>	Enrolled first day FY2022 July 1, 2021	Enrolled last day FY2022 June 30, 2022	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 detained for new delinquent offense	Number adjudicated for new delinquent offense
3rd Chancery	46	50	46	2	34	334	0	0
6th Chancery	1	1	6	6	7	131	0	0
9th Chancery	16	15	10	0	3	63	0	0
Adams	15	16	11	5	6	116	4	0
DeSoto	48	49	53	40	14	104	2	0
Forrest	4	5	6	1	2	26	0	0
Harrison	35	33	49	27	23	175	6	0
Hinds	6	6	8	4	4	18	0	0
Jackson	0	0	2	2	17	28	0	0
Madison	45	42	28	16	12	69	3	0
Pike	7	7	7	4	2	33	1	0
Rankin	43	43	28	3	11	351	30	1
Walthall	4	2	2	2	1	29	0	0
Washington	6	7	2	1	0	16	1	0
Yazoo	11	8	6	4	5	65	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>287</b>	<b>284</b>	<b>264</b>	<b>117</b>	<b>141</b>	<b>1,558</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Family Intervention Courts</b>	Enrolled first day FY2022 July 1, 2021	Enrolled last day FY2022 June 30, 2022	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	16	15	20	5	10	107	2	0
Harrison Family	17	15	29	9	18	97	0	0
Madison Family	Not Open In FY22	Not Open In FY22	Not Open In FY22	Not Open In FY22	Not Open In FY22	Not Open In FY22	Not Open In FY22	Not Open In FY22
Rankin Family	11	10	7	2	5	65	1	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>269</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>All Courts</b>	Enrolled first day FY2022 July 1, 2021	Enrolled last day FY2022 June 30, 2022	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
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>3,542</b>	<b>3,543</b>	<b>1,374</b>	<b>709</b>	<b>568</b>	<b>6,758</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>2</b>

## 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. MEC staff bring one or two courts onto the system each month. At the end of December 2022, the MEC system was utilized in 77 Chancery Courts that cover 95.8 percent of the state's population, 53 Circuit Courts that cover 76.5 percent of the population, and 18 County Courts; 148 of the 186 Chancery, Circuit and County courts were online and supported by MEC. It is anticipated that all Chancery Courts will be online by the end of June 2023, and all Circuit and County Courts will be online by the end of 2024.

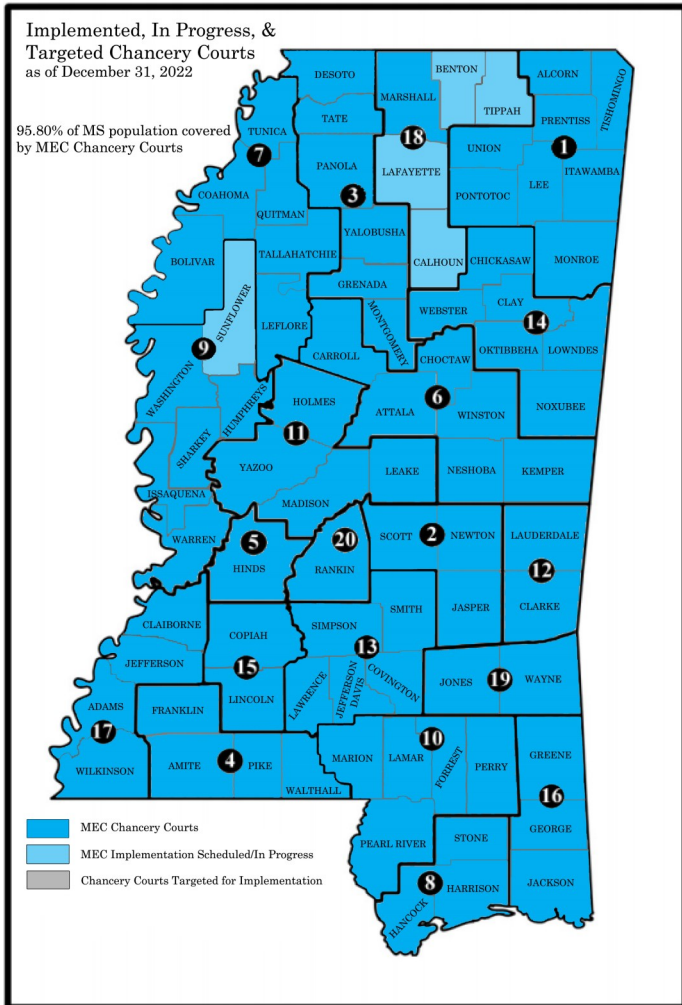


**Nathan Evans**

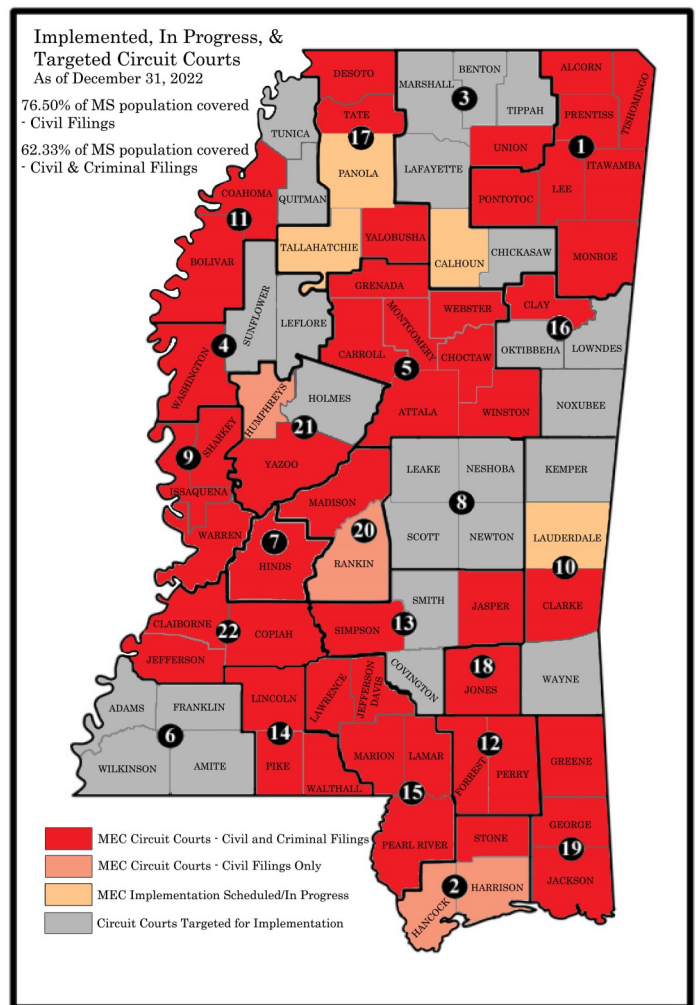
Nathan Evans, J.D., supervises a staff of 16 customer service representatives, trainers, analysts and programmers. MEC staff are responsible for supporting the numerous courts, attorneys and public users of the system, training and implementing new courts, and maintaining and enhancing the MEC online application and database servers.

The MEC system is funded solely through civil filing fees, user fees to access documents, and renewal fees. MEC had 8,558 registered attorney users, 11,329 non-attorney users, and 74 firm administrator users at the end of 2022. Since 2011, MEC has generated usage fees totaling \$4,287,568.20, including \$2,169,625.40 from the Chancery Courts and \$2,117,942.80 from the Circuit and County Courts. Online page viewing fees are divided equally between the county clerks of the court and MEC.

**Mississippi Chancery Courts  
MEC Implementation Map**

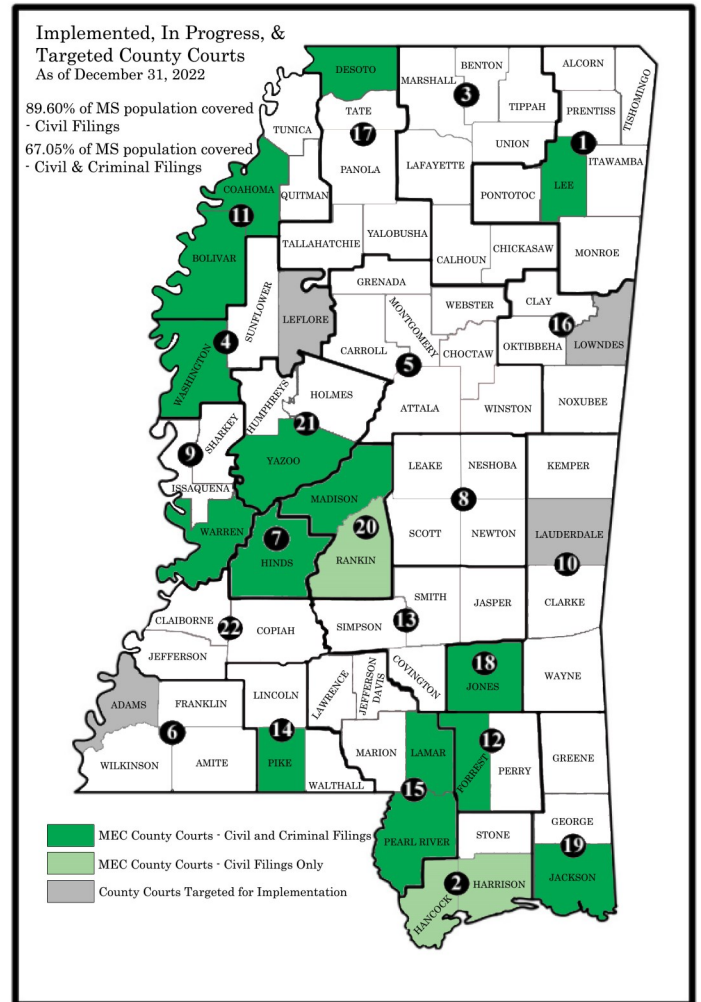


**Mississippi Circuit Courts  
MEC Implementation Map**



CALENDAR YEAR 2022 MEC Court Implementations	
Court	Date went live
Lee County Circuit Court, civil, criminal	2/7/2022
Lee County Court, civil, criminal	2/7/2022
Lee County Chancery Court	2/28/2022
Pontotoc County Chancery Court	3/28/22
Pontotoc County Circuit Court, civil, criminal	5/2/2022
Monroe County Circuit Court, civil, criminal	5/23/2022
Bolivar County Chancery Court	6/13/2022
Monroe County Chancery Court	6/27/2022
Prentiss County Chancery Court	7/25/2022
Prentiss County Circuit Court, civil, criminal	8/22/2022
Union County Chancery Court	9/26/2022
Union County Circuit Court, civil, criminal	9/26/2022
Tishomingo County Circuit Court, civil, criminal	10/24/2022
Tishomingo County Chancery Court	11/21/2022

Mississippi County Courts (22 Total)  
MEC Implementation Map



### 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.

Acadia development and implementation continued in 2022 with eight software releases including 28 new features and 49 improvements along with various bug fixes. Orders processing was implemented for the Clerk's Office, replacing orders and dispositions functionality from the Clerks Module. The ability to use Microsoft Word for order document generation and e-signing was also developed, with plans for full implementation in 2023. Various letters, alerts and other automated Clerk's Office workflow improvements were implemented as well.

To improve security, in 2022, major upgrades were underway for the server and network infrastructure for the MYCIDS system. A statewide phased rollout was planned to begin in early 2023. Also, a major upgrade of the Bar Admissions BarWeb online bar exam application was underway in 2022, with plans for release in Spring 2023.

With the COVID-19 pandemic subsiding, MYCIDS training sessions returned completely to in-person weekly onsite seminars.

### **Mississippi Youth Court Information Delivery System (MYCIDS)**

The Mississippi Youth Court Information Delivery System, MYCIDS, is a system for the real-time management of the activities of the Mississippi Youth Court System. It is a web-based application that provides support for the intake of youths into the court system, scheduling of youth cases, management of court dockets, tracking of custody situations, and necessary document generation. MYCIDS also provides a base dataset for statistical reporting purposes.

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 helpdesk support are provided at no charge to local courts.

The Mississippi Youth Court Information Delivery System was developed in 1999 and went live in 2002. MYCIDS became the mandatory case management system for all Youth Courts statewide on July 1, 2015. MYCIDS is the official court record for Youth Court.

Legislative mandate and the *In re Olivia Y.* lawsuit require extensive and continuous training. This training is required for practitioners in the Youth Courts including judges, administrators, intake officers, case workers including Department of Youth Services and Child Protection Services, prosecutors, youth defenders, guardians ad litem and judicial clerks. Between July 1, 2021, and June 30, 2022, the MYCIDS staff trained 1,172 people in 63 counties, presenting a total of 840 hours of training. The MYCIDS team also presented at the Youth Court Judges and Referees Conference in Oxford.

## 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 2023 Fiscal Year appropriation for the judicial branch was \$92,913,782, which includes \$54,449,144 in general funds, \$598,000 in capital expense funds, \$34,638,955 in special funds and \$3,227,683 from the Coronavirus State Fiscal Recovery Fund. 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. The FY 2023 general fund appropriations for all three branches of state government totaled \$6,291,920,655.

The General Fund appropriation for the Administrative Office of Courts and all state courts of record, including the Supreme Court, Court of Appeals, 23 circuit courts, 20 chancery courts, and 24 county courts, was \$54,449,144.

The judicial system's largest expenditure is salaries: \$66,472,631, or 71.54 percent of the entire judicial branch budget, including General Fund and Special Fund appropriations. The funding pays the salaries of judges, court administrators, staff attorneys, court reporters and other court staff who work in communities across the state.

As a result of the difficulties presented by the COVID-19 pandemic, the Judiciary was able to obtain a legislative appropriation of \$3,227,683 in Coronavirus State Fiscal Recovery funds in FY 2023.

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.

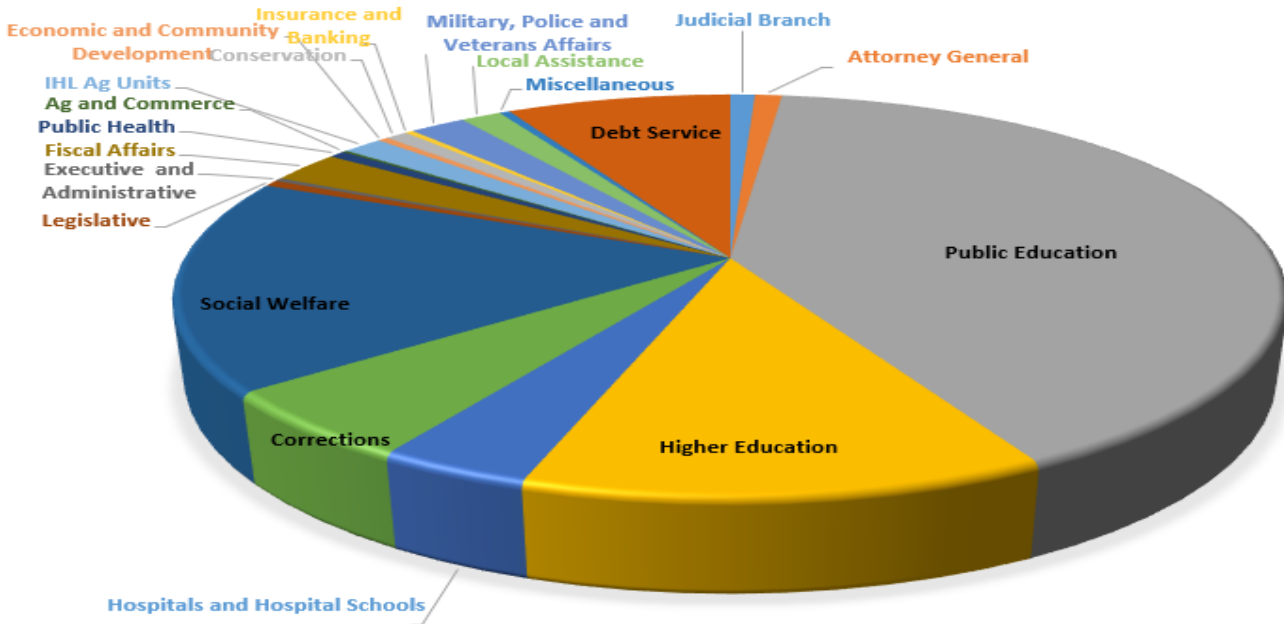
Leaders of the judiciary have worked extremely hard to secure adequate funding for the judicial branch of government, while providing an efficient, cost effective system of justice for the people of the state of Mississippi.

### FY 2023 JUDICIAL BRANCH BUDGET

	Supreme Court	Court of Appeals	Trial Judges	Admin Office of Courts	Continuing Legal Education	Board of Bar Admissions	Trial Judge Case Backlog	Trial Judge Olivia Y Case	TOTALS
Salaries	7,071,465	6,159,678	29,485,043	21,024,796	124,600	207,049	1,000,000	1,400,000	66,472,631
Travel	372,662	456,752	650,000	98,250	13,000	15,000	100,000	100,000	1,805,664
Contractual	345,110	66,950	97,500	1,653,555	13,500	102,900	500,000		2,779,515
Commodities	400,450	2,700	1,089,000	47,750	4,500	30,500	127,683		1,702,583
Equipment	-	-	-	150,000	-	-			150,000
Subsidies	-	-	-	20,003,389	-	-			20,003,389
<b>Judicial Branch Appropriation</b>	<b>8,189,687</b>	<b>6,686,080</b>	<b>31,321,543</b>	<b>42,977,740</b>	<b>155,600</b>	<b>355,449</b>	<b>1,727,683</b>	<b>1,500,000</b>	<b>92,913,782</b>
General Funds	7,252,217	5,097,224	27,129,175	14,970,528	-	-			54,449,144
Capital Expense Fund	-	-	-	598,000					598,000
Special Funds	937,470	1,588,856	4,192,368	27,409,212	155,600	355,449			34,638,955
Coronavirus State Fiscal Recovery	-	-	-				1,727,683	1,500,000	3,227,683
<b>Judicial Branch Appropriation</b>	<b>8,189,687</b>	<b>6,686,080</b>	<b>31,321,543</b>	<b>42,977,740</b>	<b>155,600</b>	<b>355,449</b>	<b>1,727,683</b>	<b>1,500,000</b>	<b>92,913,782</b>
No. of PINS	70	58	109	40	2	3	-	-	282



## FY 2022 GENERAL FUND APPROPRIATION



DOES NOT INCLUDE FY 2022 REAPPROPRIATIONS

<b>Judicial Branch</b>	<b>54,449,144</b>		<b>0.8654%</b>
Attorney General	62,956,217		1.0006%
Total Judiciary and Justice per LBO		117,405,361	
Other:			
Public Education	2,577,488,496		40.9651%
Higher Education	814,894,805		12.9514%
Hospitals and Hospital Schools	221,619,746		3.5223%
Corrections	362,878,248		5.7674%
Social Welfare	1,059,920,654		16.8457%
Legislative	33,332,992		0.5298%
Executive and Administrative	15,657,419		0.2488%
Fiscal Affairs	150,731,391		2.3956%
Public Health	42,346,384		0.6730%
Agriculture and Commerce	10,808,433		0.1718%
IHL- Agriculture Units	85,284,391		1.3555%
Economic and Community Development	22,024,526		0.3500%
Conservation	52,041,402		0.8271%
Insurance and Banking	18,597,223		0.2956%
Military, Police and Veterans Affairs	157,590,655		2.5047%
Local Assistance	90,600,000		1.4399%
Miscellaneous	24,775,230		0.3938%
Debt Service	433,923,299		6.8965%
Total Other		6,174,515,294	
<b>Total General Fund Appropriation for FY2023</b>		<b>6,291,920,655</b>	<b>100.00%</b>

**FY 2009—FY 2023 JUDICIAL BRANCH SPENDING**

Fiscal Year	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Supreme Court	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	7,774,352	8,189,687
Court of Appeals	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	6,081,997	6,686,080
Trial Judges	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	30,515,309	31,321,543
AOC	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	40,598,514	42,977,740
CLE	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	151,593	155,600
Bar Admissions	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	349,724	355,449
AOC CARES Act	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2,500,000	655,050	3,227,683
Total	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	86,126,539	92,913,782

**FY 2009—FY 2023 JUDICIAL BRANCH BUDGETS BY FUNDING SOURCES**

Fiscal Year	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Special Fund	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	36,615,173	35,236,955
General Fund	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	48,856,316	54,449,144
CARES Act	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	2,500,000	655,050	3,227,683
TOTAL	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	86,126,539	92,913,782

## ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE OF COURTS



E. Gregory Snowden, J.D. has served as AOC Director since June 22, 2021. Lisa A. Counts, J.D., is AOC Deputy Director.

Snowden, former House Speaker Pro Tempore, served in the House of Representatives for 20 years, representing Lauderdale County District 83 from January 2000 through December 2019. As Speaker Pro Tem, he chaired the Management Committee and also was a member of the Appropriations, Budget, Judiciary A; Judiciary En Banc; Rules; and Compilation, Revision, and Publication committees. He served terms on the executive committees of the National Conference of State Legislatures, the Council of State Governments, and the Southern Legislative Conference. Snowden is the second former high-ranking legislator to lead AOC. Former Senator Martin Smith of Poplarville was AOC's first director after the administrative arm of the courts of Mississippi was created by the Legislature and began operation in 1995.

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. Duties of the AOC, specified in Miss. Code Ann. §§ 9-21-1, -3, -9 (Rev. 2019), -11 (Rev. 2019), -13, -14, -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 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 intervention courts;
- collect monthly data reports from certified drug intervention 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 federal grants awarded to the AOC for the benefit of the judiciary.

**Court Interpreter Credentialing Program**



**Deenie Miller**

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. At the end of 2022 there were 30 credentialed interpreters available — 27 Spanish speakers and one each for Arabic, Mandarin Chinese and Portuguese. There is a need for Vietnamese speakers, but none have been credentialed yet.

The 2022 Mississippi Legislature authorized a new position which allowed AOC to hire its first full-time Language Access Coordinator. Deenie Miller, who has paralegal certification and 22 years of experience in the legal profession, joined AOC in July 2022. She immediately began work with the Access to Justice Commission and the Mississippi Judicial College to get more than 50 civil forms used in Justice Courts translated to Spanish. Forms in Spanish went live on the Mississippi Judicial College website on Sept. 14, 2022. The Access to Justice Commission funded the work.

The Language Access Coordinator assists the courts in meeting the needs of people with limited English proficiency, LEP. The Coordinator is in charge of educating judges, court staff and attorneys about requirements for providing court interpreters for people of limited English proficiency as well as recruiting more foreign language interpreters. During

2022 she made training presentations at the Fall Trial and Appellate Judges Conference, the Court Administrators Conference and the Court Reporters Conference. She gave a presentations to all new state trial judges in December. She

partnered with the Office of State Public Defender to present at the Youth Defender Certification Training, Parent Defender Certification Training and Public Defender Conference. She also spoke to Justice Court judges.

She is responsible for ensuring that the state judiciary is in compliance with federal rules and regulations regarding court interpreters. She began work on revising state statutes to comply with U.S. Department of Justice requirements for LEP individuals. Proposed legislation will be submitted during the 2023 legislative session.

The Language Access Coordinator is responsible for court interpreter training and certification. Under Miller's leadership, AOC resumed training for bilingual speakers interested in becoming language interpreters. The COVID pandemic had forced AOC to discontinue training workshops in 2021. The first Ethics and Skill Building Seminar was held Nov. 2-4, 2022, with 13 participants. Court interpreter Georgina Barvie, a veteran of court interpreter training, was lead instructor. Participation in the Ethics and Skill Building Seminar is the first step in the Mississippi Court Interpreter Credentialing Program which trains, tests and certifies individuals who wish to serve as court interpreters. There are two levels of proficiency: registered and certified. Among those currently credentialed, 12 interpreters are certified, and 18 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.

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.

### Indigent Parent Representation

Pilot programs in Mississippi have demonstrated that better outcomes for children occur when legal representation is provided to indigent parents facing the possibility of court-order removal of their children and termination of their parental rights.

In 2022, 34 counties reported some level of parent representation, with a majority receiving matching state funds. Not all parents are represented in these counties, but campaigns were started to increase awareness of the parent attorney programs and to provide resources to those parents who do not have access to an attorney.

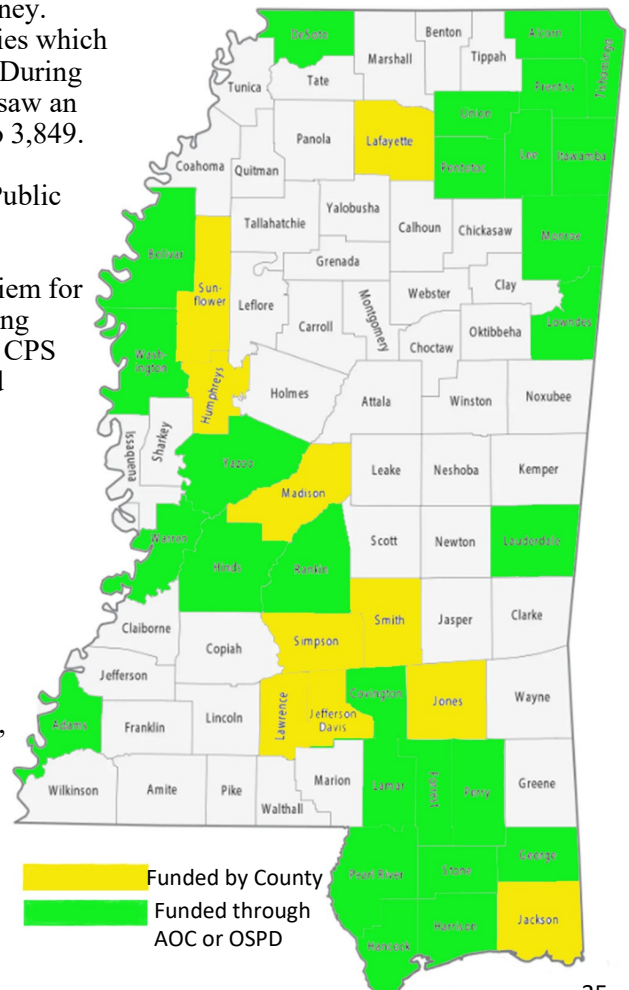
The number of children in foster care declined in most counties which provide parent representation, and time spent in foster care declined. During the 2021 calendar year, the Department of Child Protection Services saw an overall 1.89 percent increase of children in custody — from 3,766 to 3,849. However, counties with salaried parent defenders saw a 2.61 percent decrease of children in custody, according to the Office of the State Public Defender.

Fewer days in foster care means a savings to taxpayers. The Department of Child Protection Services reported that the daily per diem for foster care board payments ranges from \$23.23 to \$29.22, not including special needs or therapeutic resource homes. Reducing time spent in CPS custody by one month for 4,000 children would result in an estimated savings of \$2.7 million.

Since 2016, the Office of State Public Defender's responsibilities have included direct representation of some parents whose children have come under the jurisdiction of the Youth Court and the Department of Child Protection Services. Jennifer Morgan, who previously served as parent representation attorney for DeSoto County, has served as Parent Defense Program Manager since June 2021. She provides technical support and training for other parent defenders.

The 2022 Mississippi Legislature provided level funding of \$278,500 to OSPD for Fiscal Year 2023 — the same as for FY 2020, FY 2021, and FY 2022. The funding was used to match county level funding for certified attorneys to represent indigent parents or guardians in abuse, neglect or termination of parental rights proceedings as provide under Mississippi Code Sections 43-21-201 and 99-18-13.

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, University of Mississippi School of Law, 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.



### Resident Jurist

Former Adams County Youth Court Judge John N. Hudson has served as Resident Jurist since April 2015. Judge Hudson is a resource person to the judicial system, acting as a liaison between the Supreme Court and local courts. He works with the Administrative Office of Courts and the state judiciary to improve the juvenile justice system. He works with issues including child abuse reporting, findings of reasonable efforts to safely prevent removal of children from their homes, efforts to accomplish safe reunification with family, efforts to find permanency for children when reunification is not appropriate, termination of parental rights, general child protection services issues of competency in court proceedings, indigent parent representation, truancy, education neglect and crossover youth.



**Judge John Hudson**

The Resident Jurist is a member of the Commission on Children’s Justice. He worked with the Commission to encourage local and statewide development of resources to assist with reduction of children coming into custody and to facilitate expedited returns when removal cannot be prevented.

A key work of the Commission has been development of competent representation for parents who are involved in the child welfare system. The Resident Jurist has continued the call for increased funding to maintain and expand parent representation programs. He worked to continue the pilot sites that provide attorney representation to indigent parents. He served on a task force with the Office of the State Public Defender to deepen parent representation, including adding individuals with lived experiences in the child welfare system to act as peer support for parents. The Resident Jurist serves on the Parent

Representation Advisory Committee to further this mission.

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. Youth Courts are charged with responsibility to oversee work of the Mississippi Department of Child Protection Services to ensure that reasonable efforts have been made, first to prevent removal, and failing that, to ensure expedited permanency. Federal regulations require findings to be included in the court orders. The Resident Jurist works in assisting courts and CPS in correctly documenting eligibility requirements for obtaining Title IV-E funds. This work in assisting courts and MDCPS in correctly documenting IV-E eligibility requirements has increased federal reimbursement to MDCPS for the support of children in foster care.

The Resident Jurist worked closely with the Commissioner of CPS and the agency’s legal division to identify and address emerging issues in the area of child welfare and the courts. For instance, he participated in a task force to study obstacles to adoptions.

The Resident Jurist is a trainer for local courts and other court related entities. He made presentations to judges and prosecutors regarding the process to make appropriate reasonable efforts to prevent removal and later accomplish permanency.

Throughout the year, numerous judges, prosecutors and other court personnel call upon Judge Hudson seeking advice and clarity. He worked to resolve issues arising between local courts and other entities.

## COMMISSION ON CONTINUING LEGAL EDUCATION

The Mississippi Commission on Mandatory 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 Mandatory 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. 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.

Due to continued health concerns related to COVID-19, the Mississippi Commission on CLE again 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. The Supreme Court again granted the Commission's petition, and attorneys were allowed to complete their CLE requirement through online programs, webinars or live in-person programs. Also, the Mississippi Supreme Court again ordered that any newly admitted attorney who had to complete the new lawyer program by July 31 of the reporting year could complete that program online. The Supreme Court granted waivers of Rule 3 and Rule 3b of the Rules and Regulations for Mandatory Continuing Legal Education in Emergency Administrative Order 10, issued May 5, 2020; Emergency Administrative Order 17, issued Dec. 1, 2020; Emergency Administrative Order 24, issued Nov. 18, 2021; and in an En Banc Order issued on Nov. 10, 2022.

As COVID-related illnesses diminished, the number of live CLE programs increased in 2022, compared to the previous year, and the number of remote webcast CLE presentations decreased. In 2022, the Mississippi Commission on CLE approved for credit 264 live programs that were held in the state of Mississippi and 1,209 live programs held outside the state. By comparison, 2021 approved live CLE offerings included 211 in-state and 503 out-of-state. In 2022, 4,435 CLE programs were given by satellite, teleconference or online through live webcasts and on-demand programs, down from 6,687 remote presentation CLE programs utilized the year before.

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.

Members of the Commission on CLE are John Dickson Mayo of Oxford, Robert M. Tyner Jr. of Sumner, George Scott Luter of Jackson, Elizabeth Lee Maron of Ridgeland, Richard W. Sliman of Gulfport, Sam H. Buchanan of Hattiesburg, Marcus A. McLelland of Petal, Helen Morris of Cleveland and Katherine K. Farese of Ashland. Terms of Christopher L. Wansley and Robert D. Schultze ended on July 31, 2022.

Tracy Graves serves as Administrator of the Mississippi Commission on Continuing Legal Education.

## BOARD OF BAR ADMISSIONS

The Board of Bar Admissions administers 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.

The Supreme Court in 2022 revised the Rules Governing Admission to the Mississippi Bar to allow applicants to take the Bar Exam a maximum of four times. Under the previous rule, enacted in 2019, applicants after three failed attempts to pass the Bar Exam were required to successfully complete 12 course hours at an accredited law school before taking the Bar Exam additional times.

The rule amendment, adopted by the Supreme Court on Nov. 10, 2022, set a cap of four attempts to pass the Bar Exam and eliminated the provision for remedial classes. Rule IV, Section 8, says, "Re-Examination in Excess of Four Prohibited. An applicant who has unsuccessfully taken the Mississippi Bar Exam at least four (4) times shall not be eligible for re-examination."

The Mississippi Board of Bar Admissions requested the change in a petition, citing recent lower bar passage rates both in Mississippi and nationwide, in addition to the fact that large numbers of repeat exam takers "adversely and significantly affected pass rates in Mississippi" as reasons for requesting the Rule change. Deans of the University of Mississippi School of Law and Mississippi College School of Law supported the rule change in a letter submitted with the petition.

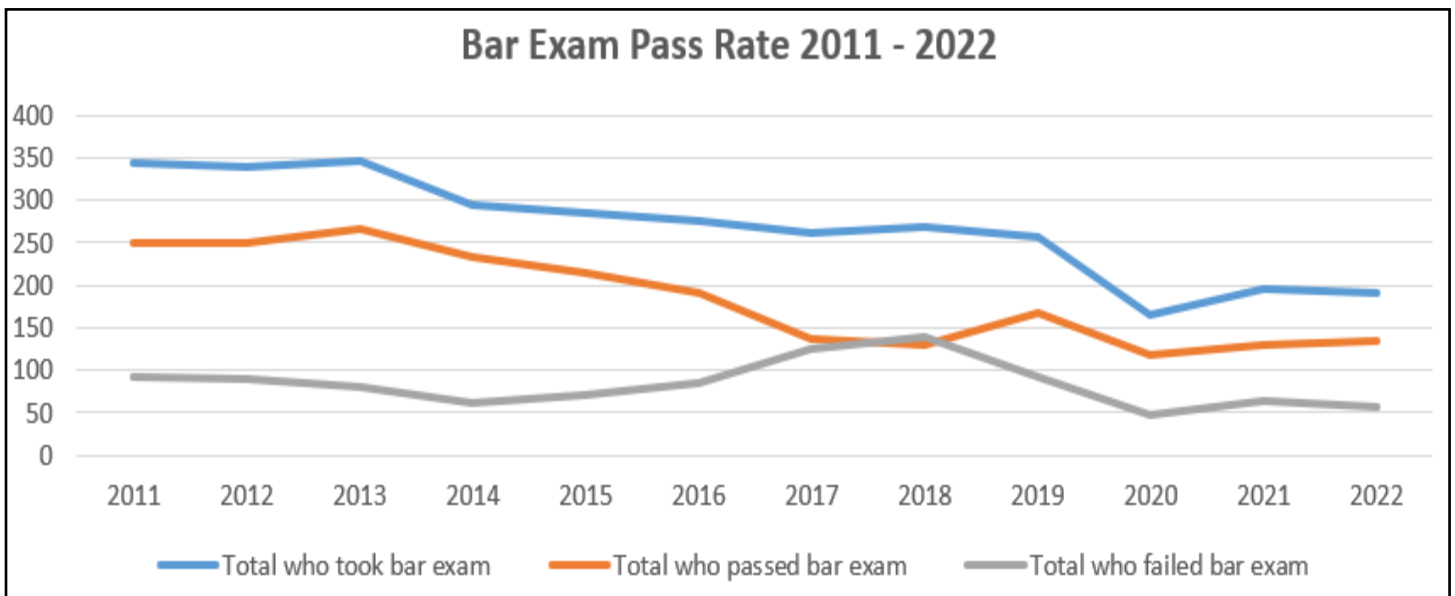
A total of 190 people took the bar exam in 2022 — five fewer than the previous year. The pass rate increased to 70.5 percent, up from 66.7 percent the previous year.

The February 2022 and July 2022 bar exams were administered at the Mississippi Trade Mart in Jackson. COVID protocols were followed.



In 2022, the Board of Bar Admissions processed 11 applications for registration as law students and 240 applications for examination. There were 35 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.

Members of the Board of Bar Admissions in 2022 were Chair Marcie Fyke Baria of Bay St. Louis, Vice-chair Pieter Teeuwissen of Jackson, Gwendolyn Baptist-Rucker of Southaven, Anthony R. Simon of Jackson, Kristopher A. Powell of Hattiesburg, Joseph D. Neyman Jr. of Hernando, J. William Manuel of Jackson, Walter Alan Davis of Oxford, and Michael C. McCabe Jr. of Gulfport. Wendy Smith serves as Administrator to the Board of Bar Admissions.





	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
<b>Total took Bar Exam</b>	343	339	346	294	286	276	262	269	258	168	195	190
<b>Total passed Bar Exam</b>	251	249	266	233	215	190	137	129	167	119	130	134
<b>Total failed Bar Exam</b>	92	90	80	61	71	86	125	140	91	49	65	56
<b>Percentage pass rate</b>	73%	73%	76%	79%	75%	68%	52%	48%	64.7%	71.7%	66.7%	70.5%

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
<b>Bar Exam Applications</b>												
Applications for registration as law student	105	69	66	92	61	27	29	16	10	9	21	11
Applications for examination	420	426	433	385	318	343	343	323	279	263	250	240
Admission on motion				46	30	46	33	56	57	33	34	35
Total applications processed/ being processed	525	495	499	523	409	416	405	395	346	166	305	286
<b>Bar Exams</b>												
Took February bar exam	101	108	108	111	98	95	88	91	102	49	66	54
Passed February bar exam	66	71	76	90	70	62	36	37	62	27	38	32
Failed February bar exam	35	37	32	21	28	33	52	54	40	22	28	22
Took July bar exam	242	231	238	183	188	181	174	178	156	117	129	136
Passed July bar exam	185	178	190	143	145	128	101	92	105	92	92	102
Failed July bar exam	57	53	48	40	43	53	73	86	51	25	37	34
Total who took bar exam	343	339	346	294	286	276	262	269	258	166	195	190
Total who passed bar exam	251	249	266	233	215	190	137	129	167	119	130	134
Total who failed bar exam	92	90	80	61	71	86	125	140	91	47	65	56

# OUTREACH

## 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.

In 2022, the Commission worked with Disability Rights Mississippi to create a Disability Access Manual to help courts with disability access issues. The manual is available online at [www.msatjc.org/judges-court-clerks-and-court-staff](http://www.msatjc.org/judges-court-clerks-and-court-staff). The Commission worked with Disability Rights Mississippi and the Mississippi Judicial College to train court clerks, court administrators and court staff on access issues involving people with disabilities.

The Commission continued to develop and expand its online and print resources. The Office of the State Public Defender worked with the Commission to create a Youth Court tab on the Commission's website to make resources available in one spot, [www.msatjc.org/youth-court](http://www.msatjc.org/youth-court). The webpage includes links to videos and other material designed to assist parents whose children come under the jurisdiction of Youth Court for issues of abuse, neglect and delinquency.

The Commission partnered with the Commission on Children's Justice to produce a series of self-help videos for parents with cases in Youth Court. The videos were filmed in February 2021 and completed in 2022. The videos are intended to assist individuals represented by counsel and self-represented litigants to prepare for court and to navigate the legal system. Topics include parents' rights, responsibilities for working on a safety plan, the first court hearing, and other court hearings. The videos are available on the Access to Justice Commission website at this link: <http://www.msatjc.org/youth-court>, as well as on provider and partner websites.

A primary objective of the Commission has always been to expand and improve the state's civil legal services delivery system. An effort to host pro se legal clinics in every judicial district began in 2018. After two very successful years, the effort encountered difficulties due to the pandemic. Working under COVID limitations, the Commission still was able to do some in-person outreach including:

- *Pro se* family law clinics were held in all First Chancery District courts of Alcorn, Itawamba, Lee, Monroe, Prentiss, Pontotoc, Tishomingo and Union counties. The First Chancery District clinics served 207 clients with assistance from 146 volunteer lawyers and 53 law students from the University of Mississippi School of Law.
- The Commission partnered with the Mississippi Center for Justice to provide a free legal clinic to address expungements, wills and estates in Jackson, and another expungement clinic in Indianola. The Commission also partnered with the Wills for Magnolia State First Responders program. Ten attorneys assisted 35 first responders with their estate issues.

The availability of lawyers — paid and pro bono — is critical to ensuring that all people have access to the courts. In an effort to encourage young people to consider a career in law, Commission Co-Chair Chancellor Jacqueline Mask collaborated with Lee County government leaders and the Lee County Bar Association to conduct a summer program for high school students. Twenty-three students participated in the Themis Law Camp at the Lee County Justice Center in Tupelo July 18-21, 2022. Chief Justice Mike Randolph, Court of Appeals Chief Judge Donna Barnes and judges of the Chancery, Circuit and County Courts spoke to the students.

The Commission received the 2022 Curtis E. Coker Access to Justice Award. The award is presented annually by the Mississippi Volunteer Lawyers Project to an individual, law firm or other organization that provided or helped to provide consistent, outstanding pro bono legal services.

### Mississippi Volunteer Lawyers Project

For the past 40 years, the Mississippi Volunteer Lawyers Project has worked to provide civil legal services for people who cannot afford to hire a lawyer. Two Legal Services organizations provide assistance to poor people across the state, but there are too few Legal Services attorneys to meet the needs of all of the low-income people who qualify



for assistance. MVLP bridges the gap with the help of volunteer attorneys who give free or reduced rate legal services. During 2022, a total of 117 attorneys gave of their time through MVLP.

MVLP conducted 29 free legal clinics across the state during 2022. A total of 520 cases were closed through pro se legal clinics. A total of 1,116 individuals received service through clinic participation and other MVLP efforts.

MVLP is a non-profit, cooperative effort of the Mississippi Bar, Mississippi Center for Legal Services and North Mississippi Rural Legal Services. Low income residents whose civil legal needs cannot be met by the two Legal Services entities are referred to the Volunteer Lawyers Project. Volunteer lawyers working through MVLP handle civil cases including divorce, child custody, child support, guardianships, bankruptcy matters and landlord tenant issues, among others. MVLP also conducts expungement clinics, which are in high demand as people seek to clear their records in efforts to find employment and qualify for better jobs.

In its early years, MVLP worked to match individual cases and clients to volunteer lawyers. Free family law clinics evolved in the 2000s as a way to reach more people. In 2007, Chancellor Marie Wilson began setting aside days on her court calendar to hear family law cases involving self-represented litigants, with representation provided by MVLP volunteers. The special hearing times grew into the quarterly Pro Se Day in Washington County to meet the community's needs. Starting in 2008, under the leadership of Hinds County Chancellor Denise Owens, annual guardianship clinics were scheduled shortly before the start of the fall school term to assist grandparents and other family members who needed to obtain legal guardianships of children to enroll them in school. Chancellors in other parts of the state began partnering with MVLP or the Access to Justice Commission to conduct free legal clinics.



The free family law clinics are designed to give people enough basic legal advice and directions so that they can handle simple legal matters on their own in Chancery Court. Attorneys at the legal clinics help clients prepare documents, give limited legal advice and help them get ready to go to court on their own. Chancellors make themselves available during the clinics to hear cases which are ready to be resolved immediately.

## 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	\$710,955.07
2021	\$661,718.85
2022	\$639,744.36
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$11,620,324.24</b>

The Civil Legal Assistance Fund provides much needed assistance to promote access to the courts for low-income people. Money provided through the Civil Legal Assistance Fund is a significant supplement to Legal Services providers.

The Supreme Court in Fiscal Year 2022 distributed \$639,744.36 for civil legal assistance to low income people. Since the Civil Legal Assistance Fund was created in 2004, more than \$11.6 million has been disbursed to help poor people gain access to the legal system.

The funds held by the Administrative Office of Courts are disbursed quarterly to the Mississippi Center for Legal Services, North Mississippi Rural Legal Services and the Mississippi Volunteer Lawyers Project. The funds 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 in 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.

## Commission on Children’s Justice

The Mississippi Supreme Court charged the Commission on Children’s Justice in 2006 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 Sheldon and

Rankin County Youth Court Judge Thomas Broome.



**Justice Dawn Beam**



**Judge Rhea Sheldon**



**Judge Thomas Broome**

The Commission on Children’s Justice is a multi-disciplinary, statutorily charged entity to collaborate with the Administrative Office of Courts and all stakeholders and promulgate how funding received from the Children’s Bureau in Washington, DC, should be used. The Commission fulfills a requirement for receipt of federal funds for the state Court Improvement Program, CIP, in that an advisory group must be utilized to assist in

identifying areas needing improvement in children's justice issues, to make recommendations for improvement of those areas, and to monitor implementation of the recommended reforms. All CIP funding received by the state is supposed to be used around efforts for improving legal representation, hearing quality and joint efforts with the child welfare agency. Other common focus areas include efforts to improve court data, timeliness and quality of permanency, engagement of parties, Indian Child Welfare Act compliance and tribal collaboration, foster care prevention, and safety decision-making.

The Commission is the forum for diverse child and family entities to share their initiatives and connect with others to more effectively serve families and children throughout the state. MCCJ, at its core, is the collaborative home for emerging ideas about child welfare in the state. Statewide stakeholders from the judiciary, the executive branch, including the Mississippi Department of Child Protection Services and the state Department of Human Services, as well as the legislative branch join non-profit organizations, the private sector and the voices of those who have lived through the system. Together, these stakeholders discuss new approaches to a difficult system, with topics ranging from new practices throughout courtrooms and investigations to suggestions for new legislation.

A continuing problem facing the child welfare system is the lack of placement options for children in crisis. A study committee was formed to work with all pertinent partners to identify potential solutions for placement and/or treatment of children who are in crisis. This work is of particular importance to the Youth Courts, juvenile detention center directors, the Department of Child Protection Services and the Division of Youth Services of the Mississippi Department of Human Services. Many of the children in crisis have co-occurring disorders involving mental health and substance abuse and severe trauma in their past. Their problems are often acute, such that they are suicidal or homicidal, and they are not admitted to acute care facilities due to their aggressive behaviors, both past and/or present. Each successive placement is of short duration. One of the issues that has to be addressed is the need for enhanced Medicaid funding due to the costs to provide the much higher level needs of care for these children. Mississippi, like most other states, lacks sufficient options for children who fall into this category.

Poverty is the root of much of what is reported as child neglect. The Commission for several years has discussed a proposal to redefine a “neglected child” under the Youth Court Act to take into account the effects of poverty. David Calder, a clinical professor who teaches the Child Advocacy Section of the Civil Legal Clinic at the University of Mississippi School of Law, presented draft findings of the study committee on how Mississippi’s statutes could be modified to provide that the inability of a parent or caregiver to provide for a child’s needs due to inadequate financial resources alone shall not be considered neglect. A working draft of proposed statutory changes is currently under review by the Commission for future legislative consideration. There is a national movement to determine how child protection agencies and the courts should work to address the financial hardships so that children are not needlessly removed due solely to poverty. Other states, including Arkansas, Florida, Kansas, Louisiana, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, North Dakota, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Texas and Washington as well as the District of Columbia, have addressed this issue.

The Commission continues to work to expand parent representation. The Legislature’s FY 2023 appropriations included continued funding for parent representation for those indigent parents who are at risk of having their children removed for allegations of neglect or abuse. Additional funding by Casey Family Programs has allowed expansion of the multi-disciplinary team approach in several pilot sites around the state. This includes assignment of a dedicated social worker to work with clients of the parent representation attorney. The Commission continues to seek contributions of funds from the Boards of Supervisors to match monies from the Legislature to allow the growth of the parent representation team approach to all areas of the state.

The Commission is supportive of efforts to bring back the Adolescent Opportunity Program, formerly known as the Adolescent Offender Program, AOP. The Mississippi Department of Human Services Division of Youth Services and the Mississippi Department of Mental Health have worked to bring back the programs. The Department of Mental Health has received approval for enhanced funding from the Legislature to fund approximately 13 AOPs throughout the State. However, as of the end of December 2022, the American Rescue Plan Act funding had not been implemented, so the AOP programs had not begun operation. The Commission advocated for this community-based program to help keep children out of residential facilities. This would give courts another option to serve children in their homes. The grants are intended to last four years and the hope is for them to be self-sustaining at the end of that time. The AOP model will be based on a day treatment model and will add specialized treatment where needed.