

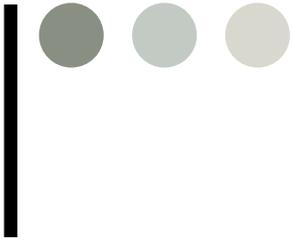


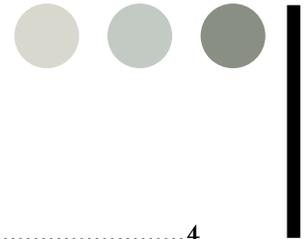
# MICHIGAN COURT OF APPEALS

**2017**

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 167 employees work in the Court's Judicial Chambers, Clerk's Office, Research Division, Information Systems Department, Finance Office, and Security Department.

The Judges and staff at the Court of Appeals take seriously our 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 Court continually focuses on improving the speed at which cases move through the Court; providing accessible, transparent operations; and delivering high quality judicial decisions.

Highlights of the year included the January launch of our e-Notification system for opinions, which provides registered attorneys, parties, and the trial courts, with immediate, electronic delivery of the decisions in their cases. Opinions to over 8,000 recipients were sent through e-Notification in 2017, providing better service while eliminating the expense of printing and mailing those opinions. And, in July, the Court altered the order in which it assigns cases to the research department, taking cases in order of the time they are ready for research, rather than by overall case age. This change allows parties more predictability and control of the time on appeal. If parties comply with the transcript and briefing deadlines, they will not be required to wait behind older cases that were delayed by extended or missed deadlines.

On behalf of the Court, I offer thanks and best regards to our esteemed colleagues that left the Court in 2017. In June, after 19 years with this Court, Judge Kurtis T. Wilder was appointed to the Michigan Supreme Court, and, in November, Judge Henry W. Saad retired from the Court after 23 years of distinguished service, including two years as Chief Judge. Their remarkable intellect, dedication, and friendship will be missed. We extend a warm welcome to Judges Thomas C. Cameron and Jonathan Tukel who were appointed to fill the vacancies created by the departure of Judges Wilder and Saad.

Finally, 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

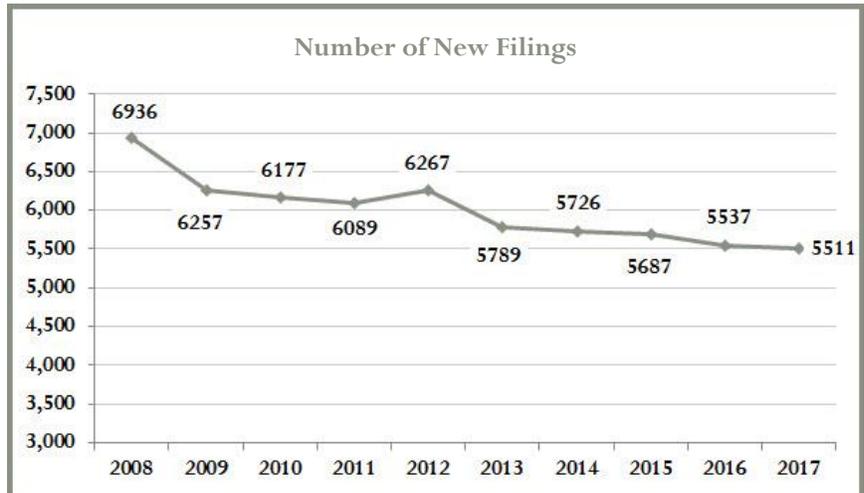


# Court Performance

## New Filings

The Court of Appeals received 5,511 new case filings in 2017. This was a slight decrease from 2016. The graph here 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 2017, while 47% were discretionary appeals, and 2% were “other” case initiations (e.g., original actions). Roughly 54% of the cases were civil and 46% were criminal. Discretionary appeals from guilty plea convictions accounted for 33% of all criminal appeals, while appeals from termination of parental rights cases made up about 14% of all civil appeals.



## Dispositions

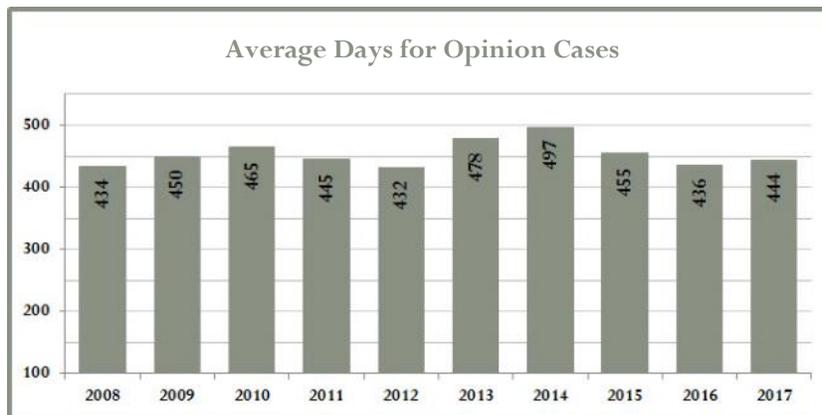
Cases filed with the Court of Appeals are resolved by order or opinion. Dispositions by order generally occur in appeals by leave when the Court denies the application. Opinion dispositions typically occur in appeals by right and in those cases where leave to appeal is granted. Opinion dispositions take 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 2017, the Court issued 2,320 opinions and 3,130 dispositive orders for a total of 5,450 dispositions. The graph to the left shows the number of opinion and order dispositions over the past ten years.



## 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

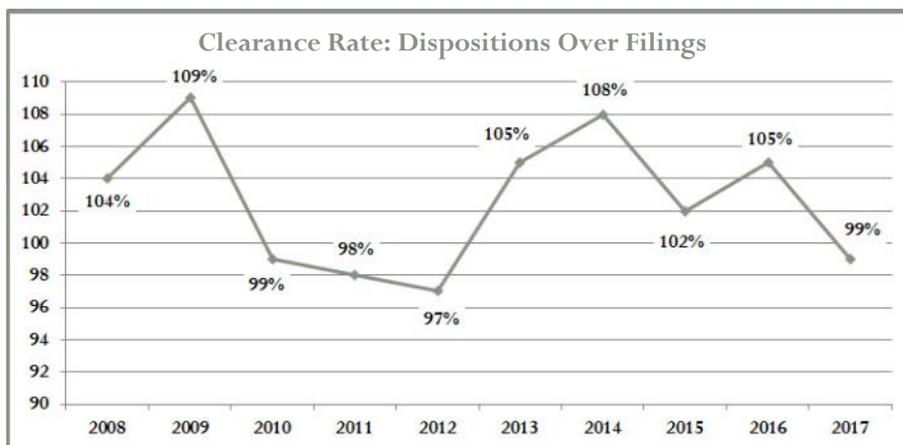


days to opinion disposition has fluctuated slightly in subsequent years, due in part to reductions in the number of staff attorneys employed by the Court, but the Court has generally been able to maintain its delay reduction gains. In 2017, the Court took an average of 444 days (14.6 months) to opinion disposition, one of the lowest rates over the past ten years.

The Court also separately tracks the average disposition times of various matters expedited by statute, court rule, or court order. Expedited cases are primarily child custody and termination of parental rights cases. In 2017, the average disposition time on appeal for expedited cases was 236 days (7.8 months). This is slightly lower than the 2016 average of 241 days and is the lowest average disposition time in the last five years. To put this in context, the pre-delay reduction average for expedited cases was 351 days (11.5 months).

## 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 2017, the Court achieved a clearance rate of 99%, disposing of 5,450 cases while receiving 5,511 new filings. The following graph shows the Court's clearance rate since 2008.



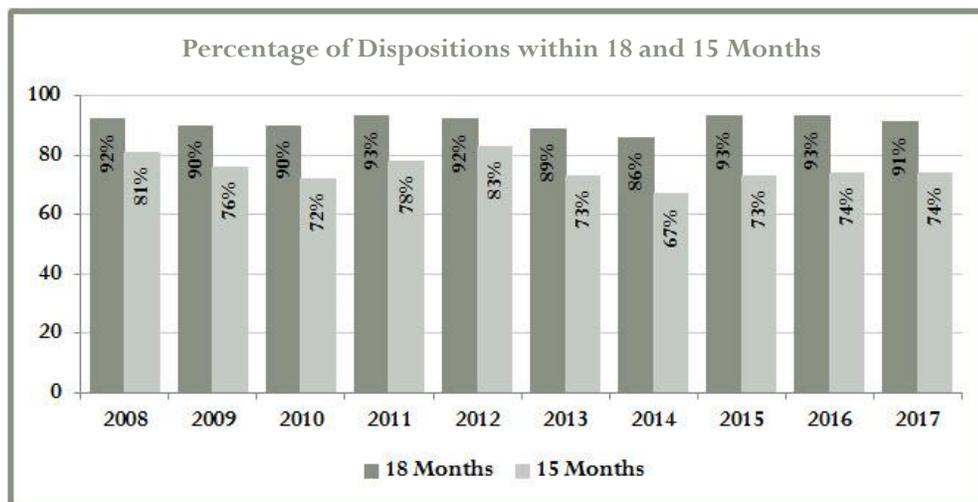


## Percentage of Dispositions within 18 and 15 Months

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 2017, 91% of all cases and 83% of opinion cases were disposed within 18 months.

In 2012, the Court set a more ambitious goal of deciding 95% of all cases within 15 months of filing. In 2017, 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 2017, the Court of Appeals bench consisted of 27 judges, although there were some departures and additions to the Court throughout the year. Judge Donald Owens retired from the bench on the first day of the year, and Brock A. Swartzle filled this vacancy by gubernatorial appointment, which had been announced in November 2016. Governor Rick Snyder appointed Judge Kurtis Wilder to the Michigan Supreme Court on May 9, 2017, and two months later appointed Thomas C. Cameron to fill the vacancy. Finally, on November 30, 2017, Judge Henry Saad retired from the bench, and Jonathan Tukel joined the Court by gubernatorial appointment.

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.



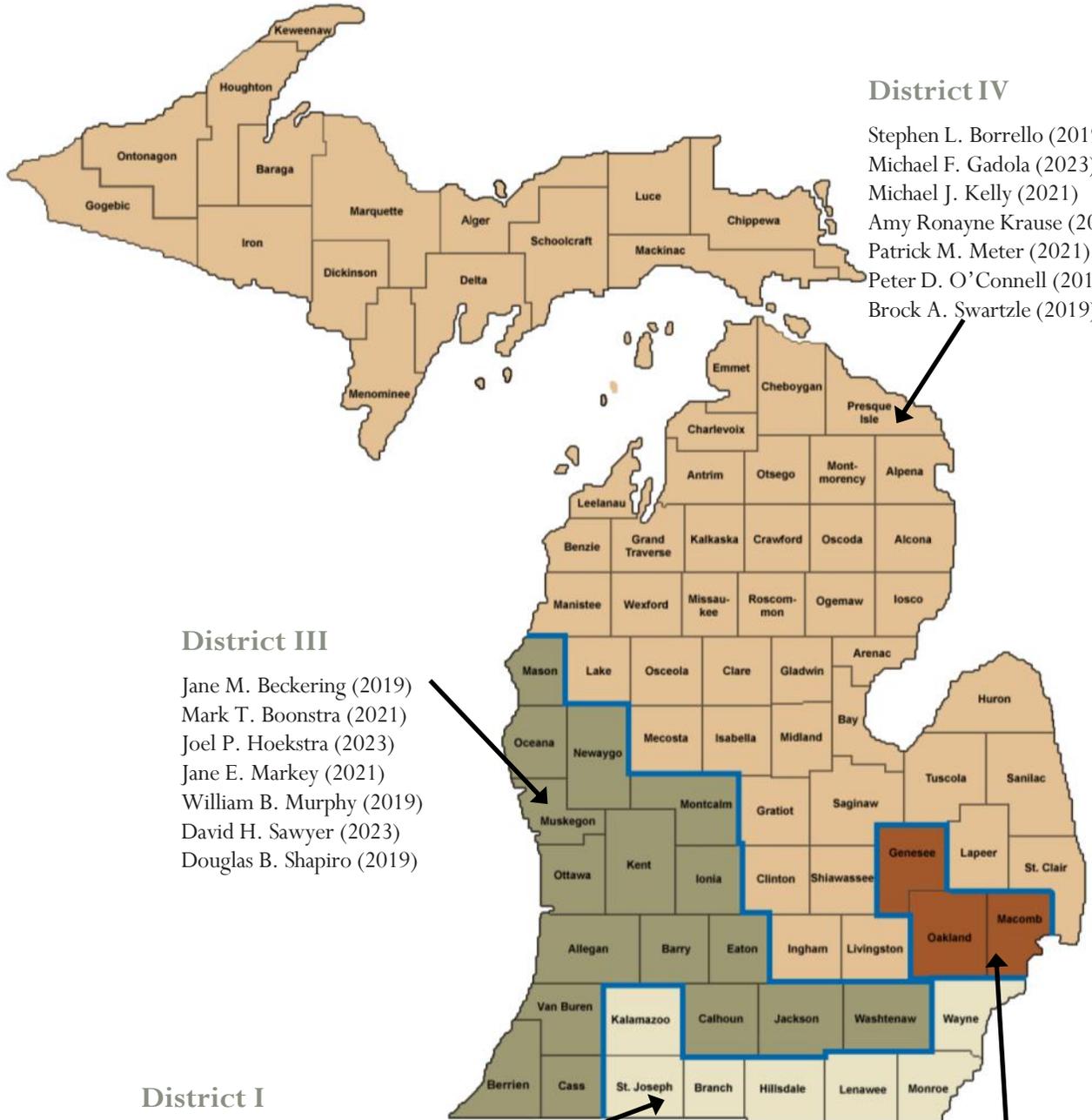
*Photograph by Trumpie Photography*

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

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

# Judges by District in 2017

Year that Current Term Expires Indicated in Parentheses



## 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)
- Brock A. Swartzle (2019)

## 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

- Thomas C. Cameron (2019)
- 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)

## District II

- Mark J. Cavanagh (2021)
- Elizabeth L. Gleicher (2019)
- Kathleen Jansen (2019)
- Colleen A. O’Brien (2023)
- Deborah A. Servitto (2019)
- Jonathan Tukel (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 2017, approximately 407 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

## Donna Hellman

Donna Hellman, age 56, passed away from natural causes at her home in Albion, Michigan, on July 4, 2017. Donna, who was born in Evanston, Illinois, on August 30, 1960, grew up in a musical family in the Chicago suburbs and was a violinist since childhood. Her lifelong passion for learning led her to earn four degrees, including a bachelor's and two master's of science degrees and a juris doctorate. She followed a varied career path working as a librarian for two universities and for the R&D library at Federal Mogul, as a marine biologist collecting water samples in Chesapeake Bay, as an attorney working in various positions at the Court of Appeals and the Michigan Judicial Institute and as a law clerk for former Michigan Supreme Court



Justice Clifford Taylor. Books and language permeated Donna's life from writing poetry and reading, to translating Italian. She was so intrigued by the Costa Concordia disaster, that she taught herself Italian, read everything that was published about the trial, traveled to the island where the accident occurred to watch some of the salvage operation, and connected with the captain of the ship and helped him with English translations. At the time of her unexpected death, Donna was working for the Court as a research attorney and librarian. Her Court colleagues fondly remember her enthusiasm to help others and learn new things, love for her three children and passion for the Concordia. Donna is greatly missed by many friends and colleagues at the Court.

## Terry Bruner

Terry Bruner, age 59, passed away on September 9, 2017. Terry, who was born on August 28, 1958, in Warren, Ohio, worked as the records clerk in the Detroit clerk's office since 1999. Terry graduated from Detroit Northern High School and later attended Wayne State University and Ross Business School. Terry was an avid sports fan, particularly the Detroit Lions and Pistons, and had a passion for music. Before joining the Court, Terry traveled to Japan and Germany to play lead guitar with several bands. He was also the lead guitarist in the New Providence Baptist Church band and played with the Black Catholic Ministries Gospel Choir. Terry is fondly remembered by his Court colleagues for his friendly and helpful manner, his irrepressible smile, joyous sense of humor, and occasional pranks. He is greatly missed by his many friends at the Court.



# Clerk's Office

## Overview

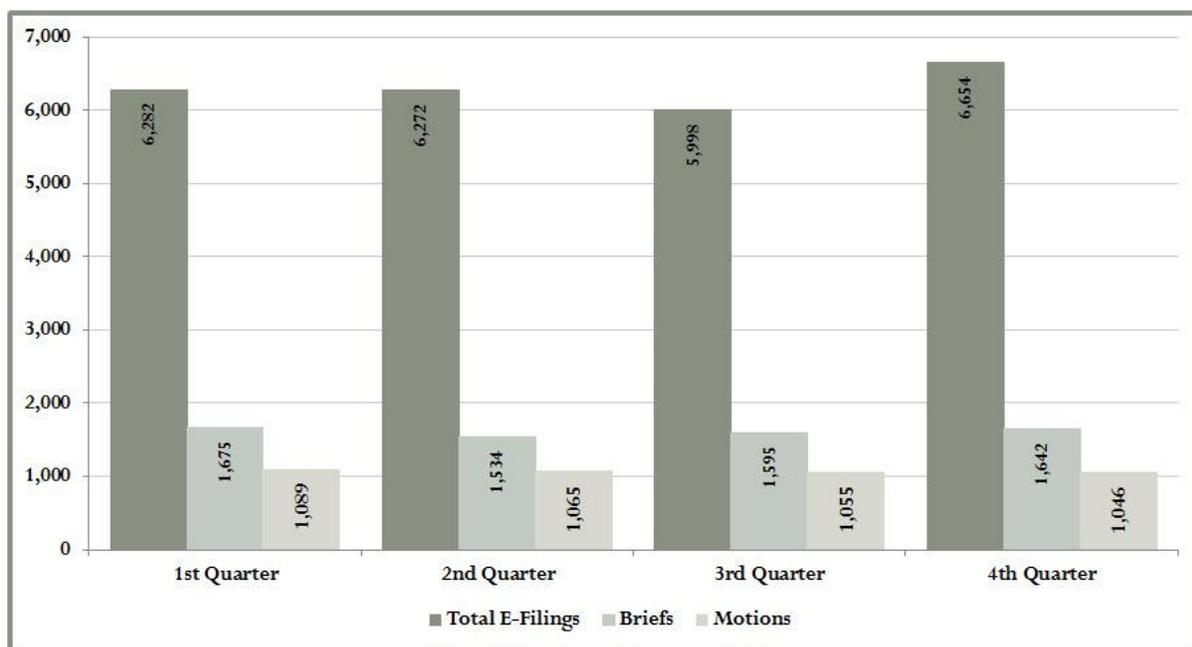
The Court of Appeals Clerk's Office is comprised of four office locations: District I in Detroit, District II in Troy, District III in Grand Rapids, and District IV in Lansing. Generally, each office is tasked with handling the Court files that arise from the trial courts located in the counties that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

As of the end of 2017, 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 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

In January 2015, the Court of Appeals and Michigan Supreme Court 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 2017 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, Tax Tribunal, Alpena Circuit Court, Grand Traverse Circuit Court, Macomb Circuit Court, Ottawa Circuit Court, Oakland Circuit Court, Oakland Juvenile Court, and the Court of Claims. In late 2017, the Court began receiving electronic records from Wayne Circuit Court’s Civil Division and is working on expanding that to the Criminal Division in 2018. As Wayne Circuit Court accounts for more than a quarter of all appeals to the Court, this is a significant step in the Court of Appeals’ effort to use technology to improve workflow and efficiency. 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 Program

After studying the effectiveness of appellate mediation through a pilot project in 2015–2016, the Michigan Supreme Court revised MCR 7.213(A) to establish a permanent mediation program in the Court of Appeals. In the more than two years of operation, the Court’s mediation program has provided a low-cost mechanism to resolve appeals early in the process. Through the end of 2017, the Court had ordered a total of 194 cases into mediation since October 1, 2015. Of the cases that completed mediation, the program has achieved a settlement rate of roughly 40%. The above table details the results of the program from its inception through the end of 2017.

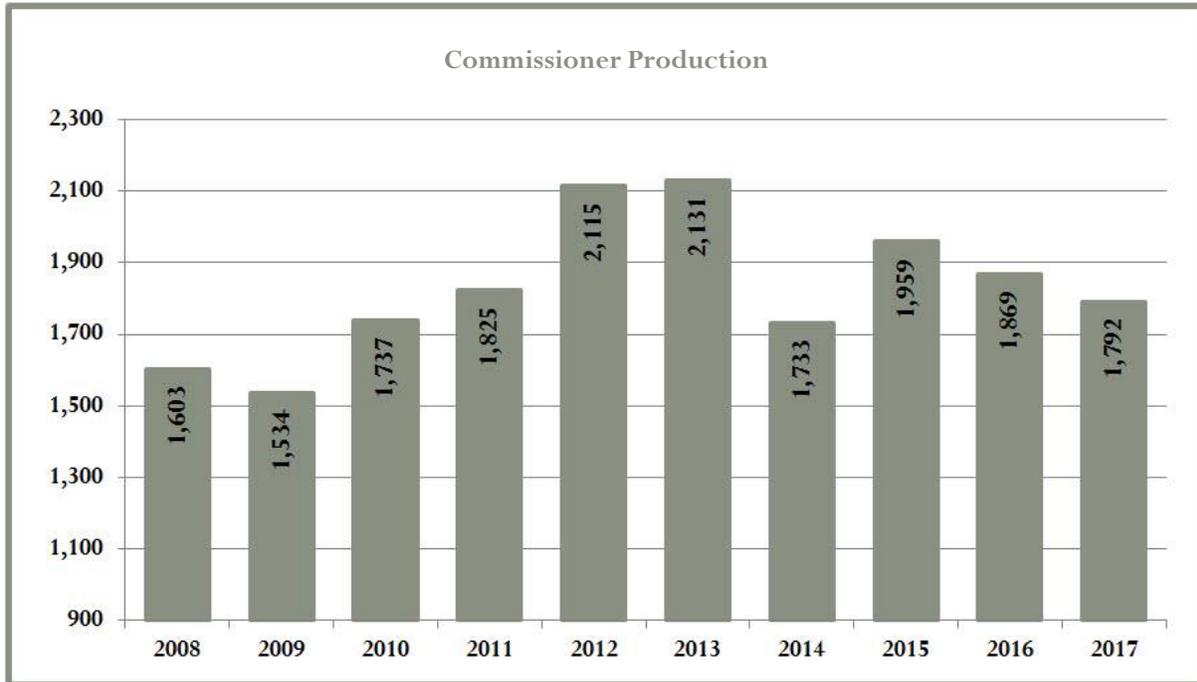
<b>Total Cases Ordered to Mediation</b>	<b>194</b>
Cases Currently Pending in Mediation	7
Cases Removed from Mediation Program on Request	52
Cases Closed before Mediation	3
<b>Total Cases that Completed Mediation</b>	<b>132</b>
Cases Where Mediation Concluded Without Settlement	79
Cases Settled After Ordered to Mediation	53
<b>Percent of Cases that Settled through Mediation</b>	<b>40%</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 2017, the commissioners prepared reports in 1,792 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, many students from other out-of-state law schools were interviewed at the research offices in Detroit, Lansing, and Grand Rapids. In 2017, 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), Indiana University Mauer School of Law (Bloomington, IN), Loyola University College of Law (New Orleans, LA), New York Law School (New York, NY), Northeastern University School of Law (Boston, MA), Notre Dame (South Bend, IN), Ohio State University Moritz College of Law (Columbus, OH), University of Toledo (Toledo, OH), and Southern Methodist University Dedman School of Law (Dallas, TX). 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.

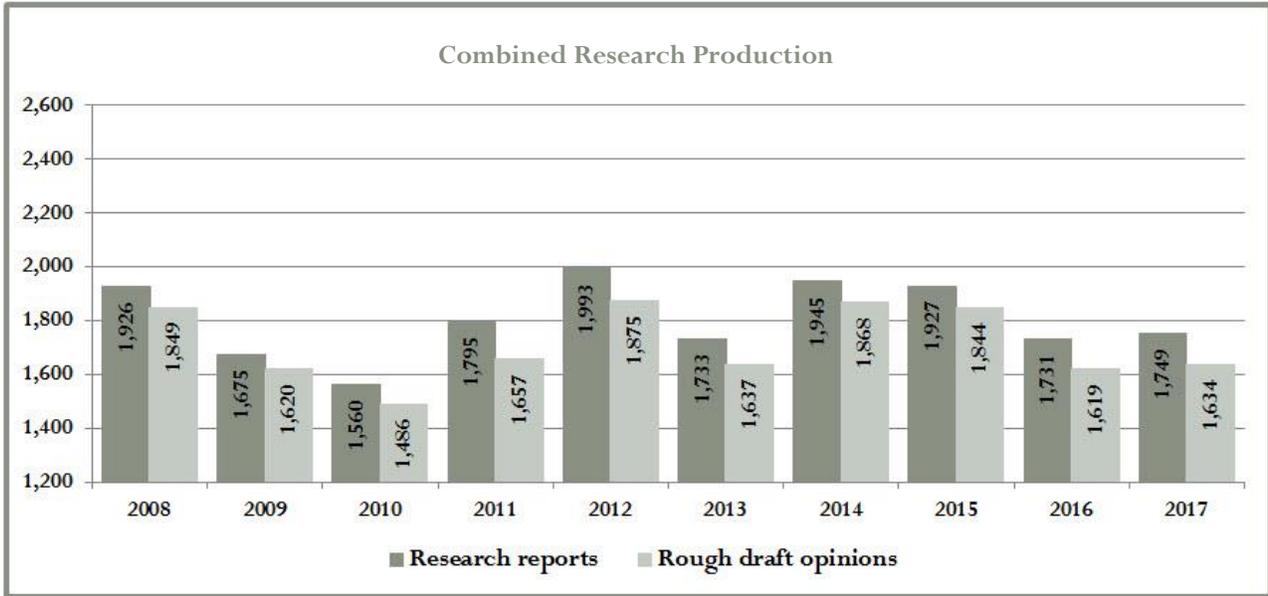
Contract attorneys work for the Court on a contractual basis, primarily preparing reports and rough draft opinions for a significant number of routine criminal and civil appeals, as well as for routine termination of parental rights (TPR) appeals. Most of the current contract attorneys previously worked 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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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.

Combined, the research attorneys, senior research attorneys, and contract attorneys prepared 1,749 research reports and 1,634 rough draft opinions in cases that were submitted on case call. The graph below compares the combined production numbers from 2008 to 2017.



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 table to the right shows the number of research and senior research attorneys, as well as the average day evaluation of the cases, for 2017 and the prior nine years.

	Number of Research & Senior Research Attorneys	Average Day Evaluation of All Cases Screened
2008	36.43	4.06
2009	36.84	3.95
2010	32.36	3.99
2011	35.31	3.88
2012	45.40	4.05
2013	44.60	4.15
2014	45.40	4.10
2015	39.20	4.00
2016	40.30	5.08
2017	40.80	4.85



# 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. The Court of Claims also employs a full-time research attorney to provide support for the judges.

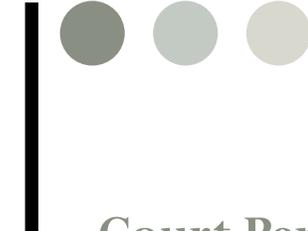


*Photograph by Rick Browne*

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, 2017, the Michigan Supreme Court appointed Chief Judge Michael J. Talbot, and Judges Christopher M. Murray, Stephen L. Borrello, and Cynthia Diane Stephens to two-year terms on the Court of Claims expiring April 30, 2019. 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

In 2017, 133 cases filed prior to that year 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 336 new case filings and 47 cases were reopened. As a result, the total caseload for the Court in 2017 was 516 cases.

During the year, the Court disposed of 385 cases. Dividing the 385 dispositions by the 383 new filings and reopened cases, the Court of Claims achieved a clearance rate of 100.5% for the year. At the close of 2017, the Court's pending caseload was 132 cases. The following table details the Court's reported caseload statistics for 2017.

2017 Caseload Statistics	Habeas Corpus	Mandamus	Highway Defect	Medical Malpractice	Contracts	Constitutional Claims	Prisoner Litigation	Tax-related Matters	Other Damage Claims	Totals
Beginning Pending	0	1	7	4	17	8	7	35	54	133
New Filings	2	5	2	12	18	16	15	66	200	336
Reopened	0	1	1	0	0	4	0	0	41	47
<b>Total Caseload</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>101</b>	<b>295</b>	<b>516</b>

Disposed by Court	0	3	5	3	12	15	7	14	95	154
Transferred by Joinder	0	0	0	4	0	0	0	1	0	5
Dismissed by Party	0	0	3	5	13	3	1	50	86	161
Dismissed by Court	2	1	0	0	2	4	5	4	9	27
Placed on Inactive Status	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	1	35	38
<b>Totals</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>225</b>	<b>385</b>

# Court Highlights

## e-Notification of Opinions

On January 12, 2017, the Court went live with its e-Notification system for opinions. With e-Notification, parties and attorneys, as well as the trial courts, immediately receive the Court's opinions electronically at the time they are released by the clerk's office, rather than waiting for delivery through the regular mail. This new technology provides improved service to the Court's customers, while achieving cost savings for the Court. In 2017, e-Notification was used to deliver opinions to more than 8,000 recipients, saving the Court the material, postage, and labor costs associated with delivery to those recipients by U.S. Mail.

## 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.

The winner of the 2017 Donald L. Byerlein "Ace" Award was Eleni Lygizos. Eleni began working at the Court in 1995 as the Office Manager in the Detroit research office. A few years later, Eleni resigned for personal reasons, but thankfully rejoined the office as the Research Assistant in 2008. Fifteen employees who worked in the research office filed a joint nomination, describing Eleni as selfless, kind, welcoming, warm, friendly, a pleasure to work with, and immensely deserving of the award.



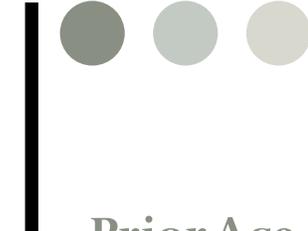
Photograph by Rick Browne

Eleni Lygizos and Don Byerlein.

A reception to honor Eleni was held in Detroit on June 19, 2017, and her husband John was in attendance. At the ceremony, Detroit Research Supervisor Jeff Parthum fondly referred to Eleni as the "brains of our operation" and shared the following about her:

*"Eleni understands the Court's mission and the goal of the Research Division, and is responsible for making sure our office runs as efficiently as it does. She performs countless duties with a smile on her face, she is always upbeat, and never complains. Her receipt of the Ace Award is well-deserved. The selection committee has once again made a tremendous selection."*

The 2017 selection committee included Judge Jansen (chair), Chief Judge Talbot, Donald L. "Ace" Byerlein, Chief Clerk Jerry Zimmer, Research Director Julie Isola Ruecke, and Judges Markey, Servitto and Ronayne Krause.



## Prior Ace Award Honorees

Year	Ace Award Recipient(s)	Title	Location
2016	Lori Zarzecki	District Clerk	Grand Rapids
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 Claudette Bexell Frame	Judicial Assistant Judicial Assistant	Lansing Lansing
2007	Rebekah Neely (awarded posthumously)	Programmer	Lansing
2006	Bob Kwiatkowski	Lead Court Officer	Detroit
2005	Thomas Rasdale	Assistant Clerk	Lansing
2004	Carol Abdo Bobbie Dembowski	PC Network Specialist 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

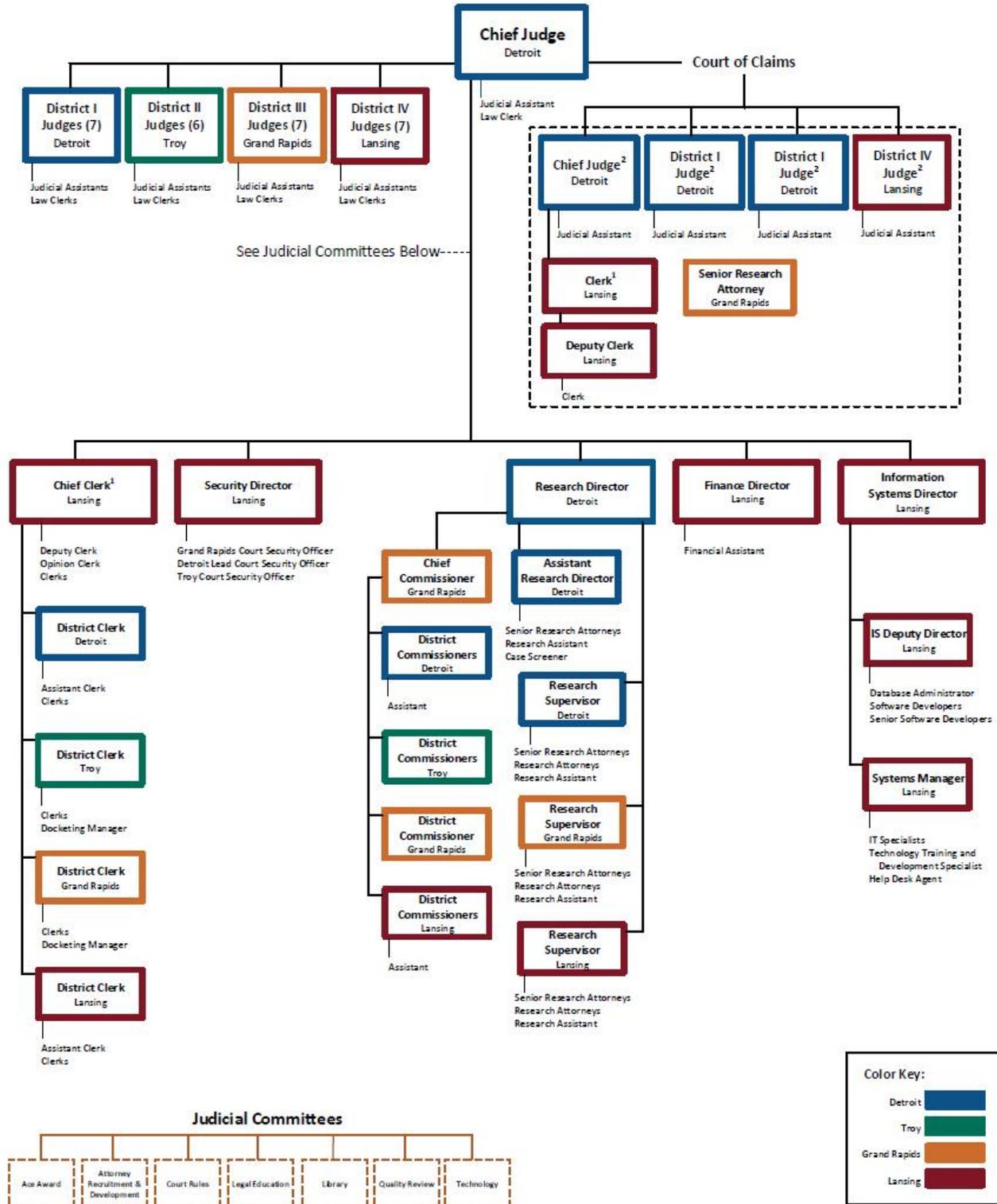


## Employee Service Recognition

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 2017, service recognition ceremonies were held to honor 25 employees who represented 395 years of combined service.

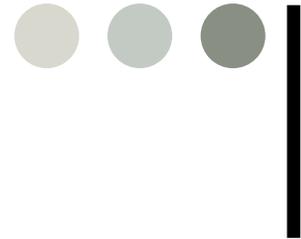
Name	Title	Years
Mary Lu Hickner	Deputy Clerk, Lansing	40
Joan M. Becher	Clerk, Lansing	35
Mark Stoddard	Chief Commissioner, Grand Rapids	30
Kathleen E. Kane	Senior Research Attorney, Lansing	25
Julie Isola Ruecke	Research Director, Detroit	25
Abigail Tithof	Human Resources Assistant, Lansing	25
Anna Campbell	Judicial Assistant, Troy	20
Clare M. Cylkowski	District Commissioner, Detroit	20
William R. Durr	Research Supervisor, Lansing	20
Steven R. Manley	Senior Research Attorney, Lansing	20
Sarah L. Seguin	Judicial Assistant, Lansing	20
Karen Tinn	Senior Research Attorney, Detroit	20
Vicky Patricca	Judicial Assistant, Detroit	15
Frances Debinski	Clerk, Troy	10
Brian Dietrich	Clerk, Grand Rapids	10
Laurie Hrydziuszko	Research Supervisor, Grand Rapids	10
Tara McQuade	Clerk, Troy	10
Yvette Brabant	Judicial Assistant, Lansing	5
Katherine Budzynski	Clerk, Grand Rapids	5
Colleen Lees	Judicial Assistant, Detroit	5
Jason Murdey	Law Clerk, Lansing	5
Nicholas Paulucci	Senior Research Attorney, Grand Rapids	5
Tricia Warren	Senior Research Attorney, Lansing	5
Shara Youles	Senior Research Attorney, Detroit	5
AJ Zapata	Mail Services, Lansing	5

# Organizational Chart



**Color Key:**

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



# 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

**Denise M. Devine**

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

**Jimmy G. Patrick**

Security Director  
Hall of Justice  
925 West Ottawa Street P.O. Box 30022  
Lansing, MI 48909-7522  
(517) 373-7970

**Russell A. Rudd**

Finance Director  
Hall of Justice  
925 West Ottawa Street P.O. Box 30022  
Lansing, MI 48909-7522  
(517) 373-5979

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**District I Clerk's Office**

**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**

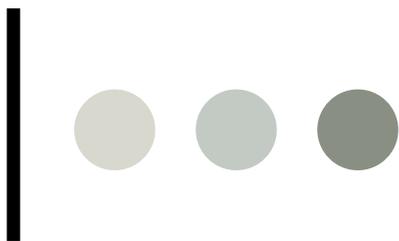
**Angela P. DiSessa**, District Clerk  
Columbia Center  
201 West Big Beaver Road, Suite 800  
Troy, MI 48084-4127  
(248) 524-8700

**District III Clerk's Office**

**Patricia A. Murray**, District Clerk  
State of Michigan Office Building  
350 Ottawa NW  
Grand Rapids, MI 49503-2349  
(616) 456-1167

**District IV Clerk's Office**

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



**2017**

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