



# MICHIGAN COURT OF APPEALS

**2016 ANNUAL REPORT**



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# 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 1995 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 currently has 27 judges and is divided into four geographic districts for election purposes with 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 175 employees work in the Court's Judicial Chambers, Clerk's Office, Research Division, Information Systems Department, Finance Office, and Security Department.

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, the Court achieved remarkable results in 2016, continuing to reduce delay and provide outstanding service to the public. For the fourth consecutive year, the Court posted a clearance rate over 100% and lowered the average time on appeal by 19 days from the prior year. A mediation program was implemented that resulted in a settlement rate of 46% and the Court invested significant technical resources to develop a process to immediately deliver its opinions electronically to participants and trial courts. That process, which came online at the beginning of 2017, will bear fruit into the future by providing more timely and efficient service to our constituents while significantly reducing operating costs.

On behalf of the judges of the Court, I offer thanks and best regards to our esteemed colleague Judge Donald S. Owens who retired after many years of distinguished service to the Court. Judge Owens' remarkable intellect, dedication, and friendship will be missed. The Court also extends a warm welcome to Judge Brock A. Swartzle who was appointed to fill the vacancy created by Judge Owens' departure.

As the Chief Judge, 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. I look forward to the future, confident that the Court of Appeals will continue to set high standards in both the quality of its work and the efficiency of its operations.

—Chief Judge Michael J. Talbot

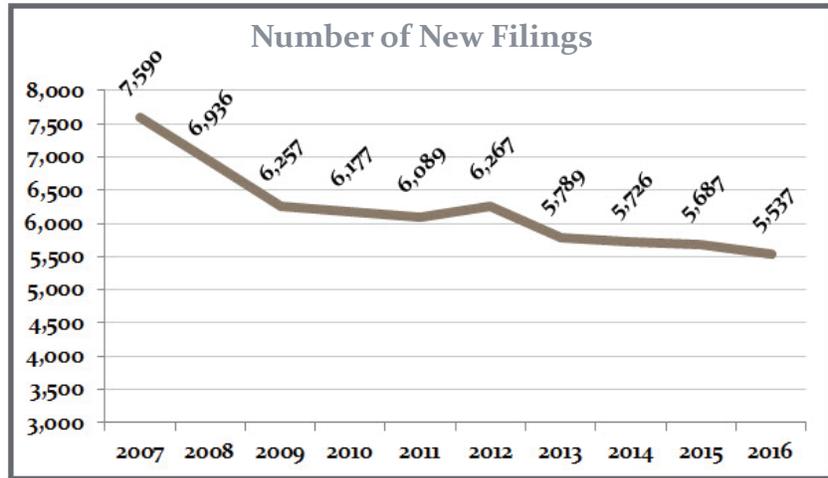
# Court Performance

## New Filings

The Court of Appeals received 5,537 new case filings in 2016. This was a slight decrease from 2015. The graph here depicts the volume of new filings with the Court over the past ten years.

Appeals by right made up about 50% of new filings in 2016, while 48% were discretionary appeals, and 2% were “other” case initiations (e.g., original actions). Roughly 51% of the cases were civil and 49% were

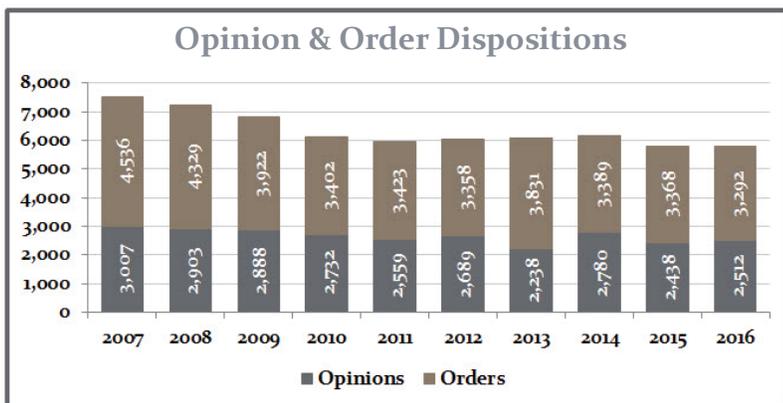
criminal. Discretionary appeals from guilty plea convictions accounted for 29% of all criminal appeals, while appeals from termination of parental rights cases made up about 15% of all civil appeals.



## Dispositions

Cases filed with the Court of Appeals are resolved by order or opinion. Dispositions by order generally occur in appeals by leave when the Court denies the application. Opinion dispositions typically occur in appeals by right and in those cases where leave to appeal is granted. Opinion dispositions take longer due to the need for transcript preparation, briefing, and record transmission; a process largely outside the control of the Court which takes over 7 months on average. Opinion cases are typically routed to the Court’s research department for preparation of a report by a staff attorney on the relevant facts and applicable law prior to being scheduled for oral argument before a three-judge panel that will ultimately issue the opinion disposing of the appeal.

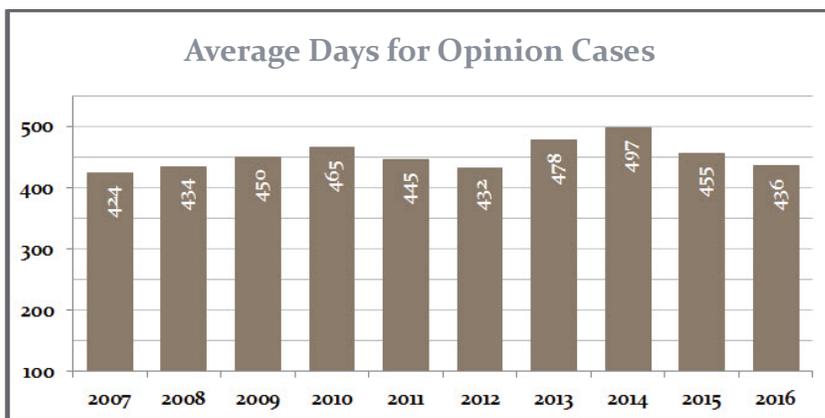
In 2016, the Court issued 2,512 opinions and 3,292 dispositive orders for a total of 5,804 dispositions. The accompanying graph shows the number of opinion and order dispositions over the past ten years.



As shown, dispositions for 2016 were virtually unchanged from 2015, but slightly lower than in prior years. The reduction in dispositions is due, in part, to the statutory reduction from 28 to 27 judges at the beginning of 2015.

## Delay Reduction

In 2001, it took an average of 653 days (21.5 months) 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 time on appeal. Under that plan, the average time to disposition by opinion dropped to 424 days (14 months) by 2007, a reduction of 229 days. As shown in

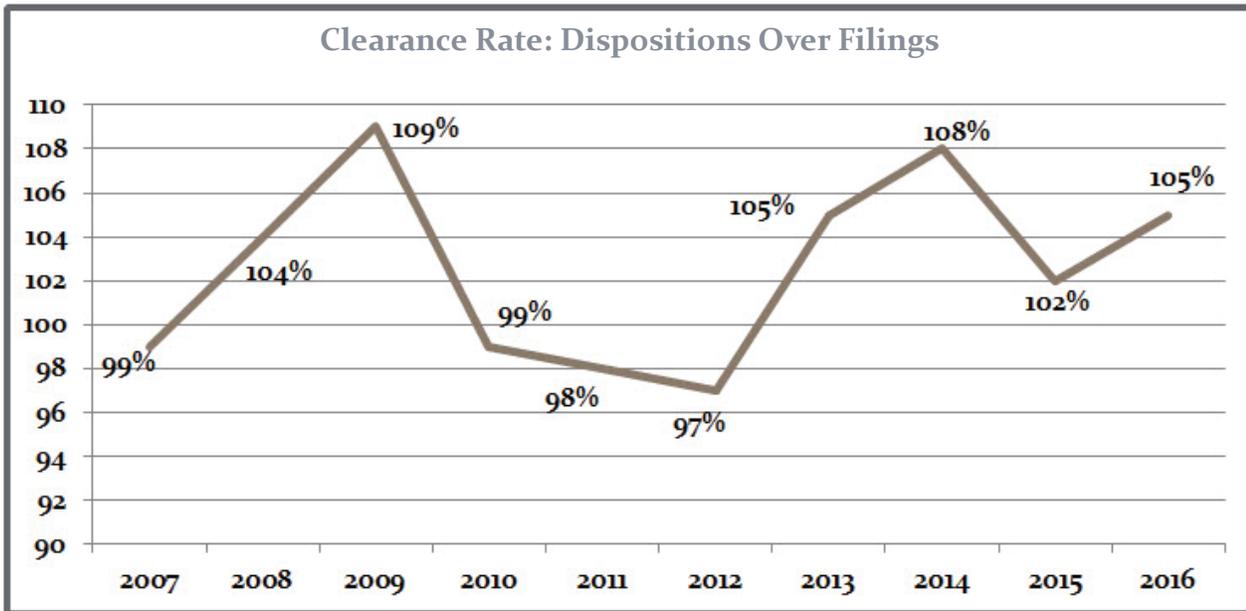


the accompanying chart, the average days to opinion disposition has fluctuated slightly in subsequent years, due in part to reductions in the number of staff attorneys employed by the Court, but the Court has generally been able to maintain its delay reduction gains. In 2016, the Court took an average of 436 days (14 months) to opinion disposition, the lowest rate since 2012.

The Court also separately tracks the average disposition times of various matters expedited by statute, court rule, or court order. In 2016, the average disposition time on appeal for all expedited cases was 241 days (8 months). Included in that group are the child custody and termination of parental rights appeals, for which the average disposition time in 2016 was 233 days. These numbers are slightly lower than the 2015 average of 243 days for all expedited cases and 230 days for custody and termination appeals. To put this in context, the pre-delay reduction averages were 351 days (11.5 months) for all expedited cases and 325 (10.7 months) days for child custody and termination appeals.

## Clearance Rate

The clearance rate reflects the number of cases disposed by the Court during the year compared to the number of new cases filed. In 2016, the Court achieved a clearance rate of 105%, disposing of 5,804 cases while receiving 5,537 new filings. The graph the following page shows the Court's clearance rate since 2007. As indicated, 2016 was the fourth year in a row that the Court achieved a clearance rate above 100%.

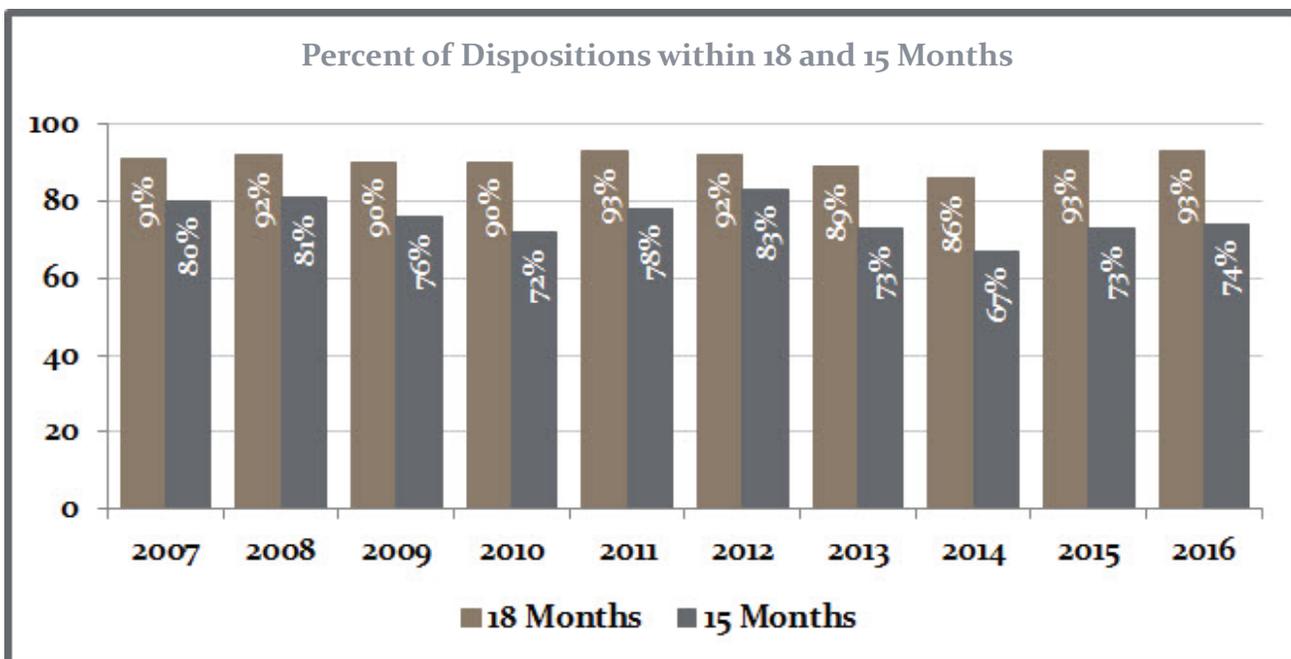


## Percentage of Dispositions within 18 and 15 Months

For the delay reduction effort that began in 2002, the Court set a goal of disposing of 95% of all cases within 18 months of filing. In the first year of delay reduction, 66% of all cases were disposed within 18 months of filing, while only about 33% of opinion cases were disposed within that time period. By comparison, in 2016, 93% of all cases and 88% of opinion cases were disposed within 18 months; these are the highest rates the Court has ever achieved.

In 2012, the Court set a more ambitious goal of deciding 95% of all cases within 15 months of filing. In 2016, 74% of all cases and 43% of opinion cases were decided within 15 months.

The chart below shows the percentage of all cases disposed within 18 months and 15 months for the past ten years.



# Judicial Chambers

## Court of Appeals Judges

In 2016, the Court of Appeals bench consisted of 27 judges. 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.



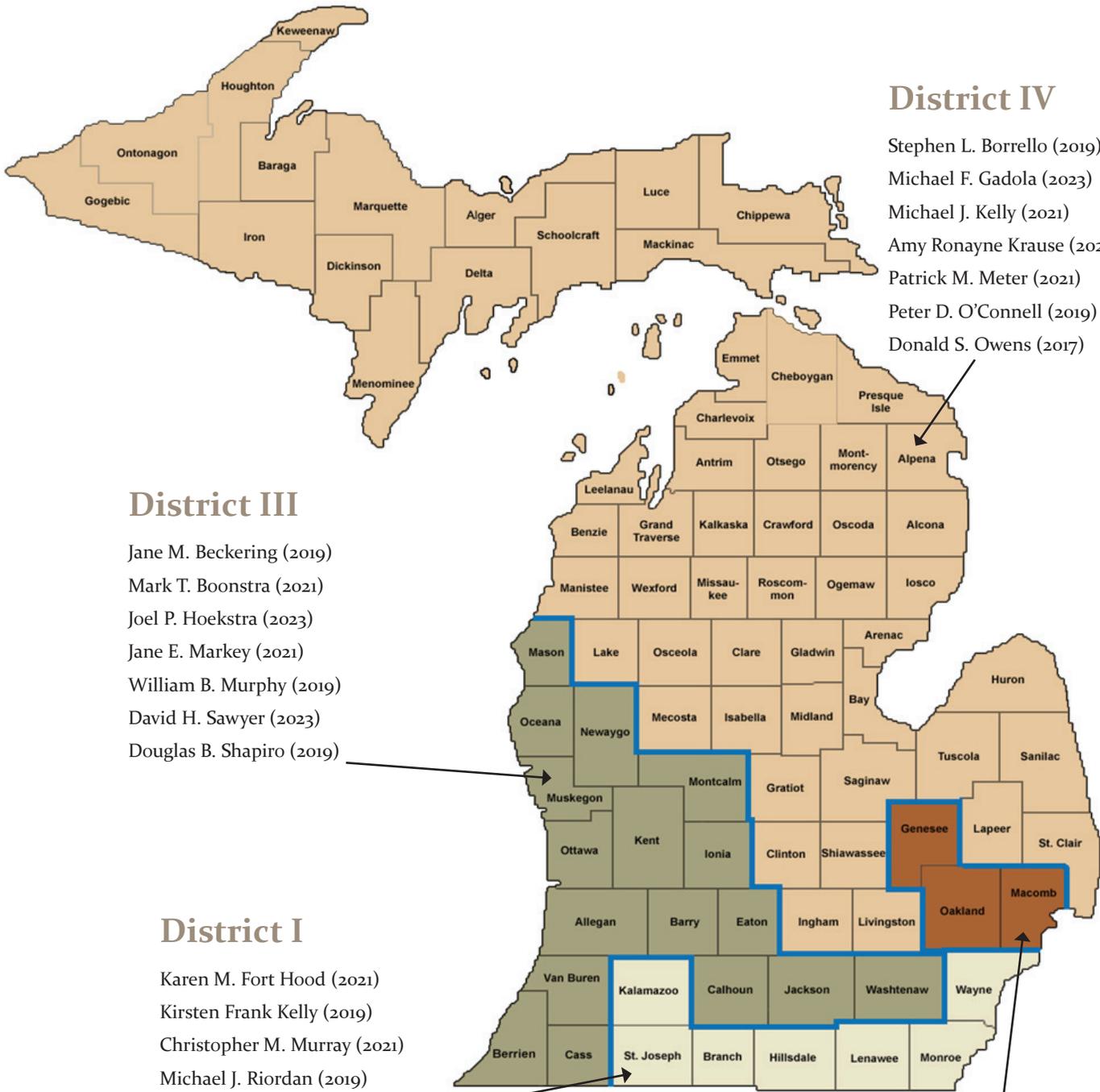
*Photograph by Trumpie Photography*

### **Pictured from Left to Right**

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

# Judges by District in 2016

Year that Current Term Expires Indicated in Parentheses



## District III

- Jane M. Beckering (2019)
- Mark T. Boonstra (2021)
- Joel P. Hoekstra (2023)
- Jane E. Markey (2021)
- William B. Murphy (2019)
- David H. Sawyer (2023)
- 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 (2023)
- Michael J. Talbot (2021)
- Kurtis T. Wilder (2023)

## District IV

- Stephen L. Borrello (2019)
- Michael F. Gadola (2023)
- Michael J. Kelly (2021)
- Amy Ronayne Krause (2021)
- Patrick M. Meter (2021)
- Peter D. O'Connell (2019)
- Donald S. Owens (2017)

## District II

- Mark J. Cavanagh (2021)
- Elizabeth L. Gleicher (2019)
- Kathleen Jansen (2019)
- Colleen A. O'Brien (2023)
- Henry William Saad (2021)
- Deborah A. Servitto (2019)

## 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.

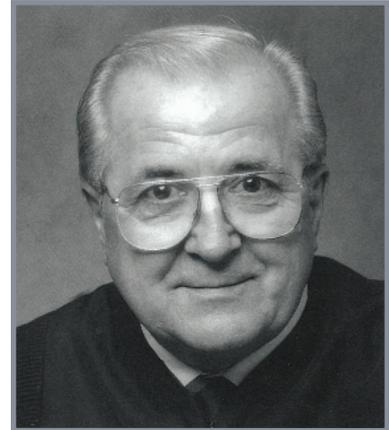
## Law Clerks

Each judge employs a single law clerk to assist him or her in handling the large 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 2016, approximately 357 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.

# In Memoriam

## *Former COA Judge Roman S. Gribbs*

Judge Roman S. Gribbs, age 90, passed away on April 5, 2016. Judge Gribbs, who was born in Detroit, Michigan, grew up on a farm in the Thumb region of Michigan. Following his graduation from high school, he served in the United States Army from 1944 to 1948. After returning to Michigan, Judge Gribbs earned his undergraduate degree from the University of Detroit in 1952 and earned his law degree from the University of Detroit in 1954. He was a University of Detroit instructor (1955–1957) and an assistant Wayne County prosecutor (1955–1964). In 1964, he entered private practice working at the law firm of Shaheen, Gribbs and Brickley. In 1968, Judge Gribbs was appointed Wayne County Sheriff, later winning a full four-year term. In 1969, he was elected Mayor of the City of Detroit. As the city was still rebounding from the riots in 1967, Judge Gribbs played a fundamental role in the revitalization of Detroit, including the implementation of the concept by business leaders for the Renaissance Center in the downtown area. He chose to not run for another term as mayor and returned to private practice in 1974. He became a judge in Wayne County Circuit Court in 1975 and then was elected to the Michigan Court of Appeals in 1982. Judge Gribbs was re-elected twice to the Court of Appeals, and served for eighteen years before retiring at the end of his final term on January 1, 2001.



# Clerk's Office

## Overview

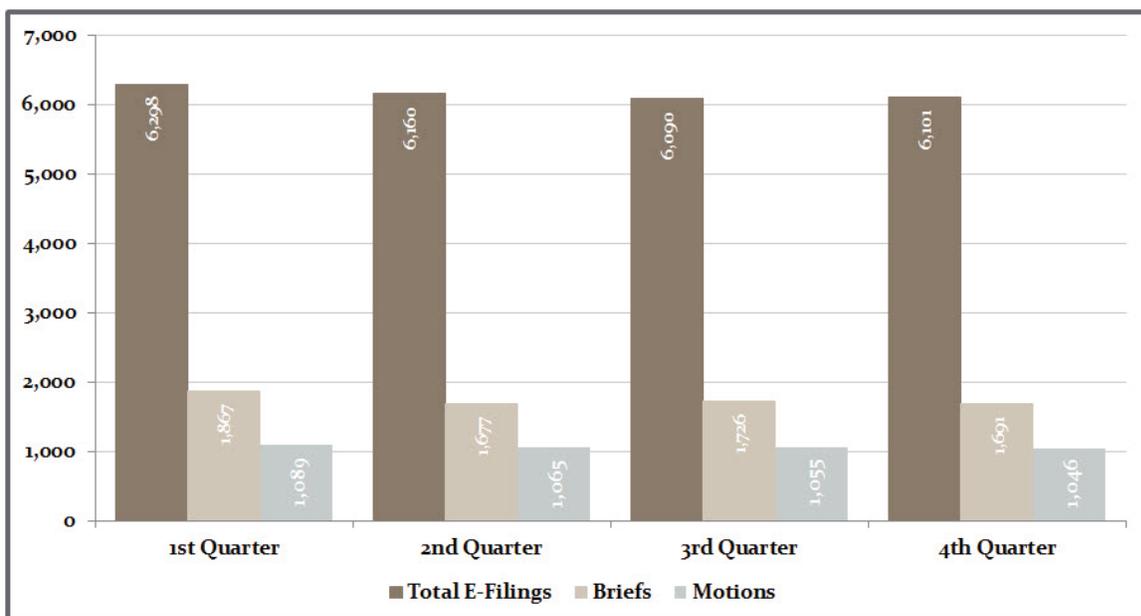
The Court of Appeals Clerk's Office is comprised of four office locations: District I in Detroit, District II in Troy, District III in Grand Rapids, and District IV in Lansing. Generally, each office is tasked with handling the Court files that arise from the trial courts located in the counties that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

As of the end of 2016, the Clerk's Office had 32 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 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.

## Electronic Filing

Throughout 2014, the Court of Appeals, in coordination with the Michigan Supreme Court, worked with ImageSoft Inc. of Southfield to develop a new electronic filing system for both Courts. In January 2015, the Courts went live with ImageSoft's e-filing solution, known as TrueFiling. This replaced the prior e-filing system that had been in place with the Court of Appeals since 2006.

This voluntary e-filing program has been remarkably successful, with more than two-thirds of all filings by attorneys in 2016 being received electronically, including roughly three-quarters of all briefs and motions. The following chart details the steady volume of e-filings throughout the year.



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, with the high volume of e-filed documents, the need for the Court to devote resources to scanning, transporting, and copying documents is reduced.

## 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, Oakland Juvenile Court, and the Court of Claims. 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.

## Mediation Pilot Project

Effective October 1, 2015, Supreme Court Administrative Order 2015-8 authorized a one-year pilot project to study the effectiveness of mediation of pending appeals. The mediation project focused on identifying large, complex, civil cases early in the appeal process and submitting them to mediation.

In early September 2016, the Court reported to the Supreme Court that 46% of cases that completed the mediation program were settled and the appeals dismissed. Based on that track record, the Court requested that the Supreme Court authorize a permanent mediation program. On September 21, 2016 the Supreme Court conditionally approved a revision to MCR 7.213(A) providing that authority. The following table details the results of the program from its inception through the end of 2016.

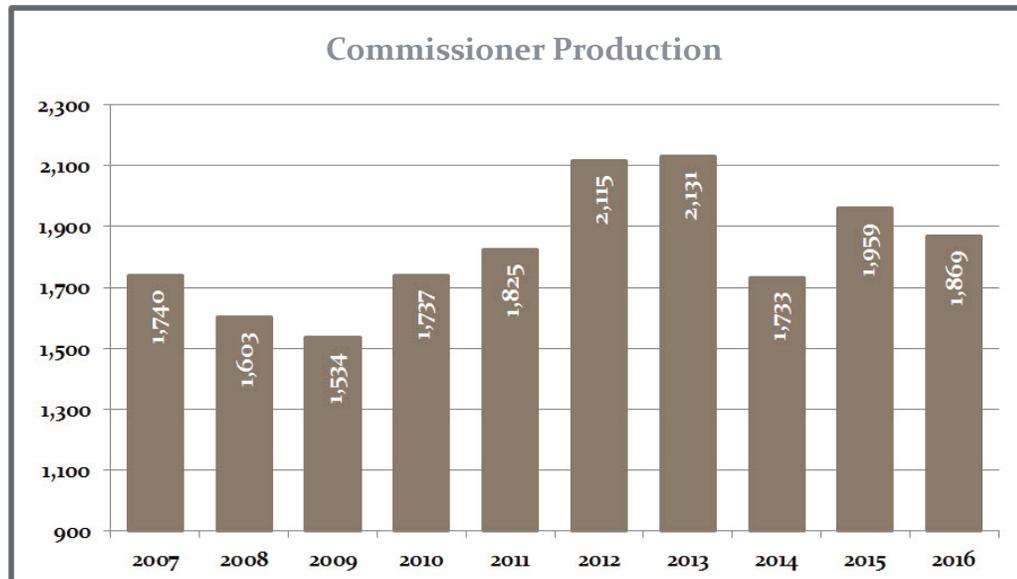
<b>Total Cases Ordered to Mediation</b>	<b>145</b>
Cases Currently Pending in Mediation	21
Cases Removed from Mediation Program on Request	31
Cases Closed before Mediation	3
<b>Total Cases that Completed Mediation</b>	<b>90</b>
Settlement	49
Cases Settled After Ordered to Mediation	41
<b>Percent of Cases that Settled through Mediation</b>	<b>46%</b>

# 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 2016, the commissioners prepared reports in 1,869 leave applications and miscellaneous matters. Some commissioners were asked to assist the Court of Claims judges on some matters, which contributed to a reduction of regular reports for the Court of Appeals. 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, many students from other out-of-state law schools were interviewed at the Research offices in Detroit, Lansing, and Grand Rapids. In 2016, the research staff represented the in-state law schools of Michigan State University, Western Michigan University Cooley Law School, University of Michigan, University of Detroit Mercy, and Wayne State University, and the out-state law schools of Ave Maria (Naples, FL), DePaul (Chicago, IL), Chicago-Kent (Chicago, IL), Notre Dame (South Bend, IN), University of Toledo (Toledo, OH), Valparaiso (Valparaiso, IN), and University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (Champaign, IL). Most research attorneys ranked in the top five percent of their graduating classes.

The research attorneys generally prepare research reports in cases that are determined to be easy to moderately difficult.<sup>1</sup> 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.<sup>2</sup> The main office of senior research is located in Detroit, but several attorneys also work in Lansing and Grand Rapids.

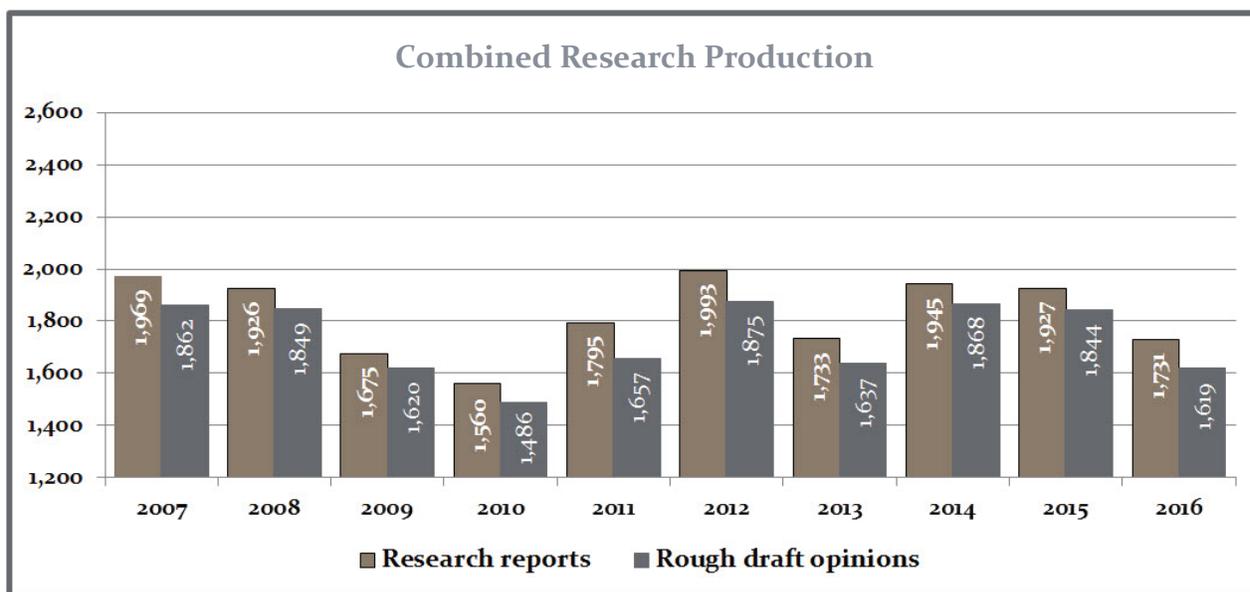
Contract attorneys work for the Court on a contractual basis, primarily preparing reports and rough draft opinions for a significant number of routine criminal and civil appeals, as well as for routine termination of parental rights (TPR) appeals. In 2016, the Court employed fewer contract attorneys than it had in prior years, which in turn reduced the number of research reports produced during the year. Most of the current contract attorneys previously worked for the Court in research. The contract attorneys work from their homes and are not otherwise engaged in the practice of law.

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<sup>1</sup> 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

<sup>2</sup> 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

Combined, the research attorneys, senior research attorneys, and contract attorneys prepared 1,731 research reports and 1,619 rough draft opinions in cases that were submitted on case call. The graph below compares the combined production numbers from 2007 to 2016.



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. In early 2016, the research management team modified the screening criteria, which led to an increase in the average day evaluation of all cases screened. The increase also likely caused a slight reduction in the number of research reports. 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 2016 and the prior nine years.

	Number of Research & Senior Research Attorneys	Average Day Eval of All Cases Screened
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
2015	39.2	4.00
2016	40.3	5.08

# Court of Claims

## Operations

After the Court of Claims became a function of the Court of Appeals on November 12, 2013, a separate clerk's office for the Court of Claims was established within the Court of Appeals' Lansing district office. With two full-time employees dedicated to Court of Claims work and a separate case management system, the clerk's office docketed the filings for the Court, supports the Court of Claims' work of the four judges, responds to inquiries from parties and practitioners, coordinates court sessions, and issues opinions and orders. In 2016, the Court of Claims hired a full-time research attorney to provide support for the judges.



*Photograph by Rick Browne*

Deputy Clerk Angela Davis reviewing a file with Clerk Morgan Adams.

All Court of Claims filings are scanned by staff on receipt allowing the Court to maintain a fully electronic record of each of its case files. This use of technology allows the judges and their staff to access the case filings from any location, as well as allowing the clerk's office to file its records electronically with the Court of Appeals.

## Judges

Effective May 1, 2015, the Michigan Supreme Court appointed Chief Judge Michael J. Talbot, and Judges Stephen L. Borrello, Mark T. Boonstra, and Cynthia Diane Stephens to two-year terms on the Court of Claims expiring April 30, 2017. While handling the demands of the Court of Claims caseload, these four judges continue to manage their full caseload with the Court of Appeals. As demonstrated by the Court's caseload statistics, the judges are providing a high-level of service to the public in their dual roles.

## Court Performance

At the start of 2016, 122 cases were pending in the Court of Claims. The caseload included a variety of civil claims brought against the state, including highway defects, medical malpractice, prisoner litigation, tax-related matters, and other damage claims. Through the year, the Court received 317 new case filings and 9 cases were reopened. Therefore, for the entire year, the Court had a total caseload of 448 cases.

The Court disposed of 318 cases during 2016. Comparing the new filings of 317 and the 9 cases reopened, to the 318 dispositions for the year, the Court of Claims achieved a clearance rate of 98% for the year. At the close of 2016, the Court's pending caseload was 130 cases. The following table details the Court's reported caseload statistics for 2016.

2016 Caseload Statistics	Habeas Corpus	Mandamus	Highway Defect	Medical Malpractice	Contracts	Constitutional Claims	Prisoner Litigation	Tax Related Matters	Other Damage Claims	Totals
Beginning Pending	0	2	7	6	17	7	4	12	67	122
New Filings	2	2	13	5	19	19	15	66	176	317
Reopened	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	6	9
<b>Total Caseload</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>249</b>	<b>448</b>
Disposed by Court	0	2	7	2	17	11	7	12	68	126
Transferred by Joinder	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	1	5	8
Dismissed by Party	0	0	5	2	3	2	1	27	109	149
Dismissed by Court	2	2	1	1	0	5	4	4	10	29
Placed on Inactive Status	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	4	6
<b>Totals</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>196</b>	<b>318</b>

# Court Highlights

## e-Notification of Opinions

In late 2016, Information Systems programmers began working on e-notification of opinions whereby parties and attorneys, as well as lower courts and tribunals in individual cases, would receive opinions by email rather than by U.S. mail. E-notification replaces printing and mailing copies of the Court's opinions and affords those individuals doing business with the Court immediate access to the Court's opinions in their cases. The first opinions were sent electronically on January 12, 2017. During 2017, orders and other Court correspondence will be reprogrammed so they can be sent electronically as well. This project was an enormous effort and its success marks another major electronic milestone for the Court's business processes.

## 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.



Don Byerlein, Lori Zarzecki, and Chief Judge Talbot.

The winner of the 2016 Donald L. Byerlein "Ace" Award was Lori Zarzecki, who was the District Clerk for the Grand Rapids office until she retired on February 29, 2016. A reception to honor Lori was held in Grand Rapids on June 27, 2016. At the ceremony, Judge Markey shared the following about Lori:

*"Lori Zarzecki is truly one of the finest people to ever work for the Michigan Court of Appeals. Her service from the bottom up to the top as Grand Rapids District Clerk has been superb. Her reputation both within and outside the Court is sterling. What an outstanding face she was for our Court—and I heard it often over the years from attorneys and others who had dealings with her. She embodies every single attribute we look for in an ACE award recipient. The committee could not have chosen better than Lori Zarzecki to receive this year's award."*

*Photograph by Rick Browne*

## Prior Ace Award Honorees

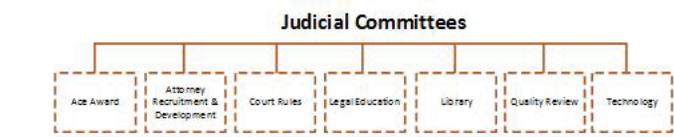
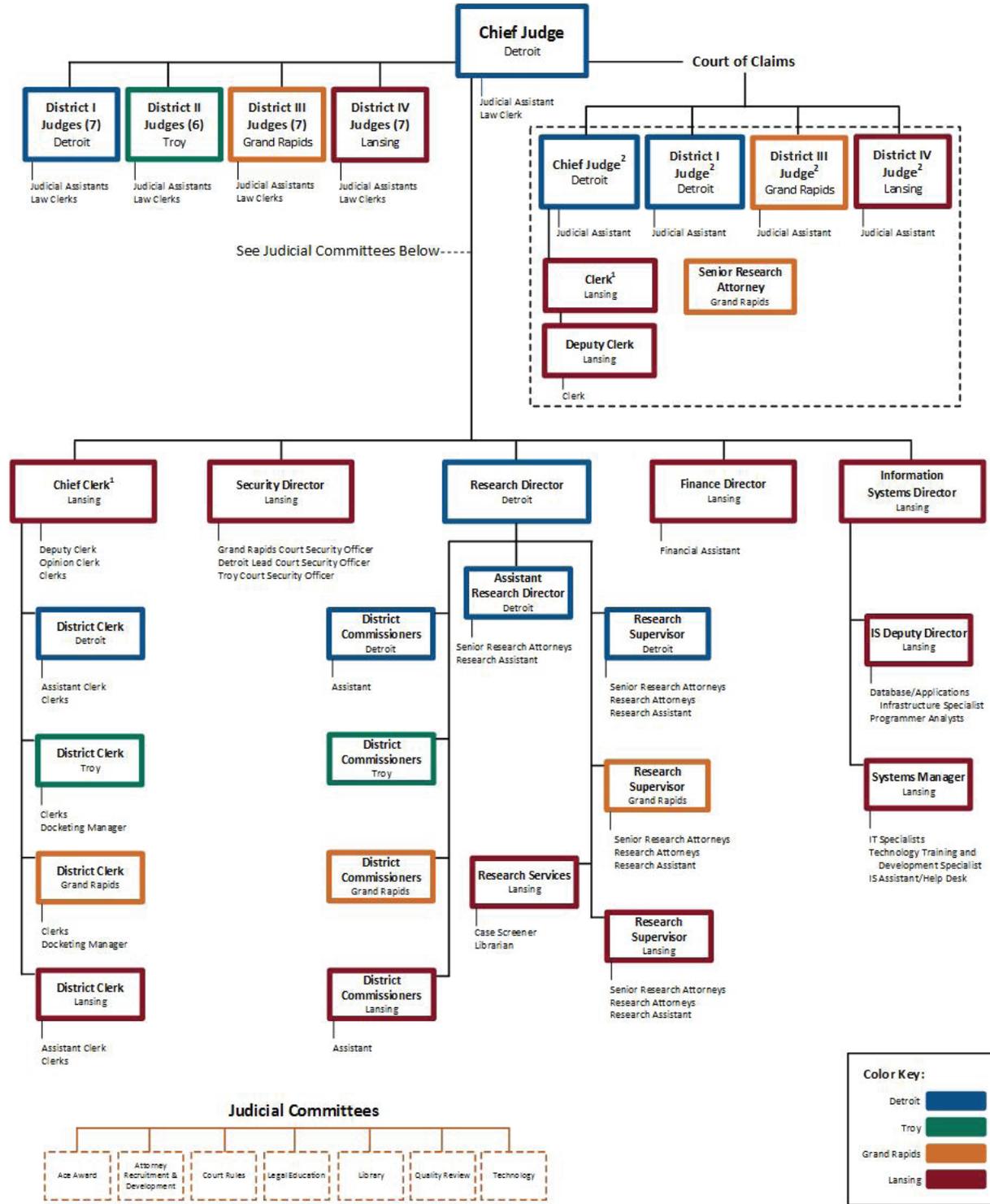
Year	Ace Award Recipient(s)	Office Location
2015	Lorraine Stokes, Docket Clerk	Detroit
2014	Rita Bacon, Judicial Assistant	Detroit
2013	Russell Rudd, Finance Director	Lansing
2012	Irene Coffee, Judicial Assistant	Grand Rapids
2011	Kathy Donovan, Technology Training Specialist	Lansing
2010	Matthew Johnson, Docket Clerk	Troy
2009	Anna Campbell, Judicial Assistant	Detroit
2008	Martha Sutton, Judicial Assistant -and- Claudette Bexell Frame, Judicial Assistant	Lansing  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 -and- Bobbie Dembowski, Commissioner Assistant	Lansing  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

# Employee Service Recognition

In June of every year, the Court recognizes current employees who have celebrated a five-year incremental anniversary with the Court during the preceding twelve months. In 2016, service recognition ceremonies were held to honor 22 employees who represented 350 years of combined service.

Name	Title (Office Location)	Years
Claudette Bexell Frame	Judicial Assistant, Lansing	40
Lorraine Stokes	Clerk, Detroit	40
Angela DiSessa	District Clerk, Troy	25
Mark McElwee	Commissioner Assistant, Lansing	25
Linda Freund	Research Support, Detroit	20
Linda Metzger	Senior Research Attorney, Detroit	20
Patricia Murray	District Clerk, Grand Rapids	20
Johanna Rush	Clerk, Detroit	20
Dale Crowley	Law Clerk, Grand Rapids	15
Mike DeAngelo	Senior Research Attorney, Lansing	15
Abbey Mercure	Commissioner Assistant, Detroit	15
Cameron Smith	Clerk, Lansing	15
John VandenHombergh	Law Clerk, Grand Rapids	15
Eleni Lygizos	Research Support, Detroit	10
Rachelle Kutchuk	Law Clerk, Troy	10
Amber Tykoski	Law Clerk, Detroit	10
Julie VanGroningen	Senior Research Attorney, Grand Rapids	10
Will Ensor	Security Officer, Troy	5
Betty Gauthier	Clerk, Lansing	5
Christina Nagey	Clerk, Detroit	5
Kierston Nunn	Judicial Assistant, Detroit	5
Patricia Schuelke	Information Systems Assistant, Lansing	5

# Organizational Chart



**Color Key:**

- Detroit: Blue
- Troy: Green
- Grand Rapids: Orange
- Lansing: Red

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

# Directory

**Jerome W. Zimmer, Jr.**  
**Chief Clerk**

Hall of Justice  
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P.O. Box 30022  
Lansing, MI 48909-7522  
(517) 373-2252

**Julie Isola Ruecke**  
**Research Director**

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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**

Patricia Murray, 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**

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



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