

Michigan Court of Appeals



2014
Annual
Report

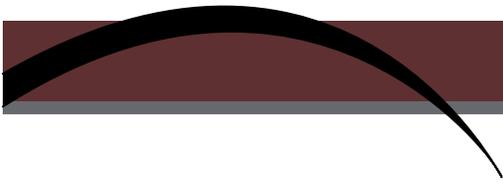


Table of Contents

Introduction	4
Court Performance.....	5
New Filings	5
Dispositions	6
Delay Reduction.....	6
Clearance Rate.....	7
Percentage of Dispositions within 18 and 15 Months	8
Judicial Chambers	9
Court of Appeals Judges	9
Judges by District in 2014	10
Judicial Assistants	11
Law Clerks	11
Clerk’s Office	12
Overview	12
Electronic Filing	12
Electronic Records.....	13
Research Division.....	14
Commissioners.....	14
Research, Senior Research and Contract Attorneys	14
Court of Claims	17
Clerk’s Office	17
Court Performance	17
Judges	18
Court Highlights	19
Ace Award.....	19
Prior Ace Award Honorees	20
Employee Service Recognition	21
Organizational Chart	22
Directory	23

Introduction



The Michigan Court of Appeals was created by the Constitution of 1963, art 6, § 1, and began operation in 1965 with a bench of nine judges. The Legislature increased the size of the bench several times in subsequent years and by 1993 the Court was comprised of 28 judges. In 2012, legislation was enacted that will eventually reduce the Court's size to 24 judges through attrition. The Court is divided into four geographic districts for election purposes and has office locations in each of those districts: Detroit (District I), Troy (District II), Grand Rapids (District III), and Lansing (District IV).

In addition to the judges, approximately 170 employees work in the Court's Judicial Chambers, Clerk's Office, Research Division, Information Systems Department, Finance Office, and Security Department. By contrast, the Court employed roughly 228 employees ten years earlier. While the work force is 25% smaller, the hard work, innovation, and productivity of the judges and staff have allowed the Court to thrive and be recognized as a leader in court management.

The Court takes seriously its mandate "to secure the just, speedy, and economical determination of every action and to avoid the consequences of error that does not affect the substantial rights of the parties." MCR 1.105. To effectuate that goal, the judges and staff continually focus on improving the speed at which cases move through the Court; providing accessible, transparent operations; and delivering high quality judicial decisions.

As detailed in this report, 2014 was a very successful year for the Court, as shown by the remarkable 108% clearance rate for the year and by the fact that the Court issued over 500 more opinion dispositions in 2014 than it did the previous year. A large measure of the Court's success this year, and over the last five years, is directly attributable to the efforts of the Court's Chief Judge during that period, William B. Murphy. Under Chief Judge Murphy's steady leadership from 2009 through 2014, the Court has been able to stabilize its operations through several lean budget years, maintain its delay-reduction achievements, and garner national recognition as a leader in court management. Judge Murphy is well deserving of our gratitude for his guidance these past several years and for his long, distinguished tenure on the Court of Appeals bench.

Finally, I wish to acknowledge the hard work and dedication of the judges and staff of the Court over the past year in making significant progress toward our common goals. In particular, on behalf of the judges of the Court, I offer thanks and best regards to two of our esteemed colleagues who retired at the end of 2014. Judge William C. Whitbeck served the Court for 17 years, with six years as Chief Judge, before retiring in November of 2014. As Chief Judge of the Court, Judge Whitbeck was the driving force behind the Court's efforts to reduce delay and he achieved dramatic, lasting results in that area. Judge E. Thomas Fitzgerald concluded his 24 years of distinguished service to the Court at the close of 2014. Judge Fitzgerald was a workhorse for the Court, with unfailing good cheer, he routinely volunteered for extra assignments and committee work. The high standards and collegiality of these two preeminent judges will be missed.

—Chief Judge Michael J. Talbot

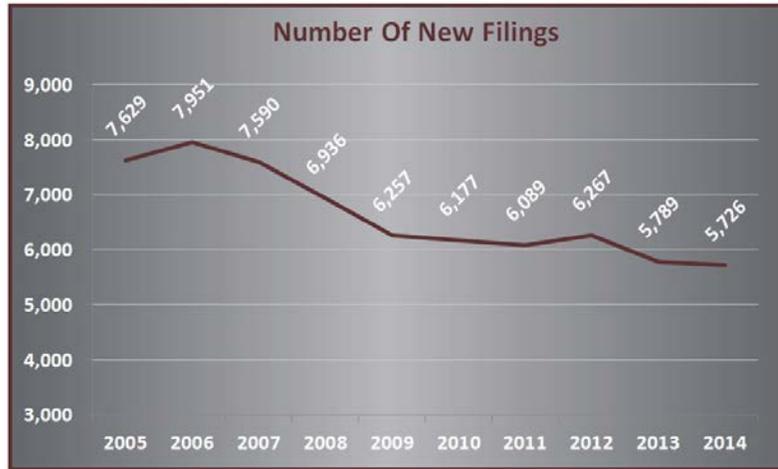
Court Performance

New Filings

The Court of Appeals received 5,726 new case filings in 2014. This was a slight decrease from 2013 and continued a general downward trend in filings on the order of 1%-3% in the past few years. At right, the graph depicts the volume of new filings with the Court over the past ten years.

Appeals by right made up about 51% of new filings in 2014, while 47% were discretionary appeals, and 2% were “other” case initiations (e.g., original actions). Roughly 52% of the cases were civil and 48% were criminal.

Appeals from civil cases encompass family matters, including termination of parental rights and child custody, as well as personal injury, probate, tax, and appeals from agency decisions. The chart on the right identifies the approximate share of the Court of Appeals’ civil caseload in 2014 for some of the various case types.



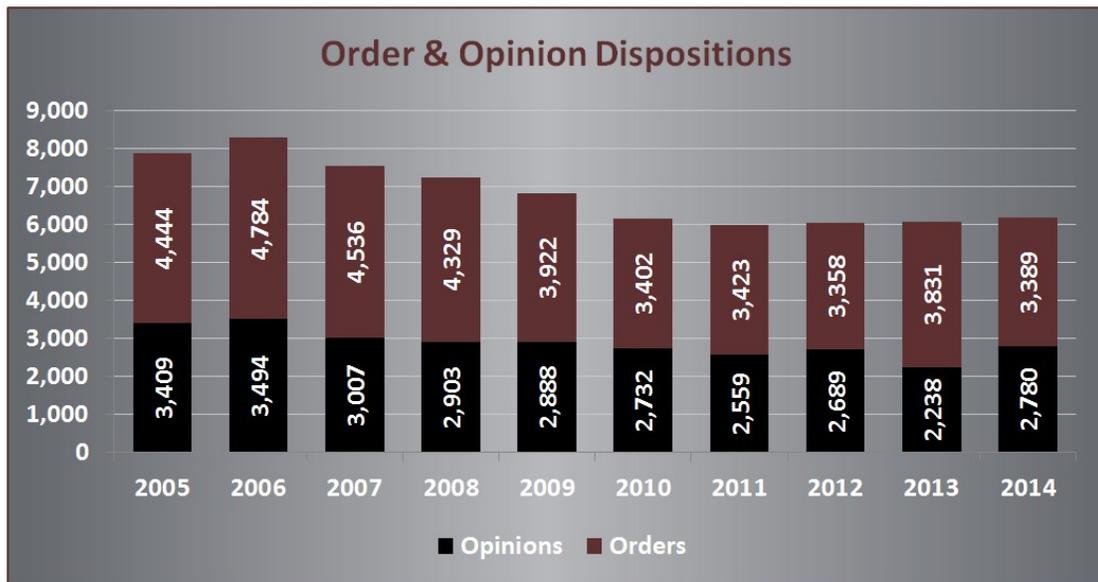
Type of Civil Appeal	% of All Civil Appeals
Agency Appeal	2.5%
Contracts	8.4%
Divorce w/ minor children	6.2%
Divorce w/o minor children	1.2%
Housing & Real Estate	5.4%
Medical Malpractice	3.8%
No-Fault Auto Insurance	4.8%
Personal Injury Automobile	5.1%
Professional Malpractice	1.0%
Personal Injury	5.5%
Termination of Parental Rights	14.5%

Court Performance

Dispositions

Cases filed with the Court of Appeals are resolved by order or opinion. Dispositions by order usually occur in discretionary appeals, while dispositions by opinion typically occur in appeals by right or in discretionary appeals that have been granted. Dispositions by opinion take longer because of the time periods allowed by the court rules for transcript preparation, briefing, and record transmission, and because they generally receive reports on the relevant facts and applicable law by staff attorneys, are scheduled for oral argument, and are submitted for plenary consideration to three-judge panels.

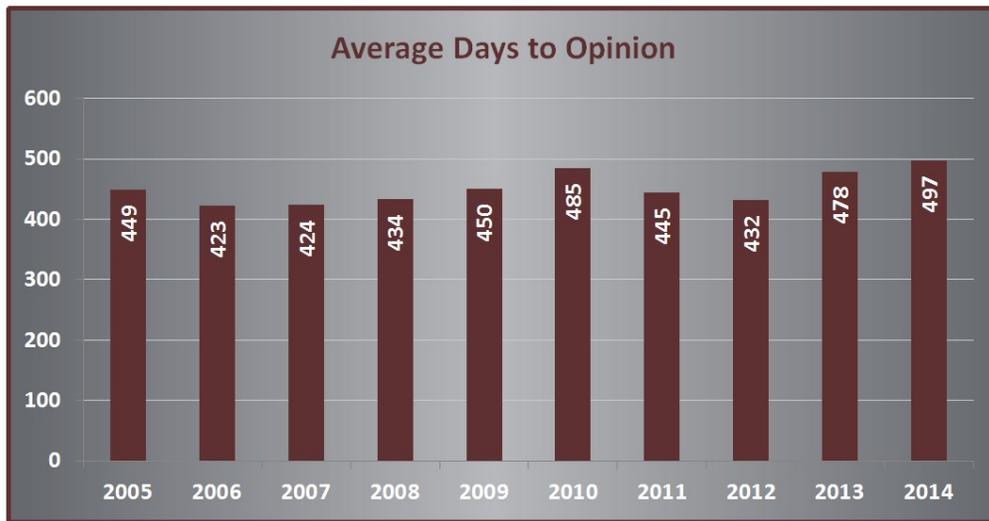
In 2014, the Court issued 2,780 opinions and 3,389 dispositive orders for a total of 6,169 dispositions. The following graph shows the number of opinion and order dispositions over the past ten years. As shown, dispositions for 2014 were higher than in any year since 2009, including over 500 more opinion dispositions than the previous year.



Delay Reduction

In 2001, it took on average 653 days for the Court to dispose of a case by opinion. Recognizing that such a delay was unacceptable, the Court voluntarily undertook an ambitious plan in 2002 to reduce the delay in dispositions so that 95% of all cases would be decided within 18 months. Under the delay reduction plan, the average time to disposition by opinion dropped to 603 days in 2002, 554 days in 2003, 494 days in 2004, 449 days in 2005, and 423 days in 2006. Thus, between 2001 and 2006, the average time to disposition by opinion cases was reduced by 230 days. As shown in the graph on page 7, the average days to opinion disposition has fluctuated slightly in subsequent years, due in part to reductions in the number of staff attorneys employed by the Court, but the Court has generally been able to maintain its delay reduction gains. For 2014, the Court took an average of 497 days to opinion disposition.

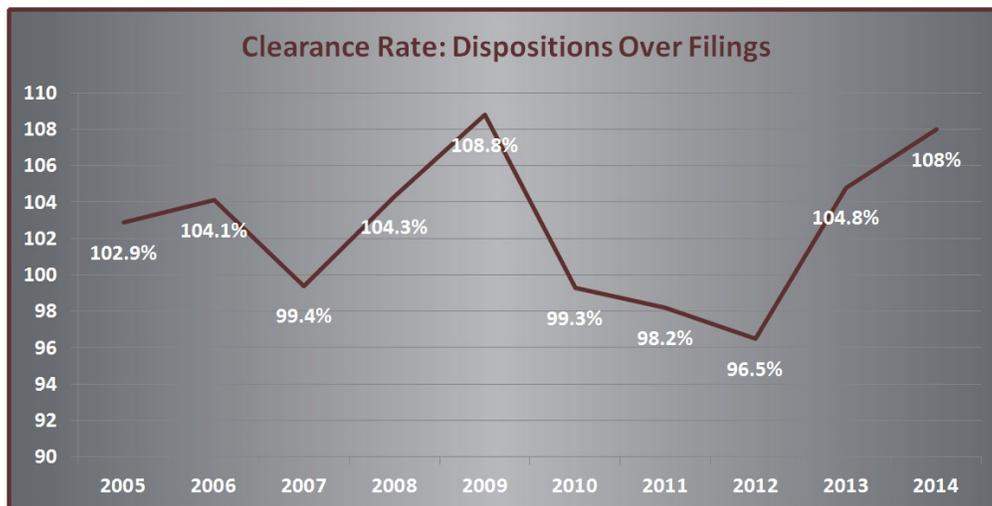
Court Performance



The Court also separately tracks the average disposition times of various matters expedited by statute, court rule, or court order. In 2014, the average disposition time of all expedited cases was 290 days. For child custody and termination of parental rights (TPR) appeals, the average disposition time was 274 days. While these numbers are higher than in 2013, they still represent a vast improvement over the pre-delay reduction timeframe of 351 days and 325 days for all expedited cases and child custody/TPR appeals, respectively.

Clearance Rate

The clearance rate reflects the number of cases disposed of compared to the number of new cases filed. In 2014, the Court achieved a clearance rate of 108%, disposing of 6,169 cases while receiving 5,726 new filings. This rate was significantly higher than prior years and results from the increase in dispositions for the year, coupled with the decrease in new filings. The graph below shows the Court's clearance rate since 2005.



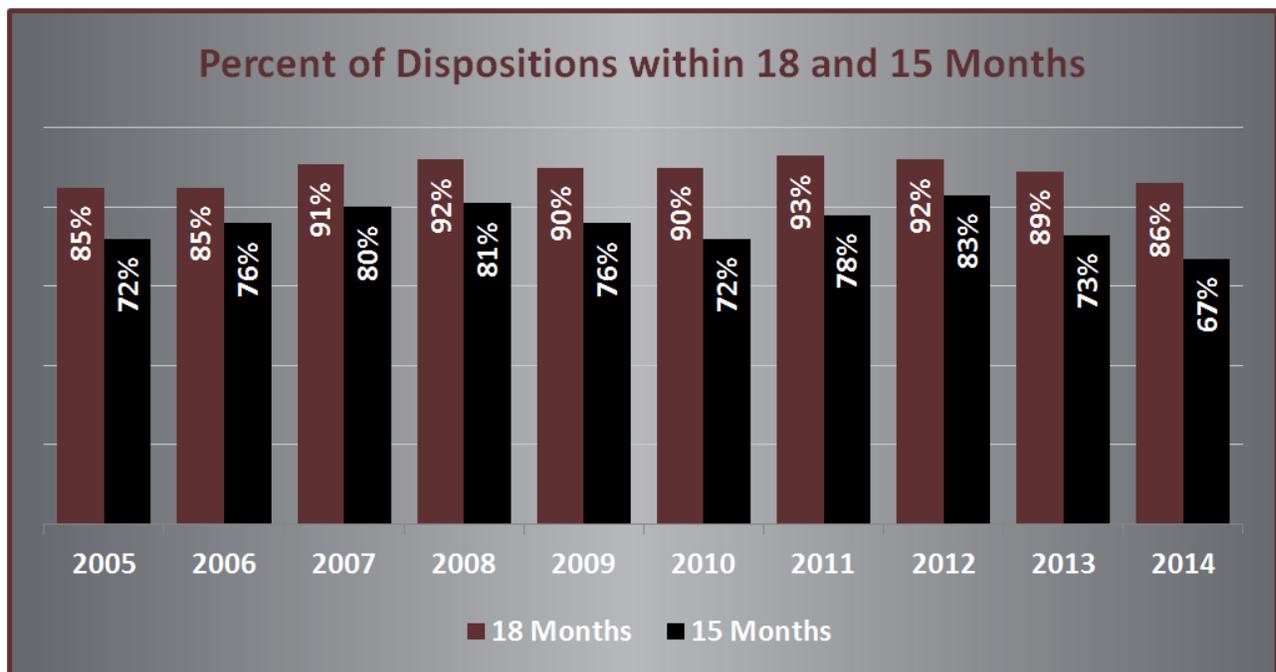
Court Performance

Percentage of Dispositions within 18 and 15 Months

For the delay reduction effort that began in 2002, the Court set a goal of disposing of 95% of all cases (i.e., by opinion or order) within 18 months of filing. In the first year of delay reduction, 65.8% of all cases were disposed within 18 months of filing. For opinion dispositions only, about one-third were disposed within that time period. By comparison, in 2014, 86% of all cases and 71% of opinion cases were disposed within 18 months.

Being within just a few percentage points from achieving its “95-in-18” goal, in 2012 the Court set a more ambitious goal of deciding 95% of all cases within 15 months of filing. In 2014, 67% of all cases and 30% of opinion cases were decided within 15 months, respectively.

The graph below shows the percentage of all cases disposed within 18 months and 15 months for the past ten years. The decline of the past two years is attributable in large part to the Court’s focus on eliminating a backlog of older, more complex cases.



Judicial Chambers

Court of Appeals Judges

In 2014, the Court of Appeals was statutorily authorized to operate at twenty-eight judgeships, although legislation that was enacted in 2012 will eventually reduce the number to twenty-four through attrition. The judgeships are divided into four districts for election purposes, but the judges sit statewide in panels of three, rotating with two other judges with equal frequency and among the three courtroom locations (Detroit, Lansing and Grand Rapids). Published opinions of the Court of Appeals are controlling across all four districts unless and until reversed or overruled by a special conflict panel of the Court or by the Supreme Court.

Judge E. Thomas Fitzgerald's judicial term expired at the end of the year and he could not seek another term due the restriction in the Michigan Constitution preventing a judge from running after reaching the age of seventy. In accordance with the 2012 legislation, the Court loses a judgeship and will operate with twenty-seven judges in 2015.



Photograph by Trumpie Photography

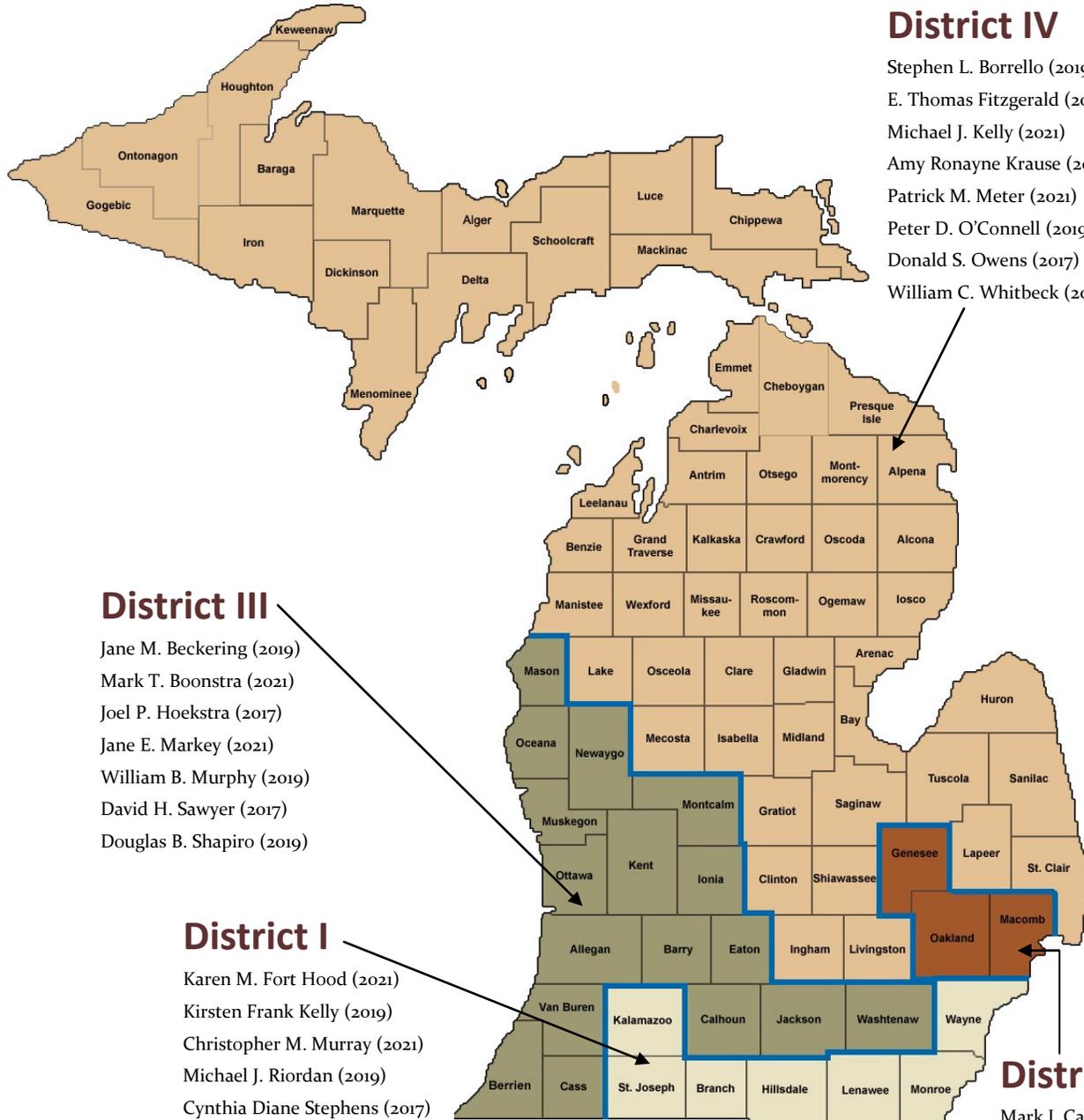
Pictured from Left to Right

- First row:** Joel P. Hoekstra, Kathleen Jansen, Chief Judge Pro Tem David H. Sawyer, Chief Judge William B. Murphy, Mark J. Cavanagh, E. Thomas Fitzgerald, Jane E. Markey
- Second row:** Stephen L. Borrello, Pat M. Donofrio, Kirsten Frank Kelly, Kurtis T. Wilder, Michael J. Talbot, Patrick M. Meter, Christopher M. Murray, Karen M. Fort Hood, Jane M. Beckering
- Third row:** Michael F. Gadola, Mark T. Boonstra, Douglas B. Shapiro, Cynthia Diane Stephens, Michael J. Kelly, Elizabeth L. Gleicher, Amy Ronayne Krause, Michael J. Riordan
- Not pictured:** Deborah A. Servitto, Peter D. O'Connell, Donald S. Owens, Henry William Saad

Judicial Chambers

Judges by District in 2014

Year that Current Term Expires Indicated in Parentheses



District IV

- Stephen L. Borrello (2019)
- E. Thomas Fitzgerald (2015)
- Michael J. Kelly (2021)
- Amy Ronayne Krause (2021)
- Patrick M. Meter (2021)
- Peter D. O’Connell (2019)
- Donald S. Owens (2017)
- William C. Whitbeck (2017)

District III

- Jane M. Beckering (2019)
- Mark T. Boonstra (2021)
- Joel P. Hoekstra (2017)
- Jane E. Markey (2021)
- William B. Murphy (2019)
- David H. Sawyer (2017)
- Douglas B. Shapiro (2019)

District I

- Karen M. Fort Hood (2021)
- Kirsten Frank Kelly (2019)
- Christopher M. Murray (2021)
- Michael J. Riordan (2019)
- Cynthia Diane Stephens (2017)
- Michael J. Talbot (2021)
- Kurtis T. Wilder (2017)

District II

- Mark J. Cavanagh (2021)
- Pat M. Donofrio (2017)
- Elizabeth L. Gleicher (2019)
- Kathleen Jansen (2019)
- Henry William Saad (2021)
- Deborah A. Servitto (2019)

Judicial Chambers

Judicial Assistants

The Judicial Assistants perform a wide variety of secretarial and administrative tasks to assist the judges in operating the judicial chambers in a confidential and professional manner. A few examples of these tasks include scheduling and maintaining the judges' calendars, preparing files for motion dockets and case calls, submitting and tracking votes and memos concerning motion docket and case call matters, docketing the receipt and transmission of lower court records, proofreading and cite-checking opinions, typing bench memoranda, draft opinions, and original correspondence, and monitoring various case management lists.



Judge Douglas B. Shapiro with his Judicial Assistant Deborah Allen.

Law Clerks

Each judge employs a single law clerk to assist him or her in handling the huge volume of motion docket and case call matters assigned to the judge. The law clerks read the appellate briefs of the parties and the staff reports written by Research Division attorneys, conduct independent research on the issues, and review the lower court files and transcripts to recommend appropriate resolutions of the issues and dispositions of the appeals. The law clerks also rewrite draft opinions written by the Research Division to reflect the judge's writing style or to add statements of facts and analyses of the legal issues. Further, the law clerks assist the judges in drafting concurrences and dissents, as well as those opinions where publication is recommended by the Research Division attorneys. In 2014, approximately 438 civil and criminal appeals were assigned to the judicial offices for preparation of a bench memoranda and/or draft opinions by the law clerks. The judges were assigned these cases without reports as a way of advancing the Court's delay reduction goals.

Clerk's Office

Overview

The Court of Appeals Clerk's Office is comprised of four office locations: District I in Detroit, District II in Troy, District III in Grand Rapids, and District IV in Lansing. Generally, each office is tasked with handling the Court files that arise from the trial courts located in the counties that comprise that election district and with supporting the work of the judges elected to that district.

As of the end of 2014, the clerk's office had 31 full-time employees. Managers and staff in the four locations handle a variety of tasks, including opening new case files, docketing incoming filings, reviewing new cases for jurisdiction and compliance with the court rules, and issuing orders. The Lansing district office also schedules case call matters and releases the opinions resolving those appeals. Importantly, the Clerk's Office is often the public face of the Court in that it communicates with counsel and the parties, as well as prospective litigants, trial courts, and media representatives.



Entrance to the Clerk Office in Grand Rapids.

Electronic Filing

In late 2014, the Court of Appeals, in coordination with the Michigan Supreme Court, implemented a new electronic filing system developed by ImageSoft, Inc. of Southfield. The ImageSoft e-filing solution, known as TrueFiling, is a replacement for the e-filing system provided by Tyler Technologies that has been in place with the Court of Appeals since 2006. In the eight years the Court has offered voluntary e-filing of documents, filers have increasingly relied on this new delivery vehicle for their case filings. From roughly 1,000 filings per year in the first years of e-filing, to more than 50,000 filings in recent years, the Court has received over 200,000 e-filed documents in more than 17,000 cases. It is clear that e-filing is a hit with the Court's customers and it provides significant benefits to the Court.

When e-filed documents are received and docketed, a link to the document is created in the Court's case management system. The judges and staff can immediately access the document from any location connected to the Court's network. In addition to the benefits of ease-of-use and accessibility, as the volume of e-filing increases, the need for the Court to devote resources to scanning, transporting, and copying documents is reduced.

Clerk's Office

Electronic Records

Just as an increasing number of documents are filed and stored electronically, more lower court and tribunal records exist in electronic form only. In 2011, the Court set up a File Transfer Protocol (FTP) server to receive the electronic records on appeal from lower courts and tribunals.

The Court regularly receives records in electronic format directly from the Public Service Commission, Alpena Circuit Court, Grand Traverse Circuit Court, Macomb Circuit Court, Ottawa Circuit Court, Oakland Circuit Court, and the St. Clair Probate Court. To date, the Court has received a total of over 1,700 electronic case records, more than 1,300 from Oakland Circuit alone. Having records accessible electronically through the Court's case management system allows the judges, law clerks, and staff attorneys to access the records simultaneously and instantly, and greatly reduces costs associated with the physical transfer of the printed records.



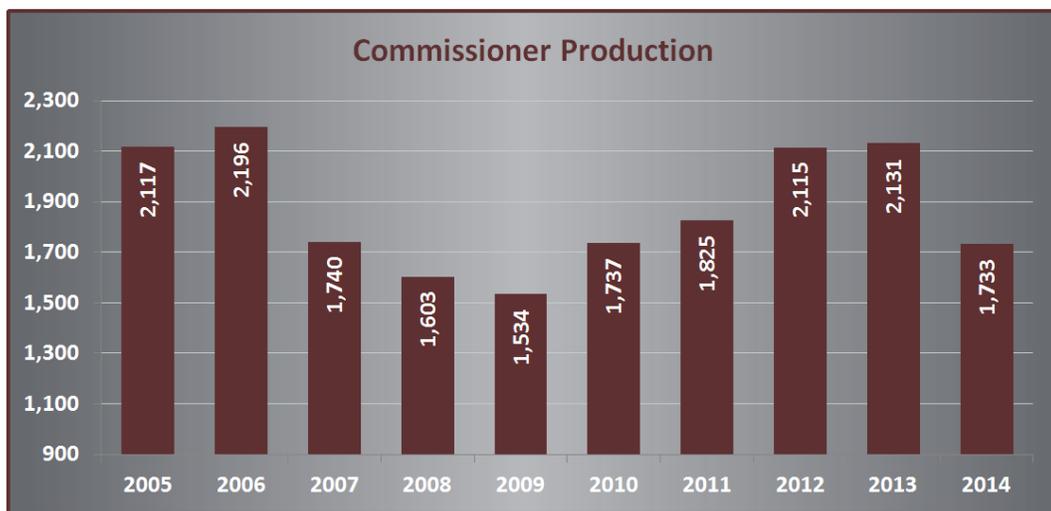
E-records enable the judges, law clerks, and staff attorneys to access the records simultaneously and instantly.

Research Division

Commissioners

The commissioners are experienced staff attorneys whose primary functions are to prepare written reports and proposed orders for (1) applications for leave to appeal (which are discretionary appeals) and any accompanying motions, (2) original actions, such as complaints for writs of habeas corpus, superintending control, and mandamus, and (3) motions to withdraw as counsel in termination of parental rights appeals and criminal appeals. The commissioners also review incoming emergency applications and work closely with the judges to resolve priority matters on an expedited basis. They are also responsible for the jurisdictional review of applications and original actions and for ensuring the pleadings comply with the Michigan Court Rules. The commissioners are located in each of the four district offices — Detroit, Troy, Lansing, and Grand Rapids.

In 2014, the commissioners prepared reports in 1,733 leave applications and miscellaneous matters. The graph below shows the production of commissioner reports for the past ten years.



Research, Senior Research and Contract Attorneys

Research attorneys are typically recent law school graduates who are hired for a period of one to three years. Although these graduates are primarily recruited from in-state law schools, the Research Division also made an on-campus recruitment visit in 2014 to the University of Notre Dame Law School in Indiana. In addition, many students from other out-of-state law schools were interviewed at the Research offices in Detroit, Lansing, and Grand Rapids. In 2014, the research staff represented the in-state law schools of Michigan State University, Thomas M. Cooley, University of Michigan, University of Detroit Mercy, and Wayne State University, and the out-state law schools of Ave Maria (Naples, FL), Boston University (Boston, MA), DePaul (Chicago, IL), Chicago-Kent (Chicago, IL), Indiana University Mauer School of Law (Bloomington, IN), Loyola University (Chicago, IL), Northwestern University (Chicago, IL), Notre Dame (South Bend, IN), University of Toledo (Toledo, OH), Valparaiso (Valparaiso, IN) and West Virginia University (Morgantown, WV). Most research attorneys ranked in the top 5 percent of their graduating classes.

Research Division

The research attorneys generally prepare research reports in cases that are determined to be easy to moderately difficult.¹ A research report is a confidential internal Court document that contains a comprehensive and neutral presentation of the material facts with citation to the lower court record, a recitation of the issues raised by the parties, a summary of the parties' arguments, a thorough analysis of the law and facts on each issue, and a recommendation as to the appropriate disposition. In cases involving non-jurisprudentially significant issues, which do not require a published opinion, the research attorneys also prepare rough draft opinions to accompany the reports. The judges and their law clerks are responsible for preparing those opinions when publication is recommended, as well as editing, refining, or rewriting the rough draft opinions provided by the research attorneys.

Senior research is comprised of experienced attorneys who have worked as a research attorney and as a law clerk to one of the Court's judges, and/or who have worked in private practice or at other courts. Unlike the research attorneys, the tenure of the senior research attorneys is not for a limited duration. The primary function of senior research attorneys is to prepare research reports in the longer or more complex cases for case call. The content of these research reports is the same as those prepared by the research attorneys, but the cases are typically more difficult in nature.² The main office of senior research is located in Detroit, but several attorneys also work in Lansing and Grand Rapids.

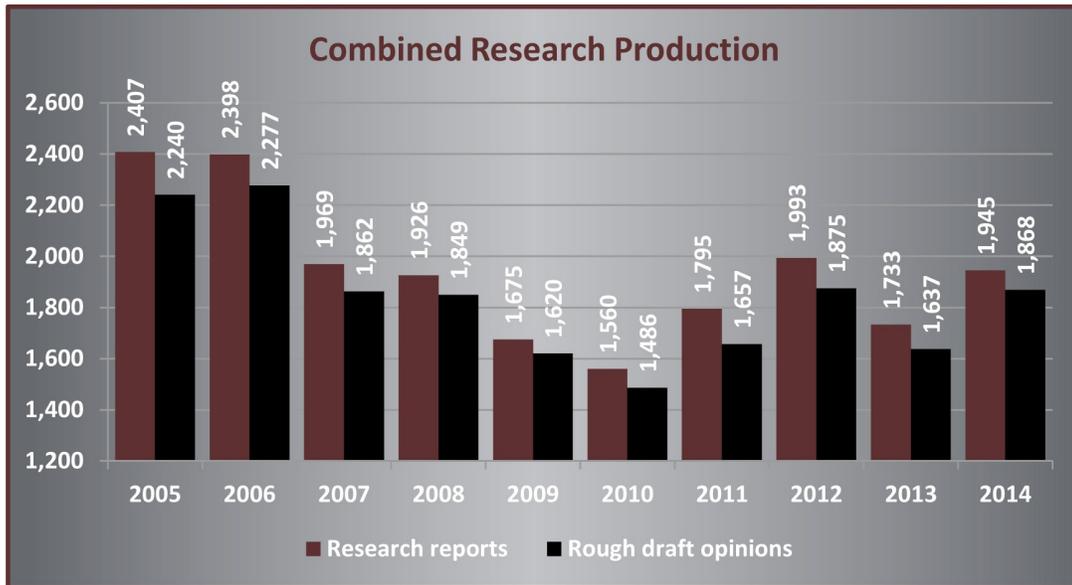
Contract attorneys work for the Court on a contractual basis, primarily preparing reports and rough draft opinions for a significant number of routine criminal and civil appeals, as well as for routine termination of parental rights (TPR) appeals. Most of the contract attorneys previously worked for the Court in research. The contract attorneys now work from their homes and are not otherwise engaged in the practice of law.

¹ When cases are ready for reports from the Research Division, an experienced staff attorney reviews the lower court records and appellate briefs and, based on established criteria, assigns a day evaluation to them. The day evaluations represent how long it should take an average research attorney to complete reports in the cases. The day evaluations are calculated in whole numbers only (i.e., no fractions of a day). Research attorneys generally work on cases that are evaluated at six days or lower, and are expected to complete the reports within the day evaluations of the cases, as measured on a monthly basis.

² Senior research attorneys generally work on cases that are evaluated at seven days or more (see footnote 1, *supra*). They have higher production requirements than the research attorneys and are expected to complete the reports in approximately 25% less time than the day evaluations.

Research Division

Combined, the research attorneys, senior research attorneys, and contract attorneys prepared 1,945 research reports and 1,868 rough draft opinions in cases that were submitted on case call. The graph below compares the combined production numbers from 2005 to 2014.



In 2014, there was a significant increase in the number of research reports and rough draft opinions produced by the Research Division from the prior year. Research continued to work on eliminating the backlog of larger-day evaluated case (box cases), which had developed in early 2013. However, a shift in assignments occurred among the senior research attorneys in early 2014, which resulted in more attorneys working exclusively on the box cases. In September 2014, the box cases became current with the non-box cases; thus, eliminating the backlog.

The number of research reports and rough draft opinions produced annually by the Research Division correlates directly with the staffing levels and average day evaluations of the cases for any given year. The table to the right shows the number of research and senior research attorneys, as well as the average day evaluation of the cases, for 2014 and the prior nine years.

	Number of Research & Senior Research Attorneys	Average Day Eval of All Cases Screened
2005	45.4	3.97
2006	42.8	3.99
2007	37.5	4.15
2008	36.4	4.06
2009	36.8	3.95
2010	32.4	3.99
2011	35.3	3.88
2012	45.4	4.05
2013	44.6	4.15
2014	45.4	4.10

Court of Claims

Clerk's Office

As 2014 began, the transition of the Court of Claims to the Court of Appeals was still in progress. The Court of Claims became a function of the Court of Appeals on November 12, 2013 with the passage of 2013 PA 164. Through the first several months of 2014, the clerk's office began to organize the files transferred from the Court of Claims former home, Ingham Circuit Court, and those from other circuit courts which fell under the expanded jurisdiction of the Court. In February, a critical step in that process was taken when the Court became just the second court to adopt the "MiCourt" case management system developed by the State Court Administrative Office's Judicial Information Systems division. With the MiCourt rollout, the Court of Claims clerk's office was able to fully implement its docketing and record keeping functions, and make the Court's register of actions available online through the Court's website.

As 2014 progressed, the Court hired two dedicated clerical staff to handle the day-to-day docketing, case initiation, public inquiries, and file management. In consultation with the judges assigned to the Court, the clerk's office developed policies and procedures to meet the requirements of trial court operations. By mid-2014, the Court of Claims clerk's office was a fully-operational, separate business unit within the larger Court of Appeals structure.

Court Performance

At the start of 2014, 202 cases were pending in the Court of Claims. While the majority of the cases involved tax matters, the caseload included a variety of civil claims brought against the state, including highway defects, medical malpractice, prisoner litigation and other damage claims. Through the year, the Court received 295 new filings and 24 cases were reopened. Thus, for the entire year, the Court had a total caseload of 521 cases.

The judges of the Court disposed of 370 cases during 2014. Comparing the new filings of 295 to the 370 dispositions for the year, the Court of Claims achieved a clearance rate of 125%. At the close of 2014, the Court's pending caseload was 151 cases. The following table details the Court's reported caseload statistics for 2014.

2014 Pending Cases	Habeas Corpus	Mandamus	Highway Defect	Medical Malpractice	Contracts	Constitutional Claims	Prisoner Litigation	Tax Related Matters	Other Damage Claims	Total
Beginning Pending	0	0	12	7	16	4	0	126	37	202
New Filings	43	17	11	9	14	12	26	83	80	295
Reopened	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	23	0	24
Total Caseload	43	17	23	16	30	16	27	232	117	521
2014 Dispositions	Habeas Corpus	Mandamus	Highway Defect	Medical Malpractice	Contracts	Constitutional Claims	Prisoner Litigation	Tax Related Matters	Other Damage Claims	Total
Disposed by Court	43	17	3	1	9	8	19	94	51	245
Dismissed by Party	0	0	6	4	13	1	1	30	23	78
Inactive Status	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	20	2	23
Transferred	0	0	5	4	0	1	0	9	5	24
Total Dispositions	43	17	14	9	23	10	20	153	81	370
Ending Pending	0	0	9	7	7	6	7	79	36	151



Court of Claims

Judges

The day after 2013 PA 164 became effective, the Michigan Supreme Court issued an administrative order that assigned Court of Appeals Judges Michael J. Talbot, Amy Ronayne Krause, Pat M. Donofrio, and Deborah A. Servitto to sit as judges of the Court of Claims for terms that will expire on May 1, 2015. The order designated Judge Talbot as Chief Judge of the Court. After a short period to get organized, provided by a blanket 30-day stay order issued by Chief Judge Talbot, the four judges began to schedule proceedings, hold hearings, and issue interlocutory and dispositive orders. The judges assigned to the Court of Claims continue to carry a full appellate caseload with the Court of Appeals.

In quick order the newly appointed judges adopted several policies to improve efficiency in case management. A new local court rule governing motion practice was formulated and adopted to streamline that process. Given the volume and nature of the tax related matters, the judges concluded that those cases could benefit from handling by a single judge, so a specialized Tax Docket was created to bring predictability and consistency to this area. Under that plan, the Tax Docket cases are assigned to the chief judge and are subject to several unique practices to promote efficiency and expedite decision making. The judges also adopted a variety of technologies, such as phone and video conferencing, to make the Court more accessible to the attorneys and parties.

In this first year of operation, the judges quickly brought the Court of Claims caseload current and have ensured that parties before the Court can expect prompt, efficient, and high-quality decision making. The Court of Claims is well positioned to continue to expand on the successes of 2014 as it becomes more established as a function of the Court of Appeals operation.

Court Highlights

Ace Award

The Ace Award is named after Donald L. (“Ace”) Byerlein, who served as court administrator from the Court’s inception in 1965 until his retirement in 1997. Mr. Byerlein was known for being conscientious, dedicated, loyal, selfless, upbeat, civil, and possessed a “can-do” attitude. In 1998, the Court created the annual Ace Award in honor of Mr. Byerlein as a way to recognize current Court employees who possess those same qualities. The Ace Award is given to an outstanding employee (or employees) who was nominated by his or her peers and selected by a committee of judges and administrators.



ACE Award Winner Rita Bacon and her family. From left to right, Natalie’s fiancé, Jim, her daughter, Natalie, Rita, and her husband, Tim.

The winner of the 2014 Donald L. Byerlein “Ace” Award was Rita Bacon, Judicial Assistant for Judge Jansen. A reception to honor Rita was held in Detroit on June 5, 2014.

The 2014 selection committee included Judge Jansen (chair), Chief Judge Murphy, Donald L. “Ace” Byerlein, Chief Clerk Jerry Zimmer, Research Director Julie Isola Ruecke, and Judges Cavanagh, Markey, Wilder, Servitto and Ronayne Krause.

Court Highlights

Prior Ace Award Honorees

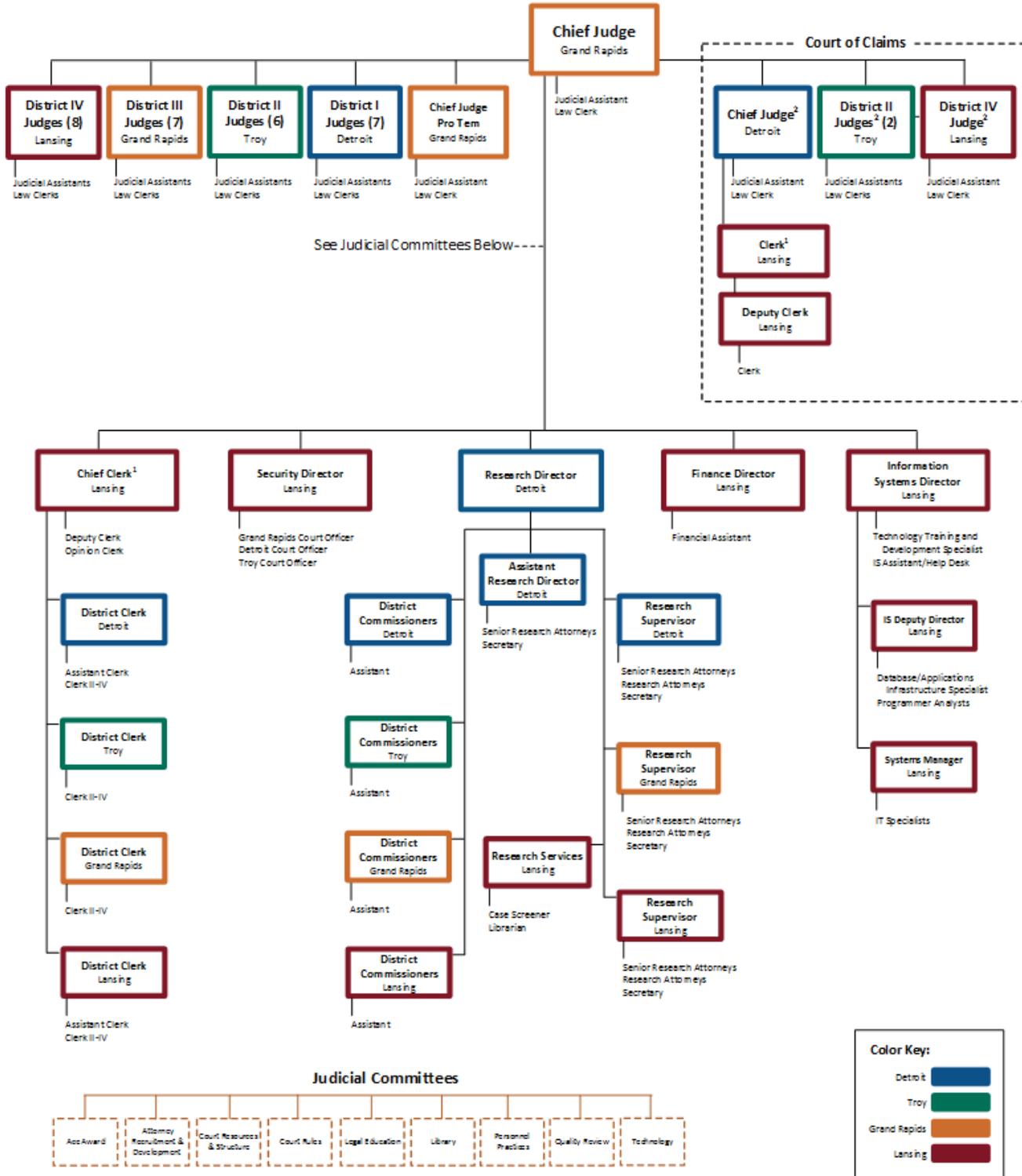
Year	Ace Award Recipient(s)	Office Location
2014	Rita Bacon, Judicial Assistant	Detroit
2013	Russell Rudd, Finance Director	Lansing
2012	Irene Coffee, Judicial Assistant	Grand Rapids
2011	Kathy Donovan, Technology Training Specialist	Lansing
2010	Matthew Johnson, Docket Clerk	Troy
2009	Anna Campbell, Judicial Assistant	Detroit
2008	Martha Sutton, Judicial Assistant	Lansing
	-and- Claudette Bexell Frame, Judicial Assistant	Lansing
2007	Rebekah Neely, Programmer (awarded posthumously)	Lansing
2006	Bob Kwiatkowski, Lead Court Officer	Detroit
2005	Thomas Rasdale, Assistant Clerk	Lansing
2004	Carol Abdo, PC Network Specialist	Lansing
	-and- Bobbie Dembowski, Commissioner Assistant	Lansing
2003	Elizabeth Gordon, Research Support	Lansing
2002	Suzanne Gammon, Judicial Assistant	Saginaw
2001	Mark Stoddard, District Commissioner	Grand Rapids
2000	John Pratt, Court Officer	Lansing
1999	Deborah Messer, Judicial Assistant	Petoskey
1998	Mary Lu Hickner, Deputy Clerk	Lansing

Court Highlights

Employee Service Recognition

Name	Title (Office Location)	Years
Rebecca Dubuque	Law Clerk, Detroit	5
Mary Ann Mercieca	Senior Research Attorney, Detroit	10
Connie Fuller	Judicial Assistant, Detroit	15
Terry Bruner	Clerk, Detroit	15
Dawn Lemon	District Commissioner, Detroit	20
Rita Bacon	Judicial Assistant, Detroit	20
Demetria Washington	Senior Research Attorney, Detroit	20
Douglas Messing	Assistant Research Director, Detroit	25
Pamela Larson	Senior Research Attorney, Grand Rapids	5
Donna Fischer	Judicial Assistant, Grand Rapids	20
Jim Soltis	District Commissioner, Grand Rapids	25
Sandra Justian	Judicial Assistant, Grand Rapids	25
Martin Hillard	Law Clerk, Grand Rapids	30
Lisa Barker	Clerk, Lansing	5
Jason Smith	Programmer Analyst, Lansing	5
Traci Dantzler	Judicial Assistant, Lansing	5
Josh Galloway	Systems Manager, Lansing	5
Toby Koenig	Law Clerk, Lansing	5
Regina Delmastro	District Commissioner, Lansing	10
Cheryl Pazur	Judicial Assistant, Lansing	15
Candace Strong	Judicial Assistant, Lansing	15
Liz Rogers	Programmer Analyst, Lansing	25
Lou Ann Smith	Opinion Clerk, Lansing	30
Caitlin Matz	Clerk, Troy	5
Robert LaChance	Law Clerk, Troy	5
Jack Walrad	District Commissioner, Troy	25

Organizational Chart



¹ The Chief Clerk is the same person for the Court of Appeals and the Court of Claims.
² These Judges are also Judges for the Court of Appeals.

December 2014

Directory

Jerome W. Zimmer, Jr.
Chief Clerk
Hall of Justice
925 West Ottawa Street
P.O. Box 30022
Lansing, MI 48909-7522
(517) 373-2252

Julie Isola Ruecke
Research Director
Cadillac Place
3020 West Grand Boulevard
Suite 14-300
Detroit, MI 48202-6020
(313) 972-5820

District I Clerk's Office – Detroit

John P. Lowe, District Clerk
Cadillac Place
3020 West Grand Boulevard
Suite 14-300
Detroit, MI 48202-6020
(313) 972-5678

District II Clerk's Office – Troy

Angela DiSessa, District Clerk
Columbia Center
201 West Big Beaver Road
Suite 800
Troy, MI 48084-4127
(248) 524-8700

District III Clerk's Office – Grand Rapids

Lori Zarzecki, District Clerk
State of Michigan Office Building
350 Ottawa NW
Grand Rapids, MI 49503-2349
(616) 456-1167

District IV Clerk's Office – Lansing

Kimberly S. Hauser, District Clerk
Hall of Justice
925 West Ottawa Street
P.O. Box 30022
Lansing, MI 48909-7522
(517) 373-0786

Denise Devine **Information Systems Director**

Hall of Justice
925 West Ottawa Street
P.O. Box 30022
Lansing, MI 48909-7522
(517) 373-6965

Court of Appeals website address: <http://courts.mi.gov/courts/coa>



The 2014 Annual Report is published by
The Michigan Court of Appeals

For more information, visit [http://
courts.mi.gov/courts/coa](http://courts.mi.gov/courts/coa)