

# 2023 Annual Report







# 2023

## Annual Report

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Sharon L. Kennedy

CHIEF JUSTICE

Patrick F. Fischer

R. Patrick DeWine

Michael P. Donnelly

Melody J. Stewart

Jennifer Brunner

Joseph T. Deters

JUSTICES

Robert W. Horner, III

ADMINISTRATIVE DIRECTOR

James P. Cappelli

DEPUTY ADMINISTRATIVE DIRECTOR,  
OPERATIONS

Gina White Palmer

DEPUTY ADMINISTRATIVE DIRECTOR,  
LEGAL SERVICES

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# *Dear Ohioans:*

On behalf of my colleagues, I welcome you to explore the Annual Report of the Supreme Court of Ohio for 2023. Between these pages, you will learn about the work of the court in deciding cutting-edge questions of law and the assistance that court staff provide to judges, attorneys, and the citizens of Ohio. Three principles guide the court in fulfilling its duties: service, outreach, and value.

*Every day*, the court decides cases that impact the lives of every Ohioan. Whether it is answering constitutional or statutory questions or resolving conflicts in state or federal law, the court safeguards the rights of citizens while maintaining fairness and certainty in the law. The people working in the court's legal services divisions aid in this important task.

*Every day*, the court ensures access to justice throughout the state by providing services to local courts. These services include case management and interpreter assistance, the assignment of judges, and the regulation of the practice of law.

*Every day*, the court provides education to the public, judges, court staff, and attorneys through guided tours, programs, and off-site court, the Judicial College, the Law Library, and the Office of Public Information. The court's operations divisions make this happen.

The court extends these services to judges, court staff, attorneys, students, and the public at large through outreach. The court collects caseload and timeliness data to secure transparency in the judicial branch and assist courts in promptly resolving cases. It provides legal and professional education to judges and court personnel while opening its doors to schools, citizens, and the media. The court monitors legislative developments and listens to experts on the court's advisory committees, boards, commissions, and task forces to improve access to justice and the practice of law.

The court enhances the values we all share: excellence, integrity, accountability, equality, independence, trust, respect, and neutrality. In upholding the rule of law, the court ensures that parties to litigation have a voice and are heard and respected throughout a case. The court promotes standards of integrity and accountability for judges and attorneys, and it builds trust in an efficient and impartial court system. And the court strives for excellence as a careful steward of taxpayer dollars.

Florence E. Allen, the first female Justice on this court, once said, "The attainment of justice is the highest human endeavor."

After you read this Annual Report, the court hopes you will see that the attainment of justice is our core mission. We do this by deciding difficult legal questions of statewide importance and by fostering open courts that are ready to serve to resolve people's disputes in a timely manner. In doing this, we impact the lives of everyday Ohioans, every day.

May God bless you!



**Sharon L. Kennedy**

Chief Justice



# Table of Contents

Justices of the Supreme Court .....	1
2023 Year in Review .....	9
New Leadership and Priorities .....	12
Notable Case Decisions .....	15
Assigned Visiting Judges .....	23
<b>Administrative Operations .....</b>	<b>25</b>
Administrative Structure .....	29
Office of the Chief Legal Counsel .....	30
Assignment of Judges .....	34
Office of the Chief Fiscal Officer .....	36
Judiciary/Supreme Court Budget .....	37
<b>Legal Services .....</b>	<b>38</b>
Clerk of the Court .....	39
Case Statistics .....	40
Reporter of Decisions .....	44
Legal Resources Division .....	45
Attorney Services Division .....	46
Modernizing Attorney Registration .....	52
Rural Practice Initiative .....	53
Court Services Division .....	55
Summit on Children 2023 .....	59
Resources for Local Courts .....	62
Reentry Task Force .....	66
Judicial College .....	67
<b>Operations .....</b>	<b>72</b>
Commission on the Thomas J. Moyer Ohio Judicial Center .....	73
Andrew “Andy” Douglas Portrait Dedication .....	74
Facilities Management Division .....	75
Human Resources .....	77
Information Technology Division .....	79
Law Library .....	80
Public Information .....	82
Off-Site Court .....	85
Commemorating Black History .....	86
Court Security .....	87





# Justices of the Supreme Court of Ohio



Standing, from left: Justice Jennifer Brunner, Justice Michael P. Donnelly, Justice Melody J. Stewart, and Justice Joseph T. Deters.

Seated, from left: Justice Patrick F. Fischer, Chief Justice Sharon L. Kennedy, and Justice R. Patrick DeWine

**Chief Justice Sharon L. Kennedy** assumed the role of the 11th chief justice of the Supreme Court of Ohio following her election in November 2022. She was first elected to the court as a justice to fill an unexpired term in 2012 and was reelected in 2014 and 2020.

Chief Justice Kennedy began her career in the justice system as a police officer in the City of Hamilton. Transitioning to a legal career, she became a solo practitioner serving the needs of families and the less fortunate. Her judicial tenure began in 1998 when she was elected as a judge on the Butler County Court of Common Pleas, Domestic Relations Division. Later, as the administrative judge of the division, she spearheaded initiatives to enhance case-clearance rates, streamline case management, and facilitate pathways to employment for individuals with child-support obligations.

As a justice of the Supreme Court, she championed the statewide “Lean Forward” initiative to educate judges and criminal justice partners about the services available to justice-involved veterans with the goal of providing treatment instead of incarceration when appropriate.

As chief justice, she remains dedicated to advancing specialized dockets and has initiated substantive efforts towards meaningful reentry, so that formerly incarcerated individuals who have achieved a life restored can live a life restored. Continuing her efforts to improve Ohioans’ access to justice, the chief justice is addressing the lawyer shortage in 82 of Ohio’s 88 counties through the Rural Practice Initiative. By leveraging strategic partnerships, education, and incentivization, the initiative encourages lawyers to practice in underserved communities, aiming to ensure adequate legal representation across Ohio.

Chief Justice Sharon L. Kennedy earned an undergraduate degree from the University of Cincinnati, School of Social Work, and her Juris Doctorate from the University of Cincinnati College of Law.



**Sharon L. Kennedy**  
CHIEF JUSTICE

December 7, 2012 - Present

Garrett Anderson  
Francis “Bud” Barnes  
Dorothy Gass-Lower  
Alyssa Guthrie  
Taylor Lovejoy  
James W. Sheridan



**Patrick F. Fischer**  
JUSTICE

January 1, 2017 - Present

Kylie A. Conley  
Jenna C. Foos  
Christine L. Hahn  
Ronald L. Wadlinger II

**Justice Patrick Fischer** received the Ohio State Bar Association's (OSBA) most prestigious award in 2023, the Ohio Bar Medal, which is given to a lawyer or judge for "dedicated service to the legal profession, the community, and humanity."

Justice Fischer was first elected in November 2016 and again in November 2022. Previously, he had been twice elected to serve as a judge on the First District Court of Appeals. An honors graduate of Harvard Law School and Harvard College, he tried cases throughout the country, and was named to Best Lawyers in America, Top 50 Lawyers [Cincinnati], Top 100 Lawyers [Ohio], and routinely to Ohio Super Lawyers.

Then Judge Fischer served as president of the OSBA, and previously served on its board and on numerous other OSBA committees. He also served two terms on the Ohio Lawyers Assistance Program board. He was elected by his peers as president of the Cincinnati Bar Association (CBA) for 2006 - 2007 and served on numerous CBA committees.

Justice Fischer has an abiding interest in ethics and professionalism. As an attorney, he served two terms on the Ohio Supreme Court's Commission on Professionalism, including as vice chair. He also chaired the CBA's Ethics and Professional Responsibility Committee, as well as the Professionalism Committee.

Having represented plaintiffs and defendants, Justice Fischer is keenly aware of the importance of listening to all sides and that the law be applied properly. Then Chief Justice Thomas J. Moyer named him to co-chair a task force to make the Ohio judicial system more efficient. Justice Fischer also served on the Ohio Constitutional Modernization Commission and was vice chair of its judiciary committee.

Justice Fischer began his legal career as a clerk for U.S. District Court Judge William Bertelsman, and in 1987, he began working in the trial department for Keating Muething & Klekamp, and four years later became a partner.

Justice Fischer has been a dedicated public servant, committing time to numerous boards including Hamilton County Mental Health & Recovery Services, Visions Community Services, St. Ursula Villa, and the Pleasant Ridge Community Council. A founding member of the Cincinnati Children's Museum board, he later served as president.

Justice Fischer and his wife, Jane, live in Cincinnati, and have one married daughter who is an Ohio attorney, and two grandsons. A graduate of St. Xavier High School, he also is a longtime and active member of St. Xavier Church in Cincinnati.

**Justice Pat DeWine** was reelected to a second term on the Supreme Court of Ohio in November 2022. An excellent writer, Justice DeWine is known for the quality and thoroughness of his legal opinions. His opinions reflect his strong belief in judicial restraint and his respect for the constitutional roles of the other coequal branches of government.

Justice DeWine has served at all levels of the Ohio judiciary. Prior to his election to the Supreme Court, Justice DeWine served for four years on the First District Court of Appeals, and prior to that, for four years on the Hamilton County Common Pleas Court.

Justice DeWine has a strong commitment to furthering the rule of law through education. He is an adjunct professor at the University of Cincinnati College of Law where he has taught Appellate Practice and Procedure for the past 11 years. In addition, he has taught undergraduate courses at the University of Cincinnati.

Justice DeWine graduated from the University of Michigan Law School in the top ten percent of his class with Order of the Coif honors. He received his undergraduate education at Miami University, where he earned summa cum laude honors. He was also a member of the Varsity Track and Cross Country teams.

After law school, he clerked for the Honorable David A. Nelson on the United States Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit. Justice DeWine later practiced law for 13 years in Cincinnati with KMK Law, where he handled a diverse range of litigation matters.

Prior to becoming a judge, Justice DeWine served as a Hamilton County Commissioner and a member of Cincinnati City Council. He was a founder of the Build Cincinnati reform group that successfully passed a charter amendment to allow Cincinnati voters to directly elect the Mayor.



**R. Patrick DeWine**  
JUSTICE

January 2, 2017 - Present

Shea Daley  
Nathaniel Fouch  
Razi Lane  
Ed Matin  
Audra Robitaille  
Joseph Spica  
Lauren Staley  
Paul Taske



**Michael P. Donnelly**  
JUSTICE

January 1, 2019 - Present

Robert Burpee  
Hugh Dowell  
Christine Einloth  
Cheryl Hannan\*  
Rebecca Rabb

*\* Retired in 2023*

**Justice Michael P. Donnelly** took office in January 2019. Prior to joining the Court, Justice Donnelly served as a judge on the Cuyahoga County Court of Common Pleas, General Division for 14 years. He also served on the Cuyahoga County Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities Court, which oversees criminal cases involving defendants who suffer from severe mental illness or developmental disabilities. Before serving as a member of the judiciary, Justice Donnelly was an assistant Cuyahoga County Prosecutor, and he later practiced civil litigation for seven years.

Justice Donnelly served on the Supreme Court of Ohio's Commission on Professionalism, chairing the Commission during his final year. He helped establish the highly successful Lawyer to Lawyer Mentoring Program, which received national accolades. He also spent more than a decade personally mentoring new lawyers.

Justice Donnelly accepts numerous speaking invitations throughout the year to advocate for comprehensive data-driven criminal justice reform, plea bargaining reform, and the elimination of wrongful convictions. In 2023 he was invited to speak and participate at the inaugural meeting of the Plea Bargaining Institute at Belmont University College of Law.

Additionally, Justice Donnelly participated in the "Innovative Leadership Skills for Leader-Manager Judges Project," created by the National Judicial College to empower future judicial leaders across the United States to improve the functioning of the justice system.

Justice Donnelly has been a faculty member of the Ohio Judicial College, teaching both attorneys and judges at numerous continuing legal education seminars on professionalism, criminal and civil justice reform, and procedural fairness. He has served as a member of the Ohio Board of Bar Examiners and the Ohio Jury Instruction Committee. He served on the Ohio Supreme Court Joint Task Force to Review the Administration of Ohio's Death Penalty and as the Court's liaison to the Task Force on Conviction Integrity and Post-Conviction Review. That task force issued its formal recommendations in August 2022 for improving the post-conviction process for claims of innocence.

Justice Donnelly's awards include the 2015 Honorable William K. Thomas Professionalism Award from the Cleveland Metropolitan Bar Association, the 2017 Public Service Award from the Ohio Association of Civil Trial Attorneys, and the 2020 Alumni of the Year Award from Cleveland State University College of Law. He was inducted into Cleveland State University College of Law Hall of Fame in 2020.

He is a graduate of Cleveland's St. Ignatius High School and John Carroll University, and he received his Juris Doctorate degree from Cleveland State University College of Law.

**Justice Melody J. Stewart** was elected in 2018 to a full term as the Supreme Court's 161st Justice. Prior to joining the Court, Justice Stewart served on the Eighth District Court of Appeals for twelve years and was that court's Administrative Judge in 2013.

Justice Stewart has more than 35 years of combined administrative, legal, and academic experience. She was an administrator for a health care management company, a music teacher, a civil defense litigator, and a law school administrator and professor before being elected to the appellate court.

She earned a Bachelor of Music degree from the College-Conservatory of Music at the University of Cincinnati; her law degree from the College of Law at Cleveland State University; and her Ph.D. as a Mandel Leadership Fellow at Case Western Reserve University (CWRU) School of Applied Social Sciences. She also holds an Honorary Doctor of Laws degree from Cleveland State University.

After practicing law as an assistant law director, Justice Stewart worked as an adjunct instructor, and an assistant dean at Cleveland State's law school before joining the full-time faculty. She taught also at the University of Toledo College of Law and at Ursuline College and was the Director of Student Services, School of Law at Case Western.

Some honors and awards received in recognition of Justice Stewart's service on the Supreme Court include Public Elected Official of the Year by the National Association of Social Workers (OH Chapter Region V) • Hon. William K. Thomas Professionalism Award by the Cleveland Metropolitan Bar Association • Advocate for Social Justice and Leadership Development Award by the Mandel School at CWRU • Nettie Cronise Lutes Award (recognizing a woman lawyer who has improved the legal profession through her high level of professionalism) by the Ohio State Bar Association • Government in Action Award (honoring a woman who has demonstrated strong leadership by promoting opportunities for women and who has been influential in the public sector and the community she serves) by the Ohio Women's Bar Association • St. Thomas More Award (honoring persons of exemplary quality) by the Lawyers Guild of the Cleveland Catholic Diocese and featured in *Trailblazing Women in Ohio Politics and The HistoryMakers®*.

Justice Stewart is admitted to practice in the state and federal courts in Ohio, the District of Columbia, and the United States Supreme Court. Of historical note, Justice Stewart is the first African American woman elected to the Supreme Court of Ohio.



**Melody J. Stewart**  
JUSTICE

January 2, 2019 - Present

Caitlin Hill  
Joseph Nelson  
Alexis V. Preskar  
Arleathia L. Radcliffe  
Chelsea Rubin  
Sarah R. Stafford



**Jennifer Brunner**  
JUSTICE

January 2, 2021 - Present

John Biancamano  
Stacy Brooks  
Benjamin Tracy  
Kara Wells

**Justice Jennifer Brunner** is the 162nd justice of the Supreme Court of Ohio. Prior to joining the high Court, Justice Brunner served on the Tenth District Court of Appeals. Earlier in her career, she served on the Franklin County Court of Common Pleas, initiating the county's first adult felony drug court program, "Treatment is Essential to Success (TIES)," still in operation today. In 2006, Justice Brunner was elected Ohio's first woman Secretary of State. In 2008, then Secretary Brunner was the first of two Ohioans to receive the bipartisan John F. Kennedy Profile in Courage Award for courageous elected public service since the award's inception in 1989.

Justice Brunner holds 17 years of private law practice experience. She founded her own law firm in 1988 after gaining experience as an associate in a Cleveland law firm and clerking for several law firms as a law student. Justice Brunner's solo and law firm private practice was focused in election and government law, campaign finance, and election litigation. She has performed legislative and rule drafting, multi-state and Federal Communications Commission telecom compliance legal work for low-income cellular service providers, computer law, government contracting, criminal appellate work, and general litigation. She served as the administrative partner of her law firm for six years.

Justice Brunner has provided rule of law technical expertise through United States Agency for International Development-funded U.S. State Department projects in the Republic of Serbia, election observation in the Arab Republic of Egypt, and rule of law instruction at the bar association of Sri Lanka. She has performed remote technical training on civil society issues to the Republic of Kazakhstan, and in-person assistance to the Republic of Benin's Human Rights Commission. She has gained a deep understanding of the importance of a strong and well-functioning judiciary to preserving the rule of law for peace and healthy democracies.

Justice Brunner has served on state and local governmental boards, appointed by both Republican and Democratic governors and other local officials, including the Ohio Counselor, Social Worker, Marriage and Family Therapist Board; the Ohio Cultural Facilities Commission; the Ohio Student Loan Commission; the Central Ohio Transit Authority; and the Franklin County Board of Elections.

Justice Brunner served as an attorney in the Ohio Secretary of State's office early in her legal career and as a committee secretary and legislative aide in the Ohio Senate following her undergraduate work at Miami University in Sociology-Gerontology.

**Justice Joseph T. Deters** was sworn in as the 163rd justice of the Supreme Court of Ohio on January 7, 2023, following appointment by Governor Mike DeWine. As a Justice, he believes in upholding the Ohio and U.S. Constitutions while demonstrating judicial restraint and respect for our coequal branches of government.

While growing up in Cincinnati, Justice Deters admired his grandfather, long-time Hamilton County Sheriff Dan Tehan, and followed in his footsteps by pursuing a career in public service.

In 1982, Justice Deters began his career as an assistant prosecutor in Hamilton County. It was there, while working in the felony trial division, that he realized the needs of victims and their families went unnoticed. After becoming prosecutor in 1992, Justice Deters created the county's first victim/witness advocate program. Victim advocates attend court hearings, provide emotional support, and connect victims of crime with available resources.

As prosecutor, Justice Deters established the first drug court in Ohio in partnership with the Hamilton County Court of Common Pleas. He witnessed firsthand the strain addiction had on local courts and law enforcement. As a result, Hamilton County's Drug Treatment and Recovery Court oversees more cases than any other specialized docket in the state. He also helped develop several diversion programs for first time non-violent offenders, established a sex offender unit within the prosecutor's office, and formed a unit focused solely on violent crimes against women and children.

Justice Deters is Hamilton County's longest-tenured prosecutor, holding that position from 1992–1999, and again from 2005–2023. Justice Deters was also elected statewide as Ohio Treasurer for two terms, in 1998 and 2002, where he collected, managed, and invested more than \$11 billion in assets for Ohio. Justice Deters also served as Hamilton County's Clerk of Courts from 1988–1992.

Justice Deters attended the University of Cincinnati where he received both his undergraduate and law degrees. In 1997, he was the recipient of U.C. Law School's Nicholas Longworth, III, Alumni Achievement Award for outstanding contributions in legal practice, and public and community service.

In 2023, he was named Xavier University's "Justice in Residence"—an honorary position. He is a member of the Ohio State Bar Association. He previously served on the University of Cincinnati Board of Trustees, the Ohio Organized Crime Commission, and the Southern Ohio Leukemia Foundation.

Justice Deters lives with his wife, Tanya, in Cincinnati. They have six children and two grandchildren.



**Joseph T. Deters**  
JUSTICE

January 7, 2023 - Present

Francesca Boland  
Melissa Goodyear  
Emily Smith  
Mary Stier

## January

**Jan. 1**

Chief Justice Sharon L. Kennedy begins her term as Ohio's eleventh chief justice of the Supreme Court.

Justice Patrick F. Fischer begins his second term on the Court.



**Jan. 2**

Justice R. Patrick DeWine begins his second term on the Court.

**Jan. 7**

Joseph T. Deters is sworn in as the 163<sup>rd</sup> justice of the Court.

**Jan. 25**

Formal investiture ceremony for the Honorable Chief Justice Kennedy in leading the state judicial branch of government. The Honorable Evelyn Lundberg Stratton, retired justice of the Supreme Court of Ohio, administers the Oath of Office. *[See story page 11.]*

## February

**Feb. 8**

Teachers from across Ohio visit the Court experiencing Government in Action sponsored by the Ohio Center for Law Related Education. Chief Justice Kennedy thanks them for their service and for igniting a dream for a future career in law or government.

**Feb. 20**

The Court Law Library marks 50 years of being a Federal Depository Library.

**Feb. 27**

The Court hosts the Black History Month program, "Opening Doors to Careers in Law." Members of the Law & Leadership Institute share stories of growth through mentoring program that promotes diversity in the legal profession and prepares young people for careers in law and justice.



## March

**March 16**

Teams of judges and magistrates, prosecutors and defense attorneys, and professionals in children services, behavioral health, and educators from 52 counties gathered at the Summit on Children. *[See story page 30.]*



**March 16**

The Court hosts more than 200 high school students from 21 schools across the state for the 40th annual Ohio Center for Law-Related Education Mock Trial State Competition. St. Edward High School in Lakewood wins the state championship.

## April

**April 19**

In its eighty-first session, Off-Site Court is held at the University of Cincinnati College of Law. Off-Site Court provides an opportunity for high school students, law students, and community members to witness the appellate process.



**April 28**

Chief Justice Kennedy announces the Task Force on Reentry. The multidisciplinary group will analyze the needs, services, and practices between courts and the reentry population to take a holistic approach to improve outcomes for formerly incarcerated people as they reenter Ohio communities.

**April 28**

Results of the February Ohio Bar Examination are released. There were 141 first-time test takers and 60% earned passing scores. A total of 358 people sat for the exam and 151 passed.

# 2023 Year in Review

## May

**May 9**

Chief Justice Sharon L. Kennedy addresses the state's largest association of lawyers at the Ohio Bar Association Annual meeting. She applauds their partnership in working to close the gap in access to justice by encouraging young people to practice in communities with too few attorneys.



**May 10**

Forty-two local courts are awarded Supreme Court Technology Grants for projects that will improve court efficiency and provide cost-savings to better serve their community.

**May 15**

Admission to the Bar ceremony is held at the Ohio Theatre. 120 New lawyers who met all requirements are sworn in at this special session of Court.

**May 18**

The inaugural meeting of the Task Force on Reentry. The task force will identify evidence-based best practices to aid in reentry and improve outcomes for those living a life restored.

## June

**June 2**

Milt Nuzum retires as Director of Judicial and Education Services after 16 years at the Court and four decades as an attorney.



**June 28**

The Court celebrates the life and career of Justice Andrew "Andy" Douglas (1932-2021) at a public ceremony to accept the donation of his portrait to the Thomas J. Moyer Ohio Judicial Center collection.

**June 29**

For the first time, attorney registration became a completely online process. The online application was updated, and organizations were able to make group payments online. *[See story page 28.]*

## July

**July 3**

Fireworks light up the night as colleagues, family, and friends celebrate American Independence during Red, White & Boom on the grounds of the Thomas J. Moyer Ohio Judicial Center.

**July 10**

Robert W. Horner, III joins the Court as administrative director. He serves as the chief administrative officer of the judicial branch of Ohio government, working closely with the chief justice and justices of the Supreme Court, as well as judges of the state to develop and communicate the vision, values, and direction of the Ohio judiciary. *[See story page 25.]*



## August

**Aug. 27**

The National Association for State Judicial Educators holds its annual conference for the first time in Ohio. More than 100 leaders in judicial education from across the U.S. learn about new ideas and services to enhance the court experience for the people they serve. *[See story page 33.]*



## September

### Sept. 11

The Court holds a moment of silence in remembrance of the lives lost on Sept. 11, 2001.

### Sept. 14

Chief Justice Kennedy delivers her first annual State of the Judiciary address to more than 400 judges and court leaders. She discusses change through support services for people experiencing reentry from jails and prisons, and people ready for a second chance. She encourages the timely administration of justice and the Rural Practice Initiative, to address the lawyer shortage in Ohio. *[See story page 53.]*



### Sept. 29

The Judicial College educated a total of 118 new magistrates during the combined sessions of New Magistrates Orientation.

## October

### Oct. 2

Civic Education Section awards transportation grants to 98 schools in 39 counties to enable civic education at the award-winning Supreme Court Visitor Education Center.

### Oct. 16

Specialized Dockets Conference draws nearly 600 people including court staff, public defenders, prosecutors, and treatment providers, working to support people involved in the justice system with substance use or mental health disorders.

### Oct. 25

82nd session of Off-Site Court at Buckeye Local High School in Jefferson County drew high school students, legal community, and the public to experience appellate practice first-hand. Chief Justice Kennedy encouraged students to study for a career in the law and return home to serve their community and close a gap in legal representation. *[See story page 84.]*

### Oct. 27

Ohio Bar Examination results are released. A total of 966 people sat for the exam in July, 820 were first-time test takers and 80% earned passing scores.

## November

### Nov. 13

Admission to the Bar ceremony is held with 613 new lawyers being sworn in during this special session of the Supreme Court. Speaking about the Rural Practice Initiative, Chief Justice Kennedy encouraged the new lawyers to consider practicing in legally underserved areas where their service would mean access to justice for people in need of legal representation.



### Nov. 16

Chief Justice Kennedy welcomes guests to a summit dedicated to the healing and recovery of former members of the military as part of the Lean Forward Initiative. The project is a collaboration among courts and treatment providers to improve the care and support services for justice-involved veterans while identifying strategies to address veterans needs so they do not enter the justice system.

## December



### Dec. 14

The Judicial College educated a total of 110 new judges at New Judges Orientation.

### Dec. 22

The Court announces a new organizational structure, including a new Executive Leadership Team and plans for implementation in the coming year.



Chief Justice Sharon L. Kennedy's investiture on January 25.

## New Leadership and Priorities

The year rang in with [an experienced justice taking the helm as chief justice](#) of the state. Chief Justice Sharon L. Kennedy first joined the Supreme Court in 2012. Citizens elected her as chief justice in November 2022, and she began her term as the Ohio's 11th chief justice on Jan. 1, 2023.

At a [formal investiture ceremony](#) on Jan. 25, Chief Justice Kennedy described her role leading the state judiciary as the “greatest honor of her life.” She celebrated the accomplishment surrounded by family, friends, and colleagues. To set the stage for her tenure, she shared her goals for strengthening the state justice system.

One of her priorities is greater efficiency in Ohio courts. Chief Justice Kennedy firmly believes in a person's constitutional right to the timely resolution of court cases. The chief justice wants to work with presiding and administrative judges to reduce the number of criminal cases that are “over-age” – beyond the six-month timeframe for getting those cases to trial.

“Access to justice is more than just the ability to file a case in court, it includes the right to have cases heard in a timely manner,” Chief Justice Kennedy said.

Another initiative is to steer vulnerable people away from the justice system. She plans to increase support for substance use, mental

health, and veterans treatment courts. The goal is for communities to provide services to keep people out of the justice system and to find ways for offenders who have served their sentences to “live life restored” through reentry with community help.

“It is a new day at the Ohio Supreme Court and together, building collaborative problem-solving teams, we will find local solutions for local problems and address the challenges that every court faces,” said Chief Justice Kennedy.

During “Second Chance Month” in April, Chief Justice Kennedy announced a multidisciplinary, statewide Task Force on Reentry and asked it to analyze the needs, services, and practices between courts and the reentry population. The task force will identify best practices to aid in reentry with a holistic approach to improve outcomes for those living a life restored. In addition to prison reentry, the task force will examine local jail release efforts.

Representatives from criminal justice, health care, and community services will look at evidence-based policies and practices, and collaborative efforts to address basic needs toward successful reentry: education, housing, employment, and treatment. The Reentry Task Force will deliver its report of findings and recommendations by June 1, 2024.

As her inaugural year as chief justice moved forward, she [delivered a speech before the Ohio legal community in May](#) at the Ohio State Bar Association (OSBA) Annual Meeting. She applauded the association and its members for working with the courts and the legislature to strengthen legal services. In addition, Chief Justice Kennedy introduced a vehicle for attorneys and parties to request assistance when a timely decision has not occurred in a pending case, known as the Case Inquiry Form. She also called for action to address the shortage of attorneys in most counties to increase access to legal guidance for families in underserved areas of Ohio, the Rural Practice Initiative.

In September, Chief Justice Kennedy [presented her first annual State of the Judiciary address](#). Her update to more than 400 judges and court leaders focused on changing times, changes confronting the judiciary, and how they can adapt and work together to assist their communities.

The chief justice prioritized certification of more specialized dockets to get people back on track after involvement with the legal system due to unmanaged mental health or substance use. She advocated for Settlement Week opportunities to resolve civil disputes in a timely manner. And she encouraged judges to mentor young students, particularly in the underserved areas of the state, so that they could see their own possibilities for service to their community through the law, as they pursue a career.



Reentry Task Force - First Meeting, May 18



OSBA Annual Meeting, May 9



State of the Judiciary, September 14

**"Access to justice is more than just the ability to file a case in court, it includes the right to have cases heard in a timely manner."**

*Chief Justice Sharon L. Kennedy*

## Justices Return for New Term

Justices Patrick F. Fischer and R. Patrick DeWine were sworn in for their second terms on the Supreme Court. Each was first elected to serve on the Court in 2016 and reelected in November 2022.

Before serving on the Court, Justice Fischer was elected twice to the First District Court of Appeals. He has served as president of both the Ohio State Bar Association (OSBA) and Cincinnati Bar Association. He was honored in May with the OSBA's most prestigious award, the Ohio Bar Medal, for "dedicated service to the legal profession, the community, and humanity." In accepting the award, he reminded those in attendance and watching via livestream that American governance is based upon the idea that all reasoned arguments must be heard. He encourages lawyers to lead efforts to restore civil discussion in American life; "listen to others with whom you may disagree."

Justice DeWine has served the people of Ohio through the law in local government, as a private practice attorney, and at all levels of the Ohio judiciary, the trial, appellate, and Supreme Court. His opinions reflect his strong belief in judicial restraint and respect for the separate but equal constitutional roles of the three branches of government. Prior to being elected to the Court, he was a judge on the Hamilton County Common Pleas Court and the First District Court of Appeals. As part of his strong commitment to furthering the rule of law through education, Justice DeWine dedicates time to teaching as an adjunct professor at the University of Cincinnati College of Law.

## New Justice Appointed to the Court

Former Hamilton County prosecutor Joseph T. Deters was appointed to the seat vacated when Justice Sharon L. Kennedy won her bid for chief justice. Justice Deters was sworn in as the 163rd justice of the Supreme Court on January 7, 2023.

Justice Deters believes his role is to ensure Ohio's justice system protects the rights of all Ohioans. His judicial philosophy is shaped by his oath. He applies the law as it is written and respects the separation of powers among the three co-equal branches of government. He brings a unique perspective to the Court having significant trial experience and countless hours inside courtrooms throughout his career. He is truly honored to continue to serve the people of Ohio in his capacity as justice.

Justice Deters has spent the last 40 years in public service, serving twice as prosecutor handling high-profile cases in Hamilton County, one of the state's largest counties. He's also served as Ohio Treasurer and Hamilton County Clerk of Courts.



Justice Patrick F. Fischer



Justice R. Patrick DeWine



Justice Joseph T. Deters

# Notable Case Decisions

## Statewide Issues



### Law to Keep Offenders in Prison Longer is Constitutional

A state law allowing prison officials to retain beyond their minimum terms offenders who violate laws or rules while incarcerated does not violate the constitutional rights of inmates, the Supreme Court ruled.

In a 5-2 decision, the Court affirmed two appellate court decisions finding the “Reagan Tokes Law” to be constitutional. The Reagan Tokes law, which took effect in 2019, imposes an indefinite prison term on those who commit serious felonies. Under the law, the offender is expected to be released once the minimum sentence is served. But the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction can maintain an inmate’s incarceration up to the maximum sentence imposed by the court for committing crimes or breaking rules while serving a sentence.

The Reagan Tokes law is named for a 21-year-old Ohio college student who was abducted,

raped, and murdered in 2017 by a man on parole.

Writing for the Court majority, Justice Joseph T. Deters stated that two men raised a “facial” challenge to the Reagan Tokes law and had to prove that under no circumstances could the law be fairly applied. The pair failed to prove that was the case, raising only hypothetical situations in which an inmate might serve more than the minimum term for a minor prison rule infraction, the opinion noted.

▶ 2020-1496 and 2021-0532.  
*State v. Hacker*,  
[Slip Opinion No. 2023-Ohio-2535](#).

### Bank Must Follow State Procedure to Challenge Transfer of Abandoned Property to County

A national bank seeking to avoid transfers of abandoned property to county land banks should have pursued other remedies available in state court before seeking to compel appropriation proceedings, the Supreme Court ruled.

In a unanimous decision, the Court denied US Bank Trust’s petitions for writs of mandamus alleging that there was an unconstitutional “taking” of private property when counties handed over property with delinquent taxes to land banks. In each case, the fair market value of the property exceeded the amount of taxes owed, and the bank argued it is entitled to the difference between the fair market value and the delinquent taxes.

Writing for the Court, Justice Patrick F. Fischer noted that in two of the three instances, the bank had the ability to contest decisions by the local government to transfer the abandoned properties but took no steps to do so. US Bank’s challenge to a transfer by Lucas County was rejected because the bank did not own the property until a year after it was granted to the land bank and its prior owner did not contest the transfer, Justice Fischer concluded.



Click to watch archived video of oral arguments.

The Court did not address whether the 2006 law allowing counties to transfer properties with delinquent taxes to land banks rather than sell them at auction could result in an unconstitutional taking of private property.

► 2021-1090, 2021-1091, and 2021-1181. *State ex rel. US Bank Trust Natl. Assn. v. Cuyahoga Cty.*, [Slip Opinion No. 2023-Ohio-1063](#).

## Tax Case Decision Has Broad Implications for Future Tax Cases

The Ohio tax commissioner improperly taxed a company for five types of equipment used in blending water, chemicals, and sand for the hydraulic fracturing of oil and gas deposits, the Supreme Court ruled.

A divided Court reversed an Ohio Board of Tax Appeals (BTA) decision on five of six pieces of equipment that Stingray Pressure Pumping argued should have been exempt from taxation. The tax dispute dates back to 2012. The Court noted the case was complicated by a 2018 change in state law that retroactively applied to Stingray's purchases.

Writing for the Court majority, Justice R. Patrick DeWine explained that the Court would no longer construe tax statutes against the taxpayer. In the past, the Court has read tax statutes in a way that favors taxation. But the Court's task is to "provide a fair reading of what the legislature has enacted," he stated. The Court will now read tax statutes neutrally based on their plain and ordinary meaning — not in a manner that favors or opposes taxation, Justice DeWine concluded.

The Court had to determine whether the equipment at issue was used "directly in the production of oil and gas," as claimed by Stingray, or if its use was primarily "storing, holding or delivering solutions," which the BTA ruled is taxable. Justice DeWine explained that like numerous everyday items, the equipment at issue has multiple purposes. But the primary use is what matters. And the primary use of much of the equipment is to produce oil and gas, which means that the equipment is tax exempt, the opinion concluded.

► 2022-0304. *Stingray Pressure Pumping LLC v. Harris*, [Slip Opinion No. 2023-Ohio-2598](#).

## Local Governments Denied Refunds for Workers' Compensation Payments

The Supreme Court dismissed an attempt by more than 2,100 local governments to collect refunds from the Ohio Bureau of Workers' Compensation (BWC) for alleged overpayments made more than a decade ago.

At the request of the BWC, the Court ordered Cuyahoga County Common Pleas Court Judge John P. O'Donnell to dismiss the city of Parma's class action lawsuit. The ruling is the latest to reject refunds of premiums to public employers. The BWC agreed to pay \$420 million in refunds to private employers in 2014.

In a unanimous per curiam opinion, the Supreme Court reiterated that Parma's lawsuit could only be filed in the Ohio Court of Claims. The ruling is based on a 2020 decision in which the Court told the city of Cleveland that its attempt to recoup overpayments from the BWC belonged in the Court of

Claims. In the 2023 decision, the Court noted that Parma could not use "artful pleading" to bypass the Court of Claims' jurisdiction and instead pursue a case in common pleas court.

2022-0108. *State ex rel. Ohio Bur. of Workers' Comp. v. O'Donnell*, [Slip Opinion No. 2023-Ohio-428](#).

## Retire/Rehire Plan Violated Civil Service Law

The city of Wickliffe's fire chief retired and was rehired the next day to the same position. The Supreme Court ruled that rehire violated state law.

In a unanimous opinion, the Court found that the fire department is governed by a competitive promotional examination process and must fill a vacancy based on the competitive exam. The Court ruled that Wickliffe Fire Chief James Powers vacated his position when he retired in January 2020. State law did not authorize Powers to be rehired as chief the next day so he could collect a pension plus his salary, a practice known as "double dipping."

Writing for the Court, Justice Melody Stewart explained that the city argued that Powers had not vacated his position because he intended to stay in the post and his service was continuous. She noted that R.C. 124.48 does not require intent be shown to create a vacancy.

► 2022-0988. *State ex rel. Internatl. Assn. of Fire Fighters, Local 1536, AFL-CIO v. Sakacs*, [Slip Opinion No. 2023-Ohio-2976](#).



### Burglary Conviction Vacated for Man Who Strolled Into Open Garage to Steal Leaf Blower

The Supreme Court vacated the burglary conviction of a man who walked past a homeowner into his open garage and stole a \$500 leaf blower, finding the offender did not use “force, stealth, or deception” to commit the crime.

Instead, the Court directed the Scioto County Common Pleas Court to convict Donald Bertram of misdemeanor criminal trespassing for the September 2020 crime. Bertram had been sentenced to 8 to 12 years in prison for the burglary offense. Sentences for misdemeanor offenses in Ohio are less than a year in jail.

Writing for the unanimous Court, Justice Michael P. Donnelly explained that the lower courts determined Bertram engaged in stealth and deception because he calmly, silently walked past homeowner Timothy Huff, giving no indication that he intended to steal anything. Justice Donnelly wrote that evidence “utterly failed to establish” that Bertram

engaged in any “secret, sly, or clandestine conduct,” which the law requires must be proven to convict someone of felony burglary.

► 2022-1047. *State v. Bertram*, [Slip Opinion No. 2023-Ohio-1456](#).

### Court Upholds Nursing Home Aide's 65-Year Prison Sentence

A trial court properly imposed consecutive sentences when it handed down a 65-year prison term on a former nursing home aide who stole personal items from residents of nursing homes and assisted living facilities in Delaware and Franklin counties, the Supreme Court ruled.

In 2016, Susan Gwynne received an extensive prison term after a Delaware County trial court imposed consecutive sentences, ranging from six months to three years, on 46 theft-related charges. After a series of appeals, the Supreme Court ruled in December 2022 that the sentencing was erroneous. The Court reconsidered its 2022 decision in 2023, and upheld Gwynne's 65-year sentence.

In the lead opinion, Chief Justice Sharon L. Kennedy stated that

the prior ruling in the case was wrongly decided. She wrote that the 2022 decision was based on an issue not raised by Gwynne in her appeal.

Chief Justice Kennedy explained that the law gives appellate courts limited authority to modify a trial court's decision to impose consecutive sentences, and that can be done only if the appeals court determines that “the trial court's findings are clearly and convincingly not supported by the record.” She wrote that the Fifth District Court of Appeals properly concluded that the record supported the trial court's consecutive sentence findings.

► 2021-1033. *State v. Gwynne*, [Slip Opinion No. 2023-Ohio-3851](#).

### Arson Registry Law Is Constitutional

A state law that requires a recommendation from a prosecutor and law enforcement agency to reduce an arson offender's registration obligation is constitutional, the Supreme Court ruled.

A divided Court rejected a Toledo man's challenge to a law that imposes a lifetime registration requirement for certain arson offenders. Tyree Daniel claimed the provision that allows a judge to reduce the registration requirement only after receiving a recommendation from executive branch officials violates the “separation of powers” doctrine of the Ohio Constitution.

Writing for the Court majority, Justice R. Patrick DeWine stated that there is no violation of the separation of powers doctrine. Justice DeWine explained that the registration requirement is not part of Daniel's criminal sentence.



He also explained that even if the registration requirement was considered to be part of Daniel's sentence, the legislature has the power to prescribe criminal sentences, and nothing requires that courts be afforded discretion in imposing a sentence prescribed by the legislature.

► 2022-0603. *State v. Daniel*,  
[Slip Opinion No. 2023-Ohio-4035](#).

### Teen Suspected of Shooting Friend During Car Chase Should Be Tried in Adult Court

Sufficient evidence was presented to transfer a teenager's involuntary manslaughter charge to adult court for allegedly shooting his friend while they were fleeing police in a stolen car, the Supreme Court ruled.

In a unanimous decision, the Court ruled that to transfer a case from juvenile court to adult court, the prosecution needs only "to produce evidence that raises more than a mere suspicion of the juvenile's guilt." The decision reversed the rulings of the Cuyahoga County Juvenile Court, which refused to bind over the then-16-year-old to face the involuntary manslaughter charge in adult court, and the

Eighth District Court of Appeals, which affirmed the juvenile court.

Writing for the Court, Justice Joseph T. Deters stated that the juvenile judge exceeded the role of "gatekeeper" when determining if there was probable cause to transfer the teen's case. Instead, the juvenile judge expected the Cuyahoga County Prosecutor's Office to provide definitive proof that the teen shot and killed his friend. Justice Deters wrote that at "the probable cause stage of the proceedings, the state need not prove a juvenile's delinquency beyond a reasonable doubt."

► 2022-0993. *In re E.S.*,  
[Slip Opinion No. 2023-Ohio-4273](#).

### Man Can Challenge Conviction for Nonpayment of Child Support

A judge should have considered before trial a man's claim that he could not be criminally charged for failing to pay child support after his daughter graduated high school, the Supreme Court ruled.

In a 4-3 decision, the Court ruled that under the procedural rules for criminal trials, a judge should have decided in a pretrial proceeding whether a revised law

imposing prison time for missed child support payments applied to Michael Swazey. The trial judge had determined the case could not be decided without a trial. Swazey pleaded guilty to three counts of felony nonsupport of a dependent to avoid a trial.

Writing for the Court majority, Justice Jennifer Brunner stated that the trial court made an error in concluding that it could only base a pretrial decision to dismiss a case on the information provided in Swazey's indictment. Under the Ohio Rules of Criminal Procedure, Swazey should have been able to introduce information at the pretrial stage demonstrating the nonsupport law did not apply to his situation and that he could not be charged with the crime, she wrote.

The Court stated it expressed no opinion on whether Swazey is correct but directed the Medina County Common Pleas Court to consider his argument at the pretrial stage. The Court also ruled that Swazey had a right to appeal his conviction even though he pleaded guilty to the charges because he was challenging the constitutionality of the law.

► 2022-0382. *State v. Swazey*,  
[Slip Opinion No. 2023-Ohio-4627](#).

### Jury Should Decide if K-9 Handler is Liable for Dog's Bite

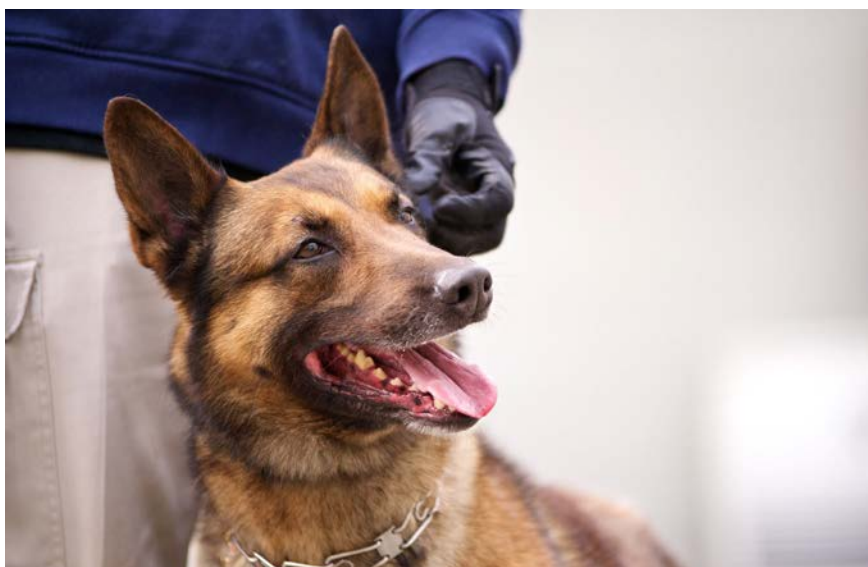
An off-duty K-9 officer hosted a cookout at his home. About an hour after demonstrating his canine partner's skills, the dog bit a guest. The Supreme Court ruled that a jury should decide whether the officer is held financially responsible for the guest's injuries.

An Ohio statute, R.C. 2744.03(A) (B)(3), makes government employees immune from liability for injuries caused by on-the-job acts or omissions unless "[t]he employee's acts or omissions were manifestly outside the scope of the employee's employment or official responsibilities."

In a unanimous opinion, the Court reversed a Seventh District Court of Appeals decision that found Belmont County Sheriff Deputy Dustin Hilderbrand was immune from liability because he was not "manifestly acting outside the scope of his employment or official duties" during the events leading up to the bite by Xyrem, his canine partner.

Writing for the Court, Chief Justice Sharon L. Kennedy explained that the Seventh District granted Hilderbrand summary judgment, meaning the victim's case was dismissed before a trial court jury could consider the matter. After examining the statements of cookout attendees and the state law regarding immunity for government employees, the Court remanded the case to the trial court for further proceedings to determine whether immunity is justified.

► 2022-0784. *Harris v. Hilderbrand*, Slip Opinion No. 2023-Ohio-3005.



### Deadline for Medical Error Lawsuits Applies to Wrongful Death Claims

Wrongful death lawsuits based on faulty medical care must be filed within four years of the medical provider's alleged error, just as any other lawsuit based on a medical claim, the Supreme Court ruled.

The 4-3 decision reversed a Tenth District Court of Appeals ruling that found wrongful death claims based on medical care are not subject to the time limit for filing other lawsuits based on medical claims. The Court majority found that state lawmakers defined the term "medical claim" to apply to all types of cases regarding medical care and that wrongful death based on medical care falls into the medical claim category.

Writing for the majority, Justice Patrick F. Fischer stated that Ohio adopted a four-year "statute of repose," meaning a case must be filed within four years of the alleged medical error. Justice Fischer wrote the legislature "means what it says" when it stated a medical claim involves "any claim that is asserted in

any civil action" against medical providers, including wrongful death claims.

► 2022-0407 and 2022-0424. *Everhart v. Coshocton Cty. Mem. Hosp.*, Slip Opinion No. 2023-Ohio-4670.

### Lawsuit Filed by Children Based on Mother's Medical Injury Cannot Continue

When a medical malpractice case filed by a mother and father against a physician was dismissed for being filed too late, a claim brought by their children for the loss of the companionship of their deceased mother was also too late, the Supreme Court ruled.

In a 4-3 decision, the Court found that when a medical malpractice claim is barred by the four-year deadline to file under R.C. 2305.113, the "derivative" lawsuit tied to the medical claim also fails. The decision affirmed the ruling of the Tenth District Court of Appeals, which found that once a parent's medical negligence claim is extinguished by the four-year limit, the children's claim for loss of their mother's companionship and affection no longer exists.



Writing for the Court majority, Justice Joseph T. Deters explained that R.C. 2305.113(C) (2) enacted a “statute of repose,” which places a strict four-year time limit on filing a case alleging injury by medical error. Failure to meet the deadline is substantive grounds for dismissing a case, he wrote, and when a case is dismissed on substantive grounds, any other claims derived from the case are also dismissed.

2022-0732. *McCarthy v. Lee*,  
[Slip Opinion No. 2023-Ohio-4696](#).

### East Cleveland Must Pay Accident Victims \$12 Million

The City of East Cleveland must pay more than \$12 million for a judgment and interest that a jury awarded in 2017 to two bystanders whose car was struck by a police cruiser involved in a chase, the Supreme Court ruled.

The Court unanimously granted a writ of mandamus to Charles Hunt and the estate of Marilyn Conard requiring East Cleveland to pay them the judgment along with pre- and post-judgment interest. Hunt and Conard were seriously injured in 2008 when East Cleveland police officer Todd Carroscia collided with a vehicle Hunt was driving.

In a per curiam opinion, the Court wrote that under

R.C. 2744.06, the city is mandated to pay the judgment. The opinion noted the law gives the city the option of setting up a payment plan to meet its obligation. East Cleveland had argued it is not obligated to pay the judgment because Carroscia should be fully responsible for the payment.

2021-1592. *State ex rel. Hunt v. E. Cleveland*,  
[Slip Opinion No. 2023-Ohio-407](#).

### Invited Apartment Complex Visitor Could Not Be Convicted of Trespassing

A landlord or property manager cannot exclude a visitor to a rented premise and seek to have the person prosecuted as a trespasser when the tenant invited the visitor, the Supreme Court ruled.

In a unanimous decision, the Court noted that, generally, landlords cannot have invited visitors declared trespassers but can add provisions to lease agreements giving them that authority. The decision affirmed a Sixth District Court of Appeals ruling to overturn a Toledo man’s 2021 trespassing conviction.

Writing for the Court, Justice Patrick F. Fischer explained that under state law, a tenant, not the landlord, can declare

someone on the property as a trespasser because the tenant has a “possessory interest” in the leased property. However, by making it part of the lease agreement, a landlord has the right to reserve the authority to prosecute those banned from the property.

2022-1082. *State v. Randolph*,  
[Slip Opinion No. 2023-Ohio-4753](#).

### Insurance Policy Excludes Injuries Man Suffered at Adult Care Home

The language of an insurance policy prevents a man who lived at a residential care facility for adults, and who was injured by another resident in a knife attack, from collecting a near \$1 million court judgment from the facility’s insurer, the Supreme Court ruled.

A Court majority found that a commercial general liability policy covering the Brown County Care Center precludes coverage of the judgment because a provision that excludes coverage for “bodily injury arising from assault or battery” applies. The decision overturns a First District Court of Appeals determination that the “assault or battery” exclusion did not apply. The appellate court concluded the resident who stabbed Austin Krewina in 2014 did not “assault” him because the other resident lacked the mental capacity to do so.

Writing for the Court majority, Chief Justice Sharon L. Kennedy explained the plain language definition of assault in the insurance policy exclusion applies and Krewina was in fact assaulted by the other resident. The attacker’s subjective intent is irrelevant, she stated.

2022-0322. *Krewina v. United Specialty Ins. Co.*,  
[Slip Opinion No. 2023-Ohio-2343](#).

### Board Overseeing Opioid Settlement Funds Must Make Records Public

The foundation formed to distribute settlement funds that local and state governments are receiving from opioid makers and distributors is the functional equivalent of a public office and must make its records publicly available, the Supreme Court ruled.

In a unanimous per curiam opinion, the Court directed the OneOhio Recovery Foundation to provide the public records that were requested by Harm Reduction Ohio, a nonprofit organization that works to prevent overdose deaths.

Local governments suing “pharmaceutical supply chain participants” signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the governor and attorney general to plan the use of Ohio’s share of any settlement proceeds from the lawsuits. As part of the MOU, the OneOhio Recovery Foundation was formed in December 2021. It was agreed that the foundation would receive 55% of settlement funds won in opioid lawsuits and distribute the proceeds throughout the state to address the opioid epidemic.

The foundation claimed it was a private nonprofit corporation not subject to R.C. 149.43, the Ohio Public Records Act.

Citing its 2006 *State ex rel. Oriana House, Inc. v. Montgomery* decision, the Court found the foundation met the definition of a functional equivalent of a public office and must respond to Harm Reduction’s public records request.

2022-0966. *State ex rel. Harm Reduction Ohio v. OneOhio Recovery Found.*, [Slip Opinion No. 2023-Ohio-1547](#).



### Amusement Park Police Must Provide Records Requested by TV Stations

The Cedar Point Police Department must turn over records requested by three Ohio television stations, the Supreme Court ruled.

The Court unanimously concluded the amusement park’s police department is the “functional equivalent” of a public office, noting that park officers report to the Sandusky city manager by city ordinance and they carry out the core functions of government. Under the Ohio Public Records Act, the department must turn over records including those regarding an injury that occurred near the Top Thrill Dragster roller coaster in 2021 and reports of sexual misconduct over a period of five years.

In a per curiam opinion, the Court majority also directed Cedar Fair, the parent company

of Cedar Point, to pay the media outlets’ court costs, but denied requests that the company pay damages and attorney fees.

2022-0194. *State ex rel. WTOL Television LLC v. Cedar Fair LP*, [Slip Opinion No. 2023-Ohio-4593](#).

### State-Created Property Insurance Provider Must Make Records Available to the Public

A state-created association that assures property insurance is available in hard-to-serve urban areas is a “public office” and must make most of its records available to the public, the Supreme Court ruled.

A Court majority found that since the Ohio Fair Plan Underwriting Association (OFP) was created by a state statute in the 1960s, it meets the definition of a “public office” and must provide records sought by Fair Housing Opportunities of Northwest Ohio.

The law creating the underwriting association requires all licensed private insurers selling basic property insurance policies in Ohio to be members of the OFP and issue policies to help cover urban properties denied coverage in the traditional insurance market.

Writing for the Court, Justice Michael P. Donnelly offered a number of reasons why the justices rejected the association's claim that it was not subject to the Ohio Public Records Act, R.C. 149.43. One reason, he explained, is that the legislature specifically exempted a category of OFP documents covering reports and communications related to property inspections.

2022-0244. *State ex rel. Fair Housing Opportunities of Northwest Ohio v. Ohio Fair Plan*, Slip Opinion No. 2023-Ohio-2667.

### City Did Its Best to Locate Offensive Images From Police Chief's Computer

The Supreme Court of ruled that Sheffield Lake officials made reasonable, but unsuccessful, efforts to uncover racist or disparaging documents from the computer of a former police chief who was caught on video placing a "Ku Klux Klan" sign on the coat of a Black police officer.

Former Sheffield Lake Police Chief Anthony Campo was placed on leave four days after the June 2021 incident, and resigned the same day. The officer, Keith Pool, submitted a public records request seeking more information from the city about Campo's behavior as chief. When Pool believed the city was stalling, he asked the Supreme Court to compel the city to

thoroughly search computer and printer hard drives for other documents Campo made.

In a per curiam opinion, the Court noted the city hired an outside expert company to try to recover or recreate information Campo had "stripped" from his computer. The Court denied the writ of mandamus Pool requested, finding that the city's search and recovery effort had to be "reasonable, not Herculean."

2021-1387. *State ex rel. Pool v. Sheffield Lake*, Slip Opinion No. 2023-Ohio-1204.



Dum Loquor Hora Fugit  
"While I speak the Hour Flies"

An engraving in Latin above the south courtroom door reminds counsel that time flies as they speak.

# Assigned Visiting Judges

## Hon. Matthew R. Byrne TWELFTH DISTRICT

*Highland Tavern, LLC,  
et al. v. Michael DeWine,  
Governor of the State of Ohio,  
et al.*

Case Number: 2022-0014

Jan. 10, 2023

*State ex rel. US Bank Trust,  
N.A. v. Cuyahoga Cty.; State ex rel. US Bank Trust,  
N.A. v. Lucas Cty. Bd. of Commrs.; State ex rel. US  
Bank Trust, N.A. v. Summit Cty.*

Case Numbers: 2021-1090,  
2021-1091, 2021-1181

Jan. 10, 2023

*Kelley D. Kyser v. Summit County Children Services*

Case Numbers: 2022-1419 and 2023-0126

Sept. 13, 2023

*Preterm-Cleveland, et al. v.  
David Yost*

Case Number: 2023-0004

Sept. 27, 2023



## Hon. David A. D'Apolito SEVENTH DISTRICT

*Disciplinary Counsel v.  
Hon. Daniel Gaul*

Case Number: 2022-1515

April 5, 2023



## Hon. Terri Jamison TENTH DISTRICT

*Disciplinary Counsel v.  
Hon. Daniel Gaul*

Case Number: 2022-1515

April 18, 2023



## Hon. Christopher B. Epley SECOND DISTRICT

*In the Matter of the  
Application  
of the East Ohio Gas*

Case Number: 2022-0458

May 3, 2023

*State of Ohio v. Joel Jordan*

Case Number: 2022-0736

April 18, 2023



## Hon. Craig R. Baldwin FIFTH DISTRICT

*Highland Tavern, LLC, et al.  
v. Michael DeWine, Governor  
of the State of Ohio, et al.*

Case Number: 2022-0014

Jan. 10, 2023



## Hon. Mark C. Miller THIRD DISTRICT

*State of Ohio v. Michael  
Schilling*

Case Number: 2022-0782

April 5, 2023



## Hon. Kristy S. Wilkin FOURTH DISTRICT

*Thomas Weidman v.  
Christopher Hildebrandt*

Case Numbers: 2022-0837 and  
2022-1042

May 16, 2023



**Hon. Christine Mayle**  
**SIXTH DISTRICT**

*Thomas Weidman v.  
Christopher Hildebrandt*  
Case Numbers: 2022-0837 and  
2022-1042  
May 16, 2023



**Hon. Lisa Forbes**  
**EIGHTH DISTRICT**

*State of Ohio v. Damon L.  
Taylor*  
Case Number: 2022-1069  
Sept. 13, 2023



**Hon. Sean C.  
Gallagher**  
**EIGHTH DISTRICT**

*Disciplinary Counsel v.  
Tracie M. Hunter*  
Case Number: 2023-0472  
June 28, 2023



**Hon. Jeffrey  
M. Welbaum**  
**SECOND DISTRICT**

*State of Ohio v. Timothy  
Williams*  
Case Number: 2022-1053  
Sept. 26, 2023



**Hon. Ronald C. Lewis**  
**SECOND DISTRICT**

*Disciplinary Counsel v.  
Tracie M. Hunter*  
Case Number: 2023-0472  
June 28, 2023

*State of Ohio v. Jamie Toran*  
Case Number: 2022-1203  
June 28, 2023

*State of Ohio ex rel. Dave Yost,  
Ohio Attorney General v. FirstEnergy Corp., et al.*  
Case Number: 2022-1286  
June 28, 2023



**Hon. John J. Eklund**  
**ELEVENTH DISTRICT**

*Tera, LLC v. Rice Drilling D,  
LLC et al.*  
Case Number: 2023-0411  
Nov. 14, 2023

*State of Ohio v. Sontez  
Sheckles*  
Case Number: 2023-0294  
Nov. 14, 2023



**Hon. Mike Powell**  
**TWELFTH DISTRICT**

*State of Ohio v. Rickey Brown*  
Case Number: 2022-1182  
Sept. 12, 2023

*Vandercar, LLC v. The  
Port Authority of Greater  
Cincinnati*  
Case Number: 2022-1312  
Sept. 12, 2023



**Hon. Betsy Luper  
Schuster**  
**TENTH DISTRICT**

*State of Ohio v. Michael Jones*  
Case Number: 2023-0572  
Dec. 13, 2023



# Administrative Operations



**Robert W. Horner, III**  
ADMINISTRATIVE DIRECTOR

Diana Burroughs\*  
Stephanie Hess  
Lindsay Morris  
Shannon Scheid

*\* Retired in 2023*

As chief administrative officer of the judicial branch of Ohio government, the administrative director works closely with the chief justice and justices of the Court and judges of the state to develop and communicate the vision, values, and direction of the Ohio judiciary.

**Robert W. Horner, III became Administrative Director of the Supreme Court of Ohio on July 10, 2023.**

In August 2020, Bob retired as Senior Vice President – Corporate Legal Affairs for Nationwide Insurance, a Fortune 100 insurance and financial services company headquartered in Columbus, Ohio. During his time at Nationwide, he also served as the Corporate Secretary. He was the chief officer responsible for all financial and corporate legal support. He was also responsible for all governance activities for over 300 legal entities in the Nationwide enterprise and for the coordination of all board of director activities. Bob joined Nationwide in 2006 initially working on mergers and acquisitions.

Since his retirement from Nationwide, Bob served as Executive Director of Honor Flight Columbus, Inc. and as President of Chartwell Governance, LLC.

Bob has over 30 years of experience in corporate governance, general corporate matters, and mergers and acquisitions. Prior to coming to Nationwide, Bob was in private practice as a partner in the law firm of Kegler, Brown, Hill & Ritter in Columbus, Ohio. Bob has also served as the General Counsel and Secretary of three public health care companies, Advance Paradigm, Inc.; Vitalink Pharmacy Services, Inc.; and, In Home Health, Inc.

Bob graduated with honors from Xavier University in 1983. He received his J.D. with honors from the Ohio State University in 1991 and his MBA, also from Ohio State in 2003.

Bob is a long-time leader of a number of educational and military/veteran support organizations. He has served as Board Chairman for St. Charles Preparatory School in Columbus and for Honor Flight Columbus, Inc. He currently serves as a member of the Xavier University Board of Trustees and of the St. Charles Preparatory Endowment Board.

Bob and his wife of 35 years, Mimi, have five children and reside in Dublin, Ohio.

## *Dear Ohioans,*

On Monday, July 10, 2023, after thirty-two years of private sector experience in the corporate legal, transactional and governance world, I entered public service as the new Administrative Director of the Supreme Court of Ohio. As described in this Annual Report, the breadth and depth of what is done on behalf of the people of Ohio by the administrative staff of the Supreme Court is truly remarkable. What became clear to me at the outset was that the services and outreach programs of the administrative staff were well-developed and efficiently produced. I therefore set out to help the staff build on this exemplary value delivery system and to develop an organization that ensured our ability to sustain the delivery of these excellent results for years to come.

The first order of business in July 2023 was an initial familiarization and assessment of all Court administrative staff and functions. The strong foundations of these functions became immediately apparent. The other sections of this annual report describe in detail the services and support offerings provided by the Court administrative staff to the members of the Ohio legal community and the citizens of our state. In short, the work of the Court administrative staff facilitates the reliable, consistent and transparent administration of justice throughout the state.

The assessment process was aimed at informing the formulation of a strategic plan for the court's administrative functions. The 2023-2025 Strategic Plan, entitled "A Pathway to Sustainable Excellence", formed the framework for key operational initiatives in the second half of 2023 and beyond. The core elements of the strategic plan address organizational architecture, talent acquisition and development, leadership identification and deployment, operational clarity and accountability, and staff engagement.

It was both a strategic and operational imperative to engage all functional leaders in assessing existing organizational structures and processes. Three leadership committees were formed to assess opportunities in the areas of organizational structure, staff engagement and talent acquisition/development. The work of these committees resulted key actions by the Court and staff leadership.

### Organizational Structure

At the start of my tenure, the leaders of all fourteen administrative functions reported to the Administrative Director. This organizational structure left little opportunity for leadership development and created certain operational inefficiencies. In turn, this apparent opportunity impediment may have inadvertently created employment/engagement disincentives among both current staff members and potential applicants. Staff leaders ultimately recommended a new leadership structure for the organization. As the organizational chart on page 29 shows, there are now three tiers of organizational leadership. The foundational tier is referred to as the Senior Leadership Team ("SLT"). The SLT is comprised of twelve functional leaders. All SLT members report to one of two new Deputy Administrative Directors. These Deputies, along with the Chief Legal Counsel and Chief Financial Officer form what is referred to as the Executive Leadership Team ("ELT"). All ELT members report to the Administrative Director.

The new organizational structure provides continuing leadership development and advancement opportunities. The enhancement of executive leadership availability also facilitates operational depth of knowledge and execution efficiency. In 2024, the organization will further leverage this structure to assess and refine all operational methodologies, resulting in the increasingly efficient and effective delivery of service and support.



The Executive Leadership Team, from left: James P. Cappelli, Deputy Administrative Director, Operations; Gina White Palmer, Deputy Administrative Director, Legal Services; Robert W. Horner, III, Administrative Director; John VanNorman, Chief Legal Counsel; and Ronda Carver, Chief Financial Officer.

## An Environment of Opportunity

In an increasingly difficult labor environment, it is always important that staff leadership identify and leverage any competitive advantages that the Court workplace possesses. The working environment and culture of the Court are universally recognized as strong and supportive. Staff leadership moved quickly to leverage the new organizational structure to encourage and effectuate opportunities for increasing staff expertise, exposure to new subject matter opportunities and professional advancement.

These innovative initiatives resulted in dozens of new opportunities and promotions within the organization. As 2024 begins, these trends continue and accelerate. We are creating a bold and dynamic environment of opportunity. We are confident that this will pay long-term dividends in the areas of staff engagement and retention.

Staff leadership also began the development of an enhanced and purposeful intern program. Leaders have identified operational areas of need for college and professional school students. As this program develops it will provide functional support for the organization, ancillary educational opportunity for the student interns and a potential recruitment pathway for bright new talent into the Court administrative staff. 2024 has already seen the deployment of new intern functions and targeted recruitment in key areas of administrative need.

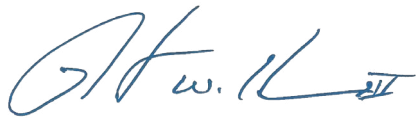
## Input and Engagement

At the heart of all these 2023 initiatives is the goal of achieving optimal staff engagement. Court administrative staff seek clarity in performance objectives, leadership accessibility and support, opportunities for growth/advancement and workplace collegiality. These objectives were, and continue to be, a foundational element of all strategic and operational considerations. To identify staff needs and preferences we perpetually encourage the input and feedback of all staff. There is no doubt that the best and most innovative practices arise in a vibrant marketplace of ideas. Several staff advisory groups provide thought and action leadership in the areas of event planning, diversity and inclusion and operational improvement. These advisory groups afford a direct communication pathway by which the staff can influence and direct administrative operations. 2024 will see the addition of other opportunities for staff to participate in driving the cultural identity and strategic direction of court administration.

## Continuous Improvement

One of the core mechanisms by which we assess our performance and identify opportunities for continuous improvement is the utilization of the simple question, “why?”. In 2023, we have become accustomed and adept at exploring the reasons why we do things and how we do them. This process ensures the engagement of all staff in identifying and employing creative and compelling new ways to deliver exceptional value to the people of Ohio. There is an unmistakable culture of individual engagement and accountability that is at the heart of all we do. The citizens of our great state should be encouraged by the universal commitment of Court administrative staff to build and maintain a value proposition of efficient and effective service that is second to none.

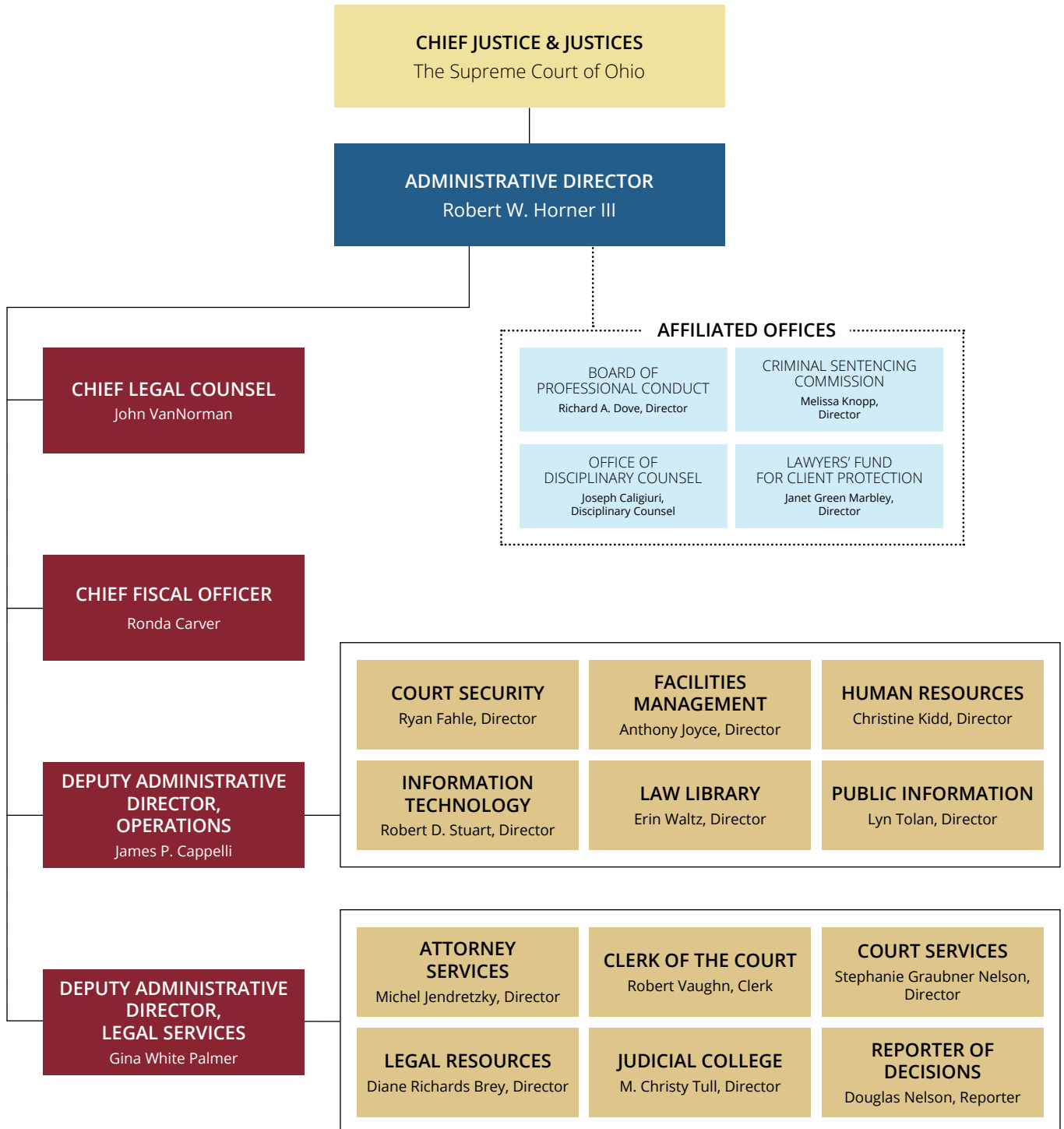
Respectfully,



Robert W. Horner, III  
Administrative Director



# Administrative Structure



# Office of the Chief Legal Counsel



John VanNorman  
CHIEF LEGAL COUNSEL

Dahria Beaver  
September Coyne  
Heather Eby  
Michel Jendretzky  
Jesse Mosser  
Bryan Smeenck

The Office of the Chief Legal Counsel is responsible for assisting the Supreme Court and the Office of the Administrative Director with legal, government relations, and policy matters.

In addition to the traditional role of hearing cases, the Ohio Constitution grants the Supreme Court certain oversight authority concerning the courts, the bar, and the judiciary. The Supreme Court exercises this authority via rules it promulgates. Among the various rules are the Rules of Superintendence for the Courts of Ohio, the Practice and Procedure Rules, the Rules for the Government of the Judiciary, and the Rules for the Government of the Bar.

## Outreach for Input on Operation of the Judiciary

The office serves the judiciary and the legal profession by overseeing the Court's process for adopting and amending the Court's various rules. This includes working with the justices on the timely selection and appointment of members of the various boards, commissions, and other advisory groups. These advisory groups, who you will learn about through this annual report, provide input and advice to the Court on rulemaking. The office oversaw the Court's adoption of 17 rule amendments this year.

The Office of Chief Legal Counsel develops and maintains relationships with the General Assembly and other state entities. The office also monitors and pursues legislative activity on matters of interest to the Court and the judicial branch.

And beginning in 2023, the office administers the judicial assignment program of the chief justice, who is authorized by the state constitution to assign sitting and retired judges to temporarily preside in Ohio courts. The office processed 4,431 requests from courts for judicial assignments during the year. *More information about this program follows.*

## Service Through Transparency and Efficiency

Consistent with the Court's commitment to transparency and a more informed citizenry, the Office of Chief Legal Counsel fulfilled 151 public-records requests in 2023.

## Assisting Special Commissions

The Office also serves the public through legal guidance and staff support to special panels that review certain complaints against public officials as well as complaints against judicial candidates.

In 2023, the office served as liaison to one five-judge commission to hear a judicial campaign complaint under Gov.Jud.R. II, Sec. 5(D)(1) and one three-retired-judge commission to consider the temporary suspension of an elected official pursuant to R.C. 3.16(C).

And the office provided staff assistance to the following commissions.

### Commission on the Rules of Superintendence for Ohio Courts

The 19-member commission that recommends to the Court adoption of new rules and amendments to the rules, which govern general administrative matters for the courts. During 2023, the commission worked on proposed rules regarding video remote interpretation and language-access plans and completed a proposed rewrite of the records-retention rules to modernize and simplify requirements applicable to local courts.

### Commission on the Rules of Practice & Procedure

The 21-member commission that recommends to the Court adoption of new rules and amendments to the Rules of Appellate Procedure, Civil Procedure, Criminal Procedure, Juvenile Procedure, Traffic Rules, and the Rules of Evidence. In 2023, the commission completed work on rules regarding technology in courts, expert-witness qualifications, and the repeal of the Court's bail rule in light of the constitutional amendment passed by voters in November 2022. Additionally, the commission began work on rules for appeals based on ineffective assistance of counsel, time limits on depositions, the timing of determining probable cause in criminal matters, and waiver of service. Those rule changes will be available for public comment in 2024.

### Commission on the Rules of Superintendence for Ohio Courts

Hon. Paula Giulitto, chair	Mark McCown
Hon. Thomas Januzzi, vice chair	Hon. Jenifer Overmyer Hon. Carol Ann Robb
Magistrate Tamela Womack	Hon. Jonathan Starn
Hon. David Bennett	Elizabeth W. Stephenson
Hon. T. Owen Beetham	Hon. Howard H. Harcha, III
Hon. Donna Carr	Ex Officio Member:
Hon. Thomas Moulton	Stephanie Hess, and
Hon. Carl Henderson	Robert W. Horner III
Philip D. Williamson	Staff Liaison: Bryan Smeenok
Michele K. Mumford	

### Commission on the Rules of Practice & Procedure

Hon. Richard A. Frye, chair	James Kresge
Hon. Laura B. Smith, vice chair	Hon. Tess Neff Bridget O'Brien
Bradley Barbin	Hon. Donald Oda
Robert Barnhart	Christian Patno
Daniel J. Brandt	Professor Cassandra Burke Robertson
Rick Brunner	Magistrate Kenneth Roll
Captain Jeffrey Davis	Hon. James Shriver
Eleana Drakatos	Lori Tyack
Hon. Alison Floyd	Hon. Cheryl Waite
Hon. Laura J. Gallagher	Jessica Wallace
Hon. Emanuella Groves	Staff Liaison:
Christopher S. Habel	Michel Jendretzky
Melissa Hicks	
Daniel Izenon	



## Amendments to Rules of Superintendence for the Courts of Ohio

### Neutral Evaluation and Parenting Coordination, Sup. R. 16.14 and 16.50 through 16.55 and Rules 16.60-16.66

Eff. Jan 1, 2023

These amendments provide more consistency and simplicity for local courts by creating a flexible structure to best fit each court's needs. The rules also update parenting coordination specifics, including responsibilities, education, and training. Finally, the rules establish new requirements and detail responsibilities for local courts that elect to use neutral evaluation and specify performance expectations and mandatory training for neutral evaluators.

### Rules of Superintendence for the Courts of Ohio (2022 Standard Probate Form Amendments)

Eff. Jan 1, 2023

The amendments created a form to order disbursement of an attorney decedent's trust accounts, created a set of forms for name change and name conformity applications, and amended existing forms related to settling a minor's claim to account for depositing the proceeds into a trust.

Other changes include:

- An updated residency requirement.
- The creation of an affidavit for a person to submit in support of an application for a minor's name change.

- Updates to the types of applicants who may seek a minor's name change, the residency requirement, and the nature of parental involvement.
- Updates to the judgment-entry form granting an adult's name change to include a statutory citation to reflect the current revised code number. The judgment-entry form now acknowledges that the application was supported by sufficient proof.

### Sup. R. 16.02 and 16.03

Eff. April 1, 2023

This amendment harmonized the term "Chief Justice of the Court of Appeals" with the statutory language in R.C. 2501.03.

### Sup. R. 5.02

Eff. July 1, 2023

Repeal of the bail schedule rule.

### Sup. R. 39

Eff. December 14, 2023

Made changes for the timely disposition of cases. The new section states "a judge shall not order, instruct, or otherwise direct, suggest, encourage, or request a party or attorney to dismiss and subsequently refile a case in order to avoid failure by the judge to comply with the time limits specified in this rule."

## Amendments to Rules of Practice & Procedure

*Ohio Rules of Civil Procedure (1, 1.1, 4.1, 4.6, 10, 26, 30, 33, 36, 37, 39, 43, 45, 53, 57, 65.1, 73, 75, and Civil Form 20), the Ohio Rules of Criminal Procedure (1, 2, 4, 6, 9, 10, 12, 15, 19, 40, 43, and 46), the Ohio Traffic Rules (4), the Ohio Rules of Evidence (101, 601, 607, 609, and 616), and the Ohio Rules of Juvenile Procedure (1, 2, 7, 8, 18, 30, 34, 35, 40, and 41)*

### Technology-Related Rules

The technology-related amendments provide new definitions relating to physical and remote appearances to ensure uniform use by courts for civil, criminal, and juvenile cases.

### Criminal Rules

An amendment to Crim.R. 12 and Juv.R. 8 requires local courts to establish a method to accept filings electronically in criminal and juvenile matters. A Crim.R. 15 revision gives criminal defendants the option to appear remotely for depositions.

Additionally, In November 2022 voters approved an amendment to the Ohio Constitution regarding bail. Based on that amendment, the Court approved the repeal of Crim.R. 46.

### Civil Cases

Changes include:

- Establish statewide minimum standards for process servers – people tasked with finding defendants and ensuring they are given notice of legal actions against them – and guidelines for standing orders appointing those servers.
- Change the permissible service method for interrogatories – formal written questions in cases answered in writing under oath – and requests for admissions. It also allows courts to reduce the number of interrogatories.
- Allow courts to adopt a local rule exempting parties in certain case types from a requirement to meet and discuss discovery issues before scheduling a conference with the court.
- Exclude certain domestic relations and civil protection order cases from a rule about the second dismissal of a case. Typically, when a plaintiff dismisses a case for a second time, the dismissal ends the case and prevents a later re-filing of the action.

### Evidence Rules

A change to the Evidence Rules clarifies a requirement for expert testimony in medical liability cases. To qualify as an expert witness, the person must dedicate one half of their professional time to active clinical practice in their field or to its instruction at an accredited school. The revised rule makes clear when the time in active clinical practice is determined. It is not at the time of trial, but when the negligent act allegedly occurred, or the claim accrued.

### Juvenile Cases

A change to Juv.R. 34 aligns the rule with legislation regarding the timing of dispositional hearings in certain juvenile cases.



## Assignment of Judges

### The Service We Provide

Article IV, Sections 5(A)(3) and 6(C) of the Ohio Constitution and Revised Code Sections 1901.121 and 1907.141 vest the chief justice of the Supreme Court with the authority to make temporary assignments of sitting and retired judges to serve in any Ohio court in the absence of a judge due to circumstances subject to constitutional, statutory, and rule limitations. The Judicial Assignment Specialist and Administrative Coordinator work together to timely resolve requests for the assignment of a judge to ensure that cases are not delayed.

### Outreach Identifies Solutions to Speed Justice

In April 2023, Chief Justice Sharon L. Kennedy met with judges throughout the state in a joint effort to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the assignment process. The result was clarification of the permitted reasons for the request for an assigned judge. The [guidelines](#) were amended on October 2, 2023. As the year progressed, amending the guidelines was key to creating a predictable, transparent, and consistent workflow process. Improvements also were made, and continue to be made, to the Supreme Court Interactive Generator of Online Requests (IGOR), the online system for submitting requests for judicial assignments. In addition, Chief Justice Kennedy and Judicial Assignment Specialist Dahria Beaver hosted webinars to answer questions from judges and court administrators regarding the guidelines. More than 500 judges and court administrators attended.

The most [frequently asked questions and answers](#) were captured and are available at [SupremeCourt.ohio.gov](#), search “judicial assignment.”

### Value from Reduced Response Time

The need to assign judges is ongoing. The more information the judicial assignment office has about the request, the more effectively and efficiently the Judicial Assignment Specialist can fill the request. In 2023, the judicial assignment office received between one and 42 requests each day, with an average annualized turnaround time of 11.1 days per request. The goal of the court is to process all requests within 48 hours. Due to increased compliance with the guidelines, the court’s response time significantly improved, and the average turnaround time has been reduced to 0.7 days (i.e., within the same day) since July of 2023. For the first time since IGOR was introduced in July 2015, the year ended with no pending requests.

### Continued Service Improvements

The IGOR system is being updated with enhanced features to be unveiled in 2024. The enhancements, intuitive to the guidelines, will ensure the consistent application of the guidelines and decrease the court’s response time. Further educational opportunities will be available in 2024 in this collaborative and interactive process of continual improvement.

**14.8** Average number of requests per day.



# Office of the Chief Fiscal Officer

The Office of Fiscal Resources became the Office of the Chief Fiscal Officer in December 2023. The Office provides fiscal, procurement, and grant management support to the Supreme Court and the judiciary of the state of Ohio. Primary responsibilities include budget management and fiscal oversight of more than \$221 million appropriated through H.B. 33 of the 135th General Assembly for fiscal year 2024.

The Office works with Court leadership refining current and implementing new administrative policies and guidelines to better serve the operations of the Court.

## The Service We Provide

The budget is used to support the payment of the salaries of the judges of the state, the salaries of the staff employed by the courts of appeals, and the operation of the Thomas J. Moyer Ohio Judicial Center and the administrative offices of the Supreme Court.

The fiscal team ensures proper internal controls, reporting to regulatory bodies as required, purchasing to include competitive procurement, contract management, and grants administration primarily to fund the needs of local Ohio courts.

## Modernization to Improve Efficiencies to Benefit Local Courts

The Office of the Chief Fiscal Officer participated in a major state financial system reporting upgrade, the payroll reporting module upgrade, and the conversion to a paperless purchasing card system to improve operational efficiencies. The office managed federal grant responsibilities and an additional \$2.9 million in funding for technology grants to local courts through a competitive application process. Effective management of these grant programs enables local courts to modernize their systems and save money, as well.

The Records Management Center is the off-site records storage facility. The center operates under a comprehensive Records Management Policy for retention and destruction of records. By converting records from paper to digital and by destroying records at the end of their retention period, the value is improved data security and cost savings. The center shredded approximately nine tons of recyclable material with a net storage reduction of 400 boxes of records.

Ronda Carver  
DIRECTOR

Michael Bracone  
Debi Fagan  
Tim Gaunt  
Mallory Geib  
Mary Harper  
Linda Hodge  
Brandee Preston  
Nathan Rush  
Scott Schaller



**\$2.9  
million**  
in technology  
grants were  
awarded to local  
courts in 2023.

## Judiciary/Supreme Court Operating Expenditures

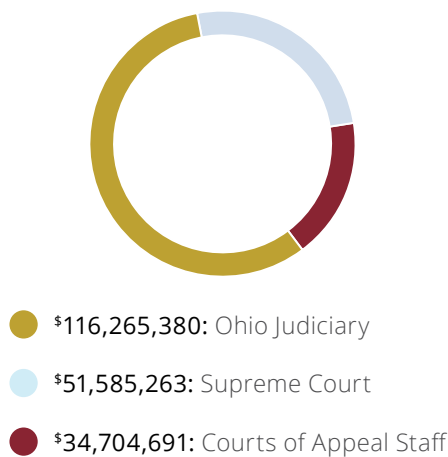
The Judiciary/Supreme Court General Revenue Fund (GRF) budget is \$202.6 million, which supports the administrative operations at the Thomas J. Moyer Ohio Judicial Center, salaries of Ohio judges and employees of the district courts of appeals.

OHIO JUDICIARY	Expenditures FY 2023*	Percent of Total	Budgeted FY 2024**	Percent of Total
Courts of Appeal Judges	\$15,057,633	7.4%	\$15,697,374	7.1%
Trial Court Judges	\$101,207,747	50.0%	\$105,541,254	47.7%
<b>TOTAL OHIO JUDICIARY</b>	<b>\$116,265,380</b>	<b>57.4%</b>	<b>\$121,238,628</b>	<b>54.8%</b>
<b>COURT OF APPEALS STAFF</b>	<b>\$34,704,691</b>	<b>17.1%</b>	<b>\$38,917,569</b>	<b>17.6%</b>
<b>SUPREME COURT</b>				
Supreme Court of Ohio Operations	\$47,218,444	23.3%	\$56,322,499	25.4%
Ohio Center for Law-Related Education	\$200,000	0.1%	\$375,000	0.2%
Ohio Courts Network Initiative	\$3,579,112	1.8%	\$3,843,000	1.7%
County Law Library Resources Board	\$249,242	0.1%	\$308,500	0.1%
Civil Justice Program Fund	\$338,465	0.2%	\$400,000	0.2%
<b>SUPREME COURT TOTAL</b>	<b>\$ 51,585,263</b>	<b>25.5%</b>	<b>\$ 61,248,999</b>	<b>27.7%</b>
<b>OHIO JUDICIARY &amp; SUPREME COURT TOTAL</b>	<b>\$ 202,555,334</b>		<b>\$ 221,405,196</b>	

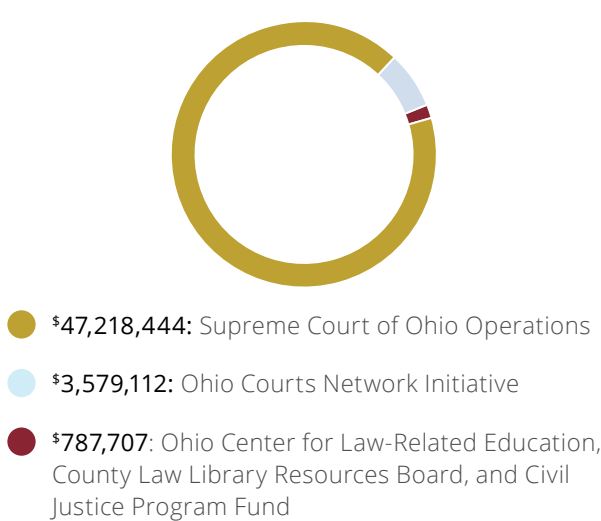
\* Includes encumbrances and all fund sources.  
\*\* Budget is as of January, fiscal year 2024.

NOTE: Numbers may be rounded up to the nearest dollar.  
SOURCE: State of Ohio OAKS Fin System

Ohio Judiciary/Supreme Court  
Fiscal Year 2023 Total Expenditures



Supreme Court of Ohio  
Fiscal Year 2023 Total Expenditures



# Legal Services

The primary work of the Supreme Court is the matters on appeal before the Court and the decisions, opinions, and orders of the chief justice and the justices.

Three divisions within Legal Services work primarily in support of the cases and work of the justices. The Office of the Clerk of the Court manages all cases filed with the Supreme Court and is the repository for other documents and filings. Attorneys in the Office of Legal Resources provide legal research and writing support to the justices on complex matters of law. Attorneys in the Office of the Reporter edit and publish decisions and maintain the historic record of the actions of the Court.

The other three divisions within Legal Services provide service through outreach to determine the needs of, and provide resources for, local courts, justice partners, and the public. The Attorney Services Division supports admission, registration and continuing legal education to promote competency, ethics, and professionalism among lawyers. The Court Services Division hears the challenges Ohio courts are facing and develops resources for courts to deliver timely, fair, and consistent justice. And the Judicial College works with judicial officers, court staff, and associated professionals to design the highest quality curriculum to advance justice.

All the Legal Services divisions assist in access to justice, providing practitioners and the public with the resources they need. The Office of the Clerk maintains Rules of Practice of the Supreme Court of Ohio and the staff provides assistance to attorneys and self-represented litigants to ensure the smoothest experience possible.

Among the many resources available at no cost to the public, courts, and justice partners are bench cards, guides, and toolkits on specialized questions of jurisprudence, developed by the Court Services Division. And attorney services provides information on the status of Ohio attorneys and what continuing legal education is available to them.

The attorneys and support staff who make up the Legal Services of the administrative offices of the Supreme Court value commitment to justice and are ready and willing to serve you.



**Gina White Palmer**  
DEPUTY ADMINISTRATIVE  
DIRECTOR

Support, services, and programs for justices, judicial officers, local courts, and attorneys are grouped as Legal Services, and led by Deputy Administrative Director Gina White Palmer.

Legal Services encompasses six divisions, including:

- The Clerk of the Court,
- Legal Resources,
- The Reporter of Decisions,
- Attorney Services Division,
- Court Services Division, and
- The Judicial College.

# Clerk of the Court

Robert Vaughn  
CLERK

Catherine Allen  
Amy Ervin  
Melissa Ferguson  
Kimberly Hamiter  
Kayla Jefferson  
JoElla Jones  
Stephen Kahler  
Kaitlyn Mooney  
Amy Reitz  
Jodi Hanna



The Clerk's Office manages all cases filed with the Supreme Court. The office maintains the case files, case dockets, and journal; prepares and issues Court orders; schedules oral arguments and consideration by the Court of other case matters; and maintains records sent to the Supreme Court by the lower courts and agencies while cases are on appeal. Deputy clerks, attorneys, and other staff in the Clerk's Office also serve Ohio attorneys, litigants, and the public by answering phone calls and emails regarding filing questions, case statuses and updates, and public records requests.

## The Service We Provide

In 2023, the Clerk's Office filed more than ten thousand distinct pleadings and other documents, including 1,650 new cases. More than 1,700 cases were disposed of in the calendar year, leaving just 524 cases pending at year's end. The pages that follow provide further statistical and categorical breakdowns of cases filed, disposed, and pending at the start and end last year.

## Increasing Access to Justice through Outreach

Non-attorneys representing themselves account for about half of the documents filed. A Filing Guide published on [SupremeCourt.ohio.gov](https://supremecourt.ohio.gov) walks them through the process. Self-represented filers have access to e-filing and about half file electronically.

While the Rules of the Judiciary prevent us from providing legal advice, deputy clerks are always happy to assist people in navigating the filing process.

## Value through Transparency

The Clerk's Office provides citizens the ability to handle all filing needs in one place, that can be accessed online, in person, or by contacting the office, which serves as the repository for other documents and filings, including affidavits of disqualification filed against lower court judges, the local rules of practice of other courts, and determinations finding persons to be vexatious litigators in the Supreme Court and lower courts.

1,650  
new cases filed.

1,787  
cases disposed.

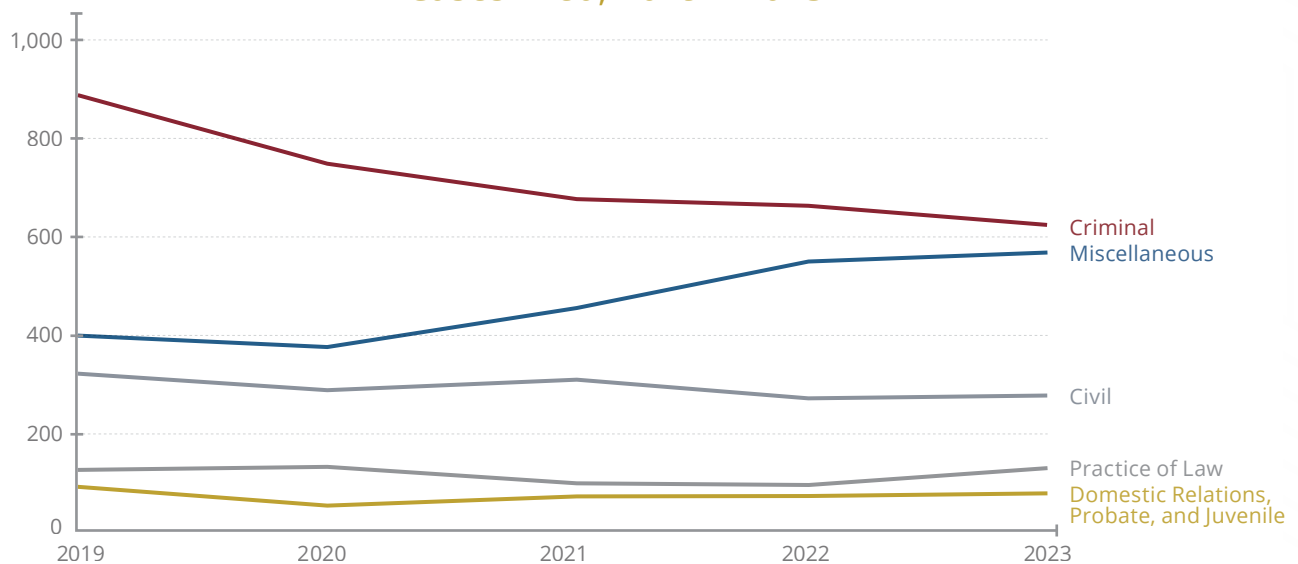
Citizens can sign up for automatic notifications when any action takes place in a case in which they may be interested. At [SupremeCourt.ohio.gov](https://supremecourt.ohio.gov), go to the docket for the case of interest and in the top right-hand corner, sign up for an alert. If anything changes you will be notified by email or text when anything posts to the docket.

The office is also responsible for maintaining and enforcing the Rules of Practice of the Supreme Court of Ohio and recommending appropriate rule amendments to the Court.

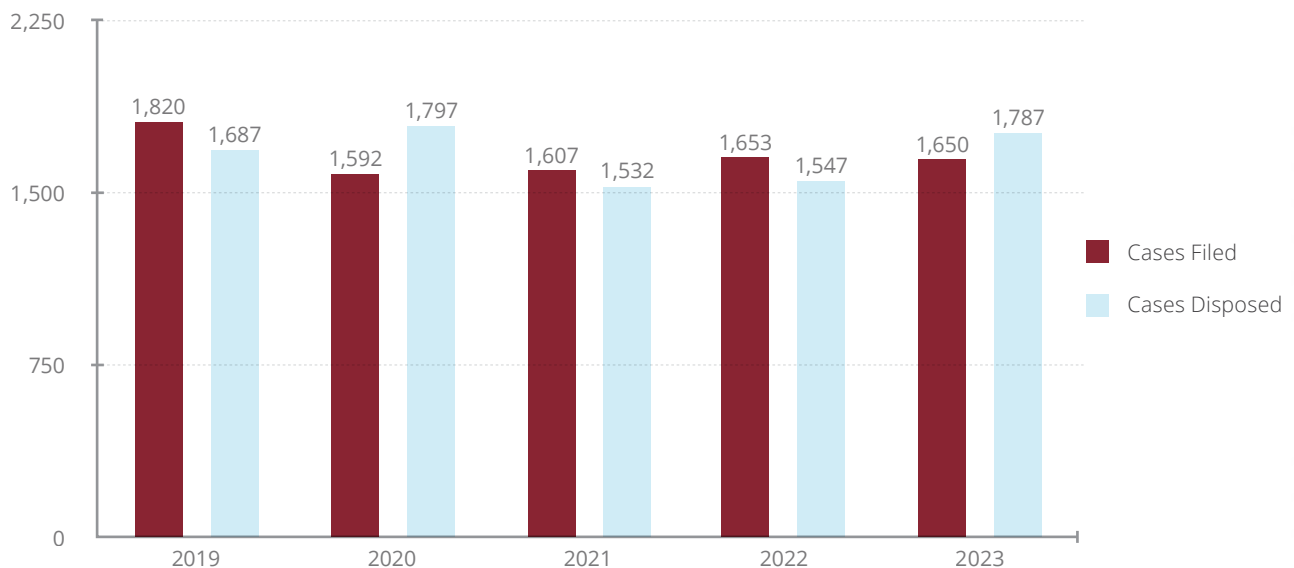
## Case Statistics

1,650 cases were filed with the Ohio Supreme Court in 2023.

Cases Filed, 2019 – 2023



Cases Filed and Disposed, 2019 – 2023



## 2023 Cases Filed

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### 972 Jurisdictional Appeals

922	Jurisdictional Appeals
7	Death Penalty Postconviction Appeals
10	Appeals Involving Termination of Parental Rights/Adoption
33	Appeals from App.R. 26(B) Applications

### 558 Merit Cases

369	Original Actions
53	Habeas Corpus Cases
89	Direct Appeals (Cases Originating in Court of Appeals)
11	Certified Conflicts
0	Certified Conflicts Involving Termination of Parental Rights/Adoption
9	Appeals from Board of Tax Appeals
4	Appeals from Public Utilities Commission
8	Appeals from Power Siting Board
2	Death Penalty Cases
1	Appeals from App.R. 26(B) Application in Death Penalty Case
1	Certified Questions of State Law
0	Appeals from Denial of DNA Testing in Capital Case
0	Appeals of Contest of Election under R.C. 3515.15
1	Petition Challenges pursuant to Article II, Section 1g of the Ohio Constitution
0	Contests of an Election pursuant to R.C. 3515.08
10	Cases Purporting to Invoke Unspecified Original Jurisdiction
0	Redistricting Cases

### 120 Practice of Law Cases

112	Disciplinary Cases
4	Bar Admission Cases
3	Unauthorized Practice of Law Cases
1	Other Matters Relating to the Practice of Law

**1,650** Total Cases Filed

## Amendment to Rules of Practice

Eff. Jan 1, 2023

The Clerk's Office of the Supreme Court completes a bi-annual review of the Rules of Practice of the Supreme Court. As a result of that review, the following amendments approved by the Court include changes related to the number and form of copies, the filing of audio and video exhibits, and address changes for counsel of record.

## 2023 Cases Disposed

---

### **1,002 Jurisdictional Appeals<sup>1</sup>**

955	Jurisdictional Appeals <sup>2</sup>
1	Death Penalty Postconviction Appeals
11	Appeals Involving Termination of Parental Rights/Adoption
35	Appeals from App.R. 26(B) Applications

### **672 Merit Cases**

429	Original Actions
56	Habeas Corpus Cases
95	Direct Appeals (Cases Originating in Court of Appeals)
11	Certified Conflicts
1	Certified Conflicts Involving Termination of Parental Rights/Adoption
5	Appeals from Board of Tax Appeals
2	Appeals from Public Utilities Commission
6	Appeals from Power Siting Board
0	Death Penalty Cases
0	Appeals from App.R. 26(B) Application in Death Penalty Case
0	Certified Questions of State Law
0	Appeals from Denial of DNA Testing in Capital Case
0	Appeals of Contest of Election under R.C. 3515.15
1	Petition Challenges pursuant to Article II, Section 1g of the Ohio Constitution
10	Other Merit Cases
3	Redistricting Cases
53	Jurisdictional Appeals Accepted for Merit Review <sup>3</sup>

### **113 Practice of Law Cases**

104	Disciplinary Cases
5	Bar Admission Cases
3	Unauthorized Practice of Law Cases
1	Other Matters Relating to the Practice of Law

### **1,787 Total Cases Disposed**

---

<sup>1</sup> This category includes jurisdictional appeals that were declined and the merits of the case were not reviewed by the Court.

<sup>2</sup> This category includes jurisdictional appeals that were accepted, held, and later summarily decided without briefing.

<sup>3</sup> This category does not include jurisdictional appeals that were accepted, held, and later summarily decided without briefing.

## Cases Pending on December 31, 2023

### 236 Jurisdictional Appeals

223	Jurisdictional Appeals
5	Death Penalty Postconviction Appeals
3	Appeals Involving Termination of Parental Rights/Adoption
5	Appeals from App.R. 26(B) Applications
0	Petitions to Transfer Board of Tax Appeals Appeal from Court of Appeals

### 265 Merit Cases

109	Original Actions
9	Habeas Corpus Cases
51	Direct Appeals (Cases Originating in Court of Appeals)
16	Certified Conflicts
0	Certified Conflicts Involving Termination of Parental Rights/Adoption
8	Appeals from Board of Tax Appeals
4	Appeals from Public Utilities Commission
5	Appeals from Power Siting Board
4	Death Penalty Cases
1	Certified Questions of State Law
1	Appeals from App.R. 26(B) Application in a Death Penalty Case
0	Appeals from Denial of DNA Testing in Capital Case
1	Other Merit Cases
0	Redistricting Cases
56	Jurisdictional Appeals Accepted for Merit Review

### 23 Practice of Law Cases

23	Disciplinary Cases
0	Bar Admission Cases
0	Unauthorized Practice of Law Cases
0	Other Matters Relating to the Practice of Law

### 524 Total Cases Pending

	Jurisdictional Appeals	Merit Cases	Practice Of Law Cases	Total
Cases Filed	972	558	120	1,650
Case Dispositions	1,002	672	113	1,787
				<b>108%</b> CLEARANCE RATE

# Reporter of Decisions

The Office of the Reporter is responsible for editing and recording the decisions of the Supreme Court. All Supreme Court opinions are edited by “assistant reporters” until January 2023 when their title was changed to attorney-editors, to more clearly reflect their credentials and the work they perform.

## The Service We Provide

During 2023, approximately 7,700 pages of draft opinions were edited by the Office, which included reviewing citations, grammar, punctuation, and style. The attorney editors ensure that opinions follow the Writing Manual of the Supreme Court of Ohio. The manual is used by legal professionals including judges, lawyers, paralegals, and self-represented individuals to provide a consistent and professional legal record.

## Modernizing through Outreach

Beginning in February 2023, Chief Justice Sharon L. Kennedy established a committee composed of practitioners, writing instructors, and court staff to consider and propose revisions to the Manual’s Second Edition, which was released in 2013 and is currently in use. A Third Edition is anticipated to simplify and modernize opinion writing. It is expected to include citation-form updates resulting from legal research, reading, and writing of briefs and opinions now occurring primarily online rather than on paper. It is expected to be released in 2024.

## Value through Transparency

The Reporter’s Office publishes announcements describing each opinion, decision without an opinion, as well as certain administrative actions, to the Opinions and Announcements section of SupremeCourt.ohio.gov.

More than 137,000 opinions of the Supreme Court and other Ohio courts are available on the Court website –all easily accessible to the public at no cost. This total includes the 261 Supreme Court opinions, 371 Supreme Court case announcements and administrative actions, 4,032 Court of Appeals opinions, and 209 Court of Claims opinions issued in 2023.

The Reporter’s Office also continues to coordinate the publication of the biweekly *Ohio Official Reports* advance sheets and the bound volumes of the *Ohio Official Reports*. Volumes 168 through 171 of *Ohio St.3d*, published in 2023, include more than 2,600 pages of opinions and approximately 425 pages of announcements in Supreme Court cases. Bound volumes are available to the public at the Law Library at the Supreme Court of Ohio.

Douglas M. Nelson  
REPORTER OF DECISIONS

Katherine Biancamano  
Britney Brouwer  
Holly Coats  
Alicia F. Elwing  
Kristopher A. Haines  
Erik Henry  
Fred Ingram  
Becky B. Johnson  
Stephanie B. Kellgren  
Katherine J. Mosca  
Katherine Szudy

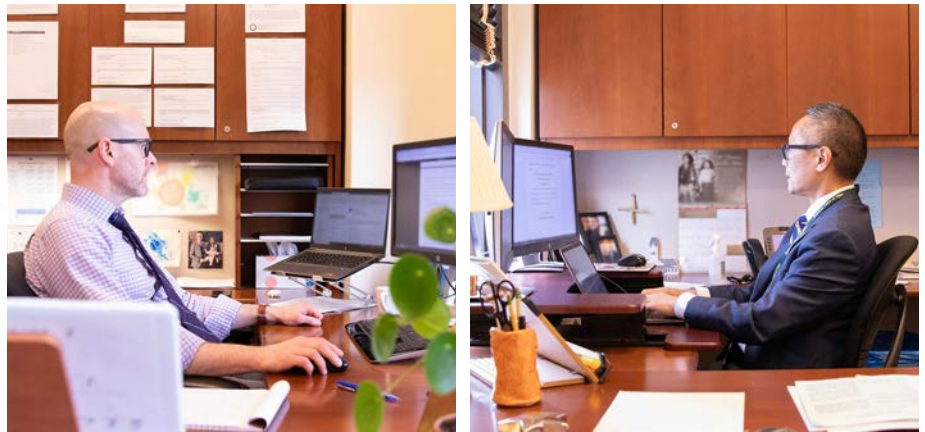


# Legal Resources

Diane Richards Brey  
DIRECTOR

Vladimir Belo  
James Bumbico  
Laura Dawson  
Aaron Epstein  
Dan Fox\*  
Erick Gale  
Peter Jamison  
Doug Kohrt\*  
Jeffrey Loeser  
Gregory Mathews  
Mel Prendergast  
Ryan O'Rourke  
Kathryn Steveline  
Deanna Tuttle

*\* Retired in 2023*



The attorneys in the Office of Legal Resources are known as the master commissioners. They provide legal research and writing support to the justices on the non-discretionary portion of the docket.

This includes the review of actions of certain administrative agencies of Ohio government including state tax appeals, public utility appeals, workers' compensation appeals, as well as death penalty appeals, practice of law matters (attorney and judicial discipline, character, and fitness review of applicants to the bar, and the unauthorized practice of law), and extraordinary writ cases.

## The Service We Provide

In 2023, master commissioners researched and prepared 224 memoranda on complex legal issues pending before the Court and drafted other written work product.

Master commissioners in 2023 also aided the chief justice in processing 192 affidavits of disqualification filed against Ohio judges.

Master commissioners' activities to assist the bench and bar included presenting to new judges an overview of the affidavit-of-disqualification process and participating in the work of committees to revise the Court's writing manual and propose amendments to the Court's Rules of Practice.

# Attorney Services Division



The Office of Attorney Services administers attorney registration requirements.

## The Service We Provide

The Supreme Court of Ohio, by authority of Article IV of the Ohio Constitution, has original jurisdiction in matters of admission to the practice of law, including discipline. The Attorney Services Division assists the Supreme Court in carrying out its constitutional authority through its two offices – the Office of Bar Admissions and the Office of Attorney Services. The division works with other offices of the Court to regulate the legal profession effectively and efficiently, for the betterment of the profession and the constituents it serves.

## Office of Bar Admissions

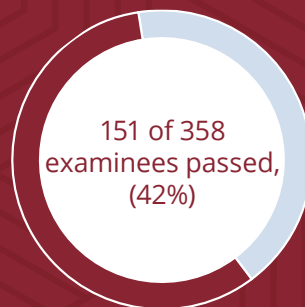
Bar Admissions handles all matters leading up to and including a person's admission to the practice of law in Ohio. The office processes applications to take the bar examination; applications to transfer Uniform Bar Examination (UBE) scores; and applications for admission without examination. The office oversees character and fitness investigations; coordinates and administers semi-annual bar examinations; and organizes admission ceremonies during which eligible applicants take the oath of office.

The office processes certificates permitting limited practice in Ohio, including legal intern certificates, certificates for temporary admission issued to out-of-state attorneys employed with a legal services or public defender program, military spouses, or those granted permission to appear pro hac vice, and permission to practice while their application is pending, and foreign legal consultant certificates.

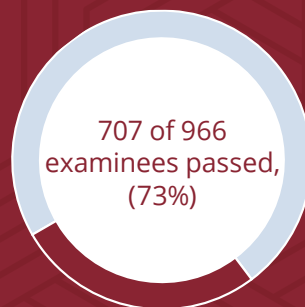
Gina White Palmer  
DIRECTOR

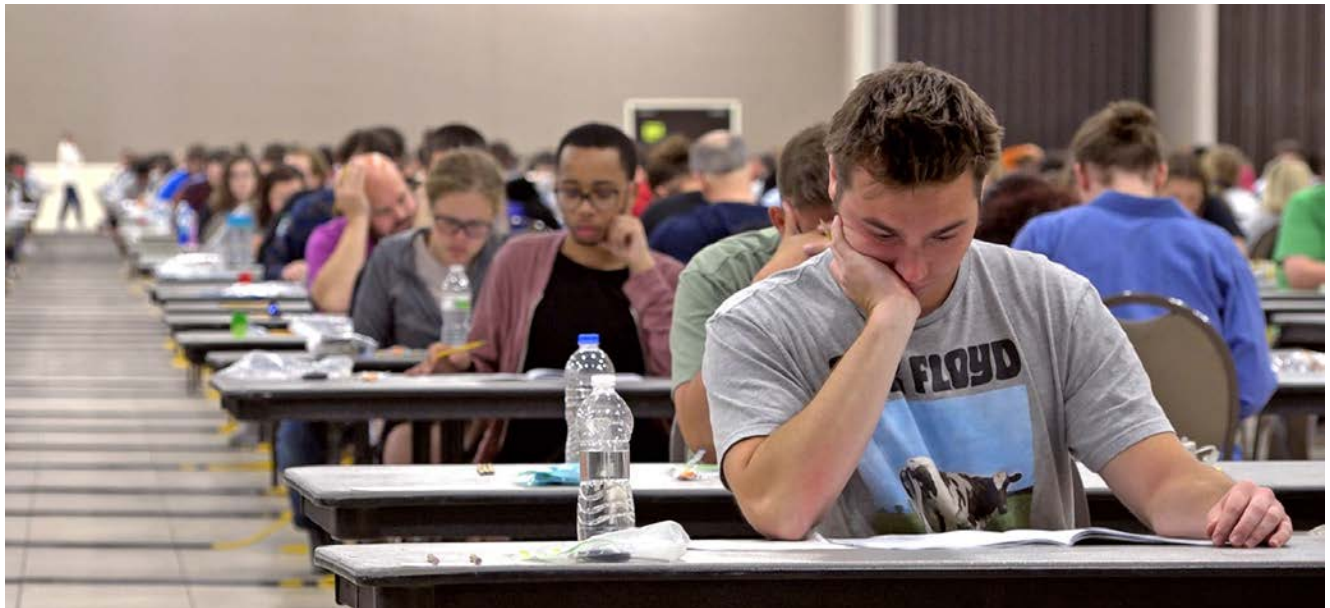
Elizabeth Arcos  
Amie Chapman  
Britney Cider  
Ashlea Glaser  
Asha Grimes  
Tarik Jackson  
Vivian Jones  
Tiffany Kline  
Bradley Martinez  
Penny Marchal  
Joshua Martin  
Kirstyn Moyers  
Alexis Preskar  
Lori Robison-Embry  
Shannon Scheid  
Jennifer Smith  
Denise Spencer  
Tammy White  
Phil Wille  
Cypress Williams

## February Bar Exam



## July Bar Exam





The bar examiners graded exams for the February and July 2023 bar examinations and maintained the Ohio Law Component outlines and the Ohio Law Component Test, which they created.

### Value Through Rigorous Standards and Monitoring

The office provides staff support to the Board of Bar Examiners, the Board of Commissioners on Character and Fitness, and the Commission on Certification of Attorneys as Specialists. These boards ensure the highest standards of education, training, and professionalism apply to those admitted to the practice of law in Ohio.

#### Board of Bar Examiners

The 18-member board performs duties pursuant to Gov. Bar R. I. The board is responsible for examination of applicants for admission to the practice of law in Ohio. Some of their responsibilities include grading the written portion of the UBE. The board collaborated with each other and bar examiners across the country to prepare for grading exams.

#### Board of Commissioners on Character and Fitness

The board is responsible for ensuring applicants possess the requisite character, fitness, and moral qualifications for admission. Essential functions include promoting admission standards, supervising local bar admissions committees, reviewing qualifications of each applicant, and hearing appeals from admission applicants who receive adverse recommendations from local bar admission committees or its investigatory authority. The board is 12 members of the Ohio bar, appointed by the Court.

During 2023, the board conducted 30 hearings regarding the character and fitness of applicants for admission and considered hearing panel reports from 31 applicants who had merit hearings. In addition, review committees evaluated hundreds of applications for admission to the practice of law in Ohio.

#### Board of Bar Examiners

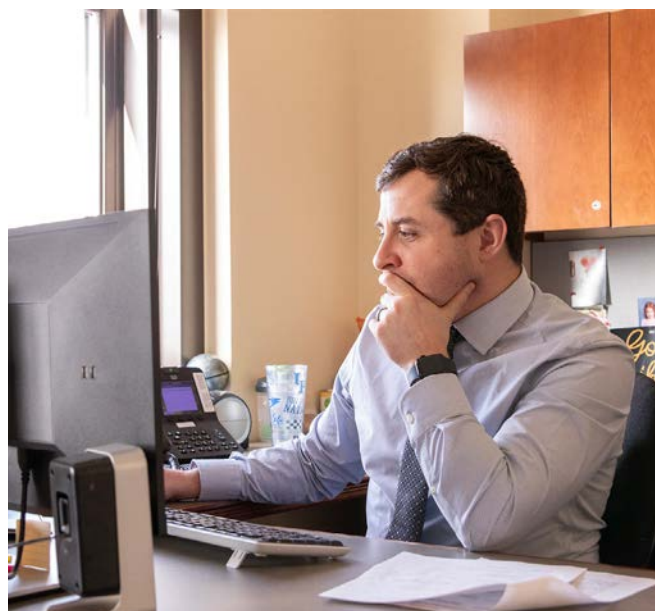
Hon. Mark K. Wiest (Retired), chair	C. Michael Walsh
Robert M. Morrow, vice chair	Suzanne M. Waldron
Lisa A. Coulter	Hon. Margaret Evans
Hon. Fanon A. Rucker	Alexander L. Ewing
Hon. Amy H. Lewis	Steve C. Coffaro
Robert Sanker	Hon. Linda J. Jennings
Kevin J. Kenney	Andrea D. Uhler
Michael E. Murman	Montrella S. Jackson
Magistrate Elizabeth Howe	Jennifer E. Krieger
Patricia Gajda	Jonathan M. Perrin
	Hon. Tommy O'Brien
	Staff Liaison: Tiffany Kline

#### Board of Commissioners on Character and Fitness:

Chad A. Heald, chair	Benita D. Reedus
Alan H. Abes	Brandon D. R. Dynes
Anthony S. VanNoy	Charles H. Bean
Faye D. Cox	Hon. Matthew R. Byrne
Sky Pettey	Charles H. Bean
Sarah K. Skow	Staff Liaison:
Timothy Chai	Gina White Palmer
Lisa S. DelGrosso	



Jennifer Smith, administrative assistant.



Bradley Martinez, assistant director of Attorney Services.

## Office of Attorney Services

Attorney Services maintains the records for Ohio attorneys in accordance with the registration requirements. The office is a model of efficiency, having registered more than 44,000 active attorneys licensed to practice law in Ohio in 2023. For the first time, the process was done entirely online, fees could be paid by a third party, and registration cards also became electronic. *[See page 51 Modernizing Attorney Registration.]*

### Modernization Means Value, Access to Justice, and High Standards

All this was accomplished at a cost savings, which ensures registration fees are among the lowest in the country, making the business of practicing law viable for all professionals in the field.

### Outreach to Include Best Practices and Quality of Service to Clients

The Office of Attorney Services monitors and ensures attorneys and judicial officers meet continuing legal education (CLE) obligations under Gov. Bar. R. X and Gov. Jud. R. V. In addition to tracking the continuing legal education of each licensed practitioner, the Office works with high performing members of the legal community selected to serve in monitoring the profession through the commissions on Certification of Attorneys as Specialists, Continuing Legal Education, Professionalism, Board on the Unauthorized Practice of Law, and the Commission on the Appointment of Counsel in Capital Cases.

### Commission on Certification of Attorneys as Specialists

The commission administers Gov. Bar R. XIV and the Standards for Accreditation of Specialty Certification Programs for Lawyers. The commission accredits and regulates qualified organizations to certify attorneys as specialists. In April 2023, those organizations reported 2,116 attorneys certified as specialists in Ohio, a 250% increase over 2022.

### Commission on Certification of Attorneys as Specialists

Amy Beth Koorn, chair	Awatef Assad
David S. Blessing, vice chair	Margaret A. O'Bryon
Hon. Carla J. Baldwin	Pamela Kurt
Hon. Emily Hagan	Sasha A.M. Blaine
John M. Lintz	Professor Felix B. Chang
Grant B. Garverick	Professor Christopher Peters
Justin R. Blume	Professor Christopher Roederer
Lewis J. Dolezal	
Janis E. Susalla Foley	Norman J. Ogilvie
Karen L. Bovard	Staff Liaison: Britney N. Cider

### Commission on Continuing Legal Education

Kevin Williams, chair	Sharon Harwood
Robert Mann, vice chair	Patricia Wagner
Judge Marisa Cornachio	Douglas Bloom
Hon. Sherrie Mikhail Miday	Karin Wiest
Hon. Michael Oster, Jr.	Ben A. Manning
Barbara Howard	Professor Terri Enns
Karen Bradley	Julie Cohara
Anthony Will	Staff Liaison:
James Sillery	Gina White Palmer

### Commission on Professionalism

Karen E. Rubin, chair	Laura Welles Wilson
Halle B. Hara, vice chair	Jay E. Michael
Hon. Latecia E. Wiles	Emily C. Samlow
Hon. Craig Baldwin	Belinda S. Barnes
Hon. Christopher B. Epley	Lindsay Ford Ellis
Hon. Molly K. Johnson	Staff Liaisons:
Hon. David Hamilton	Bradley J. Martinez,
Melissa Kidder	Alexis V. Preskar, and
Debra D. Overly	Phil Wille
Courtnee Carrigan	

### Board on the Unauthorized Practice of Law

David A. Kutik, chair	Jan A. Saurman
David E. Tschantz, chair	Mindi L. Schaefer
Robert J. Gehring,	RaMonna D. Benson
vice chair	Denny Ramey
Magistrate Julita Varner	Emily Gerken
Robert D. Alt	Staff Liaison:
Richard L. Creighton	Bradley J. Martinez
Elizabeth T. Smith	
Roseanne Hilow	

### Commission on Appointment of Counsel in Capital Cases

Hon. Thomas Marcelain	Jefferson Liston, vice chair
Kimberly S. Rigby	Timothy F. Sweeney
Ann Baronas, chair	Staff Liaison: Tammy White

### Commission on Continuing Legal Education

The commission, created by Gov. Bar R. X, accredits continuing legal education (CLE) programs and activities and administers the CLE requirements for attorneys and judges pursuant to that rule and Gov. Jud. R. IV. In 2023, the Office of Attorney Services processed more than 26,300 applications for CLE course accreditation, providing over 78,000 hours of legal education to attorneys and judges to meet the mandatory requirement, to better serve clients.

### Commission on Professionalism

The commission promotes professionalism among Ohio attorneys by maintaining and promoting the highest standards of integrity and honor among members of the legal profession. The commission is governed by Gov. Bar. Rule XV. The secretary to the commission administers the Court's nationally recognized Lawyer to Lawyer Mentoring Program, which pairs new attorneys with seasoned mentors.

### Board on the Unauthorized Practice of Law

The board is established by Gov. Bar R. VII and conducts hearings, preserves the record, and makes findings and recommendations to the Supreme Court in cases involving the alleged unauthorized practice of law.

### Commission on Appointment of Counsel in Capital Cases

The commission administers the requirements of the Rules for Appointment of Counsel in Capital Cases, including the certification of attorneys eligible to accept appointments to represent indigent defendants in death penalty trials and appeals in state courts.

## Amendments to Rules Governing the Bar

Gov. Bar R. VI, Section 8; Gov. Bar R. X, Sections 3 through 7, 9, 12, 14, 18, 19; and Gov. Jud. R. IV

Eff. Jan 1, 2023

These Amendments removed the CLE self-study caps for attorneys and provided an increase in CLE self-study caps for judges and magistrates. An amendment also allows CLE credit for serving as an election precinct official.

Gov. Bar R. I, Section 13

Eff. January 17, 2023

Amendments to Gov. Bar R. I to remove references to mental health as a consideration for an applicant's character and fitness. The amendment also replacing the word "sex" with "gender, sexual orientation, and marital status" as impermissible factors to consider in determining an applicant's character, fitness, and moral qualifications for the practice of law.

Gov. Bar R. VI, Sections 2 through 6, 8, 10, and 15

Eff. July 1, 2023

Increase the attorney registration fee by \$50 for a total of \$400 for the 2023/2025 attorney registration period and to increase it an additional \$50 for a total of \$450 for the 2025/2027 attorney registration period.

Increase the attorney late registration fee from \$50 to \$100 effective with the 2023/2025 registration period.

Increase the standard certificate of good standing ("CSG") fee from \$10 to \$20, increase the disciplinary history CGS fee from \$25 to \$35, and introduce \$50 for an expedited same-day certificate of good standing (if request is received by 2 p.m. Eastern Standard Time).

Eliminate the issuance of a paper bar card and provide an electronic version that an attorney may show on their phone or print out. This is also effective with the 2023/2025 attorney registration period.

Gov. Bar R. VII, Sec. 2(G)

Eff. July 1, 2023

The Board on the Unauthorized Practice of Law made several changes to the rules governing its procedures, including the timeliness of motions, electronic filing by parties, and several others.

Gov. Jud. R. IV, Sections 3 and 4

Eff. July 1, 2023

Allows the Chief Justice, in some circumstances, to delay or excuse completion of certain judicial orientation requirements.

Gov. Bar R. VI, Section 4

Eff. July 1, 2023

Amended to make it permissive for an attorney registering in Ohio to provide information identifying the gender, race, and ethnicity of the attorney in the manner required by the office.



# Modernizing Attorney Registration

## Serving the Legal Profession by Modernizing Registration, Continuing Legal Education, Fees, and More

For the first time, over 40,000 attorneys completed their registration with the Supreme Court completely online in 2023.

In the joint project of the Divisions of Information Technology and Attorney Services, the modernization of the registration process included expanded options for demographic questions of gender, race, and ethnicity, which became optional. Attorneys are now asked to identify other states where they are licensed to practice law, whether they have professional liability insurance, and if there is a succession plan in the event the attorney is permanently or temporarily unable to manage their caseload.

Once registered, the registration cards are now electronic rather than paper. This provides attorneys with quick and easy access from their device. The online process and the digital cards reduced costs for certificates of registration and registration cards. For the prior registration period, printing and mailing of the registration cards cost \$37,183, which included more than \$22,000 in postage, and the printing and mailing of the registration certificates cost an additional \$26,000. Cost savings makes it possible to contain registration fees.

Attorney registration fees were adjusted in 2023 after 16 years without change. Beginning Sept. 1, 2023, the fee is \$400 for the two-year period. The fee will be \$450 for the 2025-2027 period. Ohio remains among the lowest attorney registration fees in the country. Ohio attorneys pay registration only every two years,

compared with other states where fees are charged annually. Attorney registration fees fund processing registrations, maintaining attorney records, investigating complaints of judicial or attorney misconduct, reimbursing victims of attorney theft, and other services to attorneys.

With the digital modernization, another first, a third party can now pay attorney registration fees for an individual or group. Agency billing makes it possible for an employer to pay fees for all its employees through one payment. This process made it easier and reduced paperwork for firms and individuals who previously had to submit for reimbursement and pay by paper checks.

Effective Jan. 1, rules for continuing legal education (CLE) were amended to waive the caps on approved self-study courses, allowing attorneys to meet their CLE requirements in a time and location to accommodate their practice. Amendments also increased the self-study caps for judges and magistrates to 20 hours per compliance period. And organizations that develop CLE for Ohio attorneys can apply for course approval and pay related fees by credit card or ACH payment through the Supreme Court website. Bar associations, law firms, educational organizations, and public agencies are among those who sponsor CLE courses.



## Rural Practice Initiative

Ohio is facing an attorney shortage. With 75% of Ohio attorneys practicing in the three largest counties, the people who live in 82 of the 88 Ohio counties may not have legal representation when they need it.

People living in rural communities are less likely to have access to lawyers as they navigate complex legal issues related to health care, housing, food assistance, criminal defense, or juvenile cases of abuse and delinquency. Currently, the greatest needs include prosecutor, public defender, court-appointed attorneys, lawyers to represent children and families, and other civil legal needs of low-income Ohioans. .

### Outreach to Improve Access to Justice

Chief Justice Sharon L. Kennedy forged partnerships with the Ohio State Bar Association, Ohio Access to Justice Foundation, the Ohio Judicial Conference, law schools across the state, and the Ohio Department of Higher Education. Their shared goal is to encourage young lawyers to work in underserved counties.

The Ohio General Assembly provided legislation and funding for the first *Rural Practices Incentive Program*. Law school graduates and attorneys early in their careers may receive law school loan repayment in exchange for a commitment to serve in an area of need through the program.

### Service to Communities Through a Career in the Law

People are seeking careers where they can contribute to a higher purpose, according to a 2022 study by McKinsey & Co. The study found this particularly true of millennials, people born between 1981 and 1996 who came of age in 2000. Today millennials are 28 to 43-year-olds and the attorneys among them are needed across the state to meet the legal services needs of underserved families. But the need is on-going and long-term.

Chief Justice Kennedy is focused on a sustainable pipeline for people to enter the profession in the future. By capturing the imaginations of students, beginning in middle school, high school, college, and engaging with deans of Ohio law schools, caring young people can be shown the way careers in the law serve others and make a difference in their communities.



**"With education comes the opportunity to dream,  
and the ability to achieve that dream."**

*Chief Justice Sharon L. Kennedy*

### Value in the Work and in Life

In February 2023, the chief justice spoke to government and history educators and recognized the difference they make in the lives of children. The chief justice recounted the impact a high school teacher had on her future when he told her she could make a good attorney, which sparked her dream of serving the law.

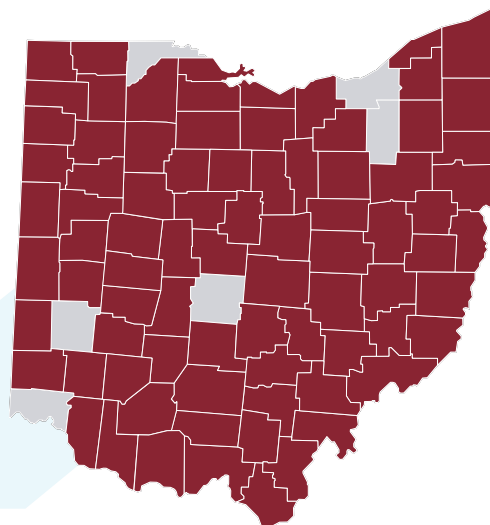
"With education comes the opportunity to dream, and the ability to achieve that dream," the chief justice told educators as she thanked them for their service.

In September, during the State of the Judiciary address, Chief Justice Kennedy called on judicial officers, who are members of the Ohio Judicial Conference, to go into schools to meet and talk to young people. Participating in civic education in their community schools may provide the first contact the students have with a judge or lawyer. That contact may prove powerful in sparking an interest in a career in law.

Recent law school graduates who were admitted to the Bar in November, were encouraged to take advantage of the Rural Incentive Program, while finding a community that is underserved where they can establish themselves and have a quality life in service of their neighbors.

Showing children the range of opportunities for careers in the law must start early and be continuous. And building pathways for students to interact with legal professional along the educational journey can ensure Ohio meets the current and future legal needs in all communities.

**82 of 88**  
counties are underserved.



# Court Services Division

Stephanie Graubner Nelson  
DIRECTOR

Almaria Bellamy  
Abbey Christopher  
Debra Copeland\*  
Olivia Chadwick  
David Edelblute  
Brian Farrington  
Jenna Fawcett  
Chris Geocarlis  
Joel Gottke  
Samantha Goyings  
Quincella Harrison  
Diane Hayes  
Tony Ingram  
Sarah Jeu  
Marya Kolman  
Kevin Lottes  
Sheila Lovell  
Katheryn Munger  
Anne Murray  
Kyana Pierson  
Bruno Romero  
Colleen Rosshirt  
Sarah Schregardus  
Anne Thompson  
Zach Vicha  
Lisa Williams  
Alicia Wolf

\* Retired in 2023



The Office of Court Services supports trial and appellate courts in the administration of justice. The division provides traditional and innovative services in response to and with respect for the needs of courts and the public.

Trainings and best-in-class resources are offered to court professionals and justice system partners across the state to ensure consistent compliance with laws and rules of courts, as well as best practices in five specialty sections: Case Management Section, Children and Families Section and the Domestic Violence Program, Dispute Resolution Section, Language Services Section, and Specialized Dockets.

The Division operates efficiently and effectively with 23 staff members and a budget of \$5.7 million, including state and federal grants.

## Outreach to Determine Needs and Provide Resources to Courts

The work of the division begins by identifying and understanding the needs of the local courts we serve. Understanding their needs enables us to bring together courts, national and local experts, with best practices, to innovate and engineer solutions in their community to serve justice.

Among its many outreach activities, each week court services subject matter specialists facilitate educational programs and roundtables allowing court administrators, judges, magistrates, and staff to connect and share ideas with peers across the state. All sections host roundtables. One example is the 19 virtual roundtables held for court staff and court-connected dispute resolution professionals which drew 184 participants in 2023.

There are six commissions and advisory committees that advise the Court Services Division, made up of judges, magistrates, attorneys, and professionals in related fields, who lend their expertise and focus on rules, education, programs, and innovations. The sections provide

staff support and gather maximum input from these subject matter experts who contribute a wide range of experiences and are committed to a transparent, accessible, accountable legal system in Ohio.



Brian Farrington, statistics manager in the Court Services Division, leads a session during New Judge Orientation, May 8.

## Case Management Section

Whether a criminal or civil case, aspects of a person's life, family, or business may be on hold while a legal dispute is resolved. The case management section provides a service fundamental to justice when it assists courts and as a result, every person who comes before a court.

### The Service We Provide

The Case Management Section provides judges and court personnel with training, consulting, and technical assistance on case management and delay reduction including:

- Caseflow, statistical reporting, and operations management training.
- Caseflow process mapping and process improvements.
- Technical support in the collection, analysis, and reporting of caseload statistics.
- Implementation of CourTools Performance Measures from the National Center for State Courts which creates and measures targets for case processing, operational efficiencies, and employee satisfaction.

### The Values We Share

Courts share the desire to provide timely justice as set forth in the U.S. and Ohio constitutions.

Case Management Section training on best practices makes it possible for all courts to identify areas for improvement to meet the time standards set forth in the rules of Superintendence, Rule 37.

In 2023, the section provided large group training, including statistical reporting requirements, for new mayors affiliated with mayor's courts, as well as at the Common Pleas General Division Judicial Conference, at the Ohio Judicial Conference, and for both new judge and new magistrate orientation trainings.

The section provided customized consulting to a dozen Ohio courts in 2023 at no additional cost to the courts or taxpayers.

The section conducted caseflow process mapping for three courts at no cost to those courts.



**Case Inquiry Form**

When a timely decision or ruling (pursuant to Sup. R. 39, 40) has not occurred in a pending case, parties and attorneys may complete this form for assistance. The staff of the Case Management Section will review this and determine if they may intervene. Staff of the Case Management Section does not engage in the substance of a case, the law or how the law applies to the facts of the case, nor provide legal advice. Case management staff have expertise in the processes and procedures related to case management.

To submit a case inquiry, please fill out the following form.

**Your Information**

Relationship to Case\*

☐ Self-represented person: I have no attorney. I am representing myself.

☐ Represented Party: I have an attorney. I am a party to this case.

☐ Attorney: I represent a party to this case.

First Name\* Last Name\*

Address

City State Zip Code

Email\* Phone\*

**Case Management**

Caseflow and Operations Management Consulting

Superintendence Rules Quick Reference Guide

eStats

Resource Sharing in Ohio Courts

Statistical Reporting Information and Forms

**28% to 21%**

Reduction in common pleas criminal docket backlog from 2022 to 2023.

## Timely Access to Justice is Constitutionally Guaranteed

Chief Justice Sharon L. Kennedy committed from the start of her leadership that cases will be resolved in a timely manner in Ohio.

The chief justice began the year, traveling the state, meeting with judges and court administrators to hear what could be done to reduce aging and over-age cases and ensure citizens receive timely access to justice.

In the ongoing outreach to judges and court staff, they demonstrated a willingness to improve case statistics and a growing number have reached out for consulting services.

The Court Services Division, Case Management Section has provided technical assistance to over 20 courts in 2023. In conjunction with the Judicial College, Court Services has developed courses on caseflow management for common pleas judges, with the goal of making best practices in administration available to benefit all litigants by reducing backlogs in the felony criminal process.

Common factors for faster resolution of cases are to maintain control over scheduling; reduce continuances; and to add hearing dates to finish a case sooner than later.

The Supreme Court made available \$3 million in technology grants, which some courts used to update case management systems and other technology to improve case processing.

A *Case Inquiry Form* was developed as a service to any party to a case anywhere in the state. They can submit the form to the case management section to inquire about the status of their case. The case management team contacts the local court and shares the update with all parties.

While it can take time to see the impact of efforts like this, thanks to the conscientious management of dockets and over-age cases, both civil and criminal case backlogs in the courts of common pleas are declining on a statewide basis.

In 2023, Ohio courts demonstrated success in reducing backlogs, a clear value from focusing attention on a shared problem and working to resolve it. At the end of 2022, the courts of common pleas reported an over-age rate of 28% in their criminal dockets. As of December 31, 2023, that rate had declined to 21%. In their civil dockets, the courts of common pleas also saw over-age rate reductions, from 7% at the end of 2022 to 4% by the end of 2023. Overall declines were also seen in domestic relations cases (from 9% to 8%) and juvenile cases (10% to 7%).

Case Management works collaboratively with the Ohio Department of Public Safety to monitor the courts that were awarded grant funding for delay reduction through the federal American Rescue Plan Act. The funding to courts was specifically to address backlog reduction. Site visits began in 2023 and will continue in 2024.

And in an ongoing desire to improve monitoring, the Court Services Division in partnership with the Information Technology Division is developing an automated email notification system to alert courts when they are delinquent in their reporting according to Sup.R.37. This will provide courts with an additional tool to ensure the timely submission of data and is anticipated to be online in calendar 2024.

### Advisory Committee on Case Management

Hon. Craig R. Baldwin, chair	Hon. Michael Oster
Hon. Beth Cappelli, vice chair	Hon. John Rudduck
Tonja Amato	Elizabeth W. Stephenson
Hon. Kim A. Browne	Hon. Terri L. Stupica
Hon. Patrick Carroll (Retired)	Hon. Thomas Teodosio
Hon. Kimberly Cocroft	C. Michael Walsh
Hon. Michelle Earley	Hon. Latecia Wiles
Hon. Kristen K. Johnson	Hon. William R. Zimmerman
Michael Negray	Hon. Gene A. Zmuda
Hon. Terrance A. Nestor	Staff Liaison: Christopher Geocariss
Je'Nine Nickerson	

## Children & Families

The Children & Families Section provides technical assistance, training, and policy recommendations to improve court performance in cases involving children and families.

### The Service We Provide

In addition to the outreach work and input from stakeholders and advisors, the section monitors and assists pilot programs which show qualitative and quantitative promise in making the lives of children and families better and to support them so they can avoid or reduce involvement with the justice system.

This year, six counties (Cuyahoga, Erie, Clark, Wayne, Stark, and Summit) completed their second year of a four-year pilot program of Multidisciplinary Representation. The program is for families involved in the child protective services system. Ohio is the first state to implement a multi-site legal representation pilot program. In each of the six counties, teams of an attorney, a social worker, and a person with lived experience in the child protective system work together with families involved or at risk of involvement. Technical assistance is available to the pilot sites by Susan Jacobs, former director of the Center for Family Representation in New York, NY and evaluation is provided by Action Research.

The six site representative courts came together to gain additional benefit from sharing their experiences with the program.

Dual Status Youth Initiatives is another pilot program implemented in four counties (Champaign, Clark, Fairfield, and Hancock). In November, these pilot teams came to the Thomas J. Moyer Ohio Judicial Center to work together with consultants from the Robert F. Kennedy National Resource Center for Juvenile Justice. All four counties have created multi-agency leadership teams implementing best-practice approaches to working with youth that are currently or have been involved in both the juvenile justice and child protective services systems.

The division's largest event of the year was the 2023 Summit on Children. The Children and Families Section brought together teams of judges, child welfare workers, behavioral health professionals, educators, prosecuting and defense attorneys, guardian ad litem, and youth from 52 Ohio counties. Teams left the collaborative event with a customized action plan to improve the lives of children and families in their county.



## Summit on Children 2023

Teams from 52 Ohio counties gathered at the Supreme Court Summit on Children increasing collaboration between the courts, children services, and families. The teams included judges, child welfare workers, attorneys, guardians ad litem, and youth participants who shared their stories of growing up in the foster care system.

The Summit featured speakers from around the country sharing best practices to improve outcomes for children and families. Chief Justice Darlene Byrne of the Texas Third Court of Appeals in Austin described ways courts can intervene earlier in the case to connect families with services and reduce the time children spend away from home. David Reed from the Indiana Department of Children Services talked about how his state worked to reduce the unnecessary use of institutions for youth in foster care placements. William Bell, president and CEO of [Casey Family Programs](#), examined ways courts, agencies, and community partners can work together to build a “community of hope.”

For Champaign County Family Court Judge Lori Reisinger, collaboration and teamwork is a constant goal. In her early days as an assistant prosecutor, she shadowed caseworkers during family visits and got a deeper appreciation of the system.

“That kind of laid the foundation for me to understand what they did, how important it was, and that they really had the same interest I do. And that’s helping families,” she said.

During the Summit, Judge Reisinger joined Summit County Juvenile Court Judge Linda Teodosio and local children and family services leaders for a panel discussion. They talked about ways to build partnerships and increase teamwork between judges and caseworkers. Key steps included having regular meetings with the agencies and establishing clear and open lines of communication where everyone feels heard and understood. Judge Teodosio echoed to the group that everyone is working toward the same goal.

“What has made it successful in our community is the fact that not only are we willing to collaborate and always come to the table, but I think we are able to be honest with each other in a respectful manner to solve problems,” she said.



Montgomery County Permanency Coordinator Julie Pennington works with children and families and recognized the benefit of children having an active role in their court proceedings. Young people can contribute to solutions in their case.

“We want them to know that they have a say in their case. They have a voice. They need to be aware of what’s happening to them and their family,” she said.

High school senior Marcos Barker is on the Children’s Services Youth Advisory Board in Montgomery County. The board consists of emancipated youth and children in foster care who share their first-hand experiences to offer

improvements to the foster care system. Marcos was grateful for the opportunity to attend the Summit and be heard. He’s learning more about the work of the court, case workers, and other child welfare leaders.

For the Court Services Division, Children & Families Section, it was important that each team that attended the summit develop an action plan using new strategies and best practices to address the specific needs of their community. This included ways for all partners to contribute and identify specific steps for implementing changes to help children and families.

## Awareness, Education and Reporting Improve Victims' Lives

Within the Children & Families Section, the Domestic Violence Program assists and supports local courts in response to civil and criminal domestic violence, sexual violence, and stalking cases. Trends in domestic violence are tracked by working closely with the Advisory Committee on Domestic Violence, which is appointed by the chief justice. Trend information is disseminated to local courts and allied professionals through education and guidance documents. And in 2023, the program sponsored nine webinars on topics including cultural responsiveness and domestic violence; medical and legal considerations of the strangulation law; brain injury resulting from domestic violence; and assessing and responding to stalking. The courses reached more than 1,000 multidisciplinary justice partners, representing 82 of Ohio's 88 counties, including judicial officers from family, juvenile, municipal, common pleas, and appellate courts.

In addition to inquiries from courts and attorneys, there was direct service to over 60 constituents who called for assistance with referrals or legal information about domestic violence related issues.

Two laws with significant impact on domestic violence related cases became effective this year: the strangulation law, and the crime victim rights law, known as Marsy's Law. Educational documents were created, and program staff guided local courts regarding the changes.

At the heart of the work to curb domestic violence is the importance of safety and valuing the lives of the victims. The program staff assisted in the development of an online course for judicial officers about reporting to the Attorney General's Bureau of Criminal Investigation to ensure timely and accurate data for criminal history reports and firearms disqualifications. In collaboration with the executive branch agency, the Ohio Office of Criminal Justice Services staff shared ideas for grant funded projects to improve reporting of domestic violence related cases to reduce court staff time when reporting.

The staff also serves as the program manager for the Court's Violence Against Women Act funds.

## Advisory Committee on Children and Families

Hon. Denise Cubbon, chair (Retired)	Hon. Todd Kohlriseser
Hon. Linda Tucci Teodosio, vice chair	Magistrate Kathleen Lenski
Gerald Bryant	Hon. Diane Palos
Hon. Glenn H. Derryberry (Retired)	Hon. Dixilene Park
Magistrate Michelle Edgar	Hon. Matthew Puskarich
Ryan Gies	Magistrate William Rickrich
Hon. Elizabeth Gill	Katie Stenman
Hon. Rosemarie A. Hall	Magistrate Jennifer Svec
David Haverfield	Jeff Van Deusen
Magistrate Patricia Hider (Retired)	Hon. James T. Walther
Hon. Frank Janik	Tonya Whitsett
Eric W. Johnson	Staff Liaisons: David Edelblute, Kyana Pierson, and Debra Copeland

## Advisory Committee on Domestic Violence

Hon. James Brown, chair	Hon. Lindsay Navarre
Cynthia Bailey	Hon. Jaiza Page
Jennifer Dave	William Shaughnessy
Lisa DeGeeter	Hon. Jarrod Skinner
Colleen Eyenon	Hon. Laura Smith
Hon. Marianne Hemmeter	Hon. Richard Wright
Detective Laurie Carney	Magistrate Jeannine Myers
Hon. Terri L. Kohlriseser	Staff Liaisons: Anne M. Murray and Sheila Lovell
Hon. Katrine Lancaster	
Hon. Anita Laster Mays	
Hon. Julie Monnin	





## Resources for Local Courts and Partners

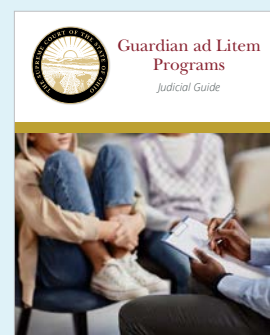
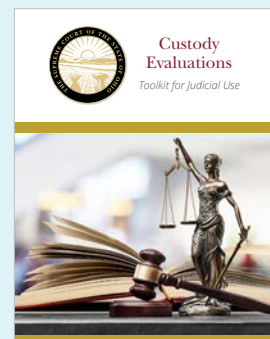
Through the outreach efforts of the Court Services Division, the Supreme Court identifies trends and compiles guidance for trial and appellate courts.

This year, one major shift for local courts, prosecutors, and law enforcement involved expanded victim rights and protections detailed in the Ohio Constitution and state legislation, which went into effect in April. The expansion was part of the Ohio Crime Victims' Bill of Rights, often called Marsy's Law.

To provide service to crime victims, the Court developed a tool to help with an aspect of the law. The [Crime Victim Restitution Amount Summary Form](#) provides guidance for victims seeking compensation for economic loss from a criminal or delinquent act.

Three other toolkits were created in 2023 for local courts:

- [Developing an Effective School Attendance Program](#): Details how schools, courts, and community partners can work together on issues, such as unreliable transportation or mental health struggles, that may keep a child from attending school. Developed with the Ohio Department of Education.
- [Custody Evaluations Toolkit for Judicial Use](#): Informs courts and custody evaluators about their responsibilities, best practices, laws, and rules for decision-making in custody disputes to help families resolve conflicts.
- [Judicial Guide to Guardian ad Litem Programs](#): Identifies strategies courts can use to recruit and educate guardians ad litem and highlights best practices for increasing accountability and improving performance.



## Dispute Resolution

The Dispute Resolution Section promotes statewide rules and uniform standards concerning dispute resolution; develops and delivers innovative dispute resolution services to Ohio courts; sponsors training programs for judges, court personnel, and dispute resolution professionals; and provides mediation for Supreme Court litigants and Ohio public officials.

The Supreme Court referred 46 cases to the section in 2023 with the goal of assisting the parties in resolving their conflict without the need for further formal court proceedings. Most cases involved public records, state and local taxes, and workers' compensation issues. Most required multiple mediation sessions.

### Saving Time, Saving Money

When parties settle their disputes outside of court, they reach resolution more quickly. Settlement saves the parties time and money, and everyone can move forward in their life or their business. Settlements reduce a court caseload and the court can focus its efforts on the cases that will not be resolved except by trial.

Settlement Week is a strategy to multiply the time and money saving benefits, as well as reducing caseload during a designated period. This court-managed program can reduce civil and domestic relations case backlogs by establishing a time to mediate older cases that appear ready for resolution. The section developed and updated resources for courts and practitioners and held a virtual presentation on operating a Settlement Week program that was attended by 43 judges, magistrates, court administrators and mediators.

### Outreach with Resources for Courts

The section maintained a national and international presence through membership, leadership, presentations, and curriculum development in the Association for Conflict Resolution, the Association of Family and Conciliation Courts, the Ohio Mediation Association, and the American Bar Association Dispute Resolution Section. Section staff helped develop or update training programs and served as faculty. They also gave presentations for the Association for Conflict Resolution, the Ohio Judicial Conference, Moritz College of Law, and served as conversation starters and facilitators for dispute resolution roundtables.

The section receives advice from and assists the Commission on Dispute Resolution.

### Commission on Dispute Resolution

As provided in Sup.R. 16.01, the commission advises the Supreme Court and its staff on the promotion of statewide rules and uniform standards concerning the use of dispute resolution in Ohio courts; development and delivery of dispute resolution education and professional development activities for judges, magistrates, court personnel, attorneys, and court-affiliated dispute resolution professionals; development and delivery of dispute resolution services for disputes arising among state, county, and local public officials throughout Ohio; and consideration of any other issues the Commission deems necessary.

### Commission on Dispute Resolution

Hon. Joyce V. Kimbler, chair	Professor William Froehlich
Magistrate Penny Gates, vice chair	Peggy Foley Jones
Hon. Larry Heiser	George Kaitisa
Barbara A. Moore	Andrea L. Weaver
Hon. Pierre Bergeron	Hon. Lori Reisinger
Anthony E. Palmer, Jr.	Professor Maara Fink
E. Rodney Davisson	Hon. Karen Phipps
Garry E. Hunter	Hon. Barbara Carter
Hon., Sylvia Hendon (Retired)	Douglas N. Godshall
Chris Abbuhl	Magistrate Benita D. Reedus
	Staff Liaison: Marya Kolman

### The Services We Provide

Contract, staff, and volunteer educators conducted 18 rule-based dispute resolution training and education courses for mediators, court personnel and attorneys more than 44 training days. These programs included Fundamentals of Mediation, Specialized Family and Divorce Mediation, Domestic Abuse Issues for Mediators, School Attendance Mediation, Elder Mediation, Eldercaring Coordination, Child Protection Mediation, and Parenting Coordination. There were 394 participants in these events.

Four advanced virtual training programs for mediators and court personnel were held in 2023 including advanced Parenting Coordination

programs. There were 189 attendees in these advanced educational programs.

Online mediation courses are available through the Judicial College and available to court personnel, attorneys, and mediators and were completed by 976 individuals in 2023. The Dispute Resolution Section and the Judicial College have updated these modules for 2024 and made them easier to access.

## Language Services

The Language Services Section provides technical assistance, training, resources, and policy recommendations to improve access to courts in cases involving limited English proficient, deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals.

### Service to Local Courts

When local courts need technical assistance regarding language access and the utilization of interpreters with nominal linguistic populations the Language Services Section is the first place they turn. Legal interpretation requires an understanding of both foreign language and the legal terms. A certified interpreter provides clear understanding between a person and their legal representative in a legal setting. The section administers testing, certification, and credentialing of court interpreters. Training is offered to court staff, judges, magistrates, attorneys, and other legal professionals on matters related to the use of interpreters in the court. Specialized training is offered to interpreters preparing for certification and credentialing.

### Service to People of Limited English Proficiency

Imagine arriving in a courtroom and not understanding the words or implications when your life, your family, or your livelihood is at stake. For people who are not English language proficient, are deaf, or have trouble hearing, certified interpreters are the lifeline so they can assist in their own representation.

The section provided over 500 instances of assistance to local courts including finding interpreters in languages of lesser diffusion, providing protocols for use of interpreters in legal proceedings and ancillary court services, translation issues, technology in court interpretation and translation, and navigating the Standards for the Use of Video Remote Interpretation.

Dispute Resolution Section staff and contract mediators mediated seven Government Conflict Resolution Services (GCRS) cases through the confidential dispute resolution program designed to assist county and local public officials in resolving and preventing conflicts using mediation, facilitation, and neutral evaluation.

The section also assists foreign language constituents who call the Supreme Court for information.

To ensure access for individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing, or limited English proficient, the section manages the language access compliance process and provides solutions to pressing issues regarding the scarcity of court interpreters. Five cases involving non-compliance with Superintendence Rule 88 and 89 were effectively resolved.

### Outreach to Determine the Needs and Provide Resources to Local Courts

As the scarcity of qualified court interpreters reached a critical stage, Chief Justice Sharon L. Kennedy, apprised judges of the steps the Supreme Court was taking to mitigate this shortage. The section increased the testing frequency, worked with universities to establish training programs, proposed amending the Rules of Superintendence to increase the pool of eligible entrants, and established standards for video remote interpretation.

### Advisory Committee on Language Services

Hon. David Hejmanowski, chair	Lori Harris
Lidia Ebersole, vice chair	Hon. Jonathan Hein
Amy Braddock	Hon. Molly Johnson
Edward H. Chyun	Hon. Aram M. Ohanian
Hon. Steven K. Dankof	Hon. Andrea C. Peebles
Magistrate Serpil Ergun	Hon. Suzan Marie Sweeney
Alexander Etlin	Hon. Jazmin Torres-Lugo
Rosalind C. Florez	Louis E. Valencia II
Lisa Gorrasi	Magistrate Lisa Wiseman
Becky A. Guzman	Staff Liaison: Bruno G. Romero

## Specialized Docket Section

The Specialized Docket Section provides technical support to trial courts in analyzing the need for, planning, implementation, and certification of specialized docket programs.

### Services We Provide

As of December 31, 2023, Ohio has 260 certified specialized dockets.

The staff recommended that 100 specialized dockets be certified by the Commission on Specialized Dockets. Recertifications accounted for 90 of the dockets, and 10 of the dockets were new programs. Dockets are certified every three years.

A key component of certification is helping local courts meet the Supreme Court standards for specialized dockets and adherence to national best practice standards. This is accomplished by certification of specialized docket judges, using the Rules of Superintendence for the Courts of Ohio standards based on the National Association of Drug Court Professionals recommendations.

Through a grant obtained through the Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA), staff worked with national technical assistance partners NPC Research, American University, and the Center for Justice Innovation with tools designed to help local courts improve outcomes for participants.

### The Value of Quality Standards

Staff collaborated with judges and program coordinators to disseminate the BeST (Best Practices Self-Assessment Tool) and the RED (Racial Equity and Diversity) tool statewide. The BeST assessment tool measures fidelity to the drug court model. The RED tool provides strategies for dockets to enhance their equity and diversity. This grant focuses on adult drug and veteran dockets. Where best practices and monitoring are utilized, participants have the best chance of success.

Additionally, NPC Research partnered with staff on developing a peer review program specific to Ohio. Peer review involves two dockets of similar type and size using the BeST Assessment results along with direct observation of each other's court processes and procedures to provide meaningful feedback regarding adherence to current best-practice standards. As part of this process, individuals who have completed the program or are actively involved with the dockets, are part of a focus group that also provides each

docket with feedback on positive aspects and areas identified for improvement. The initial cohort pair was Lucas County Court of Common Pleas Drug Court led by Judge Ian English and Cuyahoga County Court of Common Pleas Drug Court led by Judge Kelly Gallagher.

This year the section assisted adult and juvenile docket types including adult and juvenile drug courts, veteran treatment courts, mental health courts, operating a motor vehicle while intoxicated (OVI) courts, human trafficking courts, family dependency treatment courts, reentry courts, and domestic violence courts.

### Partnerships Make Everyone Stronger

Specialized docket staff continue monitoring a human trafficking grant obtained through the U.S. Department of Justice Office for Victims of Crime and administered by the Ohio Department of Public Safety. Funds were awarded to Delaware County Juvenile Court and Hamilton County Juvenile Court for human trafficking dockets. The grant is to build capacity of juvenile justice agencies to identify victims of human trafficking, train communities to respond to human trafficking of minors, and facilitate county-based coordination of victim services.

### Commission on Specialized Dockets

Hon. Theresa Dellick, chair	Hon. Jeannine Pratt
Hon. Ian B. English, vice chair	Wade Melton
Veronica Perry	Hon. Teresa Ballinger
Magistrate Robert Rice	Chase Carter
Hon. Charles L. Patton	Abbie Badenhop
Hon. Marianne Sezon	Hon. Jeffrey Benson
Mary Bower	Magistrate Laura Lynd-Robinson
Hon. Kevin Dunn	Staff Liaisons: Anthony
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Tricia A. Lucido	Wolf, Zachary Vicha,
Susan M. Zurface	Sarah Jeu, Lisa
Hon. Linda Knepp	Williams, and Abbey
Hon. David Rodabaugh	Christopher



First Task Force on Reentry meeting, on May 18. Tony Ingram, Manager of Specialized Dockets Programs, introduces himself and the role of the Court Services Division.

## Reentry Partners Outreach to Identify Community Needs and Share Solutions

In April 2023, Chief Justice Kennedy announced the Reentry Task Force, the first task force created in her administration and reflecting her ongoing commitment to ensure the restored life that awaits formerly incarcerated people back in their communities is attainable and real.

To form the Reentry Task Force, she reached out to a wide range of stakeholders to come together for a first of its kind collaboration. The task force includes representatives from state and local agencies, law enforcement, and community health and rehabilitation partners. Judge Chryssa Hartnett of Stark County Common Pleas General Division Reentry Court leads the task force. She also leads one of Ohio's nine reentry specialized dockets. Her co-chair Chris Nicaastro from the Ohio Mental Health and Addiction Services agency was purposefully chosen due to his breadth of knowledge about support services.

Staffed by the Court Services Division, Specialized Docket Section, the group is analyzing the needs, services, and data regarding courts and the reentry population. It is looking at evidence-based best practices and expected to take a holistic approach, with consideration for housing, education, employment, health care, and more.

Reentry is multi-faceted. Early into their work, the task force identified the wide distinction between prison reentry and jail release. The experiences are different. The needs are different. The resources are different. And while community partners may overlap, they are often different, as well. There are highly motivated subcommittees moving fast to deliver recommendations to the Court at the end of June 2024.

**"Justice-involved people need to know that there is help waiting for them. With that knowledge comes hope. Hope provides the bridge from incarceration to full participation in community and family life."**

*Chief Justice Sharon L. Kennedy*

# Judicial College

M. Christy Tull  
DIRECTOR, JUDICIAL COLLEGE

Milt Nuzum\*  
DIRECTOR, JUDICIAL SERVICES

Dahria Beaver  
Terri Bidwell  
Susan Brown  
Sam Campbell  
Myla Danison  
Brandon Deaner  
Kim Eggerton  
Chris Fields  
AngelaKay Garvey  
Dean Hogan  
Briana Jones  
Dot Keil  
Rick Loutzenhiser  
Karra Mowry  
Brittany Preece  
Richard Presley  
Alexandria Reasoner  
Kristopher Steele  
Laura Tainer  
Terry Taylor  
Katrina Webb  
Cindy Wright\*

\* Retired in 2023



Court Management Program, June 6

The Judicial College is not a campus nor is it a building. It does not offer degrees. Yet, it is the largest single provider of judicial education in Ohio, promoting justice for all and the wellbeing of citizens in our state.

## Service We Provide

Each year dedicated professional staff of the College and almost 500, mostly volunteer faculty, provide hundreds of live and online courses for thousands of judicial officers, court personnel, and guardians of children and adults. Central to its mission is educating new judges and magistrates. When judges and magistrates are elected or appointed, they must attend an orientation offered by the Judicial College.

In 2023, 15% of all judges and 12% of magistrates were new to their role and participated in the orientation programs. For judges, courses help guide the administration of justice, judicial decision-making, and provide the opportunity to learn from experienced judges in the classroom and through a required mentor relationship during their first year.

Portions of the orientation for new juvenile judges occurred at the Department of Youth Services' Circleville Juvenile Correctional Facility. Judges talked with youth and the staff, and learned about education, treatment, and services for young people behind bars.

**"Education provided by the Judicial College is imperative to ensuring that the states judiciary serves the needs of our communities."**

*Hon. Janet Burnside (Ret.)*



Court Management Program, February 8



Civil Treatment Course, August 10



New Judge Orientation, May 8

Education continues throughout a judge's professional life. As one judge described, "Being from a smaller county, I don't have magistrates, I don't have a law clerk, I don't have an administrative assistant. So, the Judicial College is all that for me. I'm not sure I could do my job without their support."

For that judge and many other courts, the Judicial College is also known for the staff support it provides to the Ohio Association of Magistrates, Ohio Association of Court Administration, and the Advisory Committee on the Judicial Family Network.

In addition, the College partnered with and provided education at meetings of the Ohio Judicial Conference, all six Ohio judicial associations, and many court personnel associations, including the American Probation and Parole Association regional conference.

## Delivering Valuable Education to All Ohio Courts

Judicial College scholarships made it possible for court leaders in rural counties to gain national certification through the Court Management Program.

New in 2023, the College launched a 40-hour online curriculum to equip custody evaluators with practical education using national experts as faculty.

Increasingly, the College is providing local Ohio courts with materials to offer specialty courses in their communities, like video recorded training for guardians of adults.

In 2023, a total of 349 courses were delivered and 19,846 individuals completed two courses on average. The total course count is the highest in the nearly 50-year history of the College-the culmination of a 64% increase in course offerings over the past six years. Over half of the courses were delivered live in-person or through webinars. A total of 160 courses were delivered online and thus available on demand day or night, increasing convenience for participants.

In 2023, judges gave Judicial College courses an overall rating of 4.63 out of 5.00 (excellent). Judges find quality education is invaluable.

As one judge stated “The indirect result of Judicial College education can include a reduced number of appellate cases, and this results in benefits to families, to juveniles, to victims and criminal cases, to folks who are frankly probationers and parolees. So, all of that benefits the public.”

Added another, “I think that without the Judicial College we would lack the standards that would compel our judges to seek excellence, and to seek competency.”

### Outreach to Determine the Educational Needs

The Judicial College Board of Trustees is chaired by Franklin County Common Pleas Judge Stephen McIntosh along with trustees representing the judges and magistrates’ associations. The board provides meaningful guidance throughout the year. The Court Personnel Education and Training Committee also advised College staff on state and local trends, priorities, and education needs.

In 2023, board members began a strategic planning process and recommended several policy and rule changes to improve compliance tracking and user access to College courses via a new learning portal, OhioCourtEDU, launching in January 2024.

Decisions regarding course offerings, content, and faculty for the Judicial College are based on input from the chief justice and justices, court administration, and more than 245 individuals who serve on curriculum and course planning committees. Curriculum guides, ongoing needs assessment, and course evaluations further inform these decisions.

→ **349**  
courses offered in 2023

→ **19,846**  
individuals completed courses

→ **64%**  
increase in course offerings over the past six years

### Judicial College Board of Trustees

Hon. Stephen L. McIntosh, chair	Magistrate Thomas Freeman
Hon. Mary Katherine Huffman, vice chair	Hon. Randall D. Fuller
Hon. David A. Hejmanowski, secretary	Hon. Todd Grace
Hon. Joyce Campbell	Hon. James T. Walther
	Hon. Annalisa Stubbs Williams
	Hon. Gene A. Zmuda
	Staff Liason: M. Christy Tull

### Committee on Court Personnel Education and Trainings

Noah Atkinson	Kathy Lopez
Douglas Bettis	Michele Mumford
Eric Brown	Lance Ray
Sarah Brown-Clark	Tasha Ruth
Michelle Butts	Eric Shafer
Gayle Dittmer	Julie Tice
Tonya Dye	Staff Liason: Dot Keil

### Advisory Committee on the Judicial Family Network

Tim Gorman, chair	Sharon Hickson
Vallie Bowman-English, vice chair	Bill Jennings
Rick L. Brunner	Betty Jo Malchesky
Susan Burchfield	Erin Rohrer
Dan Firestone	Craig Smith
Jennifer Fuller	Allison Stimpert
Dr. Susan Hany	Staff Liaison: Dean Hogan



## Ohio Welcomes Legal Educators from Across United States

Ongoing education allows judges, magistrates, and court personnel to share ideas and best practices to be better equipped to tackle the challenges that arise in state courts.

“It is critical that judges and court personnel stay current on the ever-changing world we have and how that impacts the courts,” said Christy Tull, Judicial College director. “There are changing laws and changing skills needed to be successful and serve the public.”

In August, more than 100 people from the National Association for State Judicial Educators attended the [annual conference](#) in Columbus for the first time. Leaders in judicial education came together for three days of learning about innovations and resources to enhance the court experience for the people they serve.

The Judicial College was host to the participants who took part in presentations and roundtable discussions. They also saw firsthand the work of Ohio municipal and domestic relations courts during a visit to the Franklin County Government Center.

It was an opportunity for the Judicial College to demonstrate the nationally-recognized continuing education and essential guidance available in Ohio for judges, magistrates, and other court personnel who translate the lessons into service to citizens in their courts and communities.



“It is critical that judges and court personnel stay current on the ever-changing world we have and how that impacts the courts.”

*Christy Tull, Judicial College director*



# Operations

Access, safety, and security for all who visit and work at the Thomas J. Moyer Ohio Judicial Center are the top priorities of Supreme Court operations.

The judicial branch of Ohio government resolves disputes between citizens, organizations, or the government. An open and accessible judiciary is central to our system of self-governance and enhanced by visibility of courts, which is why courthouses are historically placed in the center of towns, cities, and counties. The Thomas J. Moyer Ohio Judicial Center is a centerpiece in Ohio's capital in the center of the state.

The Office of Court Security coordinates safety of the justices, court staff, and the public at the justice center and assists Ohio courts on security and emergency preparedness, as well as life safety issues. A safe and secure environment is central to public confidence in the judiciary.

With the authority to review the actions of the executive and legislative branches of government, the Supreme Court provides a check on actions of the other branches of government. Preservation of decisions of the Court ensures the rule of law is based on principles and precedents rather than arbitrary or partisan interests. The Law Library and the Public Information Office are key public partners in assisting all Ohioans with access to information about the operation and decisions of the Court by reporting, in common language, on cases and decisions of the Court, providing live streaming access to oral arguments, assisting with legal research, and much more.

The Office of Human Resources ensures smooth operation of Ohio courts through timely recruiting, onboarding, and compensation of judicial officers and court staff as well as creating an atmosphere to retain the best, brightest, and most effective professionals in their fields. The judiciary is made up of legal and non-legal positions which support the highest judicial ideals to promote confidence in the justice system.

Every year thousands of people come to file documents, participate in or attend hearings, and attend professional and educational functions at the courthouse. In addition to the Supreme Court staff, the Board of Professional Conduct, the Ohio Court of Claims, and the Criminal Sentencing Commission have their offices at the justice center.

The Divisions of Information Technology and Facilities ensure the staff and public can accomplish their goals. Committed to a well-maintained facility, these professionals make certain the atmosphere is conducive to productivity, prevents accidents, and ensures smooth functioning of activities at the justice center. Regular maintenance of infrastructure, including the building and information technology systems, enhances resilience to natural disasters and ensures continuity of essential operations when unforeseen circumstances arise. Continual maintenance of the facility, including timely repairs, preventative maintenance, and environmental sustainability enhancements avoid more extensive and expensive costs in the future.



**James P. Cappelli**  
DEPUTY ADMINISTRATIVE  
DIRECTOR

Administrative operations of the Supreme Court, led by Deputy Administrative Director of Operations James P. Cappelli, provide support to the justices, judicial officers, local Ohio courts, and provide direct and indirect services to the public.

The operations offices are:

- Facilities Management,
- Human Resources,
- Information Technology,
- Law Library,
- Public Information Office, and
- Court Security.

# The Commission on the Thomas J. Moyer Ohio Judicial Center

Established in 2005, the Commission on the Thomas J. Moyer Ohio Judicial Center is charged with assisting and advising the Court on maintaining the artistic, architectural, and historic integrity of the Ohio Judicial Center.

The 10-member commission includes individuals who have an appreciation for and understanding of the significance and symbolism of the Moyer Judicial Center as the home of the judicial branch of Ohio government and the history and timelessness of the art and architecture displayed in the Moyer Judicial Center.

## Activities of the Commission in 2023

- Installation of the triptych mural, “A Century of Women and the Law,” painted and donated by Ohio attorney, artist, and vice-chair of the Commission, Nils P. Johnson. The mural depicts women attaining full citizenship and ascending to the high court of Ohio.
- The Court accepted donations of portraits of former Chief Justice Jacob F. Burket and Supreme Court Justice Andrew Douglas. The portrait of Justice Douglas was received at a dedication ceremony attended by his wife, Sue Douglas.
- Acquisition by donation of a Map of North America/Postal History, Carolinas, The Dominions of the King of Great Britain on ye Continent of North America” was added to the Kingsley A. Taft Map Room.
- Initiated a cloud-based archival database of the artwork to preserve, promote, and augment awareness and comprehension of the fine art within the permanent collection housed at the Thomas J. Moyer Ohio Judicial Center. It can be viewed any time at [supremecourt.ohio.gov](https://supremecourt.ohio.gov).

## Commission Members

Lane Beougher, chair  
Nils Johnson, vice chair  
Brodi J. Conover  
Michael D. Farley  
Rick W. Grady  
Marques Hillman Richeson

Justin Nigro  
Barbara Powers  
Ashley Bartman Watson  
Gary Williams  
Staff Liaison: Dean Hogan





## Andrew “Andy” Douglas Portrait Dedication

The Supreme Court dedicated the portrait of Justice Andrew “Andy” Douglas in a special session of the Court on June 28, 2023.

Family, friends, and colleagues came together to celebrate the justice’s life and career and recognize the attorney and judge dedicated to solving legal problems for 61 years. Justice Douglas, the 139th person to serve on the Supreme Court of Ohio, passed away at 89 in September 2021.

The late justice’s wife, Sue Douglas, donated the portrait to the Supreme Court for permanent display at the Thomas J. Moyer Ohio Judicial Center. The painting by artist and retired Dayton-area attorney Greg Gibson depicts a smiling Douglas holding two items he always had on hand, a red pen used to edit legal drafts, and a pocket constitution he carried to educate people about the foundation of law.

Originally from Toledo, Justice Douglas spent the first 20 years of his career working as a private attorney and city councilman, focused on resolving problems that impacted the city.

Justice Douglas used his bipartisan skills on the bench to protect equal rights under the law.

He started on the Sixth District Court of Appeals in northwest Ohio and served as a Supreme Court justice for 18 years. He retired due to a constitutional mandate that prevents judges from seeking office after they turn 70.

“He had a view of equality for all Ohioans. When he donned the robe, he was a champion of a transparent judiciary and of fairness under the law,” said Chief Justice Sharon L. Kennedy.

Justice Douglas’ most prominent decisions shaped case law to ensure that the rights of people and institutions were not overlooked. Some of his decisions advanced civil and individual rights, particularly for minorities. Others expanded First Amendment rights and the open record laws. His most notable cases helped reshape how schools are funded in Ohio.

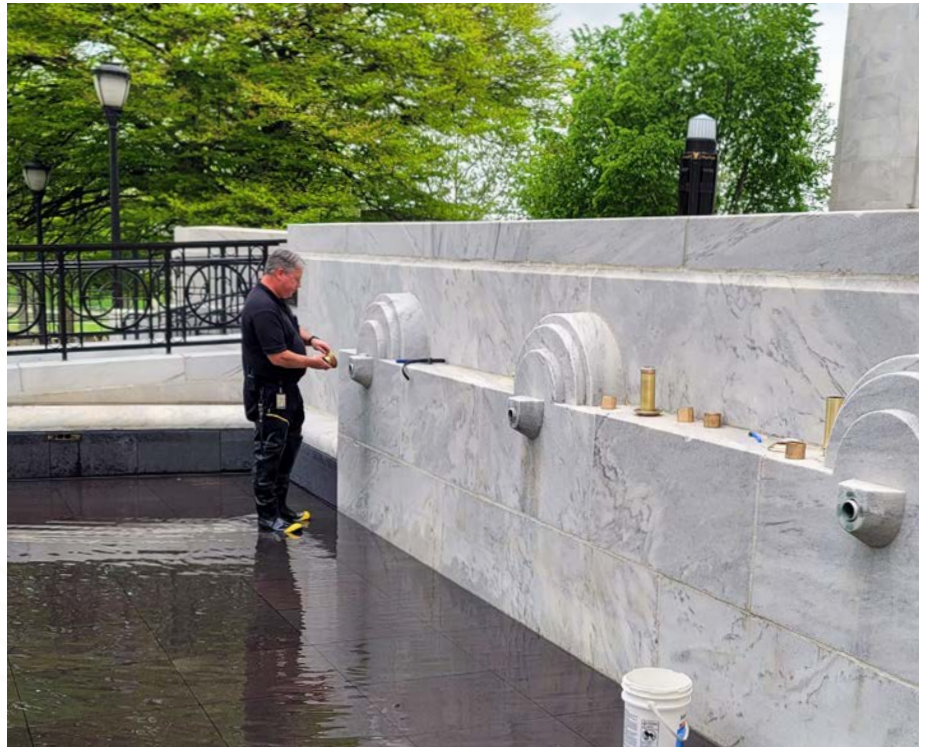
Speaking at the ceremony, Justice Joseph Deters, “Andy was a force of nature. Brilliant, hysterically funny, and without exception, he looked out for the little guy.”

# Facilities Management

Anthony Joyce  
DIRECTOR

Isaac Blackstone  
Robert Brown  
Webb Craggette  
Curtis Muhammad  
Derrick Head  
Amber Hess  
Robert Little  
Chris Lozan  
Troy Moran  
Kristen Myers  
Michael Robison  
Charles Ross  
Brandon Sharron  
Rick Stout  
Linda Sykes  
Nikola Tancevski  
Jennifer Wardell  
Richard Wardell\*  
Robert Willis

\* Retired in 2023



Filling plaza fountains: May 8

The Facilities Management Division maintains and oversees the Thomas J. Moyer Ohio Judicial Center (TJMOJC) to make certain the historic building serves the Supreme Court and the public as a quality work environment that also speaks to the importance of the legal system in the lives of Ohioans.

## Service We Provide

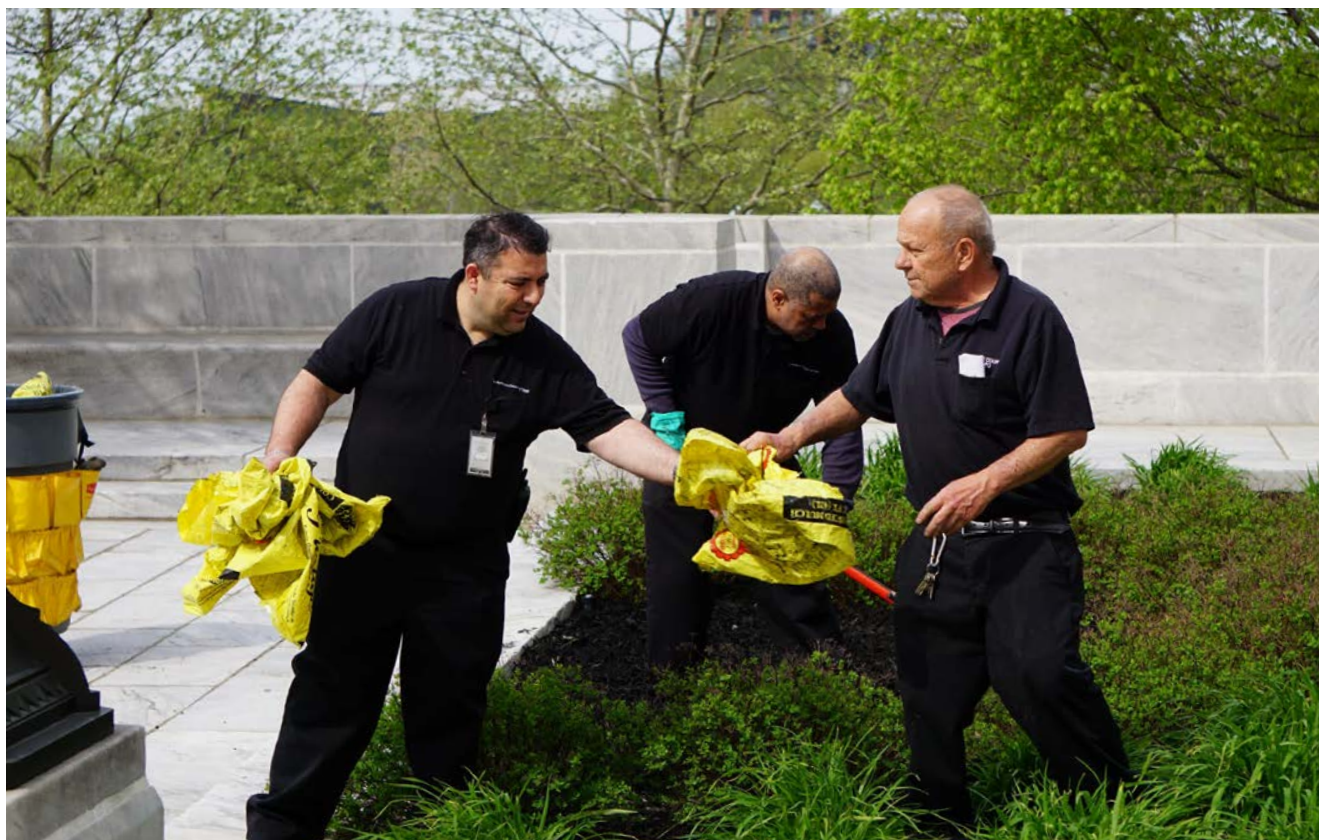
Cost-effective management of the building's infrastructure, utilities, housekeeping and groundskeeping, and services to support the organization's core business functions receive careful attention.

## Value We Bring

Sustainability initiatives such as upgrades in energy management, waste reduction, cross departmental awareness strategies, and identifying potential staff and equipment vulnerabilities reduce the facility's economic and ecological impact.

In 2023, major projects included door opening assisting, chiller pump replacements, automatic lighting, fire alarm system upgrades, HVAC control, building exhaust, and solid surface safety flooring.

The Facilities Management Division is vigilant about safety to protect its staff and our guests.



Mulching, April 20

### **Maintenance Work Group**

In 2023, the group completed 10,505 preventative and requested work orders ensuring the proper functioning, reliability, and longevity of the TJMOJC's physical assets. Regular inspections, preventative maintenance, and timely repairs minimize downtime and extend the lifespan of equipment and the facility. Optimizing operational efficiency, reducing disruptions, and ensuring a safe and well-maintained working environment are the top priority. This team is also responsible for project supervision to smooth workflow among contractors, timely completion, cost efficiency, high-quality results, and adherence to safety standards.

### **Housekeeping & Grounds**

The Housekeeping & Grounds Work Group maintains a clean and safe environment, organizing interior spaces, ensuring hygiene and sanitizing practices reduce the risk of the spread of microorganisms. This group also maintains the grounds of the TJMOJC, including landscaping, waste management, and overall aesthetics. Both functions create a pleasant and welcoming atmosphere for employees and visitors.

### **Public Outreach and Response**

#### **Meeting & Events**

Inviting local courts, partner organizations, and the public into the Courthouse to participate in, or observe the work we do, is central to the Court's outreach commitment. In 2023, there were 1,948 meeting reservations over 7,642 hours with 41,367 attendees. This team plays a pivotal role in creating successful and memorable experiences for visitors. They are responsible for planning, logistics, managing room schedules, coordinating vendors, and technology and equipment connections, to ensure that meetings and events run smoothly at the TJMOJC.

#### **Mail Center**

In 2023, there were 4,370 packages delivered to the Court and 54,907 pieces of metered mail taken to the USPS. The Mail Center is a centralized hub for managing incoming and outgoing mail, include sorting and distributing mail to respective departments, handling and tracking package deliveries, and coordinating courier services, for efficient communication between the Court, partners, and citizens.

# Human Resources

Christine Kidd  
DIRECTOR

Niko Jackson  
Michele Jakubowski  
Shreve “Denise” Johnson  
Michelle LaMaster  
Davina Tate

Adrianne Fletcher  
DIRECTOR, DIVERSITY, EQUITY,  
AND INCLUSION



The Office of Human Resources is responsible for developing and implementing Human Resources policies and programs that align with the strategic direction of the Court.

## Services We Provide

The Office of Human Resources (HR) responsibilities include coordinating the employment process, maintaining position and salary classifications, supervising the performance evaluation process, and assuring the Court’s compliance with federal and state employment laws. During 2023, the office achieved incremental improvement in its management of day-to-day human resources issues through recruitment and selection. The team partnered with hiring managers to successfully recruit and onboard 54 new hires.

Working in partnership with the Chief Fiscal Officer and a consultant, the HR office provided the Court with data and analysis to modernize its compensation strategy, thereby enhancing its recruitment and retention strategy to retain top performers and attract the best talent to the Court.

## Outreach to Serve Local Courts and Justice Partners

The office increased participation in its externship program by welcoming 83 students to experience day-to-day court administration. This enhanced the students legal research, writing, professional development, and networking opportunities to help build effective future legal professionals.



Left: Terri Bidwell and Niko Jackson chaired the Employee Events Committee in 2023.  
 Right: Christine Kidd welcomes new externs on May 19.

The office provides day-to-day support to Court staff and Ohio judges in all areas of human resource management, including payroll and benefits services for Court staff, the staff of the 12 district courts of appeals, and Ohio judges. In 2023, the office collaborated with the Judicial College with onboarding 30 newly elected and 82 re-elected State of Ohio judges.

This year, the office began the conversion of paper to electronic records. An electronic records system, when fully implemented, provides more efficient, accessible record keeping and reduces paper storage.

### Healthy, Engaged Workers Benefit Court and Constituents

Throughout the calendar year, the office facilitated workplace activities to foster community and employee engagement and promote health and wellness. Onsite wellness events included biometric screening in collaboration with the State of Ohio Take Charge Live Well Program, a flu/COVID vaccine clinic sponsored by Walgreens, and an American Red Cross blood drive. Donations for Operation Feed and Holiday Meals and the state Combined Charitable Campaign to aid local, regional, and international charitable organizations generated \$31,546.00 in employee donations.

## Employee Events Committee

The Employee Events Committee brings together employees from all divisions of the Court and affiliated offices for employee engagement and team building. The 2023 activities included March Madness, the Front Street Fiesta, Plaza Palooza, and the annual holiday party. Employee events and activities are funded through staff fundraising which included the sale of Court-branded fleece jackets. Additionally, employees raised funds in support of a local charity by hosting a bake sale.

### 2023 Employee Events Committee Members:

Terri Bidwell	Ely Margolis	Nathan Rush
Rachel Dilley	Kristi McAnaul	Lisa Tenerove
Candie Gutierrez	Lindsay Morris	Jason Thomas
Niko Jackson	Kate Mosca	Shawn Welch
Kayla Jefferson	Kirstyn Moyers	Kara Wells
Denise Johnson	Karen Osmond	
Marya Kolman	Mel Prendergast	

## Wellness Committee

The Wellness Committee is an internal committee of the Supreme Court and affiliated office staff that organizes various activities to promote health and wellness. The Committee hosted several fundraising events including a Pop-A-Shot tournament, Root Beer Float and Smoothie sales. Proceeds benefitted the employee fitness center equipment upgrades.

### 2023 Wellness Committee Members:

Katie Biancamano	Alan Ohman	Csaba Sukosd
Michelle Bowman	Jennie Parks	Abigail Wilson
Ryan Fahle	Patti Reed	
Ely Margolis	Kathryn Steveline	

# Information Technology

Robert D. Stuart  
DIRECTOR

Jeff Campbell  
Randall Drum  
Mark Dutton  
Kristina Blake  
J Espinosa-Smith  
Patrick Farkas  
Kevin Fitzpatrick  
Randy Garrabrant  
Heather Huth  
Greg Jarrett  
Russ Johnson  
Marcelino Menchaca, Jr.  
Josh McCrea  
Jason Monroe  
Alan Ohman  
Megan Real  
Michelle Ridgway  
Igor Stavniychuk  
Lisa Tenerove  
Gerald "Butch" Thomas  
Justin Wagner  
Cindy Wendel  
Gabriel White

The Information Technology (IT) Division provides the services necessary to enable the offices of the Court and its constituents to operate efficiently and effectively. The division is comprised of four sections.

- Office of Information Technology
- Applications Development
- Network & Technology Resources Section
- IT Project Management

## Services We Provide

IT ensures the operation of the Court's information technology systems and processes, including the development and maintenance of the Court's computer networks, internet services, personal computers, internal business applications, databases, end-user software programs, web-based service applications, copiers, telephony services, cyber-security protections, IT disaster recovery solutions, and audiovisual technologies.

## Outreach with Resources for Local Courts and Justice Partners

The IT Division is responsible for the development, implementation, and maintenance of the Ohio Courts Network (OCN). The OCN is an online criminal justice information exchange that provides all Ohio courts and justice-system partners with access to justice data necessary for critical decision making. The OCN is accessed by thousands of users daily for services such as investigations, background checks, criminal history reviews, driving record reviews, guardian/foster care decisions, protection orders, and more. The OCN's primary data sharing partners include the Ohio Attorney General, Ohio Bureau of Motor Vehicles, Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction, and Ohio law enforcement agencies.

The division also facilitates the exchange of technology related ideas and solutions among the courts of the state. For example, the division hosts the Court IT Leaders Forum which includes over 100 members across the state. Through the forum, courts can solicit input from other courts on technology issues or problems and share best-practice solutions.

## Commission on Technology and the Courts

The division director serves as staff liaison to the Commission on Technology and the Courts which identifies awareness of technology issues affecting Ohio courts and provides input on the development, governance and use of technologies and systems including the Ohio Courts Network.

## Commission Members:

Hon. Anita Laster Mays, chair	Barron Henley	Robert Scott
Hon. Linda Warner, vice chair	Magistrate David Hunter	Brandon K. Standley
John Adams	Nick Lockhart	Hon. Terri Stupica
Hon. Jeffrey J. Beigel	Branden C. Meyer	Kenneth R. Teleis
Hon. James J. Costello	Hon. Carolyn J. Paschke	Hon. Jeffrey Welbaum
Hon. Kevin W. Dunn	Michael Pifher	Hon. Latecia Wiles
Hon. Francine Goldberg	Hon. Robert Rusu	Staff Liaison: Robert Stuart
Andrew S. Good	Jason Sadler	

# Law Library

The Law Library of the Supreme Court provides legal research services to the justices and staff of the Supreme Court, judges, magistrates, and court staff across the state.

As the primary law library for executive branch state agencies, it offers essential legal information and materials, and serves the legislature and attorneys.

The library is dedicated to enhancing public access to legal resources and provides legal research assistance for citizens.

## The Service We Provide

In 2023, the library staff responded to over 6,400 inquiries, with 3,670 of those being from the public.

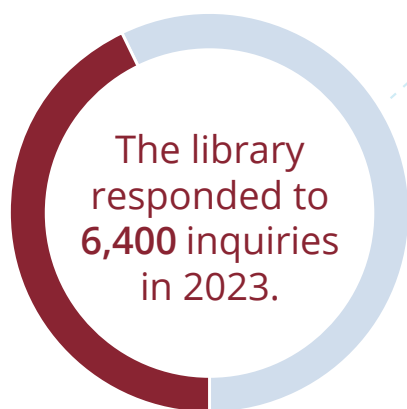
The library houses a robust collection containing approximately 90,000 titles and 226,000 physical items. In the past year the library added almost 2,000 physical items to the collection and over 21,000 electronic titles. Library staff update and maintain all physical and electronic items in the library collection.

## Outreach to Serve Needs of Partners and Public

Beyond its core functions, staff members actively participate in collaboration with other organizations, including the Columbus Bar Association, the Ohio Library Support Staff Institute, Ohio Law Libraries Consortium, Ohio Regional Association of Law Libraries, American Association of Law Libraries, and the Ohio Electronic Records Committee. This collaboration reflects the library's commitment to contributing to initiatives and staying connected with the broader legal community and the public.

Erin Waltz  
DIRECTOR

Marlys Bradshaw  
Michael Bradshaw  
Rachel Dilley  
Anna Gault  
Michelle Graff  
Lisa Lynch  
Adrian Tinsley



53% came from the public

In 2023 the library added:

+2,000 physical items  
+21,000 electronic titles  
to the collection.

## The Library Celebrates 50 Years as a National Partner

On February 20, 2023, the Supreme Court of Ohio Law Library marked 50 years serving Ohioans as designated depository library. Here citizens can freely access federal government information and receive expert reference assistance.

Every day the U.S. government issues congressional bills, laws, regulations, presidential documents, studies, and more. The Federal Depository Library Program (FDLP) was established in 1813 and is administered by the U.S. Government Printing Office to ensure Americans have access to government information. The FDLP provides information at no cost to designated depositories throughout the country.



The library joined the FDLP on February 20, 1973.

## National Library Week Celebration at the Supreme Court

National Library Week is an annual celebration that highlights the importance of libraries in our communities and encourages people to explore the wealth of resources they offer. Law libraries promote access to legal information, facilitate research, and contribute to the advancement of justice. This week was an opportunity to spotlight the Supreme Court Law Library's unique role in supporting courts, legal professionals, and the public.

During the week, events and activities were tailored to the specific needs and interests of legal professionals, including continuing legal education sessions for court employees, database demonstrations for patrons, exhibits showcasing legal topics, and handouts focused on resources available throughout the State of Ohio.

National Library Week also served as a platform for highlighting the latest advancements in legal technology and resources available to enhance legal research methodologies.

Librarians in the law library take center stage during this celebration, showcasing their expertise in navigating complex legal databases, assisting with multifaceted legal research queries, and providing guidance on lesser-known legal resources. Ultimately, the week reinforced the library's commitment to serving as a vital resource hub for the courts, legal community, and the broader public, interested in understanding and navigating the intricacies of legal research.



CLE offered during Library Week, April 24-28

# Public Information

The Public Information Office (PIO) encourages trust and confidence in the Supreme Court and Ohio judiciary through transparency, education, information, and activities for citizens to understand the importance of the judicial branch of government in their lives.

The Office of Public Information has three sections: Public Information, Creative Services, and Civic Education, working together in support of the offices and divisions of the Supreme Court, local courts, the legal community, and the public.

The main communications tool of the Supreme Court is the website: SupremeCourt.ohio.gov. In 2023, there were 2,368,383 visits to the site where local courts access information and resources for improving operations; attorneys update their registration; future lawyers check bar exam results; people sign up for a Judicial College course; the public learns about the judiciary, and so much more. The number one destination is the daily opinions and announcements. The Public Information Office issued 349 case announcements on the site in 2023.

## Service We Provide

The primary work of the Supreme Court is the decisions, opinions, and orders of the justices. Judicial writers research and write previews of cases to be presented at oral argument, summaries of merit decisions with opinions, and general stories of interest about the Court's programs and activities. They can be read on the website CourtNewsOhio.gov. In 2023, there were 1,322,228 visits to the site, a 59% increase over 2022 visits. Court News reported 92 previews of upcoming cases, 77 merit opinion summaries, and more than 30 stories about the self-regulating activities of the legal system to ensure competent, prompt, diligent, and loyal representation by lawyers so that citizens remain confident in the justice system.

In partnership with the Ohio Channel, we provide live and archived gavel-to-gavel proceedings of the oral arguments of the Supreme Court, without commentary or analysis, direct to the citizens.

Lyn Tolan  
DIRECTOR

## Office of Public Information

Lisa Colbert  
Jake Eckelberry  
Phil Farmer  
Christine Holmes  
Alencia Lang  
Michael Leavitt  
Erika Lemke  
Kathleen Maloney  
Ely Margolis  
Adam Mihely  
Doug Stein  
Sara Stiffler  
Csaba Sukosd  
James Theado  
Dan Trevas

## Ohio Government Telecommunications

Jesse Bethea  
Liesl Bonneau  
Anne Fife

CourtNewsOhio.gov

1,322,228 visits to the website

a 59%  
increase  
from 2022

92 upcoming case previews

77 merit opinion summaries

30+ legal news stories

SupremeCourt.ohio.gov

2,368,383 visits to the website

bar exam results

attorney registration

sign up for courses

daily announcements & decisions



267

tours led by thirteen  
volunteer tour guides

9,911

student and adult  
visitors to the Court

98

schools received  
transportation grants

Production values meet high standards for professionalism and technical innovation, while maintaining the dignity of the Court and conveying the proceedings rather than distracting from them.

The office translates the complexity of the legal system for citizens, distributing information through various communications channels, including LinkedIn, Facebook, and X (formerly known as Twitter).

#### Outreach to Understand Justice Partners and Public

PIO conducts outreach to determine the needs of courts, justice partners, and the public on issues of interest to the legal community. PIO initiates interest in the judiciary and responds to media inquiries and constituents to explain procedural and administrative matters, helping people understand the Court and the Ohio judiciary.

Public information staff supports events at the courthouse through outreach to organize event details for annual events like the commemoration

of Black History Month and one-time events, like dedication of portraits of former and retired justices, among others. Invitation and program design, marketing and media relations, and live streaming are among the PIO services.

Each year, the Court conducts oral arguments in a local high school so students and the public can experience the appeals process. It is called Off-Site Court. *[See story on page 84.]*

#### Civic Education

By establishing partnerships with judicial education organizations and reaching young people through traditional and non-traditional educational systems, young people can build lifelong understanding of and confidence in the legal system, and their role as a citizen.

In 2023, the Civic Education Office relied on the generous volunteer services of 13 tour guides who contributed 435 hours while leading 267 tours including 9,911 visitors including students, adult and civic organizations, and foreign dignitaries.

### An Affordable Education on Citizenship

The Court provides transportation grants to schools, based on financial need and distance of travel, to ease the financial burden of travel. In 2023, the civic education section was able to provide grants to 98 schools in 39 counties. Working with civic education partners in the capital city, we paired schools with combination judicial center and statehouse tours.

### Creative Services

The creative services professionals work with Information and Civic Education sections of PIO as well as all offices and divisions of the Court to ensure a high-quality look and presentation to all the public facing materials.

The creative services team provides a wide range of services in photography, graphic design, and website development and design. The custom print shop provides layout and printing of signage, training booklets, collateral materials, and other publications. Publications are made available upon request, at no additional cost to courts.



Off-Site Court in Hamilton County in April at the University of Cincinnati.



In October, approximately 450 students from Jefferson and Harrison counties attended oral arguments at Buckeye Local High School in Rayland, Ohio. It was the first time Off-Site Court was held Jefferson County.

## Off-Site Court Encourages Careers in Law

The Supreme Court commits to educating the next generation about the judicial branch and its crucial role in our republic. As part of that mission, and reminiscent of the historic justices riding the circuit, the Court holds sessions of oral arguments in school auditoriums across the state.

The Off-Site Court Program is coordinated by the Public Information Civic Education Section but requires extensive work from all areas of the Court.

Off-Site Court is a unique opportunity for students and the public to see the appellate process at work in their community. For many who attend, it is the first time they have attended a court proceeding. In 2023, Off-Site Court was held in Hamilton County and Jefferson County.

In April in Hamilton County, students and teachers from six local high schools, Xavier University, and the University of Cincinnati (UC) came to the UC College of Law to hear attorneys argue before the high court. It was an opportunity to learn about careers in law and see precedents being set in the new, state-of-the-art facility that opened in late 2022.

In October, approximately 450 students from Jefferson and Harrison counties attended oral arguments at Buckeye Local High School in Rayland, Ohio. It was the first time Off-Site Court was held Jefferson County.

The program begins in advance of the court date. Attorney volunteers and high school history and government teachers prepare the students, teaching about the process. They receive the briefing documents and case summaries filed by the attorneys and prepared by the Court Public Information Office. And when the arguments conclude, the students debrief with the actual attorneys who argued the cases. Just like the justices, the students ask the questions that may inform their judgment about the case.

The Off-Site Court program began in 1987. But it is modeled after the early days in Ohio history when Supreme Court justices “rode the circuit” going into the territory with their law books in their saddlebags, to hear the cases across the state. Off-Site Court has been held in 73 of Ohio’s 88 counties, allowing more than 34,000 students to see the state high court up close. The event encourages young people to consider legal careers, which is particularly important in counties without enough attorneys to meet the legal need.

# Commemorating Black History

Chief Justice Sharon L. Kennedy welcomed members of the Law & Leadership Institute to the Court on February 28 to share their stories as part of the Court's celebration of Black History Month.



Black History Month Celebration

Young people bound for careers in leadership, law, and justice spoke from the dais in the historic courtroom about the experiences that sparked their interest in a legal career, their dreams, and determination to achieve.

A current high school student, a college graduate preparing for law school, and a lawyer at a global law firm in Cleveland shared their thoughts with the justices and eighth graders at the program, called “Opening Doors to Careers in Law.”

The speakers were students or past participants of the Law and Leadership Institute, which started in 2008 as a summer initiative of the Court to inspire and prepare young people from underserved communities to consider careers in the legal field. The program was free and open to the public.

*An archive of Supreme Court programs celebrating Black history can be viewed at [supremecourt.ohio.gov](https://supremecourt.ohio.gov/search/Celebrating%20Black%20History): search “Celebrating Black History.”*

# Court Security

Ryan Fahle  
DIRECTOR

Julian Brown  
Roger Eden  
Nelson Frantz  
John Groom  
Nicholas Hunt  
Scott Irion  
Christopher Luginbuhl  
Adam Savarese  
Chelsey Stillwell  
Jason Thomas  
Rodney Tyler  
Terrance Upchurch



The Office of Court Security provides physical and personnel security at the Thomas J. Moyer Ohio Judicial Center ensuring all who enter the historic building have a safe visit. In 2023, court security officers conducted more than 31,000 security screenings.

## The Service We Provide Saves Lives

All court security officers are certified in first aid, CPR, and the use of automated external defibrillators (AED). In 2023, officers responded to 10 medical emergencies. An additional 70 Supreme Court employees were trained with the skills necessary to respond to medical emergencies by an on-staff certified first responder and instructor in American Red Cross First Aid, CPR, and AED.

## Outreach to Serve and Be a Resource to Ohio Courts

Collaboration and service are at the heart of the mission of the Office of Court Security. The office assists courts across Ohio by providing cost-free, professional security services that allow local courts to maintain the integrity of the judicial process and ensure the safety of those who work in or visit their courthouses. During calendar year 2023, consulting and training services provided to local courts and law enforcement included:

- More than 30 comprehensive court security site surveys.
- Review and development of emergency and security procedures.
- Aid in operational planning and coordination of high-risk or sensitive trials.
- Security education for new judges, new magistrates, and their families, the Ohio Bailiffs and Court Officers Association, and the Ohio Association of Court Administrators.
- Checkpoint security screening training for more than 150 court officers, bailiffs, local law enforcement, and court security staff.

## Bringing Value to Communities

The Office of Court Security works with nonprofit organizations to connect those struggling with homelessness and mental health issues with services geared to assist them in recovery.

When the Court travelled to Fayette and Jefferson counties in 2023, to hear oral arguments as part of the Off-Site Court program, security officers collaborated with state and local law enforcement agencies to ensure all who participated and observed the proceedings were safe.

## Advisory Committee on Court Security

The Advisory Committee on Court Security provides advice regarding statewide rules and uniform standards for the establishment and operation of court security programs including emergency preparedness, security services to local courts, and training programs for judges and court personnel.

In 2023, the advisory committee created a digital guide to give judges instant access to security-related resources. The guide was distributed as part of the New Judges Orientation program in Partnership with the Judicial College.

## Committee Members:

Hon. Christopher Roberts, chair  
Hon. Steven D. Barnett  
Hon. Samuel Bluedorn  
Chief Charles Chandler  
Hon. Steve Christopher  
Hon. Katarina V. Cook  
Lorrain Croy  
Hon. Theresa Dellick  
Hon. Julia Dorrian  
Andrew Elder  
Hon. Warren Edwards  
Hon. Howard Harcha, III  
Scott Howard  
Hon. Eric Mulford  
John Ralph  
Sheriff Thomas Riggensbach  
Hon. Rick Rodger  
Hon. Richard P. Wright  
Staff Liaisons: James P. Cappelli, Ryan Fahle,  
and John Groom



Two staff members received national instructor certifications. Chelsey Stillwell became a certified Taser instructor. Jason Thomas earned his First Aid, CPR, and AED instructor certification from the American Red Cross. Additionally, Julian Brown became the first member of the Supreme Court to serve as a Director for the Ohio Bailiff and Court Officers Association.



**70** employees certified in first aid CPR, and AED use.

**150** court officers, bailiffs, and local law enforcement professionals trained in checkpoint security screening.

**30+** comprehensive security surveys and reports for local courts.



For more information about  
the work of the Court, visit  
[www.SupremeCourt.ohio.gov](http://www.SupremeCourt.ohio.gov).



