

2024 Annual Report



Twentieth Century Commerce in Ohio (1932), a mural celebrating American technological innovation by Herman Henry Wessel, is located in a Supreme Court first floor hearing room.



Cover:

Twentieth Century Commerce in Ohio (1932), a mural celebrating American technological innovation by Herman Henry Wessel, is located in a Supreme Court first floor hearing room. Wessel was born in Indiana to immigrant farmers. He sold his inherited farmland in 1895 to move to Cincinnati to study art. After graduating, he studied briefly in Europe, where he met Frank Duveneck, whose teachings had a great and lasting influence on his work at the Cincinnati Art Academy. Wessel returned to Cincinnati in 1908, took a post as an instructor at the academy, and acted for a time as curator of painting at the Cincinnati Museum of Art. His murals grace the Federal Reserve Bank in Cleveland, the Scioto County Courthouse, and the Springfield, Ohio, Post Office.



2024

Annual Report

Sharon L. Kennedy

CHIEF JUSTICE

Patrick F. Fischer

R. Patrick DeWine

Jennifer Brunner

Joseph T. Deters

Daniel R. Hawkins

Megan E. Shanahan

JUSTICES

Robert W. Horner, III

ADMINISTRATIVE DIRECTOR

James P. Cappelli

DEPUTY ADMINISTRATIVE DIRECTOR,
OPERATIONS

Gina White Palmer

DEPUTY ADMINISTRATIVE DIRECTOR,
LEGAL SERVICES



FOUNDERS OF LIBERTY



Dear Fellow Ohioans:

It is my honor to present the 2024 Annual Report of the Supreme Court of Ohio. This year's theme, **"Dynamic Innovation in the Administration of Justice: Perpetual Change Requires Continuous Quality Improvement,"** reflects the essence of our mission—to adapt and evolve in safeguarding rights and upholding justice while remaining steadfast in our commitment to serving the people of Ohio.

Every day, the court embraces the challenges and opportunities of change to ensure justice is accessible, fair, and efficient. Our work spans areas of critical importance: deciding cases that affect people across the state, supporting local courts in their essential functions, and educating Ohioans about the rule of law and the judiciary's role in society.

The Ohio Constitution's grant of jurisdiction to the court entrusts us with the responsibility to decide cutting-edge questions of law, resolve cases of state and national importance, determine the meaning of the Ohio and United States Constitutions, and settle controversies that affect the people of Ohio in their daily lives. The court's legal staff play a vital role in this effort, making sure that each case is carefully prepared for the court's deliberation and decision.

Meanwhile, our support for local courts ensures they have the tools and guidance to carry out their work. Through innovations in case management, specialized dockets, and judicial assignments, we strive to create processes that are as effective as they are transparent. The court's commitment to improvement has led to advances such as upgraded technology platforms and streamlined systems, empowering courts statewide to provide quicker resolutions for those they serve.

Education and outreach remain pillars of our service. From the Judicial College's professional training programs to public education through guided tours and off-site court sessions, the court continues to foster understanding of the court system. These programs bridge the gap between the public and the judiciary, demonstrating that courts exist not only to resolve disputes but also to uphold the values of fairness, integrity, and accountability that define our system of justice.

Justice Sandra Day O'Connor once said, *"I don't know that there are any shortcuts to doing a good job."*

These words inspire the work we do every day. Justice is not only about judgments rendered; it is about processes improved, services expanded, and partnerships strengthened. It is a commitment to excellence that echoes through every part of this court and its offices, impacting Ohioans in countless ways.

The spirit of this year's theme lies in perpetual self-assessment and innovation. It is a recognition that the work of justice is never static—it requires constant refinement, new technologies, and collaboration with judges, attorneys, and community leaders. By listening to our partners and leading with purpose, we ensure the judicial system evolves to meet the needs of those it serves while preserving the principles of fairness and equality.

I invite you to explore this Annual Report to see how the Supreme Court of Ohio embodies these principles, ensuring that justice remains our guiding mission.

May God bless you all,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Sharon L. Kennedy". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of the first and last names being capitalized and prominent.

Chief Justice Sharon L. Kennedy
Supreme Court of Ohio

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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.



Sharon L. Kennedy
CHIEF JUSTICE

December 7, 2012 – Present

Garrett Anderson
Francis “Bud” Barnes
Christopher Belmarez
William Lewis
Taylor Lovejoy
Louis Shaheen
James Sheridan*
Tammy White

** Retired in 2024*

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. The people of Ohio first elected her to the court as a justice to fill an unexpired term in 2012, and they reelected her 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. That effort continues with the annual Lean Forward Summit in November of each year.

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 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.

Justice Patrick 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. Justice Fischer has received the OSBA Bar Medal, the state bar's highest award, for service to his profession, his community, and all of humanity.

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.

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 substantial 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 its president. He remains a Lector and Eucharistic Minister at St. Xavier church in Cincinnati. He has a daughter who is also a lawyer and two grandsons. He and his wife Jane live in Columbia Township.



Patrick F. Fischer

JUSTICE

January 1, 2017 – Present

Kylie Conley
Jenna Foos
Christine Hahn
Stephan Laboy
Ronald Wadlinger II



R. Patrick DeWine

JUSTICE

January 2, 2017 – Present

Jackson Berry
Alyssa Daley
Nathaniel Fouch
Razi Lane
Audra Robitaille
Joseph Spica
Layne Tieszen

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 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 twelve years. He is also an adjunct professor at the Ohio State University's Moritz College of Law, where he teaches State and Law Government with Sixth Circuit Chief Judge Jeffrey Sutton. In addition, he has taught undergraduate courses at the University of Cincinnati.

Justice DeWine's article on Ohio Constitutional Interpretation will be published in the Ohio State Law Journal and his article on state administrative law will be published in the University of Michigan Journal of Law Reform.

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.

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.



Michael P. Donnelly
JUSTICE

January 1, 2019 –
December 31, 2024

Robert Burpee
Hugh Dowell
Christine Einloth
Rebecca Raab



Melody J. Stewart
JUSTICE

January 2, 2019 –
January 1, 2025

Caitlin Hill
Alexis Preskar
Arleathia Radcliffe
Sarah Stafford

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.

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.



Jennifer Brunner
JUSTICE

January 2, 2021 – Present

Stacy Brooks
Anita DiPasquale
Benjamin Tracy
Kara Wells



Joseph T. Deters
JUSTICE

January 7, 2023 – Present

Francesca Boland
Melissa Goodyear
Emily Smith
Mary Stier

Justice Joseph T. Deters is the 163rd justice of the Supreme Court of Ohio. He first joined the Supreme Court in January 2023, following an appointment by Governor Mike DeWine. Justice Deters was elected to a six-year term in November 2024. 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 largely unnoticed. After becoming the 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 in 2010, Justice Deters established the first drug court in Ohio with the assistance of Hamilton County Municipal Court Judge Deidra Hair. 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 served as 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 Daniel R. Hawkins was elected to the Supreme Court of Ohio in November 2024. He is the 164th justice of the Supreme Court of Ohio. Prior to his term on the Supreme Court, Justice Hawkins served at the Franklin County Court of Common Pleas, General Division where he earned top ratings from the Columbus Bar Association as well as recognition from law enforcement and numerous community organizations.

Justice Hawkins began his career as an assistant prosecuting attorney at the Franklin County Prosecutor's Office. He spent 13 years as a trial prosecutor, the last 10 years serving as Director of the office's Special Victims Unit specializing in crimes of violence against women and children.

In July 2013, Justice Hawkins was appointed to fill a vacancy on the Environmental Division of the Franklin County Municipal Court. He implemented new strategies to deal with properties that became a magnet for criminal activity such as vacant and abandoned structures and drug houses. He also created a new neighborhood clean-up program directing individuals with court-ordered community service to pick up trash in the community.

Justice Hawkins was born and raised in Columbus, Ohio. He graduated from St. Francis DeSales High School and went on to receive a Bachelor of Science in Criminal Justice from Bowling Green State University, earning his law degree from the Ohio State University Moritz College of Law.



Daniel R. Hawkins

JUSTICE

December 10, 2024 – Present

Hugh Dowell

Erin Porta

Kandis Sargeant

Jill Whittier

Dynamic Innovation in the Administration of Justice

2024 focused on key initiatives designed to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of Ohio's judicial system, underscoring the judiciary's role in adapting to a rapidly changing world. In her State of the Judiciary address, Chief Justice Kennedy emphasized the importance of continuous quality improvement and innovation.



"Perpetual change requires a commitment to continuous quality improvement – especially when serving the needs of those who seek legal redress."

The Judicial Assignment Program utilizes necessary judicial resources to ensure the timely administration of justice. In 2024, significant enhancements were made to the Interactive Generator of Online Requests (IGOR) to facilitate the timely assignment of judges, ensuring predictability, transparency, and consistency.

(Read more about the work of the Judicial Assignment program on page 31.)

"Civic education demystifies the justice system. It allows civic leaders and students to understand the role of a judge and the limitations of judicial authority."

In 2024, the Court hosted 292 tours for 11,475 visitors including students, adult and civic organizations, and foreign dignitaries. In addition, the 83rd session of Off-Site Court was held in Jackson County, allowing 350 students to experience a session of the state's highest 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.

(Read more about the work of the Civic Education program on pages 80-83.)



Watch the full State of the Judiciary on [OhioChannel.org](https://ohiochannel.org).

"In recent times three laws have called for dynamic innovation and will require continued innovation – Marsy's Law, BCI reporting requirements, and e-filing."

In 2024, the Commission on the Rules of Practice and Procedure worked to lay the groundwork that will advance Marsy's Law throughout Ohio courts, as envisioned in Ohio's Constitution to secure for victims justice and due process throughout the criminal and juvenile justice systems. *(Read more about the committee's work on page 32.)*

The Court provides resources for local courts to assist in their crucial role of ensuring that high quality and timely information is shared with justice partners. In April, Court Services produced a publication, "Understanding BCI Reporting" and corresponding bench card. *(Read more about the work of Court Services on pages 48-60.)*

In 2024, the Court awarded more than \$2.8 million in technology support, some of which helped courts implement e-filing systems. The grants also empowered courts to update case management systems and use other technologies to improve case processing times. *(Read more about the work of the Chief Financial Office on pages 35-36)*

The expansion of e-filing by the General Assembly is a crucial step toward modernizing Ohio's courts. In August the Judicial College hosted a webinar, "Developing an Effective E-filing System in Your Court: Easier Than You Think." *(Read more about the work of the Judicial College on pages 62-68.)*



Lean Forward Veterans Summit 2024

Special Populations
10th Anniversary





Lean Forward Veterans Summit 2024

Supreme Court of Ohio Chief Justice Sharon L. Kennedy welcomed guests to the 10th Annual Lean Forward Veterans Summit. The 2024 theme, “Special Populations,” focused on the many resources to help aging veterans and military families. Participants included treatment courts and law enforcement, mental and physical health providers, and county veterans services.

“This year, we bring together a host of professionals to discuss topics veterans frequently experience, such as neurological issues including traumatic brain injury and post-traumatic stress disorder, accessibility hardships due to physical disabilities, and homelessness,” Chief Justice Kennedy said.

The summit also recognized Purple Star Schools. The Purple Star Award recognizes schools that show a major commitment to students and families connected to our nation’s military. Schools that earn the award will receive a special Purple Star recognition to display on site. It has become the country’s “purple standard” for pre-K and K-12 military efforts and supports, with the original Ohio program now in 45 states.

“The Buckeye State just doesn’t lead the sacred, shared work of directly assisting 35,000 Ohio military kids from Lake Erie to the Ohio River,” said Chief Justice Kennedy. “It has pioneered the mission on behalf of a grateful nation.”

Butler County Bar Association Honors Chief Justice Kennedy

On Law Day 2024, the Butler County Bar Association honored Chief Justice Sharon L. Kennedy for her lifetime achievements, celebrating a distinguished career that began in Butler County. Chief Justice Kennedy’s professional journey is inspiring; she started as a Hamilton police officer before earning her law degree from the University of Cincinnati College of Law in 1991. Her career then flourished as she served as a law clerk, defense attorney, and Butler County Domestic Relations judge, ultimately leading to her role as chief justice.

Chief Justice Kennedy expressed deep gratitude, describing it as a “tremendous honor” bestowed upon her by the legal community where her career began. Reflecting on her journey, Chief Justice Kennedy emphasized, “From patrolling the streets of Hamilton, to the Butler County courtrooms—at the counsel table and behind the bench—to the chambers of the Supreme Court of Ohio, my journey has been marked by challenges and triumphs. Yet throughout, Butler County remained my anchor.”

Notable Case Decisions



Click to watch archived video
of oral arguments.

Public Nuisance Lawsuits Cannot Be Pursued Against Pharmacies Selling Prescription Opioids

Two Ohio counties cannot claim national pharmaceutical chains caused a public nuisance by selling opioids and could only bring a lawsuit against the companies by following the procedures outlined in the Ohio Product Liability Act, the Supreme Court ruled.

The U.S. Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit asked the Ohio Supreme Court to clarify whether the Ohio Product Liability Act (OPLA) abrogated, or abolished, the right to file a common law public nuisance case against product makers and sellers.

The Sixth Circuit is considering an appeal from CVS, Walgreens, and Walmart, which are part of the multidistrict national prescription opiate litigation pending in a Cleveland federal court. A divided Supreme Court found that the OPLA, as amended in 2007, eliminated all forms of common law public nuisance cases for the sale of products and that the OPLA governs any public nuisance claim.

Writing for the Court majority, Justice Joseph T. Deters explained that state lawmakers added a second paragraph to the definition of “product liability claim” in R.C. 2307.71, broadening it to include “any public nuisance claim.” The counties argued the OPLA applies only to product liability claims involving defective products and claims seeking compensatory damages. The counties contended the law does not apply to their case because they did not make those types of claims.



Justice Deters noted the legislature inserted language into the law eliminating all common law product liability and public nuisance lawsuits allegedly caused by a manufacturer’s or supplier’s product and requiring that those complaints be pursued using only the OPLA.

🔴 2023-1155. *In re Natl. Prescription Opiate Litigation*, [Slip Opinion No. 2024-Ohio-5744](#).

Ballot Language for Redistricting Amendment Approved With Two Revisions Required

Six of eight contested provisions in ballot language for a proposed state constitutional amendment to alter the drawing of legislative and congressional districts can remain as is, while two must be revised, the Supreme Court ruled.

In a 4-3 per curiam opinion, the Court found that most of the Ohio Ballot Board’s language describing proposed Issue 1 for the Nov. 5 general election ballot is consistent with the measure’s full text. Citizens Not Politicians, a group that proposed the issue, contested eight of the 10 summary points appearing on the ballot language and the title of the ballot language itself, both of which will appear before voters.

The opinion noted the Court can only invalidate the board’s language if it finds the wording would “mislead, deceive, or defraud the voters.” The Court majority found that most of the ballot board’s amendment’s summary and title were not misleading and did not need to be revised.

2024-1200. *State ex rel. Citizens Not Politicians v. Ohio Ballot Bd.*, [177 Ohio St.3d 444, 2024-Ohio-4547](#).



School Board Can Continue Tax Challenge Initiated Before State Law Change

A 2022 change in state law by the General Assembly did not affect an appeal by the Marysville Exempted Village School District challenging the property tax value of a private residential complex, the Supreme Court ruled.

In a 6-1 decision, the Court ruled the Marysville school board could appeal the tax value of The Residence of Cooks Pointe to the state Board of Tax Appeals (BTA). The school board's appeal could go forward even though the 2022 state law has limited the rights of local governments to appeal tax valuation decisions of local Boards of Revision to only the property the local government owns or leases.

Writing for the Court majority, Justice Melody Stewart explained that the school board's objection to the county auditor's \$8.8 million valuation of the apartment complex was pending with the county board of revision before the new law

took effect. Because of the state law's wording, the school board retained its right to appeal to the BTA after the law changed.

The Court affirmed a Third District Court of Appeals decision, which found Marysville could still go to the BTA. The Court remanded the case to the BTA for further proceedings.

► 2023-0964. *Marysville Exempted Village Schools Bd. of Edn. v. Union Cty. Bd. of Revision*, [176 Ohio St.3d 520, 2024-Ohio-3323](#).

Municipalities Taxing Stay-At-Home Workers During Pandemic Was Constitutional

A state law that allowed cities to temporarily collect income tax from individuals working from home but who lived outside of city limits during the COVID-19 pandemic was constitutional, the Supreme Court ruled.

In a 5-2 decision, the Court found the state had a legitimate interest in ensuring that municipal revenues remained stable during the pandemic when employees were ordered to

work from home. The decision rejected a man's claim that allowing Cincinnati to tax his income while he worked at his Blue Ash home violated the U.S. Constitution.

Writing for the Court majority, Justice R. Patrick DeWine stated that the due process clause of the U.S. Constitution has been understood to limit the power of states and cities to tax out-of-state individuals. However, the Court concluded that the federal constitutional provision governs "interstate" taxation, not "intrastate" taxation, where one municipality collects income tax from a resident of another municipality. After all, the majority explained, the federal government's relationship with the 50 sovereign states is very different from the state government's relationship with municipalities, and the U.S. Constitution limits federal authority in ways that the Ohio Constitution does not limit state authority.

► 2022-0316. *Schaad v. Alder*, [176 Ohio St.3d 158, 2024-Ohio-525](#).



Attorney General Not Authorized To Review Proposed Amendment Titles

The Ohio attorney general did not have the authority to reject a petition to place a constitutional amendment on the ballot because he objected to the title, the Supreme Court ruled.

In a unanimous per curiam opinion, the Court ruled Attorney General Dave Yost wrongly rejected a proposal titled “Ohio Voters Bill of Rights” when claiming the title did not fairly and accurately summarize or describe the content of the proposed amendment.

The Court found that under R.C. 3519.01(A), the attorney general can only review the summary of the petition, but not the title. Under Ohio law, a citizen’s effort to amend the constitution must start with a petition signed by at least 1,000 registered voters and include a summary of the

proposed amendment. The attorney general must certify the summary as a “fair and truthful statement” before the process to place the issue on the ballot proceeds.

The group seeking to place the Voters Bill of Rights on the ballot asked the Supreme Court to overturn Yost’s rejection based on his disagreement with the wording of the title. Yost had previously objected to the petition based on four concerns he had with content of the summary, including its former title, “Secure and Fair Elections.”

The Court ruled Yost has no right to withhold certification based on the title alone, but he must still review the latest summary before sending the proposed amendment to the Ohio Ballot Board for review. The Court directed Yost to follow the statute and review the summary within 10 days.

2024-0161. *State ex rel. Dudley v. Yost*, 177 Ohio St.3d 50, 2024-Ohio-5166.

Court No Longer Recognizes Controversial ‘Public-Right’ Exception

The Supreme Court rejected a controversial 1999 precedent that had allowed litigants to file lawsuits even when they had not been injured. The Court made clear that the Ohio Constitution requires that an individual have standing — that is, suffered an injury in fact — to file a lawsuit.

A divided Court affirmed a Third District Court of Appeals decision, finding a Findlay property owner lacked standing to sue all the judges in the Findlay Municipal Court and the Hancock County Common Pleas Court for hearing cases regarding unpaid municipal income taxes. George Martens, who had no legal action against him pending at the time, argued he had the right to file the lawsuit as a taxpayer and by invoking the public-right doctrine.

Writing for the Court majority, Justice R. Patrick DeWine explained the Court adopted the public-right doctrine in its 1999 *State ex rel. Ohio Academy of Trial Lawyers v. Sheward* decision. The decision created an exception to the standing requirement. The ruling allowed a person to seek the “enforcement or protection of a public right” in a case “where the issues to be litigated are of great importance and interest to the public.”

Since the *Sheward* decision, the Court has not allowed any party to rely on the public-right doctrine to initiate a case before the Court in more than 20 years, the opinion noted. The opinion stated that the *Sheward* decision was a departure from the “deeply rooted standing requirement and the Ohio Constitution.”

2024-0122. *State ex rel. Martens v. Findlay Mun. Court*, [Slip Opinion No. 2024-Ohio-5667](#).



Court Decides Case About Statements Made to Police After Cincinnati Shooting

Initial statements made to police by a witness to a Cincinnati shooting were not testimonial because the officer's primary purpose at that stage was to address an emergency situation, the Supreme Court ruled. However, statements the witness made after the suspect was apprehended were testimonial because there was no longer an emergency.

The Court explained that when a witness's testimonial statement is admitted into evidence in a case, it violates the defendant's constitutional right to confrontation if the defendant does not have the opportunity to cross-examine the witness.

In the Court's lead opinion, Justice Patrick F. Fischer wrote that the Cincinnati shooting witness, Doniesha Monroe, made statements that evolved from being nontestimonial to testimonial during the course of police questioning.

Justice Fischer noted that when the officer began

questioning Monroe, the officer had no indication that the shooting suspect had been apprehended. The Court found that the primary purpose of the initial questioning was to gather information necessary to respond to an ongoing emergency. Monroe's statements during the initial questioning were nontestimonial, the opinion stated. The admission of these statements into evidence did not violate Wilcox's right to confront witnesses against him at his trial, the Court determined.

► 2023-1204. *State v. Wilcox*, [Slip Opinion No. 2024-Ohio-5719](#).

Court Upholds 60-Year Sentence for Crime Spree Convictions

The Supreme Court affirmed the decision to impose consecutive sentences leading to a 60-year prison term for a man who went on a two-month robbery and kidnapping spree in Hamilton County, forcing at gunpoint many of his victims to drive around and withdraw money from ATMs.

A divided Court found the Hamilton County Common Pleas Court followed the state law on issuing consecutive sentences when it sentenced Tommy Glover. Glover was convicted of robbing five individuals, including one man twice, and kidnapping four of them. The First District Court of Appeals had reduced Glover's sentence to 25 years.

The trial court's 60-year "aggregate sentence" was calculated by imposing six consecutive seven-year sentences for aggravated robbery for a total of 42 years. Those are to be served consecutive to and after six three-year gun specifications totaling 18 years.

In the Court's lead opinion, Justice R. Patrick DeWine wrote that the First District did not properly apply the law for reviewing consecutive sentences and that the record does not justify modifying Glover's sentence. The Court reversed the First District's opinion and reinstated Glover's 60-year sentence.

► 2023-0654. *State v. Glover*, [Slip Opinion No. 2024-Ohio-5195](#).

Felony Cruelty Law Applies to Harming Stray Dogs and Cats

A state law elevating the penalty for animal cruelty to a felony protects all dogs and cats, including strays, the Supreme Court ruled.

In a unanimous decision, the Court ruled Alonzo Kyles could be convicted of fifth-degree felony animal cruelty for pouring bleach into an apartment building basement to make an unclaimed cat leave. The Court reversed an Eighth District Court of Appeals decision, which found the felony-level animal cruelty statute only applied to dogs and cats that had “received care” from someone, not strays.

Writing for the Court majority, Justice Patrick F. Fischer explained the state law is not clearly written, but is designed to protect all cats and dogs, including those that are not kept in a residential dwelling or by a person.

“Applying the statute’s plain meaning, we hold that R.C. 959.131’s prohibition on causing serious physical harm to a companion animal extends to all dogs and cats,” Justice Fischer wrote.

► 2023-1182. *State v. Kyles*, [Slip Opinion No. 2024-Ohio-5038](#).

Utility Vehicle Does Not Fit Charge for Vehicular Assault

The driver of a utility vehicle for farm tasks cannot be convicted of a felony for injuring his passengers when he flipped it because the vehicle does not meet the definition of “motor vehicle” under the Ohio criminal code, the Supreme Court ruled.

The Court unanimously affirmed a Sixth District Court of Appeals decision that found Joshua Fork of Sandusky County



was inappropriately convicted of two counts of aggravated vehicular assault. Fork crashed his Polaris utility vehicle while driving drunk at a late-night party in 2020. He did not contest his conviction for operating a vehicle under the influence of alcohol, but disputed the vehicular assault charges.

Writing for the Court, Chief Justice Sharon L. Kennedy explained that Ohio law has two definitions of “motor vehicle” – one that applies strictly to traffic laws, and one that applies more broadly to various chapters of the Revised Code and to the “penal laws” of the state. The definition that applies to penal laws, such as aggravated vehicular assault, exempts utility vehicles, and “the record is insufficient to support Fork’s convictions,” the chief justice concluded.

The Sandusky County Prosecutor’s Office had urged the Court to consider how the vehicle was used on the night of the accident rather than its defined “principal use.” The

prosecutor urged the Court to find the Polaris did not meet the definition of a utility vehicle. The Court rejected the argument, ruling that R.C. 4501.01(VV) requires the Court to examine the vehicle’s principal purpose.

► 2023-0356. *State v. Fork*, [174 Ohio St.3d 224, 2024-Ohio-1016](#).

Warning Shot Enough for Jury To Consider Self-Defense Claim

A Clark County man was entitled to argue self-defense when he intentionally shot toward a person, and was not required to show he intended to kill or harm the man who threatened him, the Supreme Court ruled.

A divided Court vacated the felonious assault conviction of Tyler Wilson for his altercation at a Springfield gas station in 2021. At trial, Wilson was acquitted of attempted murder but convicted of felonious assault after he fired a shot at Billy Reffett. The shot struck the window frame of Reffett’s truck, near his head.



Civil Law

Defamation Lawsuit Could Be Filed Within One Year of Discovering Phony, Secret Email

When a person's reputation is harmed by a secretive or concealed message, a defamation lawsuit can be pursued within one year after discovering the harmful statement, the Supreme Court ruled.

A Court majority held the "discovery rule," which has been applied to victims of asbestos exposure and medical malpractice, applies to defamatory statements that are secretive, concealed, or otherwise inherently unknowable due to the nature of the publication. The decision arose from a phony email created in 2011 that was sent to one person alleging a Warren County township trustee was demanding bribes. That email resurfaced in 2019 and led to a state auditor investigation of the trustee.

Writing for the Court majority, Justice Michael P. Donnelly stated that the one-year statute of limitations for filing a defamation lawsuit should not apply to the date a real estate developer sent a private email to defame Sycamore Township Trustee Thomas Weidman. Rather, the discovery rule starts the statute of limitations at the time when Weidman could reasonably discover the statement.

"Use of the discovery rule eases the unconscionable result to innocent victims who by exercising the highest degree of care could not have discovered the cited wrong," Justice Donnelly wrote, quoting the 1983 Supreme Court *Oliver v. Kaiser Community Health Found.* decision.

► 2022-0837 and 2022-1042. *Weidman v. Hildebrant*, [178 Ohio St.3d 3, 2024-Ohio-2931](#).

The trial judge refused to instruct the jury to consider Wilson's argument that he acted in self-defense. The judge ruled Wilson was not claiming self-defense because Wilson testified that he did not aim the gun at Reffett and had no intention of harming him but was just trying to get Reffett to "back off."

In the Court's lead opinion, Justice Melody Stewart stated that the Ohio self-defense law does not require an intent to harm or kill another, just the "intent to repel or escape force." Shooting toward another with the intent to stop an aggressor is sufficient to justify a self-defense jury instruction, she concluded.

► 2022-1482. *State v. Wilson*, [174 Ohio St.3d 476, 2024-Ohio-776](#).

State Law Limits Imposition of Consecutive Sentences for Firearm Violations

Ohio law only allows a maximum of two consecutive prison terms for firearm specifications that are added to the sentence of a violent offender, the Supreme Court ruled.

A divided Court found the Clermont County Common Pleas Court improperly imposed four consecutive three-year firearm

specifications to be served by a man convicted of shooting at a group of four people. In 2021, Aunrico Beatty was sentenced to a total of 16 to 18 years in prison. He was sentenced to 12 years of mandatory prison time for firearm specifications that had to be served before a four-to-six-year felonious assault sentence.

Beatty appealed his sentence, arguing that, at most, he could only be sentenced to a total of six years for the firearm convictions, not the 12 years the trial judge imposed.

Writing the Court's lead opinion, Justice Michael P. Donnelly explained that under Ohio's criminal sentencing scheme, multiple prison terms must be served concurrently unless an exception applies. The exceptions in R.C. 2929.14(C) and R.C. 2929.41(A) allowed the trial court to impose two consecutive sentences for the firearm specifications, but no more. The third and fourth consecutive sentences issued to Beatty must be served concurrently with the first six years of prison time, the Court concluded.

► 2022-1290. *State v. Beatty*, [177 Ohio St.3d 507, 2024-Ohio-5684](#).



County Can Be Held Responsible for Damage to Nearby Home After Roadway Collapse

A county may be liable for damage to a woman's home following the collapse of part of a county road and subsequent flooding, the Supreme Court ruled.

In a 4-3 decision, the Court ruled that state law does not limit a political subdivision's liability for negligently failing to keep a road in repair or remove obstructions based on whose property is damaged. The ruling reversed the Ninth District Court of Appeals, which found that Summit County was immune from liability for damage to the home of Roberta Schlegel, who lived adjacent to the roadway that collapsed. The Ninth District determined that the exception to the immunity of political

subdivisions when a roadway is not maintained applies only to motorists or users of a roadway who are injured by a roadway condition.

Writing for the Court majority, Justice Jennifer Brunner stated that the state law contains no such restriction. Schlegel claimed that the public road collapsed into a culvert under the road and the resulting debris blocked stormwater, causing flooding, damage, and loss to her home. R.C. 2744.02(B)(3) states that "political subdivisions are liable for ... loss to ... property caused by their negligent failure to keep public roads in repair and other negligent failure to remove obstructions from public roads." The Court found that the law is not limited to losses by users of a roadway.

🔴 2023-1232. *Schlegel v. Summit Cty.*, [Slip Opinion No. 2024-Ohio-5678](#).

Restaurant Not Responsible for Injury From Bone in Boneless Wing

The Supreme Court ruled that a restaurant patron who ordered boneless chicken wings could have reasonably expected to find a piece of bone in his meal and guarded against swallowing it.

In a 4-3 decision, the Court ruled that Michael Berkheimer's 2017 lawsuit against Wings on Brookwood and its chicken suppliers was properly dismissed by the lower courts at the summary judgment phase. The majority found the Twelfth District Court of Appeals correctly concluded that the sellers were not liable for the injuries Berkheimer suffered after swallowing a 1 3/8-inch sliver of bone found in a 1-inch boneless wing.

Writing for the Court majority, Justice Joseph T. Deters explained that "boneless wings" are a cooking style and not a guarantee that fragments of bones would not be present in the dish. He explained that a food seller is not liable when a customer could reasonably expect and guard against a hazardous substance in food. A customer's "reasonable expectation" is formed in part by whether the "injurious substance in the food is foreign to or natural to the food," he noted.

🔴 2023-0293. *Berkheimer v. REKM LLC*, [177 Ohio St.3d 431](#), [2024-Ohio-0293](#).

Power Company Can Use Herbicides To Clear Vegetation Under Transmission Lines

Three 1948 easements allow Ohio Edison to "remove" vegetation from under its power lines by using herbicides despite the objections of Harrison County landowners who opposed the spraying, the Supreme Court ruled.



In a 5-2 decision, the Court reversed a Seventh District Court of Appeals ruling, which found Ohio Edison could remove vegetation by trimming or cutting it, but could not remove it in any other manner.

Writing for the Court majority, Justice Michael P. Donnelly explained at issue in the case was the easements' wording giving Ohio Edison the right to "trim, cut and remove at any and all times such trees, limbs, underbrush or other obstructions" to maintain its transmission lines. The Seventh District ruled the lack of a comma between the words "cut" and "remove" limited the power company's options.

Justice Donnelly wrote that when reading the easements in context, it is clear that Ohio Edison has other options on how to "remove" objects from underneath its power lines. And because one definition of "remove" is to "eliminate or eradicate," Ohio Edison can use herbicides to clear brush.

► 2023-0216. *Corder v. Ohio Edison*, 177 Ohio St.3d 319, 2024-Ohio-5432.

Dismissed Lawsuit Can Be Refiled More Than Once

The Supreme Court ruled that a state statute permits the refile of a dismissed lawsuit as long as it is refiled within the designated time limit.

The Court rejected the claim that there is an unwritten "one-use" limit to the "savings statute," which allows civil cases to be refiled after the statute of limitations has expired in certain instances. The decision affirmed a Second District Court of Appeals ruling, which permitted a Montgomery County lawsuit to proceed after it was filed and dismissed twice before the expiration of the statute of limitations, and then filed a third time after the expiration of the statute of limitations.

Writing for the Court majority, Justice R. Patrick DeWine explained that under the plain language of the savings statute, Ryan McCullough's claim was properly filed. The law allows a party to refile a complaint that has been dismissed without prejudice within one year of the claim's dismissal. While there is no one-time refile limit, Justice DeWine wrote that the Ohio Rules of Civil Procedure protect

against abusive refile of cases by those trying to extend the life of their lawsuits indefinitely.

► 2022-0879. *McCullough v. Bennett*, Slip Opinion No. 2024-Ohio-2783.

Hospital Not Liable for Man's Death Following Combative Reaction to Anesthesia

In Ohio civil lawsuits, only the agreement of three-fourths of the jury members is required to reach a verdict. For negligence cases where jurors vote step-by-step to reach a decision, only the jurors who find a person acted negligently can vote to determine if that person is at fault for causing the plaintiff's injuries, the Supreme Court ruled.

In a 5-2 decision, the Court stated the "same-juror rule," not the "any-juror rule," applies to negligence cases. The Court reversed a Second District Court of Appeals ruling, which found that the any-juror rule should have been used in a medical negligence and wrongful death lawsuit filed against Good Samaritan Hospital and other medical providers.

Writing for the Court, Chief Justice Sharon L. Kennedy explained that in negligence cases, it would be illogical if a juror who found a defendant did not act carelessly was then allowed to vote on whether the defendant's actions were the cause of the plaintiff's injuries.

The decision reinstated a Montgomery County Common Pleas Court jury verdict in favor of the hospital system and the providers. In that case, the same six jurors who agreed that a nurse anesthetist was negligent when caring for a patient did not agree she caused the patient's death.

► 2023-1076. *Hild v. Samaritan Health Partners*, 177 Ohio St.3d 121, 2024-Ohio-3338.

Ohio Constitution Prohibits Judges From Sealing Juvenile Delinquency Records Without Considering Public's Interest

A state law mandating the blanket sealing of records in delinquency cases when a juvenile is not found delinquent violates the Ohio Constitution because it does not allow for any consideration of the public's interest in access to the records, the Supreme Court ruled.

In a divided opinion, the Court ordered Hamilton County Juvenile Court Judge Kari Bloom to provide the Cincinnati Enquirer access to the transcript of a 2022 trial. The case involved a case in which the juvenile court found a juvenile to be not delinquent despite a police officer stating that he witnessed the juvenile standing over an assault victim and continuously firing a gun. Judge Bloom had denied the newspaper's request to review the transcript, citing a state law that directed her to seal the records once she found the 13-year-old was not delinquent.

Writing for the Court majority, Justice R. Patrick DeWine stated the law violates the "open courts provision" of the Ohio Constitution. He explained that Judge Bloom argued the law is constitutional because juvenile proceedings are generally not open to the public, a position that drew its basis from two prior Ohio Supreme Court decisions. Justice DeWine explained that those prior decisions improperly held that the open courts provision provided no greater right to court access than the free speech and free press clauses of the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution.



The opinion maintained that the state open courts provision is distinctly different than the First Amendment, and the two should not be read in lockstep as if they protect the same rights. With this case, the Court majority announced a new approach to "lockstep precedent," noting that the Court would revisit past precedent where it held that the Ohio Constitution had the same meaning as the U.S. Supreme Court's interpretation of a provision of the U.S. Constitution without the Ohio Supreme Court having fully considered the text and history of the Ohio constitutional provision.

2022-1457. *State ex rel. Cincinnati Enquirer v. Bloom*, [177 Ohio St.3d 174, 2024-Ohio-5029](#).

Database Collection of Death Information Not Public Record

A statewide database of dead Ohioans with the names and addresses associated with the causes of death is not available to the public via a public records request because it contains "protected health information," the Supreme Court ruled.

In a 5-2 decision, the Court rejected the claim of former Columbus Dispatch Reporter Randy Ludlow, who sought the cause-of-death information from the Ohio Department of Health during the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. The department provided Ludlow with requested spreadsheets with vital information from death certificates, including sex, age, and cause of death, but not the

names and addresses of those who died.

Writing for the Court majority, Justice Patrick F. Fischer stated the department correctly determined that the names and addresses, when combined with the other medical information, would constitute protected health information. Under R.C. 3701.17, the department is prohibited from releasing that information. The Court disagreed with Ludlow's claim that R.C. 3701.17 protects the information of the living and that the health information of deceased Ohioans is not protected.

2022-1391. *Ludlow v. Ohio Dept. of Health*, [176 Ohio St.3d 26, 2024-Ohio-1399](#).

Akron Can Conceal Identity of Some Officers Involved in Police Shooting

The city of Akron can continue to conceal the identities of eight police officers involved in a 2022 shooting of a motorist that drew widespread attention and protests, the Supreme Court ruled.

The Court partially granted a request by the Akron Beacon Journal to force Akron to turn over public records related to the June 2022 shooting death of Jayland Walker. However, the Court ruled the names of eight officers who fired their weapons can be redacted from records provided to the newspaper. The names of other officers involved in the Walker incident and two other police shootings in 2022 must be provided.

In a per curiam opinion, the Court noted that police incident reports and supplemental information gathered by officers are public under the Ohio Public Records Act. However, the law contains an exception for certain confidential law enforcement



investigatory records. This exception allows information to be concealed if it creates a high probability of disclosing "the identity of a suspect who has not been charged with the offense to which the record pertains."

The Ohio attorney general presented evidence about the eight officers who shot at Walker to a grand jury, which declined to indict the officers with a crime. Because the officers could face a possible federal investigation, they are "uncharged suspects" under the law and their identities do not need to be released, the Court concluded.

2022-1444. *State ex rel. Copley Ohio Newspapers, Inc. v. Akron*, [178 Ohio St.3d 46, 2024-Ohio-5677](#).

Lakota School District Must Release Former Superintendent's Letter Threatening Lawsuit

The Supreme Court ruled that the Lakota Local Schools Board of Education must publicly release a letter on behalf of the former school superintendent who allegedly threatened a lawsuit.

In a per curiam opinion, the Court found a "demand letter"

sent by an attorney representing former superintendent Matthew Miller to the school board's attorney was a public record. The letter was sought as part of an early January 2023 public records request by Vanessa Wells, a resident of the Butler County school district.

The Court found the district improperly withheld the letter and requests for communications between Miller's private attorney, Elizabeth Tuck, and attorneys representing the district. The Court also found the district improperly redacted public information from records Wells requested about how much the district was spending for legal services related to a drawn-out dispute between Miller and school board members.

The Court ruled that Lakota owes Wells \$2,000 in damages for failing to promptly turn over public records and must pay her court costs. Wells is also entitled to attorney fees to be paid by Lakota. The fees must be calculated and submitted to the Court for approval.

2023-0190. *State ex rel. Wells v. Lakota Local Schools Bd. of Edn.*, [176 Ohio St.3d 442, 2024-Ohio-3316](#).



Township Newsletter Mailing Lists Are Public Records

Mail and email distribution lists for a township newsletter are public records, the Supreme Court ruled.

A divided Court found Union Township in Clermont County was required to turn over the distribution lists for the township newsletter, rejecting the township's argument that the lists were exempt from the Ohio Public Records Act.

Writing for the Court majority, Justice Michael P. Donnelly explained records that document the functions and procedures of a public office are public, and the distribution lists meet the definition because they reveal how and to whom the township's newsletter is regularly distributed.

The records were requested in 2022 by Christopher Hicks. The ruling reversed decisions by the Ohio Court of Claims and the Twelfth District Court of Appeals, which found

the newsletter, but not the distribution lists, were public records.

🔴 2023-0580. *Hicks v. Union Twp., Clermont Cty. Bd. of Trustees*, [Slip Opinion No. 2024-Ohio-5449](#).

Sheriff Must Release Records Created by Private Company Operating County Jail

The Columbiana County Sheriff's Office must obtain and provide public records in possession of the private companies contracted to operate the county jail, the Supreme Court ruled.

In a 6-1 per curiam opinion, the Court found the sheriff's office could not redirect requests for jail records to the private operators, but has a legal duty to obtain the records and fulfill public records requests. The Court gave Sheriff Brian McLaughlin 21 days to either gather the requested records or notify the requester, Terry Brown, that the records do not exist.

When Brown, a Belmont Correctional Institution inmate, requested records from the Columbiana County Jail in August 2023, the sheriff's office provided only two of several documents sought. The office told Brown the records were in the hands of the private companies, and the sheriff's office did not have access to them.

The Court found by state law, the sheriff's office must have access to all records and documents created by the private operators related to the facility and inmates. Regardless of whether the documents are in the possession of the public office or the private operator, the records are public, and the sheriff's office has the duty to provide them to the public, the Court concluded.

2023-1218. *State ex rel. Brown v. Columbiana Cty. Jail*, [176 Ohio St.3d 763, 2024-Ohio-4969](#).

Assigned Visiting Judges

According to the Ohio Constitution, in the event of a recusal by a justice from a pending case, the chief justice can appoint any of the sitting Ohio appellate court judges to sit temporarily on the Supreme Court. The Court thanks the court of appeals judges who served as visiting judges for Supreme Court oral arguments in 2024.



Hon. Robert C. Winkler

FIRST DISTRICT

*In the Matter of the Application of Ohio Power Company
for an Increase in Electric Distribution*

Case Number: 2023-0464

Feb. 6, 2024



Hon. Michael Mentel

TENTH DISTRICT

Brian P. Caldwell v. Whirlpool Corp., et al.

Case Number: 2023-0809

Feb. 7, 2024



Hon. Ginger Bock

FIRST DISTRICT

Mahoning County Bar Association v. Brian John Macala

Case Number: 2023-1561

March 12, 2024



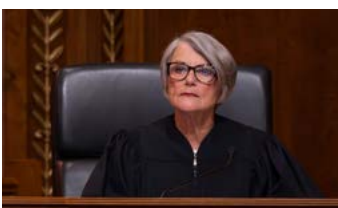
Hon. Charles Sulek

SIXTH DISTRICT

State of Ohio vs. Mark Gasper

Case Number: 2023-0786

March 26, 2024



Hon. Carol Ann Robb

SEVENTH DISTRICT

State of Ohio v. James Echols

Case Number: 2023-1024

April 9, 2024



Hon. Eugene Lucci
ELEVENTH DISTRICT

State of Ohio v. Jeffrey Wogenstahl

Case Number: 2023-0945

April 23, 2024



Hon. Andrew King
FIFTH DISTRICT

State of Ohio v. Jeffrey Wogenstahl

Case Number: 2023-0945

April 23, 2024



Hon. Juergen Waldick
THIRD DISTRICT

State of Ohio v. Jeffrey Wogenstahl

Case Number: 2023-0945

April 23, 2024



Hon. Mary Huffman
SECOND DISTRICT

Disciplinary Counsel v. Carolyn Kaye Ranke

Case Number: 2024-0491

July 9, 2024

State of Ohio vs. Quantez Wilcox

Case Number: 2023-1204

July 9, 2024



Hon. Jennifer Kinsley
FIRST DISTRICT

Disciplinary Counsel v. Carolyn Kaye Ranke

Case Number: 2024-0491

July 9, 2024



Hon. Scot Stevenson
NINTH DISTRICT

Columbus Bar Association v. Teresa Ann Villarreal

Case Number: 2024-0492

July 10, 2024

Administrative Operations



Robert W. Horner, III
ADMINISTRATIVE DIRECTOR

James P. Cappelli
Ronda Carver
Stephanie Hess
Alicia Lang
Lindsay Morris
Cindy Radford
John VanNorman
Gina White Palmer



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

Dear Ohioans:

Our 2023 Annual Report outlined the initial phase of the Supreme Court of Ohio's administrative strategic plan – a commitment to examine not just what we do, but how and why we do it.

In 2024, we built on that foundation while recognizing, as the saying goes, that the only constant in life is change. To meet that reality, we embraced the philosophy and practice of Dynamic Innovation in the Administration of Justice.

With a mindset of continuous quality improvement embedded more deeply across the Court, we challenged assumptions, streamlined processes, and pursued smarter, more effective ways to meet the evolving needs and preferences of Ohioans. The impact of that work is detailed in the pages of this report.

Improving Court Operations Statewide

Supporting the timely and cost-effective administrative of justice across Ohio is our overarching priority. We do this by equipping judges, administrators, and attorneys with the tools, resources, and data to help deliver optimal results.

In 2024, we awarded over \$2.8 million in technology grants that helped local courts modernize case management systems, expand e-filing capabilities, and expedite case processing.

In addition to funding, we also partnered with local courts to establish and track efficiency metrics—empowering them with data-driven insights to refine their operations and drive measurable progress. These collective efforts strengthen both court performance and public confidence.

Expanding Civic Education and Public Engagement

Trust in our judiciary is built on more than efficiency; it requires transparency and understanding. When Ohioans recognize the role of the judicial branch and its independence from the legislative and executive branches, they are better equipped to trust our justice system. To meet that need, in 2024 we continued to grow our civic education strategies.

We welcomed thousands of visitors to the Moyer Judicial Center and broadened our outreach beyond Columbus. We brought oral arguments to Jackson County through our continuing Off-Site Court Program, giving students a firsthand look at the justice system in action. We ramped up the Rural Practice initiative to address the growing gap in access to legal services across rural communities – focusing on strengthening partnerships and aligning statewide strategies.

Together, these efforts help ensure that all Ohioans, regardless of where they live or how closely they interact with the courts, have opportunities to understand, and have confidence in, our system of justice.

Investing in Our Workforce

At the heart of Supreme Court’s success is its workforce. Their collective expertise, commitment, and innovation power every advancement outlined in this report. The organizational restructuring initiated last year has strengthened leadership at all levels, creating a more agile and responsive team.

In 2024, we promoted 41 employees, preserving institutional knowledge while developing subject matter and leadership excellence. We also expanded our internship and externship programs, providing students with hands-on experiences, and inspiring the next generation of legal professionals.

Looking Ahead: A Commitment to Continuous Improvement

Our work to improve the administration of justice is not defined by any single achievement – it is a continuous journey. As change continues to shape the world around us, we remain steadfast in our belief that innovation, responsiveness, and continuous improvement must be embedded in everything we do.

The progress outlined in this report reflects the strength of that mindset—one that positions the Court to meet the evolving needs of Ohioans.

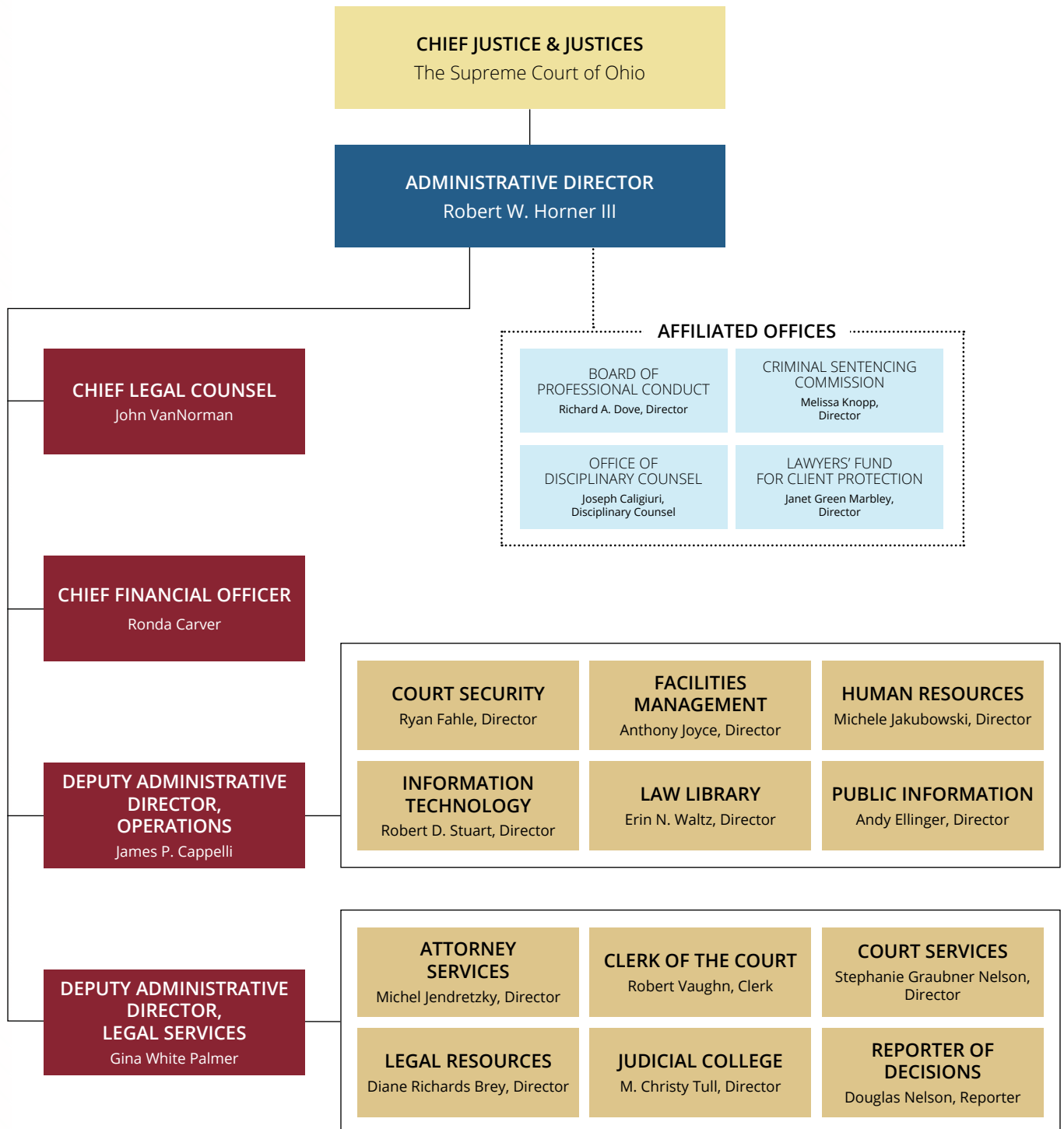
Thank you for your continued support and trust.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "R. W. Horner, III".

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
Lisa Eschbacher
Zachary Holscher
Keely McWhorter
Bryan Smeenck
Phillip Wille

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.

The office serves the judiciary and the legal profession by overseeing the Court's process for adopting and amending these various rules.

In this role, the office provides staff support to two of the Court's rule-advising bodies, the Commission on the Rules of Superintendence for Ohio Courts and the Commission on the Rules of Practice & Procedure.

Dynamic Innovation in the Administration of Justice

The Supreme Court's Judicial Assignment Program showcases a firm commitment to enhancing efficiency, transparency, and cost-effectiveness in addressing judicial vacancies. Consistent with the Court's commitment to continuous quality improvement, the Office of the Chief Legal Counsel has continued to improve the response time of judicial assignments. The program has introduced streamlined governance with clearer guidelines, upgraded technology through an improved Interactive Generator of Online Requests (IGOR) tool, and achieved remarkable results, such as reducing response times to less than one day and saving Ohio taxpayers over \$150,000 in 2024.

The redefined program signifies a major step toward a judicial system that operates with greater efficiency and accountability. Through ongoing collaboration and innovation, the Judicial Assignment Program is set to deliver even greater advancements and benefits in the future.

Commission on the Rules of Superintendence for Ohio Courts

The 19-member commission recommends to the Court adoption of new rules and amendments to the rules, which govern general administrative matters for the courts. During 2024, the commission worked on proposed rules regarding the recording and broadcasting of court proceedings, presiding and administrative judges, and 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 recommends to the Court adoption of new rules and amendments to the Rules of Appellate Procedure, Civil Procedure, Criminal Procedure, Juvenile Procedure, Evidence, and Traffic Rules. In 2024, the commission worked on rules primarily related to the rights of victims of a crime found in Article I, Section 10a of the Ohio Constitution and Ohio Revised Code Chapter 2930, also known as “Marsy’s Law.” Those proposed rule changes will be finalized in 2025.

Commission on the Rules of Superintendence for Ohio Courts

Hon. Paula Giulitto, Chair	Hon. Carol Ann Robb
Hon. Thomas Januzzi, Vice Chair	Hon. James Shriver
Benjamin M. Flowers	Hon. Jonathan Starn
Charles B. Galvin	Elizabeth W. Stephenson
Hon. Howard H. Harcha, III	Greg Thomas
Hon. Monica Hawkins	Philip D. Williamson
Hon. Carl Henderson	Hon. Kristy Wilkin
Hon. Natasha R. Kennedy	Mag. Tamela Womack
Brandon Meyer	Ex Officio Member: Robert W. Horner III
Hon. Thomas Moulton	Staff Liaison: Keely McWhorter
Hon. Jenifer Overmyer	

The Office of the 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.

The office also oversees the Court’s public records request response process. Consistent with the Court’s commitment to transparency and a more informed citizenry, the Office of the Chief Legal Counsel fulfilled 140 public records requests in 2024.

Finally, 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 5,206 requests from courts for judicial assignments during the year.

Assisting Special Commissions

The office serves the public through staff support to special commissions that consider the temporary suspension of public officials pursuant R.C. 3.16 as well as complaints against judicial candidates pursuant to the Code of Judicial Conduct. In 2024, the office served as liaison to one commission to consider the temporary suspension of an elected official pursuant to R.C. 3.16.

Commission on the Rules of Practice & Procedure

Hon. Richard A. Frye, Chair	James Payne
Hon. Laura B. Smith, Vice Chair	Prof. Cassandra Burke Robertson
Robert Barnhart	Mag. Kenneth Roll
Daniel J. Brandt	Angela Stone
Hon. Matthew Byrne	David H. Thomas
Eleana Drakatos	Jessica Wallace
Hon. Alison Floyd	Benjamin White
Hon. Laura Gallagher	Ex Officio Members:
Hon. Emmanuella Groves	Staff Lieutenant Brad Longo
Christopher S. Habel	Erin C. Reed
James Kresge	Judge James Shriver
Hon. Tess Neff	Lori Tyack
Hon. Donald Oda	Staff Liaison:
Christian Patno	September Coyne

Amendments to Rules of Practice & Procedure

Ohio Rules of Appellate Procedure (26), Ohio Rules of Civil Procedure (4, 4.1, 4.7, 30, and 45), Ohio Rules of Criminal Procedure (4), Ohio Rules of Evidence (101 and 702), and Ohio Rules of Juvenile Procedure (9).

The Supreme Court of Ohio's Commission on the Rules of Practice & Procedure approved amendments effective as of July 1, 2024. The amendments were the result of an annual review of all rules governing the practice and procedure in Ohio courts.

The amendments include:

- Revised rules for reopening of an appeal based on ineffective counsel.
- Updates to procedures for serving documents in civil cases.
- Clarification of timing of post-arrest events.
- Providing a standard for when testimony is "expert testimony."
- Requiring notification to victims in certain situations in juvenile courts.

Appellate Rules

The amendments include changes to Appellate Rule 26 to expand the category of people who may apply for reopening their appeal based on a claim of ineffective assistance of counsel. Previously, App.R. 26(B) allowed a "defendant in a criminal case" to make such an application. (See *In re T.A.*, 2022-Ohio-4173). A technical correction to App.R. 26 also ensures the consistent spelling of the word "judgment."

Civil Rules

The amendments include several changes to Civil Rules 4(D), 4.1 4.7, 30, and 45. Changes to Civ.R. 4(D)(1) and 4.7 clarify that the general authority for waiver of service under Civ.R. 4(D) applies in domestic relations and civil protection order cases. The revisions make clear that an attorney may sign a waiver of service for his or her client. The amendment also requires an individual signing a waiver on their own behalf to provide an address for future service under Civ.R. 5.

Additional changes include limiting depositions to one day of seven hours, clarifying who may serve a subpoena in a civil case, and limiting the signatures for accepting service by mail to the person accepting the delivery.

Criminal Rules

The amendments to the Criminal Rules include changes involving the timing of post-arrest events to require: (1) a probable cause review no later than 48 hours after arrest (when arrested without a warrant) and (2) an initial appearance before the court within 2 court days (regardless of a warrant) as outlined in Ohio Revised Code Section 2937.011.

Evidence Rules

The amendments to the Evidence Rules include a change to Evid.R. 101 corrected a cross reference. The amendments also include a change to Evid.R. 702 to add a preponderance of the evidence standard for expert witness qualification. The rule previously stated the criteria that must be satisfied for a witness to testify as an expert. However, the rule was silent as to the standard of proof for that criteria. The amendment adds the criteria must be shown as "more likely than not." The amendment also requires that the expert witness's opinion must reflect a reliable application of the principles and methods to the facts of the case. These changes mirror an amendment to the rule's federal counterpart, Fed. R. Evid. 702, which took effect Dec. 1, 2023.

Juvenile Rules

An amendment to Juvenile Rule 9 adds language requiring a juvenile court to notify the prosecuting attorney and the victim of the offense if formal court action is avoided. This change is in recognition of and compliance with Article I, Section 10a of the Ohio Constitution (effective 2017) and the corresponding statutory provisions, known as "Marsy's Law."

Judiciary/Supreme Court Operating Expenditures

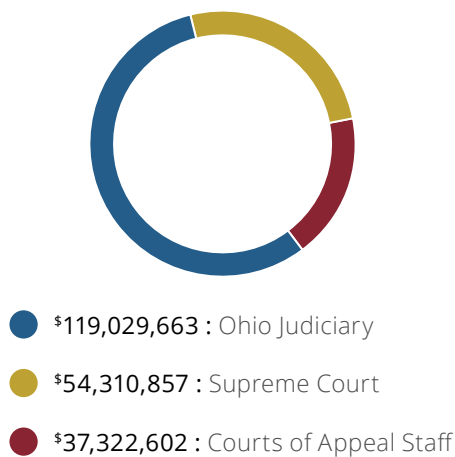
The Judiciary/Supreme Court General Revenue Fund (GRF) budget is \$210.6 million, which supports the administrative operations at the Thomas J. Moyer Ohio Judicial Center, salaries of Ohio judges, and employees of the district courts of appeals.

OHIO JUDICIARY	Expenditures FY 2024*	Percent of Total	Budgeted FY 2025**	Percent of Total
Courts of Appeal Judges	\$15,395,800	7.3%	16,074,197	7.1%
Trial Court Judges	\$103,633,863	49.2%	108,052,582	47.4%
TOTAL OHIO JUDICIARY	\$119,029,663	56.5%	\$124,126,779	54.5%
COURT OF APPEALS STAFF	\$37,322,602	17.7%	\$40,786,229	17.9%
SUPREME COURT				
Supreme Court of Ohio Operations	\$49,548,621	23.5%	\$57,922,256	25.4%
Ohio Center for Law-Related Education	\$375,000	0.2%	\$375,000	0.2%
Ohio Courts Network Initiative	\$3,843,000	1.8%	\$3,843,000	1.7%
County Law Library Resources Board	\$220,910	0.1%	\$308,500	0.1%
Civil Justice Program Fund	\$323,326	0.2%	\$500,000	0.2%
SUPREME COURT TOTAL	\$54,310,857	25.8%	\$ 62,948,756	27.7%
OHIO JUDICIARY & SUPREME COURT TOTAL	\$ 210,663,122		\$ 227,861,764	

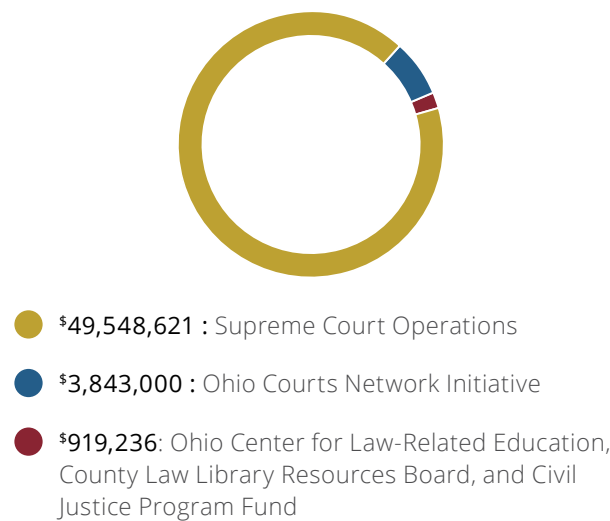
* Includes encumbrances and all fund sources.
** Budget is as of January, fiscal year 2025.

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

Ohio Judiciary/Supreme Court
Fiscal Year 2024 Total Expenditures



Supreme Court
Fiscal Year 2024 Total Expenditures



Office of the Chief Financial Officer



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DIRECTOR

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Mallory Geib
Mary Harper
Christopher Hipp
Linda Hodge
Denise Johnson
Brandee Preston
Nathan Rush
Scott Schaller

The office provides procurement and financial management support to the Supreme Court and the judiciary of the state of Ohio. Primary responsibilities include operating budget and fiscal oversight of more than \$227 million appropriated through H.B. 33 of the 135th General Assembly for fiscal year 2024.

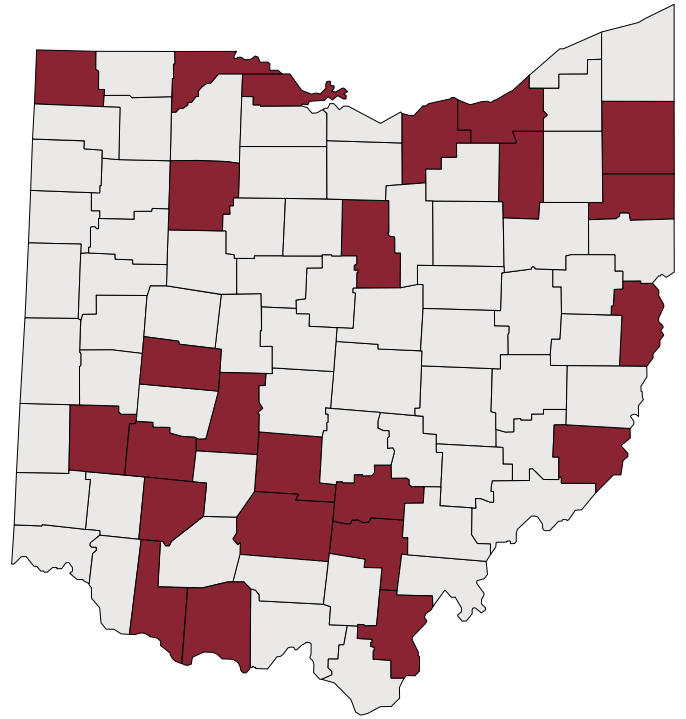
Dynamic Innovation in the Administration of Justice

The office plays a pivotal role in supporting the operations of the Court by refining and implementing administrative policies and guidelines in collaboration with Court leadership. The office manages the budget to ensure the payment of judicial salaries, the compensation of court of appeals staff, and the operation of the Thomas J. Moyer Ohio Judicial Center and administrative offices of the Supreme Court. Additionally, the office maintains proper internal controls, meets regulatory reporting requirements, oversees competitive procurement and contract management, and administers support to address the funding needs of local Ohio courts.

The Court awarded and managed over \$2.8 million in funding for technology to appellate, common pleas, municipal and county courts across Ohio to modernize their systems.

Funds for Technology Upgrades Awarded to Local Courts

The Supreme Court awarded \$2.89 million for 35 projects to improve court operations across the state.



With a new judicial center under construction in Hancock County, there was an ideal opportunity to modernize the technology used in some courtrooms. At the top of the list was replacing the antiquated systems used for recording court proceedings.

But a barrier for courts needing reliable, up-to-date technology is often the hefty price tag. So, it was a welcome relief when the Hancock County court received word that it would receive \$120,000 in funding from the Supreme Court of Ohio for digital recording systems for the domestic relations court. The Hancock County project is one of 35 statewide to receive technology funding in 2024. The funding assists local courts with modernizing their operations.

E-Filing Technology Enhancements Improve Court Operations

Recent technology upgrades funded by the Supreme Court of Ohio are transforming court operations across the state, with e-filing and modernized systems enhancing efficiency and accessibility. E-filing eliminates the need for individuals to travel to courthouses, allowing documents to be submitted online, saving time for both the public and court staff. This streamlined process reduces administrative burdens and enables faster responses to inquiries.

Upgrades to outdated software, such as real-time digital docket scheduling and document scanning directly into case files, ensure courts can manage daily operations more effectively. These improvements not only promote convenience but also benefit individuals needing immediate access to legal documents, such as attorneys, self-represented litigants, and the public. By integrating advanced technology, Ohio courts are addressing barriers to access while modernizing outdated systems.

Outdated Hardware and Software Common in Funding Requests

Many Ohio courts that applied for 2024 funding support are dealing with aging case management software and obsolete computer systems. The technology often is no longer supported by the original vendors. The Clinton County Probate Court and Clinton County Juvenile Court were together awarded \$70,340 to overhaul their case management systems.

Other improvements are expected to speed up workflow for staff and deliver better service to the public. They will include the ability to scan and attach documents directly on the docket and to e-file with the court.

Clerk of the Court



Robert Vaughn
CLERK

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

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.

Dynamic Innovation in the Administration of Justice

An innovative addition to the Clerk's Office in 2024 was the initial implementation of E-filing capabilities for persons incarcerated in Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction (ODRC) facilities. The system is a partnership with the United States District Court for the Southern District of Ohio, where scanning technology has been placed in the law libraries of seven ODRC facilities. The technology allows the incarcerated persons to electronically file documents with each court's clerk, rather than filing paper documents through the mail. The Clerk will continue to partner with the federal court and ODRC to expand the technology to additional facilities throughout the coming year.

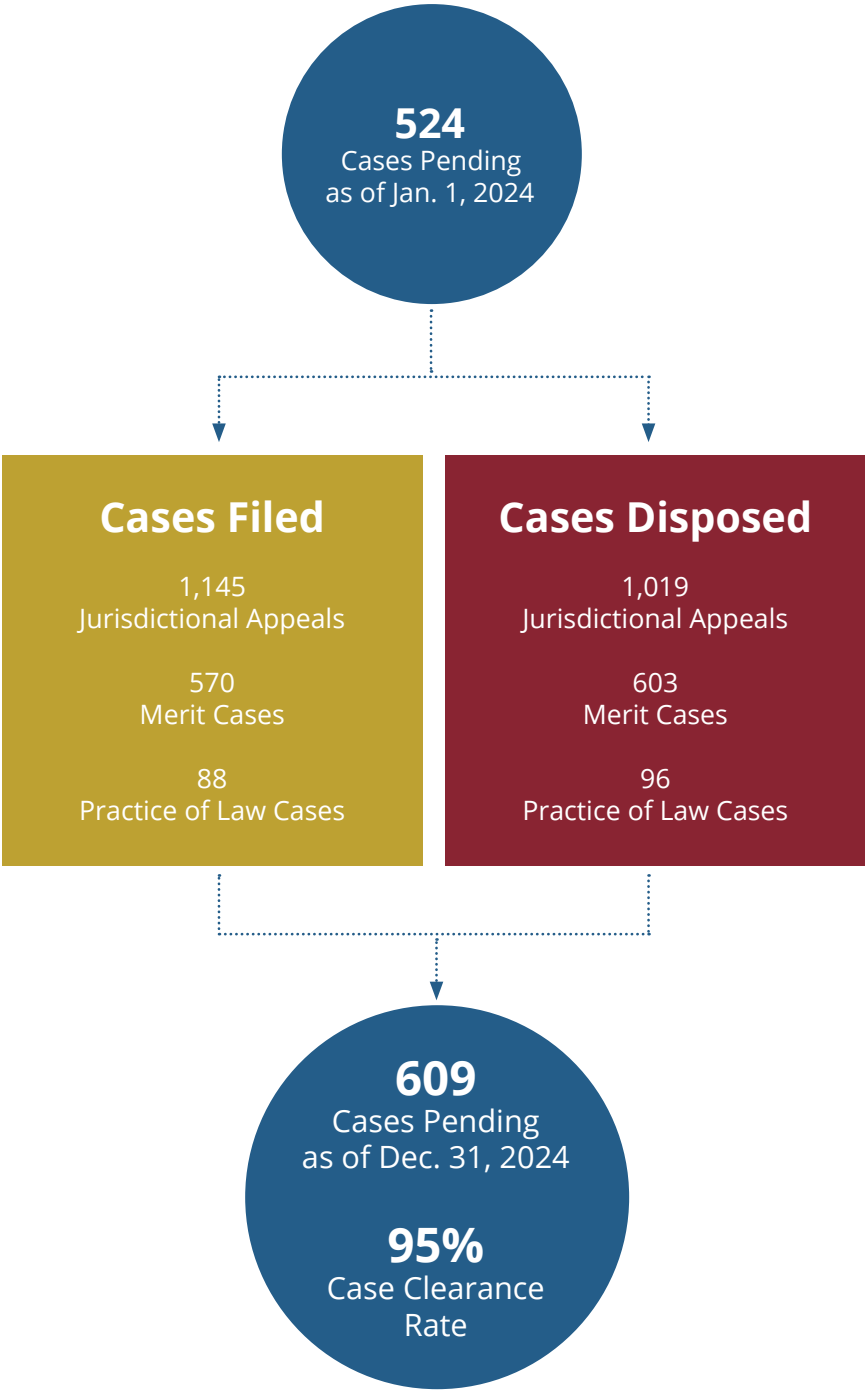
Deputy clerks, attorneys, and other staff in the Clerk's Office also serve Ohio attorneys, litigants, and the public by answering phone calls and emails regarding filing questions, case statuses and updates, and public records requests.

The 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.

In 2024, the Clerk's Office filed more than 11,000 distinct pleadings and other documents, including 1,803 new cases. More than 1,700 cases were disposed of in the calendar year, leaving 609 cases pending at year's end. The pages that follow provide further statistical and categorical breakdowns of cases filed, disposed of, and pending at the start and end of last year.

2024 Caseload Activities

Summary of Caseload Activity



Cases Filed in 2024

1,145 Discretionary Appeals

1,082 Jurisdictional Appeals

6 Death Penalty Postconviction Appeals

14 Appeals Involving Termination of Parental Rights/Adoption

43 Appeals from App.R. 26(B) Applications

570 Merit Cases

391 Original Actions

64 Habeas Corpus Cases

68 Direct Appeals (Cases Originating in Court of Appeals)

1 Direct Appeals Involving Termination of Parental Rights/Adoption

11 Certified Conflicts

7 Appeals from Board of Tax Appeals

10 Appeals from Public Utilities Commission

1 Appeals from Power Siting Board

1 Death Penalty Cases

16 Cases Purporting to Invoke Unspecified Original Jurisdiction

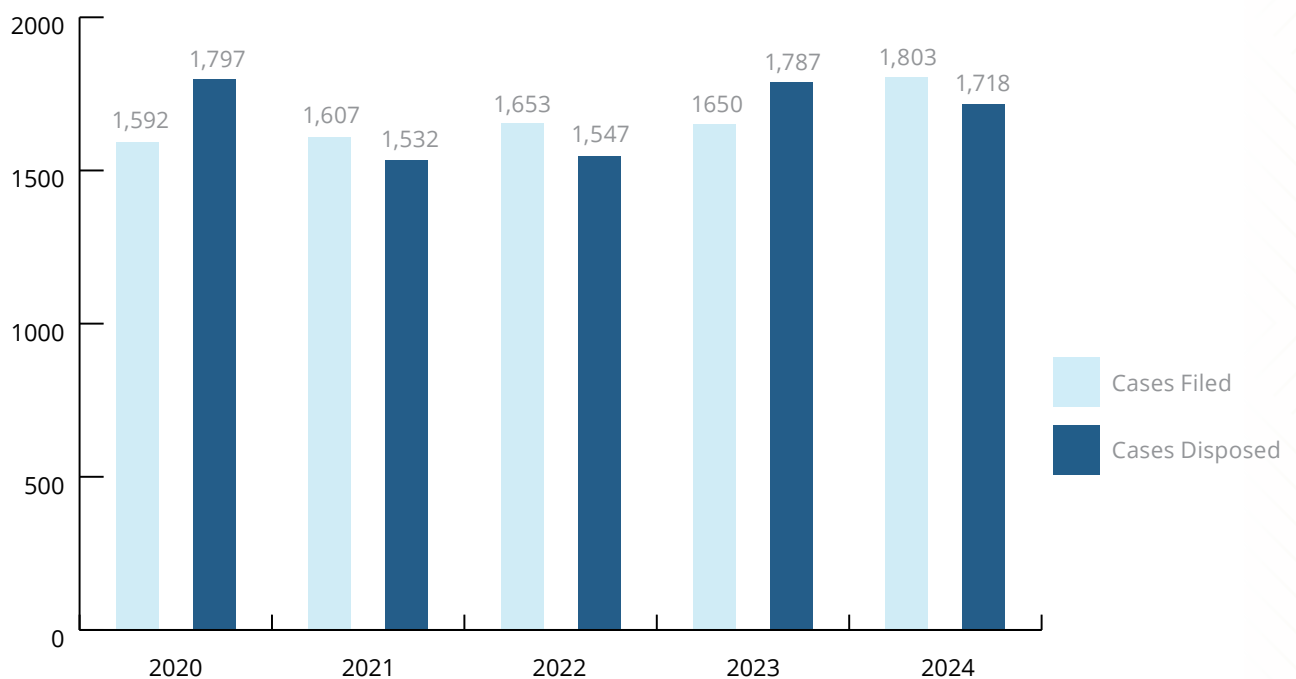
88 Practice of Law Cases

85 Disciplinary Cases

3 Bar Admission Cases

1,803 Total Cases Filed

Total Cases Filed and Disposed, 2020 – 2024



Cases Disposed in 2024

1,019 Discretionary Appeals¹

956 Jurisdictional Appeals²

7 Death Penalty Postconviction Appeals

15 Appeals Involving Termination of Parental Rights/Adoption

41 Appeals from App.R. 26(B) Applications

603 Merit Cases

356 Original Actions

65 Habeas Corpus Cases

74 Direct Appeals (Cases Originating in Court of Appeals)

1 Direct Appeals Involving Termination of Parental Rights/Adoption

13 Certified Conflicts

8 Appeals from Board of Tax Appeals

2 Appeals from Public Utilities Commission

1 Appeals from Power Siting Board

3 Death Penalty Cases

1 Appeals from App.R. 26(B) Application in Death Penalty Case

1 Certified Questions of State Law

10 Other Merit Cases

68 Jurisdictional Appeals Accepted for Merit Review³

96 Practice of Law Cases

93 Disciplinary Cases

3 Bar Admission Cases

1,718 Total Cases Disposed

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

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

3 This category does not include appeals that were accepted, held, and later summarily decided without briefing.

Cases Pending on December 31, 2024

280	Discretionary Appeals
271	Jurisdictional Appeals
1	Death Penalty Postconviction Appeals
1	Appeals Involving Termination of Parental Rights/Adoption
7	Appeals from App.R. 26(B) Application
314	Merit Cases
144	Original Actions
8	Habeas Corpus Cases
45	Direct Appeals (Cases Originating in Court of Appeals)
14	Certified Conflicts
7	Appeals from Board of Tax Appeals
12	Appeals from Public Utilities Commission
5	Appeals from Power Siting Board
2	Death Penalty Cases
7	Other Merit Cases
70	Jurisdictional Appeals Accepted for Merit Review
15	Practice of Law Cases
15	Disciplinary Cases
609	Total Cases Pending

Reporter of Decisions

Douglas M. Nelson
REPORTER OF DECISIONS

Katie Biancamano
Britney Brouwer
Holly Coats
Alicia Elwing
Kristopher Haines
Erik Henry
Fred Ingram
Becky Johnson
Stephanie Kellgren
Katherine Mosca



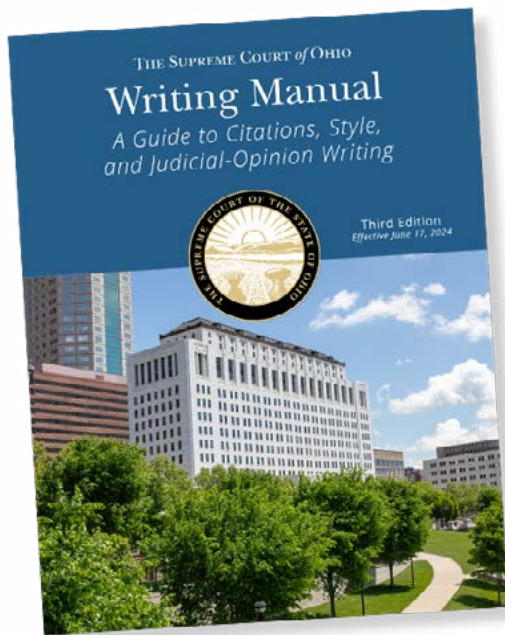
The Office of the Reporter edits all Supreme Court opinions and, as cases are decided, publishes them on the Court’s website, along with announcements describing each ruling made without an opinion as well as certain administrative actions. The office’s attorneys responsible for editing were known as assistant reporters until January 2023, when the Court changed their job title to attorney-editor to better reflect their qualifications and role at the Court.

Dynamic Innovation in the Administration of Justice

In addition to reviewing citations, grammar, punctuation, and style, the Attorney-Editors ensure that the Court’s opinions follow the Court’s Writing Manual. In February 2023, the chief justice established a committee composed of practitioners, writing instructors, and Court staff to consider and propose revisions to the Writing Manual’s Second Edition, released in 2013.

In February 2024, the Court adopted the Third Edition of the Writing Manual. The new edition is intended to help simplify and modernize opinion writing. It includes various citation-form updates that account for the fact that legal research and the reading and writing of briefs and opinions are now occurring primarily online rather than on paper.

The new edition was posted on the Court’s website on April 15, allowing sufficient time for judges and lawyers to learn the updates before they took effect in June, especially for those sitting and practicing in appellate districts that require that citations in filings to conform to the Manual.



New Edition of Court's Writing Manual Widely Distributed

On April 15, a Court News Ohio article introduced the Third Edition of the Writing Manual to the public. That same day, a letter introducing the Third Edition was emailed to judges and court administrators of Courts of Appeals, Courts of Common Pleas, and the Court of Claims, along with a reference guide explaining updates to the most frequently used citation forms.

Use of the Third Edition became effective on June 18, 2024. Approximately 300 hard copies of the Third Edition were sent in June to Supreme Court justices and staff; Court of Appeals judges, court administrators, magistrates, and staff attorneys; prison libraries; legal writing instructors; and others upon request.

The Reporter's Office and members of the 2023-24 Writing Manual Committee provided multiple presentations on the Manual between April and December to judges and staff at the Supreme Court and Court of Appeals, as well as to attorneys in private practice. Beginning in September, a Reporter's Office intern was assigned to reformat Supreme Court opinions issued between 1992 and 2002, adding paragraph numbers. With that reformatting, these opinions can be cited by their existing Ohio WebCite and paragraph numbers instead of the print-published page numbers.

Third Edition's Innovations Simplify and Modernize Opinion Writing

Some of the most important examples of the changes made in the updated writing manual include:

- Shortening of citations, including removal of parallel citations to print publications for cases.
- Removal of arbitrary distinctions from the Bluebook.
- Updated guidance on citing internet sources, including the use of "permalinks."
- Justices' votes are now reported more comprehensively and clearly, allowing readers to look to a single place (above the majority or per curiam opinion, rather than underneath it) to count and identify the justices signing on to the opinion of the Court.
- The online version is now easier to navigate, with links embedded in the table of contents and in internal cross-references to related sections of the Manual.

Reporter's Office Statistics

The Reporter's Office has continued to maintain the Opinions and Announcements section of the Court's website. More than 141,500 opinions of the Supreme Court and other Ohio courts are available there—all easily accessible to the public at no cost. This total includes the 296 Supreme Court opinions, 4,216 Court of Appeals opinions, and 158 Court of Claims opinions issued in 2024.

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 172 through 175 of *Ohio St.3d*, published in 2024, include more than 2,700 pages of opinions and approximately 350 pages of announcements in Supreme Court cases.

During 2024, approximately 8,100 pages of draft opinions were edited. Specifically, the Reporter's Office edited:

- 235 draft majority and per curiam opinions.
- 180 draft separate opinions (concurrences and dissents).
- 162 revised drafts of opinions.

Legal Resources

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Jeffrey Loeser
Susan Malloy
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Ryan O'Rourke
Kathryn Steveline
Deanna Tuttle



The attorneys in the Office of Legal Resources are known as the master commissioners. The master commissioners in 2024 provided legal research and writing support to the justices on the non-discretionary portion of the docket, preparing 275 memoranda and drafting other written work product. Cases in the Office of Legal Resources include practice of law matters such as attorney and judicial discipline and character and fitness review of applicants to the bar. The office also works on state tax appeals, public utility appeals, workers' compensation appeals, death penalty appeals, and extraordinary writ cases.

Master commissioners in 2024 also assisted the chief justice as requested in processing 200 affidavits of disqualification filed against Ohio judges. Master commissioners' activities to aid the bench and bar included participating in the work of committees to propose amendments to the Court's Rules of Practice.

Dynamic Innovation in the Administration of Justice

The Office of Legal Resources demonstrates a commitment to innovation and efficiency by instituting measures to ensure timely resolution of cases. A notable example is the implementation of regular discussion of case and docket management strategies. These periodic assessments allow for the development of solutions to maintain the steady progression of cases. By incorporating these reviews into their workflow, the master commissioners continue to uphold high standards of responsiveness and effectiveness, reinforcing their role in supporting the Court's administration of justice.

Attorney Services Division



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DIRECTOR

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Heidi Beckman
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Asha Grimes
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Shannon Scheid
Jennifer Smith
Denise Spencer
Cypress Williams

In 2024, the Supreme Court of Ohio's Attorney Services Division exemplified its dedication to dynamic innovation by significant developments in the bar examination process, aimed at elevating the standards and efficiency of attorney admissions.

Dynamic Innovation in the Administration of Justice

The February and July bar exams were pivotal, with 370 examinees participating in February and a pass rate of 49%, while July saw 1,075 examinees with a notable 75% pass rate. The July exam also set a record for accommodation requests, reaching 115, a substantial increase from the previous year. This exam session marked a critical transition by eliminating fingerprinting in favor of picture ID verification, streamlining the identification process.

The division facilitated mass swearing-in ceremonies in May and November, celebrating the new attorneys from the February and July exams.

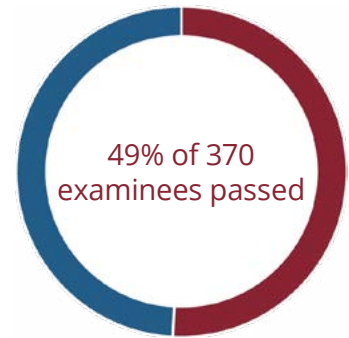
Improving Attorney Admission Process

A significant rule change in the admission by motion process now accommodates part-time practice, leading to 149 applications in 2024, with 104 falling under the new rule. To date, 50 applicants have been approved, 20 of whom benefitted from the revised rule. Meanwhile, the modification to the attorneys as specialist rule is under observation, with its effects yet to fully manifest.

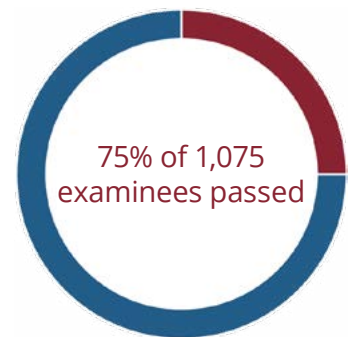
The division is working in collaboration with the IT department to develop a streamlined pro hac vice application system, set to be effective in December 2024 for the 2025 application year. This initiative reflects the division's proactive approach to enhancing procedural efficiencies.



February Bar Exam



July Bar Exam



Ensuring High Standards in the Practice of Law

The Board on the Unauthorized Practice of Law's efforts to combat the unauthorized practice of law have intensified. Three panels addressed cases, and the advisory opinion subcommittee issued an opinion based on two closely related requests. The board's biannual seminar in December further reinforced these efforts.

In addition, the division conducted a thorough review of over 24,000 continuing legal education programs, ensuring compliance and maintaining high educational standards. The division also conducted a CLE exemption audit to verify that no attorney is unjustifiably exempt from their continuing legal education requirements.

The Professionalism Commission also played a vital role by hosting the 2024 Student to Lawyer Symposium, fostering a seamless transition for new attorneys into the legal profession.

Additionally, the Board of Commissioners on Character & Fitness held 21 hearings, with further sessions scheduled, underscoring the division's commitment to maintaining the integrity of the legal profession.



Eyeing the Horizon

Mastering Modern Lawyering in the Digital Age



Oct. 4, 2024
9 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.
Zoom Webinar

Register Today!

Student to Lawyer Symposium

The **Student to Lawyer (S2L) Symposium** is a biennial conference that brings together a variety of stakeholders – law students, law schools, lawyers, law firms, legal organizations, industry leaders, and bar associations – to explore a topic relevant to law students and practicing lawyers.

This year's event will examine what legal mastery means in the 21st century, which requires competent counsel to bridge tradition and digital innovation.

An application for CLE accreditation will be submitted to the Supreme Court of Ohio Commission on Continuing Legal Education.

This event is hosted by the Supreme Court of Ohio Commission on Professionalism.

The Commission on Professionalism hosted the Student to Lawyer Symposium in October.

The staff of Attorney Services are liaisons to the following:

Board of Bar Examiners

Hon. Mark K. Wiest, Chair	Patricia Gajda	Jennifer E. Krieger	Robert Sanker
C. Michael Walsh, Vice-Chair	Magistrate Elizabeth Howe	Hon. Amy Lewis	Andrea Uhler
Steve C. Coffaro	Montrella Jackson	Michael E. Murman	Suzanne M. Waldron
Hon. Margaret Evans	Hon. Linda J. Jennings	Hon. Tammy O'Brien	Staff Liaison: Tiffany Kline
Alexander J. Ewing	Kevin J. Kenney	Magistrate Jonathan Perrin	

Board of Commissioners on Character and Fitness

Chad A. Heald, Esq., Chair	Faye D. Cox	Sky Pettey	Staff Liaison:
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Hon. Matthew Byrne	Brandon D. R. Dynes	Sarah K. Skow	
Timothy Chai	Michael P. McCormick	Anthony S. VanNoy	

Board on the Unauthorized Practice of Law

David A. Kutik, Chair	Cecilia M. Cooper	Julie Paek Hubler	David E. Tschantz
Robert J. Gehring, Vice Chair	Richard L. Creighton	Denny Ramey	Magistrate Julita Varner
Robert Alt	Emily Gerken	Mindi L. Schaefer	Staff Liaison:
RaMona D. Benson	Roseanne Hilow	Elizabeth T. Smith	Bradley J. Martinez

Commission on Appointment of Counsel in Capital Cases

Ann M. Baronas, Chair	Hon. Thomas Marcelain	Timothy F. Sweeney
Jefferson Liston, Vice Chair	Kimberly S. Rigby	Staff Liaison: Kirstyn Moyers

Commission on Certification of Attorneys as Specialists

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Prof. Christopher Peters,	Lewis J. Dolezal	Andrew Miller	Staff Liaison:
Vice Chair	Hon. Tom Elkin	Margaret A. O'Bryon	Britney N. Cider
Awatef Assad	Hon. Emily Hagan	Norman Ogilvie	
Sasha A.M. Blaine	Pamela Kurt	Tina Owens-Ruff	
Justin R. Blume	Linda Lawrence	Prof. Andrew S. Pollis	

Commission on Continuing Legal Education

Kevin L. Williams, Chair	Sharon Harwood	Jacqueline M. O'Donnell	Magistrate Ebony Wreh
Robert J. Mann, Vice Chair	Hon. J. Gregory Howard	Adrienne J. Roach	Staff Liaison:
Douglas E. Bloom	Hon. Kevin Kelley	James Sillery	Michel Jendretzky
Dr. Carri L. Brown	Bennett Manning	Patricia Wagner	
Hon. Marisa Cornachio	Hon. Eric Allen Marks	Karin Wiest	
Prof. Terri Enns	Hon. Sheryl Munson	Anthony Will	

Commission on Professionalism

Halle B. Hara, Chair	Lindsay Ford Ellis	Debra D. Overly
Laura Welles Wilson,	Hon. Christopher B. Epley	Karen E. Rubin
Vice Chair	Hon. David Hamilton	Staff Liaison:
Hon. Craig Baldwin	Amy Ikerd	MacLaren Roemer
Belinda S. Barnes	Hon. Molly K. Johnson	
Hon. Ginger Bock	Melissa Kidder	
Courtnee Carrigan	Jay E. Michael	

Court Services Division

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Marya Kolman
Kevin Lottes
Sheila Lovell
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Bruno Romero
Sarah Schregardus
Sara Smith
Ryan Stickel
Anne Thompson
Linda Topping
Zach Vicha
Lisa Williams
Alicia Wolf



The Division of Court Services supports Ohio trial and appellate courts by offering both traditional and innovative services for the effective administration of justice. The division's work begins by identifying and understanding the needs of the local courts. Understanding those needs enables the Supreme Court to bring courts together with national and local experts to innovate and engineer solutions for Ohio communities and to serve justice.

Dynamic Innovation in the Administration of Justice

The Office of Court Services has a data and analytics team who support initiatives across the Supreme Court. Among their accomplishments in 2024:

- **Time Guidelines.** Provided data analytics and research services to the Advisory Committee on Case Management in support of its review of the appellate and trial court case processing time guidelines promulgated under Rule 39 of the Supreme Court Rules of Superintendence.
- **Causes of Delay Research.** Developed and implemented surveys of judges, magistrates, court administrators, and attorney practitioners concerning the causes of delays in the appellate and trial courts.
- **Task Force on Reentry.** Provided support to the Task Force on Reentry, including data analytics and the implementation of surveys of judges concerning their judicial release practices and of jail administrators concerning their reentry programs and services.

- **BCI Reporting.** Provided data analytics and technical services in support of the production of the Understanding BCI Reporting toolkit and related educational planning activities.
- **Task Force on Juvenile Diversion.** Developed and implemented a survey of juvenile court judges in support of the Task Force on Juvenile Diversion's study of pre-initial appearance diversion practices across the juvenile courts.
- **New Judge and Magistrate Education.** Provided education to new judges and magistrates concerning court performance measurement and related services provided by the Office of Court Services.
- **Administration of Statistical Reporting.** Assisted in the development of an automated system to notify courts of delinquent caseload statistical reports.
- **Judicial College – Judges Survey.** Assisted the Judicial College in the development and implementation of a survey of judges concerning faculty recruitment and appellate review matters.
- **Judicial College – Probation Officers Survey.** Assisted the Judicial College in the development and implementation of a survey of chief probation officers concerning educational needs planning.
- **Judicial College – Program Survey.** Assisted the Judicial College in the development and implementation of a survey concerning various aspects of its New Judge Orientation program.
- **Text Messaging Pilot Program.** Assisted the Case Management Section in its analysis of failure-to-appear rates following the implementation of text message reminders in a set of pilot courts.
- **Case Inquiry Form.** The Case Inquiry Form on the Supreme Court website allows parties and attorneys to seek assistance when a decision or ruling has not occurred in a pending case, enabling the Case Management Section staff to review the matter and determine if intervention is appropriate.

By developing cutting-edge courses and best-in-class resources, the division helps courts and their justice system partners to ensure consistent compliance with laws and the rules for courts, and to build best practices. The office has five specialty sections: the Case Management Section; the Children & Families Section, which includes the Domestic Violence Program; the Dispute Resolution Section; the Language Services Section; and the Specialized Dockets Section.

The division operates efficiently and effectively with 26 staff members and a budget that includes state and federal grants.

Advising the Court Services Division are six commissions and advisory committees, made up of judges, magistrates, attorneys, and professionals in related fields. They lend their expertise and wide range of experiences to the development of updated and new rules, education, programs, and innovations. Supreme Court staff are liaisons to the commissions and committees. Together they are committed to a transparent, accessible, accountable legal system in Ohio.



Understanding BCI Reporting



Resources for Local Courts and System Partners

Court Guide to BCI Reporting:

This is a [comprehensive resource](#) that provides an overview of the criminal disposition reporting process to the Ohio Attorney General's Bureau of Criminal Investigation, identifies best practices in court reporting and taking fingerprints, and outlines state and federal weapons disqualifiers. A shorter companion resource, [Quick Reference Guide to BCI Reporting](#), was also published.

Principles for the Use of Medication for Addiction Treatment Bench Card: To bring awareness to Ohio courts, the Supreme Court provided specific guidance on the use of medication for addiction treatment pursuant to Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act. The Office of Court Services developed a bench card titled ["Principles for the Use of Medication for Addiction Treatment in Community Control, Probation, and Supervision"](#).

Limited Scope Representation Guide:

This [online resource](#) provides information about limited scope representation (LSR) for lawyers, litigants, and courts. Limited scope representation allows a lawyer to provide a specific set of legal tasks as determined by the client instead of full representation. The guide outlines the permissible rules under which lawyers can engage in LSR, and provides sample checklists and engagement letters used by lawyers and the clients. It also provides an overview of the benefits LSR offers, as well as example case types where LSR may be appropriate to use. Courts, local bar associations, and legal aid organizations are encouraged to link to this resource from their websites.

Case Management Section

In 2024, the Case Management Section staff provided technical assistance to local trial and appellate court judges, magistrates, clerks, and staff by way of in-person and remote statistical reporting training, process-mapping sessions to review system efficiency, and court surveys. This year, the Case Management Section conducted in-person process-mapping sessions with: Delaware County Municipal Court, Hamilton County Juvenile Court, Hamilton County Common Pleas Court, Franklin County Common Pleas Court, Niles Municipal Court, Franklin County Domestic Relations Court, Greene County Juvenile Court, Greene County Probate Court, and Stark County Probate Court.

Staff also provided courts with assistance on conducting various CourTools Performance Measures, which are promulgated by the National Center for State Courts. Staff assisted courts with the various CourTools to help better measure how the Ohio local courts are performing.

The Case Management Section went on location to several local courts to provide training for clerks and court staff on case management best practices, including statistical reporting requirements. The section provided that service either in-person or via videoconference to the following courts in 2024:

- Darke County Common Pleas Court.
- Hamilton County Juvenile Court.
- Hamilton County Common Pleas Court.
- Hocking County Common Pleas Court and Hocking County Domestic Relations Court.
- Vinton County Municipal Court.
- Green County Juvenile Court.
- Athens Municipal Court.
- Fayette County Juvenile and Probate Court.
- Franklin County Domestic Relations and Juvenile Court.
- South Euclid Municipal Court.

- Paulding County Common Pleas Court and Paulding County Domestic Relations Court.
- Miami County Common Pleas Court.
- Warren County Juvenile and Probate Court.
- Clermont County Municipal Court.
- Geauga County Common Pleas Court.
- Berea Municipal Court.
- Montgomery County Common Pleas Court.

The Case Management Section provided additional trainings for new mayors affiliated with a mayor's court. The staff also presented at the Ohio Association of Court Administration's Fall Conference, Ohio Association of Magistrates Fall Conference, Juvenile Clerks' Summer Conference, Ohio Probate Judges Association Summer Conference, Ohio Juvenile Judges Association Summer Conference, the Judicial College's Administrative Judge Seminar, New Judge Orientation, and New Magistrate Orientation. The Case Management Section continues to serve as faculty for the Certified Court Manager program through the National Center for State Court's Institute for Court Management.

Additionally, the Case Management Section completed its review of the grant funding through the American Rescue Plan Act for reducing delays. Site visits to each court that was awarded funding began in 2023 and were completed in 2024. The funding provided to the courts was specific to addressing backlog reduction on court dockets.

The Case Management Section developed two webinars this year. The first was held in August in collaboration with the Supreme Court's Judicial College on e-filing, and the second was conducted in December on civil caseflow best practices for Ohio judicial officers. The civil caseflow webinar will become an e-course in 2025 and include a written resource promoting the best practices and philosophies.

Children & Families Section

The Children & Families Section provides outreach to local domestic relations, juvenile, and probate courts through technical assistance, training, and policy recommendations to improve court performance in cases involving children and families. The section also works with courts, justice system partners, and community

stakeholders to develop programs focusing on improving outcomes for families involved in the child welfare system, juvenile justice system, or victims of domestic violence. The Advisory Committee on Children & Families and the Advisory Committee on Domestic Violence provide guidance for the section's work.



The first-ever Kids Summit, September 5.

Dual Status Youth Initiatives

The section partnered with the Robert F. Kennedy National Resource Center for Juvenile Justice to provide technical assistance to pilot sites in Clark, Champaign, Fairfield, and Hancock counties in successfully implementing cross-system collaborations and creating specific programs for dually involved youth – those youth involved in both the child welfare and juvenile justice systems. These efforts have resulted in strong leadership, tailored interventions, and improved outcomes for the youth, enhanced data sharing, and multi-disciplinary training.

The successes of Ohio's pilot sites were highlighted nationally in an article the center published, as well as a webinar featuring Judge Kristen K. Johnson of Hancock County and Judge Katrine Lancaster of Clark County, who shared insights into targeted interventions and systemic approaches to supporting dual status youth. Building on the success of the initiative since its inception in 2019, the Children & Families Section intends to expand to additional sites in 2025.

Multi-Disciplinary Representation Programs

The Multi-Disciplinary Representation (MDR) program saw notable progress in its third year. This initiative offers enhanced support for parents involved in a child welfare case by integrating a

cross-system collaborative approach to increase the quality of the legal representation a parent receives. Ohio is the first state to implement a multisite legal representation pilot program with MDR programs in Clark, Cuyahoga, Erie, Stark, Summit, and Wayne counties. Each program offers teams comprised of an attorney, a social worker, and a person with lived experience who work together with families involved or at risk of involvement in the child welfare system.

Key achievements included the implementation of specialized training, targeted interventions, and improved data-sharing, which have led to a reduction in recidivism rates, improved legal representation, and the strengthening of leadership roles within multidisciplinary teams. MDR's continued growth and success highlight its potential for sustainable, long-term impact on vulnerable families across Ohio. As the final year of this initiative approaches, the section will focus on sustainability for the current programs and developing tools for establishing similar programs in new counties.

The section, along with the Ohio Department of Children & Youth (DCY), hosted the six pilot sites for a two-day training. Office of Court Services Director Stephanie Graubner Nelson and DCY Director Kara Wente welcomed participants, followed by success stories from the pilot sites.

Highlights of the training included sessions on motivational interviewing, funding and sustainability, educational advocacy, and resiliency for team members.

Ohio Leaders Kids Summit

The DCY, in partnership with the Children & Families Section hosted the first-ever Kids Summit, bringing together over 800 county leaders from across the state. Attendees included representatives from juvenile courts, children services, law enforcement, and family advocates who gathered to learn how streamline services for children and families. Key speakers included Chief Justice Kennedy and Gov. Mike DeWine, and they stressed the importance for local child-serving agencies to more efficiently work together. The summit provided an opportunity for collaboration, learning, and the sharing of innovative strategies to improve outcomes for Ohio's children and families.

Ohio CASA's Celebrate Kids! Conference

The Children & Families Section was a sponsor for Ohio CASA's 29th Annual "Celebrate Kids!" Conference in Columbus this year. More than 700 CASA volunteers, judges, attorneys, and child welfare professionals from across Ohio attended the three-day event featuring training on topics such as youth aging out of foster care, domestic violence, poverty, and juvenile human trafficking. Participants enhanced their skills to better support Ohio's 15,000 foster children while fulfilling required training hours. The conference also featured nationally recognized experts and special events, including a networking session with a student performance from Columbus City Schools.

Virtual Assistance for Protection Orders

The section's Domestic Violence Program continued its partnership with Ohio Legal Help,

an online self-help legal assistance website, to enhance the availability of easy-to-use, online resources and information about protection orders. The civil stalking and sexually oriented offender protection order tool launched in June 2024. The tool provides information and a guided interview process for those seeking to complete these types of protection orders. This new tool is similar to the online tool for domestic violence and dating violence protection orders developed through a similar Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) grant partnership in 2021.

Expanded Access to Crime Victim Restitution Form

VAWA grant funds were also used to translate the Supreme Court's Crime Victim Restitution Amount Summary Form into seven foreign languages (Arabic, French, Spanish, Somali, Mandarin, Nepali, and Russian) to help victims with limited English proficiency. The form assists victims with calculating their economic losses suffered as a result of a criminal offense.

Trainings for Local Courts and Justice System Partners

The section conducted several trainings for judicial officers, court staff, clerks, law enforcement, and other multidisciplinary justice partners. Court Café lunch-and-learn webinars featured topics such as community-based juvenile diversion programs, parenting coordination, safe haven babies, and rule amendments.

The Domestic Violence Program sponsored webinars on cultural responsiveness, the effects of domestic violence on children, strangulation, and managing trauma for court professionals. A series of regional trainings were also held featuring a national expert. He addressed topics such as how to assess lethality, the impact of trauma on the brain, strangulation, and witness intimidation.

Dispute Resolution Section

The Dispute Resolution Section provides mediation to Supreme Court litigants and Ohio public officials, offers dispute resolution training, and delivers innovative dispute resolution services to Ohio courts.

The Supreme Court referred 38 cases for mediation this year, and 124 mediation sessions were conducted in these cases. Through mediation, the parties resolved many of these cases without the need for further formal court proceedings.

Dispute Resolution Section staff and contract mediators mediated eight government conflict resolution services matters, with a total of 27 mediation sessions. This confidential dispute resolution program is designed to assist county and local public officials in resolving and preventing conflicts by using mediation, facilitation, or neutral evaluation.

Settlement Week is a court-managed program that helps reduce civil and domestic relations case backlogs by establishing a defined time period to mediate older cases that appear ready for resolution. The section provides training and resources on Settlement Week for courts and mediators and held a virtual roundtable discussion this year. The roundtable included judges, magistrates, and program administrators from four courts that have had successful Settlement Week programs. Resolving cases during Settlement Week benefits the parties and the court.

The section also developed training programs and resources on neutral evaluation, which is an outcome-oriented process in which the parties

to a dispute present their claims or defenses and evidence to a neutral third party. The neutral party then shares impressions about the strengths and weaknesses of the case. Only a few Ohio courts currently offer neutral evaluation. The section's resources and guidance will assist other courts in instituting neutral evaluation programs. In addition, the section offered a robust schedule of training and education programs for judges, court personnel, and dispute resolution practitioners. The programs included trainings required for new practitioners as well as advanced programs. Twelve different programs, with a total of 41 training days and 485 participants, were taught in 2024.



General Division Court Administrators Roundtable, August 14

Local Court Professionals Discuss Key Issues at Roundtables

Court administrators from around Ohio gathered in Columbus for candid conversations about issues facing their courts and to learn from each other about how their peers are tackling challenges.

The Office of Court Services hosted a series of roundtables in 2024 for court professionals. At one roundtable in August, administrators and staff members from the common pleas court general divisions met face-to-face at the Moyer Judicial Center to discuss numerous topics selected by the local court personnel.

Chris Geocarlis, manager of the Case Management Section, kicked off the session, expressing that the roundtables are a great experience for the office to learn about the issues

that local courts are dealing with on a day-to-day basis. Court Services staff joined the conversation and emphasized their role in assisting and supporting local courts. Roundtables are scheduled to address the concerns of numerous court professionals. Sessions through the year brought together a wide variety of judicial officers, including eviction mediators, domestic relations and probate court administrators, specialized docket managers, juvenile court magistrates, and more.

These programs included Fundamentals of Mediation, Specialized Family and Divorce Mediation, Domestic Abuse Issues for Mediators, School Attendance Mediation, Elder Mediation, Child Protection Mediation, Parenting Coordination, Settlement Week, and Neutral Evaluation.

Eighteen virtual roundtables were held for court staff and court-connected dispute resolution professionals to share best practices and provide networking opportunities. Each roundtable began with a short educational program presented by a conversation starter, followed by a discussion facilitated by the conversation starter and section staff. There were 243 participants in the roundtables this year.

Language Services Section

In 2024, the Language Services Section offered the written exam for credentialing interpreters to 61 candidates and administered 35 oral exams for interpreter credentialing certification. This year, 17 new credentialed interpreters were added to Ohio's roster of interpreters.

As a service to local courts, the Supreme Court provides telephonic interpretation when a credentialed interpreter is unavailable. Telephonic interpretation was expected to exceed 12,000 calls in 2024 compared to 8,803 calls in 2023. Telephonic interpretation is appropriate for ancillary service and unexpected events, such as a victim seeking an ex parte hearing for a protection order or a shelter care hearing in an abuse, neglect, or dependency action.

Responding to the call to address a shortage of interpreters in Ohio and nationwide, the Advisory Committee on Language Services proposed amendments to the Supreme Court Rules of Superintendence. The changes would increase the number of roster interpreters by adding another category and allowing reciprocity for registered interpreters from other states.

A brochure, titled "Become a Court Interpreter," was released this year. The outreach tool is designed to increase the numbers of interpreters for courts by recruiting individuals who are bilingual, increasing testing frequency for credentialing interpreters, and examining language assessment tools to qualify interpreters.

The section conducted a survey of the court-related dispute resolution programs throughout Ohio to determine the types of programs and services offered by the courts to their communities. Information learned from the survey will inform the technical assistance and resources the section will provide to court dispute resolution programs in the next year.

Section staff provided outreach by giving presentations about their programs and other dispute resolution topics to statewide, national, and international organizations. Staff also has leadership roles in the Association for Conflict Resolution, Association for Family and Conciliation Courts, and Ohio Mediation Association.



Specialized Dockets Section

As of Dec. 31, Ohio had 255 certified specialized dockets. These dockets are made up of a wide variety of adult and juvenile courts, including adult and juvenile drug dockets, veteran treatment dockets, mental health dockets, operating a motor vehicle while intoxicated dockets, human trafficking dockets, family dependency treatment dockets, reentry dockets, and domestic violence dockets.

In 2024, staff recommended that 65 specialized dockets be certified by the Commission on Specialized Dockets. Dockets must be certified every three years or when a new judge takes the bench.

Certification ensures that courts adhere to Ohio's Specialized Docket Standards and take advantage of research and best practices released by All Rise, formerly the National Association of Drug Court Professionals. This year, All Rise updated their best practice standards for the first time since they were first released in 2013. As knowledge and data expand in the treatment court field, local courts must take advantage of the opportunity to refine their practices and better serve their participants and communities. The Specialized Dockets Section plays a key role by spreading information about this new research and the techniques that lead to innovation and success.

On Oct. 24, 575 judges and other treatment court professionals from around Ohio gathered for the 20th annual Specialized Dockets Conference. Sessions focused on a wide range of topics intended to help improve treatment court operations. Topics included intimate partner violence, risk and need assessments, stigmatizing language, core correctional practices, case planning, reentry, and understanding and responding to disparities in treatment courts. Ongoing education and development for individual team members are vital to enhancing the performance of local courts, and are required

by Ohio's Specialized Docket Standards.

Using an ongoing grant through the Bureau of Justice Assistance, staff continued to work with national technical assistance partners NPC Research, American University, and National Center for State Courts. The partners provided tools and technical assistance designed to help local adult drug and veterans courts improve outcomes for participants. As part of the grant, American University delivered several education sessions about methods to enhance equity based on the statewide results from the RED (Racial Equity and Diversity) tool. Throughout the year, judges and program coordinators continued to take advantage of the BeST (Best Practices Self-Assessment Tool), provided by NPC Research. The BeST assessment tool measures fidelity to the drug court model and identifies areas that local courts can make the most impact with program changes. Continuous improvement means continuous monitoring, measurement, and modification.

The Supreme Court awarded over \$880,000 for case management upgrades through a grant from the Bureau of Justice Administration. This "local court opportunity" targeted funding to Ohio's specialized dockets. Selected courts received awards ranging from \$6,000 to \$100,000 to establish or upgrade case management systems. System upgrades will streamline courts' reporting requirements to the Supreme Court, the Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services, and interface with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs' Veterans Re-Entry Search Services. Several courts used funds to install check-in kiosks to expedite check-ins and processing of people on probation. Updated technology will centralize communication and case planning, reduce administrative burdens to local staff, and improve services to clients.

Specialized Dockets Leave Individual Impact on Communities

Nearly 600 people from treatment court teams across the state met to advance their practices during the Supreme Court Specialized Dockets Conference.

The goal of specialized dockets is to work with people who need the most help and demonstrate the highest risk of recidivism. Specialized dockets focus on treating a person's illness and other personal factors that may contribute to their behavior. By intervening when the offender is first introduced to the justice system, treatment teams can offer the support and resources necessary to break patterns and keep participants from returning to court, jail, or prison.

At this year's annual conference, judges, magistrates, and treatment team representatives learned the latest science and research and heard from national experts on the subject.

"The conference really helps get everybody on the same page," said Sarah Jeu, program coordinator for the Specialized Dockets Section.

The day was packed with large sessions to share important updates and best practices regarding specialized dockets, along with breakout sessions for attendees based on their own court's interests.



Topics of discussion included mental health, veterans, reentry, risk need assessments, clinical assessments, family involvement, breaking stigmas, and confidentiality among much more.

Program Offers Resources to Courts, Communities

The Supreme Court Domestic Violence Program is dedicated to providing Ohio courts and justice system partners with the technical assistance and resources they need.

Whether it's in criminal court, where perpetrators face charges, or in domestic relations or juvenile court where custody matters and protection orders are handled, domestic violence cases touch all parts of the judicial system.

One goal of the Court's Domestic Violence Program is to provide multidisciplinary education to help local courts better understand domestic violence dynamics and improve access for victims in response to new legislation. The program sponsored a series of webinars on cultural responsiveness, domestic violence, and the courts for justice partners. In October, there were four free domestic violence related webinars on topics such as post-separation lethality, the effect of domestic violence on children, understanding protection orders, and a case study of domestic violence incidents involving strangulation.

In November and December, the program hosted five regional domestic violence courses featuring a national expert.

In response to the General Assembly initiative, the program helped create information for courts about crime victim rights known as "Marsy's Law," and a form to help victims in gathering information to present at restitution hearings. To further improve access, the restitution form was translated into seven foreign languages. Additional resources for Marsy's Law include a [Toolkit](#) and [Quick Reference Guide](#).

Another aim of the program is stopping future generations of families from experiencing domestic violence. Studies show children who grow up with domestic violence in the home experience a host of adverse physical and mental health problems, as well as potentially continuing the cycle by becoming victims or aggressors.



Addressing Family Needs Before Cases Reach Courts

Members of a six-county pilot project convened at the Supreme Court this year to assess the successes of a multidisciplinary approach to helping families in the court system.

In 2022, a single father was struggling to regain custody of his young son when he was referred to [Project Strength](#). The program is an Erie County Public Defender's Office initiative to keep more children in their own homes by proactively connecting families to resources and legal assistance before a case becomes involved in the court system.

Project Strength represents one of several counties participating in the Ohio Multi-Disciplinary Representation (MDR) pilot program, part of the Court Improvement Project at the Supreme Court. MDR was designed to make justice more accessible to parents, especially those facing financial difficulties. Instead of only being appointed an attorney, those who cannot afford to hire a private lawyer receive a team to help them through the court process and make sure they have a well-represented voice. The six counties awarded grants for the program included Clark, Cuyahoga, Erie, Stark, Summit, and Wayne.

To kick off the final year of the pilot program, participants convened at the Supreme Court in

late 2024 for a two-day conference where they could share their successes, build on their skills, and focus on sustainability and funding for the future. Topics of discussion included ways to build and maintain effective teams, self-care and resilience for staff who may be facing fatigue and trauma, motivational interviewing, and tools to help families identify their strengths.

"The Multi-Disciplinary Representation project has been a transformative initiative, enhancing the quality of legal representation and support for families involved in the juvenile court system," said Linda Topping, court improvement program analyst for the Court's Children and Families Section. "By fostering collaboration among legal, child welfare, and community professionals, the project continues to set a standard for how cross-disciplinary teams can work together to improve outcomes for Ohio's children and families."

In the case of the Erie County father and his 5-year-old son, having a team to support him made all the difference in regaining custody.



Domestic Relations Web Tool Developed for Judges and Magistrates

A guide to domestic relations legal topics, such as child support, marital property division, and protection orders, has been restructured to better serve judges and magistrates.

The Domestic Relations Resource Guide on the Supreme Court website gives judges and magistrates quick access to essential information organized by topic. They can scroll through the topics and find quick answers, whether on the bench, in their office, or elsewhere. The guide has links to statutes, rules, pertinent cases, and more. Because the guide lives on the web, it can be updated promptly and available immediately to users.

Judge Diane M. Palos of the Cuyahoga County Domestic Relations Court has bookmarked the guide webpage for quick reference wherever she is. Judge Palos, who chaired the 10-member workgroup that oversaw the reworking of the resource, said information in the parenting section on awarding parental rights and modifying parenting orders has already been one of the most useful to her. She explained that the law in these areas is some of the most challenging to understand, noting the importance of reviewing the cases that have interpreted the relevant statutes.

"Links to the seminal cases are included," Judge Palos said. "Referencing the cases can focus a judge or magistrate on the evidence necessary and the standards of proof required in parenting cases, and offer a structure for decision-making."

The judge also pointed to a chart on Ohio protection orders in the domestic abuse section. The chart identifies the different types of protection orders, who they apply to, the correct jurisdiction for each type, the standard of proof required, and what happens if the order is violated.

"This chart is invaluable not just to judges and magistrates, but also for other community stakeholders trying to navigate the complex system of protection orders in Ohio," she said.

Throughout the guide, "Practice Tips" are highlighted in boxes. They're cues to best practices.

"It's like having your mentor whisper in your ear the answer to the question you are thinking," Judge Palos noted.



Filling the Communication Gap

The ongoing demand for language interpreters in courtrooms is growing, with an increased need for the number of credentialed professionals.

The Conference of the Council of Language Access Coordinators meeting was held this year in Cincinnati. Chief Justice Kennedy spoke to court language officials from across the country who attended the event, which was jointly sponsored by the Supreme Court of Ohio and the Kentucky Administrative Office of the Courts.

The Supreme Court recognizes the crucial role interpreters play in ensuring access to justice for all Ohioans and is working to raise the numbers by recruiting bilinguals, increasing testing frequency, and examining language assessment tools to qualify interpreters. Chief Justice Kennedy shared with conference attendees that Ohio, like most other states, is struggling to find qualified interpreters for legal proceedings.

“Like many of you, we now see groups from Africa, Latin America, Asia, the Middle East, and non-English speakers from Europe. And we see the same challenges with finding qualified interpreters to service these immigrant populations,” Chief Justice Kennedy said.

Understanding legal proceedings can be challenging for anyone navigating the court system. In criminal matters, it is the duty of judges and attorneys to ensure defendants are informed before they make any legally binding decisions, such as accepting pleas. When language barriers are added, it becomes more difficult to comprehend what information is being presented and decided.

Ohio law requires courts to appoint a qualified interpreter when there is a language barrier, whether it be a foreign language or people who are deaf or hard of hearing. In order to make existing interpreters more accessible to courts, the Supreme Court has posted on its website a roster of credentialed court interpreters and established standards for the use of remote video interpretation.

The staff of Court Services are liaisons to the following:

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The Supreme Court of Ohio Judicial College is the largest single provider of judicial education in the state. New judges and magistrates need information to effectively step into their new roles. Experienced judges, magistrates, and court personnel know it is essential to keep learning throughout their careers. The Judicial College is Ohio's premier resource for courses to address the challenges and changes that state courts face.

Dynamic Innovation in the Administration of Justice

A new learning management system was implemented by the College in 2024. The system makes online courses easier for attendees to access and significantly decreases the costs of those programs. Judicial College staff Kim Eggerton, Chris Fields, Paula Hyman, Katrina Webb, and the Operations team provided exemplary support and ongoing development of the system.

The College continued to prioritize the education needs of guardians of adults, who serve some of the most vulnerable citizens in Ohio. A new course on government benefits was released, and information on new visitation rules was added to the fundamentals course. To increase access to required annual training, the College has added closed captions in multiple languages to eight online courses.



“Excellence is the sole purpose of judicial education,” said Judge Stephen McIntosh, chair of the Judicial College Board of Trustees. “The Judicial College offers hundreds of courses for judges, their staff, and others. This education advances their knowledge and skills, and even challenges their thinking. Education from the Judicial College also helps to achieve knowledgeable, fair, and impartial justice in Ohio.”

Each year, the College’s dedicated professional staff and 525, mostly volunteer, faculty provide the live and online courses for thousands of judicial officers, court personnel, custody evaluators, and guardians of children and adults.

In 2024, the Judicial College offered nearly 400 educational opportunities, up from 333 in 2023. The number of people taking courses rose to 22,190 this year from 19,846 in 2023.

New Courses Designed, Ongoing Courses Improved

This year the College continued to build high-quality educational opportunities and to improve its standard, ongoing courses. Topics explored in the new courses debuting this year were as follows:

- Eliminating and preventing backlogs of cases.
- Complying with Bureau of Criminal Investigation (BCI) reporting requirements to ensure public safety.

- Understanding Marsy’s Law.
- Navigating the new cannabis law.
- Exploring the fundamentals of how behavioral health issues impact the justice system.

In addition, an online course about behavioral health considerations at the pretrial stage of court proceedings was revised for court staff. The updates expanded the ideas presented for building supportive court systems for the public and other court users.

Central to the Judicial College mission is educating new judges and magistrates. Judge Matthew Reger chaired a committee on the curriculum for new judges. The committee was charged with identifying changes and improvements needed for this mandatory education. The committee was launched to ensure that all new judges in Ohio are provided with the most relevant education to foster the highest level of justice in the local courts.

To ensure that the College delivers education that effectively enables probation officers to meet their court responsibilities, the Probation Officer Curriculum Committee formed this year. The committee will evaluate, update, and improve education for both new and experienced probation officers.

Deepening the Faculty Bench

To design and deliver the highest quality curriculum to advance justice, the College depends on judicial officers, court staff, and associated professionals to serve as faculty to teach courses.

A comprehensive two-day seminar was offered to current, esteemed faculty and to the new group of incoming instructors to develop and improve instructional skills. Participants explored the basic principles of adult learning theory, effective teaching objectives, teaching methods, and the use of audio-visual aids. A unique element of the course was a presentation skills practicum conducted in a small-group coaching environment.

In addition, the Judicial College Board of Trustees partnered with the staff to expand the list of judicial officers who teach and plan courses. A survey sent to all judges and magistrates recruited potential new and diversified faculty and online course developers. It's part of the College's focus on maintaining the highest quality education for the varied needs of local courts.

Looking to the Future

The Judicial College went through a restructuring in 2024 to better position itself for future needs. The reorganization also will provide more opportunities for staff development and advancement. By reorganizing to meet new challenges and creating a roadmap for the years ahead, the College reaffirms its dedication to fostering a judiciary that continues to be prepared and informed.

To improve and keep up with emerging trends, the Board of Trustees and College staff engaged in a process that defined strategic priorities through 2029. These priorities were defined through a collaborative process reflecting a shared vision for the institution's future.

Through these efforts, the Judicial College continues to serve as a vital resource in supporting the rule of law and promoting justice.

The staff of the Judicial College are liaisons to the following:

Judicial College Board of Trustees

Hon. Stephen L. McIntosh, Chair	Hon. David A. Hejmanowski, Secretary	Hon. Christen Finley Magistrate Thomas Freeman	Hon. Todd Grace Hon. James T. Walther Hon. Gene A. Zmuda Staff Liaison: M. Christy Tull
Hon. Mary Katherine Huffman, Vice-Chair	Hon. Joyce Campbell	Hon. Randall D. Fuller	

Court Personnel Education and Training Committee

Noah Atkinson Douglas Bettis Molly Gauntner	Kathy Lopez Michele Mumford Michael Phillips	John Ralph Tasha Ruth Eric Shafer	Valeda Slone Juli Tice Staff Liaison: Dot Keil
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Advisory Committee on the Judicial Family Network

Tim Gorman, Chair Vallie Bowman-English, Vice-Chair Rick L. Brunner Susan Burchfield Dan Firestone	Jennifer Fuller Dr. Susan Hany Sharon Hickson Bill Jennings Margaret Nevrekar Tiffany E. Nobles	Kristine Puskarich Erin Rohrer Craig Smith Allison Stimpert Staff Liaison: Dean Hogan
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Court Management Graduates Equipped To Lead With Innovation

More than 70 staff from Ohio courts earned certifications as court managers or court executives in 2024 from a distinguished national program.

In September, 41 individuals from Ohio courts completed three years of education through the Judicial College to garner a distinction as a certified court manager. The certification is the first tier of three in the nationally recognized Court Management Program. The credentialing courses are part of a curriculum developed by the National Center for State Courts' Institute for Court Management and are designed to improve the performance of courts and access to justice for members of the community.

The nuts-and-bolts coursework for the court manager certification ranged from budgeting and personnel management to statistical analysis of caseloads and other court performance tools. One recent graduate is Karen Rowland, a bailiff for the Auglaize County Common Pleas Court in southwest Ohio. She said the education program will help her as her court implements statistical data management, as well as best practices for treatment services.

"These classes give me the resources that help with the challenges we have," said Rowland. "Other counties have seen problems, they managed projects and conflicts that I have not seen. So, I am able to stand on their shoulders, if you will. I'm learning from them and owe everybody a huge debt."

In November, 32 Ohio court administrators, clerks, chief probation officers, and other leaders earned the certified court executive credential, the second tier of the Court Management Program.

Chief Justice Sharon L. Kennedy addressed the graduates, who committed three years to the advanced study of topics such as leadership, operations management, educational development, public relations, strategic planning, and modern court governance.

She spoke of their newfound expertise and how it will equip the graduates when they return to their home courts to introduce innovative management practices. Those skills are designed to help streamline operations and elevate the overall administration of justice.

"Today signifies a pivotal achievement, not only marking a major step in your professional careers but also representing a critical advancement in the ongoing evolution of our judicial system," Chief Justice Kennedy said.

She encouraged the graduating class to stay at the forefront of emerging trends and technologies to ensure that courts will continue to evolve to meet the needs of the communities they serve.

"Every answer, every solution, begins and ends with the people we serve. Not what is easiest. Not what is expedient. What is best for them," said Chief Justice Kennedy.



Course Highlight

Crime and Punishment

During a day-long seminar, judicial officers from across the state met in Mansfield to experience life in both historic and modern-day prison.

The 67 judges and magistrates enrolled in the Crime and Punishment program began their June day at the Ohio State Reformatory, which is most popularly known as the filming site for "The Shawshank Redemption."

Ohio Judicial College Director Christy Tull explained that becoming immersed in the prison environment preserved from the 1800s prompts the judges and magistrates to reflect on the justice system and imagine what it was like over 100 years ago.

"It's not a field trip," said Tull. "It is a learning experience that gets people out of the classroom and into a real-life setting. It's incredibly powerful."

There are pre-course reading assignments and guided discussions to enrich the education. Participants discussed the vast changes in Ohio correctional history, from a period of lashings and hangings that pre-dates prisons, to a purely punitive prison system often deemed inhumane, to the current system that includes 28 prisons, six parole regions, community-based corrections facilities, as well as probation and diversion programs.

"From the discussions to the tour of both prisons to the panel discussion with prisoners, this was a wonderful seminar that provided insight essential to serving as a judge on the common pleas bench."





Judges and magistrates engaged in a discussion led by a panel of incarcerated men at Mansfield Correctional Institution.

After touring the facility, the group jumped forward in time to the present-day Mansfield Correctional Institution (ManCI), where they experienced daily life in a maximum-security prison. Sitting in a row at ManCI, nine incarcerated men convicted of crimes as serious as murder and rape welcomed the group of judges and magistrates to the place some of the prisoners will call home for the rest of their lives.

The panelists were identified by staff as leaders within the prison who are fully engaged in rehabilitative programming and serve as mentors to their peers. Even though some of the men may never leave prison, each took pride in sharing his story of growth and change while incarcerated.

“Sometimes going to prison is what saves people’s lives,” said Judge Finley.

Some of the most powerful moments throughout the day were the interactions judges and magistrates had with inmates.

“I’m different,” said Judge Deborah Turner of Cuyahoga County Common Pleas Court when the day ended. “What they had to impart and share with us was encouraging.”

Judge Turner recently had the experience of watching her own relative go to prison.

“I know what it feels like to sit in the back of the courtroom,” she said. “I know that helplessness. I know that hopelessness.”

When she heard the panelists share their stories of incarceration and finding success behind bars, Judge Turner told them the common theme she saw among them was hope.

“It’s important to pour something into you,” she told the panel, referencing hope and purpose. “You’ve got to have something inside of you to feed off of while you’re in here.”

The nine inmates seated at the front of the room nodded their heads in agreement with the judge. When prisoners were asked if the courts could have done more to intervene, Judge Christen Finley of Lawrence County Common Pleas Court said their overall response was no, and that they had to do their time to start making positive changes.



A Civil Treatment Workplace for Leaders course on May 29.

Civil Treatment Workplace for Leaders

Managers and supervisors from courts in 18 Ohio counties participated in a course on maintaining a professional and respectful work environment in 2024.

“Civil Treatment Workplace for Leaders,” offered by the Judicial College, instructs staff with supervisory roles on working with employees to build and sustain a fair work environment that complies with the law.

Cassandra Munoz, director of court services for the Franklin County Domestic Relations and Juvenile Court, said she attended the class for a second time as a refresher, and sent all of the supervisors who report to her, too.

“I want the departments that I supervise to lead by example,” Munoz said.

As leaders in their courts, managers and supervisors play a key role in establishing and upholding good workplace practices. Civil Treatment Workplace provides guidance for achieving that.

Participants learn how to prevent, detect, and correct behaviors that are inappropriate at work.

The one-day course includes sessions discussing how to prevent and address ill-advised banter, workplace bullying, and discrimination, and when managers have a duty to act. The course is structured using interactive learning. Participants watch scenario-based videos, engage in group discussions, and work with a partner to explore different workplace challenges.

One hundred eighteen managers and supervisors from courts in 18 counties attended the course in 2024. The Judicial College offered a similar civil treatment course geared toward nonsupervisory employees six times in 2024.

Munoz said she hopes the recent course for leaders will guide the Franklin County court staff as they focus on 2025 goals and the collaboration needed to achieve them.

The Commission on the Thomas J. Moyer Ohio Judicial Center

The Commission on the Thomas J. Moyer Ohio Judicial Center, established in 2005, plays a pivotal role in advising the Court on preserving the artistic, architectural, and historical integrity of the Moyer Judicial Center. The commission is comprised of 10 members with a deep appreciation for the building's significance and symbolism as the home of the judicial branch of Ohio government and the history and timelessness of the art and architecture on display in the building.

Dynamic Innovation in the Administration of Justice

The architecture committee of the commission made recommendations for the development of a historic structure report for the long-term preservation and ongoing maintenance of the historic architecture and artistic integrity of the Moyer Judicial Center. The report would include a preservation plan for the building and enable a proactive approach to all aspects of facilities management – from maintenance projects and schedules, to long-term preservation projects and major renovation and restoration undertakings, to detailed care of the artwork including murals, mosaics, and sculpture. It would also provide documentary, graphic, and physical information about the property's history and existing condition, serving as an important guide for all changes made to the historic property during a project-repair, rehabilitation, or restoration. The report would also provide information for ongoing maintenance procedures.

Core Responsibilities

The commission makes recommendations to the Court for the adoption of standards for the selection, placement, and preservation of fine art; recommendations to the Thomas J. Moyer Moyer Judicial Center Foundation for the acquisition of works of fine art; recommendations to the Court on the exhibition of works of fine art; and recommendations to the Court on architectural and structural repairs, renovations, and improvements to the Moyer Judicial Center.

Activities of the Commission in 2024

The commission held three meetings in 2024 on March 13, Aug. 29, and Dec. 19. This year's efforts underscore the commission's commitment to preserving the Moyer Judicial Center's legacy as a historic and cultural landmark.

Portrait Presentations

The Court voted to accept three portraits, including former Chief Justice Eric Brown, former Justice James Patrick Celebrezze, and former Justice Evelyn Lundberg Stratton, on permanent loan from the Moyer Judicial Center Foundation. Court staff coordinated the portrait ceremonies of former Justice Evelyn Lundberg Stratton and Chief Justice Eric Brown to be held in early 2025.

Public Awareness

The public can access an organized archive and digital exhibition of the art displayed within the Moyer Judicial Center at www.supremecourt.ohio.gov/courts/judicial-system/supreme-court-of-ohio/mjc/contemporary-art/.

Commission Members

Nils Johnson, Chair	Barbara Powers
Ashley Watson, Vice Chair	Marques Hillman Richeson
Lane Beougher	Gary Williams
Joy Bledsoe	Staff Liaisons:
Brodi Conover	Dean Hogan,
Michael Farley	Keely McWhorter
Rick Grady	
Justin Nigro	

Facilities Management

Anthony Joyce
DIRECTOR

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

During 2024, the Facilities Management staff collaborated with a team of architects and engineers to complete a comprehensive inspection of the Moyer Judicial Center exterior as required by Columbus City code.

Staff also worked closely with other contracting organizations responsible for making repairs to the emergency back-up generator exhaust system, safety upgrades to the loading dock, the installation of digital control devices that regulate the supply of air distribution, the replacement of exhaust fans, enhancements to lighting controls, increasing the building's internal space utilization, and initiating the cooling tower replacement project. In 2024, Facilities Management staff continued to investigate more pathways to perform infrastructure upgrades and implement sustainable energy management practices.

Dynamic Innovation in the Administration of Justice

The Records Management Center is the court's off-site records storage facility. The center operates under a comprehensive records management policy for the retention and destruction of records by converting records to a digital model. There is improved data security and cost savings by performing this conversion and destroying other records at the end of their retention period. The center shredded tons of recyclable material with a net storage reduction of 2,400 boxes of records of various sizes.

Maintenance

The Maintenance Section supports the Moyer Judicial Center's basic infrastructure, as well as numerous other functioning systems throughout the building. The section supports all divisions and tenants through daily computerized work-order requests. Maintenance staff also help maintain adequate temperatures, lighting, and properly functioning equipment on a regular basis. Maintenance staff maintains a computerized database on all mandatory inspections required by either the state or city building code. Mandatory inspections include elevator, plumbing, generator, fire pump, fire detection, fire suppression, extinguishers, critical exterior elevations, construction, HVAC, and roof. Notable accomplishments in 2024 include the successful completion of several repair projects, enhancements to preventative maintenance schedule programs, and improvements in energy efficiency practices.

Housekeeping & Grounds

The Housekeeping & Grounds Section maintains the cleanliness and appearance of the Moyer Judicial Center's grounds, secured office areas, and the main Courtroom. A thorough sanitizing regimen is performed to support the mitigation of harmful material reducing the risk of illnesses among Court staff and guests, leading to fewer disruptions to Court business. This section focuses on a high standard of cleanliness through their daily routines, ensuring all areas of the building are clean and welcoming. In 2024, this group through



training, participated in an initiative that has enhanced the cleaning and care of the building's metal surfaces.

Mail Center

The Mail Center manages incoming and outgoing mail. The staff sorts and distributes mail to all departments throughout the Moyer Judicial Center. Additionally, Mail Center staff track deliveries, run postage, and provide services that are necessary to facilitate mail-associated functions. In 2024, there were 2,579 packages delivered to the Court and 24,404 pieces of mail metered and taken to the USPS.

Meetings & Events

The Meetings & Events Section schedules Judicial Center conference rooms, plans special functions, and supports other events hosted

inside of the building. This section also lends assistance for off-site meetings, conferences, and seminars on an as-needed basis. Meetings & Events sets up the Courtroom, justices' meeting rooms, and the attorney waiting room when the Supreme Court is in session. This section also manages details such as catering and other guest accommodations. In 2024, the group set up 2,057 meetings and events, hosting about 39,250 participants for 9,150 hours. Meetings and conferences supported by this group include functions for professional organizations in the legal and judicial community, the arts, and historical and educational groups.

Meetings & Events also oversees details such as catering, meeting technical equipment set-up, and other guest accommodations.

Human Resources

Michele Jakubowski
DIRECTOR

Beth Aman
Kim Cardwell
Niko Jackson
Denise Johnson
Christine Kidd
Michelle LaMaster
Davina Tate
Laken Waldroup



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.

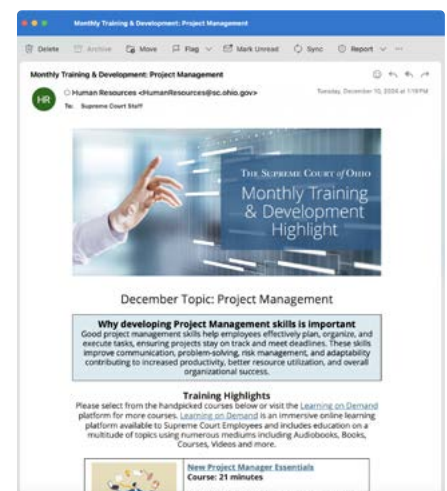
Dynamic Innovation in the Administration of Justice

In 2024, the Office of Human Resources oversaw the reorganization of five departments at the Court, including the restructuring of its own office. These changes provided developmental opportunities for staff, implemented efficiencies, and created forward-thinking succession plans.

The staff of the newly structured Office of Human Resources are now able to work as essential business partners to all Court departments, implementing creative initiatives to improve staff engagement, productivity, retention, and training and development, while continuing to serve as trusted experts in recruitment efforts, benefits, and payroll.

Some of the initiatives that have already been implemented include:

- The development of a new, streamlined performance evaluation process incorporating a self-evaluation form. After implementing the new forms and procedure, a survey was conducted. The feedback received will be used to further enhance the process in 2025.



December training email.



- Launch of a monthly training email, which includes links to topic-specific videos, courses, and articles. Training topics are chosen based on happenings at the Court and from requests made by staff members.
- The coordination of the Combined Charitable Campaign, successfully raising \$23,736 in employee donations.
- The hosting of health and wellness events including biometric screenings, blood drives, and a Flu/COVID-19 vaccine clinic.
- The recruitment, hiring, and onboarding of 49 new hires.
- The facilitation of staff development by coordinating 41 internal promotions.
- The onboarding of 36 new judges, 24 new Court of Appeals employees, and two new Clerks of Court outside of the Court.



Fall externs participated in a new extern orientation on August 16.

In 2024, the Office of Human Resources expanded the Court externship program: 73 students partnered with 15 different Court offices and justices' chambers. In addition, the Court hosted four interns.

Information Technology

Robert D. Stuart
DIRECTOR

Sarah Brougher
Jeff Campbell
Karena Clay
Randall Drum
Mark Dutton*
Kristina Blake
J Espinosa-Smith
Patrick Farkas
Kevin Fitzpatrick
Randy Garrabrant
Kristina Halter Blake
Heather Huth
Greg Jarrett
Russell Johnson
Josh McCrea
Jason Monroe
Alan Ohman
Megan Real
Michelle Ridgway
Josh Scarberry
Igor Stavniychuk
Lisa Tenerove
Gerald Thomas
Justin Wagner
Cindy Wendel
Gabriel White

**Retired in 2024*

The Information Technology (IT) Division provides services necessary to enable the offices of the Court and its constituents to operate efficiently and effectively. The division is comprised of four sections: the Office of Information Technology; the Network & Technology Resources Section; Applications Development; and IT Project Management.

Dynamic Innovation in the Administration of Justice

In 2024, spearheaded by the Information Technology Division, significant enhancements were made to the Interactive Generator of Online Requests (IGOR) to facilitate the timely assignment of judges, ensuring predictability, transparency, and consistency. This user-friendly tool streamlines requests and tailors assignments to the unique needs of each situation. This ultimately led to faster, more accurate request processing.

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, cybersecurity protections, IT disaster recovery solutions, and audiovisual technologies.

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.

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	Hon. Francine Goldberg Andrew S. Good	Robert Scott Hon. Terri Stupica
Hon. Linda Warner, Vice-Chair	Hon. Harvey Hyman Barron Henley	Kenneth R. Teleis Hon. Jeffrey Welbaum
John Adams	Magistrate David Hunter	Hon. Latecia Wiles
Hon. Rhonda Burggraf	Branden C. Meyer	Eric Zatko
Ken Carpenter	Hon. Carolyn J. Paschke	Staff Liaison: Robert Stuart
Hon. James J. Costello	Michael Pifher	
Hon. Judge Kevin W. Dunn	Jason Sadler	

Law Library

In 2024, the Supreme Court's Law Library continued to play a pivotal role in supporting the administration of justice as the central legal research hub for the Court, state agencies, and the public. The library has remained a cornerstone of legal information and resources, crucial to the functioning of the judicial and legislative branches, as well as to attorneys and citizens throughout the state.

Dynamic Innovation in the Administration of Justice

This year, the library introduced access to the Lexis Digital Library for registered Ohio attorneys in good standing. This new offering enhances the library's digital resources by providing an eBook collection that includes essential Ohio handbooks, practice manuals, treatises, and selected federal titles. This initiative not only bolsters the library's service offerings but also aligns with its mission to broaden access to vital legal resources across the state.

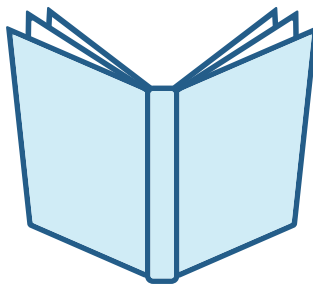
The library's commitment to public service is further evidenced by its continuous efforts to assist citizens with their legal research needs, thus enhancing public access to justice. Additionally, the library remains an invaluable resource for the legislature, supporting the creation and refinement of laws through comprehensive legal research assistance.

The Law Library reaffirms its role as an indispensable resource in the legal landscape. By embracing perpetual change, innovation, and fostering continuous quality improvement, the library ensures that it remains at the forefront of legal information services, adapting to the evolving needs of the legal community and the public it dutifully serves.



The library responded to
7,625 inquiries in 2024.

Of those inquiries, **4,145**
were in-depth research
questions requiring multiple
hours of research.



In 2024 the library added:
+1,835 physical items
+14,061 electronic titles
to the collection.

Erin N. Waltz
DIRECTOR

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

These figures underscore the library's dedication to delivering timely and precise legal information to its diverse clientele, including justices, judges, magistrates, court personnel, and the general public.



Public Information



The Office of Public Information (PIO) is instrumental in supporting the Supreme Court's mission to uphold the law, ensure justice, and foster public trust in the judiciary. Through its three components – Communications, Creative Services, and Civic Education, PIO engages diverse audiences with clarity, professionalism, and purpose.

Dynamic Innovation in the Administration of Justice

Dynamic innovation is at the heart of the communications strategy. PIO adopts best practices to craft accurate, accessible, and relevant information. Whether addressing judges, attorneys, court personnel, members of the public, or media outlets, PIO's work is driven by the belief that transparency and understanding are essential in the judiciary.

Court News Ohio: The Digital Bridge to the Judiciary

At the forefront of PIO's communications efforts is *Court News Ohio* (CNO), a comprehensive web presence offering timely updates from Ohio's judiciary, informing legal professionals and the public. CNO's reporting on opinions, rulings, rule changes, and human-interest stories about individuals improving court operations helps to make the work of courts accessible to the public. CNO also serves as the primary source for judicial previews and case summaries. Case previews, issued in advance of oral arguments, enable stakeholders to understand legal debates, while decision summaries, crafted with precision and brevity, allow journalists and legal practitioners to quickly relay outcomes to broader audiences. Central to these efforts is PIO's commitment to demystifying the judicial process, ensuring the public has equitable access to legal knowledge.

Andy Ellinger
DIRECTOR

Office of Public Information

Lisa Colbert
Phil Farmer
Stacey Gall
Christine Holmes
Michael Leavitt
Erika Lemke
Kathy Maloney
Ely Margolis
Adam Mihely
Eliza Mertz
Joseph Smith
Doug Stein
Csaba Sukosd
Lyn Tolan
Dan Trevas

Ohio Government Telecommunications

Jesse Bethea
Liesl Bonneau
Anne Fife



The Role of Digital Platforms in Transparency

PIO's commitment to transparency extends beyond CNO. The Court's main website is a hub for constituents to access resources on case law, legal education, rules, and judicial history. Designed to meet the needs of varied audiences, it features user-friendly navigation, high-quality visuals, and valuable information. The website offers livestreaming of Court sessions through the Ohio Channel, allowing citizens to witness justice in action – an innovation underscoring the Court's focus on accessibility without compromising the dignity and integrity of judicial proceedings.

Creative Services as an Engine for Excellence

High-quality design and branding are integral to PIO's mission. Creative Services ensures that all design work enhances the messaging of the Court. Innovation drives their work whether enhancing accessibility, refining visual storytelling, or designing a user-centric website.

Graphic Design & Print Media

Creative Services supports all divisions of the Court, ensuring cohesion across a myriad of materials. From presentations and training manuals to publications and event materials, the staff produces work that is visually appealing and consistent across projects. ADA compliance and accessibility remain top priorities.

Public Records and Press Engagement

Each year, PIO fields an array of media inquiries and public requests, ensuring timely, accurate, and well-researched responses. By coordinating closely with legal experts and Court divisions, PIO makes certain that the public receives credible information. The office's efforts in managing these requests exemplify our dedication to openness.

In 2024, PIO dramatically increased the Court's social media engagement and launched video explanations of case decisions to help connect with Ohio's diverse audiences.

Web Design & Development

Creative Services collaborates closely with the Office of Information Technology to maintain the Court's web presence. The team's expertise underpins usability and accessibility, making the Court's web experience positive.

Photography and Videography

By producing high-resolution visuals, expertly edited videos, and engaging multimedia content, this section ensures the Court's work is presented with clarity and dignity.

Achievements in 2024

The Public Information Office embraced the perpetual changes faced by the judiciary and worked tirelessly toward continuous improvement. Among some notable achievements:

Technological Innovations

- At the core of PIO's operations is the implementation and combined use of a collaboration platform, tactical calendar, and project management system, which serves as a roadmap for managing campaigns, publications, and content distribution.
- To measure the impact and refine PIO's strategies, the office uses a collective of data-driven reporting metrics. These metrics enable PIO to measure reach, engagement, and evaluate the effectiveness of the methods.
- A library of comprehensive software and tools allow Communications, Creative Services, and Civic Education to collaborate across activities, optimize resources, and ensure timely execution.

Streamlined Media Relations

- Implemented advanced tracking and analytics for press releases and media coverage.

Accessibility Improvements

- Updated forms and publications to meet ADA compliance standards, ensuring equal access for all constituents.

Enhanced Transparency

- Increased livestreaming opportunities and public connections for the Court, engaging more residents in the judicial process both in person and remotely.

Looking Ahead

Embracing innovation ensures that PIO is never static. Looking forward, PIO will continue leveraging technology, fostering partnerships, and refining our methods to achieve greater efficiency. Through the diligent work of the Communications, Creative Services, and Civic Education teams, PIO reaffirms its dedication to fostering public understanding, trust, and confidence.

The Ohio Channel

(Ohio Government Telecommunications)

PIO's in-house videography and multimedia partner, The Ohio Channel, has exemplified dynamic innovation since its inception. In 2024, Ohio Government Telecommunications (OGT) supported 10 divisions in the Supreme Court of Ohio with 13 produced videos and coverage of 54 live events, both locally and around the state.

Established in 1996 as one of the first of its kind in the nation, OGT began by recording and livestreaming Ohio House and Senate sessions. In 2002, OGT expanded to cover Supreme Court oral arguments at the Rhodes State Office Tower. To prepare for the 2004 Ohio Judicial Center opening of the Court's new location, the main courtroom was outfitted with robotic cameras, allowing OGT to continue its coverage and archiving of Court sessions.

In 2024, OGT updated its courtroom camera robotic systems for the first time since installation. To enhance coverage, a fourth camera was added on the northeast wall. Although cameras were replaced in 2015 to support high-definition broadcasting, the robotic controls were original to the building's opening.

In 2024, OGT also completed a major technology upgrade to a key hearing room, including the addition of robotic cameras for livestreaming events and hybrid meetings. Individual microphone controls were added to improve live event coverage, and three large monitors were installed to enhance visibility for presenters and participants. The new technology that hearing room has already seen substantial use. Notably, on Feb. 27, the Stepping Up Initiative hosted Gov. Mike DeWine and retired Justice Evelyn Lundberg Stratton in the newly upgraded space. The Court is now able to record meetings and events including the quarterly Criminal Sentencing Commission meeting, and OCLRE's High School Mock Trial, which OGT has been covering annually since 2008.

To advance remote coverage capabilities, OGT acquired LiveU technology, enabling live broadcasts from remote locations without the expense of a satellite truck. This technology has been used for Off-Site Court and the bar admission ceremonies. Previously, these events were streamed live and archived online for later broadcast, but now can be easily broadcast live.

Civic Education: Engaging the Next Generation

As part of a commitment to educating the next generation about the judicial branch and its crucial role for citizens, the Court welcomes students year-round. In 2024, the Civic Education Office hosted 292 tours for 11,475 visitors including students, adult and civic organizations, and foreign dignitaries. These tours were possible thanks to the generous services of 17 volunteer tour guides who contributed 471 hours of service.

292 tours

11k+ visitors



Celebrating Black History Through Cultural Expression

Since 1976, Black History Month has been recognized by every American president. Each February, the Supreme Court of Ohio highlights the impact of African American lawyers, judges, and other influential members of the Ohio judiciary in a special programming event for Black History Month.

This year three accomplished Ohio artists spoke to over 100 students from Whitehall-Yearling High School Feb. 7 during the Court's Black History Month Celebration about using

individual expression to advance justice. The program, titled, "The Art of Justice: Stories of Black Cultural Expression," aligned with the National Black History Month theme of African Americans and the Arts. Visual artist Duarte Brown; poet and program director from the Ohio Arts Council, Chiquita Mullins Lee; and award-winning storyteller Lyn Ford talked about people and events that shaped their lives.



Veterans Honored in New Visitor Center Exhibits

To salute veterans and commemorate Veterans Day, two new exhibits were unveiled in November in the Court's Visitor Education Center. "Tuskegee Airmen: Portraits in Courage" and "Justices in Uniform" are the first exhibits in the center to specifically show appreciation for the country's veterans and current service in the U.S. Armed Forces.

Both exhibits demonstrate to the thousands of students and adults who tour the Visitor Education Center each year the great sacrifices that took place and where history was made at nearby Lockbourne Army Airfield (now Rickenbacker Air National Guard base) by heroes of past generations when the U.S. armed forces were desegregated in 1948. Students and faculty

from three local high schools attended the dedication ceremony, along with personnel from the 121st Air Refueling Wing at Rickenbacker Air National Guard Base, invited guests, and Court staff. Also on hand was Delaware County artist Robert E. Tanner, whose five portraits of Tuskegee Airmen pilots serve as the centerpiece of the "Portraits in Courage" display.

"Justices in Uniform" honors the 42 Supreme Court of Ohio justices who have served in the U.S. armed forces. Their service ranges from 1804 to 2001 across several different branches of the military. This exhibit highlights the common thread of public service between the military and judiciary.



Off-Site Court in Jackson County

Jackson County hosted the 83rd session of Off-Site Court April 24, with Jackson County Court Judges Justin W. Skaggs and Christopher J. Regan serving as hosts. This was the Supreme Court's first Off-Site Court session in Jackson County. Oral arguments were held at Jackson Middle School with 350 students from Jackson High School, Buckeye Hills Career Center, Christian Life Academy, Oak Hill High School, and Wellston High School. The event included remarks to the students by a member of Ohio's legislative branch, State Senator Shane Wilkin, whose District 17 encompasses all of Jackson County.

To help prepare the students to hear three cases, high school faculty members were joined by local volunteer attorneys in leading classroom discussions about the rule of law, the Ohio Constitution, and the role of the courts. Off-Site Court has been held in 74 of Ohio's 88 counties, allowing more than 34,350 students to see the state's 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.



Ohio Open Doors

The Supreme Court's first Open Doors after-hours tours brought more than 200 visitors to the Moyer Judicial Center over two memorable evenings in September. The program, which is staged in historic buildings and fascinating places across the state every other year, was promoted by the Ohio History Connection to inspire pride in Ohio's heritage by inviting state landmarks to open their doors to the public.

Since tours of the Supreme Court's home are usually conducted during business hours, the event was a new opportunity for visitors from around the state to see the building, which is on the U.S. National Register of Historic Places. Guests included those traveling from out of town and from neighboring businesses and state agencies. The Ohio History Connection created Ohio Open Doors in 2016 to promote and inspire pride in Ohio's heritage and to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the National Historic Preservation Act.



Court Tours

The Court also plans programs for students as part of a commitment to educating the next generation about the judicial branch and its crucial role for citizens. In 2024, the Civic Education Office hosted 292 tours for 11,475 visitors including students, adult and civic organizations, and foreign dignitaries. These tours were possible thanks to the generous services of 17 volunteer tour guides who contributed 471 hours of service.



Schools Offered Transportation Funding To Visit Court

Around 10,000 students visit the Moyer Judicial Center each year to learn about the Ohio court system while exploring the iconic historical building. Tours are free, but schools incur expenses for transporting students to Columbus. The Supreme Court offers grants to schools to help pay for the travel costs, making the field trips more accessible to students across Ohio. This fall, 96 schools in 38 counties were awarded transportation grants ranging from \$200 to \$500 to visit during the 2024-2025 school year.

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The Office of Court Security provides physical and personnel security at the Moyer Judicial Center to ensure all who enter the historic building have a safe visit regardless of their business or interests. In 2024, the Court security officers conducted more than 28,000 security screenings of visitors during business and after-hours events.

Dynamic Innovation in the Administration of Justice

In 2024, the office's goal was to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of its checkpoint screening process by reducing visitors' average screening time while maintaining a high level of security. To achieve this goal, new X-ray machines with the latest threat image detection and dual-view technology were deployed at the Court's checkpoints. This technology helps increase operational efficiency by automatically detecting prohibited items and eliminating the need to re-position or re-scan objects. The machines that these new units replaced were donated to local courts across the state, significantly improving their screening capabilities.

The office continued to focus on services to local courts. In 2024, 24 comprehensive security assessments were conducted. The aim of these assessments is to objectively assess a court's compliance with the 16 court security standards that make up Appendix C of the Rules of Superintendence for the Courts of Ohio. Detailed reports are sent to the courts with the assessment findings and recommendations for improvement where necessary. Another service offered to the courts of Ohio is checkpoint screening training. During this training, individuals are instructed in pertinent laws governing the screening process and best practices for conducting screening and optimal checkpoint layouts. Eight checkpoint screening trainings were conducted, resulting in 46 local court security staff receiving certifications.

More change in the office came during 2024 by way of court security officers working the main phone line and assuming the role of Court operator. The primary function of this role involves answering and directing calls received on the Court's main phone. In addition to having officers more visible while working this post, they can assist callers by connecting them to the various offices within the building. Additionally, they can utilize their de-escalation training to aid those experiencing a crisis.

Other actions from the Office included responding to seven medical emergencies at the Court and supporting other Court offices by providing security for numerous off-site events.



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