

SUPREME COURT OF MISSISSIPPI

2024 Annual Report

Published by the Administrative Office of Courts

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INTRODUCTION

The Mississippi Judiciary is a co-equal branch among the three branches of state government, its independence established by Article 1, § 1 of the Mississippi Constitution. The Mississippi Supreme Court, the Circuit and Chancery Courts and the Justice Courts are constitutionally created courts established by Article 6 of the Mississippi Constitution. The Mississippi Court of Appeals is a statutorily created court established by Miss. Code Ann. § 9-4-1, and the County Courts are authorized and established by Miss. Code Ann. § 9-9-1. Municipal Courts are authorized by Miss. Code Ann. § 21-23-1.

The Supreme Court decided 335 cases in calendar year 2024, and issued rulings in 2,971 motions and petitions. The Supreme Court also has significant administrative responsibilities and rule making authority. The Supreme Court adopted Rules for Collaborative Law effective August 26, 2024, allowing parties to family law disputes to sign a Collaborative Law Participation Agreement, foregoing court intervention while using the collaborative family law process to work towards resolution of their disputes.

The Court of Appeals decided 370 cases and disposed of 1,557 motions and petitions. Appellate courts strive to decide cases within 270 days of completion of briefing. The Court of Appeals' average time to decision was 209 days in 2024. The Supreme Court's average time was 167 days. Before the Legislature created the Court of Appeals, it could take three years for an appeal to be decided, due to a backlog of appeals. The efficient work of both appellate courts allows litigants to receive timely decisions in their appeals.

Drug intervention courts reached a milestone of 25 years of providing a life-saving and cost-saving alternative to incarceration for people who commit crimes due to the influence of drug addiction. The 14th Circuit Drug Intervention Court, founded in 1999, was the state's first drug court. The 7th Circuit Court, established in 2000 as the state's second drug intervention court, marked its 50th graduation ceremony in July 2024. A total of 42 drug intervention courts were operating across the state in 2024.

Providing better data to quantify the work of the trial courts has been a longtime goal of the judiciary. Planning for Mississippi Electronic Courts, MEC, began nearly two decades ago. As of June 19, 2023, all 82 Chancery Courts were operating in MEC, an electronic filing and docket management system modeled on that of the federal district courts. MEC expects to achieve 100 percent implementation of state trial courts by the end of the 2025 Fiscal Year that concludes on June 30, 2025. As of December 31, 2024, nine Circuit Courts awaited implementation of civil and criminal filing in MEC, one Circuit Court already using MEC for civil filings was scheduled to add criminal records filings, and one County Court awaited implementation of MEC.

Trial court data is currently gathered from multiple sources: electronically generated reporting of MEC, non-MEC reporting via daily electronic data downloads, and paper cover sheets and dispositions mailed to AOC. Clerks of the Chancery and Circuit courts reported to AOC that trial courts closed more than 128,000 cases during calendar year 2024. This compared to more than 109,000 cases reported closed during 2023, with thousands of what were likely to be concluded cases reported as still pending. AOC emphasized docket-clearing in 2024, urging clerks of trial courts to make sure that all cases that had been concluded were formally closed on their dockets.

In recent years, the Annual Report has provided fiscal year data from trial courts and calendar year data for appellate courts. As AOC began a transition to calendar year data, the 2023 Annual Report provided both fiscal year and calendar year data for trial courts, so that year-to-year comparisons would be possible. The following 2024 Annual Report provides calendar year data for trial and appellate courts. Budget information remains as a fiscal year report.

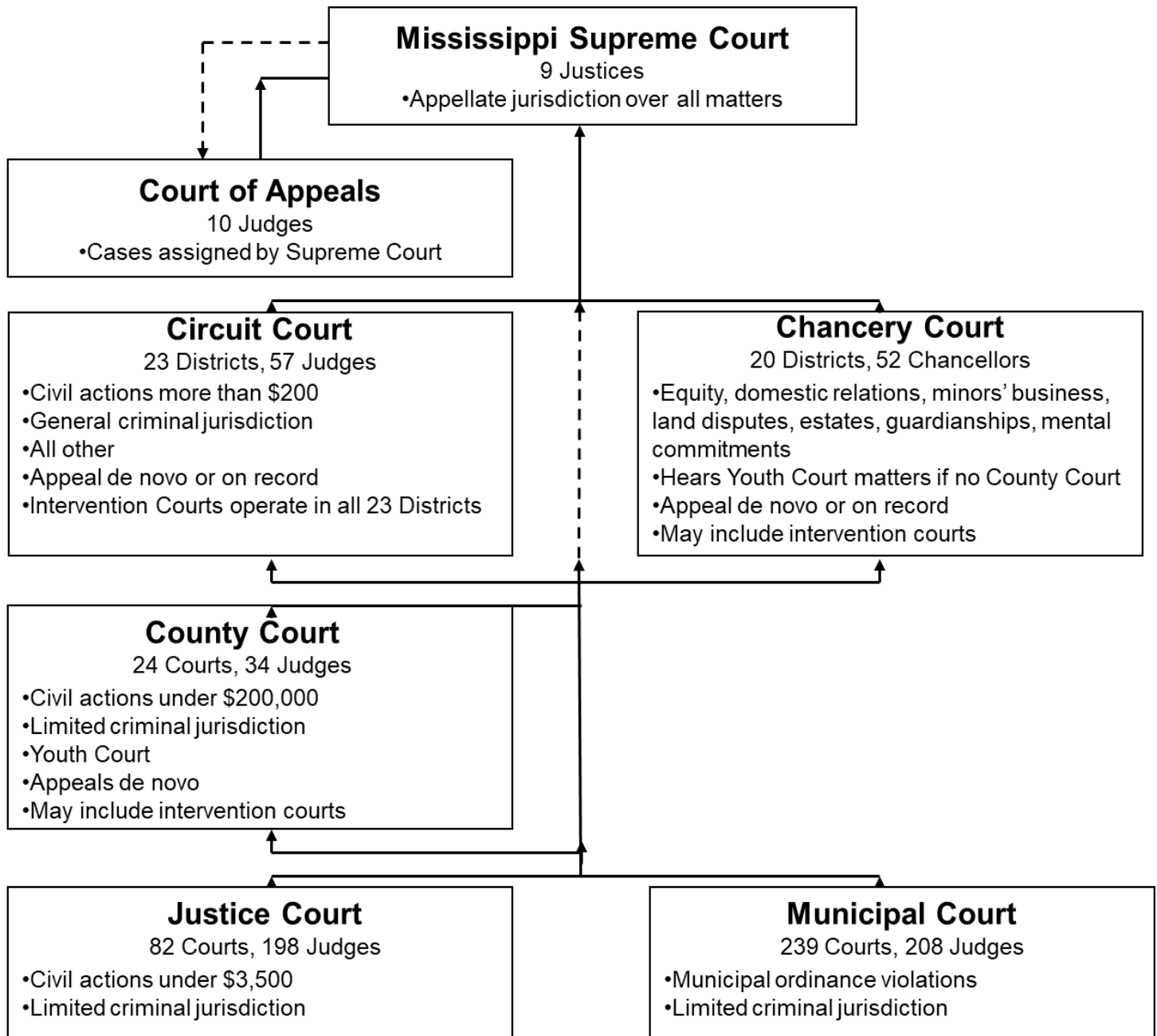
THE MISSISSIPPI JUDICIAL SYSTEM

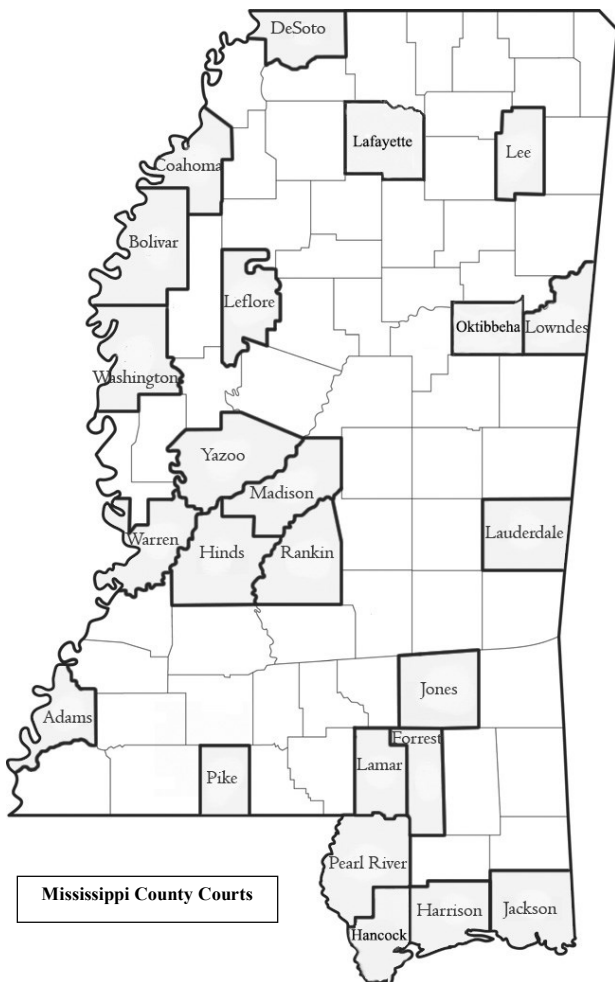
At the most basic level of the judicial system, Justice Courts and Municipal Courts are where the largest number of people encounter the judicial System. Trial courts of record are the County, Chancery, and Circuit Courts. The appellate system is made up of two appellate courts, the Court of Appeals of the State of Mississippi and the Mississippi Supreme Court, which is Mississippi's court of last resort.

There are 82 Justice Courts with 198 judges. Justice Courts have jurisdiction over civil actions involving sums of \$3,500 or less and misdemeanors. They also hold preliminary hearings in felony cases. Appeals from the Justice Courts may be taken to Circuit Courts, or County Courts if available, and the cases appealed are tried de novo.

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

ORGANIZATIONAL CHART





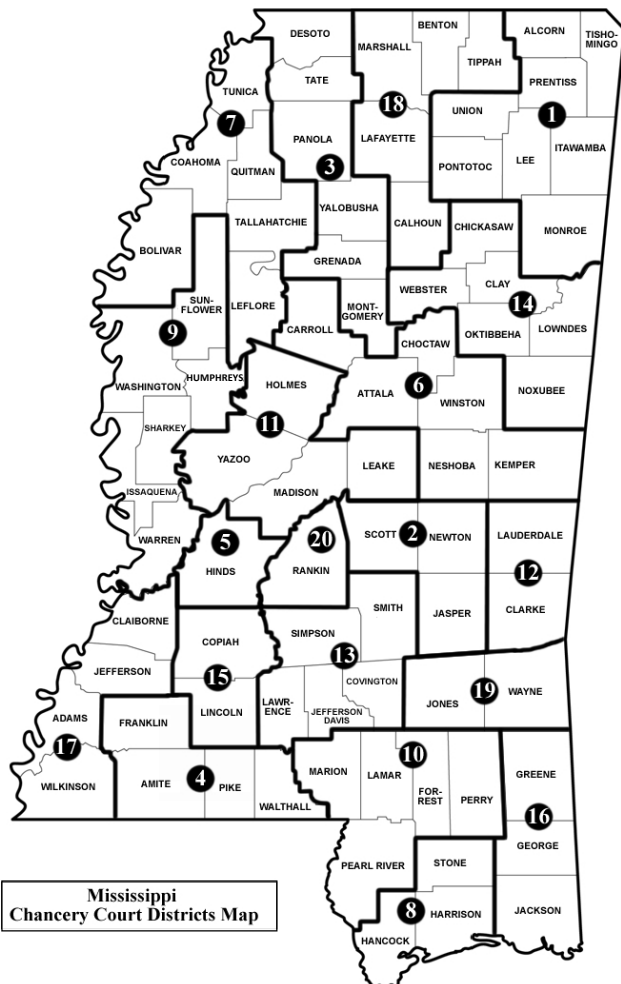
Mississippi County Courts

Mississippi has 24 County Courts with 34 judges. County Courts have concurrent civil jurisdiction with the Circuit Courts in suits involving \$200,000 or less. They have limited criminal jurisdiction and appellate jurisdiction from the Justice Courts and Municipal Courts. County Court judges can hear misdemeanor criminal matters, preside over initial appearances and preliminary hearings in felony criminal matters, and handle non-capital felony cases transferred from Circuit Court. They may issue search warrants and set bonds. County Courts also have concurrent jurisdiction with Chancery Court in some family matters.

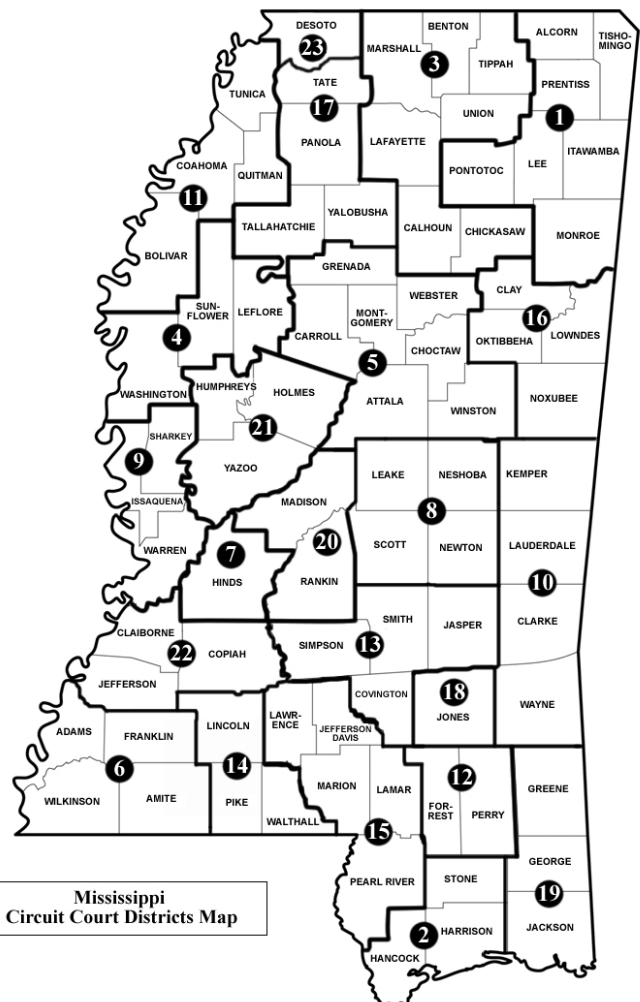
In counties with a County Court, the Youth Court functions as a division of the County Court handling juvenile matters. In counties which do not have a County Court, a Chancellor may appoint a lawyer to act in a judicial capacity as Youth Court Referee. In a few counties, the Chancellor also hears Youth Court matters. The Youth Court deals with matters involving abuse and neglect of juveniles, as well as delinquent acts committed by juveniles.

The 82 Chancery Courts are organized into 20 districts with 52 chancellors. Chancery Courts have jurisdiction over matters of equity, domestic relations, land disputes, estates, guardianships and mental commitments. In counties without County Courts, Chancery Courts handle Youth Court functions. They also receive appeals on the record from County Courts in matters over which the two courts have concurrent subject matter jurisdiction.

The Circuit Courts are the general jurisdiction trial courts in Mississippi. There are 57 Circuit Judges. Circuit Courts have jurisdiction of all civil actions at law seeking recovery in excess of \$200 and of all criminal cases under state law. They receive appeals de novo from the Justice Courts and on the record from County Courts.



Mississippi Chancery Court Districts Map



Mississippi Circuit Court Districts Map

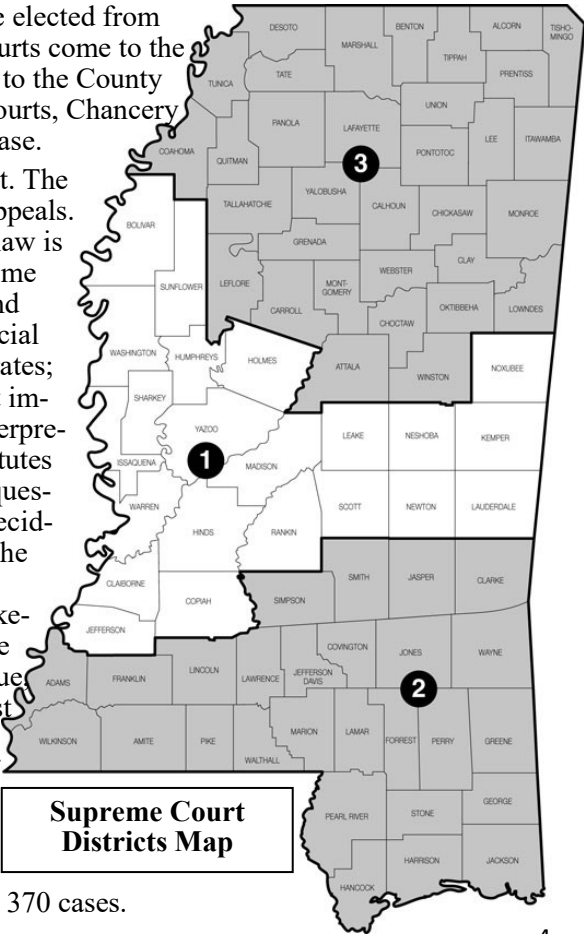
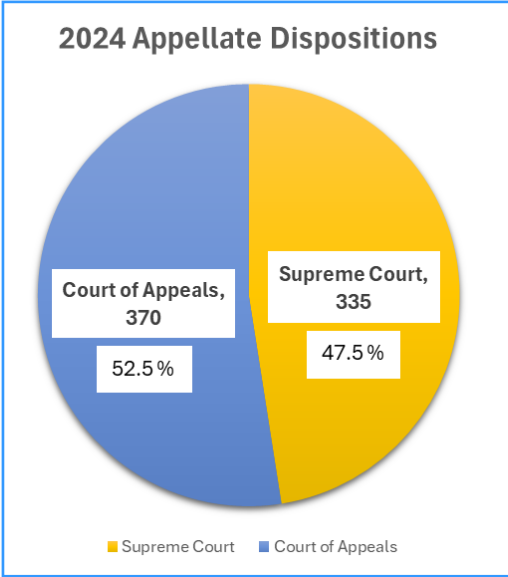


Members of the Mississippi Supreme Court are, seated, left to right, Presiding Justice James W. Kitchens, Chief Justice Michael K. Randolph, and Presiding Justice Leslie D. King. Standing are Justices Robert P. Chamberlin, T. Kenneth Griffis, David M. Ishee, Josiah D. Coleman, James D. Maxwell II, and Dawn H. Beam.

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

All appeals from the trial courts are filed with the Supreme Court. The Supreme Court may either retain an appeal or assign it to the Court of Appeals. Cases assigned to the Court of Appeals generally are those in which the law is settled, but the application of the law to the facts is in dispute. The Supreme Court retains appeals of death sentences; annexations; bar discipline; bond issues; election contests; judicial performance matters; utility rates; cases involving issues of first impression; cases involving interpretation of the Constitution, statutes or regulations; and certified questions from federal court. In deciding whether to retain a case, the Supreme Court considers the uniqueness of the case, the likelihood that its decision will be of important precedential value, whether it raises issues of first impression or interpretation, and the relative workloads of the two appellate courts.

The Supreme Court decided 335 cases in 2024; the Court of Appeals decided 370 cases.





Justice Robert P. Chamberlin, Presiding Justice Leslie D. King and Justice David M. Ishee listen to oral arguments on Feb. 6, 2024.

In addition to its workload of retained cases, the Supreme Court has significant administrative responsibilities such as rule making obligations ranging from rules of procedure to bar admissions. The Supreme Court adopted Rules for Collaborative Law effective August 26, 2024. The new rules allow parties to family law disputes to sign a Collaborative Law Participation Agreement which requires the parties to forego court intervention while using the collaborative family law process to work towards resolution of their disputes. The Supreme Court during 2024 adopted rule amendments including changes to Rules 10, 12, 46 and 62 of the Mississippi Rules of Civil Procedure and made numerous amendments to the Uniform Chancery Court Rules. See Exhibit A at this link, https://courts.ms.gov/appellatecourts/docket/sendPDF.php?f=700_665121.pdf&c=17869&a=N&s=2, for details of changes to the Uniform Chancery Court Rules. The Supreme Court also approved Local Rules for the Fifteenth Circuit Court District.

Of the 335 cases decided by the Supreme Court, 136 cases were decided on the merits. The remaining cases were dismissed. Cases decided by the Supreme Court include both appeals and other cases, such as bar discipline and reinstatement cases and judicial discipline cases. Of the 117 appeals decided on the merits, 75 (64.1 percent) were civil, and 42 (35.9 percent) were criminal. Of the 75 civil appeals decided on the merits, 35 (46.7 percent) were affirmed, and 40 (53.3 percent) were reversed, vacated or remanded. Of the 42 criminal appeals decided on the merits, 35 (83.3 percent) were affirmed, and 7 (16.7 percent) were reversed or vacated.

The Supreme Court heard oral arguments in five cases in 2024. The majority of cases were decided on briefs without oral argument.

The Supreme Court disposed of 2,971 motions and petitions during 2024. This included 26 motions for rehearing; none was granted. Pursuant to Rule 5 of the Mississippi Rules of Appellate Procedure, the Supreme Court disposed of 143 petitions for interlocutory appeal. Of those, 106 (74.1 percent) were denied, 27 (18.9 percent) were granted, and 10 (7.0 percent) were dismissed or had other dispositions.

In 2024, the Supreme Court decided 112 petitions for writ of certiorari that sought review of decisions of the Court of Appeals. Of those, 15 (13.4 percent) were granted; 85 (75.9 percent) were denied; and 12 (10.7 percent) were dismissed or had other dispositions.

Appellate courts strive to decide cases within 270 days of completion of briefing, and in most cases, decisions

Average days, final brief to decision									
	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Supreme Court	200	192	200	174	187	168	202	183	167
Court of Appeals	228	213	211	211	206	197	192	200	209

are made sooner. The Supreme Court's average time from end of briefing to case decision was 167 days during 2024. The Court of Appeals' average time was 209 days.



Members of the Court of Appeals of the State of Mississippi are, seated, left to right, Presiding Judge Virginia C. Carlton, Chief Judge Donna M. Barnes, and Presiding Judge Jack L. Wilson. Standing are Judges Joel Smith, Anthony N. Lawrence III, Latrice A. Westbrooks, Jim M. Greenlee, Deborah A. McDonald, David Neil McCarty, and John H. Emfinger.

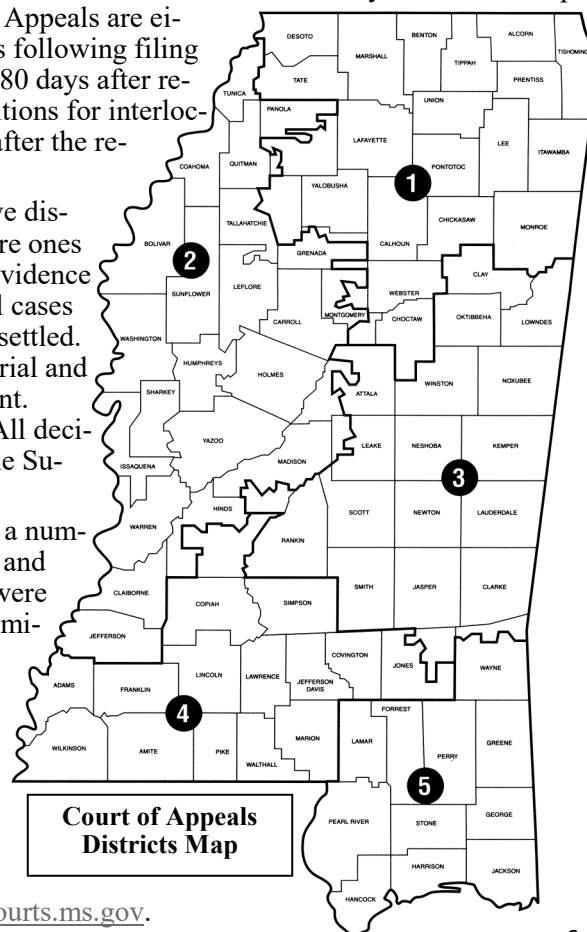
The Supreme Court has discretionary authority to review cases after those cases are decided by the Court of Appeals. All petitions for writ of certiorari from decisions of the Court of Appeals are either granted, denied or dismissed by the Supreme Court within 90 days following filing of responses to the petitions. Certiorari cases must be decided within 180 days after review is granted. The Supreme Court's average time was 116 days. Petitions for interlocutory appeal are usually granted, denied, or dismissed within 45 days after the responses are filed.

The Court of Appeals is made up of 10 judges elected from five districts. The Court of Appeals typically hears cases in which the issues are ones of error correction, such as whether the judgment is supported by the evidence or whether the judge correctly ruled on evidentiary challenges. Typical cases assigned to the Court of Appeals are those in which the law is already settled. These cases may deal with evidentiary issues which arose during the trial and with the weight and sufficiency of the evidence supporting the judgment. Workers' compensation appeals are referred to the Court of Appeals. All decisions of the Court of Appeals are subject to discretionary review by the Supreme Court on petition for writ of certiorari.

Of the 370 cases disposed of by the Court of Appeals in 2024, a number were dismissed. Of the cases decided on the merits, 201 were civil, and 125 were criminal. Of the 201 civil cases decided, 150 (74.6 percent) were affirmed and 51 (25.4 percent) were reversed or vacated. Of the 125 criminal appeals decided, 111 (88.8 percent) were affirmed and 13 (10.2 percent) were reversed. The Court of Appeals disposed of 1,557 motions and petitions. This included 144 motions for rehearing, all of which were denied or dismissed.

The Court of Appeals heard oral arguments in 37 cases in 2024.

Oral arguments are open to the public. Also, oral arguments before the Supreme Court and the Court of Appeals are webcast on the internet and archived on the Mississippi Judiciary website, <http://courts.ms.gov>.



The Court of Appeals convened on six college campuses in 2024 for the Court on the Road program. Oral arguments were heard on the campuses of Mississippi University for Women, Mississippi Valley State University, Alcorn State University, the University of Southern Mississippi, the University of Mississippi School of Law and Mississippi State University. Court on the Road schedules oral arguments on college campuses and occasionally at other locations as a teaching tool to give students and the public opportunities to watch proceedings in cases on appeal. Court on the Road offers a unique learning experience for students with an interest in law, government, journalism and a variety of other

fields. The public may attend to gain a better understanding of appellate court proceedings.

Judges always meet with students after the oral arguments, answering questions but not talking about the case on appeal. While the Supreme Court is required by the Mississippi Constitution to sit in Jackson, the Court of Appeals, legislatively created by statute, may convene at other locations around the state.



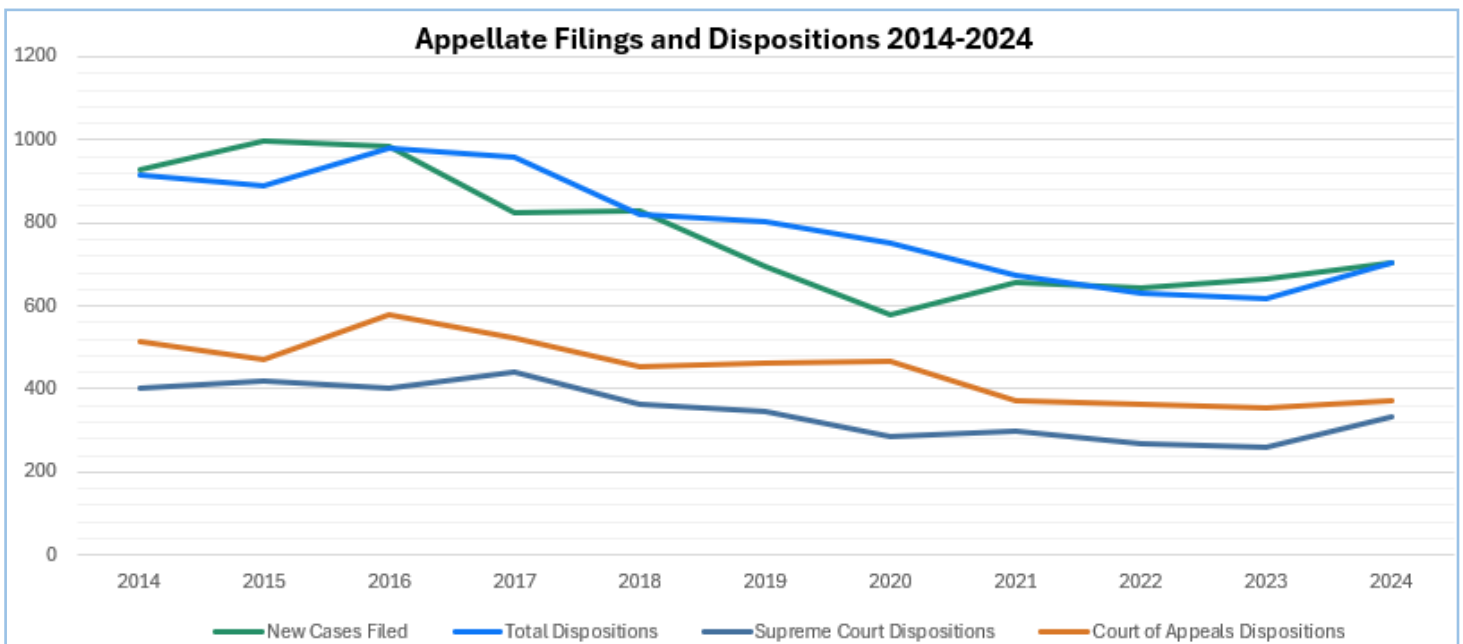
A Court of Appeals panel, in background, left to right, including Judge Latrice Westbrooks, Presiding Judge Jack Wilson and Judge David Neil McCarty hears an oral argument at Mississippi University for Women on February 21, 2024. Photo courtesy of WCBI TV.

2021 — 2022 — 2023 — 2024 Appellate Case Dispositions

	Supreme Court				Court of Appeals				Courts Combined			
	2021	2022	2023	2024	2021	2022	2023	2024	2021	2022	2023	2024
Dismissed by Clerk's Rule 2 Notice	71	68	57	82	18	27	21	20	89	95	78	102
Dismissed by Order of Court	102	81	71	110	32	26	13	14	134	107	84	124
Cert Petitions												
Dismissed after Grant	1	1	3	2	NA	NA	NA	NA	1	1	3	2
Decided by Published Opinion	121	117	126	122	322	307	320	335	443	424	446	457
Per Curiam Affirmed	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
Decided by Order	4	3	2	14	1	2	0	0	5	5	2	14
Total Case Dispositions	299	270	260	335	373	362	354	370	672	632	614	705

2021 — 2022 — 2023 — 2024 Dispositions of Rehearing Motions, Interlocutory Appeals and Cert Petitions

	Supreme Court				Court of Appeals				Courts Combined			
	2021	2022	2023	2024	2021	2022	2023	2024	2021	2022	2023	2024
Motions for Rehearing	30	33	29	26	147	129	137	144	177	129	166	170
Petitions for Interlocutory Appeal	123	151	122	143	0	0	0	0	123	0	122	143
Petitions for Certiorari	149	94	123	112	0	0	0	0	149	0	123	112



Appellate Filings and Dispositions, 2014 — 2024											
	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
New Cases Filed	926	995	983	824	830	697	579	657	642	667	704
Total Dispositions	916	890	980	958	819	805	752	672	632	616	705
Supreme Court Dispositions	400	419	401	441	365	344	285	299	270	260	335
Court of Appeals	516	471	579	521	454	461	467	373	362	354	370

Appellate Case Filings	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Notices of Appeal, General	863	732	770	637	492	576	565	585	641
Death Penalty Direct Appeals	0	1	0	1	1	0	0	1	1
Death Penalty PCR Applications	7	2	6	2	4	4	4	8	4
Bar Discipline Cases	4	1	9	8	5	7	3	7	4
Bar Discipline Appeals	1	4	0	1	1	1	1	0	0
Bar Reinstatement Cases	2	4	4	1	5	1	3	2	1
Judicial Performance Cases	4	0	3	2	1	1	1	0	1
Annexation Cases	0	1	1	2	1	0	0	0	1
Election Contests	6	1	2	1	9	4	0	8	7
Interlocutory Appeals Granted	44	37	22	29	43	26	32	25	25
Certiorari Petitions Granted	27	40	12	14	17	23	16	21	15
Workers' Compensation Appeals	24	27	25	17	17	14	16	9	8
Utility Rate Cases	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
Federally Certified Questions	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	1	2
Total New Cases Filed	983	824	830	697	579	657	642	667	704

OFFICE OF THE CLERK OF THE MISSISSIPPI SUPREME COURT AND COURT OF APPEALS

The office of the Clerk is maintained within the framework of various statutes enacted by the Legislature, rules, regulations, and orders promulgated by the Mississippi Supreme Court. The office has 12 full-time staff members, with Jeremy Whitmire serving as the Clerk of Courts since his appointment by the Court in July 2018. The Office of the Clerk serves both the Mississippi Supreme Court and the Mississippi Court of Appeals. The Office of the Clerk is tasked with providing numerous administrative and other court-related services which encompass essential and critical functions in organizing, promoting, managing, and maintaining the effective operations of the state's appellate judiciary.



Jeremy Whitmire

In addition to serving as the point of contact for attorneys, litigants, and the general public with respect to all case-related matters, the Clerk's Office serves as the primary repository for appellate cases and other matters before each Court. The office continues to be the hub for the judiciary of the state of Mississippi, working closely with the Administrative Office of Courts, Mississippi Electronic Courts, the Appellate Courts' Information Technology Department and Court Administration to suggest and implement enhancements to existing systems as the needs of trial courts, appellate courts, attorneys, litigants, and the public evolve. The collaboration between these departments ensures the coordination of court processes and resources to provide the most effective flow and management of a large volume of appellate and other matters in a timely, efficient manner.

The Clerk's Office in 2024 processed and docketed a total of 498 appellate records with the average turnaround time from receipt of record to the start of briefing being less than 24 hours. With more trial courts utilizing MEC, many appellate records are being sent to the Court electronically, which reduces cost and processing time for both appellate courts as well as the trial courts. This process will continue to improve with the goal of allowing for the transmission of more records electronically, which will result in not only a quicker turnaround time for litigants, but also further reduction in costs for the State. In 2024, the office processed and docketed 4,110 motions, 525 responses, 1,441 appellate briefs, and 2,592 total orders from the two appellate courts. A total of 2,142 procedural motions were addressed by the Clerk's office and 582 mandates were issued during the year. At present, the office is responsible for approximately 959 open and active case files.

The year 2024 saw continued improvements with the Court's case management platform incorporating real-time reports that help to improve case management and ultimately case flow within the Court itself. These improvements to the system reduce delays and improve case clearance efficiency for each Court. In addition, workflow improvements within the system allow the office to work more efficiently. The Clerk's Office continues to work very closely with the Court's Information Technology team to leverage and improve existing technologies to not only improve the functionality of the system for pro se litigants and attorneys, but also for Justices, Judges, and their staffs.

ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE OF COURTS

The Administrative Office of Courts was created on July 1, 1993, to support the judicial system by providing efficient administration of the non-judicial business of the state's courts. The AOC offices are located in Jackson in the Carroll Gartin Justice Building at 450 High Street.

Katharine McKee Surkin of Madison became director of AOC on November 1, 2023. Lisa A. Counts of Brandon, is AOC Deputy Director.

Duties of the AOC, as set forth in the Mississippi Code, include:

- assist the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court with his duties as the chief administrative officer of all of the courts in the state;
- assist in the prevention of unnecessary delay in the conduct of trials of the state courts;
- promulgate standards, rules and regulations for computer and/or electronic filing and storage of all court records and court-related records maintained throughout the state in courts and in offices of circuit and chancery clerks;
- oversee the Mississippi Electronic Courts system under the direction of the Supreme Court;
- collect case statistics from all civil, criminal and youth courts in the state;
- require the filing of reports and the collection and compilation of statistical data and financial information;
- devise, promulgate and require use of a uniform youth court case tracking system, includ-



Katharine McKee Surkin

ing a youth court case filing form for filing with each individual youth court matter, to be utilized by the Administrative Office of Courts and the youth courts in order that the number of youthful offenders, abused, neglected, truant and dependent children, as well as children in need of special care and children in need of supervision, may be tracked with specificity through the youth court and adult justice systems. The director shall require that all youth courts utilize the Mississippi Youth Court Information Delivery System, MYCIDS.

- AOC must develop and require use of a statewide docket numbering system and uniform youth court orders and forms;
- coordinate and conduct studies and projects to improve the administration of justice;
- make recommendations regarding state of the dockets and the effective number of judges and other court personnel;
- prescribe uniform administrative and business records, forms and systems;
- prepare budget recommendations necessary for maintenance and operation of the judicial system;
- administer the Civil Legal Assistance Fund under the direction of the Supreme Court;
- administer the Judicial System Operation Fund under the direction of the Supreme Court;
- serve as an agency to apply for and receive grants or other assistance;
- develop and implement personnel policies for non-judicial court employees;
- investigate, make recommendations concerning and assist in the securing of adequate physical accommodations for the judicial system;
- procure, distribute, exchange, transfer and assign equipment, books, forms and supplies acquired for the court system;
- prepare and submit an annual report on the work of the judicial system;
- make recommendations for the improvement of the operations of the judicial system;
- take necessary steps in the collection of unpaid fines and court costs;
- establish a program to facilitate the use of language interpreters in all courts of the State of Mississippi;
- certify and monitor drug intervention courts;
- collect monthly data reports from certified drug intervention courts and compile an annual data summary; and
- perform any additional administrative duties assigned by the Supreme Court.

The AOC processes payroll for the support staff of the Chancery and Circuit judges, as well as the official court reporters; administers the office and rent allowances for the trial judges; maintains inventory records for equipment purchased with state funds; approves the trial judges' travel reimbursements for in-state and out-of-state travel; collects statistical data from the Chancery, Circuit, County and Youth Courts; collects data on cases handled by family masters; administers special funds for civil legal assistance, comprehensive electronic court systems, judicial system operations and the Board of Certified Court Reporters; and oversees federal grants awarded to the AOC for the benefit of the judiciary.

Implementation of Capitol Complex Improvement District Court

During 2024, in addition to its other duties assigned by the Legislature and the Supreme Court, the AOC worked to set up the structure of the Capitol Complex Improvement District Court. Enabling legislation called for AOC, in consultation with the Chief Justice of the Mississippi Supreme Court, to appoint a clerk for the CCID Court, provide support staff, and pay the clerk and support staff. AOC hired Dr. Bryana Smith McDougal of Madison as Clerk of the CCID Court.



CCID Court Clerk Dr. Bryana Smith McDougal surveys work that will convert a former bus station lobby into a courtroom.

The original enabling legislation, House Bill 1020, adopted during the 2023 legislative session, called for creation of the CCID Court from and after January 1, 2024. However, HB 1020 met with multiple challenges via lawsuits in state and federal courts. The litigation ended when U.S. District Judge Henry T. Wingate entered a final order of dismissal of the federal court challenge on December 5, 2024.

While the litigation proceeded, AOC worked to build a new court from scratch. AOC studied the operations of municipal courts, vetted electronic court records systems to create a paperless court, and established operations policies and procedures.

The Department of Finance and Administration and AOC looked for a place to hold court. After plans to temporarily use the War

Memorial Building auditorium fell through, DFA remodeled the former Trailways Bus Station at 201 South Jefferson Street in Jackson to serve as a temporary courthouse. The CCID Court is expected to eventually move to the former Wright and Ferguson Funeral Home building. Headquarters for State Capitol Police already is there.

The CCID Court will adjudicate misdemeanor offenses investigated by State Capitol Police and traffic citations written by Capitol Police, as well as conduct initial appearances for felony offenses investigated by Capitol Police. All fines collected by the CCID Court will be forwarded to the City of Jackson.

Intervention Courts

Mississippi marked a milestone of 25 years for the drug court program in 2024. The 14th Circuit Drug Intervention Court, founded in 1999, was the state's first to offer an alternative to incarceration for people who committed felony crimes as a result of drug addiction. Then-Circuit Judge Keith Starrett started the program on a shoestring budget to deal with repeat offenders whose crimes were rooted in addiction. Thirty-one people from Lincoln, Pike and Walthall counties celebrated successful completion of the 14th Circuit Drug Court program on Aug. 26, 2024. The program is supervised by Circuit Judges Michael Taylor and David Strong.



Speakers and guests at the 14th Circuit Drug Court graduation are, left to right, Col. Craig Weaver, Sen. Jason Barrett, Sen. Gary Brumfield, Judge David H. Strong Jr., Rep. Becky Currie, Rep. Vince Mangold, District Attorney Brendon Adams, and Judge Michael Taylor.



Circuit Judge Winston Kidd, third from left, is pictured with six graduates at Hinds Circuit Drug Intervention Court's fiftieth graduation on July 23, 2024.

courts and six family intervention courts. Jackson County started the newest family intervention court in August 2024.

Drug intervention courts give non-violent offenders whose crimes are rooted in drug and alcohol addiction a chance to put their lives back together and become productive and self-supporting. Intervention courts seek to equip participants with job and life skills as well as education that will enable them to support themselves and their families. Participants are required to get and keep a job, do community service work, and work toward obtaining a GED if they do not have a high school diploma. Those who were alienated from their families by addiction get a chance to reunite with their loved ones. Some are able to regain custody of their children. Many are eligible to have their criminal records

The second oldest felony adult program, the Hinds County Circuit Drug Court, held its 50th graduation ceremony on July 23, 2024, honoring 12 people who successfully completed the program. At that time, 416 people had graduated during the program's 24 years of operation. The Hinds Circuit program began in 2000.

Eighteenth Judicial District Intervention Court Coordinator Consuelo W. Walley of Laurel was the recipient of the 2024 Chief Justice Award. Chief Justice Mike Randolph presented the award to Walley on July 12, 2024, at the Mississippi Bar Convention. The annual award recognizes individuals whose actions significantly impact the law, the administration of justice, and the people of the State of Mississippi. Chief Justice Randolph selected Walley in recognition of her compassionate commitment to changing the lives of people who struggle with drug addiction. He said, "Ms. Walley and the 18th Circuit Court continue to be shining examples of how intervention courts are supposed to work in, with, and for our communities."

More than 11,000 people have graduated from intervention court programs across the state since inception; 3,547 graduated during the 2024 Fiscal Year. Intervention court programs served more than 3,400 people during 2024.

The 42 drug intervention courts include 23 adult felony drug intervention court programs, one in each of the 23 Circuit Court districts, 13 juvenile intervention



Eighteenth District Intervention Court Coordinator Consuelo Walley, center, receives the Chief Justice Award on July 12, 2024. At left is Circuit Judge Dal Williamson. At right is Chief Justice Mike Randolph.

expunged.

Intervention courts provide enormous savings to the state budget with fine and fee collections, avoided incarceration costs and avoided medical costs. Intervention courts saved taxpayers more than \$1 billion since July 2005. With requirements that participants pay all their fines and fees, intervention courts return money to the counties by collecting fines. Participants are unable to graduate until outstanding fines and fees are paid. Total fines collected for FY2024 was \$1,249,782 and total fees collected was \$1,674,211. Fines paid by adult intervention court participants since FY 2006 total more than \$20 million, and fees paid by adult intervention court participants since FY 2006 total more than \$25million. Savings calculations are based on PEER Committee estimates of the average annual cost per inmate to house inmates in the Department of Corrections. PEER raised the average estimate to \$23,852.75 in December 2024.

The Bureau of Justice Statistics estimated that each healthy, drug-free infant saves government an average of \$750,000 during the first 18 years of life. Savings for babies born drug-free since July 2005 is more than \$719 million.

Personal successes reflect life-changing accomplishments. Successes of intervention court participants from July 2005 through January 2025 included: 959 babies were born drug-free; 6,436 participants obtained employment; 1,063 earned high school equivalency degrees; and 1,570 attended post-secondary school.

Fiscal Year	Intervention courts operating at end of FY	Estimated gross savings of incarceration costs	Appropriation to fund drug courts	Fiscal Year	Fines paid by Drug Intervention Court participants
FY 2006	16	\$13,356,373	\$1,647,358*	FY 2017	\$1,260,476
FY 2007	19	\$17,843,713	\$2,228,014	FY 2018	\$1,279,860
FY 2008	25	\$23,469,080	\$2,146,851	FY 2019	\$1,569,446
FY 2009	32	\$30,807,854	\$4,336,865	FY 2020	\$1,427,625
FY 2010	34	\$37,764,166	\$4,729,865	FY 2021	\$1,500,641
FY 2011	39	\$41,748,670	\$4,414,624	FY 2022	\$1,387,715
FY 2012	43	\$45,113,788	\$5,965,896	FY 2023	\$1,268,409
FY 2013	44	\$47,379,543	\$7,212,115	FY 2024	\$1,249,782
FY 2014	40	\$69,872,000	\$7,213,758	TOTAL	\$10,943,954
FY 2015	40	\$74,171,610	\$7,493,680	Fiscal Year	Fees paid by Drug Intervention Court participants
FY 2016	42	\$54,753,425	\$7,499,650	FY 2017	\$1,649,771
FY 2017	42	\$58,033,724	\$7,581,065	FY 2018	\$1,719,567
FY 2018	40	\$64,081,427	\$6,500,000	FY 2019	\$2,006,986
FY 2019	40	\$66,133,706	\$6,500,000	FY 2020	\$1,932,708
FY 2020	42	\$63,266,280	\$6,500,000	FY 2021	\$2,037,256
FY 2021	43	\$57,603,700	\$6,500,000	FY 2022	\$1,832,758
FY 2022	43	\$57,619,100	\$7,000,000	FY 2023	\$930,669
FY 2023	41	\$66,238,979	\$9,500,000	FY 2024	\$1,674,211
FY 2024	42	\$68,648,318	\$9,000,000	TOTAL	\$13,783,926
TOTAL		\$957,905,456	\$112,322,383		

* 2006 reflects actual expenditure. Legislative appropriations FY 2006 and earlier were \$150,000 specifically for Hinds Circuit Drug Court. A \$10 fee on felony and misdemeanor convictions funded other drug courts before 2007.

Statewide Drug Intervention Court Data FY 2019 — FY 2024

	FY 2019	FY 2020	FY 2021	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024
Total drug intervention court programs	40	42	43	43	41	42
Total served by drug intervention courts	5,292	4,934	4,828	4,803	5,234	3,537
Total drug intervention court graduates	859	656	677	617	901	717
Successfully completed, received expungement	N/A	311	192	81	69	192
Felony adult program graduates	658	433	543	504	642	525
Misdemeanor adult program graduates	54	52	28	34	59	0
Juvenile court program graduates	152	139	94	117	174	148
Family court program graduates	28	32	15	16	26	44
Total left program before completion	616	473	526	603	646	628
Charged with new offense while in program	187	122	90	71	57	29
Convicted of new crime	22	38	17	2	16	1
Drug-free babies born to female participants	52	58	21	21	12	13
Earned high school equivalency certificate	147	75	70	99	55	139
Obtained employment	858	427	186	180	314	368
Fines collected and returned to counties	\$1,571,619	\$1,427,978	\$1,500,641	\$1,387,715	\$1,268,409	\$1,249,782
Fees paid by participants	\$2,057,337	\$1,972,668	\$2,037,256	\$1,832,758	\$930,669	\$1,674,211
Hours of community service work	30,794.75	23,438.75	25,224	21,099	29,114	26,288

FY 2024	Individual Intervention Court Program Data							
Adult Felony	Enrolled first day of FY24	Enrolled last day of FY 24	Total new participants in year	Successful completions in the year	Left before successful completion	Committed at least one violation	Number arrested for new offense	Number convicted of a new crime
1st Circuit	264	268	12	6	2	63	0	0
2nd Circuit	119	121	2	0	0	27	0	0
3rd Circuit	285	287	8	2	4	58	0	0
4th Circuit	65	52	2	15	0	17	0	0
5th Circuit	71	71	1	0	1	7	0	0
6th Circuit	28	28	0	0	1	6	0	0
7th Circuit	162	162	1	0	2	28	0	0
8th Circuit	237	213	1	18	9	43	0	0
9th Circuit	115	116	5	3	0	52	0	0
10th Circuit	34	34	0	0	0	19	0	0
11th Circuit	85	86	1	0	0	6	0	0
12th Circuit	218	222	9	1	1	10	0	0
13th Circuit	73	67	0	6	0	4	0	0
14th Circuit	229	230	3	0	2	23	0	0
15th Circuit	258	268	12	0	1	36	0	0
16th Circuit	99	98	0	1	0	6	0	0
17th Circuit	194	192	3	1	3	20	1	0
18th Circuit	75	76	1	0	0	11	1	1
19th Circuit	191	192	3	1	1	19	1	0
20th Circuit	219	213	3	0	8	50	1	0
21st Circuit	20	20	0	0	0	3	0	0
22nd Circuit	24	28	4	0	0	5	0	0
23rd Circuit	156	157	6	3	2	12	0	0
TOTAL	3,221	3,201	77	57	37	525	4	1

FY 2024								
Youth	Enrolled first day of FY24	Enrolled last day of FY 234	Total new participants in year	Successful completions in the year	Left before successful completion	Number who committed at least one violation	Number arrested for new offense	Number convicted of a new crime
3rd Chancery	42	39	1	1	3	19	0	0
6th Chancery	5	2	0	3	0	0	0	0
9th Chancery	24	24	0	0	0	14	0	0
Adams	15	12	0	0	3	4	0	0
DeSoto	51	54	4	0	1	8	0	0
Forrest	3	3	0	0	0	3	0	0
Harrison	20	24	7	1	2	18	0	0
Hinds	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Madison	49	50	2	1	0	24	0	0
Pike	10	9	1	0	2	4	0	0
Rankin	23	20	1	4	0	16	0	0
Walthall	3	3	0	0	0	2	0	0
Washington	5	7	2	0	0	3	0	0
Yazoo	13	15	3	1	0	3	0	0
TOTAL	263	262	21	11	11	118	0	0
FY 2024								
Family	Enrolled first day of FY24	Enrolled last day of FY 24	Total new participants in year	Successful completions in the year	Left before successful completion	Number who committed at least one violation	Number arrested for new offense	Number convicted of a new crime
9th Chancery	9	9	0	0	0	0	0	0
Adams Family	9	11	2	0	0	11	0	0
Harrison Family	18	22	4	0	0	5	0	0
Madison Family	6	7	1	0	0	2	0	0
Rankin Family	27	25	1	3	0	13	0	0
TOTAL	69	74	8	3	0	31	0	0
All Courts	Enrolled first day of FY23	Enrolled last day of FY 23	Total new participants in year	Successful completions in the year	Left before successful completion	Number arrested for new offense	Number arrested for new offense	Number convicted of a new crime
TOTAL	3,553	3,537	106	71	48	674	4	1

State Intervention Courts Advisory Committee

The State Intervention Courts Advisory Committee was established by the Mississippi Legislature in 2003 to develop and periodically update proposed statewide evaluation plans and models for monitoring all critical aspects of drug courts. During Fiscal Year 2024, three top initiatives the Committee focused on included promulgating the Mississippi Intervention and Treatment Court Rules for the adult felony, juvenile, and family drug intervention courts; supporting legislation to reclassify Kratom as a Schedule III drug; and reviewing the state's mental health treatment courts. Additional action by the Committee included the establishment of sub-committees on a funding formula, rules, and legislation.

The Advisory Committee is chaired by Justice Robert P. Chamberlin. Members of the Advisory Committee in 2024 included 2nd Circuit Judge Randi P. Mueller; 7th Circuit Judge Winston Kidd; 11th Circuit Judge Charles Webster; 12th Circuit Judge Robert Helfrich; 14th Circuit Judge Mike Taylor; 19th Circuit Judge Kathy King Jackson; Rep. Angela Cockerham; 18th Circuit Coordinator Consuelo Walley; Department of Corrections Deputy Commissioner Nathan Blevins; State Veterans Affairs Board Executive Director Mark Smith; and Commissioner of Child Protection Services Andrea Sanders. Advisory Committee members are appointed by the Supreme Court.

Mississippi Electronic Courts

Mississippi Electronic Courts expects to achieve 100 percent implementation of state trial courts by the end of the 2025 Fiscal Year that concludes on June 30, 2025. As of December 31, 2024, nine Circuit Courts await implementation of civil and criminal e-filing and docket management: Amite, Benton, Chickasaw, Kemper, Leflore, Sunflower, Tiptah, Wayne and Wilkinson counties. Harrison County Circuit Court and County Court will add criminal e-filing, having had civil case filing in MEC since 2011, the year that courts around the state began to voluntarily implement MEC. Leflore County Court also awaits MEC.



Nathan Evans

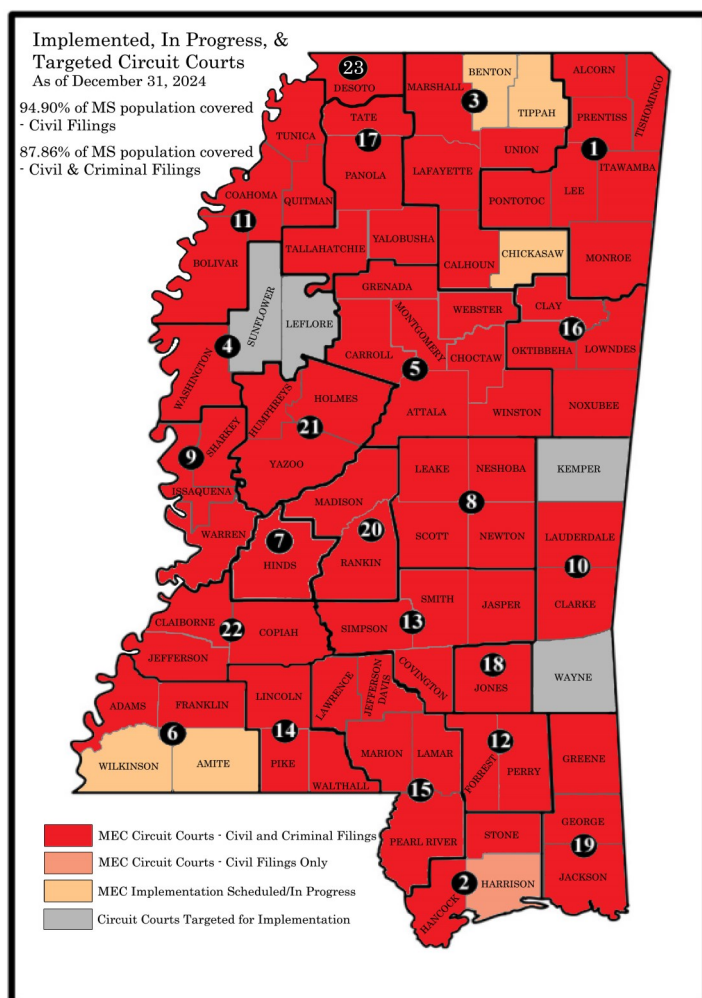
During calendar year 2024, MEC implemented the transition of 18 Circuit and County court systems to electronic filing and docket management, matching the implementation rate of 2023. MEC continues to bring new courts onto the system at a rate of one or two courts each month. MEC use began as voluntary implementation. The Mississippi Legislature mandated use of the MEC system in all Chancery, Circuit and County Courts by way of legislation signed by Gov. Tate Reeves on June 30, 2020.

The MEC system started with Chancery Courts. All 82 Chancery Courts were operating in MEC as of June 19, 2023. At the end of December 2024, the MEC system was utilized in 73 Circuit Courts covering 95 percent of the state's population.

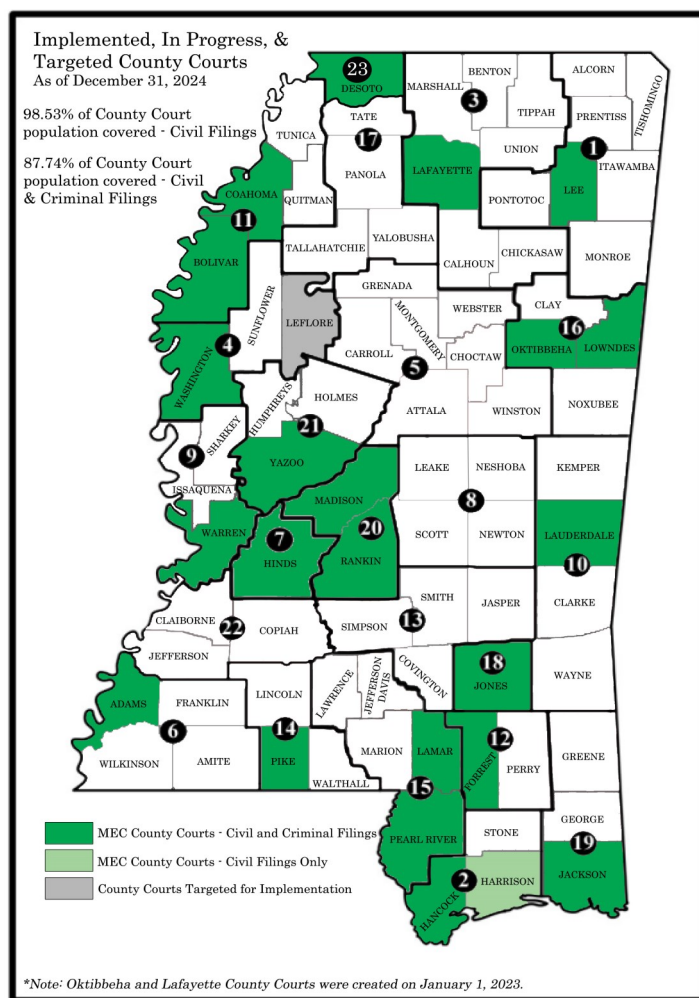
Nathan Evans, J.D., supervises a staff of 15 customer service representatives, trainers, analysts, and programmers. MEC staff are responsible for supporting the numerous courts, attorneys and public users of the system, training and implementing new courts, and maintaining and enhancing the MEC online application and database servers.

MEC is funded solely through civil filing fees, user fees to access documents, and registration/renewal fees. Almost 64 percent of MEC users are non-attorneys; at the end of December 2024, MEC had 9,221 registered attorney users, 174 firm administrator users and 16,620 non-attorney users. Since 2011, MEC has generated usage fees totaling 6,329,023.40, including \$3,323,907.60

Mississippi Circuit Courts
MEC Implementation Map



Mississippi County Courts (24 Total*)
MEC Implementation Map



CALENDAR YEAR 2024 MEC Court Implementations	
Court	Date went live
Humphreys County Circuit Court, criminal	1/29/2024
Lafayette County Circuit Court, civil, criminal	2/26/2024
Lafayette County Court, civil, criminal	2/26/2024
Rankin County Circuit Court, criminal	4/1/2024
Rankin County Court, criminal	4/1/2024
Noxubee County Circuit Court, civil, criminal	4/22/2024
Quitman County Circuit Court, civil, criminal	4/22/2024
Adams County Circuit Court, civil, criminal	5/20/2024
Adams County Court, civil, criminal	5/20/2024
Neshoba County Circuit Court, civil, criminal	6/24/2024
Hancock County Circuit Court, criminal	7/29/2024
Hancock County Court, criminal	7/29/2024
Leake County Circuit Court, civil, criminal	8/12/2024
Scott County Circuit Court, civil, criminal	8/26/2024
Newton County Circuit Court, civil, criminal	9/16/2024
Smith County Circuit Court, civil, criminal	9/30/2024
Tunica County Circuit Court, civil, criminal	11/18/2024
Franklin County Circuit Court, civil, criminal	12/16/2024
TOTALS: 14 Circuit Courts, 4 County Courts	

from the Chancery Courts and \$3,005,115.80 from the Circuit and County Courts. Online page viewing fees are divided equally between the county clerks of the court and MEC.

Any member of the public who wishes to view an electronically filed court document via the internet may register for an account in the Public Access Mississippi Electronic Case Management system, PAMEC. The annual registration fee is \$10. Viewing documents costs 20 cents per page. Here is the link for registration: <https://www.pamecapps.mec.ms.gov/onlineereg/main.jsp>.

MEC, under the supervision of the Mississippi Supreme Court, is adapted from the electronic filing and case management system used in federal courts. MEC allows courts to file, store, and manage case files in an electronic format which is accessible via the internet to judges, court staff, attorneys and the public 24 hours a day. Attorneys have the capability to file documents 24 hours a day. Documents are automatically docketed as part of the filing process and are immediately available electronically through an established account. When a document or pleading is electronically filed, an automatic e-mail notice of the case activity is sent to all attorneys of record in the case as well as the assigned judge. The system provides quicker and cheaper delivery of documents by reducing postage and courier fees and allows for easier tracking of case activity. Expanding paper records storage space is no longer an issue.

Remote electronic access to dockets and documents promotes judicial efficiency. Judges are able

to access their dockets district-wide and deal with matters in any county in the district without the need to retrieve paper case files.

Information Technology

The Information Technology Division of the Supreme Court and the Administrative Office of Courts consists of a small staff of software developers, systems administrators, business systems analysts/trainers, a cybersecurity analyst, and a webmaster. Their responsibilities include the purchase, installation and maintenance of all computer and network equipment in the appellate courts and some trial courts; development, training and support of several software systems including but not limited to the appellate court case management system Acadia/CITS, the appellate court e-filing system, the financial and inventory system FITSWeb, the Continuing Legal Education tracking system integrated into Acadia, the statewide Youth Court case management system MYCIDS, the AOC statistical system SCATS, the Board of Bar Admissions online bar exam application system BarWeb, and the design and maintenance of the State of Mississippi Judiciary website.



Members of the Information Technology Division of the Supreme Court gathered for a group photo in December 2024.

Acadia development and implementation continued in 2024 with seven software releases including 20 large new features, 24 improvements, along with various bug fixes. Among the new features was the addition of functionality for the Continuing Legal Education department to track attorneys' CLE credit hours and payments.

Online payments were added to the CLE online system and integrated into Acadia in 2024, with online registration and payments for sponsors planned for release in early 2025.

The ability to upload and view media records within Acadia was in development throughout the latter half of 2024 with a planned release in early 2025. The feature will allow the Office of the Clerk of Courts to attach videos, audio files, and photos to a case for viewing by the Supreme Court and Court of Appeals. This feature will only be accessible within the Court; it will not be available online to the public.

Youth Court Programs and Court Improvement Program (CIP) Grant

AOC's Youth Court Programs saw staff changes in 2024. Attorney Vicki Lowery, former law professor, division director for the Mississippi Department of Human Services and general counsel for the Mississippi Department of Child Protection Services, became AOC Youth Court Director. The program also added two new positions. Attorney Chip Glaze, former MDCPS Director of Workforce Wellbeing and later staff attorney, serves as AOC Youth Court Liaison. Glaze, who is a licensed marriage and family therapist, also previously worked with the Lawyers and Judges Assistance Program (LJAP) of the Mississippi Bar. Rachael Jennings is Administrative Assistant for Youth Court Programs.



Left to right, AOC Youth Court Liaison Chip Glaze, Administrative Assistant Rachael Jennings and AOC Youth Court Director Vicki Lowery talk to Sheldon Spotted Elk at the August 28, 2024, ICWA Conference at Choctaw.

The Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians hosted the 12th annual Indian Child Welfare Act Conference in collaboration with the Mississippi Judicial College, AOC and the state Department of Child Protection Services on August 28, 2024, at Choctaw. Three Native American attorneys who are experts in the history and application of the Indian Child Welfare Act, ICWA, spoke to nearly 200 conference attendees including social workers, judges, court staff, tribal officials and other professionals who deal with Native American children in a Youth Court setting. When there is reason to believe that a child is Native American, first steps are to make inquiry about ancestry, and to notify the tribe so that the tribe may intervene. Sheldon Spotted Elk, Christina C.

Bell Andrews, and Mary Kathryn Nagle emphasized that decisions about placement of Native American children from troubled families belong in tribal court, not state courts. ICWA was adopted by the U.S. Congress in 1978 in response to more than a century of abusive government sponsored efforts to erase Native American culture and heritage. ICWA aims to preserve tribal culture and safeguard the rights of Native American children to their heritage.

The need to improve Youth Court intake has been a point of discussion within the judicial system for several years. The AOC Youth Court team gave a presentation regarding the Youth Court intake process during the Youth Court Judges and Referees seminar which was presented by the Mississippi Judicial College in September 2024. The team described how, in delinquency cases, procedures are scattered across 14 code sections, starting with Mississippi Code Section 43-21-301, and three sections of the Uniform Rules of Youth Court Practice.

Mississippi Youth Court Information Delivery System (MYCIDS)

The Mississippi Youth Court Information Delivery System, MYCIDS, is the official court record for Youth Court. MYCIDS is a system for the real-time management of the activities of the Mississippi Youth Court System. It is a

web-based application that provides support for the intake of youths into the court system, scheduling of youth cases, management of court dockets, tracking of custody situations, and necessary document generation. MYCIDS also provides a base dataset for statistical reporting purposes.

MYCIDS includes electronic docketing and record keeping for delinquency, abuse and neglect cases. Case tracking features assist court staff in scheduling all hearings and other events required by law to occur within a specific time. Judges and court staff can track juveniles' encounters across multiple jurisdictions. Computer hardware, staff training and helpdesk support are provided at no charge to local courts.

Legislative mandate and the *In re Olivia Y.* federal court lawsuit require extensive and continuous training. This training is required for practitioners in the Youth Courts including judges, administrators, intake officers, case workers including Division of Youth Services and Child Protection Services, prosecutors, youth defenders, guardians ad litem and judicial clerks. Between July 1, 2023, and June 30, 2024, the MYCIDS staff trained 1,927 people in all 82 courts. In 44 weeks of scheduled training at a rate of nine three-hour sessions each week, MYCIDS staff presented 1,188 hours of training, a 47 percent increase over the previous year.

The MYCIDS MEC online portal was developed and released in 2024. It allows attorneys to access their cases and electronically file documents. MYCIDS went live in 2002. MYCIDS became the mandatory case management system for all Youth Courts statewide on July 1, 2015.

Commission on a Uniform Youth Court System and Procedures

The Mississippi Legislature during the 2023 session called for an examination of the state's Youth Court System; House Bill 1149 reconstituted the Mississippi Commission on a Uniform Youth Court System and Procedures. The Commission, which began studying the state's varied Youth Court system in August 2023, discussed the pros and cons of adopting a statewide uniform system with full-time Youth Court judges serving every county, the possibility of regional county court districts, or measures that could bring uniformity to the existing patchwork system of County Court judges, Chancellor supervised Youth Courts and Chancery-appointed Youth Court referees. Major concerns were that children do not receive adequate and uniform services, and that children spend too long in foster care without permanency. Critics of a statewide system of full-time County Court Judges argued that such a system would cost too much. Officials of the Department of Child Protection Services said that the current system that lets some children stay in foster care for years produces poor outcomes for children and costs an average of about \$40,000 per year per child. CPS officials said that changes which would bring children to permanency sooner would reduce spending on foster care.



Judge Staci Bevell
Chair



Judge Brad Touchstone
Vice-Chair



Judge Staci O'Neal
Secretary

The Commission's Report was presented to the Lieutenant Governor and the Speaker of the House of Representatives on September 16, 2024. Lee County Court Judge Staci Bevell, Commission Chair, and Madison County Court Judge Staci O'Neal, Commission Secretary, discussed findings and recommendations with the Senate Study Group on Women, Children and Families at the Capitol on October 2, 2024.

The Report offered alternative proposals to change the system's structure, but said nothing will really improve unless

funding increases. The Report found that the state's Youth Courts are underfunded and understaffed. The current state appropriation is \$2.5 million for Youth Court support funds pursuant to §43-21-801. The AOC distributes these funds with each County Court receiving \$68,000 and referee courts receiving \$15,000. "This amount is grossly inadequate for the court system tasked with protecting children, redirecting youth, and preserving families when possible," the Report said.

"Overall, the Commission wants to communicate in the strongest terms possible that unless the Legislature makes a significant increase in youth court support funds such that every county is able to have adequate human resources to comply with statutory demands, there will not be significant progress in developing a more uniform and effective statewide youth court system," the Report said.

The Report said, "The Commission carefully considered the advantages and disadvantages of several different court structures, including our current system with judges and referees. After many months of research and discussion, the Commission overwhelmingly chose to recommend a uniform system where every Youth Court will have a full-time elected judge. The Commission herewith equally recommends a uniform system of a statewide county court district sys-

tem or a statewide chancery system and/or hybrid chancery/county system for youth courts. Should the Legislature decide to keep the current system, the Commission has offered recommendations to improve the current system. With either plan, the Commission believes in the final analysis, the real decision comes down to how and if the Youth Courts will be adequately funded.”

“Regardless of a change in court structure or if the current system remains, unless the Legislature makes a significant increase in youth court support funds there will not be progress in developing a more uniform and effective statewide youth court system. Preferably, the youth courts should receive the same or more support funds as other statewide court systems considering the unique need for youth court intake and post-disposition court responsibilities” the Report said.

Currently, of the 82 Youth Courts, 24 have full-time elected county court judges, a chancellor hears Youth Court matters in two counties, and 56 counties have part-time attorney referees appointed by a chancellor.

The Report proposed three options:

1. A statewide County Court District Plan - This plan would create county court districts, expanding beyond the existing 24 counties that now have county courts. The Commission did not attempt to draw district lines but used districts offered in Senate Bill 2081, which died in committee during the 2023 legislative session. Counties would continue to support the county court districts, but with increased support funds from the state.

2. A statewide Chancery Court System - This plan was first proposed by Gov. Tate Reeves as an extra chancellor in each chancery district designated for exclusive youth court jurisdiction. The Commission strongly recommended that if this plan were to be implemented, the districts or sub-districts need to be based on historical youth court referrals, case-loads and population.

3. A Chancery/County hybrid - This plan would leave existing county courts intact but any remaining counties without a county court would need to have a chancellor presiding over the youth court. Statutes regarding county court creation would remain as is and the cost of youth courts would be shared by county and state.

The Commission Report also focused on the need for more court staff. There are no Youth Court support staff in 38 counties. There is a Youth Court administrator for 25 of the courts, although some court administrators are responsible for County Court as well as Youth Court duties. Only 32 counties reported paying a Youth Court intake officer.

The Report is on the Mississippi Judiciary website at this link: <https://courts.ms.gov/research/reports/MS%20Youth%20Court%20Commission%20Report.pdf>.

Court Interpreter Credentialing Program

The Administrative Office of Courts provides all state courts with a list of language interpreters who have demonstrated proficiency in oral and written interpretation of court proceedings. Director of Language Access Deenie Miller has focused on recruiting new interpreters since joining the AOC in July 2022 as the first full-time language access coordinator. Seventy credentialed interpreters were available at the end of December 2024. During the past year, the Court Interpreter Credentialing Program added Wolof and Hindi language interpreters to its roster. Credentialed interpreters also include those who speak Arabic, French, German, Haitian Creole, Mandarin Chinese, Portuguese, Spanish, and Yoruba and Pidgin.



Deenie Miller

The Mississippi Court Interpreter Credentialing Program trains, tests and certifies individuals who wish to serve as court interpreters. The Ethics and Skill Building Seminar is the first step in the Court Interpreter Credentialing Program. The AOC now offers the Ethics and Skill Building Seminar on-demand via Zoom, in addition to in-person. In May 2024, the in-person seminar was offered at no cost to participants for the first time. A record number of 41 bilingual individuals attended. Mississippi Court of Appeals Judge David McCarty spoke to the interpreter candidates on the first morning of the seminar, emphasizing the importance of language access. Judge McCarty said, “Our Constitution of 1890 guarantees that our courts shall be open to all people. As Mississippi grows more complex, the court system faces the challenge of ensuring we honor due process requirements. That’s why interpreters play such a vital role in our courts. Their meticulous work ensures every person has meaningful access to our court system.” The successful seminar resulted in 22 newly credentialed court interpreters.

AOC developed the Mississippi Court Interpreter Credentialing Program to assist courts in efforts to provide equal access to justice for limited English proficient individuals. The program provides judges with a list of language interpreters who have demonstrated proficiency in oral and written interpretation of court proceedings. The Director of Language Access educates judges, court staff and attorneys about requirements for providing court interpreters for people of limited English proficiency. The rules for court interpreters apply to Municipal Court, Justice Court, Youth Court, County Court, Circuit Court, Chancery Court and grand jury proceedings.



Director of Language Access Deenie Miller, at left, and Marco Hanson of Texan Translation speak to a record crowd of prospective interpreters at an Ethics and Skill Building Seminar on May 30, 2024, in Jackson.

The Director of Language Access assists the courts in meeting the needs of individuals of limited English proficiency, LEP. Mississippi House Bill 1217, which Miller drafted, passed and became law July 1, 2023, revising laws for people of limited English proficiency pertaining to litigation. Revisions to the statutes clarified that LEP individuals are entitled to use an interpreter in any instance arising out of or pertaining to the individual's involvement in litigation. This provision applies not only to litigants, but also to witnesses. This includes, for instance, a plaintiff filing a lawsuit in the Clerk's Office, a defendant appearing in court responding to a summons, or a witness testifying at a trial. The revised laws now require court interpreters to be paid by the county or municipality in criminal and civil cases, so that limited English proficient individuals will no longer be required to pay for a court interpreter.

An extensive translation project provided sample forms, brochures, and informative documents in Spanish and Vietnamese, the most commonly spoken languages other than English in Mississippi. That information is posted on the website of the Mississippi Judiciary at <https://courts.ms.gov/aoc/courtinterpreter/resources.php>. Many signs that inform limited English proficient individuals of their right to an interpreter at no cost have been translated into Spanish, Vietnamese, Chinese, French, Arabic, Tagalog, German, Korean, and Gujarati. Miller plans to visit every courthouse in the state to deliver the signs and offer the courts any needed assistance. By the end of December 2024, she had visited Circuit, Chancery, Youth, Justice, and where applicable, County and Municipal courts in Warren, Claiborne, Jefferson, Adams, Lee, Itawamba, Prentiss, Tishomingo, Alcorn, Tippah, Pontotoc, Clay, Monroe, DeSoto, Carroll, Montgomery, Grenada, Leflore, Harrison, Hancock, and Jackson counties.

Miller has worked extensively with the Access to Justice Commission to remove language barriers. Miller and Access to Justice Commission Executive Director Nicole McLaughlin presented at the Mississippi Bar Convention in San Destin, Florida, and they were invited to present at the American Bar Association Forum on Building Access to Justice for All in Rancho Mirage, California. In March 2024, Miller was invited to speak at the ABA Conference for Language Justice and Technology in Seattle, Washington. AOC and MATJC also collaborated to create an Attorney Guide for representing individuals with limited English proficiency.

FUNDING AND ADMINISTRATION OF THE COURTS

The state judiciary is funded by General Fund appropriations with additional funding for specific mandates by way of grants and special funds. The total 2025 Fiscal Year appropriation for the judicial branch was \$103,619,816, which includes \$67,753,209 in general funds, \$360,460 in capital expense funds, \$34,934,784 in special funds, \$571,363 from the Coronavirus State Fiscal Recovery Fund and \$50,000 from the Local Improvement Projects Fund for renovations to the Hinds County Courthouse.

The Capital Complex Improvement District Court is included in the budget of the Administrative Office of Courts. The Legislature provided \$732,539 in general funds for the CCID Courts. That sum is a part of the \$67,753,209 AOC budget.

The general fund appropriation of \$67,753,209 represents less than 1 percent of the general funds appropriated for all of state government. The FY 2025 general fund appropriations for all three branches of state government totaled \$7,030,230,068. The General Fund appropriation for the Administrative Office of Courts and all state courts of record, including the Supreme Court, Court of Appeals, 23 circuit court districts, 20 chancery court districts and 24 county courts, was \$67,753,209.

The judicial system's largest expenditure is salaries: \$75,406,482, or 72.74 percent of the entire Judicial Branch budget, including General Fund and Special Fund appropriations. The funding pays the salaries of judges, court administrators, staff attorneys, court reporters and other court staff who work in communities across the state.

As a result of continuing difficulties presented by the COVID-19 pandemic, the Judiciary was able to obtain a legislative appropriation of \$600,000 in Coronavirus State Fiscal Recovery funds in HB1949 effective May 8, 2024, passed during the 2024 Regular Session. Before the end of FY 2024, \$28,637 of these funds were expended, and the remaining balance of \$571,363 was carried forward to FY 2025.

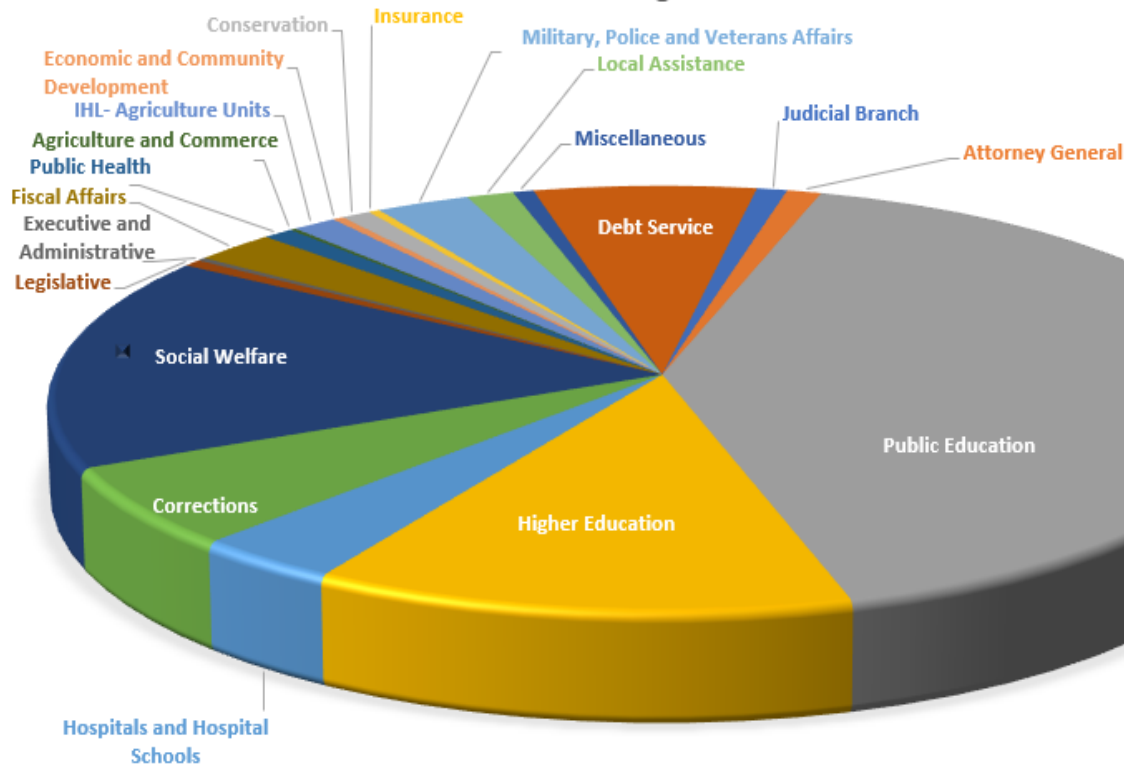
Special funds are critical to the work of the judicial branch. Mississippi Electronic Courts, MEC, is self-funded through fees. MEC charges a \$10 annual registration fee for e-filing system users, and viewing fees of 20 cents per page. The viewing fees are shared equally by MEC and the counties. Other judicial branch entities which receive no General Fund appropriations, relying totally on self-sustaining special fund collections, include the Board of Bar Admissions, the Board of Certified Court Reporters, and the Commission on Continuing Legal Education.

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

FY 2016—FY 2025 JUDICIAL BRANCH FUNDING										
Fiscal Year	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Supreme Court	8,982,639	7,658,703	7,418,303	7,512,227	7,678,983	7,645,353	7,774,352	8,189,687	8,361,916	8,606,461
Court of Appeals	6,189,265	5,632,021	5,703,898	5,877,195	6,013,252	5,991,252	6,081,997	6,686,080	6,837,004	7,149,253
Trial Judges	28,346,791	29,762,816	29,762,816	29,950,910	30,353,108	30,222,305	30,515,309	31,321,543	36,526,367	41,396,127
AOC	37,806,442	37,479,253	42,103,854	42,813,752	39,525,722	38,167,971	40,598,514	42,977,740	45,146,493	45,976,807
CLE	183,386	144,282	144,282	144,414	149,338	149,338	151,593	155,600	158,857	171,252
Bar Admissions	401,671	338,493	338,493	338,691	346,100	346,100	349,724	355,449	358,884	369,916
AOC CARES Act	-	-	-	-	-	2,500,000	655,050	3,227,683	4,627,591	571,363
Total	81,910,194	81,015,568	85,471,646	86,637,189	84,066,503	85,022,319	86,126,539	92,913,782	102,017,112	103,669,816

FY 2016—FY 2025 JUDICIAL BRANCH BUDGETS BY FUNDING SOURCES										
Fiscal Year	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Special Funds	36,683,401	33,513,116	42,376,804	42,971,615	35,355,322	34,846,138	36,615,173	35,236,955	35,967,880	35,345,244
General Funds	45,226,793	47,502,452	43,094,842	43,665,574	48,711,181	47,676,181	48,856,316	54,449,144	61,421,641	67,753,209
CARES Act Federal	-	-	-	-	-	2,500,000	655,050	3,227,683	4,627,591	571,363
TOTAL	81,910,194	81,015,568	85,471,646	86,637,189	84,066,503	85,022,319	86,126,539	92,913,782	102,017,112	103,669,816

FY 2025 GENERAL FUND APPROPRIATION FOR STATE GOVERNMENT



FY 2025 GENERAL FUND APPROPRIATION (DOES NOT INCLUDE FY2024 REAPPROPRIATIONS)

Judicial Branch	67,753,209		0.9637%
Attorney General	70,462,998		1.0023%
Total Judiciary and Justice per LBO		138,216,207	
Other:			
Public Education	2,936,745,498		41.7731%
Higher Education	903,531,193		12.8521%
Hospitals and Hospital Schools	255,633,716		3.6362%
Corrections	424,349,537		6.0361%
Social Welfare	1,095,603,562		15.5842%
Legislative	36,172,006		0.5145%
Executive and Administrative	17,312,825		0.2463%
Fiscal Affairs	174,616,147		2.4838%
Public Health	73,385,342		1.0439%
Agriculture and Commerce	11,857,997		0.1687%
IHL- Agriculture Units	92,689,689		1.3184%
Economic and Community Development	21,671,514		0.3083%
Conservation	68,881,808		0.9798%
Insurance	20,931,479		0.2977%
Military, Police and Veterans Affairs	200,713,911		2.8550%
Local Assistance	92,000,000		1.3086%
Miscellaneous	47,375,742		0.6739%
Debt Service	418,541,895		5.9535%
Total Other		6,892,013,861	
Total General Fund Appropriation for FY 2025		7,030,230,068	100.00%

FY 2025 JUDICIAL BRANCH BUDGET

Appropriation by Bill Number	Supreme Court	Court of Appeals	Trial Judges	Admin Office of Courts	Continuing Legal Ed	Board of Bar Admissions	Hinds Circuit Criminal Case Backlog	Totals
HB 1820								
General Funds	7,608,682	5,476,546	37,203,759	17,464,222		-	-	67,753,209
Capital Expense Funds	-	-	-		-	-	-	
Special Funds	997,779	1,672,707	4,192,368	27,530,762	171,252	369,916	-	34,934,784
Reappropriated from FY 2024								
Capital Expense Funds	-	-	-	360,460	-	-	-	360,460
Total HB 1820	8,606,461	7,149,253	41,396,127	45,355,444	-	171,252	369,916	103,048,453
HB 1949*								
Reappropriated from FY 2024	-	-						
Coronavirus State Fiscal Recovery	-	-	-	-	-	-	571,363	571,363
Total HB 1949		-			-	-	571,363	571,363
HB 603 (2023 Regular Session) **								
Hinds County Courthouse Improvements								-
Local Improvement Project Fund				50,000				50,000
Total HB 603	-	-	-	50,000	-	-		50,000
Judicial Branch Appropriation	8,606,461	7,149,253	41,396,127	45,405,444	571,363	171,252	369,916	103,669,816

** Allocation of remaining ARPA funds is based upon percentages calculated from budget sent to Horne in July 2024

ARPA	Original Budget	Percentage	Balance at 7/1/2024
Salaries	588,843.70	98.14%	560,739.17
Contractual Services			
Hot Spots	6,656.30		
Parking	4,500.00		
Total Contractual Services	11,156.30	1.86%	10,623.83
Total Budget	600,000.00	100.00%	571,363.00

FY 2025 JUDICIAL BRANCH BUDGET

Appropriation by Expense Category	Supreme Court	Court of Appeals	Trial Judges *	Admin Office of Courts **	Continuing Legal Ed	Board of Bar Admissions	Hinds Circuit Criminal Case Backlog	Totals	Percent
Salaries	7,631,881	6,654,528	38,835,127	21,373,439	142,402	208,366	560,739	75,406,482	72.74%
Travel	408,000	400,000	600,000	76,000	10,000	17,000		1,511,000	1.46%
Contractual	240,030	92,125	77,000	1,413,759	15,850	111,250	10,624	1,960,638	1.89%
Commodities	326,550	2,600	1,884,000	109,170	3,000	33,300	-	2,358,620	2.28%
Equipment	-	-	-	510,150	-	-	-	510,150	0.49%
Subsidies	-	-	-	21,922,926	-	-	-	21,922,926	21.15%
Judicial Branch Appropriation	8,606,461	7,149,253	41,396,127	45,405,444	171,252	369,916	571,363	103,669,816	100.00%
Number of PINS	70	58	109	48	2	3	-	290	
Appropriation by Funding Source	Supreme Court	Court of Appeals	Trial Judges	Admin Office of Courts	Continuing Legal Ed	Board of Bar Admissions	Hinds Circuit Criminal Case Backlog	Totals	
General Funds	7,608,682	5,476,546	37,203,759	17,464,222		-	-	67,753,209	65.35%
Capital Expense Funds	-	-	-	360,460	-	-	-	360,460	0.35%
Special Funds	997,779	1,672,707	4,192,368	27,530,762	171,252	369,916		34,934,784	33.70%
Coronavirus State Fiscal Recovery	-	-	-	-	-		571,363	571,363	0.55%
Local Improvement Projects Fund *				50,000				50,000	0.05%
Judicial Branch Appropriation	8,606,461	7,149,253	41,396,127	45,405,444	171,252	369,916	571,363	103,669,816	100.00%
* added to subsidies for AOC									

BOARD OF CERTIFIED COURT REPORTERS

The Board of Certified Court Reporters oversees licensing of certified court reporters and the granting of temporary permission to noncertified and nonresident court reporters. Supreme Court Presiding Justice Leslie D. King of Greenville is chairman of the Board. Members include Circuit Judge David H. Strong of McComb; Supreme Court Clerk Jeremy Whitmire of Madison; attorneys Latanya Allen of Madison and Jerry Sharp of Laurel; and court reporters Huey Bang of Pass Christian, Candace O'Barr Jones of Jackson, Theresa Lumley of Wesson and Kati Vogt of Saucier.

Angela Ward of Brandon recently assumed the duties of Administrator of the Board of Certified Court Reporters and the Mississippi Commission on Continuing Legal Education. Ward returned to the legal field after working for more than seven years as administrative assistant to the CEO of the non-profit Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks Foundation. Earlier, Ward worked for almost 13 years as a paralegal at a Jackson law firm.

A shortage of court reporters continues to be a concern of the judiciary. In 2024, there were 285 certified and non-certified reporters, 24 more than at the end of 2023. There were 26 nonresident court reporters, five more than the previous year. Three new noncertified court reporters were working on their certification.

After years without a training program for court reporters in Mississippi, judges along with officers of the Mississippi Court Reporters Association worked with Pearl River Community College to start a class to teach new court reporters. The first class began in August 2021 on the Hattiesburg branch campus. Five women graduated from the program a year later. Approaches have been made to other schools to host an in-person program, but no new programs were added. Mississippi State University offers online classes for aspiring court reporters through its Center for Continuing Education.

COMMISSION ON CONTINUING LEGAL EDUCATION

The Mississippi Commission on Mandatory Continuing Legal Education (CLE) has the primary responsibility to exercise general supervisory authority over the administration of the Rules for Mandatory Continuing Legal Education and to adopt, repeal, and amend regulations consistent with these rules. The objective of the Commission on Mandatory CLE is to ensure that each member of the Mississippi Bar complies with the rules and regulations established by the Commission and meets the mandatory CLE requirements in a timely and efficient manner.



Angela Ward

Twelve hours of approved instruction are required annually of every attorney licensed to practice law in the state of Mississippi. Newly admitted attorneys are required to attend a specific new lawyer program within the first two years of practice, then comply with the annual requirement thereafter.

In 2024, the Commission approved live CLE offerings including 674 in-state programs, — more than double the previous year's live in-state programs — and 1,819 live out-of-state programs. More remote programs were offered; 6,463 CLE programs were offered by satellite, teleconference or online through live webcasts and on-demand programs.

A new Attorney Portal is now available for attorneys to report courses, upload course certificates, and pay CLE fees under their MEC account.

The Commission strives to meet the needs of the members of the Mississippi Bar regarding continuing legal education by keeping abreast of national changes in programming formats and topics. Members of the Commission and its administrator are active in the national organization of regulatory CLE boards, CLEreg.

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

BOARD OF BAR ADMISSIONS

The Board of Bar Admissions administers the rules governing admission to the practice of law in Mississippi. Board duties include: preparation, administration and grading of the bar exam given every February and July; character and fitness investigation and evaluation of each person seeking admission to the Mississippi Bar; and making recommendations to the Supreme Court to promote gatekeeping regulation and procedures which protect the public. Board members put forth conscientious, studious and diligent efforts to juxtapose evolving legal education with admission to the Bar.

In 2024, the Board processed 297 applications to join the Mississippi Bar. Of the total, 209 took the examination — 55 in February and 154 in July 2024. A total of 156 people passed the Bar Exam, with an overall pass rate of 74.7%. The 2024 pass rate reflects the highest overall pass rate since 2015.

The 2024 examinations were administered at the Hilton on County Line Road, which resulted in significant cost savings compared to utilizing the Jackson Convention Center in 2023.

Members of the Board of Bar Admissions in 2024 were Chair Gwendolyn Baptist-Rucker of Southaven, Vice-chair Michael C. McCabe Jr. of Gulfport, Marcie Fyke Baria of Bay St. Louis, Pieter Teeuwissen of Jackson, Anthony R. Simon of Jackson, Kristopher A. Powell of Hattiesburg, Joseph D. Newman Jr. of Hernando, J. William Manuel of Jackson, and Walter Alan Davis of Oxford. Jamie Coleman was hired as part of the office staff before the July 2024 Bar Exam. The Board welcomed Coleman as a permanent administrative assistant in November 2024.

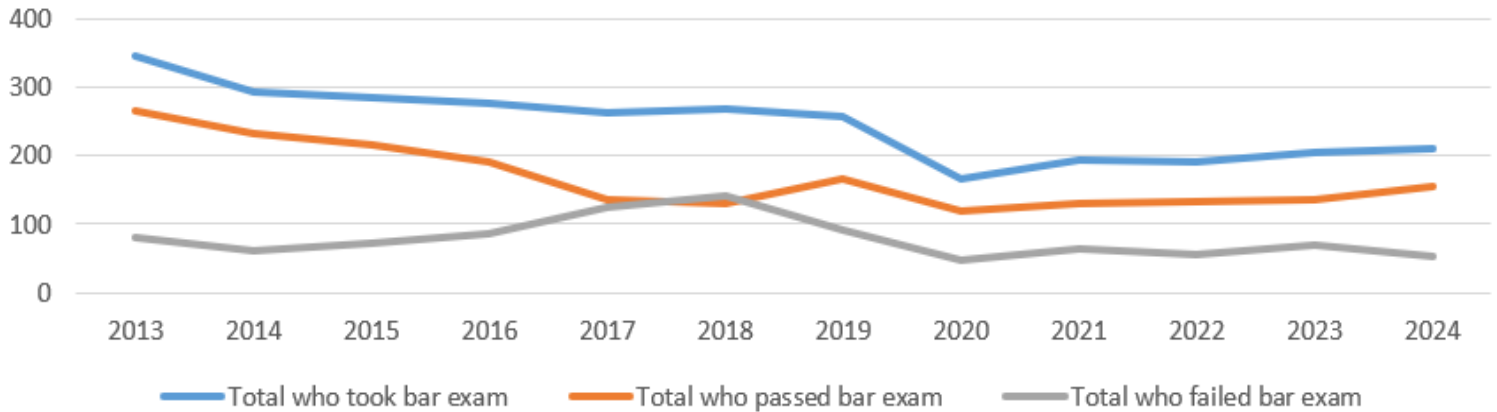
Swearing in ceremonies are held each year for new lawyers in April and September, with the September ceremony always being the larger. One hundred new lawyers took their oaths to practice in state courts, and most also took federal practice oaths, on Sept. 26, 2024. Two ceremonies were held at the Mississippi Supreme Court — morning and afternoon ceremonies — to accommodate all of the new lawyers and their families.



New lawyers recite one of the oaths to practice law at a ceremony held at the Mississippi Supreme Court on Sept. 26, 2024.

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Bar Exam Applications														
Applications for registration as law student	105	69	66	92	61	27	29	16	10	9	21	11	7	6
Applications for examination	420	426	433	385	318	343	343	323	279	263	250	240	257	252
Admission on motion				46	30	46	33	56	57	33	34	35	28	39
Total applications processed/being processed	525	495	499	523	409	416	405	395	346	166	305	286	292	297
Bar Exams														
Took February bar exam	101	108	108	111	98	95	88	91	102	49	66	54	56	55
Passed February bar exam	66	71	76	90	70	62	36	37	62	27	38	32	24	30
Failed February bar exam	35	37	32	21	28	33	52	54	40	22	28	22	32	25
Took July bar exam	242	231	238	183	188	181	174	178	156	117	129	136	150	154
Passed July bar exam	185	178	190	143	145	128	101	92	105	92	92	102	113	126
Failed July bar exam	57	53	48	40	43	53	73	86	51	25	37	34	37	28
Total who took bar exam	343	339	346	294	286	276	262	269	258	166	195	190	206	209
Total who passed bar exam	251	249	266	233	215	190	137	129	167	119	130	134	137	156
Total who failed bar exam	92	90	80	61	71	86	125	140	91	47	65	56	69	53
Percentage pass rate	73%	73%	76%	79%	75%	68%	52%	48%	64.7%	71.7%	66.7%	70.5%	66.5%	74.7 %

Bar Exam Pass Rate 2011 - 2024



MISSISSIPPI TRIAL COURTS OF RECORD

Judicial Conference Leadership

Circuit and County Court judges elected officers on Oct. 24, 2024, during the fall Trial and Appellate Judges Conference in Biloxi. Circuit Judge Christopher Schmidt of Pass Christian was elected chair of the Conference of Circuit Court Judges, Circuit Judge Celeste Wilson of Southaven was elected vice-chair, and Circuit Judge Carol White-Richard of Greenville was elected secretary-treasurer.



Judge Christopher Schmidt



Judge Celeste Wilson



Judge Carol White-Richard

Judge Schmidt previously served as conference vice-chair. He has served since January 2015 in the 2nd Circuit District of Hancock, Harrison and Stone counties. He previously worked as an assistant district attorney in the Second Circuit for 14 years. He was in private law practice from 2010 until his election in 2014.

Judge Wilson previously served as conference secretary. She has served as a Circuit Judge for more than eight years. She was appointed in February 2017 to the 17th Circuit Court. She was elected to the 23rd Circuit Court District in November 2022 and took office in January 2023 when DeSoto County became a separate Circuit Court district. She serves on the Supreme Court Advisory Committee on Rules. She previously served for eight years as a DeSoto County Court Judge. She served as vice chair of the Council of Youth Court Judges and was a member of the Council for Interstate Compact of Juveniles, the Juvenile Detention and Alternatives Task Force and the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges.



Judge Lisa Howell



Judge Carol Jones Russell



Judge Betsy Cotton

Judge White-Richard was elected in November 2014 and took office in January 2015 in the 4th Circuit Court District that includes Leflore, Sunflower and Washington counties. Before election to the bench, she practiced law as a criminal defense attorney and assistant district attorney. She is past president of the Mississippi Public Defenders Association. She also served as part-time faculty of Gideon's Promise.

Lauderdale County Court Judge Lisa Howell of Meridian was elected chair of the Conference of County Court Judges. Forrest County Court Judge Carol Jones Russell of Hattiesburg was elected vice-chair, and Yazoo County Court Judge Betsy Cotton of Yazoo City was elected secretary.



Judge Cynthia Brewer



Judge Troy Odom



Judge Larry Little

County Court judges thanked three long-serving officers, outgoing Conference chairman Judge Ed Hannan of Madison, outgoing vice-chair Judge Vernita King Johnson of Greenville, and outgoing conference secretary Judge Veldore Young Graham of Meridian. Judge Hannan became chairman in 2015. Judge Johnson became vice-chair in October 2004. Judge Young Graham began her service as secretary in April 2012.

Conference of Chancery Court Judges officers serve two-year terms; officers elected in 2023 continued their service through 2024. Chancellor Cynthia Brewer of Madison is chair, Chancellor Troy Odom of Brandon is vice-chair, and Chancellor Larry Little of Oxford is secretary-treasurer.

Judge Brewer previously served as Chancery Conference chair in 2012, and was vice-chair in 2011 and 2022. She has served on the 11th Chancery Court since January 2007. Judge Odom took office in January 2019 in the 20th Chancery. Judge Little took office in January 2019 in the 18th Chancery. He has served as Conference secretary-treasurer since October 2019.

The Council of Youth Court Judges elected new officers at its September 2024 conference in Flowood. Lee County Court Judge Staci Bevill is chair of the Council, Marion County Youth Court Referee Renee Porter is vice-chair, and Lafayette County Court Judge Tiffany Kilpatrick is secretary.

Judge Bevill is chair of the Commission on a Uniform Youth Court System and Procedures. She was elected to the Lee County Court in November 2018, and took office in January 2019.

Referee Porter has served as Marion County Youth Court Referee since June 2021. She previously served for more than 10 years as a guardian ad litem in Youth Court. She is a member of the Commission on a Uniform Youth Court System and Procedures. Her practice is in domestic rela-



Judge Staci Bevill



Referee Renee Porter



Judge Tiffany Kilpatrick



Judge Steve Simpson



Judge Patricia Wise



Judge James Bell

tions and family law.

In addition to serving as Council of Youth Court Judges secretary, Judge Kilpatrick is chair of the Council's By-laws and Curriculum committees, and sits on the Youth Court Rules Committee. She serves on the Curriculum Committee of the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges. Judge Kilpatrick was elected to the Lafayette County Court in November 2022, and took office in January 2023. She serves as County Court and Youth Court judge. She previously served as assistant district attorney for Lafayette County, public defender for Lafayette County at the felony level, Youth Court public defender, and prosecutor for the city of Abbeville. She taught legal research as an adjunct professor at the University of Mississippi School of Law for nine years.

Retired Circuit Judge Steve Simpson of Gulfport is chair of the Conference of Senior Status Judges. Retired Chancellor Patricia Wise of Jackson is vice-chair, and former Hinds County Court Judge James Bell of Crystal Springs is secretary-treasurer. They were elected at the April 27, 2023, spring Trial and Appellate Judges Conference. Judge Simpson was a 2nd Circuit judge 2000-2008. Judge Wise served as a Hinds Chancery Judge from 1989 through 2018. Judge Bell is the longest serving Senior Status judge. He began accepting Senior Status appointments in 1989 after serving for six years as a Hinds County Court Judge.

In December 2024, Senior Status judges included 70 retired judges. Senior Status judges serve a critical function, hearing cases by appointment of the Supreme Court when all judges in a district recuse themselves. In 2024, the Supreme Court made 279 Special Judge appointments of Senior Status judges.

Clerks of Trial Courts

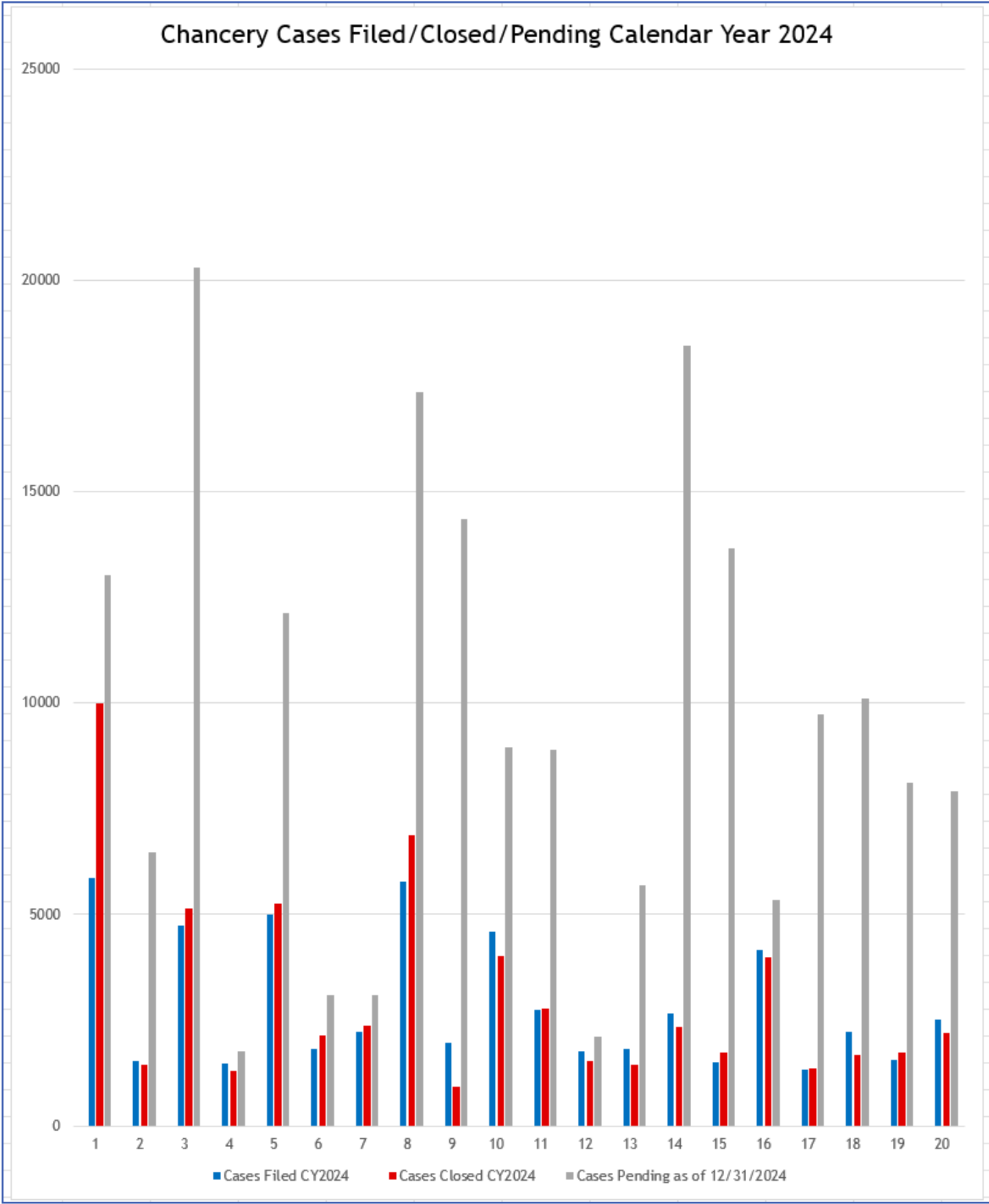


Circuit and Chancery Clerks visit the Mississippi Supreme Court annually as part of their training. Circuit Clerks, pictured above, visited the Supreme Court on January 11, 2024. Chancery Clerks, pictured below, visited on February 8, 2024. Presiding Justice Jim Kitchens, at right front in both pictures, spoke to the clerks about the critical duties which they perform.



Chancery Cases Filed/Closed/Pending Calendar Year 2024, by District

Chancery District	Counties	Cases Filed CY2024	Cases Closed CY2024	Cases Pending 12/31/2024
1	Alcorn, Itawamba, Lee, Monroe, Pontotoc, Prentiss, Tishomingo, Union	5,851	9,988	13,042
2	Jasper, Newton, Scott	1,521	1,443	6,464
3	DeSoto, Grenada, Montgomery, Panola, Tate, Yalobusha	4,740	5,151	20,303
4	Amite, Franklin, Pike, Walthall	1,470	1,290	1,758
5	Hinds	5,011	5,264	12,122
6	Attala, Carroll, Choctaw, Kemper, Neshoba, Winston	1,829	2,154	3,079
7	Bolivar, Coahoma, Leflore, Quitman, Tallahatchie, Tunica	2,214	2,361	3,099
8	Hancock, Harrison, Stone	5,772	6,862	17,369
9	Humphreys, Issaquena, Sharkey, Sunflower, Warren, Washington	1,963	941	14,349
10	Forrest, Lamar, Marion, Pearl River, Perry	4,586	4,006	8,947
11	Holmes, Leake, Madison, Yazoo	2,736	2,781	8,888
12	Clarke, Lauderdale	1,752	1,535	2,115
13	Covington, Jefferson Davis, Lawrence, Simpson, Smith	1,835	1,449	5,684
14	Chickasaw, Clay, Lowndes, Noxubee, Oktibbeha, Webster	2,649	2,347	18,451
15	Copiah, Lincoln	1,501	1,743	13,659
16	George, Greene, Jackson	4,157	3,976	5,333
17	Adams, Claiborne, Jefferson, Wilkinson	1,330	1,372	9,746
18	Benton, Calhoun, Lafayette, Marshall, Tippah	2,239	1,691	10,107
19	Jones, Wayne	1,557	1,725	8,123
20	Rankin	2,509	2,196	7,928
Totals		57,222	60,275	190,566



TRIAL COURT DATA

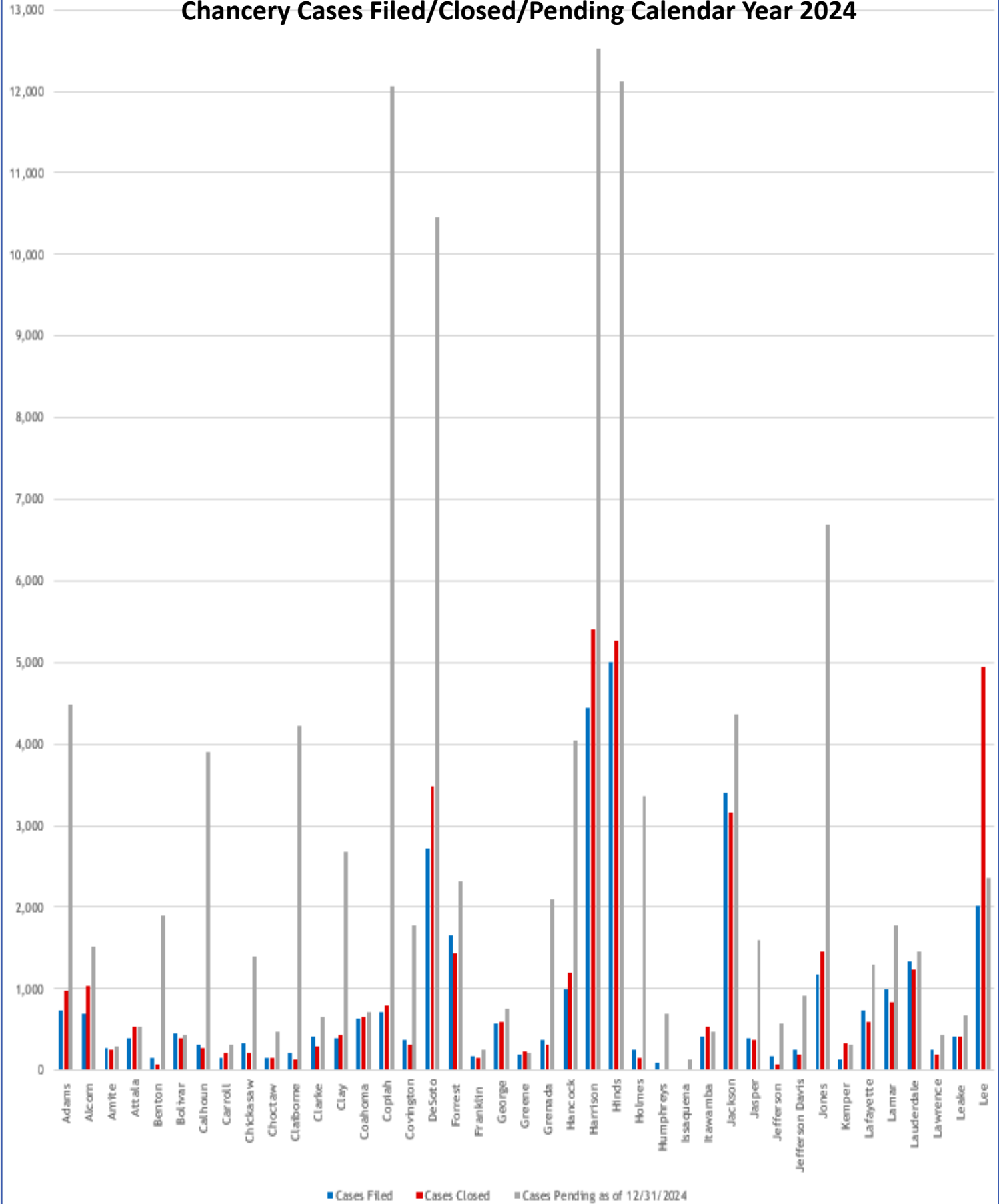
Chancery Cases Filed/Closed/Pending Calendar Year 2024, Alphabetical

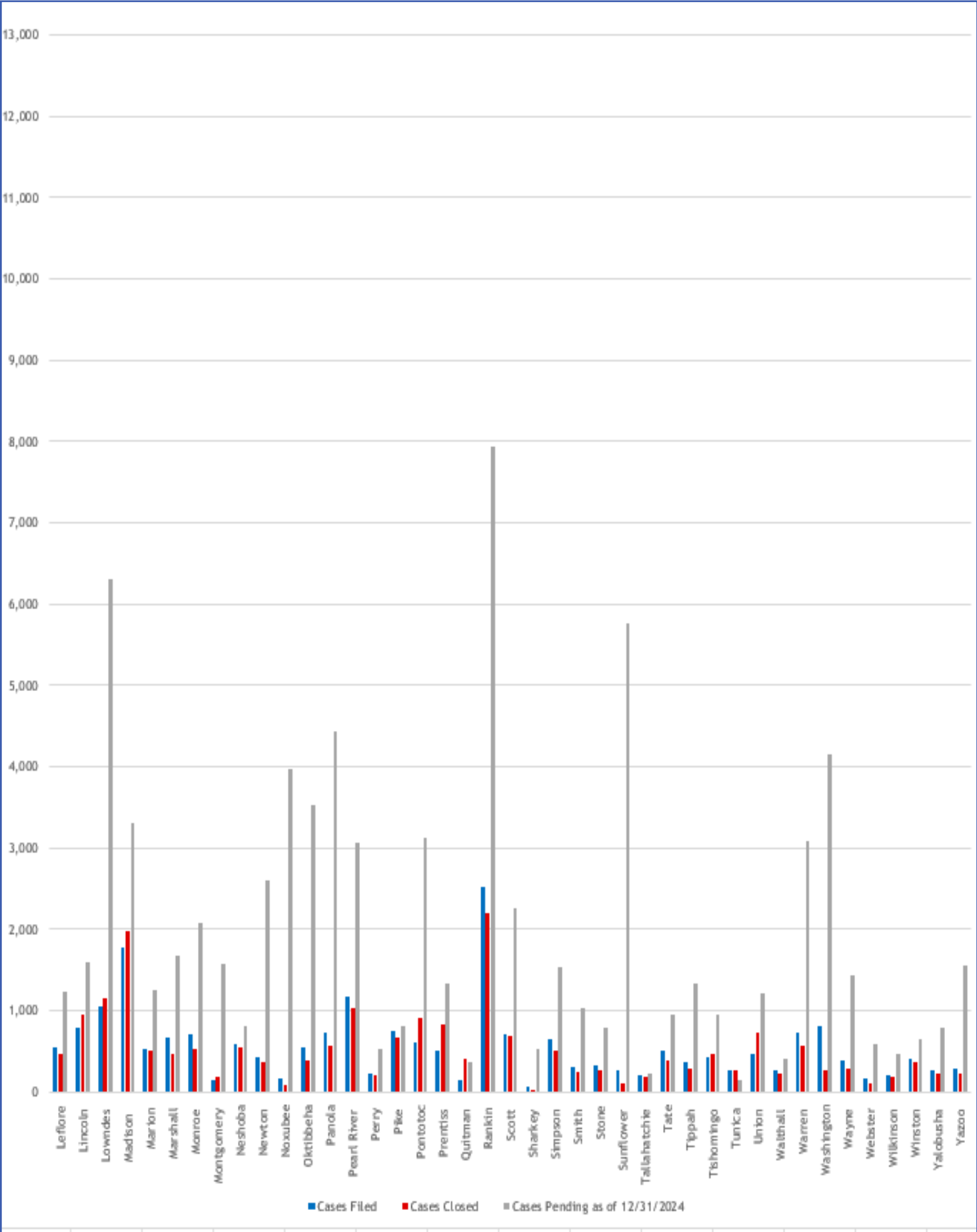
Chancery District	Counties	Cases Filed CY2024	Cases Closed CY2024	Cases Pending as of 12/31/2024
17	Adams Chancery Court	738	977	4,493
1	Alcorn Chancery Court	704	1,044	1,517
4	Amite Chancery Court	279	246	299
6	Attala Chancery Court	396	534	540
18	Benton Chancery Court	156	68	1,897
7	Bolivar Chancery Court	447	404	431
18	Calhoun Chancery Court	310	268	3,907
6	Carroll Chancery Court	158	224	320
14	Chickasaw Chancery Court	334	219	1,400
6	Choctaw Chancery Court	151	156	466
17	Claiborne Chancery Court	206	129	4,218
12	Clarke Chancery Court	407	290	649
14	Clay Chancery Court	396	438	2,673
7	Coahoma Chancery Court	627	656	710
15	Copiah Chancery Court	716	786	12,061
13	Covington Chancery Court	366	312	1,779
3	DeSoto Chancery Court	2,721	3,490	10,453
10	Forrest Chancery Court	1,658	1,433	2,328
4	Franklin Chancery Court	183	163	260
16	George Chancery Court	567	586	755
16	Greene Chancery Court	194	226	218
3	Grenada Chancery Court	367	310	2,102
8	Hancock Chancery Court	996	1,190	4,052
8	Harrison Chancery Court	4,452	5,404	12,521
5	Hinds Chancery Court	5,011	5,264	12,122
11	Holmes Chancery Court	264	161	3,354
9	Humphreys Chancery Court	100	7	705
9	Issaquena Chancery Court	15	4	136
1	Itawamba Chancery Court	423	537	477
16	Jackson Chancery Court	3,396	3,164	4,360
2	Jasper Chancery Court	402	384	1,601
17	Jefferson Chancery Court	174	81	568
13	Jefferson Davis Chancery	264	195	918
19	Jones Chancery Court	1,179	1,452	6,689
6	Kemper Chancery Court	136	332	311
18	Lafayette Chancery Court	745	599	1,304
10	Lamar Chancery Court	999	833	1,784
12	Lauderdale Chancery Court	1,345	1,245	1,466
13	Lawrence Chancery Court	254	204	440
11	Leake Chancery Court	413	412	673
1	Lee Chancery Court	2,018	4,954	2,367

Chancery Cases Filed/Closed/Pending Calendar Year 2024, Alphabetical

Chancery District	Counties	Cases Filed CY2024	Cases Closed CY2024	Cases Pending as of 12/31/2024
7	Leflore Chancery Court	544	459	1,223
15	Lincoln Chancery Court	785	957	1,598
14	Lowndes Chancery Court	1,045	1,142	6,305
11	Madison Chancery Court	1,777	1,978	3,308
10	Marion Chancery Court	530	508	1,257
18	Marshall Chancery Court	664	470	1,673
1	Monroe Chancery Court	697	529	2,070
3	Montgomery Chancery Court	151	192	1,576
6	Neshoba Chancery Court	594	539	806
2	Newton Chancery Court	415	368	2,601
14	Noxubee Chancery Court	160	78	3,973
14	Oktibbeha Chancery Court	552	376	3,517
3	Panola Chancery Court	731	569	4,439
10	Pearl River Chancery Court	1,173	1,031	3,053
10	Perry Chancery Court	226	201	525
4	Pike Chancery Court	737	665	798
1	Pontotoc Chancery Court	615	899	3,126
1	Prentiss Chancery Court	514	829	1,324
7	Quitman Chancery Court	146	402	357
20	Rankin Chancery Court	2,509	2,196	7,928
2	Scott Chancery Court	704	691	2,262
9	Sharkey Chancery Court	52	12	526
13	Simpson Chancery Court	643	503	1,524
13	Smith Chancery Court	308	235	1,023
8	Stone Chancery Court	324	268	796
9	Sunflower Chancery Court	257	102	5,758
7	Tallahatchie Chancery	195	177	229
3	Tate Chancery Court	513	376	944
18	Tippah Chancery Court	364	286	1,326
1	Tishomingo Chancery Court	418	463	956
7	Tunica Chancery Court	255	263	149
1	Union Chancery Court	462	733	1,205
4	Walthall Chancery Court	271	216	401
9	Warren Chancery Court	733	561	3,079
9	Washington Chancery Court	806	255	4,145
19	Wayne Chancery Court	378	273	1,434
14	Webster Chancery Court	162	94	583
17	Wilkinson Chancery Court	212	185	467
6	Winston Chancery Court	394	369	636
3	Yalobusha Chancery Court	257	214	789
11	Yazoo Chancery Court	282	230	1,553
TOTALS		57,222	60,275	190,566

Chancery Cases Filed/Closed/Pending Calendar Year 2024





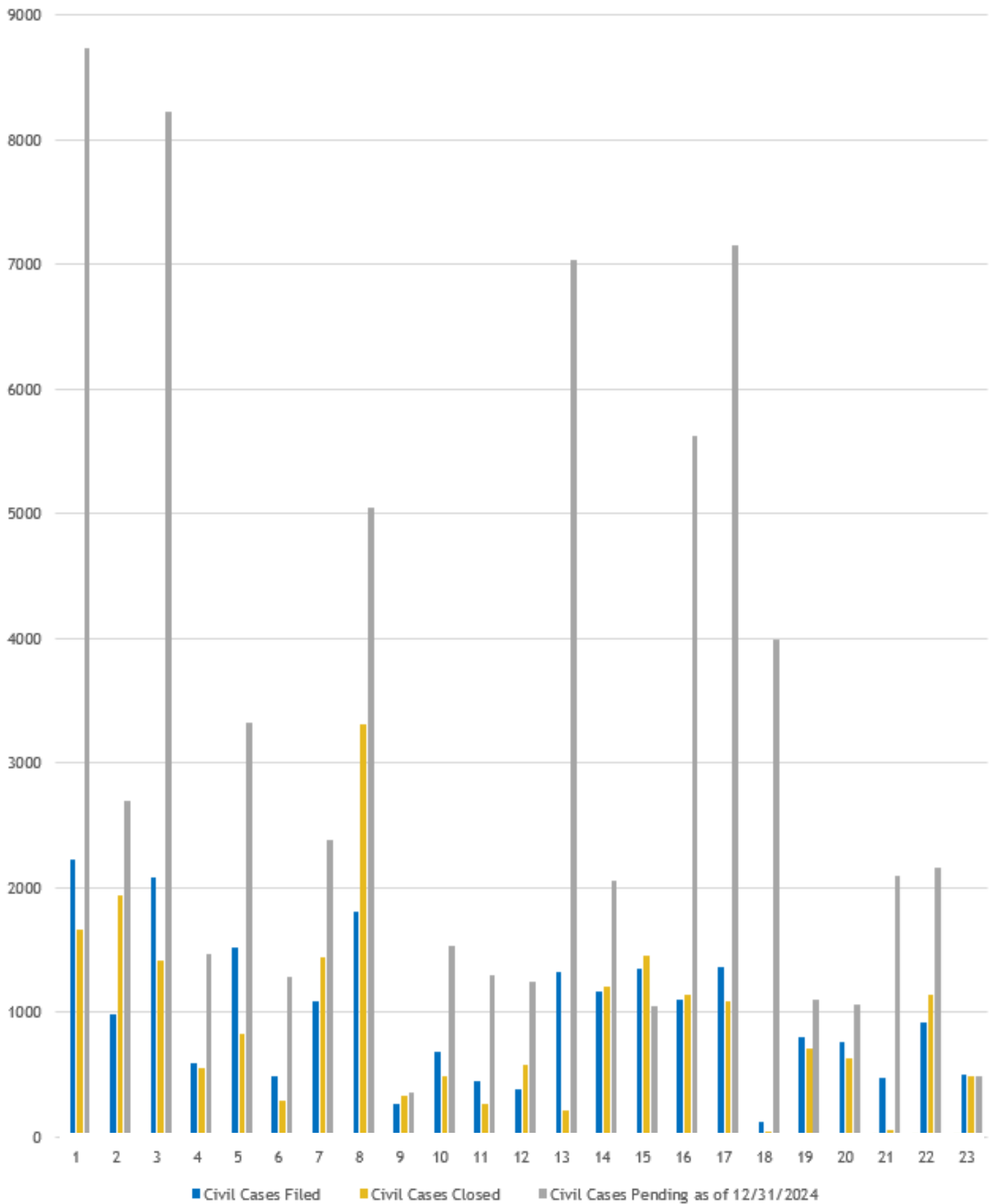
Circuit Civil Cases Filed/Closed/Pending Calendar Year 2024, by District

District	Counties	Civil Cases Filed CY2024	Civil Cases Closed CY2024	Civil Cases Pending 12/31/2024
1	Alcorn, Itawamba, Lee*, Monroe, Pontotoc, Prentiss, Tishomingo	2,222	1,656	8,728
2	Hancock*, Harrison*, Stone	975	1,938	2,697
3	Benton, Calhoun, Chickasaw, Lafayette*, Marshall, Tippah, Union	2,076	1,419	8,226
4	Leflore*, Sunflower, Washington*	585	546	1,467
5	Attala, Carroll, Choctaw, Grenada, Montgomery, Webster, Winston	1,512	820	3,317
6	Adams*, Amite, Franklin, Wilkinson	480	294	1,288
7	Hinds*	1,088	1,438	2,378
8	Leake, Neshoba, Newton, Scott	1,809	3,312	5,051
9	Issaquena, Sharkey, Warren*	268	322	349
10	Clark, Kemper, Lauderdale*, Wayne	677	482	1,536
11	Bolivar*, Coahoma*, Quitman, Tunica	444	256	1,301
12	Forrest*, Perry	374	578	1,242
13	Covington, Jasper, Simpson, Smith	1,321	210	7,039
14	Lincoln, Pike*, Walthall	1,162	1,207	2,050
15	Jefferson Davis, Lamar*, Lawrence, Marion, Pearl River*	1,346	1,455	1,053
16	Clay, Lowndes*, Noxubee, Oktibbeha*	1,100	1,140	5,623
17	Panola, Tallahatchie, Tate, Yalobusha	1,357	1,086	7,150
18	Jones*	124	36	3,985
19	George, Greene, Jackson*	798	702	1,093
20	Madison*, Rankin*	759	634	1,066
21	Holmes, Humphreys, Yazoo*	476	53	2,099
22	Claiborne, Copiah, Jefferson	917	1,141	2,158
23	DeSoto*	492	490	479
	TOTALS	22,362	21,215	71,375

Counties listed in red were not using the MEC system for civil filings as of 12/31/2024.

* Counties with County Courts divert a large civil caseload from Circuit Courts.

Circuit Civil Cases Filed/Closed/Pending Calendar Year 2024



Circuit Civil Cases Filed/Closed/Pending Calendar Year 2024, Alphabetical

District	County	Civil Cases Filed CY 2024	Civil Cases Closed CY 2024	Civil Cases Pending 12/31/2024
6	Adams Circuit Court	98	35	886
1	Alcorn Circuit Court	466	334	998
6	Amite Circuit Court	175	136	141
5	Attala Circuit Court	327	85	557
3	Benton Circuit Court	87	58	129
11	Bolivar Circuit Court	119	87	696
3	Calhoun Circuit Court	139	136	263
5	Carroll Circuit Court	109	44	342
5	Chickasaw Circuit Court	195	52	143
3	Choctaw Circuit Court	65	51	103
22	Claiborne Circuit Court	146	179	303
10	Clarke Circuit Court	213	143	578
16	Clay Circuit Court	347	150	3,219
11	Coahoma Circuit Court	51	24	152
22	Copiah Circuit Court	639	563	1,622
13	Covington Circuit Court	334	105	976
23	DeSoto Circuit Court	492	490	479
12	Forrest Circuit Court	211	156	1,011
6	Franklin Circuit Court	78	97	158
19	George Circuit Court	319	305	338
19	Greene Circuit Court	178	179	116
5	Grenada Circuit Court	494	316	1,199
2	Hancock Circuit Court	206	1,161	777
2	Harrison Circuit Court	544	616	973
7	Hinds Circuit Court	1,088	1,438	2,378
21	Holmes Circuit Court	290	12	540
21	Humphreys Circuit Court	128	4	1,026
9	Issaquena Circuit Court	10	11	30
1	Itawamba Circuit Court	262	146	760
19	Jackson Circuit Court	301	218	639
13	Jasper Circuit Court	232	98	717
22	Jefferson Circuit Court	132	399	233
15	Jefferson Davis Circuit	210	240	175
18	Jones Circuit Court	124	36	3,985
10	Kemper Circuit Court	94	17	77
3	Lafayette Circuit Court	425	333	494
15	Lamar Circuit Court	155	181	164
10	Lauderdale Circuit Court	155	139	262
15	Lawrence Circuit Court	169	179	118
8	Leake Circuit Court	381	378	499
1	Lee Circuit Court	111	83	755

Counties listed in red were not using the MEC system for civil filings as of 12/31/2024.

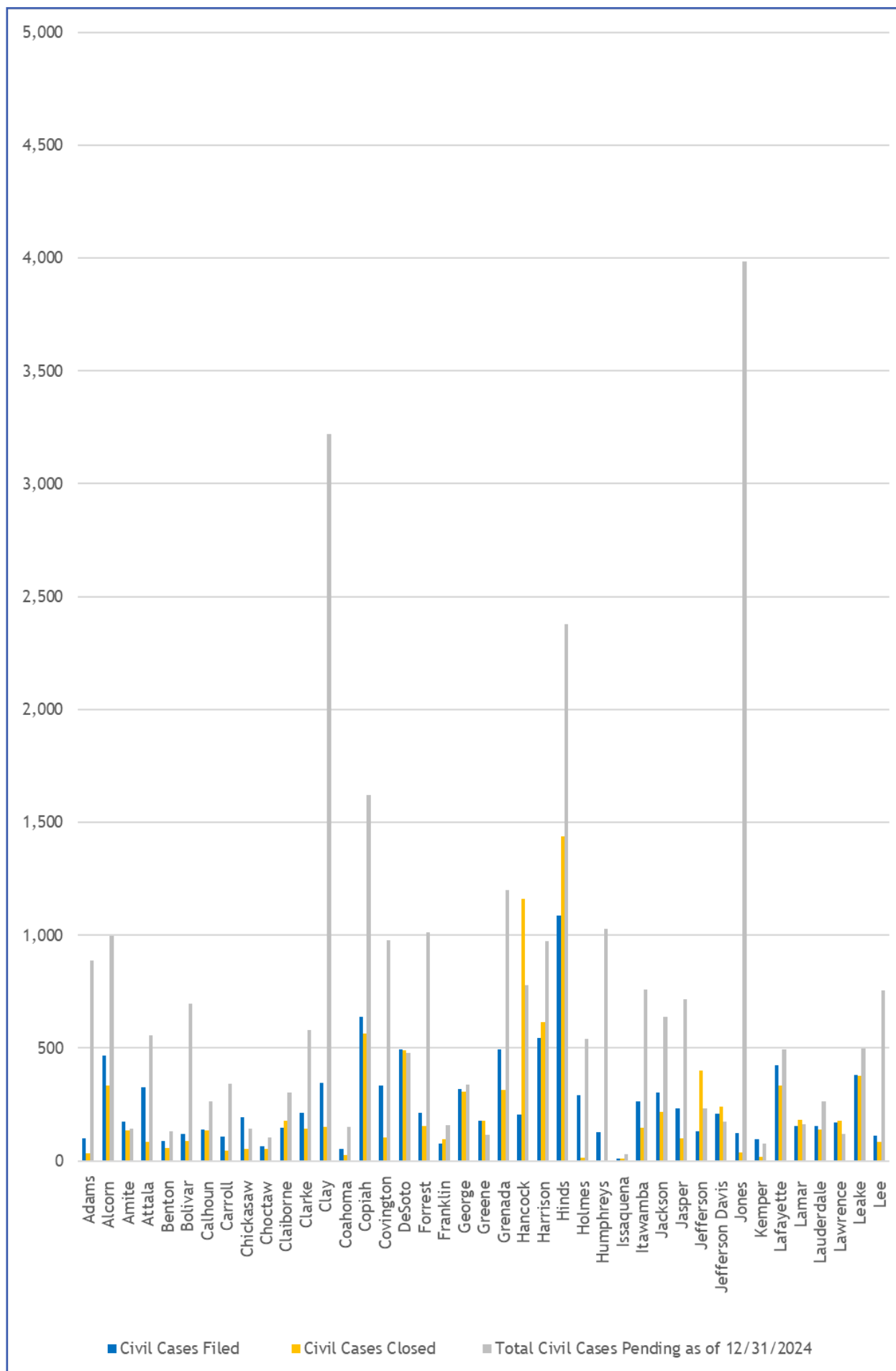
* Counties with County Courts divert a large civil caseload from Circuit Courts.

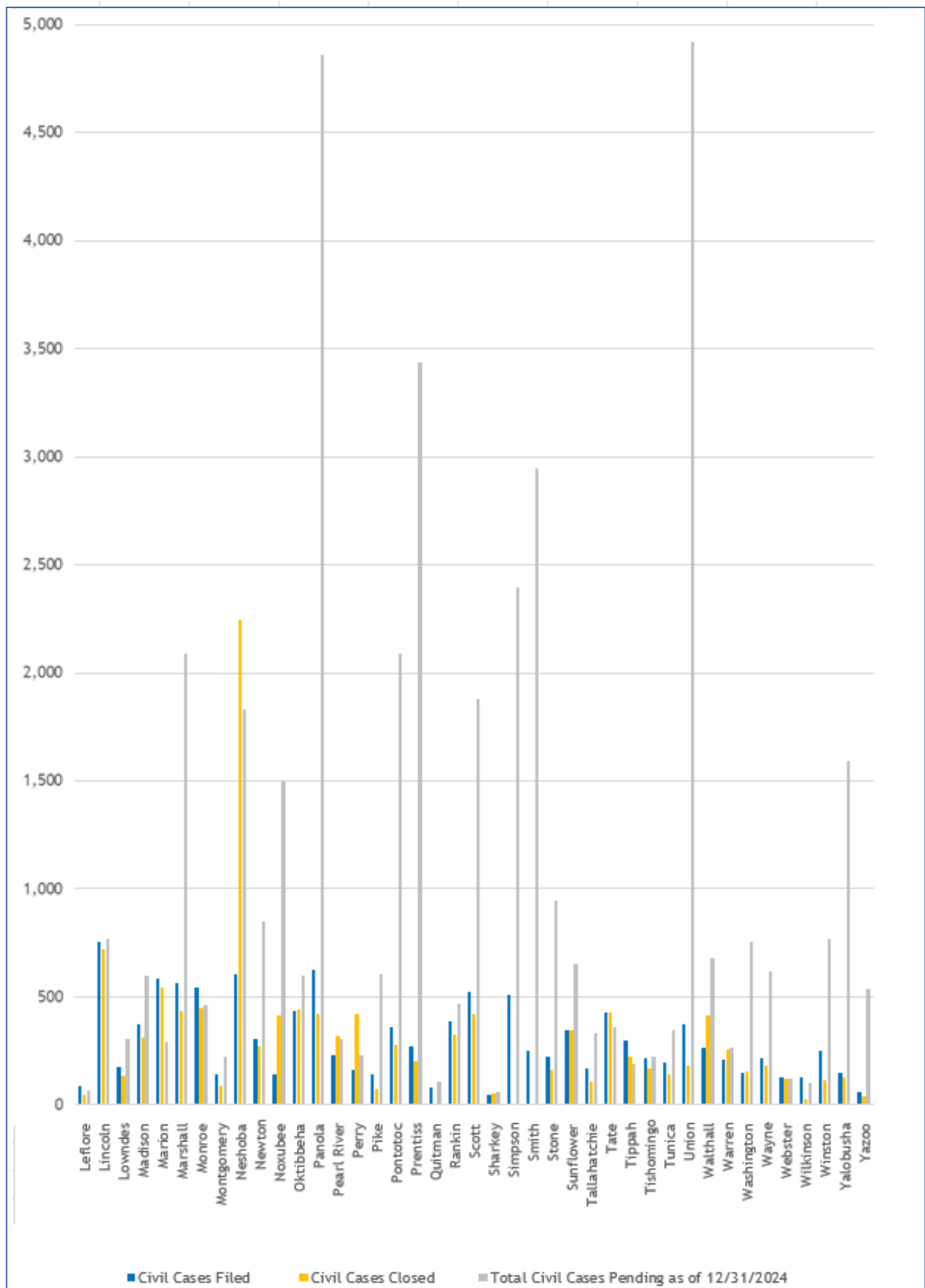
Circuit Civil Cases Filed/Closed/Pending Calendar Year 2024, Alphabetical

District	County	Civil Cases Filed CY 2024	Civil Cases Closed CY 2024	Civil Cases Pending 12/31/2024
4	Leflore Circuit Court	86	44	66
14	Lincoln Circuit Court	757	723	770
16	Lowndes Circuit Court	177	133	307
20	Madison Circuit Court	372	309	600
15	Marion Circuit Court	585	540	294
3	Marshall Circuit Court	560	437	2,091
1	Monroe Circuit Court	541	448	459
5	Montgomery Circuit Court	140	84	224
8	Neshoba Circuit Court	602	2,243	1,828
8	Newton Circuit Court	304	272	846
16	Noxubee Circuit Court	142	415	1,499
16	Oktibbeha Circuit Court	434	442	598
17	Panola Circuit Court	622	420	4,863
15	Pearl River Circuit Court	227	315	302
12	Perry Circuit Court	163	422	231
14	Pike Circuit Court	139	73	601
1	Pontotoc Circuit Court	361	277	2,092
1	Prentiss Circuit Court	268	203	3,439
11	Quitman Circuit Court	77	3	105
20	Rankin Circuit Court	387	325	466
8	Scott Circuit Court	522	419	1,878
9	Sharkey Circuit Court	49	55	56
13	Simpson Circuit Court	508	2	2,398
13	Smith Circuit Court	247	5	2,948
2	Stone Circuit Court	225	161	947
4	Sunflower Circuit Court	348	347	650
17	Tallahatchie Circuit	165	110	335
17	Tate Circuit Court	425	430	359
3	Tippah Circuit Court	300	224	187
1	Tishomingo Circuit Court	213	165	225
11	Tunica Circuit Court	197	142	348
3	Union Circuit Court	370	179	4,919
14	Walthall Circuit Court	266	411	679
9	Warren Circuit Court	209	256	263
4	Washington Circuit Court	151	155	751
10	Wayne Circuit Court	215	183	619
5	Webster Circuit Court	128	123	122
6	Wilkinson Circuit Court	129	26	103
5	Winston Circuit Court	249	117	770
17	Yalobusha Circuit Court	145	126	1,593
21	Yazoo Circuit Court	58	37	533
	TOTALS	22,362	21,215	71,375

Counties listed in red were not using the MEC system for civil filings as of 12/31/2024.

* Counties with County Courts divert a large civil caseload from Circuit Courts.



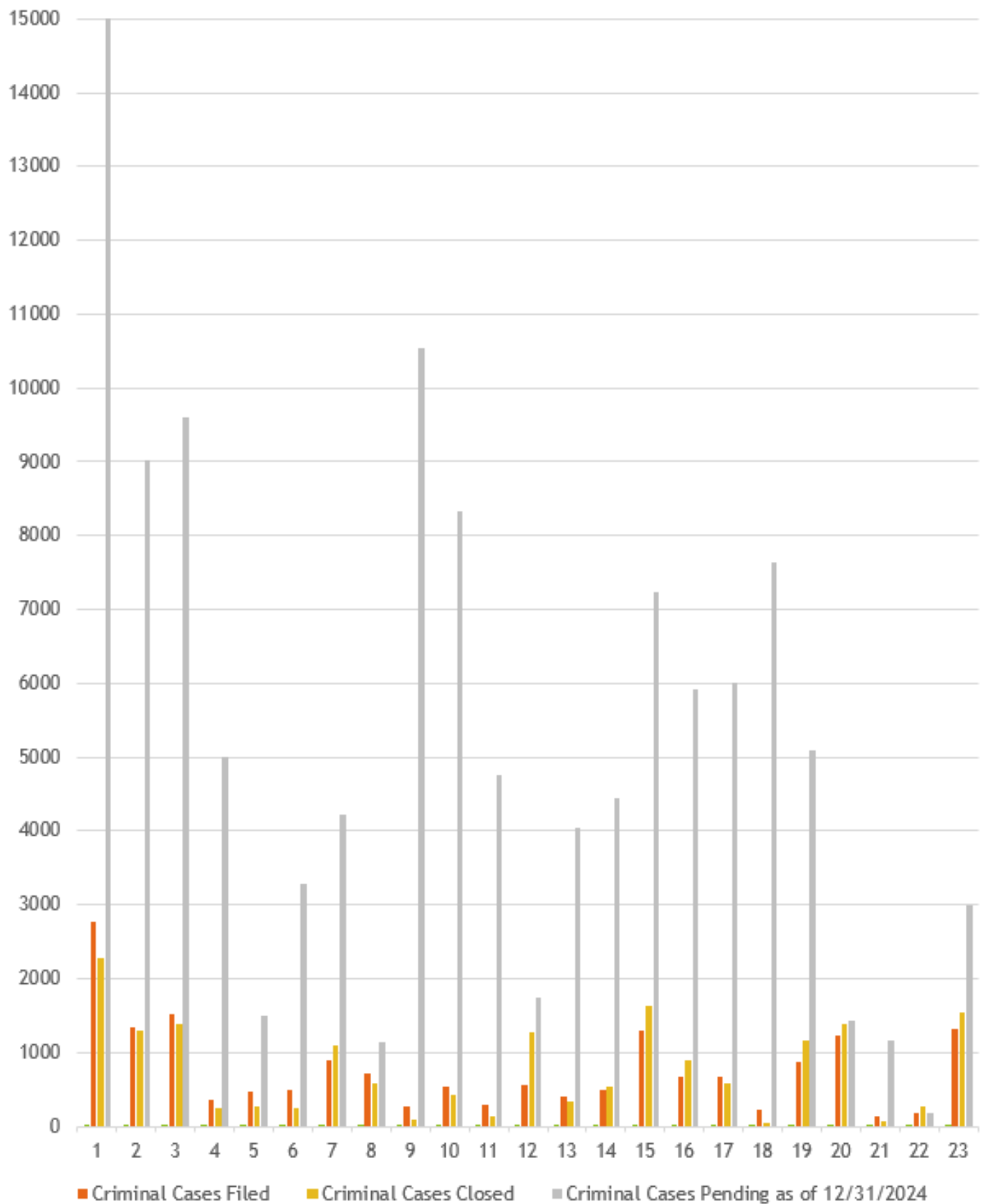


Circuit Criminal Cases Filed/Closed/Pending Calendar Year 2024

District	Counties	Criminal Cases Filed CY 2024	Criminal Cases Closed CY 2024	Criminal Cases Pending 12/31/2024
1	Alcorn, Itawamba, Lee, Monroe, Pontotoc, Prentiss, Tishomingo	2,763	2,287	15,034
2	Hancock, Harrison, Stone	1,348	1,293	9,011
3	Benton, Calhoun, Chickasaw, Lafayette, Marshall, Tippah, Union	1,518	1,395	9,607
4	Leflore, Sunflower, Washington	353	249	4,993
5	Attala, Carroll, Choctaw, Grenada, Montgomery, Webster, Winston	462	279	1,500
6	Adams, Amite, Franklin, Wilkinson	484	253	3,292
7	Hinds	904	1,099	4,222
8	Leake, Neshoba, Newton, Scott	718	582	1,145
9	Issaquena, Sharkey, Warren	273	91	10,538
10	Clark, Kemper, Lauderdale, Wayne	536	433	8,330
11	Bolivar, Coahoma, Quitman, Tunica	296	126	4,750
12	Forrest, Perry	569	1,275	1,750
13	Covington, Jasper, Simpson, Smith	398	333	4,042
14	Lincoln, Pike, Walthall	487	537	4,436
15	Jefferson Davis, Lamar, Lawrence, Marion, Pearl River	1,299	1,643	7,227
16	Clay, Lowndes, Noxubee, Oktibbeha	682	891	5,911
17	Panola, Tallahatchie, Tate, Yalobusha	673	574	6,000
18	Jones	225	40	7,648
19	George, Greene, Jackson	867	1,155	5,083
20	Madison, Rankin	1,225	1,394	1,429
21	Holmes, Humphreys, Yazoo	128	66	1,165
22	Claiborne, Copiah, Jefferson	183	266	191
23	DeSoto	1,313	1,545	2,992
TOTALS		17,704	17,806	120,296

Counties listed in red were not using the MEC system for criminal filings as of 12/31/2024.

Circuit Criminal Cases Filed/ Closed/Pending Calendar Year 2024



Circuit Criminal Cases Filed/Closed/Pending Calendar Year 2024 Alphabetical

	County	Criminal Cases Filed	Criminal Cases Closed	Criminal Cases Pending 12/31/2024
6	Adams Circuit Court	264	141	3,135
1	Alcorn Circuit Court	316	104	1,611
6	Amite Circuit Court	122	53	69
5	Attala Circuit Court	82	8	198
3	Benton Circuit Court	107	36	246
11	Bolivar Circuit Court	186	67	4,287
3	Calhoun Circuit Court	106	129	1,816
5	Carroll Circuit Court	53	21	146
5	Chickasaw Circuit Court	194	119	124
3	Choctaw Circuit Court	31	34	137
22	Claiborne Circuit Court	55	119	48
10	Clarke Circuit Court	73	0	638
16	Clay Circuit Court	91	87	3,067
11	Coahoma Circuit Court	36	24	171
22	Copiah Circuit Court	97	112	111
13	Covington Circuit Court	127	97	2,207
23	DeSoto Circuit Court	1,313	1,545	2,992
12	Forrest Circuit Court	532	770	1,605
6	Franklin Circuit Court	67	56	60
19	George Circuit Court	105	125	628
19	Greene Circuit Court	42	90	408
5	Grenada Circuit Court	152	131	186
2	Hancock Circuit Court	236	244	642
2	Harrison Circuit Court	994	975	7,609
7	Hinds Circuit Court	904	1,099	4,222
21	Holmes Circuit Court	28	2	89
21	Humphreys Circuit Court	25	8	21
9	Issaquena Circuit Court	5	1	39
1	Itawamba Circuit Court	243	215	1,059
19	Jackson Circuit Court	720	940	4,047
13	Jasper Circuit Court	75	55	151
22	Jefferson Circuit Court	31	35	32
15	Jefferson Davis Circuit	108	172	185
18	Jones Circuit Court	225	40	7,648
10	Kemper Circuit Court	37	9	28
3	Lafayette Circuit Court	437	401	1,250
15	Lamar Circuit Court	401	396	2,324
10	Lauderdale Circuit Court	359	392	5,717
15	Lawrence Circuit Court	50	91	196
8	Leake Circuit Court	84	71	122
1	Lee Circuit Court	867	889	5,517

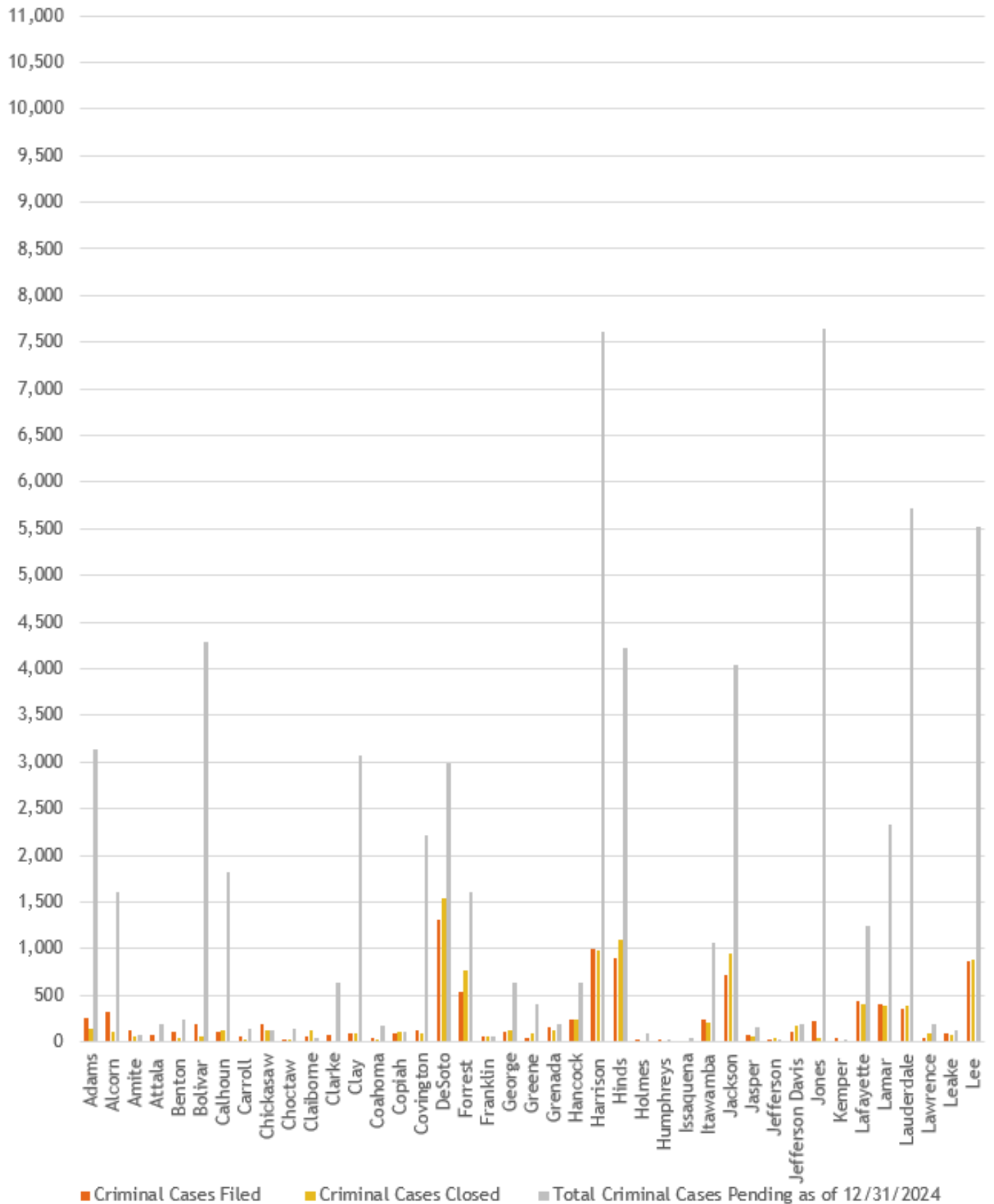
Counties listed in red were not using the MEC system for criminal filings as of 12/31/2024.

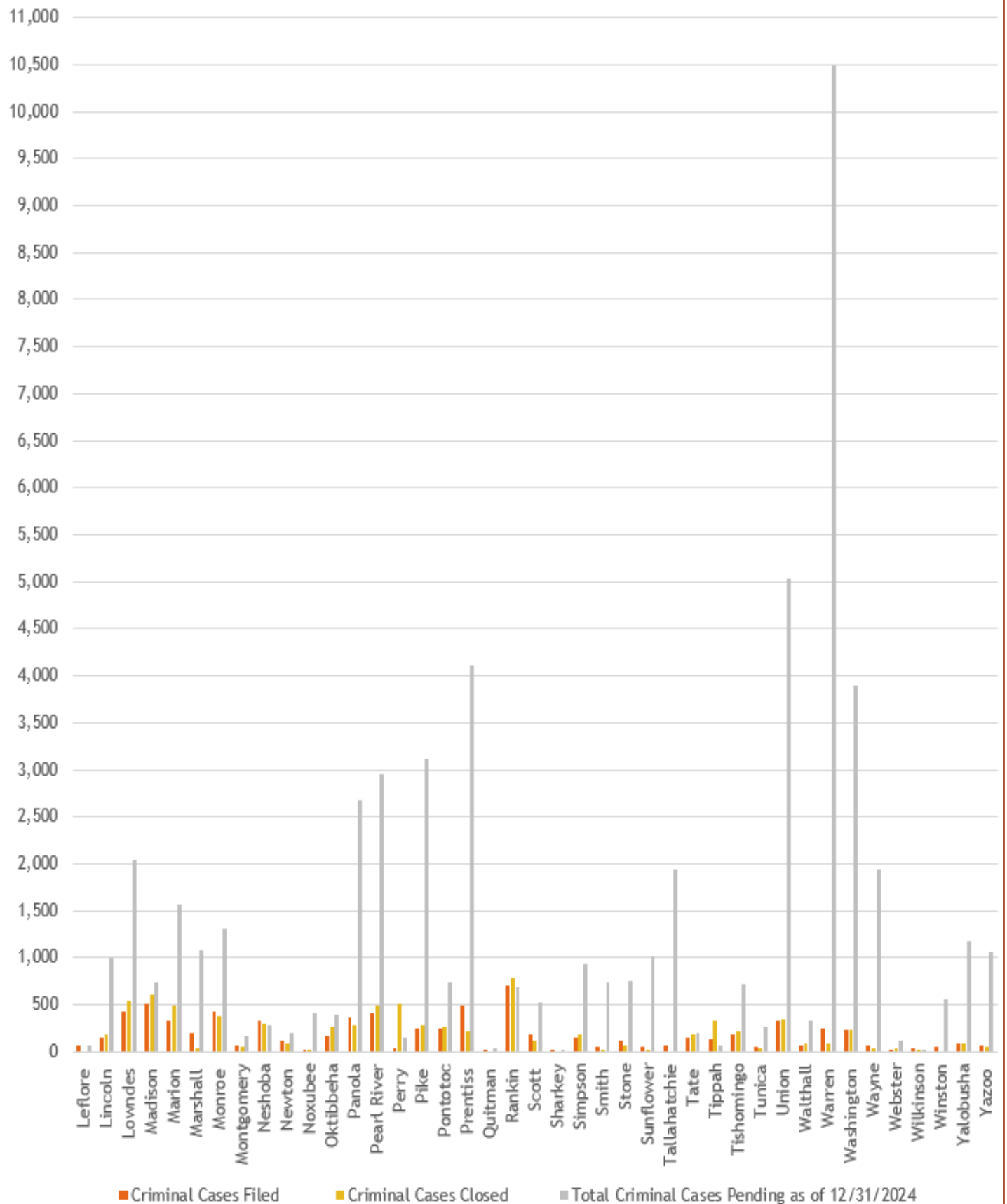
Circuit Criminal Cases Filed/Closed/Pending Calendar Year 2024, Alphabetical

	County	Criminal Cases Filed C	Criminal Cases Closed	Criminal Cases Pending 12/31/2024
4	Leflore Circuit Court	63	0	72
14	Lincoln Circuit Court	156	178	996
16	Lowndes Circuit Court	421	539	2,046
20	Madison Circuit Court	517	604	742
15	Marion Circuit Court	327	496	1,569
3	Marshall Circuit Court	207	39	1,077
1	Monroe Circuit Court	429	377	1,301
5	Montgomery Circuit Court	68	48	161
8	Neshoba Circuit Court	337	296	287
8	Newton Circuit Court	119	89	206
16	Noxubee Circuit Court	9	2	405
16	Oktibbeha Circuit Court	161	263	393
17	Panola Circuit Court	365	289	2,668
15	Pearl River Circuit Court	413	488	2,953
12	Perry Circuit Court	37	505	145
14	Pike Circuit Court	256	281	3,116
1	Pontotoc Circuit Court	241	262	731
1	Prentiss Circuit Court	489	220	4,101
11	Quitman Circuit Court	26	0	33
20	Rankin Circuit Court	708	790	687
8	Scott Circuit Court	178	126	530
9	Sharkey Circuit Court	15	0	17
13	Simpson Circuit Court	149	180	940
13	Smith Circuit Court	47	1	744
2	Stone Circuit Court	118	74	760
4	Sunflower Circuit Court	52	17	1,017
17	Tallahatchie Circuit	69	0	1,950
17	Tate Circuit Court	159	191	200
3	Tippah Circuit Court	139	332	62
1	Tishomingo Circuit Court	178	220	714
11	Tunica Circuit Court	48	35	259
3	Union Circuit Court	328	339	5,032
14	Walthall Circuit Court	75	78	324
9	Warren Circuit Court	253	90	10,482
4	Washington Circuit Court	238	232	3,904
10	Wayne Circuit Court	67	32	1,947
5	Webster Circuit Court	19	37	116
6	Wilkinson Circuit Court	31	3	28
5	Winston Circuit Court	57	0	556
17	Yalobusha Circuit Court	80	94	1,182
21	Yazoo Circuit Court	75	56	1,055
	TOTALS	17,704	17,806	120,296

Counties listed in red were not using the MEC system for criminal filings as of 12/31/2024.

Circuit Criminal Cases Filed/Closed/Pending Calendar Year 2024

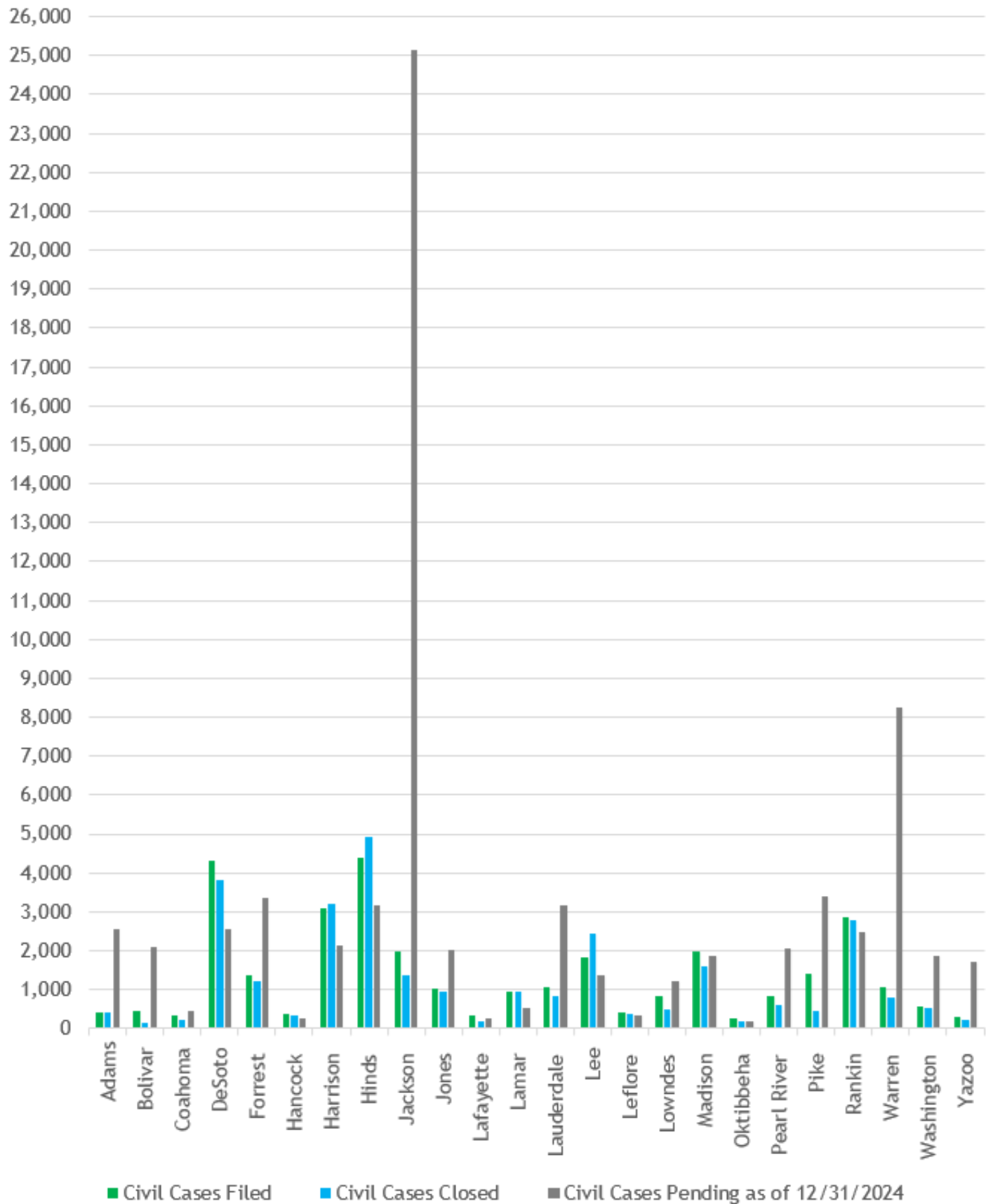




County Court Civil Cases Filed/Closed/Pending Calendar Year 2024			
County Court	Civil Cases Filed CY 2024	Civil Cases Closed CY 2024	Civil Cases Pending 12/31/2024
Adams County Court	409	398	2,537
Bolivar County Court	438	140	2,082
Coahoma County Court	324	228	450
DeSoto County Court	4,317	3,807	2,555
Forrest County Court	1,357	1,228	3,350
Hancock County Court	386	341	278
Harrison County Court	3,095	3,189	2,125
Hinds County Court	4,381	4,933	3,150
Jackson County Court	1,966	1,358	25,157
Jones County Court	1,007	960	2,004
Lafayette County Court	320	190	266
Lamar County Court	949	967	521
Lauderdale County Court	1,071	827	3,151
Lee County Court	1,829	2,438	1,356
Leflore County Court	424	388	327
Lowndes County Court	820	490	1,231
Madison County Court	1,997	1,611	1,856
Oktibbeha County Court	256	174	179
Pearl River County Court	845	588	2,076
Pike County Court	1,396	447	3,403
Rankin County Court	2,843	2,770	2,469
Warren County Court	1,046	779	8,231
Washington County Court	570	531	1,853
Yazoo County Court	303	229	1,710
TOTALS	32,349	29,011	72,317

Leflore County, listed in red, was not using MEC as of 12/31/2024.

County Court Civil Cases Filed/Closed/Pending Calendar Year 2024



YOUTH COURTS, CALENDAR YEAR 2024

COUNTY	Total Referrals			Formally Adjudicated Referrals			Referrals Handled Informally		
	ABUSE	NEGLECT	DELINQUENT	ABUSE	NEGLECT	DELINQUENT	ABUSE	NEGLECT	DELINQUENT
ADAMS	76	190	280	4	101	197	72	89	83
ALCORN	234	977	130	11	79	39	223	898	91
AMITE	34	51	9	6	7	2	28	44	7
ATTALA	92	144	66	0	9	44	92	135	22
BENTON	60	180	42	6	31	39	54	149	3
BOLIVAR	80	268	181	55	176	122	25	92	59
CALHOUN	33	226	35	0	29	33	33	197	2
CARROLL	37	36	19	6	16	18	31	20	1
CHICKASAW	9	32	71	4	27	71	5	5	0
CHOCTAW	359	462	16	0	6	15	359	456	1
CLAIBORNE	3	3	96	2	3	68	1	0	28
CLARKE	9	48	64	5	29	51	4	19	13
CLAY	55	125	85	8	24	79	47	101	6
COAHOMA	23	84	176	8	28	117	15	56	59
COPIAH	56	177	45	3	33	20	53	144	25
COVINGTON	47	174	91	1	21	60	46	153	31
DESOTO	916	1399	2010	72	159	1489	844	1240	521
FORREST	116	474	276	24	108	153	92	366	123
FRANKLIN	38	71	40	0	6	9	38	65	31
GEORGE	67	308	55	5	49	18	62	259	37
GREENE	18	77	5	1	33	1	17	44	4
GRENADA	38	98	135	25	59	118	13	39	17
HANCOCK	270	985	178	8	166	98	262	819	80
HARRISON	1256	3235	1496	20	181	507	1236	3054	989
HINDS	310	774	520	189	504	414	121	270	106
HOLMES	102	41	66	0	4	65	102	37	1
HUMPHREYS	21	67	50	7	26	48	14	41	2
ISSAQUENA	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0
ITAWAMBA	105	285	72	5	36	50	100	249	22
JACKSON	234	616	649	15	163	411	219	453	238
JASPER	18	84	54	1	18	48	17	66	6
JEFFERSON	5	32	50	5	32	31	0	0	19
JEFFERSON DAVIS	44	90	18	27	47	16	17	43	2
JONES	119	508	976	90	433	806	29	75	170
KEMPER	7	42	6	1	1	6	6	41	0
LAFAYETTE	141	360	246	12	72	245	129	288	1
LAMAR	271	525	254	7	70	141	264	455	113
LAUDERDALE	182	789	590	5	108	352	177	681	238
LAWRENCE	32	118	166	6	55	161	26	63	5
LEAKE	10	66	21	4	13	21	6	53	0
LEE	718	1921	609	23	173	474	695	1748	135

YOUTH COURTS, CALENDAR YEAR 2024

COUNTY	Total Referrals			Formally Adjudicated Referrals			Referrals Handled Informally		
	ABUSE	NEGLECT	DELINQUENT	ABUSE	NEGLECT	DELINQUENT	ABUSE	NEGLECT	DELINQUENT
LEFLORE	43	106	138	33	72	102	10	34	36
LINCOLN	60	137	191	18	41	163	42	96	28
LOWNDES	367	621	396	37	116	274	330	505	122
MADISON	230	337	473	12	30	453	218	307	20
MARION	108	309	219	39	171	206	69	138	13
MARSHALL	261	792	228	24	84	214	237	708	14
MONROE	4	50	74	2	27	55	2	23	19
MONTGOMERY	10	14	24	2	3	24	8	11	0
NESHOBA	53	340	116	2	24	114	51	316	2
NEWTON	4	21	46	0	8	45	4	13	1
NOXUBEE	1	6	17	1	6	1	0	0	16
OKTIBBEHA	94	555	136	12	70	120	82	485	16
PANOLA	70	317	316	4	41	251	66	276	65
PEARL RIVER	350	625	119	9	57	62	341	568	57
PERRY	29	61	18	7	13	15	22	48	3
PIKE	165	444	295	27	122	205	138	322	90
PONTOTOC	184	617	148	18	40	128	166	577	20
PRENTISS	98	320	144	6	87	126	92	233	18
QUITMAN	36	157	34	3	9	33	33	148	1
RANKIN	906	1369	1259	18	235	442	888	1134	817
SCOTT	23	62	112	6	26	95	17	36	17
SHARKEY	0	0	11	0	0	1	0	0	10
SIMPSON	101	247	120	1	54	116	100	193	4
SMITH	32	265	52	6	50	50	26	215	2
STONE	115	235	35	10	54	19	105	181	16
SUNFLOWER	128	281	120	27	61	82	101	220	38
TALLAHATCHIE	17	46	57	2	4	57	15	42	0
TATE	41	100	179	7	28	132	34	72	47
TIPPAH	118	391	95	0	37	85	118	354	10
TISHOMINGO	112	273	81	9	31	67	103	242	14
TUNICA	30	108	186	1	9	103	29	99	83
UNION	191	226	42	9	21	41	182	205	1
WALTHALL	36	104	94	4	23	84	32	81	10
WARREN	153	398	246	60	172	242	93	226	4
WASHINGTON	227	656	430	77	181	263	150	475	167
WAYNE	26	116	279	6	70	171	20	46	108
WEBSTER	28	43	25	9	10	25	19	33	0
WILKINSON	9	34	19	0	12	5	9	22	14
WINSTON	136	189	52	2	12	52	134	177	0
YALOBUSHA	35	86	37	9	14	34	26	72	3
YAZOO	113	182	161	5	23	51	108	159	110
TOTALS	10,889	27,382	16,773	1,195	5,283	11,466	9,794	22,099	5,307

ACCESS TO THE COURTS

Mississippi Access to Justice Commission

The Mississippi Supreme Court created the Access to Justice Commission on June 28, 2006, to develop a unified strategy to improve access to the civil courts for the poor. A core goal of the Commission is to develop and implement initiatives designed to expand civil access to justice for poor Mississippians.



Left to right, Chancellor Jacqueline Mask, Access to Justice Commission Co-Chair; MATJC Executive Director Nicole McLaughlin; and Co-Chair Rodger Wilder listen to Department of Human Services Executive Director Robert Anderson, at center, during a January 30, 2024, quarterly Commission meeting in Jackson. At right are AOC Language Access Director Deenie Miller and Jennifer Morgan, Parent Defense Program Manager for the Office of State Public Defender.

The Access to Justice Commission in 2024 conducted nine pro se clinics in Chancery Courts of the First Chancery District. During those free civil legal clinics, 263 clients were assisted by 134 volunteer lawyers and 35 law students from the University of Mississippi School of Law. The Access to Justice Commission partnered with members of the Lee County Bar Association to host two estate planning legal clinics for school administrators and first responders. The Commission also partnered with the 14th Chancery District to host a family law clinic and with the Mississippi Center for Justice to host an expungement clinic.

The Access to Justice Commission continues to develop forms to assist low-income people with civil legal issues. As of the end of 2024, the Commission had on its website interactive forms for emancipation, adult name change, domestic abuse protection and irreconcilable differences divorce without children. About 56 percent of the people who start an online form actually complete it. The Commission hopes to be able to add a much needed form for irreconcilable differences divorce with children.

The Commission has developed and provides on its website informational material on a variety of topics to assist pro se litigants. For instance, chancellors asked the Commission to create an informational sheet outlining child custody options in Mississippi. The Commission in 2024 also finalized two resources regarding guardianship — what guardianship is and what the procedure entails. A list of frequently asked questions regarding wills was created to assist individuals attending estate planning legal clinics. The Parents' Rights in Youth Court pamphlet was updated in 2024 to reflect legislative changes. These and more informational materials are on the website at www.msajtc.org.

The Commission in 2024 realized a goal of providing a modest means directory of attorneys to address the needs of people who financially do not qualify for legal aid but lack the resources to hire an attorney. The Commission partnered with the Mississippi Bar to add a section that lists attorneys who are willing to take payment plans or reduce their fees if a client meets certain income qualifications. The directory is on the Bar's website, www.msbar.org.

The Access to Justice Commission continued its partnership with the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Mississippi in the annual POWER Act program that promotes pro bono legal services to empower victims of domestic violence. The program was held on September 13, 2024, in Oxford and included presentations from the Mississippi Attorney General's Bureau of Victim Assistance, the Mississippi Volunteer Lawyer's Project, North Mississippi Family Center and the University of Mississippi's Survivor Support program.

In an effort to promote interest in the legal profession among high school students, the Commission continued its collaboration with courts, judges and other officials in Lee County to present the annual Themis Law Camp. Chancellor Jacqueline Mask, Co-Chair of the Access to Justice Commission, spearheaded efforts to create the program in 2022. The third annual Themis Law Camp was conducted June 24-27, 2024, in Tupelo. The program serves as a model. The Commission provided information to other courts that are expected to conduct law camps for high school students in 2025.

Mississippi Volunteer Lawyers Project

Volunteer attorneys help fill the gap for access to the courts for Mississippians who can't afford to hire a lawyer to represent them in family law and other civil justice issues. Two Legal Services organizations provide assistance to poor people across the state, but there are too few Legal Services attorneys to meet the needs of all who qualify for assistance. Since the nonprofit MVLP was founded in 1982, it has served more than 48,000 Mississippians. During 2024,

1,423 individuals were served. During the year, MVLP opened 967 cases, and successfully closed 825 cases with services. MVLP hosted 28 free legal clinics, providing help to 321 individuals.

The free family law clinics address issues including divorce, child custody, child support and guardianships. MVLP also assists low-income people with bankruptcy matters, foreclosure prevention, landlord tenant issues and expungements. Family law clinics are designed to give people enough basic legal advice and directions so that they can handle legal matters on their own in Chancery Court. Attorneys at the legal clinics help clients prepare documents, give limited legal advice and help them get ready to go to court on their own. Chancellors are available during the clinics to hear cases which are ready to be resolved immediately.

Judicial leadership is crucial in providing access to the courts for people who cannot afford to hire an attorney. MVLP honored Chancellor Bennie Richard of Greenville with the 2024 Beacon of Justice Award for his work providing access to court through quarterly family law clinics for low-income people. Judge Richard continued the program which



MVLP Board Chair Alicia Hall, at left, presents the Beacon of Justice Award to Chancellor Bennie Richard on December 10, 2024.

his predecessor, former Chancellor Marie Wilson, began in 2007 in Washington County. Judge Wilson was honored as a Beacon of Justice recipient in 2016 for her development and oversight of the quarterly free family law clinics.

MVLP is a non-profit, cooperative effort of the Mississippi Bar, Mississippi Center for Legal Services and North Mississippi Rural Legal Services.

Civil Legal Assistance Fund

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

The Supreme Court in Fiscal Year 2024 distributed \$667,943.96 for civil legal assistance for low-income people. Since the Civil Legal Assistance Fund was created in 2004, more than \$12.9 million has been disbursed to help poor people gain access to the legal system.

The funds held by the Administrative Office of Courts are disbursed quarterly to the Mississippi Center for Legal Services, North Mississippi Rural Legal Services and the Mississippi Volunteer Lawyers Project. The funds are paid from special assessments on court filings and from fees charged to out-of-state attorneys appearing *pro hac vice*. The Supreme Court added the Access to Justice Commission to those entities receiving funding in 2018. The Court directed the Mississippi Bar to retain one-third of *pro hac vice* fees to be used by the Access to Justice Commission, and to forward two-thirds to the Administrative Office of Courts for the Civil Legal Assistance Fund.

CIVIL LEGAL ASSISTANCE FUND	
Year	Distribution Amount
2004	\$115,000.00
2005	\$230,000.00
2006	\$145,000.00
2007	\$280,000.00
2008	\$774,663.00
2009	\$887,000.00
2010	\$800,000.00
2011	\$753,000.00
2012	\$662,500.00
2013	\$594,119.09
2014	\$597,480.76
2015	\$797,192.69
2016	\$785,254.03
2017	\$727,075.77
2018	\$717,325.07
2019	\$742,295.55
2020	\$710,955.07
2021	\$661,718.85
2022	\$639,744.36
2023	\$673,021.55
2024	\$667,943.96
TOTAL	\$12,961,289.75



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