



2025 Annual Report

Separation of Powers

A Strong and
Independent
Judiciary





2025

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





Dear Fellow Ohioans:

On behalf of my colleagues, I am honored to present the 2025 Annual Report of the Supreme Court of Ohio. At the heart of this year's theme, "The Separation of Powers: A Strong, Independent Judiciary," is the reminder that we jealously protect our judicial power "to say what the law is" against the encroachment of other branches of government to preserve the rights enshrined in the Constitution. Between these pages you will learn about the authority granted to this court by the Ohio Constitution, the cases we decide, the difference we make with our rulemaking power, and our efforts to improve the administration of justice across Ohio.

Under Article IV, Section 1 of the Ohio Constitution, our primary role is to adjudicate legal disputes. That provision empowers this court to resolve cutting-edge questions of law, decide 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. Essential to our decision-making function is the work of the offices of Legal Resources, the Clerk of Court, the Reporter of Decisions, and the Law Library. In this report, you will find notable cases the court decided, a preview of our [annual case statistics](#), and a section devoted to each office that assists the court fulfill its constitutional duties as the court of last resort for the State of Ohio.

Equally important is our rulemaking power under Article IV, Section 5 of the Ohio Constitution, which gives the court authority to adopt rules for the government of the bar and the judiciary, rules of practice and procedure, and the Rules of Superintendence for the Courts of Ohio. While each set of rules regulates different aspects of the work of lawyers, judges, and courts, collectively they are fundamental to the administration of justice. Central to our rulemaking function are the offices of the Chief Legal Officer, Attorney Services, and Court Services, as well as the members of the court's advisory committees. A compelling takeaway from this report is that our rules maintain the separation of powers and restore the General Assembly's oversight of all applicable rules of practice and procedure; protect Ohio's children, seniors, and the public at large by bringing consistency to the reporting of criminal-case dispositions to the Bureau of Criminal Investigation; and reduce delay in deciding cases across Ohio.

The administration of justice is more than just the court's work deciding cases. It includes supporting local courts in your community. Whether it is assigning judges when the elected or appointed judge is unable to serve, helping courts reimagine successful case management and specialized dockets, or bringing greater transparency through data analytics, every Supreme Court office—every employee—works to make Ohio's court system better.

As we endeavor to uphold the separation of powers and preserve judicial independence, we recognize that Ohio's judiciary faces constant challenges. As we meet each one, we know every solution begins and ends with the people we serve—not what is easiest, not what is most expedient, but what is best for them.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Sharon L. Kennedy".

Chief Justice Sharon L. Kennedy
Supreme Court of Ohio



Table of Contents

Justices of the Supreme Court of Ohio	1
Administrative Structure	10
Notable Case Decisions	16
Assigned Visiting Judges	31
Administrative Operations	34
Chief Financial Officer	38
Office of the Chief Legal Officer	40

Legal Services

Attorney Services	44
Clerk of the Court	48
Court Services	54
Data and Analytics	68
Judicial College	70
Legal Resources	76
Reporter of Decisions	77

Operations

Building Services	79
Human Resources	86
Information Technology	88
Law Library	90
Public Information	93
The Commission on the Thomas J. Moyer Ohio Judicial Center	99



Justices of the Supreme Court of Ohio



Standing, from left: Justice Daniel R. Hakwins, Justice Jennifer Brunner, Justice Joseph T. Deters, and Justice Megan E. Shanahan.

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

Francis “Bud” Barnes

**Christopher Belmarz*

Deborah Curran

**Nathan Downey*

**William Lewis*

Elliot Ping

**Louis Shaheen*

Tammy White

**Staff departed or retired in 2025*

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.

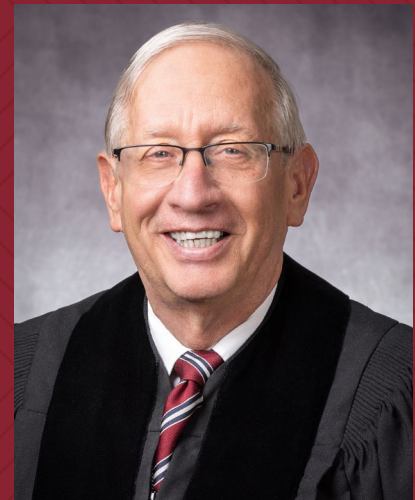
Judge Fischer served as president of the OSBA and previously served on its board and on numerous other OSBA committees. He also served two terms on the Ohio Lawyers Assistance Program board. He was elected by his peers as president of the Cincinnati Bar Association (CBA) for 2006 - 2007 and served on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

Ashley Coffaro
Kylie Conley
Jenna Foos
Christine Hahn
Stephan Laboy



R. Patrick DeWine

JUSTICE

January 2, 2017 – Present

Nicholas Kasik

Emily Krejci

**Audra Robitaille*

Derek Walker

**Joseph Spica*

**Layne Tieszen*

**Staff departed or retired in 2025*

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 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.

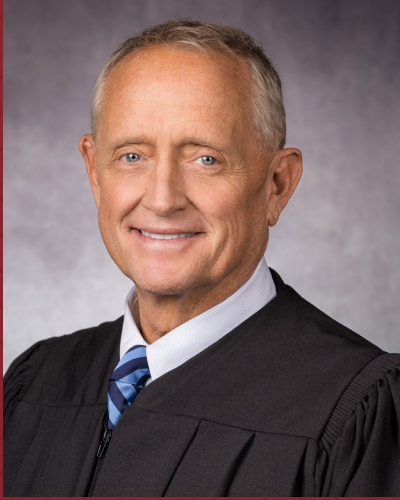


Jennifer Brunner
JUSTICE

January 2, 2021 – Present

John Biancamano
Stacy Brooks
Olivia Gemarro
Kara Wells
**Anita DiPasquale*

**Staff departed or retired in 2025*



Joseph T. Deters

JUSTICE

January 7, 2023 – Present

Francesca Boland
Melissa Goodyear
Max Stainton
Mary Stier
**Aaron Walayat*

**Staff departed or retired in 2025*

Justice Joseph T. Deters serves as the 163rd Justice of the Supreme Court of Ohio. Following an initial appointment by Governor Mike DeWine in January 2023 Justice Deters secured a full six-year term in the November 2024 election. His judicial philosophy is rooted in a strict adherence to the Ohio and U.S. Constitutions, emphasizing judicial restraint and separation of powers amongst our coequal branches of government.

Inspired by his grandfather, former Hamilton County Sheriff Dan Tehan, Justice Deters has spent his career in public service. He is the longest-tenured Prosecuting Attorney in Hamilton County history, serving for more than 25 years (1992-1999 and 2005-2023). During his time as Prosecutor, he pioneered significant reforms, including creating the first victim/witness advocate program, establishing Ohio's first drug court in 2010 to address the addiction crisis, and helped to develop several diversion programs for first-time, non-violent offenders. Justice Deters also created a Sex Offender Unit in 2005 to address sex offender registration and residency restrictions and formed a unit focused solely on violent crimes against women and children.

Beyond the prosecutor's office, Justice Deters served two terms as Ohio's 44th Treasurer of State (1999-2005), managing over \$11 billion in state assets, and previously served as Hamilton County Clerk of Courts (1988-1992).

Justice Deters remains active in the legal and academic communities. He has served as Xavier University's inaugural "Justice in Residence" since 2023. In this honorary role, Justice Deters engages with the campus community by guest lecturing in classrooms to share his legal expertise with students, particularly those in the Philosophy, Politics, and the Public (PPP) honors program. Justice Deters also provides mentorship and guidance to students interested in pursuing careers in law and public service.

Justice Deters currently serves on the Cincinnati Bar Association's Kiely Award Committee and is a member of the Ohio State and American Bar Associations. He previously served on the University of Cincinnati Board of Trustees, the Ohio Organized Crime Commission, and the Southern Ohio Leukemia Foundation.

A double alumnus of the University of Cincinnati, Justice Deters 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 (1997).

Justice Deters and his wife, Tanya, live in Cincinnati and have a large family of six children and two grandchildren.

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

Noah Cothorn

**Hugh Dowell*

Erin Porta

Kandis Sargeant

Jill Whittier

**Staff departed or retired in 2025*



Megan E. Shanahan
JUSTICE

January 1, 2025 – Present

Jessica Barwell
Elizabeth Haavisto
Kathleen Hayes
Karra Mowry

Justice Megan E. Shanahan is the 165th justice of the Ohio Supreme Court. Ohioans elected Justice Shanahan to the Supreme Court of Ohio in 2024. Prior to becoming a Justice, she spent more than a dozen years as a highly respected trial court judge.

Justice Shanahan was elected to the Hamilton County Municipal Court in 2011. She served on that bench until 2015 when the Governor appointed her to serve as a judge in the Hamilton County Court of Common Pleas. Her decade of work presiding over some of the most serious and complex cases in one of Ohio's largest counties was noteworthy because of her transparent, no-nonsense approach, earning her widespread respect from attorneys, litigants, and the citizens she served.

Before her judicial career, Justice Shanahan distinguished herself as a felony-level criminal prosecutor in both Butler and Hamilton counties. She successfully prosecuted over 50 jury trials, focusing particularly on prosecuting violent criminals who prey on children. In 2009, the Hope in Heels organization recognized her deep dedication to public safety and crime victims when they honored her with the Peggy Caldwell award.

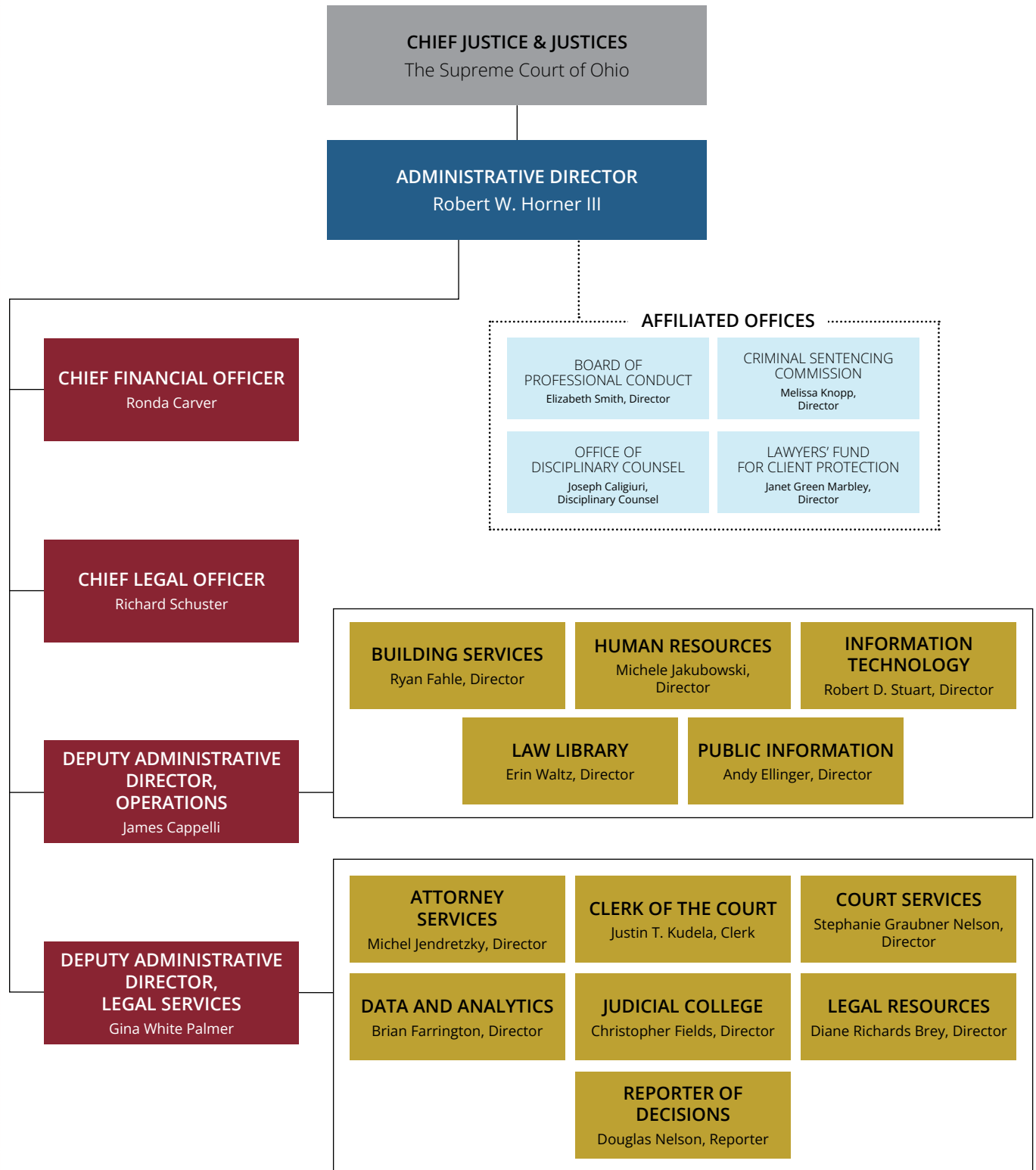
Her passion for public safety was on display in 2022, when she was the only judge in Ohio to testify in front of the Ohio General Assembly in favor of a state constitutional amendment to require judges setting bond for those accused of crimes to consider the safety of the community when determining the amount of the bond. Ohioans overwhelmingly agreed, passing the amendment with 77% of the vote.

Justice Shanahan was born and raised in western Pennsylvania as the youngest of eight children in a working-class family. She earned her Bachelor of Arts from Kent State University and her Juris Doctor from the University of Cincinnati College of Law.

Beyond her judicial duties, she actively engages with the community, frequently lecturing to students and civic groups. She supports organizations like Cincinnati Living Hope, which provides transitional housing for homeless women and their children. Justice Shanahan is married and has two children.



Administrative Structure







State of the Judiciary Address Highlights Our Strong, Independent Judiciary

Chief Justice Sharon L. Kennedy delivered the 2025 State of the Judiciary address to the Ohio Judicial Conference, emphasizing three vital requirements for maintaining a strong, independent judiciary: ingenuity, tackling the responsibilities of administering justice, and building the legal profession of tomorrow. Speaking to an audience of judges, legal professionals, and civic leaders, Chief Justice Kennedy highlighted the judiciary's commitment to upholding the rule of law while adapting to the evolving needs of communities across the state.

“Our republic was founded on respect for the rule of law and the preservation of judicial independence,” Chief Justice Kennedy stated. Both are enhanced, she explained, when judges meet the people where they are, ensure litigants have a meaningful opportunity to be heard, and decide cases in a timely and competent manner. “Together, our future is bright, with opportunities to preserve judicial independence by working to build the legal profession.”

Judicial Independence: A Cornerstone of Justice

Chief Justice Kennedy reaffirmed that judicial independence is critical to fairness and impartiality. That independence takes two forms, she explained. There is decisional independence, which keeps judges free of outside influence, and institutional independence, which recognizes that the judiciary is a separate branch of government. “These principles remain the cornerstone of our collective work.”

Judicial Ingenuity Driving Innovation

A key focus of the address was the ingenuity of courts in meeting people where they are. That includes developing specialized dockets “addressing the unique needs of individuals struggling with addiction, mental health challenges, and other barriers to success.” Chief Justice Kennedy recognized innovative programs like Cuyahoga County’s Project 180 and Marion Municipal Court’s partnerships with community coalitions to address basic human needs. She also pointed to juvenile diversion programs

“Together, we can ensure that Ohio’s courts continue to lead in a way that promotes safety, fairness, and justice for all.”

that redirect appropriate youth to intervention services to address mental health needs, housing insecurity, and the lack of educational resources.

The Chief Justice lauded strategies and programs like virtual self-help centers that help ensure that people who cannot afford an attorney still have a meaningful opportunity to be heard. Such mobile-first platforms provide resources, court forms, and support in both English and Spanish, ensuring that justice is not just a promise but a reality for every Ohioan.

Justice Without Delay: Solemn Duties in the Administration of Justice

The Chief Justice next turned to judges’ solemn duties in the administration of justice, which includes ensuring that “justice is timely delivered.” “When cases languish, justice delayed becomes justice denied,” she explained. Addressing the critical issue of case backlogs, Chief Justice Kennedy pointed out that since 2023, there have been significant reductions in average cases and backlogs across all courts. Programs like Settlement Week have proven highly effective, resolving 50 to 75 percent of mediated cases and further reducing delays.

A strong, independent judiciary is built on a foundation of knowledge, preparation and collaboration, and Chief Justice Kennedy expressed a commitment to ensuring that judges have the resources they need to carry out their solemn duties in the administration of justice. She also noted the importance of working with partners in the other two branches of government, spotlighting the urgency of reporting timely and accurate disposition data to the Bureau of Criminal Investigation.



Watch the full State of the Judiciary on OhioChannel.org.

Building the Future of the Legal Profession

Looking ahead, Chief Justice Kennedy outlined bold initiatives to address legal deserts, enhance the life cycle of Ohio attorneys, and inspire the next generation of legal professionals. Partnerships with law schools, bar associations, and civic organizations are driving efforts to make new lawyers practice-ready, because better prepared attorneys mean enhanced legal services for all communities. She also spoke of the work of the Accreditation Advisory Committee, which will help make sure that “Ohio will lead the way in driving practice readiness for students attending Ohio law schools and new admittees to the bar.”

The Chief Justice acknowledged the importance of civic education for maintaining the independence of the judiciary. She honed in on the Court’s America 250 campaign, a series of exhibits, events, and programs celebrating the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence. Such initiatives aim to engage citizens in understanding the importance of judicial independence and the rule of law.

A Call to Action

In closing, Chief Justice Kennedy called on judges, legal professionals, and community leaders to continue their dedication to the fair and impartial administration of justice. “The preservation of judicial independence is founded on public trust,” Chief Justice Kennedy stated. “That trust grows when we innovate to address the underlying causes of crime, wholly open our courthouses to all, proactively tackle our solemn responsibilities in the administration of justice, and build a bright, bold future for the legal profession in Ohio.” “Together,” she concluded, “we can ensure that Ohio’s courts continue to lead in a way that promotes safety, fairness, and justice for all.”



Investiture Ceremonies Highlight Commitment of Ohio's Newest Justices

Justices Deters, Hawkins, and Shanahan Bring Experience, Compassion, and Dedication to the Bench

The Ohio Supreme Court celebrated the investitures of three distinguished justices, marking a significant moment in the Court's history. Justice Joseph T. Deters, Justice Daniel R. Hawkins, and Justice Megan E. Shanahan were formally welcomed to the bench in ceremonies that highlighted their exceptional careers and dedication to public service.

Together, these investitures celebrated the unique journeys and shared commitment of Justices Deters, Hawkins, and Shanahan to uphold the rule of law and serve the people of Ohio with distinction.



Justice Deters Returns To Bench With Investiture Ceremony

Justice Joseph T. Deters returned to the bench in a new seat this year as the 163rd justice of the Ohio Supreme Court. He was elected to a six-year term in November 2024 and honored in a formal investiture ceremony surrounded by fellow justices, colleagues, family, and friends.

Justice Deters previously served on the Court after being appointed to a vacant seat by Governor Mike DeWine in 2023. Prior to taking the bench, Justice Deters spent much of his law career as the Hamilton County prosecutor. He also served as state treasurer for two terms, and Hamilton County Clerk of Courts.

Joining Justice Deters in front of the bench were his wife and children as he received his robe and took his oath of office as administered by Chief Justice Kennedy. Members of the Deters family added personal touches throughout the ceremony, including opening remarks from his youngest brother, Dennis Deters.

As an attorney and elected official himself, Deters said he always looked up to his older brother as a role model for being a husband, father, lawyer, and public servant.

Deters addressed the justices on the bench, assuring them his brother will carry out the duty with gratitude to serve the state and determination to always do what he believes is right. Justice Deters took a moment to reflect on his role and reinforce the importance of the separation of powers.



Daniel R. Hawkins Welcomed as Ohio Supreme Court's 164th Justice

The Supreme Court welcomed Justice Daniel R. Hawkins to the bench during his investiture ceremony on Feb. 12. Justice Dan Hawkins was elected to the Ohio Supreme Court in November and began his term in December. Before joining the Court, he served as a judge on the Franklin County Court of Common Pleas and held prior roles as an environmental judge and prosecutor.

Muskingum County Prosecuting Attorney Ronald Welch, a former mentor, described Justice Hawkins as “exceptional.” Welch noted Hawkins’ resilience and compassion, particularly during a challenging case involving a serial rapist, where Hawkins demonstrated his skill and empathy with victims. As a judge, Hawkins earned respect for his fairness, thoughtful rulings, and dignified treatment of all individuals in his courtroom. Welch also praised Hawkins as an exceptional father, husband, and friend.

During his investiture, Justice Hawkins’ daughter, Lena, highlighted his kindness, work ethic, and sense of humor, even amid the challenges of campaigning. Justice Hawkins expressed gratitude to his mentors, strategists, friends, and family, particularly his wife, children, and mother, for their sacrifices and support throughout his career. In his remarks, Justice Hawkins pledged to uphold the rule of law, honor the Constitution, and work tirelessly to ensure Ohio remains a safe, free, and prosperous state. His career reflects a deep commitment to justice, compassion for victims, and dedication to serving the people of Ohio.



Justice Megan E. Shanahan Celebrated as Court's 165th Justice

The Ohio Supreme Court welcomed its 165th justice during the investiture ceremony of Justice Megan E. Shanahan.

Chief Justice Sharon L. Kennedy praised Justice Shanahan’s career, highlighting her dedication as a felony prosecutor in Butler and Hamilton counties and her impactful tenure as a judge in Hamilton County. Kennedy emphasized Shanahan’s commitment to public safety, advocacy for the vulnerable, and her community involvement. State Senator Jane Timken, a longtime friend, described Shanahan as a blend of warmth and toughness, with the intelligence, preparation, and resolve essential for a Supreme Court justice.

Justice Patrick F. Fischer, who first swore Shanahan in as a judge in 2011, administered her oath of office. Shanahan expressed gratitude to her family, acknowledging their support and crediting her family bond and community ties as inspirations for her public service. Shanahan noted her dedication to helping families navigate the legal system and ensuring justice for the defenseless. As a Supreme Court justice, she pledged to prioritize fairness and safeguard the vulnerable, emphasizing that the court’s role extends beyond legal precedents to addressing the real lives impacted by its decisions.

Justice Shanahan’s investiture underscored her professional achievements, community service, and unwavering commitment to justice, setting the tone for her tenure on Ohio’s highest court.



Notable Case Decisions



Click to watch archived video of oral arguments.

Statewide Issues

Police Officers Involved in Highway Shooting Were Crime Victims

Two Columbus police officers fired on by an armed robbery suspect are “crime victims” under the Marsy’s Law provision in the Ohio Constitution, and their identities can be redacted from public records, the Supreme Court ruled.

A Court majority rejected a Columbus Dispatch request for unredacted footage from the dashboard and body cameras of two unidentified officers who were targeted by a criminal offender during a shootout in the middle of Interstate 70 near Columbus in July 2023.

The city of Columbus provided redacted footage to the newspaper and cited four exemptions under the Ohio Public Records Act to limit the information released. One exemption cited the “Victim Privacy Law,” which was enacted after Ohioans approved Marsy’s Law, a 2017 constitutional amendment to enhance the rights of crime victims. The Victim Privacy Law, R.C. 2930.07, allows victims of crimes to exempt identifying information from public records.

The Dispatch sought a writ of mandamus from the Supreme Court to direct the city to provide all the footage, and it argued that police officers do not meet the definition of crime victims when they are injured in the line of duty. Writing for the Court majority, Justice R. Patrick DeWine explained that Marsy’s Law provides a definition of a victim, which includes any person against whom a criminal offense is committed or who is directly harmed by a criminal offense.

“Applying the plain text of the amendment, we have no difficulty concluding that an ordinary understanding of Marsy’s Law’s definition of victim encompasses the officers in this case,” he wrote.

🔴 2023-1327. *State ex rel. GateHouse Media Holdings II Inc. v. Columbus Police Dept.*, [Slip Opinion No. 2025-Ohio-5243](#).



Ohio Property Tax Valuation of Interstate Natural Gas Pipeline Set at Nearly \$3.67 Billion

The Supreme Court affirmed a Board of Tax Appeals (BTA) decision determining the taxable value of the portion of the natural gas Rover Pipeline that passes through Ohio to be \$3.669 billion for the 2019 tax year.

The pipeline cost \$6.3 billion to construct and is over 700 miles long, running through portions of eastern Ohio to a location in Defiance County in northwest Ohio before going on to markets across the United States and Canada.

The BTA rejected the pipeline company’s claim that the taxable value of the pipeline is only about half as much as the tax commissioner’s valuation of \$3.669 billion. The Court unanimously upheld the BTA’s decision.

Writing for the Court, Justice Patrick F. Fischer characterized the dispute as a “battle of appraisals,” a type of case in which the BTA must review competing appraisal evidence. He explained that when assessing competing appraisals to determine tax values, the “BTA is vested with wide discretion in determining the weight to be given to the evidence and the credibility of the witnesses that come before it.”

The BTA ruled that Ohio Tax Commissioner Patricia Harris submitted the best evidence of the pipeline’s taxable value as presented by appraiser Brent Eyre. The opinion stated that unless the record indicates the board’s decision was unreasonable or unlawful, the Court will not disturb it. Justice Fischer wrote that Rover had not shown the board had committed an error that justified overturning the BTA’s decision.

🔴 2024-0484. *Rover Pipeline, LLC v. Harris*, [180 Ohio St.3d 525, 2025-Ohio-2806](#).

State Must Recalculate Medicaid Payments to Nursing Homes

The Ohio Department of Medicaid must recalculate how much it pays nursing homes for care because it provided less funding for incentives to high-quality providers than required by state law, the Supreme Court ruled.

In a unanimous per curiam opinion, the Supreme Court ruled in favor of associations representing nursing homes that claimed the Medicaid department did not follow changes directed in statutory amendments that were passed with the 2024-2025 state budget. The associations argued that state lawmakers intended to provide more funding to homes based on quality incentive scores rather than just the annual increase in prices to provide care.

“The department’s interpretation does not reflect what the enacted legislation says, and it dramatically shortchanges the statutorily mandated increase to the quality-incentive pool,” the Court stated.

The Court granted a writ of mandamus to the nursing homes, directing the department to recalculate a portion of Medicaid payments using a formula specified in R.C. 5165.26. The department argued the claim was moot because the state fiscal year ended in June 2025, and all the funds for nursing homes were allocated. The Court noted that while the funding cycle had ended, the formula remains in state law and is still used to determine reimbursements.

2024-1075. *State ex rel. LeadingAge Ohio v. Ohio Dept. of Medicaid*, [180 Ohio St.3d 41, 2025-Ohio-3066](#).

Judge Suspended But Misconduct Charges Relating to First Amendment Protected Activities Dismissed

The Supreme Court suspended Geauga County Probate-Juvenile Court Judge Timothy Grendell for 18 months, with 12 months stayed. A Court majority found Judge Grendell violated the Code of Judicial Conduct by impermissibly ordering two teenage boys to be held in a detention facility in an attempt to force them to engage in visitation with their father.

At the same time, the Court rejected two other counts of charged misconduct that were based on speech protected by the First Amendment.

The Board of Professional Conduct concluded that Judge Grendell violated the rules of judicial conduct by voluntarily testifying before the legislature in connection with a 2020 bill that would have required the state government to release additional statistics on COVID-19 testing and hospitalizations.

The Court found that the rule’s prohibition on testifying before the legislature violates the First Amendment. The Court stated that “lawyers and judges do not give up their First Amendment rights to free speech just because they chose to pursue a career in law.” Applying the same test that the Court applies for any other speech restriction, the Court concluded that the rule did not pass constitutional muster.

The board also concluded that Judge Grendell violated rules of judicial conduct by speaking at a meeting of the Geauga County Tea Party. The Court ruled that punishing Judge Grendell for speaking to citizens about the operation of local government would violate the First Amendment.

► 2024-1409. *Disciplinary Counsel v. Grendell*, [Slip Opinion No. 2025-Ohio-5239](#).

Criminal Law

Court Upholds Spousal Rape Conviction

A wife’s testimony about “having sex” against her will sufficiently described “sexual conduct” as defined by state law, which led to her husband’s convictions for raping her, the Supreme Court ruled.

In a unanimous opinion, the Court reversed a Sixth District Court of Appeals decision vacating the rape convictions of Stephen Coker Jr. of Wood County. The Sixth District had found Coker’s wife’s testimony was insufficient to connect her terms, such as “sexual activity” and “being intimate,” to specific allegations of unwanted intercourse or oral sex that constituted rape.

Writing for the Court, Justice Megan E. Shanahan stated that once on the witness stand, the wife’s response to the prosecutor’s initial questions indicated her use of the term “having sex” met the definition of “sexual conduct” under R.C. 2907.01(A). Further testimony included explicit descriptions of the sex acts she accused her husband of forcing on her. Justice Shanahan stated the descriptions of the acts “fall squarely within the law’s meaning of sexual conduct.”

“There is nothing to suggest that the ubiquitous phrase would mean something different on her subsequent use of it or a similar phrase. The State therefore met its burden of proving sexual conduct on all three counts of rape,” she wrote.[ber.]

► 2024-0087. *State v. Coker*, [180 Ohio St.3d 220, 2025-Ohio-2051](#).

Reopened Appeals Must Specify How Prior Attorney's Performance Was Deficient

The Supreme Court rejected a Medina County man's claim that the attorney handling the appeal of his criminal convictions was ineffective because the man failed to specify how his attorney was ineffective.

The Court unanimously affirmed a Ninth District Court of Appeals decision to overrule Thomas Clark's claim that his appellate attorney was ineffective. The Ninth District ruled that Clark's request to reopen his appeal to challenge his attorney's performance needed to include specifics about how the attorney's representation harmed him.

Writing for the Court majority, Justice Megan E. Shanahan noted some appeals courts require a claim of ineffective assistance of counsel to detail the failings, while other appeals courts have not required specifics but instead examined the allegations and made their own determinations about whether the lawyer was ineffective.

"An appellant's reopened appeal may succeed only if the appellate court 'finds that the performance of appellate counsel was deficient and the applicant was prejudiced by that deficiency,'" Justice Shanahan wrote. "The appellant's failure to assert an argument regarding the ineffectiveness of appellate counsel prevents the court from making such a finding."

2024-0401 and 2024-0539. *State v. Clark*, [180 Ohio St.3d 250](#), [2025-Ohio-4410](#).

Prosecutor Can Appeal Rape Case Dismissed Over Location Where Crime Occurred

The county prosecutor has a right to appeal a Cuyahoga County trial court's judgment terminating the case against a man charged with rape and sexual battery, after the court found that the state had not proved the actions occurred in the county, the Supreme Court ruled.

In a unanimous decision, the Court ruled that while the trial judge labeled the decision a judgment of acquittal, the decision was, in fact, a dismissal



Aggravated Vehicular Assault Conviction Upheld for Driver Who Injured Trooper

The Supreme Court affirmed the conviction of a Lorain County man who injured a state trooper directing traffic while he was driving under the influence of marijuana.

In a 6-1 decision, the Court held that Edward Balmert's hitting a state trooper, identified as "C.G.," while she was directing traffic, was the foreseeable consequence of Balmert driving with over six times the legal limit of marijuana metabolites in his system. Metabolites result from the breakdown of THC, the active ingredient in cannabis that causes a high. The evidence was sufficient to support his conviction of aggravated vehicular assault, the Court ruled.

Writing for the Court majority, Justice Patrick F. Fischer explained that to convict Balmert of aggravated vehicular assault, the prosecution needed to prove more than that Balmert was merely over the limit for driving while under the influence of a controlled substance's metabolites. It also required additional proof that his marijuana use was the "proximate cause" of the accident.

"Balmert had a concentration of marijuana metabolites in his urine that exceeded the legal limit when he struck and seriously injured C.G. The State presented evidence showing that the use of marijuana products can slow the user's reaction time and affect his ability to focus," Justice Fischer wrote. "Viewing the evidence in the light most favorable to the prosecution, the trier of fact could reasonably conclude that Balmert's marijuana use was the proximate cause of the accident."

► 2024-0669. *State v. Balmert*, [Slip Opinion No. 2025-Ohio-5588](#).



Warrant Not Required to Obtain Single Location Point From Suspect's Cellphone

A person voluntarily inputting information into an online marketplace phone app has no reasonable expectation of privacy in that information, meaning that law enforcement does not need a search warrant from a magistrate to get such information, the Supreme Court ruled.

In a unanimous decision, the Court held that a Columbus police detective's use of a warrantless subpoena did not violate the Fourth Amendment rights of Mamadou Diaw, a man suspected of using the Letgo marketplace app to set up a robbery.

The Franklin County Common Pleas Court suppressed information provided by Letgo in response to the subpoena. The Tenth District Court of Appeals reversed the decision, holding that law enforcement did not need a warrant to get the single, historical data point from Letgo. The Supreme Court affirmed that decision.

Writing for the Court, Chief Justice Sharon L. Kennedy explained the U.S. Supreme Court has developed the "third-party doctrine," which states that people have no reasonable expectation of privacy in nonconfidential information that they voluntarily turn over to others.

"Having voluntarily conveyed his location to Letgo in the ordinary course of using the app, Diaw cannot now assert a reasonable expectation of privacy in that information," she wrote.

▶ 2024-1083. *State v. Diaw*, [179 Ohio St.3d 355, 2025-Ohio-2323](#).

of the indictment against Nicholas Musarra because it was based on the state's purported failure to establish that Cuyahoga County was the proper venue for the case.

Writing for the Court, Justice Joseph T. Deters explained when the Cuyahoga County Prosecutor's Office attempted to appeal the trial court's decision, the Eighth District Court of Appeals dismissed the appeal. The Eighth District stated that under the Supreme Court's 2012 decision in *State v. Hampton*, the state does not have the right to appeal a trial court's decision purporting to grant a judgment of acquittal based on a determination that venue has not been established.

The Court today overruled the Hampton decision and directed the Eighth District to consider the prosecutor's appeal.

▶ 2024-0541 and 2024-0540 *State v. Musarra*, [180 Ohio St.3d 319, 2025-Ohio-5058](#).

Court Upholds Conviction of Man Who Stalked Former Grade-School Classmate

A man's overly affectionate social media posts to a former classmate he had never spoken to, coupled with showing up at her apartment and turning the doorknob, provided enough evidence to convict the man of menacing by stalking, the Supreme Court ruled.

In a unanimous opinion, the Court affirmed a Twelfth District Court of Appeals decision finding Dorrian Crawl stalked a West Carrollton woman by first expressing his love for her online and then appearing at her apartment to find out why she had not responded to his posts. Crawl and the victim, identified in court records as "A.P.," went to grade school together more than a decade before the encounter but were never friends.

Crawl argued he could not be convicted of menacing by stalking because the crime requires engaging in a "pattern of conduct" that could lead a person to believe the offender could cause them physical harm or mental distress. He maintained his only harmful behavior was going to A.P.'s apartment, and that non-threatening social media posts were not engaging in a pattern of conduct that could cause mental distress.

Writing for the Court, Justice Megan E. Shanahan stated that a pattern of conduct includes all actions and incidents, “even if some of them, viewed in isolation, do not seem threatening.”

▶ 2024-0532. *State v. Crawl*, [180 Ohio St.3d 443](#), [2025-Ohio-2799](#).

Toledo Drug Dealer’s Conviction in Henry County Upheld

A Lucas County drug dealer could be prosecuted for engaging in a pattern of corrupt activity in neighboring Henry County based on another drug dealer’s sales of cocaine there, the Supreme Court ruled.

A unanimous Court upheld the conviction of Kenneth Brown, a member of Toledo’s Tecumseh Street Gang, after finding that another gang member arranged to sell cocaine on credit to Alexandria Armijo. Armijo was caught reselling the drugs in Henry County.

Writing for the Court, Chief Justice Sharon L. Kennedy explained that the state law prohibiting engaging in a pattern of corrupt activity is modeled after the federal Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations (RICO) statute. The law allows for the conviction of individuals involved in an “enterprise,” which she noted is “remarkably open-ended.”

Even though Brown was not directly involved in the sales of cocaine in Henry County, he was a member of the enterprise, which had a drug-sale operation that extended to Henry County, the opinion stated. The chief justice wrote that because Armijo and Brown were members of the same enterprise, Brown could be prosecuted in Henry County, and there was sufficient evidence to “show that Armijo was associated with the Tecumseh Street Gang’s drug-selling enterprise.”

▶ 2024-0474. *State v. Brown*, [180 Ohio St.3d 443](#), [2025-Ohio-2804](#).



Prison Term Mandatory When Conviction Includes Additional Time for Gun Possession

Because a firearm specification enhances a prison sentence, an offender must receive a prison sentence for the felony involving a gun in addition to the mandatory prison time for the firearm specification, the Supreme Court ruled.

In a 6-1 decision, the Court reversed an Eighth District Court of Appeals decision, which found a Cuyahoga County woman could receive two years of community control for a firearm offense and one year of mandatory prison time for a firearm specification.

Writing for the Court majority, Chief Justice Sharon L. Kennedy stated that Ohio’s felony sentencing laws separate specifications from “offenses.” Under R.C. 2929.13(F)(8), a trial court must impose a prison sentence for the offense if a firearm specification is attached.

“Consequently, when the trial court sentences a defendant for a firearm specification, it is not sentencing for a separate offense but instead is imposing additional punishment for the underlying offense,” she wrote.

▶ 2023-1318 and 2023-1417. *State v. Logan*, [179 Ohio St.3d 302](#), [2025-Ohio-1772](#).

Civil Law

Doctor and Employer Can Be Added as Newly Identified Defendants in Negligence Lawsuit

A state law extending the time to amend a medical malpractice lawsuit applies to both newly discovered and newly identified defendants, the Supreme Court ruled.

In a unanimous opinion, the Court affirmed a Fifth District Court of Appeals decision allowing a plaintiff, Christine Lewis, who was injured when she fell out of a bed at Mansfield Hospital, to add a physician and his employer to her lawsuit 14 months after the incident. The Richland County Common Pleas Court had ruled that Lewis had waited too long and could not add the physician group past the 12-month statute of limitations for medical claims.

Writing for the Court, Justice Patrick F. Fischer explained that R.C. 2323.451 provides a 180-day extension to name “additional” defendants who were not included or named in the original complaint. This includes those whom Lewis may have contemplated when filing her original complaint, but whose identity she did not know.

The decision allowed Lewis to add Anand Patel and his employer, Mid-Ohio Emergency Physicians, to the lawsuit against MedCentral Health System, which does business as OhioHealth Mansfield Hospital.

🔴 2024-0451. *Lewis v. MedCentral Health Sys.*, [Slip Opinion No. 2025-Ohio-4802](#).



Bank Not Obligated to Inform Business Owner About Risks Related to Guarantee Agreement

Huntington National Bank had no duty to disclose facts unknown to a business owner that materially increased the risk of the business owner personally guaranteeing a \$77 million loan after that owner’s business partner placed the jointly owned companies in a perilous financial situation, the Supreme Court ruled.

In a 6-1 decision, the Court reversed the First District Court of Appeals’ decision and ruled that parties do not owe one another a duty to disclose unknown facts unless there is some relationship of special trust or confidence established between the contracting parties.

Writing for the majority, Chief Justice Sharon L. Kennedy stated that Ohio does not recognize a “doctrine of increased risk” for sureties to an agreement, but instead follows well-established law that “contracts that are fairly made and freely entered into are valid and enforceable.”

“[U]nder Ohio’s contract law, parties engaging in an arm’s-length transaction, without affirmatively establishing a relationship of special trust or confidence between the parties, do not owe one another a duty to disclose unknown facts that materially increase the risk to the other party,” she wrote.

The decision reinstated a Hamilton County Common Pleas Court holding that Raymond Schneider, as a guarantor of the credit agreement, can be held personally liable for a default of the credit agreement’s \$77 million loan made to Schneider’s businesses. The businesses had been managed by Schneider’s business partner, Harold Sosna, whose actions led to the default.

🔴 2024-0208. *Huntington Natl. Bank v. Schneider*, [179 Ohio St.3d 422, 2025-Ohio-2920](#).



Allegation of Bad Faith Insurance Claim Must Go to Arbitration

A dispute between a Canton-based physicians' group and its medical malpractice insurer must be resolved through arbitration, the Supreme Court ruled.

In a unanimous decision, the Court reversed a ruling by the Fifth District Court of Appeals that allowed a trial court to consider a lawsuit alleging bad faith in handling an insurance claim. The Court found the broadly worded arbitration clause in the insurance policy required the parties to resolve the matter through arbitration.

Writing for the Court, Justice Daniel R. Hawkins explained that typically when there is doubt about whether an arbitration clause applies to a dispute, the matter should be submitted to arbitration, unless the claim is expressly excluded. Because the physician group could not point to a clear exclusion in the policy or provide "forceful evidence" that its bad faith claim handling charge was not subject to arbitration, the parties are required to arbitrate the issue, he wrote.

▶ 2024-0450. *U.S. Acute Care Solutions LLC v. Doctors Co. Risk Retention Group*, [180 Ohio St.3d 313](#), [2025-Ohio-5010](#).

Court Rejects Claim That Honest Mistake Allowed for Delayed Signing of Lease Renewals

The renewal of leases for 24 properties that house Speedway stores was ineffective because the lessee's failure to submit a timely renewal notice was the result of negligence, not an "honest mistake," the Supreme Court ruled.

In a unanimous opinion, the Court reversed a Tenth District Court of Appeals' decision invoking equitable principles to allow Ashland Global Holdings and Speedway to renew leases on the 24 properties even after the companies failed to meet the lease renewal provisions established in the contracts. In the proceedings below, the courts employed equitable principles to help Ashland, reasoning that the failure to send timely renewal notices to SuperAsh was an honest mistake, that the untimeliness did not harm the property owners, and that Speedway could lose \$10 million worth of improvements to the property.

Writing for the Court, Justice Joseph T. Deters explained that Ohio law permits courts to invoke equitable principles to help parties in a contract when a dispute arises because of fraud, accident, or mistake. But when a party's negligence is the cause of the disagreement, a court cannot interfere with the terms of a contract, even if the results are harsh.

"The trial court's factual findings do not support the conclusion that Ashland failed to exercise its options to renew according to the terms of the leases because of an honest mistake," he wrote.

Justice Deters added that a "simple email or phone call" by Ashland officials could have verified the submission of the renewal notices and prevented any confusion in the first place.

▶ 2023-1448 and 2023-1588. *Ashland Global Holdings Inc. v. SuperAsh Remainderman, Ltd. Partnership*, [181 Ohio St.3d 36](#), [2025-Ohio-2835](#).



Seller Not Required to List Working Sewer Line on Property Disclosure Form

The existence of a working sewer line is not a “material defect” that must be disclosed by the seller when negotiating the sale of a property, the Supreme Court ruled.

A unanimous Court found that the owner of Lake Erie riverfront property did not fraudulently conceal the existence of a sewer line when he left blank on a state-required residential property disclosure form a section regarding known defects. The Court upheld the trial court decision, finding Keith Ashmus was entitled to damages when Thomas and Melissa Coughlin backed out of the purchase of Ashmus’ Bay Village home.

Writing for the Court, Justice R. Patrick DeWine stated the purpose of the state form requiring the disclosure of material defects is to alert a prospective buyer to “some sort of inadequacy or flaw” known to the seller. He cited examples of defects from prior cases, including an electrical system that failed to comply with the electrical code, and a wide crack in a basement wall that led to water seepage.

“A reasonable person might say that a sewer line had a defect if a pipe was cracked and sewage backed up. But few speakers would say that a sewer line was defective if it worked perfectly, but was in an inconvenient location,” he wrote.

▶ 2024-0264. *Ashmus v. Coughlin*, [179 Ohio St.3d 364, 2025-Ohio-2412](#).

Local Government and Election Law

Homeowners Can Maintain Lawsuit Against Cleveland for Harm Caused by Airport Expansion

Homeowners who argued that their property was taken by the expansion of the Cleveland Hopkins International Airport are entitled to sue the City of Cleveland for damages, the Supreme Court ruled.

A Court majority found owners of a home on the edge of Cleveland Hopkins have standing to argue in court that runway expansions have made the home unsuitable for living. The decision reversed an Eighth District Court of Appeals decision, which found that the homeowners could not sue Cleveland to obtain compensation for their losses because they did not live in Cleveland.

Writing for the Court majority, Justice R. Patrick DeWine stated the Ohio Constitution requires the government to pay compensation when it takes private property.

“It applies regardless of whether the property being taken is located in the jurisdiction doing the taking,” he wrote.

The decision keeps alive the condemnation lawsuit of Susan Boggs and Fouad Rachid, who live in a home owned by Fouad Inc. The Court noted its decision today only concludes the homeowners have standing to present their claim, and whether they will be successful “in establishing an unconstitutional taking remains to be determined.”

▶ 2023-1557. *State ex rel. Boggs v. Cleveland*, [180 Ohio St.3d 348, 2025-Ohio-5094](#).

Court Rejects Challenge to Property Maintenance Law

The Supreme Court rejected a challenge to a property maintenance law that claimed it was “unconstitutionally vague.”

In a unanimous opinion, the Court affirmed the decision of the Sixth District Court of Appeals, which found a city of Huron law prescribing cleanliness and

safety standards for properties could not be challenged as void for vagueness in this case. Huron used the law to file a criminal complaint against the owner for lack of water service, holes in the roof, a deteriorating break wall barrier, and debris in the yard.

Writing for the Court, Justice Patrick F. Fischer stated that a “statute or ordinance will not be struck down as unconstitutionally vague if the challenger’s conduct clearly falls within the activities proscribed by the statute.”

Huron adopted provisions of the International Property Maintenance Code, which requires properties to be maintained and kept in a “clean,” “safe,” and “sanitary” condition. Using the description of the property as alleged by the city, the challenge that the law was unconstitutionally vague “must fail because the alleged conditions of his property clearly fall within the proscriptions of those provisions,” the opinion stated.

🔴 2024-0640. *The City of Huron v. Kisil*, [Slip Opinion No. 2025-Ohio-2921](#).

County Auditor Must Continue Assessing Property Taxes to Pay Off 2013 Springfield School Levy

The Clark County auditor must continue to assess taxes resulting from a 2.2 mill bond levy approved in 2013 to upgrade Springfield City Schools, the Supreme Court ruled today.

In a unanimous per curiam opinion, the Court found County Auditor Hillary Hamilton had no authority to stop placing the 2.2 mill levy on the tax list so the county treasurer could collect taxes. Hamilton argued that collection of a levy could not exceed 12 years, and the last year to impose the tax was for tax year 2024, which is paid in 2025.

Voters approved the bond issuance and tax increase in May 2013 to pay for school facilities, enhanced technology, building security, and school buses. The school district told the Court that if Hamilton halted collection, it would need to find more than \$6 million from other sources to pay back the bond debt. The school is seeking to collect payments through 2031.



Probate Judge Not Obligated to Appoint Township Trustee

Even if the appointment of a Sylvania Township trustee was improper, a fellow trustee cannot compel a county judge to remove and replace the new trustee, the Supreme Court ruled.

In a unanimous per curiam opinion, the Court rejected the request by Sylvania Township Trustee John Jennewine to direct Lucas County Probate Court Judge Jack Puffenberger to name a new township trustee. Jennewine argued the township did not follow the legal process to name Jill Johnson a trustee in August 2024.

The Court stated that Jennewine was not in a legal position to oust Johnson even if Johnson was appointed through a flawed process. Judge Puffenberger could only fill a vacancy on the board of trustees and could not replace a trustee, the opinion stated.

2024-1238. *State ex rel. Jennewine v. Puffenberger*, [179 Ohio St.3d 431, 2025-Ohio-3041](#).

Each year, the school board must pass legislation directing the auditor to collect the property tax to pay the bonds, and the board directed the auditor to collect the money in 2026. The Court ruled the act is a ministerial one by the auditor, and Hamilton had no authority to not abide by the board's request to assess district taxpayers.

2024-1425. *State ex rel. Springfield City School Dist. Bd. of Edn. v. Hamilton*, [180 Ohio St.3d 62, 2025-Ohio-4427](#).

City Waited Too Long to Claim Immunity in Fallen Tree Lawsuit

Youngstown failed to preserve a defense of immunity in a lawsuit filed after a man died when a city tree fell on him by making the general assertion that the estate "failed to state a claim upon which relief can be granted," the Supreme Court ruled.

In a unanimous opinion, the Court affirmed a Seventh District Court of Appeals ruling addressing how the trial court procedurally handled the city's claim of political subdivision immunity authorized by state law. The trial court ruled that Youngstown did not raise the issue of immunity in its initial stages of a 2019 lawsuit, and the trial judge declined to accept the city's attempt to raise the defense for the first time in an amended pleading submitted two years and nine months after the complaint was filed.

Writing for the Court, Justice Daniel R. Hawkins stated that political subdivision immunity is a well-established defense when lawsuits are brought against government bodies, and the Ohio Rules of Civil Procedure require that the defense be asserted in a timely fashion.

"The city had an obligation to raise the affirmative defense of political-subdivision-immunity in a prompt manner to minimize the impact to the estate," he wrote.

The Court's ruling allows the lawsuit filed by Cheryl Durig in 2019 against the city to proceed.

2024-0534. *Durig v. Youngstown*, [180 Ohio St.3d 468, 2025-Ohio-4719](#).

Public Records

Health Department Permitted to Deny Information Request Regarding Deaths and Vaccinations

The Ohio Department of Health was within its rights to deny a COVID-19 vaccination researcher access to health data because her requests would require the department to create new records, the Supreme Court ruled today.

A Court majority found the department could deny Kathryn Huwig's request to collect information from two health department databases, one that contains information about deaths and another with information about vaccine recipients. The Court noted the request would require the agency to comb through databases to select information she wanted.

In a per curiam opinion, the Court stated the Ohio Public Records Act does not require an agency to compile such information, and the health department could reject the request.

2023-0936. *State ex rel. Huwig v. Dept. of Health*, [180 Ohio St.3d 569, 2025-Ohio-4454](#).

Board of Elections Must Release Emails Related to Contested Commissioner's Race

The Montgomery County Board of Elections must release two emails related to the contested placement of a county commissioner candidate on the 2024 primary election ballot, the Supreme Court ruled.

A Court majority found the Board of Elections improperly withheld emails from the county prosecutor that included an attached legal memorandum regarding a protest by leaders of the Montgomery County Democratic Party to the placement of Mary McDonald on the primary election ballot as a Republican candidate for county commissioner. The Court also ordered the board to turn over an email from the board's assistant director that he emailed to his personal account, which led to the leak of the prosecutor's legal recommendations to the board.

The Court's per curiam opinion awarded Joseph J. Platt, who is only identified as an Ohio resident, \$1,000 in statutory damages from the board, court costs, and attorney fees. Documents filed in the case indicated that Platt's attorney, Curt Hartman, represented McDonald during the challenge to her candidacy.

Russell Joseph, the board's deputy director, admitted during the board's internal investigation of the leak that he forwarded the memo to Mohamed Al-Hamdani, the chairman of the Montgomery County Democratic Party. The board issued Joseph a "letter of counseling" and required him to undergo public records training.

2024-0325. *State ex rel. Platt v. Montgomery Cty. Bd. of Elections*, [179 Ohio St.3d 233](#), [2025-Ohio-2079](#).

Clerk of Court Cannot Block Online Access to Older Eviction Records

The Hamilton County Clerk of Courts cannot defy a judicial order by eliminating remote access to online court records of older, residential eviction cases, the Supreme Court ruled.

In a unanimous per curiam opinion, the Court affirmed a First District Court of Appeals decision requiring Clerk of Courts Pavan Parikh to rescind his May 2022 policy to take some eviction records offline. Parikh had maintained as an independent elected official, he had the discretion to limit access via the clerk's website to eviction cases older than three years from the date of judgment.

The judges of the Hamilton County Municipal Court collectively objected to Parikh's independent action and ordered him to restore online access to all municipal court records. Parikh challenged the judges' order before the First District. When he was unsuccessful, he appealed to the Supreme Court.

The Court stated that under R.C. 1901.31, the clerk of courts must comply with the order as directed by the municipal court judges.

2024-1466. *State ex rel. Parikh v. Berkowitz*, [179 Ohio St.3d 51](#), [2025-Ohio-2117](#).

Supreme Court Orders Sheriff to Release Records in Disputed Accident Case

The Supreme Court determined the Richland County sheriff improperly withheld information from a woman investigating missing money and property taken after her son's death.

After the Court ordered Sheriff Steve Sheldon and his department to provide



Court Clerk Overcharged by Assessing an Additional \$1 Per Page to Make a Record

A court of common pleas clerk may charge \$1 per page to make a complete record of a court case and only an additional \$1 for the entire "service" of making that record, regardless of the number of pages it contains, the Supreme Court ruled.

In a unanimous decision, the Court held that the Medina County Common Pleas Court clerk improperly charged a man an additional \$1 per page to make a complete record of his divorce case that was billed as a "Clerk Computer Operation" fee.

Writing for the Court, Justice Patrick F. Fischer explained that under the previous version of R.C. 2303.201(B)(1), which allowed the clerk to charge additional fees "to make technological advances in or to computerize the office of the clerk of the court of common pleas," the clerk could only charge an additional \$1 total to make the record. The decision affirmed a Ninth District Court ruling, which found that the clerk had improperly charged an additional \$1 per page to create records of cases.

2024-0757 and 2024-0999. *Gault v. Medina Cty. Court of Common Pleas Clerk*, [180 Ohio St.3d 272](#), [2025-Ohio-4699](#).

records for its inspection in April, the Court determined that three sets of records should be released to Andrea Mauk, with only Social Security numbers being redacted. In a per curiam opinion, the Court awarded Mauk \$2,000 in statutory damages for the department's delay in responding.

Mauk is attempting to learn who gave \$1,500 in cash and an iPhone to a man identifying himself as the father of Mauk's son, Damon, who died in a hospital following a June 2023 car accident.

Mauk sought a writ of mandamus from the Court, seeking to compel the sheriff and his office to release all records without redactions relating to her son's death and what transpired at the hospital afterward. She also requested records from the Ohio Department of Public Safety. The Court in April denied most of Mauk's demands, finding the law enforcement agencies complied with the public records law. However, the Court found three instances where the records law may have been violated.

2023-1300. *State ex. rel. Mauk v. Sheldon*, [180 Ohio St.3d 500, 2025-Ohio-5611](#).

Family Law

Father Missed Deadline to Object to \$25,000-Per-Month Child Support Order

A party does not have three additional days to object to a magistrate's decision when the clerk of court sends the decision by U.S. mail or through a commercial carrier, the Supreme Court ruled.

In a unanimous decision, the Court held that Christian Wood was one day late in filing his objections to a Lorain County Domestic Relations Court magistrate's decision that he should pay \$25,000 a month in child support.

Wood had been paying \$5,000 a month to Jedda Eggleton and objected to the increase. Wood had received a copy of the decision by mail and filed his written objections 15 days after the decision was filed, believing he had three additional days beyond the 14-day response deadline.



Juvenile Court Can Consider Mother's Visitation Rights While Child's Adoption Pending

The Franklin County Juvenile Court can still consider a mother's request for visitation time with her son while the Franklin County Probate Court considers a pending petition to adopt the child, the Supreme Court ruled.

In a unanimous per curiam opinion, the Court rejected the claim that once an adoption proceeding is pending in probate court, a juvenile court loses its jurisdiction to consider visitation requests by a biological parent.

The great-great-uncle and great-great-aunt of a boy born in 2016, identified in court records as "Z.B.," have had co-legal custody of the child since 2018. The couple, identified as "T.B. and A.B.," filed a petition to adopt Z.B. in probate court in 2019, and proceedings have been ongoing since. Z.B.'s mother, identified as "K.T.," has sought to continue visitation of her son while he remains in the custody of T.B. and A.B.

T.B. and A.B. filed a complaint in the Supreme Court to prohibit a Franklin County Juvenile Court judge from scheduling a hearing to consider K.T.'s motion seeking visitation time with Z.B. The juvenile judge directed his magistrate to conduct the hearing.

2024-0361. *State ex rel. T.B. v. Brown*, [Slip Opinion No. 2025-Ohio-4484](#).

Writing for the Court, Chief Justice Sharon L. Kennedy explained the procedural rule that grants three additional days to respond applies to documents served on a party. However, the rule for objecting to magistrate decisions states the response must be submitted 14 days from the date of the decision's filing.

▶ 2024-1791. *Eggleston v. Wood*, [180 Ohio St.3d 599](#), [2025-Ohio-5292](#).

Parent Must Wait Until Custody Proceedings Conclude to Contest Guardian ad Litem Fee

A father disputing his required payment for guardian ad litem services in an ongoing divorce and child custody proceeding must wait until the final judgment in the case before appealing the fee charge, the Supreme Court ruled.

A Court majority ruled that an appeal regarding more than \$17,000 in outstanding payments was filed prematurely with the Eighth District Court of Appeals. The Court vacated the Eighth District's decision, which determined the merits of the appeal filed by the father, who was identified in court records as "E.A.K.M."

Writing for the Court, Justice R. Patrick DeWine explained the Eighth District prematurely considered the appeal, citing the extraordinary circumstances in the case. He wrote that the law allowing for immediate appeals establishes categories of disputes that are final orders, which can be appealed. The appeals court should have considered whether guardian ad litem fee payments are final orders, which they are not, rather than the circumstances of the case, he wrote.

▶ 2024-0587. *E.A.K.M. v. M.A.M.*, [180 Ohio St.3d 548](#), [2025-Ohio-2946](#).

Public Utilities Law



Utility Regulator Has No Authority to Withhold Significantly Excessive Earnings From Consumers

The Public Utilities Commission of Ohio (PUCO) had no right to allow Dayton Power & Light Company to retain \$61.1 million in significantly excessive earnings as an offset for the company's commitment to make future investments in its grid-modernization plan for the Dayton area, the Supreme Court ruled.

In a unanimous opinion, the Court found that significantly excessive earnings must be returned to customers. The PUCO had determined that Dayton Power & Light Company (DP&L), which does business as AES Ohio, had significantly excessive earnings in 2018 and 2019. Instead of requiring a refund of the money, however, the commission allowed DP&L to retain the \$61.1 million for its proposed \$267.6 million "Smart Grid Plan Phase 1."

Writing for the Court, Chief Justice Sharon L. Kennedy stated that the PUCO must follow R.C. 4928.143(F), which requires significantly excessive earnings to be returned to customers. She noted that the word "offset" does not appear in the statute, and that no language in R.C. 4928.143(F) authorized the PUCO to allow DP&L to retain the significantly excessive earnings. She cited the Court's 2014 *In re Application of Columbus S. Power Co.* decision when noting that the commission has no authority other than what is granted by state law.

"Had the General Assembly intended to give the commission the authority to offset significantly excessive earnings against the electric utilities' future committed investments, 'it would have chosen words to that effect,'" she wrote.

The Court remanded the case to the commission to conduct a new significantly excessive earnings test that comports with the requirements of R.C. 4928.143(F).

▶ 2021-1473. *In re Dayton Power & Light Co.*, [181 Ohio St.3d 108](#), [2025-Ohio-2953](#).



Court Approves Permits for Hancock County Solar Farm

The Supreme Court upheld the granting of a permit to construct a large-scale solar farm in Hancock County near the village of Arcadia.

The Court affirmed the Ohio Power Siting Board's decision to grant a certificate to South Branch Solar to construct a 130-megawatt electric generation facility on 700 acres.

Writing for the Court majority, Justice Jennifer Brunner noted South Branch originally proposed a 230-megawatt facility that would operate on 1,000 acres of land in Washington Township, but reduced the footprint during the certification process. The siting board also subjected the permit to 50 conditions that must be met during construction and operation.

In a concurring opinion, Chief Justice Sharon L. Kennedy stated that project applicants must provide an estimate of the economic impact of their facilities on local commercial and industrial activities. While the majority opinion noted the rule does not explicitly require an analysis of any one negative impact, an application should include both the assessment of the positive and negative economic impacts of a proposed facility, the chief justice wrote.

She found South Branch met the standard by presenting evidence of both the positive and negative impact of the proposals by reporting home sales in the vicinity of another solar farm.

▶ 2023-1020. *In re Application of S. Branch Solar LLC*, [180 Ohio St.3d 614, 2025-Ohio-5679](#).

Appeal of Natural Gas Rate Increase Can Continue

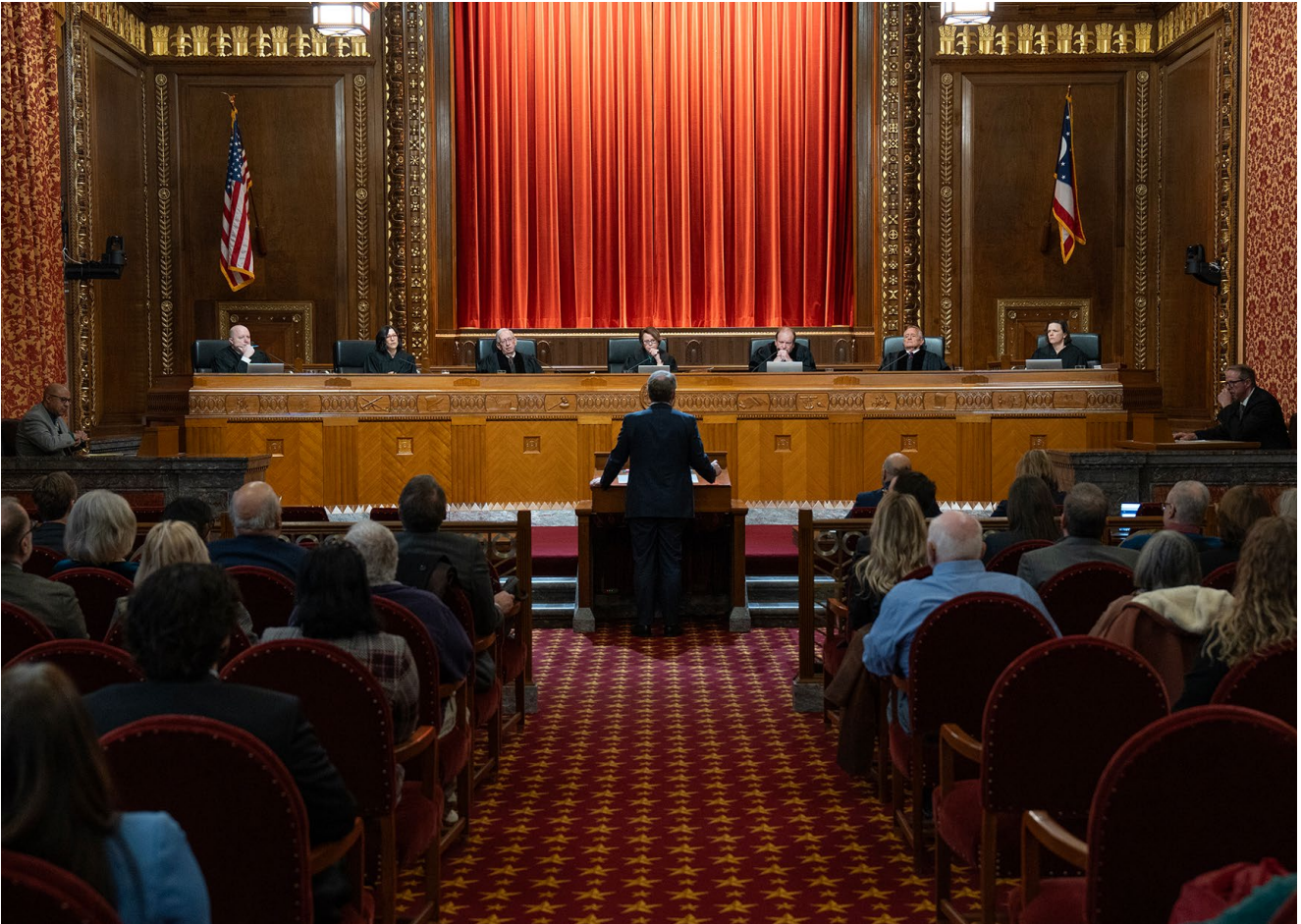
The Supreme Court ruled the state's utility consumer advocate can challenge the 2023 approval of Duke Energy of Ohio's natural gas rate plan for the Cincinnati area.

Duke Energy challenged the Office of Consumers' Counsel right to appeal the Public Utilities Commission of Ohio's (PUCO) approval of Duke's increase in natural gas distribution rates and an alternative rate plan. The dispute centered on the timing of when the consumers' counsel could file an appeal with the Supreme Court.

Writing for the Court majority, Justice R. Patrick DeWine stated the controversy stems from the PUCO's application of *In re Application of Moraine Wind LLC*, a 2024 Supreme Court decision in a separate utility case. In *Moraine Wind*, the Court held that a long-standing PUCO practice of granting itself unlimited extensions of the time to decide whether to rehear its decisions was illegal. That decision was important because a PUCO decision cannot be appealed to the Supreme Court until the rehearing process is complete.

Justice DeWine explained that *Moraine Wind* did not impact the consumers' counsel's right to challenge Duke Energy's rate increase. The Court resolved the current issue by applying state law and finding the consumers' counsel appealed within the permitted time limits.

▶ 2024-1505. *In re Application of Duke Energy Ohio, Inc.*, [179 Ohio St.3d 351, 2025-Ohio-2082](#).



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 serve temporarily on the Supreme Court. The Court thanks the court of appeals judges who served as visiting judges for Supreme Court oral arguments in 2025.

Hon. Matt Lynch
ELEVENTH DISTRICT

Ashland Global Holdings, Inc., et al. v. SuperAsh
2023-1448, 2023-1588
January 8, 2025

Hon. Jill Flagg Lanzinger
NINTH DISTRICT

State of Ohio v. Isaiah Morris
2023-1614
February 12, 2025

Hon. Carly Edelstein
TENTH DISTRICT

Disciplinary Counsel v. Hon. Timothy Joseph Grendell
2024-1409
February 13, 2025

Hon. Michael L. Tucker
SECOND DISTRICT

State of Ohio v. Elwood Jones
2023-0772
February 13, 2025

Hon. Thomas Osowik
SIXTH DISTRICT

State of Ohio v. Aarin J. Clinkscale
2024-0005
March 11, 2025

Disciplinary Counsel v. Eric Edward Norton
2024-1723
March 11, 2025

Hon. Jill Flagg Lanzinger
NINTH DISTRICT

Samuel Voss v. Quicken Loans, LLC, and Mortgage Electronic Registration Systems, Inc.
2024-0257
March 13, 2025

Hon. Robert Hendrickson
TWELFTH DISTRICT

*The Huntington National Bank,
as administrative agent v. Raymond*
2024-0208
March 13, 2025

Hon. Jason Smith
FOURTH DISTRICT

*The Huntington National Bank,
as administrative agent v. Raymond*
2024-0208
March 13, 2025

Hon. Marilyn Zayas
SECOND DISTRICT

*In the Matter of the Application of Kingwood Solar I,
LLC for a Certificate of Environmental Compatibility
and Public Need*
2023-1286
March 13, 2025

Hon. Michael Ryan
EIGHTH DISTRICT

State v. T.W.C.
2024-0265
April 1, 2025

Hon. Marilyn Zayas
SECOND DISTRICT

*In the Matter of the Application of the Dayton Power
and Light Company for Administration o
f the Significantly Excessive Earnings Test Under
R.C. 4928.143(F) and Ohio Adm. Code 4901:1-35-10
for 2018, et al.*

2021-1473
April 2, 2025

*2023-0111, In the Matter of the Application of the
Dayton Power and Light Company to Establish a
Standard Service Offer in the Form of an Electric
Security Plan, et al./2023-0130, In the Matter of the
Application of the Dayton Power and Light Company
to Establish a Standard Service Offer in the Form of an
Electric Security Plan, et al.*

2023-0111/2023-1030
April 22, 2025

Hon. Donna Carr
NINTH DISTRICT

Disciplinary Counsel v. Gregg August Rossi
2024-1722
May 14, 2025

State of Ohio v. Elijah Blaine Roberts
2024-0854
May 14, 2025

Hon. Mary Boyle

EIGHTH DISTRICT

In the Matter of the Complaint of Ohio Power Company v. Nationwide Energy Partners, LLC

2024-0207

June 3, 2025

Hon. David Leland

TENTH DISTRICT

Columbus Bar Association v. Brian Matthew Cable

2025-0205

June 4, 2025

Hon. Robert Patton

ELEVENTH DISTRICT

In the Matter of the Application of Ohio Power Company for Authority to Establish a Standard Service Offer Pursuant to R.C. 4928.143, in the Form of an Electric Security Plan; In the Matter of the Application of Ohio Power Company for Approval of Certain Accounting Authority

2024-1142

June 24, 2025

Hon. Julia Dorrian

TENTH DISTRICT

In the Matter of the Application of Moraine Wind LLC for Certification as an Eligible Ohio Renewable Energy Resource Generating Facility

2024-0098

June 25, 2025

Hon. John Willamowski

THIRD DISTRICT

In the Matter of the Application of Moraine Wind LLC for Certification as an Eligible Ohio Renewable Energy Resource Generating Facility

2024-0098

June 25, 2025

Hon. Eileen T. Gallagher

EIGHTH DISTRICT

Dayton Bar Association v. Christine Marie Baker

2025-0791

September 16, 2025

Hon. Kristin Boggs

TENTH DISTRICT

James D. Coykendall, et al. v. Lima Refining Company

2024-1256

September 17, 2025

Hon. Candace Crouse

FIRST DISTRICT

In the Matter of the Commission's Investigation into RPA Energy, Inc.'s Compliance with the Ohio Administrative Code and Potential Remedial Actions for Noncompliance

2024-0236

September 17, 2025

Hon. Mark A. Hanni

SEVENTH DISTRICT

In the Matter of the Application of Duke Energy Ohio, Inc. for an Increase in its Natural Gas Rates, et al.

2024-1505

October 7, 2025

Hon. Michelle J. Sheehan

EIGHTH DISTRICT

In the Matter of the Application of Columbia Gas of Ohio, Inc. for Authority to Amend its Filed Tariffs to Increase the Rates and Charges for Gas Services and Related Matters [et al.]

2024-1548

October 29, 2025

State of Ohio v. Michael Jones

2024-1768

October 29, 2025

Hon. Laurel Beatty Blunt

TENTH DISTRICT

In the Matter of the OVEC Generation Purchase Rider Audits Required by R.C. 4928.148 for Duke Energy Ohio, Inc., The Dayton Power and Light Company d/b/a AES Ohio, and Ohio Power Company d/b/a AEP Ohio

2024-1733

December 9, 2025

Hon. Jennifer Hensal

NINTH DISTRICT

In the Matter of the Review of the Power Purchase Agreement Rider of Ohio Power Company for 2018. In the Matter of the Review of the Power Purchase Agreement Rider of Ohio Power Company for 2019

2024-1735

December 10, 2025

Administrative Operations



Robert W. Horner, III
ADMINISTRATIVE DIRECTOR

James Cappelli
Gina Palmer
Alicia Lang
Cynthia Radford
Stephanie Tansill



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

Dear Ohioans:

As we prepare to celebrate the 250th birthday of our Republic here at the Supreme Court of Ohio, we have used the opportunity to reflect on what has made us strong as a nation and as a state. The core principle of the separation of powers within both our federal and state governments is at the top of that list. The proper identification and interaction of the state and federal governmental roles is also of prime importance.

It is likely true that when we think of the separation of powers principle we focus on the checks that each branch has on the others. While this mechanism is an indispensable deterrent to potentially ill-used state powers, it is not the only strength of this governmental design. The potential for these equal branches to collaborate and provide mutual support is an often overlooked opportunity.

In 2025, the administrative offices of the Supreme Court of Ohio continued to focus on improving our areas of primary responsibility. We also committed ourselves to identifying opportunities to collaborate with our partner branches of government. We are confident that this comprehensive approach continued to provide optimal outcomes for the citizens of our state.

In June 2025, the Chief Justice formed the Law School Accreditation Advisory Committee (LSAAC). The members of this committee include representatives of multiple branches of government. The primary responsibility of the committee is to provide advice to the Supreme Court regarding the law school accreditation process. The work of the committee has resulted in the identification of opportunities where the branches of government can work together to make the accreditation process more efficient and to use it to promote important policy initiatives.

The work of LSAAC is part of the Supreme Court's comprehensive oversight of the lifecycle of Ohio's attorneys. Our state's attorneys are on the front lines of the battle to safeguard our citizens' rights and interests. It is the Supreme Court's responsibility to help ensure that there are sufficient numbers of properly trained attorneys to represent our citizens in all parts of our state. The Supreme Court continues to identify, refine, and deploy a variety of policy initiatives and administrative processes to support these outcomes. The integration of the law school accreditation process as part of that set of tools will provide expanded leverage to achieve those aims.

The Supreme Court's administrative offices have also continued to identify and deploy important innovative advances. From the unprecedented expansion of bar examination sites to the exploration of AI as a secure, efficient support tool, the commitment to continuous quality improvement is at the center of all we do for our citizens.

We are confident that 2026 will build on the remarkable momentum of 2025. The progress of the Supreme Court will continue to reflect the hallmark of our national history – dynamic and collaborative innovation from a marketplace of ideas unlike any other in the history of mankind.

Thank you for your continued support and trust and may God continue to bless our Republic.

Respectfully,

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

Robert W. Horner, III
Administrative Director



Supreme Court of Ohio Establishes Advisory Committee to Review Law School Accreditation Process

The Supreme Court of Ohio announced the creation of an advisory committee to evaluate and review the accreditation process for Ohio's law schools. The committee's establishment was directed by Chief Justice Sharon L. Kennedy as part of the Supreme Court's ongoing efforts to ensure excellence and innovation in the state's legal education processes.

The Chief Justice has appointed Robert W. Horner, III, Administrative Director of the Supreme Court of Ohio, as Chairman of the committee. The initial members of the committee include:

- Mary Amos Augsburger, *CEO at Ohio State Bar Association*
- Kent Barnett, *Dean of Moritz College of Law at the Ohio State University*
- Amanda Gould, *Chief Counsel to U.S. Senator Bernie Moreno*
- Emily Janoski-Haehlen, *Dean of Akron School of Law at the University of Akron*
- Sen. Nathan Manning, *Ohio State Senator, 13th District*
- Gina White Palmer, *Deputy Administrative Director at the Supreme Court of Ohio*
- Rep. Brian Stewart, *Ohio State Representative, 12th District*
- Dr. Frank C. Woodside, III, *Of counsel at Dinsmore & Shohl LLP*

The committee will begin its review of current accreditation standards and procedures, with an emphasis on identifying potential opportunities for innovation, in light of the evolving needs of the legal profession.

“The Supreme Court of Ohio is responsible for the oversight of every stage of an Ohio attorney's professional development and engagement - from their education and admission to the Bar, to their continuing legal education and professional conduct. The Court's responsibility to uphold the integrity and efficacy of the profession means constant reflection, research, and openness to innovation,” said Robert W. Horner, III, Administrative Director.

Earlier this year, the Court recognized the importance of providing locations from multiple regions of the state to bar examinees to increase access and reduce travel burdens. As a result, the Court held the July 2025 Ohio Bar Examination at three locations: the University of Cincinnati College of Law in Cincinnati, The Ohio State University's Ohio Union in Columbus, and Cleveland State University College of Law in Cleveland.

This advisory committee review is the latest initiative in the Supreme Court's broader mission to support the professional lifecycle of Ohio's attorneys.



Supreme Court of Ohio Partners with Cristo Rey for Student Internships

The Supreme Court of Ohio joined the Cristo Rey Network's Professional Work-Study Program, offering high school students hands-on professional experience while pursuing a college-preparatory education. Cristo Rey, a network of schools serving students with limited economic resources, combines rigorous academics with real-world work opportunities to prepare students for future success.

For the 2025-2026 school year, the Supreme Court welcomed five Cristo Rey students who will intern 1-2 days per week in various departments, including Human Resources, Civic Education, and Attorney Services. This partnership was launched during a Draft Day event, where court representatives met the students and began fostering mentorship relationships.

The program allows students to gain valuable workplace skills while contributing to the court's operations. By participating, the Supreme Court not only supports Cristo Rey's mission but also benefits from the fresh perspectives and energy these students bring to the workplace. This collaboration highlights the court's commitment to education, diversity, and professional development.

Chief Financial Officer

Ronda Carver
DIRECTOR

Deborah Fagan
Brent Flanik
Mallory Geib
Christopher Hipp
Linda Hodge
Shreve Johnson
Brittany Preece
Scott Schaller
**Timothy Gaunt*
**Nathan Rush*

**Staff departed or retired in 2025*



The Office of the Chief Financial Officer provides comprehensive financial, procurement, and grants management support to the Supreme Court and the judiciary statewide. Its primary responsibilities include oversight of the operating budget and fiscal administration of more than \$227 million appropriated through H.B. 33 of the 135th General Assembly for fiscal year 2025.

Separation of Powers: A Strong and Independent Judiciary

The office plays a critical role in sustaining the operations of the Court in collaboration with Court leadership to balance agility in meeting funding needs with rigorous internal controls and compliance standards. Through the development and implementation of administrative policies and guidelines, the office helps strengthen the judiciary and safeguard its independence.

Operational Responsibilities

The office manages the budget necessary to:

- Ensure payment of judicial salaries
- Fund compensation for court of appeals staff
- Support operations of the Thomas J. Moyer Ohio Judicial Center
- Maintain the administrative functions of the Supreme Court.



Streamlining Reporting and Procurement

In addition, the office fulfills regulatory reporting requirements, provides internal reporting to assist offices in decision making, oversees competitive procurement and contract management, and coordinates funding support for local Ohio courts. These efforts also include advancing statewide civic education initiatives.

Technology Grants and Modernization

The office managed more than \$2.8 million in technology grant funding to appellate, common pleas, municipal, and county courts across Ohio. These grants support efforts to modernize their systems, expand e-filing capabilities, and accelerate case processing to better serve Ohioans.

During 2025, the Office of the Chief Financial Officer managed more than

\$2.8 million

in technology grant funding to appellate, common pleas, municipal, and county courts across ohio.

Office of the Chief Legal Officer

Richard Schuster
**John VanNorman*
CHIEF LEGAL COUNSEL

Dahria Beaver
September Coyne
Heather Eby
Zachary Holscher
Lindsay Morris
**Lisa Escbacher*
Keely McWhorter

**Staff departed or retired in 2025*



The Office of Chief Legal Officer (OCLO) assists the Supreme Court of Ohio in its oversight of the Ohio legal system by providing legal advice on a wide range of topics to the Justices of the Supreme Court of Ohio, the Administrative Director, and offices throughout the Supreme Court of Ohio. The OCLO also supports the Court's government relations efforts.

Separation of Powers: A Strong and Independent Judiciary

In alignment with the 2025 Annual Report theme, the OCLO played a pivotal role in supporting the Supreme Court of Ohio's commitment to upholding the separation of powers and ensuring a strong and independent judiciary. By providing legal counsel and facilitating the Court's rulemaking authority, the OCLO reinforced the judiciary's constitutional role as an independent branch of government.

This work included assisting with the adoption and amendment of rules governing the judiciary and the legal profession, ensuring that the Court's authority to regulate practice and procedure remains robust and unimpeded. The OCLO's involvement in legislative matters, such as House Bill 260/Senate Bill 61, further demonstrated its commitment to preserving judicial independence by addressing conflicts between statutory law and the Ohio Rules of Practice and Procedure, as mandated by the Ohio Constitution.

Together, these efforts underscore the OCLO's integral role in safeguarding the judiciary's autonomy and supporting the Supreme Court's mission to provide a fair, effective, and accessible legal system for all Ohioans.

2025 Highlights

In 2025, the OCLO assisted the Supreme Court in carrying out its oversight of the Ohio legal system through a wide range of activities. Key accomplishments include:

- **Administrative Policies:** The OCLO oversaw amendments to numerous Supreme Court Administrative Policies to ensure they remained current, effective, and aligned with the Court's operational needs.
- **Judicial Assignments:** The OCLE processed 5,553 requests for judicial assignments during 2025, with an average processing period of 0.3 business days.
- **Legislative and Government Relations:** The OCLO monitored judiciary-related legislation, prepared testimony, and maintained ongoing communication with the General Assembly and other government offices.
- **Public Records Requests:** The OCLE fulfilled 245 public records requests were fulfilled.
- **Rulemaking:** The OCLO ensured that all Rules of Court were properly drafted, amended, and approved by the Supreme Court. Significant revisions were made to the Rules for the Government of the Bar, Rules for the Government of the Judiciary, Rules of Practice and Procedure, Rules of Superintendence, Rules of Practice of the Supreme Court, and Ohio Rules of Judicial Conduct.
- **Special Projects:** The OCLO provided legal counsel and support to the Law School Accreditation Advisory Committee and led an initiative to improve contract management processes for the Supreme Court.

The OCLE's daily work in 2025 was broad and multifaceted. Collectively, these efforts supported the Supreme Court in fulfilling its mission to ensure that the citizens of Ohio benefit from the highest quality legal system possible.

Commission on the Rules of Practice & Procedure

Hon. Laura B. Smith, Chair	Hon. Emanuella D. Groves	Benjamin C. White
Hon. Matthew Byrne, Vice-Chair	James S. Kresge	Staff Lieutenant Bradley Longo,
Garrett M. Anderson	Hon. Bridget M. O'Brien	<i>Designee of Col. Charles A. Jones</i>
Hon. Kelly L. Badnell	Hon. Donald E. Oda	Kimberly Schwind, <i>Designee of</i>
Professor Robert B. Barnhart	Christian R. Patno	<i>Andy Wilson</i>
Daniel J. Brandt	Prof. Cassandra Burke Robertson	Hon. James A. Shriver
Eleana Drakatos	Magistrate Kenneth R. Roll	Lori M. Tyack
Hon. Alison L. Floyd	Angela D. Stone	Staff Liaison: September Coyne
Ryan W. Goellner	David H. Thomas	
Hon. David M. Gormley	Jessica Wallace	

Commission on the Rules of Superintendence for Ohio Courts

Hon. Paula C. Giulitto, Chair	Hon. Natasha R. Kennedy	Hon. Kristy S. Wilkin
Hon. Thomas A. Januzzi, Vice-Chair	Branden C. Meyer	Philip D. Williamson
Hon. Katelyn D. Dickey	Hon. Thomas S. Moulton, Jr.	Magistrate Tamela A. Womack
Benjamin M. Flowers	Hon. Jenifer K. Overmyer	Ex Officio Member:
Charles B. Galvin	Kristin A. Schultz	Robert W. Horner III
Hon. Howard H. Harcha, III	Hon. James A. Shriver	Staff Liaison:
Hon. Monica E. Hawkins	Hon. Jonathan Starn	Keely McWhorter
Hon. Carl S. Henderson	Gregory Thomas	

Amendments to Rules of Practice & Procedure

The OCLO ensures that all Rules of Court are properly drafted, amended, and approved by the Supreme Court. In 2025, the OCLO supported the Court's oversight of the Ohio legal system through significant revisions to numerous rules. During the year, the following rules were amended/adopted:

Government of the Bar

- Rules V, Sec. 4 and VI, Secs. 1, 4, and 10 (Proactive Management-Based Regulation)
- Appendix I (Attorney Continuing Legal Education Regulations)
- Rule X, Sec. 5 (General Assembly CLE Credit)
- Rule I. Sec. 13 through 15 (Character Investigations)
- Rule V. Secs. 1 and 3 - (Board of Professional Conduct)
- Rule V(4) (Office of Disciplinary Counsel)
- Rule XII (Pro Hac Vice)
- Rule VI. Sec. 4 (Attorney Demographic Information)

Government of the Judiciary

- Rule IV (New Judge and New Magistrate Orientation Programs)
- Rule IV (Legal Education)

Judicial Conduct

- Rule 2.9 (Ex Parte Contacts)
- Rule 3.2 (Appearances before Governmental Bodies and Consultation with Government Officials)

Practice and Procedure Rules

- Ohio Rules of Appellate Procedure (1, 8, 11.2 and 43)
- Ohio Rules of Civil Procedure (65.1 and 86)
- Ohio Rules of Criminal Procedure (2, 2.1, 5, 7, 11, 12, 16, 32, 32.2, 32.3, 37, and 59)
- Ohio Rules of Evidence (615 and 1102)
- Ohio Rules of Juvenile Procedure (2, 3, 4, 7, 11, 17, 20, 22, 23, 24, 26, 27, 29, 32, 34, 35, and 47)
- Traffic Rules (24 and 25)

Practice of the Supreme Court

- Rules 5.09 and 22.01 through 22.03 (Victim's Rights Cases)
- General changes made to the entire set of rules

Superintendence Rules

- Rules 26 through 26.06 (Records Retention)
- Rules 11 and 12 (Recording and Broadcasting of Court Proceedings)
- Temporary Rule 2.01 (Repeal of Mediation Training Rule)
- Rule 36.24 and Appendix I (Specialized Dockets)
- Rules 66.01, 66.04, and 66.09 (Guardianships/Direct Services)
- Rule 79.01 (Assisted Outpatient Treatment Programs)
- Rule 5 - (Law Enforcement Reporting and Compliance Plan)
- Standard Probate Form Amendments: Forms 13.2, 17.1, 17.8, 17.9, 17.10, 25.0, 25.6, and 26.0
- Rules 80 through 89, Appendices G, H, and J (Foreign Language and Sign Language Interpreters)
- Standard Probate Forms (18.0, 18.2, 18.4, 18.6, 18.7, 19.0, 19.2 and proposed form 19.4)
- Rule 36.018 (Assignment of Cases)
- Rule 36.019 (Disqualification)
- Rules 5, 8, 14, 14.01, 14.02, 16.24, 16.54, 16.61, 16.62, 16.63, 16.64, 16.65, 19, 34, 36.01, 36.011, 36.012, 36.013, 36.014, 36.016, 36.26, 37, 37.01, 37.02, 37.03, 39, 41, 43, and Standard 10 of the Ohio Trial Court Jury Use and Management Standards
- Case Processing Time Standards Amendments pursuant to Sup.R. 39 (Common Pleas Court, General Division (Form A), Common Pleas Court, Domestic Relations Division (Form B), Common Pleas Court, Juvenile Division (Form C), and Municipal and County Courts (Individual Judge and Administrative Judge Reports), and timeframes for Common Pleas Court, Probate Division)

Judiciary/Supreme Court Operating Expenditures

The Judiciary/Supreme Court General Revenue Fund (GRF) budget is \$215.6 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 2025*	Percent of Total	Budgeted FY 2026**	Percent of Total
Courts of Appeal Judges	\$15,876,132	7.4%	\$16,777,651	7.1%
Trial Court Judges	\$105,620,955	49.0%	\$112,023,076	47.7%
TOTAL OHIO JUDICIARY	\$121,497,087	56.4%	\$128,800,727	54.8%
COURT OF APPEALS STAFF	\$38,391,377	17.8%	\$43,641,237	18.6%
SUPREME COURT				
Supreme Court of Ohio Operations	\$49,884,763	23.1%	\$60,330,345	25.0%
Civil Justice Program	\$489,638	0.2%	\$425,000	0.2%
Ohio Courts Network Initiative	\$3,798,532	1.8%	\$1,155,000	0.5%
Ohio Center for Law-Related Education	\$375,000	0.2%	\$250,000	0.1%
County Law Library Resources Board	\$257,524	0.1%	\$313,800	0.1%
Ohio Criminal Sentencing Commission***	\$898,237	0.4%	\$1,506,142	0.6%
SUPREME COURT TOTAL	\$55,703,694	25.8%	\$62,474,145	26.6%
OHIO JUDICIARY & SUPREME COURT TOTAL	\$215,592,158	100.0%	\$234,916,109	100.0%

* Includes encumbrances and all fund sources.

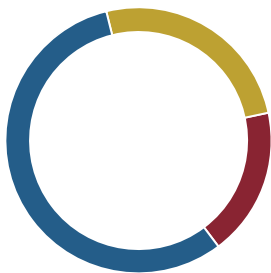
** Budget is as of February 26, 2026.

*** Office affiliated with the Supreme Court of Ohio.

NOTE: Numbers may be rounded up to the nearest dollar.

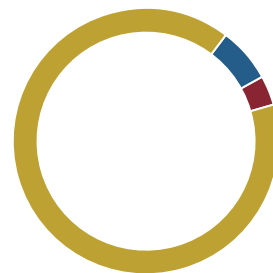
SOURCE: State of Ohio OAKS Fin System

Ohio Judiciary/Supreme Court
Fiscal Year 2025 Total Expenditures



- \$121,497,087 : Ohio Judiciary
- \$55,703,694 : Supreme Court
- \$38,391,377: Courts of Appeal Staff

Supreme Court
Fiscal Year 2025 Total Expenditures



- \$49,884,763: Supreme Court Operations
- \$3,798,532: Ohio Courts Network Initiative
- \$2,020,399: Civil Justice Program Fund, Ohio Center for Law-Related Education, County Law Library Resources Board, and Ohio Criminal Sentencing Commission

Attorney Services

Michel Jendretzky
DIRECTOR

Shannon Scheid

Bar Admissions

Elizabeth Arcos

Kelli Bray

Britney Cider

Ashley Cooper

Anna Dooley

Ashlea Glaser

**Asha Grimes*

Tiffany Kline

Sadia Munye

Jennifer Smith

Registration And CLE

Stacy Hebner

Penny Marchal

Joshua Martin

Bradley Martinez

Kirstyn Moyers

MacLaren Roemer

Denise Spencer

Lorraine Stone

**Staff departed or retired in 2025*



Bar admissions staff distributed certificates at the fall bar admissions ceremony.

The Supreme Court of Ohio is set apart in the Ohio Constitution as a separate government entity with original jurisdiction over “admission to the practice of law, the discipline of persons so admitted, and all other matters relating to the practice of law.” In exercising that authority, the Court has tasked the Office of Attorney Services with administering the biannual bar exam and biennial registration of all Ohio attorneys.

Separation of Powers: A Strong and Independent Judiciary

The office plays a critical role in supporting the Court’s constitutional authority as a separate and independent branch of government. As part of its original jurisdiction, the Court entrusts the Office with essential functions that uphold the integrity of the legal profession, including the administration of the bar exam, attorney registration, and continuing legal education. These responsibilities not only reinforce the judiciary’s independence but also ensure that Ohio attorneys meet the highest standards of professionalism and accountability. Through its work, the Office of Attorney Services exemplifies the Court’s commitment to maintaining a strong and independent judiciary that serves the public interest.



Achievements in 2025

In 2025, the Office of Attorney Services achieved significant milestones in its core functions, reflecting its dedication to supporting the Supreme Court's constitutional mandate. One of the most notable accomplishments was the relocation of the February bar exam from Wilmington to Columbus, providing a more accessible and centralized venue for examinees and staff. Additionally, the July bar exam was administered in multiple locations—Cincinnati, Columbus, and Cleveland—for the first time, expanding access and convenience for aspiring attorneys across the state.

The biennial attorney registration process also marked a major achievement, with 44,650 attorneys registered for the 2025-2027 period. This cycle introduced a new requirement for attorneys in private practice to either carry malpractice insurance or complete the Ohio Disciplinary Counsel's Proactive Management-Based Regulation course, further enhancing accountability and public trust in the legal profession.

The Office's Registration and Continuing Legal Education Section continued its vital work in ensuring attorney compliance with CLE requirements. By year's end, the Section had reviewed over 15,889 program applications for CLE accreditation and hosted an informational webinar for sponsors to streamline the application process. These efforts reflect the Office's commitment to fostering a well-informed and competent legal community.

Operational Enhancements

In addition to its programmatic achievements, the Office of Attorney Services made significant strides in improving internal operations. The migration to SharePoint for document storage and collaboration has enhanced efficiency and accessibility for staff. The completion of a functional standard operating procedure library ensures consistency and clarity in office processes. Furthermore, the installation of advanced meeting technology in the new multi-purpose room has improved communication and collaboration capabilities.



A proctor administers the July 2025 bar exam.

New Bar Exam Locations in 2025

The Supreme Court of Ohio announced new locations for the February and July bar examinations.

The February bar exam returned to Columbus, offering a more convenient and centralized location for test takers.

The location change gave examinees more hotel and food options during their stay for the two-day exam and reduced travel for staff.

This year, 345 prospective attorneys sat for the February exam. They represented 55 law schools, 49 Ohio counties, and 17 states.

The results of the exam were released on April 25. Successful candidates who met all the requirements to be an Ohio attorney were sworn in at the Bar Admissions Ceremony on May 12 at the Palace Theatre in downtown Columbus.

The July 2025 Ohio Bar Examination was offered in three locations across the state:

- **Cincinnati**
University of Cincinnati College of Law
2925 Campus Green Dr., Cincinnati, OH 45221
- **Columbus**
Ohio Union
1739 N. High St., Columbus, OH 43210
- **Cleveland**
Cleveland State University College of Law
1801 Euclid Ave., Cleveland, OH 44115

The Court's July exam accommodated 967 test-takers from 82 law schools, 61 Ohio counties, and 23 states.

For test-takers approved for accommodations testing, the examination was held at OSU Moritz College of Law (Drinko Hall, 55 W. 12th Ave., Columbus, OH 43210).

Columbus was the default location if space was not available at another location, and was the only location available for accommodations testing.

Cost Savings to Taxpayers



Partnerships with Ohio Law Schools Leads to Increased Accessibility and 15K in Venue Cost Savings

The staff of Attorney Services are liaisons to the following:

Board of Bar Examiners

C. Michael Walsh, Chair	Patricia Gajda	Jeanne Kozelek	Andrea D. Uhler
Hon. Amy H. Lewis, Vice-Chair	Hon. Emily Hagan	Jennifer E. Krieger	Robert Sanker
Steve C. Coffaro	Todd C. Hicks	Todd A. Mazzola	Suzanne M. Waldron
Jacquelyn Dossi	Magistrate Elizabeth Howe	Hon. Tammy O'Brien	Staff Liaison: Tiffany Kline
Alexander L. Ewing	Montrella S. Jackson	Ret. Magistrate Jonathan M. Perrin	

Board of Commissioners on Character and Fitness

Chad A. Heald Chair	Renee Crist	Sky Pettey	Secretary: Michel Jendretzky
Alan H. Abes	Brandon D. R. Dynes	Benita D. Reedus	
Timothy Chai	Hon. Jill Flagg Lanzinger	Sarah K. Skow	
Faye D. Cox	Michael P. McCormick	Anthony S. VanNoy	

Board on the Unauthorized Practice of Law

David A. Kutik, Chair	Davide V. Cugini	Denny Ramey	Magistrate Julita Varner
Robert J. Gehring, Vice Chair	Emily Gerken	Emily C. Samlow	Staff Liaison:
RaMona D. Benson	Roseanne Hilow	Mindi L. Schaefer	Bradley J. Martinez
Cecilia M. Cooper	Hon. Christopher R. McDowell	Elizabeth T. Smith	
Richard L. Creighton		David E. Tschantz	

Commission on Appointment of Counsel in Capital Cases

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

Commission on Certification of Attorneys as Specialists

David S. Blessing, Chair	Karen L. Bovard	John M. Lintz	Prof. Christopher Roederer
Prof. Christopher Peters, Vice-Chair	Lewis J. Dolezal	Amy McKinlay	Jennifer Smith
Awatef Assad	Hon. Tom Elkin	Andrew Miller	Staff Liaison:
Sasha A.M. Blaine	Hon. Emily Hagan	Margaret A. O'Bryon	Britney N. Cider
Justin R. Blume	Darya Jeffreys Klammer	Tina Owens-Ruff	
	Linda Lawrence	Prof. Andrew S. Pollis	

Commission on Continuing Legal Education

Hon. J. Gregory Howard, Chair	Sharon Harwood	Adrienne J. Roach	Magistrate Ebony Wreh
Hon. Kevin Kelley, Vice-Chair	Razi Lane	James Sillery	Staff Liaison:
Dr. Carri L. Brown	Bennett Manning	Patricia Wagner	Michel Jendretzky
Hon. Carly Edelstein	Hon. Eric Allen Marks	Thomas Widman	
Prof. Collen Garrity Settineri	Hon. Sheryl Munson	Karin Wiest	
	Jacqueline M. O'Donnell	Anthony Will	

Commission on Professionalism

Laura Welles Wilson, Chair	Hon. Ginger Bock	Amy Ikerd	Jennifer Schneider
Hon. Christopher B. Epley, Vice-Chair	Joseph P. Dawson	Hon. Molly K. Johnson	Staff Liaison:
Belinda S. Barnes	Lindsay Ford Ellis	Melissa Kidder	MacLaren Roemer
Hon. Mary L. Birck	Halle B. Hara	Debra D. Overly	
	Hon. David Hamilton	Karen E. Rubin	

Clerk of the Court

Justin Kudela
*Robert Vaughn**
CLERK

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

**Staff departed or retired in 2025*



Justin Kudela was sworn in by Chief Justice Sharon L. Kennedy as the new Clerk of the Court on December 2, 2025.

The Office of the Clerk of Court manages all cases filed with the Supreme Court. Its responsibilities include maintaining case files, dockets, and the journal; preparing and issuing Court orders; scheduling oral arguments and the Court's consideration of other case matters; and preserving records transmitted from lower courts and state agencies while cases are on appeal. The office also provides direct service to attorneys, litigants, and the public by assisting with filing questions, case status updates, and public records requests, while ensuring compliance with the Supreme Court of Ohio Rules of Practice.

Separation of Powers: A Strong and Independent Judiciary

The Clerk's Office plays a vital role in supporting the independence of the judicial branch by managing the Court's docket and record-keeping functions free from outside influence. By ensuring that filings, case materials, and procedural processes are governed solely by Court rules and judicial standards, the office upholds the integrity, impartiality, and autonomy of the Court's decision-making process. This independence — reflected in the Clerk's authority to administer filings, maintain official records, and enforce the Rules of Practice of the Supreme Court of Ohio — strengthens the judiciary's ability to operate as a separate and coequal branch of government.

In 2025, the Clerk's Office advanced its commitment to accessibility and modernization through the initial implementation of efilings capabilities for individuals incarcerated in Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction (ODRC) facilities.



Developed in partnership with the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Ohio, the system uses scanning technology installed in prison law libraries to allow incarcerated filers to submit documents electronically rather than through traditional mail. This initiative improves efficiency, reduces delays, and enhances access to the Court for individuals who otherwise face significant barriers to filing.

By 2025, the prisoner e-filing program expanded to six state prisons, with implementation at the Ohio Reformatory for Women scheduled to begin soon. The Clerk's Office will continue collaborating with ODRC and the federal judiciary to extend this technology to additional facilities in the coming year.

In addition to technological improvements, the Clerk's Office supported amendments to the Rules of Practice, which took effect on April 1, 2025. These amendments were developed by a working group led by Justice Patrick F. Fischer and reflect the Court's efforts to maintain clear, efficient, and modern appellate procedures.

Case Docket Management System (CDMS) Modernization

At the direction of Chief Justice Sharon L. Kennedy, the Clerk's Office began a comprehensive revision of the case phase structure within its Case Docket Management System (CDMS) — the first stage of a multi-year CDMS rebuild. Working closely with the offices

of Information Technology, Legal Resources, and the Reporter of Decisions, the Clerk's office redesigned how cases are tracked as they move through the Court's docket.

The goal was to replace the system's broad, generic case phase names with more specific designations that better reflect where a case stands in its lifecycle. The revised structure introduces more than 20 new case phases that provide the justices, staff, and court leadership a clearer real-time picture of case status. The Reporter's Office also assumed new responsibilities for managing opinion-related case phase transitions, more closely integrating their editorial workflow with the Court's docketing system. By the end of 2025, the team developed requirements, built the automated transition rules, and completed testing in preparation for implementation in 2026.

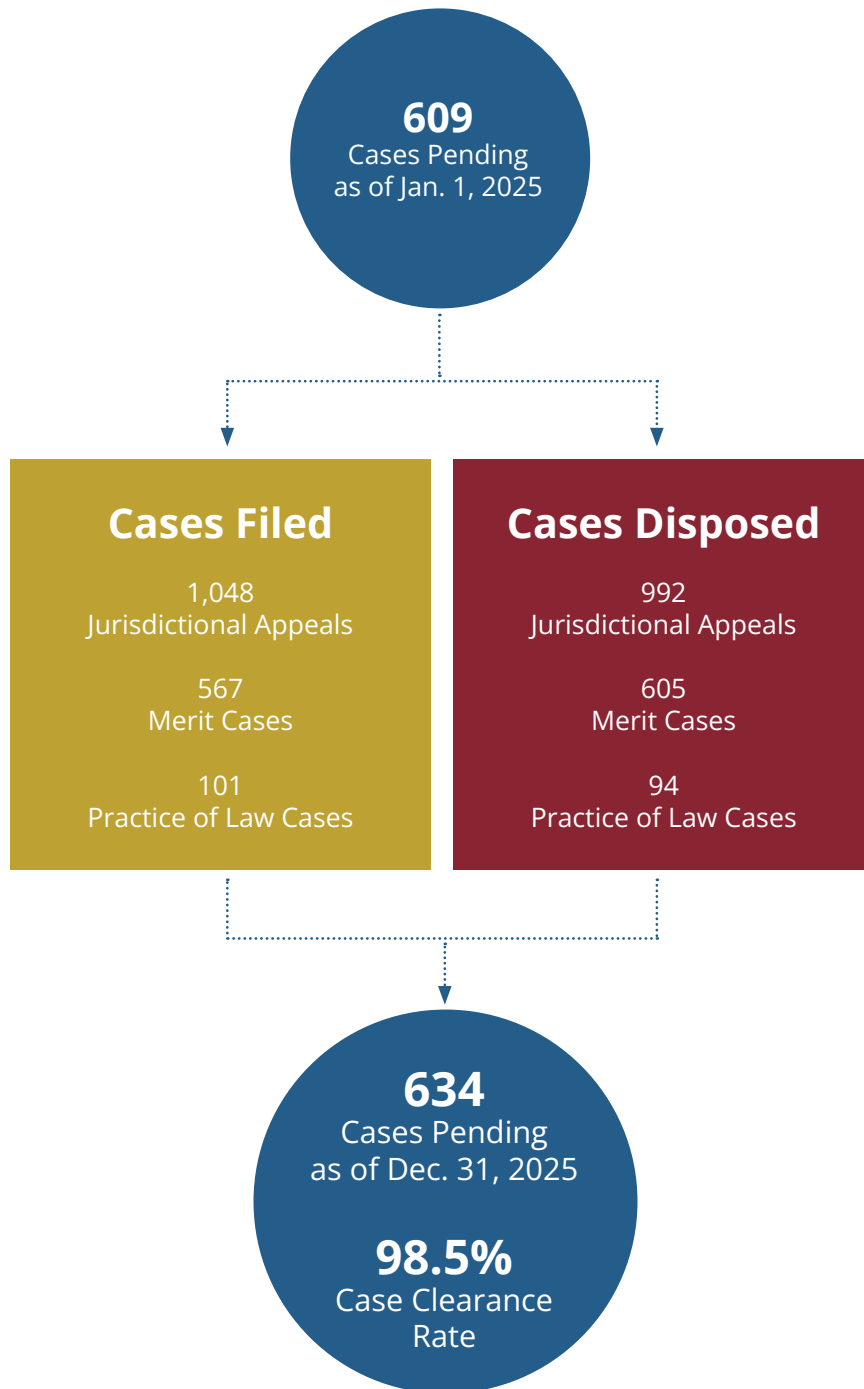
Leadership and Operations

In December 2025, Justin Kudela began his tenure as the clerk of court, bringing new leadership to the office's ongoing modernization efforts.

Throughout 2025, the Clerk's Office processed thousands of case filings and managed the Court's active docket with precision and transparency. The pages that follow provide a detailed statistical and categorical breakdown of cases filed, disposed of, and pending at both the start and end of the year.

2025 Caseload Activities

Summary of Caseload Activity



Cases Filed in 2025

1,048 Jurisdictional Appeals

- 973 Jurisdictional Appeals
 - 4 Death Penalty Postconviction Appeals
 - 23 Appeals Involving Termination of Parental Rights/Adoption
 - 48 Appeals from App.R. 26(B) Applications

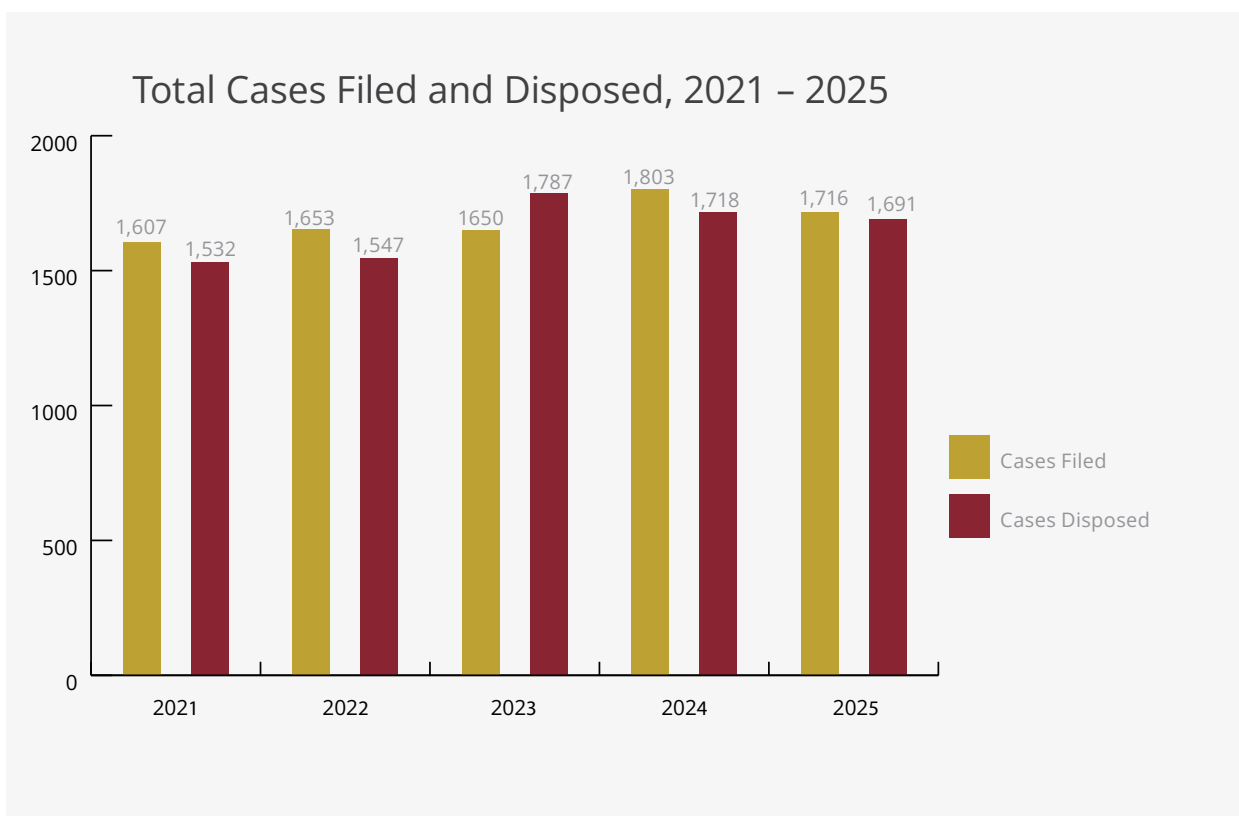
567 Merit Cases

- 403 Original Actions
- 57 Habeas Corpus Cases
- 59 Direct Appeals (Cases Originating in Court of Appeals)
 - 1 Direct Appeals Involving Termination of Parental Rights/Adoption
- 10 Certified Conflicts
- 10 Appeals from Board of Tax Appeals
- 8 Appeals from Public Utilities Commission
- 4 Appeals from Power Siting Board
- 1 Death Penalty Cases
- 4 Certified Questions of State Law
- 10 Cases Purporting to Invoke Unspecified Original Jurisdiction

101 Practice of Law Cases

- 92 Disciplinary Cases
- 3 Bar Admission Cases
- 6 Other Matters Relating to the Practice of Law

1,716 Total Cases Filed



Cases Disposed in 2025

992 Discretionary Appeals¹

- 920 Jurisdictional Appeals²
 - 3 Death Penalty Postconviction Appeals
- 20 Appeals Involving Termination of Parental Rights/Adoption
- 49 Appeals from App.R. 26(B) Applications

605 Merit Cases

- 421 Original Actions
- 46 Habeas Corpus Cases
- 59 Direct Appeals (Cases Originating in Court of Appeals)
 - 1 Direct Appeals Involving Termination of Parental Rights/Adoption
- 10 Certified Conflicts
- 6 Appeals from Board of Tax Appeals
- 3 Appeals from Public Utilities Commission
- 3 Appeals from Power Siting Board
- 1 Certified Questions of State Law
- 15 Other Merit Cases
- 40 Jurisdictional Appeals Accepted for Merit Review³

94 Practice of Law Cases

- 86 Disciplinary Cases
- 3 Bar Admission Cases
- 5 Other Matters Relating to the Practice of Law

1,691 Total Final Dispositions

-
- 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, 2025

284	Jurisdictional Appeals	
272	Jurisdictional Appeals	
2	Death Penalty Postconviction Appeals	
4	Appeals Involving Termination of Parental Rights/Adoption	
6	Appeals from App.R. 26(B) Application	
328	Merit Cases	
126	Original Actions	
19	Habeas Corpus Cases	
45	Direct Appeals (Cases Originating in Court of Appeals)	
14	Certified Conflicts	
11	Appeals from Board of Tax Appeals	
17	Appeals from Public Utilities Commission	
6	Appeals from Power Siting Board	
3	Death Penalty Cases	
2	Other Merit Cases	
82	Jurisdictional Appeals Accepted for Merit Review	
22	Practice of Law Cases	
21	Disciplinary Cases	
1	Unauthorized Practice of Law Cases	
634	Total Cases Pending	

Court Services

Stephanie Graubner Nelson
DIRECTOR

Sheila Lovell
**Anne Murray*

Case Management

Olivia Chadwick
Christopher Geocaris
Diane Hayes
Sarah Schregardus

Children & Families

Jenna Fawcett
Samantha Horna
Kyana Pierson
Linda Topping

Dispute Resolution

Marya Kolman
Kevin Lottes
Anne Thompson

Language Services

Quincella Harrison
Bruno Romero

Specialized Dockets

Samuel Campbell
Alyssa Guthrie
Sarah Jeu
Ashley Kerr
Sara Smith
Ryan Stickel

**Staff departed or retired in 2025*



Separation of Powers: A Strong and Independent Judiciary

The independence of courts is a cornerstone of justice, ensuring impartiality, integrity, and public trust in the legal system. To complement this foundational principle, the Office of Court Services supports Ohio trial and appellate courts by offering traditional and innovative services for the judicial branch to promote the effective administration of justice. The office's work begins by identifying and understanding the needs of local courts. With this understanding, the Supreme Court brings courts together with national and local experts to innovate and engineer solutions for Ohio communities and to serve justice.

Roundtables

The Court offers roundtables as a dynamic resource for court personnel statewide to engage in peer-driven dialogue. Facilitated by Court staff, these sessions provide an open forum for discussing shared challenges, exchanging ideas, and exploring innovative practices.

Agenda items are solicited directly from participants, fostering a responsive and relevant environment. Discussions are informal yet purposeful – centered on collaboration, mutual learning, and professional support. In 2025, the office hosted 52 roundtables, drawing approximately 500 participants from the judiciary and courts. This robust engagement reflects the commitment of Ohio courts to continuous improvement, transparency, and the collective advancement of justice.

Court Services is composed of five sections focused on key areas of service – **case management, children and families, dispute resolution, language services, and specialized dockets.** Each expanded their initiatives and programs in 2025.



New magistrates orientation, March 28

Case Management Section

An accountable and transparent judiciary is central to maintaining an independent one. Efficiency and overall performance in the judicial branch rely on accurate, reliable data, and the Case Management Section plays a critical role in ensuring that Ohio’s courts have the tools, training, and support necessary to meet these standards. The section oversees all the data and statistical reporting requirements established under the Rules of Superintendence for the Courts of Ohio and ensures consistent, accurate statewide reporting.

In 2025, the section continued its modernization efforts, using technology to strengthen business processes. The section worked closely with the new Office of Data and Analytics to enhance its dashboards and expand automation to improve

communication across the judiciary. Quarterly performance emails, reminders for statistical reports, annual juvenile court reports, and case inventory submissions were implemented to streamline reporting.

The section also managed all case inquiries submitted through an online portal, improving turnaround time and efficiency in serving the public. Additionally, the section reviewed statewide survey results on factors delaying court cases and convened workgroups — including those focused on technology-based solutions — to further evaluate and address these issues.

Throughout the year, the section delivered extensive training and consulting services to local courts across Ohio. Staff provided both in-person and virtual support, offering caseload

management guidance, resource assessment services, and hands-on assistance tailored to courts of all sizes and jurisdictions. These efforts strengthened operational efficiency at the local level and supported courts in meeting statewide performance expectations. In 2025, the section completed 16 training courses for local courts and gave 10 additional presentations to professional organizations, including the Juvenile Clerks' Conference, the Ohio Association of Municipal Court Clerks, the Ohio Mayor's Court Association, and the Ohio Municipal League. Three staff members also served as faculty for the Court Management Program — teaching caseload management, accountability, and court performance — and for the New Judge and New Magistrate Orientations.

The section also continued to serve as staff liaison to both the Advisory Committee on Case Management and the Capital Case Attorney Fee Council. Notably, the advisory committee advanced significant recommendations to update the time standards in Ohio Rule of Superintendence 39. This represents the first major revision to Ohio's reporting framework since the 1970s — an achievement grounded in extensive collaboration, research, and a commitment to modernizing judicial performance measurement. The section also continued its work with statewide workgroups of court professionals to identify future enhancements to the statistical reporting framework.

Education remained a major priority in 2025. The section produced four webinars, including two comprehensive sessions on statistical reporting requirements for the courts of common pleas and for municipal and county courts, and one featuring the time guidelines, changes, and history. Additionally, the "Domestic Relations Caseload Best Practices Webinar," held in December, received strong engagement and will be developed into an e-course. This will further the "Caseload Best Practices Series" already developed for criminal and civil cases.

In 2025, the section not only fulfilled its core responsibilities but also expanded its leadership role in shaping statewide policy and fostering a culture of accountability and data-driven decision-making. The section remains committed to strengthening the Ohio judicial branch through innovation, training, and improved reporting practices that promote transparency, fairness, and timely justice for all.

The Case Management Section rendered services to these local courts in 2025:

- Campbell Municipal Court
- Clermont County Municipal Court
- Darke County Court of Common Pleas, General Division
- Erie County Court of Common Pleas, Juvenile Division
- Fremont Municipal Court
- Hardin County Court of Common Pleas, Juvenile and Domestic Relations Division
- Lake County Court of Common Pleas, Juvenile Division
- Lucas County Court of Common Pleas, Juvenile Division
- Maumee Municipal Court
- Morrow County Court of Common Pleas, General Division
- Noble County Court of Common Pleas, General Division
- Scioto County Court of Common Pleas, Juvenile and Probate Division
- Sylvania Municipal Court
- Union County Court of Common Pleas, Juvenile and Probate Divisions

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, in the juvenile justice system, and for victims of domestic violence. The work of the section is guided by the Advisory Committee on Children & Families. The section's Domestic Violence Program is shaped by the Advisory Committee on Domestic Violence.

Improving Quality Legal Representation for Families

2025 marked the fourth year of the Multidisciplinary Legal Representation (MDR) Pilot Project. Teams comprised of attorneys, social workers, and parent advocates work together to reduce trauma and improve outcomes for families in the child welfare system. These teams collaborate across multiple systems as they work to divert parents from deeper involvement in the child welfare system and promote family safety and unity. Effective parent representation, not only in child welfare cases but in related civil

legal actions such as eviction or truancy cases, plays a critical role in reducing reliance on foster care, unnecessary family separations, and delays in reunifications.

Six pilot projects are funded in Clark, Cuyahoga, Erie, Stark, Summit, and Wayne counties using the Court's Court Improvement Program (CIP) grant and the Ohio Department of Children & Youth's (DCY) Children's Justice Act grant, both of which are funded by the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services (HHS). These grants empower the judiciary to lead initiatives that strengthen legal processes and uphold the rule of law in child welfare cases.

The year 3 program evaluation report highlights continued growth in team collaboration, early signs of improved family engagement and system outcomes, and increasing statewide interest in replicating the MDR model, positioning Ohio as a leader in multidisciplinary legal representation. To date, over 350 families have been served by these pilot sites. The section extended its support to pilot sites for an additional year, ensuring program continuity while also helping courts prepare for long-term sustainability. This judicially led initiative reflects the leadership of local courts and their vital role in safeguarding the rights of families and children.



Subcommittee on Responding to Child Abuse, Neglect, & Dependency Meeting, April 9

Supreme Court of Ohio Unveils Parenting Time Guide for Divorced and Separated Parents

The Supreme Court of Ohio's Advisory Committee on Children & Families has published an updated resource to assist parents living separately. The guide, *Planning for Parenting Time: Ohio's Guide for Parents Living Apart*, is now available to the public.

This comprehensive resource provides parents with guidance for establishing a parenting time schedule that identifies when children will be with each parent. The primary objective of the guide is to help parents reduce conflict and reach agreements more easily, focusing on the best interests of their children.



Expanding CASA's Reach

CASA programs in Ohio strengthened and expanded their reach in 2025, broadening access to high-quality advocacy for children in abuse, neglect, and dependency cases with the assistance of the CIP grant. Athens County CASA extended services into Hocking County, while CASA of Southern Ohio grew into Lawrence County. Medina County's CASA program transitioned to an umbrella program under The Children's Center of Medina County, and Mahoning County CASA evolved from a court-based program to a nonprofit organization. Today, CASA volunteers serve more than 9,000 children statewide. These expansions highlight CASA's unwavering commitment to ensuring that more children benefit from consistent, trained volunteer advocacy across Ohio.

Advancing the Efforts of the OHIO Youth Advisory Board

Overcoming Hurdles in Ohio Youth Advisory Board (OHIO YAB) is an organization that advocates for youth who experience foster care, kinship care, adoption, group homes, and residential facilities. It is comprised of young people who have experienced foster care and work to guide and inform system improvements at the state and national levels.

CIP grant funds supported OHIO YAB quarterly meetings where members share their firsthand experiences with state agency representatives to shape child welfare system policies.

Additionally, the grant supported the annual Leadership & Life Skills Summit. This event focused on essential skills young people need as they transition into adulthood, such as college and vocational skill-building, job interviewing,

financial management, and effective communication.

Educating the Judiciary on Strangulation

With the recent legislative adoption of strangulation as a specific criminal offense in Ohio, the Domestic Violence Program published two publications to help educate the judiciary: "Non-Fatal Strangulation/Suffocation: What Every Judge Should Know" and "Non-Fatal Strangulation/Suffocation: Four Common Myths."

In July, a webinar for judges was held, "Understanding Strangulation: The Medical & Legal Realities," which examined the signs and symptoms of strangulation, short- and long-term effects of strangulation, legal considerations of Ohio's strangulation statute, and emerging case law. This webinar was developed into a Judicial College online course that is available on demand for judicial officers.

Another online course, "The Many Faces of Intimate Partner Violence: A Strangulation Case Review," was developed. This course explores the effects of strangulation on the body and memory, the dynamics of domestic violence, and best practices for handling such cases from start to finish.

Expansion of Online Domestic Violence Education Offerings

With the assistance of the Judicial College, the Domestic Violence Program developed three additional online courses. "Misuse of Technology in Domestic Violence" examines how offenders commonly misuse technologies and online spaces as tactics of domestic violence and stalking. "The Impact of Intimate Partner Violence on Children

& Families” discusses how allegations of intimate partner violence can be common in contested custody cases and high-conflict divorces, and the impact that they can have on the family and the child. The third course, “Stalking,” highlights how stalking is a significant risk factor for lethal and non-lethal violence, but can be minimized, denied, or dismissed when not identified properly.

Training 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

Dispute Resolution Section

The Dispute Resolution Section assists the Supreme Court and local courts by providing mediation to Supreme Court litigants and Ohio public officials, developing innovative dispute resolution programs, providing technical assistance to local courts, and offering required and advanced dispute resolution training programs and roundtables.

2025 was the year of the Settlement Week Sweep. Settlement Week is a proven and effective case management tool that helps reduce civil and domestic relations case backlogs by establishing a week, or other defined time period, to mediate older cases that appear ready for resolution. Settlement Weeks can be beneficial for all involved. The parties have the opportunity to work with an experienced mediator to settle their disputes expeditiously, outside of court, saving the time and expense of going to trial. The court can reduce its caseload and focus on the cases that cannot be resolved except by trial. The section provides training and resources to courts to assist them with their Settlement Week programs. The following courts held one or more Settlement Week programs in 2025 and resolved hundreds of cases:

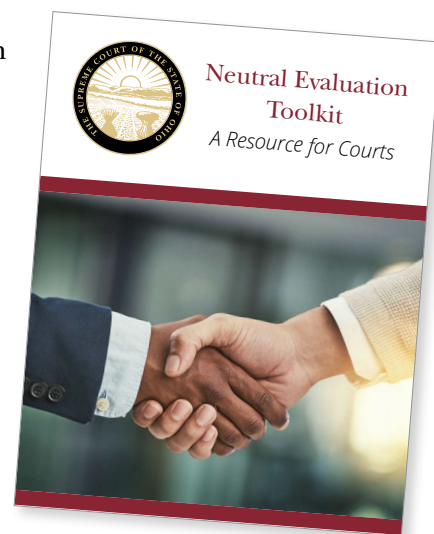
- Cuyahoga County Court of Common Pleas Court, General Division
- Delaware County Court of Common Pleas, Domestic Relations Division
- Franklin County Court of Common Pleas, Domestic Relations and Juvenile Division
- Hamilton County Court of Common Pleas, Domestic Relations Division

featured topics such as the use of plain language, DCY’s Child Match Program, the Crime Victims Compensation Fund Program, legislative changes, and rule amendments.

The Domestic Violence Program partnered with the Court’s Language Services Section and the statewide service providers for deaf survivors of domestic violence to conduct a webinar, “Beyond Words: Securing Interpreters for Courts and Client Meetings.” The training, hosted by the Columbus Bar Association, focused on the legal obligations to accommodate those who require an interpreter and best practices for coordinating with court, legal, and community partners.

- Hamilton County Court of Common Pleas, Juvenile Division
- Hancock County Court of Common Pleas, Juvenile Division
- Lorain County Court of Common Pleas, Domestic Relations and Juvenile Division
- Medina County Court of Common Pleas, Domestic Relations Division
- Medina County Court of Common Pleas, Juvenile Division
- Summit County Court of Common Pleas, General Division

The use of neutral evaluation increased in 2025. Neutral evaluation 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, which often promotes settlement. The section developed a toolkit and other resources and provided training to assist courts with their neutral evaluation programs.



School attendance mediation provides a facilitated problem-solving approach to address chronic absenteeism and truancy in a supportive, non-judgmental way. The goal of the process is to identify the issues or problems that are causing poor attendance and then help the family and the school develop a voluntary plan to improve the student's attendance. The section and the Champaign County Family Court conducted a successful pilot school attendance mediation project in Urbana Elementary School in 2025. Of the 58 students whose families received mediation, 42 improved their attendance and avoided receiving court truancy charges. The section provided training and resources for the pilot project.

The section mediates Supreme Court cases referred by the Court. In 2025, 34 cases were mediated, and 130 mediation sessions were conducted. Through mediation, the parties resolved many of these cases without the need for further formal court proceedings. In addition, the section mediates cases for Ohio public officials through the voluntary Government Conflict Resolution Program, which is designed to assist county and local public officials in resolving and preventing conflicts without court involvement. Section staff and contract mediators mediated three government conflict resolution services matters in 2025. A short video explaining Government Conflict Resolution Services was developed in collaboration with the Ohio Channel and will be utilized to promote the program at various gatherings of government officials statewide.

Developing and providing an extensive schedule of training and education for judges, court

personnel, and dispute resolution practitioners is another key responsibility of the section. The programs include the trainings required for new practitioners as well as advanced programs. Eleven different programs, with a total of 47 training days and 352 participants, were provided, including "Fundamentals of Mediation," "Specialized Family and Divorce Mediation," "Domestic Abuse Issues for Mediators," "School Attendance Mediation," "Child Protection Mediation," "Parenting Coordination," "Settlement Week," and "Neutral Evaluation." In collaboration with the Judicial College, the section helped develop virtual modules that are both pre-learning for the courses and stand-alone programs for interested court personnel and mediators. These modules were viewed 2,029 times in 2025.

Additionally, 18 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 195 participants in these dispute resolution roundtables this year.

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

Language Services Section

Interpreters play a critical role in safeguarding the independence of the judiciary by ensuring that all parties, regardless of language, can fully access and participate in legal proceedings without bias or misunderstanding.

The Language Services Section in conjunction with the Advisory Committee on Language Services presented to the Court amendments to Sup.R. 80-89 to increase the number of interpreters on the roster. These amendments, effective Nov. 13, 2025, allow for the reciprocity of interpreters from other states; make the provisionally qualified credential a permanent

credential; and include an assessment mechanism for rare languages. The amendments also provide guidance on the use of artificial intelligence in interpretation and translation.

As a service to local courts, the Court provides telephonic interpretation when in-person interpreters are unavailable. Telephonic interpretation was expected to exceed 15,000 calls in 2025 compared to 13,024 calls in 2024. The section offered the written exam for credentialing interpreters to 85 candidates and administered 46 oral exams for interpreter credentialing. In 2025, the roster included

276 credentialed interpreters in 49 languages. The section provided local courts with other assistance in 362 instances in 2025.

With the help of the Information Technology Project Management team, the section now hosts a new database that keeps track of interpreter candidates, training, exam scores, and compliance with educational requirements.

The section continues its robust outreach effort to attract more interpreters to the profession and continues a vigorous training program for interpreters, courts, and other legal partners. The section also hosted or participated in 20 training sessions (34 training hours) ranging from court interpreter ethics to telephonic interpretation webinars.

In 2025 Language Services maintained a roster of

276
credentialed
interpreters

49
languages



Specialized Dockets Section

As of Dec. 31, 2025, Ohio had 252 certified specialized dockets. These dockets are operated by trial courts throughout the state, including municipal and county courts and common pleas courts in the general and juvenile divisions. They are designed to help adults and juveniles whose substance use disorder or mental illness is at the root of their repeated criminal behavior and who have a high need for treatment. Most courts serve a variety of individuals with a variety of criminal charges, but others focus on particular populations. For instance, dockets may specialize in the unique needs of groups such as veterans, victims of human trafficking, people convicted of operating a motor vehicle while intoxicated, people being released from incarceration, domestic violence offenders, and parents with child protective services cases where substance use or mental health is a factor.

In 2025, section staff recommended that 85 specialized dockets be certified by the Commission on Specialized Dockets. The certification process includes a document review and a site observation, and 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 national groups, such as All Rise and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.

To assist courts in creating the documentation necessary to run a certified specialized docket, the section staff created the "Specialized Dockets Drafting Guide." It provides a comprehensive explanation of the Ohio Specialized Docket Standards and how to create program documentation that meet or exceed the standards.

In 2025, the Court provided awards for case management upgrades through a grant from the Bureau of Justice Assistance. The Delaware, Akron, and Jackson County municipal courts received awards, along with common pleas courts in Jefferson and Morrow counties. The courts received awards ranging from \$50,000 to \$90,000 to establish or upgrade case management systems that will streamline courts' reporting requirements to the Supreme Court and the Ohio Department of Behavioral Health, and to interface with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs' Veterans Re-Entry Search Services.



Specialized Dockets Conference, October 28

As part of the section’s ongoing efforts to help people make the transition back to their communities after incarceration, staff worked on initiatives identified in the 2024 Final Report and Recommendations of the Supreme Court of Ohio Task Force on Reentry. Highlights include the publication of guidance on obtaining a certificate of qualification for employment and the creation of a reentry specialized docket guidance resource page. Additionally, the section collaborated on three reentry videos:

- A 30-second “Public Service Announcement to Reduce Stigma.”
- “A Message of Hope for the Reentry Population,” which specifically targets those currently or previously incarcerated.
- “Encouraging Judicial Leadership with Reentry Dockets,” a long-form mini-documentary designed for Ohio judges.



Three video messages share hope and inspiration for the reentry population. ▶ Click to watch the mini documentary version.



Courts Play Vital Role in Connecting Veterans Resources

The Supreme Court of Ohio facilitated an information-packed day to connect courts with innovative veteran services during the 11th annual 2025 Lean Forward Veterans Summit. Each year, Chief Justice Sharon L. Kennedy and Retired Justice Evelyn Lundberg Stratton convene the summit, part of the broader Lean Forward initiative seeking to advance treatment for justice-involved veterans in Ohio.

This year's Summit focused on veterans' specialized dockets and support services. Panelists examined innovative pathways to healing – programs supporting veterans, civil legal services, and empowering veterans through employment. The sessions also identified community resources for veterans and military families.

Emerging Trends in Veterans Specialized Dockets: Insights from the Field

A panel of court representatives, including judges, staff, and a veterans treatment docket graduate, led the first session of the day, providing insight from their own experiences. They discussed best practices for veterans specialized dockets and the advice they have for success.

Innovative Pathways to Healing: Programs Supporting Veterans

For veterans facing mental health crises, it can be a matter of life and death. The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs reported in 2024 that 17 veterans die by suicide each day. Connecting those veterans to services that can intervene and help them to find new purposes in life can be crucial. A variety of organizations are here to help.



Civil Legal Services Supporting Veterans' Stability

Representatives from Legal Aid and Ohio Legal Help shared the resources they provide to veterans facing hard times. Anna Lynch, an attorney for Legal Aid of Southeast and Central Ohio, shared that many of the top unmet needs for homeless veterans are civil legal needs. The organization offers a range of legal services to eligible veterans, from advice to brief service to full case representation. There are also many online tools, such as Ohio Legal Help, available to the public that can connect veterans to the legal resources they are seeking.

Connecting Veterans to Vital Support: Relink Ohio's Resource Network

An additional service available to Ohioans is Relink Ohio, a free and anonymous online platform that connects people in need with local

community resources. That includes resources for addiction recovery, reentry, behavioral health, basic needs, and more.

Empowering Veterans Through Employment: Ohio Means Jobs

For veterans reintegrating into civilian life, Ohio Means Jobs makes finding a new career less challenging by providing tools to help with job searches. Veterans also receive priority for certain services, including access to training and certification programs that can help launch their careers. Veterans can visit the Ohio Means Jobs Center in any of Ohio's 88 counties to fill out the Veteran Questionnaire or do so online. Those who meet the eligibility requirements can receive help and advocacy in securing a job.

The next Lean Forward Veterans Summit will take place on Nov. 19, 2026.



Reentry Simulations Highlight Specialized Dockets Conference

Nearly 800 judges, magistrates, probation officers, treatment providers, attorneys, and community partners attended the Supreme Court of Ohio's annual Specialized Dockets Conference. This year's event drew 475 attendees to the Ohio State University campus in Columbus, and another 300 joined online.

With over 200 dockets certified by the Supreme Court, Ohio continues to be a national leader in the field. These dockets can be tailored to address specific populations or issues, including veterans, operating a motor vehicle while under the influence of drugs or alcohol, human trafficking, domestic violence, and reentry into society after incarceration.

The conference offered opportunities to network, share best practices, and explore new approaches. Sessions featured discussions on trauma-informed practices, addiction science, ethics, reentry, media relations, and more.

Learning From Experience

To further educate courts on the subject of reentry and specialized dockets, the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction attended the conference and presented reentry simulations in the morning and afternoon breakout sessions.

A recent report released by the Supreme Court of Ohio Reentry Task Force recommended that Ohio expand its reentry docket offerings.

"Reentry programs are essential to help returning citizens become productive members of society," the report explained. "These programs assist individuals in securing employment, housing, and the skills they need to restore stability to their lives."

The premise of the simulations was to provide attendees with a glimpse of the challenges incarcerated people face upon release from prison to make courts more aware of the assistance needed for success.

Those who participated in the simulation were given new identities as fictional people just released from prison. Each person's scenario was different, with varying levels of resources from money to transportation to identification records. However, all were expected to find jobs, secure housing, and attend all necessary appointments to meet parole requirements.

Participants were faced with difficult decisions and no guidance to reach their goals. As they increasingly felt despair, many turned to crime for money. Many ended up back in jail. The experience emphasized the importance of having resources ready for people when they leave institutions to maximize their success.

Oftentimes, when someone is released from prison, they return to their same environment. Reentry dockets are about breaking that cycle.

The staff of Court Services are liaisons to the following:

Advisory Committee on Case Management

Hon. Beth Cappelli, Chair	Hon. Patrick Carroll, Ret.	Hon. Terrance A. Nestor	Cynthia Sgalla
Hon. Kristen Johnson, Vice-Chair	Hon. Kimberly Cocroft	Je'Nine Nickerson	Hon. Latecia Wiles
Stephan P. Babik	Hon. Michelle Earley	Hon. Michael Oster	Melissa Wilt
Hon. Craig R. Baldwin	Brandy N. Hartman	Hon. Jeannine Pratt	Hon. William R. Zimmerman
Hon. Andrew Ballard	Justin T. Kudela	Wendy Roush	Hon. Gene A. Zmuda
Hon. David Brannon	Hon. Mary Montgomery	Laura Schnecker	Staff Liaison:
	Michael Negray	Kristin Schultz	Christopher Geocaris

Advisory Committee on Children and Families

Hon. Matthew Puskarich, Chair	Magistrate Michelle Edgar	Hon. Diane M. Palos	Hon. Linda Tucci Teodosio
Hon. Frank Janik, Vice-Chair	Ryan Gies	Magistrate C. William Rickrich	Jeff Van Deusen
Amy Ast	Hon. Elizabeth Gill	Doug Schonauer	Hon. James T. Walther
Hon. Rebecca Bennett	Eric W. Johnson	Hon. Patricia Smith	Tonya Whitsett
Gerald Bryant	Hon. Katrine Lancaster	Katie Stenman	Staff Liaison: Kyana Pierson
Hon. Anthony Capizzi, Ret.	Magistrate Kathleen Lenski	Magistrate Jennifer Svec	

Advisory Committee on Domestic Violence

Hon. James W. Brown, Chair	Hon. Marianne Hemmeter	Hon. Lindsay Navarre	Hon. Laura Beth Smith
Hon. Richard Wright, Vice-Chair	Hon. Terri L. Kohlrieser	Hon. Jaiza Page	Hon. Linda Warner
Laurie Carney	Hon. Katrine Lancaster	Olivia Parkinson	Staff Liaison:
Jennifer Dave	Hon. Anita Laster Mays	Alexandria Ruden	Anne M. Murray
Lisa DeGeeter	Hon. Julie Monnin	William Shaughnessey	
Colleen Eynon	Jeannine Myers	Hon. Jarrod Skinner	

Advisory Committee on Language Services

Hon. Molly Johnson, Chair	Edward H. Chyun	Kathleen Lanker	Hon. Jazmin Torres-Lugo
Magistrate Serpil Ergun, Vice-Chair	Alexander Etlin	Said Orra	Louis E. Valencia II
Hon. Anita M. Bechmann	Hon. Don W. Fraser	Hon. Jennifer Petrella	Magistrate Lisa Wiseman
Amy Braddock	Hon. Jonathan Hein, Ret.	Hon. Andrea C. Peebles	Staff Liaison: Bruno G. Romero
Kimberly Canada	Hon. David Hejmanowski	Hon. Suzan Marie Sweeney	
	Hon. Tammie Hursh	Beth Tischler	

Commission on Dispute Resolution

Hon. Joyce V. Kimbler, Chair	Maara Fink	Garry Hunter	Magistrate Benita D. Reedus
Magistrate Penny Gates, Vice-Chair	William Froehlich	Peggy Foley Jones	Hon. Lori Reisinger
Hon. Pierre Bergeron	Douglas N. Godshall	George Kaitsa	Hon. Elizabeth J. Schuller
Hon. Barbara Carter	Hon. Larry Heiser	Barbara A. Moore	Andrea L. Weaver
E. Rodney Davisson	Glenn A. Miller	Anthony Palmer	Staff Liaison: Marya Kolman
	Hon. Sylvia Hendon, Ret.	Hon. Karen Phipps	

Commission on Specialized Dockets

Hon. Ian B. English, Chair	Hon. Courtney Caparella- Kraemer	Abbie Badenhop	Hon. Sheryl Munson
Magistrate Robert Rice, Vice-Chair	Hon. Jeannine Pratt	Hon. Jeffrey Benson	Hon. Jodi Thomas
Hon. Annalisa Stubbs Williams	Meghan Patton Disbrow	Magistrate Laura Lynd- Robinson	Joshua Hazelrigg
Tricia A. Lucido	Hon. Kevin Dunn	Hon. Jay Nixon	Rodney Baca
Susan M. Zurface	Hon. Gina Russo	Veronica Perry	Staff Liaison:
Hon. Linda Knepp	Chase Carter	Hon. Beth W. Cappelli	Sam Campbell
	Hon. Kristin Farmer	Hon. Marisa Cornachio	

Data and Analytics

Brian Farrington
DIRECTOR

Joel Gottke
Samantha Goyings

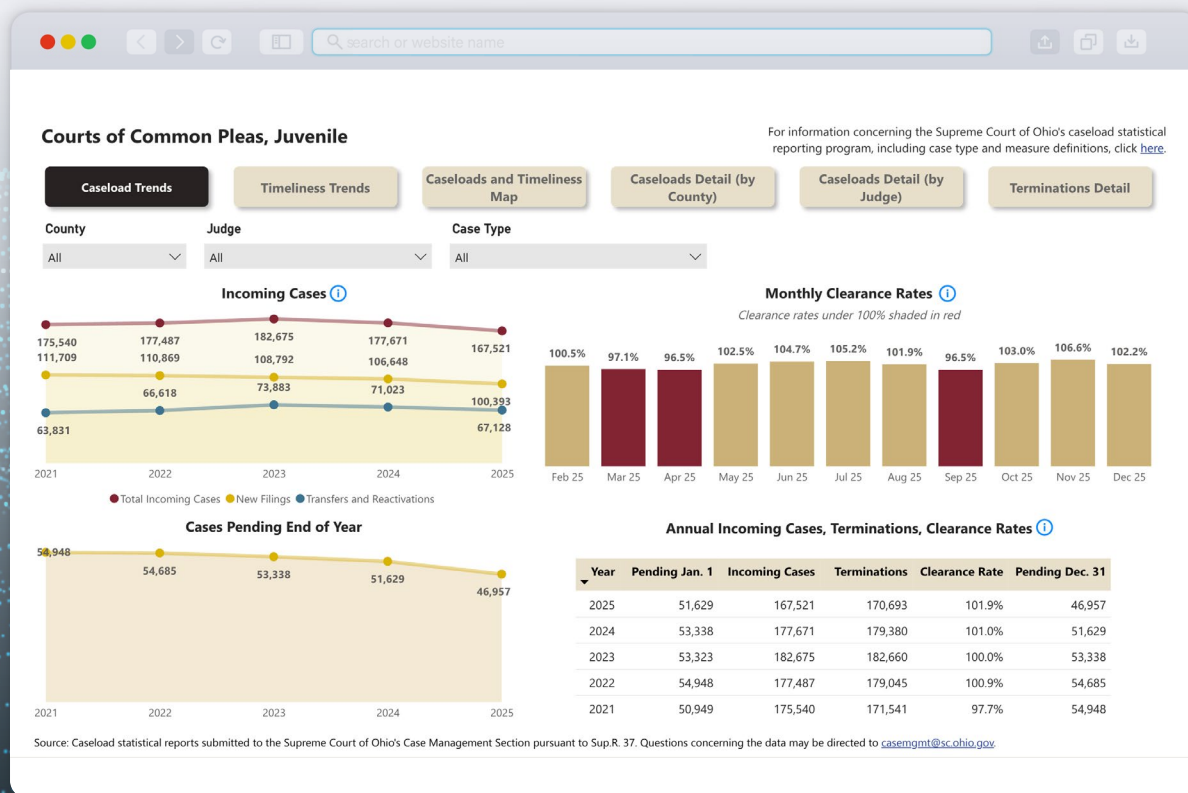


In 2025, the Supreme Court launched the Office of Data and Analytics to strengthen the judiciary's use of high-quality data as a strategic asset. Courts across Ohio generate vast amounts of information every day, and the office was created to help lead the judiciary in transforming that information into insight by supporting transparency, enhancing performance, and enabling evidence-based decision-making at every level of the judicial branch.

Separation of Powers: A Strong and Independent Judiciary

The office reinforces the independence of the judicial branch by establishing high-quality data as a strategic asset. By promoting uniform statewide standards and ensuring access to trusted, transparent information, the office empowers the judiciary to govern its own affairs and measure performance without reliance on external interpretations. These efforts strengthen the separation of powers by equipping the judiciary with the necessary tools to demonstrate accountability and make evidence-based decisions in service to the people of Ohio.

In addition to its work with local courts, the office partners closely with internal Supreme Court offices to modernize data practices, streamline reporting and analytics, and ensure that the Court's own operational decisions are guided by accurate and timely information. Bringing together data governance principles, advanced analytics, modern reporting tools, and technical assistance for courts and internal partners alike, the office is guided by a unified mission to ensure that judges, court leaders, policymakers, and the public have



Interactive data dashboards produce visual data on cases and caseloads from courts across the state. Judges in Ohio courts of appeals, common pleas courts, municipal courts, and county courts are required to report statistics and case processing timelines to the Supreme Court Case Management Section. The interactive dashboards, available on the Supreme Court website, transform these complex statistics into informative graphics and tables to assist the public, news media, and courts.

[Click here to visit the Data Dashboards.](#)

access to reliable, meaningful, and trusted data. This year, the office analyzed statewide survey data on the causes of delay in Ohio's courts and helped convene discussions among judges, court administrators, and justice-system partners to explore practical strategies to address those challenges. The office also provided technical expertise to the Advisory Committee on Case Management, which Chief Justice Sharon L. Kennedy has charged with conducting a comprehensive review of the Supreme Court's caseload statistical reporting program under Sup.R. 37.

An independent judiciary depends on trusted data that is accurate, transparent, and free from external influence. Data and Analytics helps safeguard that independence by promoting uniform statewide standards, reducing ambiguity in judicial performance measures, and ensuring that courts speak for themselves through consistent and credible data.

This work supports the separation of powers in a very practical way by giving the judicial branch the tools it needs to understand its own caseloads, diagnose areas of concern, and make informed decisions without relying on external interpretations of court performance. Throughout the year, the office has assisted judges and court leaders in examining trends in caseload, identifying emerging challenges, and demonstrating accountability to the communities they serve. These efforts strengthen the judiciary's capacity to govern its own affairs and reinforce a core principle of our constitutional design, in which a strong and independent judiciary must be able to measure its work, understand its impact, and chart its own path forward in service to the people of Ohio.

Judicial College

Chris Fields
**M. Christy Tull*
DIRECTOR, JUDICIAL COLLEGE

Terri Bidwell
Susan Brown
Rebecca Czaja
Brandon Deaner
Kimberly Eggerton
Briana Garrison
Marissa Henley
Dean Hogan
Christopher Hohenberger
Kimberly Hornyak
Paula Hyman
Dorothy Keil
Richard Loutzenhiser
Richard Presley
Natalie Reichert
John Steele
Laura Tainer
Katrina Webb

**Staff departed or retired in 2025*



The independence of the judiciary relies on the ability of the judicial branch of government to operate without interference and for individual judges to serve independently and free from undue or improper influences. To support and protect the judiciary's independence, the public must trust that judges act impartially and competently in understanding and applying the law, explains the International Organization for Judicial Training. Judicial education is instrumental to achieving these high standards of competence and performance in the judicial branch.

Separation of Powers: A Strong and Independent Judiciary

The Supreme Court of Ohio Judicial College advances the independence of the judiciary by equipping Ohio judges and court personnel with the knowledge, judgment, and ethical grounding necessary to uphold the rule of law competently and with impartiality. The Judicial College provides judges, magistrates, acting judges, and non-judicial court personnel with numerous options for continuing legal and professional education. The Judicial College also partners with all state judicial associations to offer continuing legal education for their members. In addition, courses for guardians ad litem, custody evaluators, and guardians of adults are offered.

Judicial training is fundamental to judicial independence, the rule of law, and the protection of the rights of all people. The work of the office is guided by the expertise of the 10-member Judicial College Board of Trustees.

Year of Transitions, New Ideas to Strengthen Judicial Education

2025 was a year filled with many changes at the Judicial College. Christy Tull, the director of the College, retired in June after 28 years of service to the Court. Chris Fields took the helm as the new director, and Kim Eggerton was named deputy director. The office was reorganized and several promotions were made to ensure that the College can meet the varied and evolving needs of the legal community and others who take courses through the College.

In 2025, the Judicial College delivered 400 educational opportunities – representing a continued increase in courses delivered and people completing the courses.

The staff continued to build on the positive reputation of the College and invest in developing quality educational opportunities. Dedicated to the efficient and effective delivery of education, the staff extended their collaboration within the team to reduce any siloed approaches and achieve the greatest benefit for those they serve. The efforts included meetings to foster peer-to-peer collaboration and leaning on technology for greater efficiency. One technology-driven initiative this year improved mentorships for new judges and magistrates by enhancing the quality of mentor-mentee pairings and reducing the time to connect mentees with mentors.

To further strengthen the delivery of education, the College focused on ensuring that the Learning Management System, OhioCourtEDU, was optimized in its second year and responsive to the needs of its audiences. To date, more than 40,000 judges, magistrates, court staff, and citizens have accessed and created accounts within OhioCourtEDU. The new system has opened opportunities to better serve the audiences by implementing new methods of delivering education, such as modules, microlearning, and just-in-time resources.

Responding to Educational Needs of Courts

Artificial Intelligence and the Courts:

As artificial intelligence (AI) continues to evolve, its integration into the judicial system raises complex ethical challenges. Recognizing the importance of providing guidance, the Court and the Judicial College facilitated webinars in 2025 for judges, magistrates, and attorneys throughout



Chris Fields became the director of the college in 2025.

the state. Two live webinars, in February and May, explored the intersection of AI and legal ethics in the courts and insights into how AI will impact the legal profession now and into the future. The course also addressed access to justice issues, and how the public is likely to use the technology. The two webinars drew 2,695 attendees.

Caseflow Management: The College collaborated with the Court’s Case Management Section to deliver a series of webinars discussing effective case management practices; statistical reporting requirements for common pleas, municipal, and county courts; domestic relations caseflow best practices; and case time guidelines, changes, and history. The webinars became the basis for courses available online and on demand.

Court Personnel Education: The College expands its educational opportunities to thousands of court personnel to support the independence of the judicial branch and to advance the administration of justice in Ohio. Key highlights from 2025 include the ongoing education to improve the leadership skills of court staff through the Court Management Program and the courses “Civil Treatment for Leaders” and “Civil Treatment for Employees.” In addition, the College is examining the educational needs of probation officers in the state.



Faculty development course, October 23

Court Security: In response to the continuing needs of courts across the state and to align with the Supreme Court’s priorities, the College expanded its education in 2025 regarding court and personal security. Two online, on-demand courses were updated and expanded to address the relevance of this topic, and the content was part of the New Judges Orientation.

New Judges Orientation: One of the top priorities of the College is ensuring that all new judicial officers (judges and magistrates) are prepared to assume the bench. In addition to holding New Judges Orientations on a yearly basis, the College also began a comprehensive analysis of the program.

The goal of the review, which began in March 2025 with the encouragement of Chief Justice Kennedy, is to provide new judicial officers with the most relevant and necessary content at optimal times through flexible, accessible methods that meet their individualized learning needs. More than 70 members of the judiciary served on a steering committee or one of several subcommittees tasked with evaluating and identifying the most essential content for new judges. The College will continue to collaborate with the Court and judicial partners to implement a plan to deliver the education in the most meaningful way possible.

Proactive Management-Based Regulation:

The College collaborated with the Office of Disciplinary Counsel to ensure that nearly 3,000 attorneys were able to complete the Proactive Management-Based Regulation course pursuant to Rule VI(1)(B) of the Rules for the Government of the Bar of Ohio.

Resources for the Bench: This centralized collection of bench cards, guides, and toolkits on the Court’s website is aimed at ensuring that judicial officers have ready access to the materials they need in their roles. To that end, the College identified education resources from its courses to make available on the webpage – an effort that will be ongoing.

Continuous Development of Faculty

The Judicial College relies on more than 500 individuals annually to teach its courses. The majority of those individuals are volunteers dedicated to enhancing the competence of the judiciary through education, which furthers the independence of the judicial branch. To that end, an annual two-day training on faculty development was held in October. It is part of ongoing efforts to collaborate with, guide, develop, and enhance the teaching skills of current and future faculty. Participants explored the basic principles of adult learning theory, learning objectives, teaching methods, audio-visual aids, and effective delivery.



Supporting Education of Guardians ad Litem, Guardians of Adults

In addition to the judges, magistrates, and court staff across the state that the college educates, it also is charged to ensure that guardians of adults and guardians ad litem are adequately prepared for the critical roles they serve in Ohio. Guardians of adults are appointed by a court to act in the best interest of people when they can no longer make or communicate decisions about themselves or their property. Guardians ad litem are appointed to assist a court in its determination of a child's best interests.

In 2025, nearly 8,000 guardians of adults completed almost 10,000 courses. Evaluation data across all guardianship courses show a nearly 40% increase in participants' self-reported knowledge after completing the education.

One guardian wrote: "The presenters were clear, engaging, and made the material easy to follow and understand. I highly recommend this course to anyone pursuing guardianship or working in a professional setting where they may interact with guardians. It offers valuable insights into the rights and responsibilities of both guardians and wards, making it an essential resource for anyone involved in this area."

Adult guardianship education primarily is offered through online self-study courses.

The college also provides videos and workbooks for local courts and organizations to present the fundamentals course and 16 continuing education courses at sites throughout the state. For non-English speakers, the fundamentals course and half of the continuing education courses are available in multiple languages.

Also this year, more than 600 guardians ad litem (GALs) registered almost 1,500 completions of the 15 courses available for online self-study. In addition, more than 600 GALs attended one of the nine pre-service courses or one of the 13 continuing education webinars offered during the year. Learners rated the quality of courses as excellent, on a 1-5 scale: 4.38 for all self-study courses and 4.76 for all instructor-led courses.

One participant in the pre-service course said the information about Rule of Superintendence 48 and the court system "gave a great expectation of what it will be like to be in the role."

Regarding a self-study course, another GAL said: "This was a good refresher. ... I did find myself remembering things that I had previously incorporated, but had forgotten or discontinued."



Connecting Courts and Corrections

Judicial officers from courts across the state recently had the opportunity through the Supreme Court of Ohio to explore the partnership between courts and corrections while experiencing life in both historic and modern-day prisons.

During the Crime and Punishment program organized by the Judicial College, 37 judges and magistrates met in Mansfield, where they began their day by reflecting on the history of the state's penal system within the confines of the historic Ohio State Reformatory.

There, participants discussed the changes in Ohio correctional history leading up to a tour of the facility that began housing offenders in 1896. Originally a reformatory for young offenders, the institution placed education and religion at the core of its mission. Over time, however, it shifted into an adult prison, known for its harsh conditions and punitive approach. The Ohio State Reformatory closed its doors in 1990 and was later used as the setting for the film *The Shawshank Redemption*.

Down the road from the former reformatory is an active, close security prison – Mansfield Correctional Institution (ManCI). Inside its walls is a campus complete with a school, doctor's office, recreation center, mental health clinic, housing units, and workspaces. Each of its inhabitants entered the facility by the sentence of a judge after being convicted of a felony crime.

Their visit to ManCI gave judges and magistrates an opportunity to speak with those incarcerated about life in prison and to get a glimpse of their daily routines.

During their tour, judicial officers spoke with prison staff, hearing about the successes and challenges of their jobs. Ohio leads the country in prison education programs, and at ManCI, students can receive their GED and even a bachelor's degree. Offenders can also gain work experience while incarcerated through ManCI's box manufacturing program or other prison jobs. Due to resource limitations, some jobs are reserved for offenders nearing their release dates to better prepare them for reintegration.

While walking the prison grounds, judges and magistrates also interacted with offenders who showed them their living spaces, shared their job duties in the dog adoption program, and answered questions about their experiences while incarcerated.

Those conversations gave judicial officers better insight into the outcomes of their sentences. Reflecting on the experience, one judge shared the following: "This was the best Ohio CLE I've taken. Seeing how what we do affects the individuals we have in court daily really makes you think deeper about the decisions we make and why. The tours were fun but also gave me an insight into what a prison sentence actually means to the individual."



Faculty development course, October 23

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

Advisory Committee on the Judicial Family Network

Vallie Bowman-English, Chair	Dan Firestone Jennifer Fuller	Rebecca Little Margaret Nevrekar	Allison Stimpert Scott Tucker
Erin Rohrer, Vice-Chair	Sarah Grace	Tiffany Nobles	Michael Worley
Rick Brunner	Dr. Susan Hany	Kristine Puskarich	Staff Liaison: Dean Hogan
Susan Burchfield	Ryan Krivosh	Craig Smith	

Court Personnel Education and Training Committee

Noah Atkinson	Gayle Ditmer	John Ralph	Valeda Slone
Douglas Bettis	Gina Hartman	Tasha Ruth	Juli Tice
Michelle Butts	Kathy Lopez	Eric Shafer	Staff Liaison: Dot Keil

Judicial College Board of Trustees

Hon. David Hejmanowski, Chair	Hon. Gene Zmuda, Secretary	Hon. Randall Fuller Magistrate Penny Gates	Hon. James Walther Staff Liaison: Chris Fields
Hon. Todd Grace, Vice Chair	Hon. Wende Cross Hon. Christen Finley	Hon. Paula Giulitto Hon. Joy Malek Oldfield	

Legal Resources

Diane Richards Brey
DIRECTOR

Andrew Bair
Vladimir Belo
James Bumbico
Laura Dawson
Byers Emmerling
Erick Gale

**Joseph Graziano*

Joseph Hess

Jeffrey Loeser

Ryan O'Rourke

Mel Prendergast

Michael Robertson

Kathryn Steveline

**Deanna Tuttle*

**Staff departed or retired in 2025*



The attorneys in the Office of Legal Resources are known as the master commissioners. The master commissioners in 2025 provided legal research and writing support to the justices on the non-discretionary portion of the docket.

Separation of Powers: A Strong and Independent Judiciary

The Office of Legal Resources plays a vital role in upholding the principle of separation of powers by ensuring the judiciary remains strong, independent, and well-supported. By delivering meticulous legal research and comprehensive written analyses, the office empowers the justices to focus on their constitutional duty of interpreting the law without external influence. This unwavering support reinforces the judiciary's ability to function as an independent branch of government, safeguarding its role as a cornerstone of democracy. Through its work, the Office of Legal Resources exemplifies its commitment to maintaining the integrity and independence of Ohio's judicial system.

Cases in the Office of Legal Resources include practice of law matters such as attorney and judicial discipline, character and fitness review of applicants to the bar, and the unauthorized practice of law. The office also works on state tax appeals, public utility appeals, workers' compensation appeals, death penalty appeals, and extraordinary writ cases.

Reporter of Decisions



Douglas M. Nelson
REPORTER OF DECISIONS

Katherine Biancamano
Britney Brouwer
Holly Coats
Alicia Elwing
Erik Henry
Fred Ingram
Becky Johnson
Stephanie Kellgren
Katherine Mosca
Audra Tidball

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.

Separation of Powers: A Strong and Independent Judiciary

The Reporter's Office plays a crucial role in maintaining the separation of powers and ensuring the independence of the judiciary by editing and publishing Supreme Court opinions, making caselaw accessible and authoritative. The efforts align with the Court's Writing Manual updates, reflecting the shift to online legal research while the reformatting project ensures that caselaw is as easily accessible and citable as statutory or administrative codes, reinforcing its status as an independent source of law. Additionally, the office maintains a free online repository of nearly 146,000 opinions and continues to publish the Ohio Official Reports, further supporting judicial transparency and accessibility.

Supreme Court Caselaw: A Separate and Independent Source of Ohio Law, Now Just as Easy to Access and Cite as Legal Authority from the Legislative and Executive Branches

During 2025, the Reporter's Office employed two interns to reformat the online versions of decisions issued by the Court between 1992 (the earliest year of decisions available online) and 2002 (when the Ohio WebCite first became consistently used). Supervised by Reporter's Office staff, the interns enhanced the accessibility of more than 2,200

of these decisions in various ways, including by updating font type and size and—most importantly—by sequentially numbering each paragraph. With the paragraphs numbered, judges, attorneys, and litigants can now pin-cite more precisely when citing or quoting particular language in the decisions.

The reformatting project brought these decisions into compliance with the Third Edition of the Court’s Writing Manual, which became effective in June 2024. The Third Edition 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. When the reformatting project is completed in early 2026, all Court decisions on the Court’s website will be citable by their Ohio WebCite and paragraph number rather than the volume and page number of Ohio Official Reports where they were published in print. In other words, citations no longer will need to refer to the page numbers of hardbound volumes.

As an independent and equally authoritative source of the law of a jurisdiction, caselaw should be as easy to locate, discuss, and quote as a jurisdiction’s statutory or administrative code.

Thanks to the efforts of Reporter’s Office staff and interns in the reformatting project last year, the vast majority of the decisions issued by the Court since 1992 can now be accessed and cited as easily and precisely as the various sections, divisions, and subsections of the Ohio Revised Code or the Ohio Administrative Code.

Reporter’s Office Statistics

The Reporter’s Office has continued to maintain the Opinions and Announcements section of the Court’s website. Nearly 146,000 opinions of Ohio courts, including the Supreme Court, are available there at no cost—all just as easily accessible to the public as the state’s statutes and regulations are on other government websites. This total includes the 220 Supreme Court opinions, 4,063 Court of Appeals opinions, and 171 Court of Claims opinions that were issued in 2025.

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 176 through 179 of Ohio St.3d, published in 2025, include more than 2,600 pages of opinions and 300 pages of announcements in Court cases.

During 2025, Reporter’s Office staff edited approximately **8,300 pages** of draft opinions, including:

243

draft majority and per curiam opinions

100

draft separate opinions (concurrences and dissents)

The Reporter’s Office maintains **146,000** court opinions online. This includes the following opinions from 2025:

220

Supreme Court of Ohio opinions

4,063

Court of Appeals opinions

171

Court of Claims opinions

Building Services



In 2025, the Office of Building Services was established by uniting Court Security, Facilities Management, and Civic Education under a single organizational structure. This intentional consolidation enhanced operational efficiency and ensured that every resource—human and physical—directly contributes to the Supreme Court of Ohio’s ability to function as a strong and independent third branch of government.

Separation of Powers: A Strong and Independent Judiciary

The office supports the principle of separation of powers by ensuring the judiciary operates as a secure, dignified, and independent branch of government. Through its unified structure, the Office supports the Court’s constitutional role by maintaining the physical and operational integrity of the Thomas J. Moyer Ohio Judicial Center and other judicial spaces. By safeguarding the Court’s facilities, events, and public engagement efforts, the Office enables the judiciary to function without external interference, reinforcing its independence and its ability to administer justice impartially. Every initiative—from security screenings to historic preservation—reflects the Office’s dedication to upholding the judiciary’s autonomy and its vital role in Ohio’s government.

The office operates through three sections comprising seven workgroups, all aligned with a shared purpose: to create and maintain an environment where justice can be administered impartially, securely, and accessibly.

Ryan Fahle
DIRECTOR

Chelsey Stillwell
Linda Sykes

Events & Education

Michael Bracone
Stacey Gall
Amber Hess
Christopher Lozan
Kristen Myers
Michael Robison
Douglas Stein
Jennifer Wardell

Facilities

Isaac Blackstone
Michael Bridges
Robert Brown
Webb Craggette
Anthony Joyce
Robert Little
Curtis Muhammad
Charles Ross
Brandon Sharron
Rick Stout
Nikola Tancevski
Robert Willis
David Woolridge
**Troy Moran*

Court Security

Julian Brown
Michael Carroll
Roger Eden
John Groom
Jeffrey Hunt
Scott Irion
Christopher Luginbuhl
Nicholas Morris
Kimberly Province
James Robinson
George Roush
Rodney Tyler
Michael West
**Nelson Frantz*
**Nicholas Hunt*
**Darryl Payne*

**Staff departed or retired in 2025*



Security staff was recognized in December for their quick and life-saving response to a medical emergency.

Joining Resources for a Stronger Court

Court Security Section

An independent judiciary begins with physical safety. Only when justices, staff, attorneys, and the public can enter a courthouse without fear can the rule of law flourish.

In 2025, the Court Security Section:

- Conducted more than 31,000 security screenings at the Thomas J. Moyer Ohio Judicial Center.
- Completed 14 comprehensive security assessments for local courts, measuring compliance with the 16 standards in Appendix C of the Rules of Superintendence.
- Trained and certified 41 local court security officers through seven checkpoint screening courses.
- Responded to 5 medical emergencies within the Moyer Judicial Center.
- These efforts strengthen public confidence that Ohio's courts are safe and secure spaces where justice can be carried out safely and effectively.

Facilities Section

When the Supreme Court convenes, the dignified and well-maintained setting is a visible declaration reminding all present of the institution's permanence and independence, standing on equal footing with the legislative and executive branches.

The Maintenance and Housekeeping & Grounds workgroups kept every system and surface of the almost 100-year-old Moyer Judicial Center in exemplary condition:

- Responded to every computerized work-order request, ensuring proper temperature, lighting, and equipment function.
- Tracked and completed all mandatory state and local inspections (elevators, fire systems, HVAC, roofing, etc.).
- Launched a 2025 initiative, backed by specialized training, to restore and protect the building's historic bronze and brass surfaces.
- Advanced the LED lighting conversion project to further support energy efficiency goals.
- Initiated planning for the replacement of aging cooling towers to ensure reliable climate control.

By preserving the building's grandeur and reliability, Facilities affirms that the judiciary neither seeks nor settles for second-tier resources.



Events and Education Section

In 2025 the Meetings & Events workgroup flawlessly supported the Court’s work and public outreach:

- Coordinated 1,041 meetings and events totaling 2,334 hours.
- Welcomed approximately 7,280 participants, from legal professionals to community organizations.
- Prepared the Courtroom, justices’ conference room, and attorney areas for every session and special proceeding.

Each successful event reinforced the Court’s independence in managing its schedule, and environment, and communications.

Civic Education

Public trust in an independent judiciary grows when citizens can see it in action, engage with it directly, and understand how it serves them.

In 2025:

- Hosted nearly 250 tours for more than 10,500 visitors, most of them students. These visits were supported by 15 volunteers who generously contributed more than 450 hours of service.
- Conducted the 84th and 85th Off-Site Court sessions in Monroe and Defiance Counties, continuing a 38-year tradition established by Chief Justice Thomas J. Moyer. Since 1987, a total of 46,110 Ohioans—including 37,115 students—have observed the Supreme Court hear and decide cases in their own communities.

These experiences reinforce the principle that the judiciary exists to serve the people, and not any political agenda.

Support Groups: Mail and Records Centers

Even the most routine operations must be executed with unwavering reliability; any failure risks eroding the Court’s independence.

- The Mail Center processed 6,893 packages and metered 36,473 pieces of outgoing mail without a single critical delay.
- Records Management successfully completed a complex May 2025 relocation of more than 10,000 boxes back into the Judicial Center, strengthening control over official records while advancing digitization efforts for greater security and efficiency.

In 2025 the Office of Building Services demonstrated that behind every independent decision rendered in an Ohio courtroom stands a dedicated network of professionals who ensure the judiciary remains secure, dignified, and accessible to all—precisely what a strong and independent third branch requires.

Off-Site Court



Monroe County Hosts 84th Off-Site Court

Monroe Central High School in Woodsfield hosted an official session of the Supreme Court of Ohio during the 84th session of Off-Site Court.

Chief Justice Thomas J. Moyer established the Off-Site Court Program in 1987, and this was the first time the program was held in Monroe County. Over 350 students from Monroe Central High School, Beallsville High School, River High School, and Swiss Hills Career Center were in attendance.

Off-Site Court offers students an immersive experience to learn more about the judicial branch and state government.

Observing oral arguments at Off-Site Court is the culmination of several weeks of preparation and collaboration between students, teachers, and local attorneys. After observing a case, participating students met with the oralists involved to debrief the case and discuss the legal profession. Students also learned more about the legislative branch with State Senator Brian Chavez, who represents Monroe County as part of Senate District 30.

Archived footage of the Off-Site Court arguments is available courtesy of the Ohio Channel. Defiance County was selected to host the fall session of Off-Site Court in October 2025.

Record-Setting Number of Students See Justice in Action During 85th Off-Site Court

The Supreme Court of Ohio visited Defiance County to hear oral arguments before a record-setting crowd and inspire the future generation to become legal professionals during the 85th session of the Supreme Court's traveling civic education program. A total of 1,836 students from schools throughout Defiance County attended oral arguments.

The Off-Site Court program includes an official session of oral arguments before the Supreme Court and also offers an immersive experience for students to learn more about the judicial branch and state government through collaborations among the justices, Court staff, teachers, and local attorneys.

Chief Justice Thomas J. Moyer established the Off-Site Court program in 1987. This month's event was the first time the program was held in Defiance County, marking the 76th county in Ohio to host the justices. Students from Defiance High School, Tinora High School, Ayersville High School, Fairview High School, and Hicksville High School were in attendance.

Student ambassadors had the opportunity to greet the justices and join them for a luncheon following oral arguments.

After observing oral arguments, students met with the attorneys who argued each case to share what they saw and to discuss the legal profession. To conclude their experiences, students learned about the legislative branch with State Representative Roy Klopfenstein, who represents a portion of Defiance County, which is part of House District 82.

The Off-Site Court program also addresses Ohio's rural attorney shortage by exposing students to the importance of legal careers. Defiance County, like most of Ohio's rural communities, is considered a legal desert and doesn't have enough attorneys to represent the county's population.

Chief Justice Sharon L. Kennedy sees the program as a powerful educational tool to address this disparity and hopes it will inspire students to pursue a career in law.

Defiance High School principal Jay Jerger encourages other Ohio school administrators to inquire about hosting the Supreme Court for future sessions of Off-Site Court.

Archived footage of the Off-Site Court arguments is available courtesy of the Ohio Channel. Carroll County will host the next Off-Site Court session in April 2026.



Black History Month



Supreme Court Celebrates Excellence in Annual Black History Month Event

Students from Columbus area schools gathered at the Thomas J. Moyer Ohio Judicial Center for the Supreme Court of Ohio's annual Black History Month event. This year's program, "Celebrating Excellence, Building Futures," honored the Tuskegee Airmen, their connection to Ohio, and the contributions of Black Ohioans and their legacy in inspiring careers in law.

The event's speakers highlighted the many life lessons that students can learn from the Tuskegee Airmen, who were the first all-African American unit in the Army Air Forces. The Tuskegee Airmen were stationed at what is now Rickenbacker Air National Guard Base after World War II and are the subject of a new exhibit in the Moyer Judicial Center's Visitor Education Center.

Gregory Edmonds, the president of the Ohio Memorial Chapter of the Tuskegee Airmen, remarked that the Tuskegee Airmen were driven by a steadfast commitment to themselves, their race, and their country, regardless of the conditions, barriers, or personal rewards.

Kelzé Riley, a labor and employment attorney, discussed the discrimination and barriers the Tuskegee Airmen faced, and how their hard work and dedication allowed them to prevail.

Lyn Ford, an award-winning storyteller and poet, echoed Riley's sentiment of the importance of perseverance as she spoke about her father, who served as a Tuskegee Airman. Ford's father performed a great service to the country in the military and was extraordinarily accomplished, but he was unable to find work in similar fields when he returned home. He found other ways to still serve his community, including joining a planning commission. Ford encouraged the audience to find creative ways to achieve goals just as her father did.

Recordings of this event and previous Black History Month programs are available to stream online through the Ohio Channel. The Tuskegee Airmen's legacy is featured in a new exhibit in the Visitor Education Center at the Moyer Judicial Center.

After Hours Tour

Supreme Court Offers Evening Tours in Celebration of America's 250th Birthday

The Supreme Court of Ohio stayed open late to the public on Sept. 9 with two evening tour offerings.

This special evening event was part of the Supreme Court's ongoing celebration of America's upcoming 250th birthday.

Visitors had the chance to see Ohio's rich history on full display at the Thomas J. Moyer Ohio Judicial Center, home of the Supreme Court. The iconic downtown Columbus building was completed in 1933 and served as the Ohio Departments Building for nearly 70 years. Listed on the U.S. National Register of Historic Places, it was renovated and repurposed in 2004 as the "forever home" and headquarters of Ohio's highest court in the state.

The awe-inspiring interior features a convergence of Art-Deco styling and Beaux-Arts architecture, which gives the building the look and feel of a palace with museum-quality finishes. The artwork and fixtures in the Grand Concourse and Courtroom make it a one-of-a-kind Ohio landmark.

The evening tour groups were among some of the first to view the Court's new Women in Law exhibit. The installation features the trailblazing contributions women have made to Ohio's legal history, from the first women admitted to the bar to those who ascended to the highest courts.

While in the Visitor Education Center, guests could also explore the history of Ohio, from its Native American roots to its impact on industry and transportation. Learn of the Ohioans who made an impact on America's story while walking through the Grand Concourse or examining the Tuskegee Airmen exhibit in the Visitor Education Center.



More than 10,500 visitors came to see the Moyer Judicial Center in 2025.

Human Resources

Michele Jakubowski
DIRECTOR

Kimberly Cardwell
Laken Pauff
Amber Postlewaite Veal
Ryan Smith
**Beth Aman*
**Niko Jackson*
**Michelle LaMaster*

**Staff departed or retired in 2025*



The Office of Human Resources develops and administers HR policies and programs that support the strategic direction of the Court. The office delivers comprehensive services in recruitment, classification, compensation, employee development, and workforce planning to ensure the Court operates efficiently and effectively.

Separation of Powers: A Strong and Independent Judiciary

The independence of the judiciary extends to the governance of its workforce, and the Office of Human Resources plays a central role in maintaining that independence. Unlike other state agencies, the Court exercises autonomous authority over its position descriptions, job classifications, and compensation structure.

By managing these functions independently, Human Resources ensures the Court can:

- Define its own organizational structure
- Attract and retain the highly specialized talent required for judicial operations
- Maintain a workforce aligned with the constitutional and administrative needs of an independent branch of government

Staff Harmonization

Human Resources advanced several initiatives designed to promote clarity, consistency, and equity across the Court's workforce. As part of the Staff Harmonization project, the office conducted a comprehensive review of all position descriptions and introduced new templates that clearly define essential job duties, responsibilities, and core competencies. These updates enhance transparency and provide employees with a clear understanding of expectations within their roles.

The office also performed a detailed audit and restructuring of job classifications to better reflect:

- Scope of work
- Decision-making authority
- Technical requirements
- Level of independence

Qualifications and competency standards were refined to ensure uniformity and internal alignment, resulting in a more cohesive classification framework across the organization.

Employee Development Program Manager

In 2025, the Court established a new, dedicated Employee Development Program Manager position—an investment in building a high-performing, collaborative, and mission-driven workforce. This unique role leads the strategic design, delivery, and evaluation of Court-wide professional development initiatives.

Key responsibilities include:

- Developing comprehensive training programs
- Creating mentorship and career-pathing opportunities
- Enhancing employee engagement and retention
- Shaping the onboarding experience
- Supporting employee recognition programs
- Working closely with Court leadership and departments, the program manager ensures development initiatives align with organizational priorities and foster a culture of continuous learning.



Human Resources provided onboarding for externs.

During 2025,
the Office of
Human Resources:

recruited, hired,
and onboarded

51

new employees

supported career
growth through

29

internal promotions

and additionally
onboarded

53

new judges

30

new Court of
Appeals employees

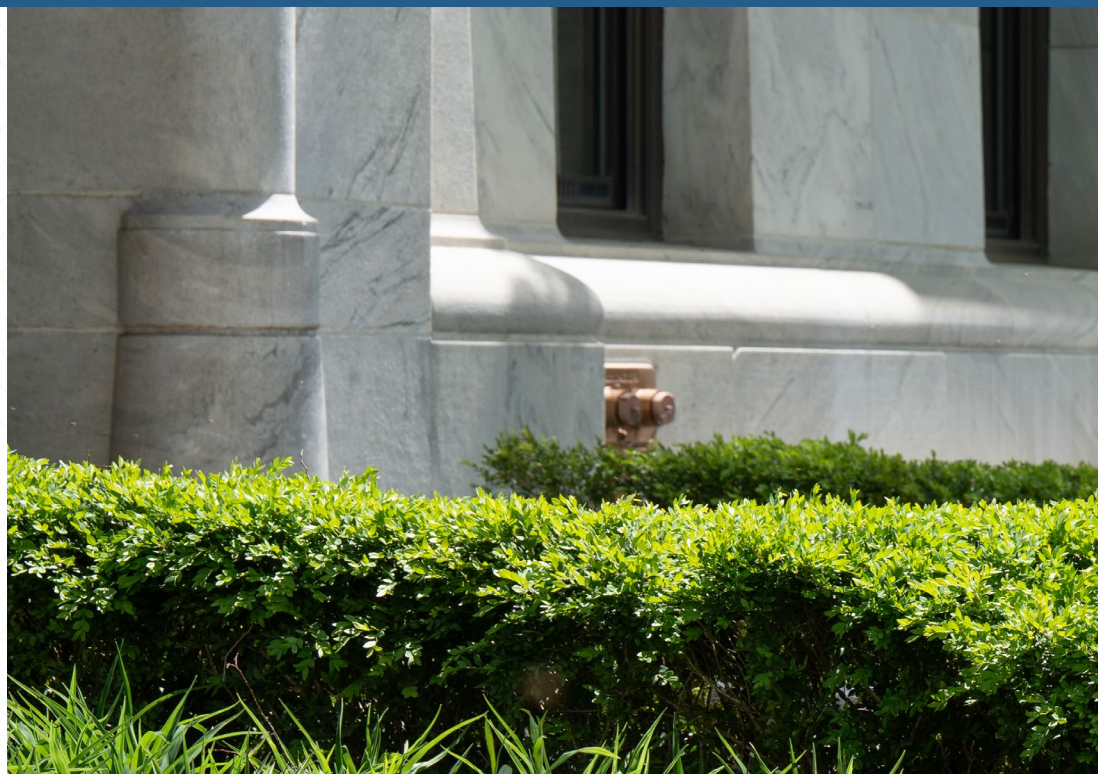
13

Clerks of Court

Information Technology

Robert D. Stuart
DIRECTOR

Kristina Blake
Sarah Brougher
William Campbell
Karena Clay
Randall Drum
J Espinosa-Smith
Patrick Farkas
Kevin Fitzpatrick
Randall Garrabrant
Heather Huth
Gregory Jarrett
Russell Johnson
Joshua Mccrea
Jason Monroe
Alan Ohman
Megan Real
Michelle Ridgway
Joshua Scarberry
Igor Stavniychuk
Lisa Tenerove
Cynthia Wendel
Gabriel White



The Office of Information Technology (IT) provides essential technological services and infrastructure that enable the offices of the Court and its constituents to operate efficiently, securely, and effectively. The office is comprised of four sections: Information Technology; Network & Technology Resources; Applications Development; and IT Project Management.

Separation of Powers: A Strong and Independent Judiciary

A strong and independent judiciary relies on modern, resilient, and secure technology. IT advances this independence by safeguarding the Court's digital environment, ensuring uninterrupted access to mission-critical systems and empowering judges and staff with reliable tools to carry out their constitutional duties. Through innovative system design, robust cybersecurity protections, and trusted statewide information-sharing platforms, the Office reinforces the judiciary's capacity to operate autonomously, transparently, and with integrity.

IT ensures the continuous operation of the Court's information technology systems and processes, including the development and maintenance of computer networks, internet services, personal computers, internal business applications, databases, end-user software programs, web-based service applications, copiers, telephony services, cybersecurity protections, disaster recovery solutions, and audiovisual technologies. These enterprise-level services ensure that Court staff and judicial partners have secure, dependable access to the tools necessary to perform their work with confidence and efficiency.



Commission Members

Hon. Anita Laster Mays, Chair
Hon. Linda Warner, Vice-Chair
Hon. Rhonda Burggraf
Ken Carpenter
Hon. James J. Costello
Hon. Kevin W. Dunn
Christopher Galli
Hon. Francine Goldberg

Barron Henley
Magistrate David Hunter
Hon. Harvey Hyman
David J. Magura, Jr.
Branden C. Meyer
Hon. Beth Owens
Hon. Carolyn J. Paschke
Michael Pifher

David A. Randolph
Jason Sadler
Robert Scott
Hon. Terri Stupica
Hon. Charles Sulek
Hon. Adam Wilgus
Eric Zatko
Staff Liaison: Robert Stuart

Ohio Courts Network (OCN)

IT is responsible for the development, implementation, and maintenance of the Ohio Courts Network (OCN)—a statewide criminal justice information exchange that provides courts and justice system partners with timely access to critical data. Accessed by thousands of users each day, OCN supports investigations, background checks, criminal history reviews, driving record evaluations, guardian and foster care decisions, protection order reviews, and more. 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. OCN continues to serve as one of Ohio’s most valuable tools for informed judicial decision making.

Commission on Technology and the Courts

The IT Director serves as staff liaison to the Commission on Technology and the Courts, which identifies technology trends affecting Ohio courts and provides guidance on the development, governance, and use of emerging systems—including the Ohio Courts Network. Through this work, IT ensures that technology driven policy and innovation continue to align with the needs of Ohio’s judiciary, supporting consistent, accessible, secure, forward-looking progress across the state.

Law Library

Erin N. Waltz
DIRECTOR

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

**Staff departed or retired in 2025*



In 2025, the Supreme Court’s Law Library continued to serve as an essential resource for the judiciary, ensuring that judges, magistrates, and court personnel have access to authoritative legal information necessary for fair and informed decision-making. By providing comprehensive research support, the library strengthens the foundation of judicial independence. As the central hub for authoritative legal resources, the library remains essential to the work of the judicial branch, as well as attorneys and citizens across Ohio.

Separation of Powers: A Strong and Independent Judiciary

The Law Library plays a vital role in upholding the separation of powers by fostering a strong, independent judiciary through unimpeded access to legal scholarship. Judicial independence depends on the ability to research, analyze, and interpret the law free from external influence —work made possible by the library’s extensive print and digital collections and the expertise of its research staff.

The library’s dedication to public service is also evident in its ongoing efforts to assist citizens with legal research, expanding access to justice across the state. Its expert research support contributes to the development and refinement of legal ideas, helping judges and legal professionals resolve complex issues with confidence.

In 2025 the Law Library

answered	completed	added
11,817	8,536	20,526
research questions	judicial research requests	materials

These figures highlight the library's dedication to delivering timely, accurate legal information to its diverse users, including justices, judges, magistrates, court staff, attorneys, state agencies, and the public.

Preserving Access to Essential Legal Resources

Not all legal research materials are available online. For many critical resources, the best or only way to access them is to pull a volume from a shelf. The library continues to maintain these essential texts, ensuring thorough and reliable legal research.

More than a repository of books, the Supreme Court Law Library is a dynamic environment that supports justice, scholarship, and professional growth. While digital tools have broadened access, many authoritative works remain available only in print. By centralizing these resources, the library provides a cost-effective solution for the state, reducing duplication of materials across agencies and branches of government.

A Workspace Designed for Precision

Legal research demands precision and deep focus. The library offers a structured setting that supports the concentration required for drafting opinions, analyzing precedent, and conducting complex research. As legal practice evolves, physical library space remains vital, ensuring access to justice, accuracy in legal research, and the preservation of legal knowledge.

Supreme Court of Ohio Honors Judicial Legacy with Melhorn Exhibit for Law Day

The Supreme Court of Ohio commemorated Law Day on May 1 with the unveiling of the Melhorn exhibit, "Preserving Ohio's Judicial Legacy."

This presentation highlights a significant contribution to the state's legal history with Frank Melhorn's donation of the historic article, Important Law Intelligence, first published in the Scioto Gazette on December 25, 1806.

The article, attributed to Judge Calvin Pease, captures a pivotal moment in Ohio's judicial history. Judge Pease, facing considerable political pressure and the threat of impeachment, rendered a groundbreaking decision ruling an act of the Ohio Legislature unconstitutional. This assertion of judicial independence marked the first recorded use of judicial review in the state and laid the foundation for the judiciary's role as a coequal branch of government. Often referred to as Ohio's Marbury v. Madison, this early case exemplifies the enduring principles of justice and the rule of law in Ohio.

The Supreme Court recognizes Frank Melhorn for his efforts in preserving this historic document for the public's viewing. Utilizing high-resolution scans provided by the American Antiquarian Society, Melhorn oversaw the creation of two replicas of the article, now on display publicly, offering greater accessibility for those interested in Ohio's judicial history. Together, this donation honors Judge Pease's courage while serving as a testament to Ohio's commitment to preserving its legal heritage.

Law Day, a national observance held annually on May 1, celebrates the rule of law and its role in protecting freedoms and promoting justice. This year's commemoration underscores the historical contributions of individuals like Judge Pease, whose legacy continues to inspire confidence in the judicial system.

The Supreme Court of Ohio invites the public to reflect on and celebrate these foundational moments of legal history.



WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 25, 1806.

CHILICOTHE, BY J. S. COLLINS & Co. PRINTERS.

E.
Ann hath, with-
, eloped from my
re to warn all per-
rboring her on my
ed to pay none of

IAH JINKINS.
15th, 1806.

ORE.
just opening and
e house in Paint
oied as a printing
Co. A large and

DIZE,
Goods of every
, Saddlery, Iron
and Tin Wares,

which they will sell at the most re-
duced prises, for cash.

J. WOODBRIDGE, & Co.
Chillicothe, Oct. 16th, 1806.

Valuable Property for
THE subscriber offers for
lowing property, situate
Chillicothe, viz.—The noted s
appurtenances, whereon he no
sign of the BLACK HORSE,
of Water and Walnut street
VERN HOUSE is about fifty feet
ries high, with a commodious c
and smoke house, a well incl
with bearing fruit trees of app
cherry, sufficient for the use o
family, together with an exce
water, walled with brick and a
thereon.—Also,

An OUT-LOT, containing
and well inclosed, and set w
grass. A further description
useless, presuming those incl
chase will view the premises
making a contract.

The above property will be
CASH, or on reasonable instalm
cured. Military or other land
titles, will be accepted in part p

For further particulars, en
subscriber on the premises.

N B Immediate possession

by bond, note or book ac-
ard before that time and
ve balances.

t comply with the above
great any farther indel

Public Information



Andy Ellinger
DIRECTOR

Office of Public Information

Lisa Colbert
Phil Farmer
Christine Holmes
Michael Leavitt
Erika Lemke
Kathleen Maloney
Ely Margolis
Eliza Mertz
Adam Mihely
Dan Trevas

Ohio Government Telecommunications

**Jesse Bethea*
Liesl Bonneau
Anne Fife

**Staff departed or retired in 2025*

The Office of Public Information (PIO) plays a vital role in advancing the Supreme Court of Ohio's mission to uphold the law, ensure justice, and strengthen public trust in the judiciary. Operating at the nexus of communication, education, and creative strategy, PIO guides its two core components—Communications and Creative Services—to reach diverse audiences with clarity, professionalism, and purpose.

Separation of Powers: A Strong and Independent Judiciary

PIO has been instrumental in supporting the Court's commitment to judicial independence and transparency. Through expanded livestreaming of court sessions, accessible publications, and robust media engagement, the office reinforces public understanding of the judiciary as a coequal branch of government.

By delivering clear, accurate information through platforms such as Court News Ohio, educational exhibits, and public events, PIO helps demystify the judicial process and promotes an informed citizenry—essential to safeguarding the judiciary's independence and integrity.

Launching America 250: An 18-Month Celebration

In 2025, PIO launched America 250, an 18-month celebration commemorating the nation's 250th anniversary. Beginning July 5, 2025, with *The Story of America: This Day in History*, the initiative highlights the judiciary's role in shaping the nation's legal and cultural heritage.



Exhibits such as Women in Law and Ohio’s Foundational Documents, along with events like the After Hours Open Doors evening tour and the Off-Site Court sessions in Monroe and Defiance Counties, PIO has brought history to life while fostering a deeper appreciation for the judiciary’s role in America.

Court News Ohio: Informing the Public, Strengthening Trust

At the center of PIO’s communications work is Court News Ohio (CNO)—the judiciary’s primary digital news platform and a trusted source for timely, authoritative information about Ohio’s courts.

CNO provides comprehensive coverage of opinions, rulings, rule amendments, administrative actions, and human-interest stories, translating complex legal matters into clear, accessible reporting. This work ensures the public and legal community can engage with judicial decisions based on facts and context—not speculation.

CNO also delivers previews of oral arguments and concise summaries of Court decisions. These resources help journalists, attorneys, and the public understand key legal issues, outcomes, and their implications, further supporting transparency and equitable access to judicial information.

Digital Platforms Advancing Transparency and Access

Beyond CNO, PIO oversees the Court’s website, the central hub for case law, court rules, educational materials, and judicial history. Designed to serve a wide range of audiences, the site prioritizes intuitive navigation, visual clarity, and accessible content.

A cornerstone of this digital presence is the livestreaming of court sessions through The Ohio Channel, allowing Ohioans to observe oral arguments and court proceedings in real time. This level of access underscores the judiciary’s openness while preserving the dignity and integrity of the judicial process—an essential balance for a strong and independent court system.

Public Records and Media Engagement

PIO’s approach to public records and media relations is defined by accuracy, responsiveness, and reliability.

The office manages a high volume of media inquiries and public information requests each year, providing timely, well-vetted, and reliable responses. By working closely with legal experts and court divisions, PIO ensures that information released to the public is both precise and contextual.

These efforts enhance accountability while respecting judicial independence. By maintaining consistent, professional engagement with the press and the public, PIO strengthens trust in the courts and supports informed civic discourse.

The communications team continues to refine how information is delivered—expanding social media engagement and sharing court news, opinions, and decisions in more accessible formats. This evolution in tone and delivery helps ensure judicial information resonates with Ohio’s diverse communities.

Creative Services: Supporting Excellence Through Design

PIO’s creative services team plays an essential role in advancing the Court’s mission through high-quality design, branding, and multimedia storytelling. Their work ensures that the Court’s messaging is clear and consistent across all platforms.

Graphic Design and Print Media

Creative services supports every division of the Court by producing visually compelling and cohesive materials, including publications, training manuals, presentations, and event collateral.

Web Design and Development

The team helps maintain and enhance the Court’s online presence with a strong focus on usability, accessibility, and modern design standards. Ongoing accessibility initiatives ensure webpages, forms, and publications meet ADA WCAG 2.1 requirements, providing equitable access for all users.

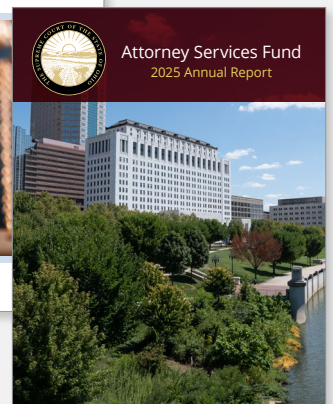
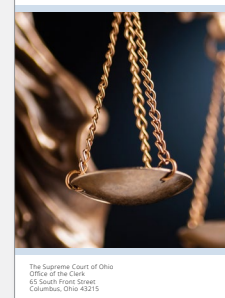
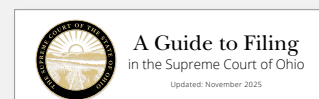
Photography and Videography

Through high-resolution photography, professional video, and engaging multimedia content, creative services documents and elevates the work of the judiciary. These visuals present the Court’s work with clarity, professionalism, and respect, reinforcing public understanding of the judiciary’s role within Ohio’s system of government.

Looking Ahead

As the America 250 celebration continues into 2026, PIO will build on its momentum through a series of themed monthly initiatives. The communications and creative services teams will continue to amplify the Court’s message through digital platforms, publications, and social media, while advancing signature projects designed to enhance public access to the Court’s resources.

Through its unwavering dedication to innovation, transparency, and public education, the Office of Public Information remains a cornerstone of the Court’s efforts to uphold the principles of justice and foster trust in a strong and independent judiciary.



Ohio Channel Partnership

The Office of Public Information (PIO) oversees the Court coverage provided by the Ohio Government Telecommunications (OGT) Ohio Channel, which plays a pivotal role in enhancing transparency and accessibility in the judicial system. OGT records and live streams Supreme Court oral arguments ensuring the public remains informed and connected to the judicial process.

In 2025, OGT strengthened the public's access to the work of the Supreme Court of Ohio through expanded video coverage, modernized infrastructure, and record-setting multimedia production.

The team completed its first full year operating with upgraded courtroom camera systems and robotics, significantly improving visual clarity and close-up coverage of oral arguments and ceremonial events while eliminating the need for temporary production equipment. OGT recorded 120 oral arguments across 31 court days, including Off-Site Court sessions in Monroe and Defiance Counties, and producing two supplemental videos to accompany and enhance the program.

Through live statewide streaming and broadcast coverage, OGT ensured broad public access to oral arguments, investitures, portrait dedications, Admission to the Bar ceremonies, the Black History Month program, and the State of the Judiciary. The team also supported civic education by broadcasting the Ohio Center for Law-Related Education Mock Trial and Moot Court state competitions.

Under the direction PIO, OGT completed more video projects than in any previous year, providing production services to 10 sections of the Court. Major initiatives included a three-part reentry video series supporting Specialized Dockets and rehabilitation efforts, training and public service campaigns and two new video franchises, Making the Case and Featured Decision. The new series highlight pivotal Court cases and decisions, making the Court's primary work more accessible to the public.

Videography by the Numbers

Statewide live coverage of:

120 Oral arguments	1 State of the Judiciary
3 Investitures	2 Portrait Dedications
3 Admission to the Bar ceremonies	1 Black History Month program

In addition to:

31 court days covered (Jan. – Dec. 2025)	4 OGT staff deployed for each Off-Site Court
10 Supreme Court offices supported with production services	3-part Reentry Video Initiative supporting Specialized Dockets
2 Ohio Center for Law-Related Education state competitions broadcast	2 Off-Site Court sessions at Monroe and Defiance Counties
5 Featured Decisions	30+ video projects completed — highest annual total to date
6 Making the Case	



Click to watch the video collection.



Supreme Court Celebrates Women in Law at Exhibit Opening

The Supreme Court of Ohio proudly unveiled its new Women in Law exhibit, a tribute to the extraordinary women who have shaped Ohio's legal history and inspired future generations of lawyers. The exhibit, located in the Visitor Education Center of the Thomas J. Moyer Ohio Judicial Center, highlights the impact trailblazing women have made on Ohio's legal system.

Chief Justice Sharon L. Kennedy reflected on the significance of the exhibit and the legacy of the women it honors during the grand opening ceremony. She stated that the exhibit is a testament to the power of perseverance, courage, and vision, honoring the women who broke barriers and challenged conventions.

Chief Justice Kennedy also acknowledged the presence of several former Justices of the Supreme Court of Ohio, including Evelyn Lundberg Stratton, Yvette McGee Brown, Judith L. French, Mary DeGenaro, and Melody J. Stewart, whose contributions have left an

indelible mark on Ohio's legal landscape.

Visitors will learn not only of the women justices who made a mark on the Supreme Court, but also the first women admitted to the bar, those first elected to local judgeships, and those who rose to the highest positions in the Ohio Attorney General's Office.

The Women in Law exhibit is made possible through a grant from the Ohio State Bar Foundation and is part of the Court's America 250 celebration, highlighting pioneering women who've contributed to the nation's evolving justice system. The exhibit joins other educational displays in the Visitor Education Center, including Careers in Law, Tuskegee Airmen: Portraits in Courage, and Justices in Uniform.

The Supreme Court invites the public to explore the exhibit and be inspired by the stories of these remarkable women.



New Exhibit Celebrates 250 Years of Freedom Through Ohio's Foundational Documents

The Supreme Court of Ohio continues its America 250 commemoration with a new exhibit: Ohio's Foundational Documents. Located on the historic ground floor of the Visitor Education Center, this exhibit offers a unique opportunity to explore the pivotal texts that shaped Ohio's history and its connection to America's enduring pursuit of liberty and justice.

The exhibit showcases five foundational documents—the Declaration of Independence, the Articles of Confederation, the U.S. Constitution, the Northwest Ordinance, and the Ohio Constitution—each playing a critical role in Ohio's journey from frontier territory to a thriving state. Through these documents, visitors will gain a deeper understanding of how Ohio's story intertwines with the broader American narrative, reflecting shared ideals of freedom, equality, and governance.

Visitors will explore the Declaration of Independence's influence, the Articles of Confederation's role in creating the Northwest Territory, and the U.S. Constitution's framework for governance. The exhibit also highlights the Northwest Ordinance's revolutionary blueprint for statehood and the Ohio Constitution's unique contributions to the state's identity.

As America prepares for its 250th anniversary, this exhibit invites visitors to honor the past while embracing the values that will guide the next chapter of Ohio's and America's shared history.

This exhibit is one of several featured in the Visitor Education Center at the Thomas J. Moyer Ohio Judicial Center.



Women in Law exhibit dedication, August 26

The Commission on the Thomas J. Moyer Ohio Judicial Center

The Commission on the Thomas J. Moyer Ohio Judicial Center, established in 2005, advises the Supreme Court of Ohio on preserving the artistic, architectural, and historical integrity of the Moyer Judicial Center. The 10-member commission brings together individuals with deep expertise and a shared appreciation for the building's enduring significance as the home of the judicial branch of Ohio's government, as well as for the history and timeless artistry represented throughout the structure.

Separation of Powers: A Strong and Independent Judiciary

A strong and independent judiciary is grounded not only in constitutional authority, but also in thoughtful stewardship of the physical spaces that embody and protect that independence. The Commission's work ensures that the Moyer Judicial Center—symbolically and functionally the heart of Ohio's judicial branch—remains preserved, respected, and maintained free from external influence.

By safeguarding the building's historic architecture, public art, and structural integrity, the Commission helps uphold the dignity, autonomy, and continuity of the judiciary for generations to come.

Women in Law Exhibit

Through support from the Thomas J. Moyer Judicial Center Foundation, the Court hosted the Women in Law Exhibit, a special installation celebrating the trailblazing women who have shaped Ohio's legal landscape. The exhibit highlighted historic milestones, honored the contributions of women who advanced the profession, and showcased artifacts and stories that illuminate their lasting impact on the judiciary.

The Commission reviewed and supported the exhibit's placement and presentation, ensuring alignment with the building's artistic and historical preservation standards.

Long-Term Preservation Planning

In 2025, the architecture committee advanced recommendations for the development of a comprehensive historic structure report to guide long-term preservation of the Moyer Judicial Center. This report would serve as a foundational document, providing detailed historical context and a thorough assessment of the building's current condition.

The report is expected to support proactive facilities management, including maintenance planning, preservation initiatives, and any major renovation or restoration projects. It would also offer essential guidance for the care of the building's extensive artwork—murals, mosaics, sculptures, and other architectural features—ensuring each piece is maintained according to its historic and artistic significance.

By documenting both the building's past and its preservation needs, the report would become a vital resource for all future repairs, rehabilitations, and conservation projects.

Core Responsibilities

The Commission advises the Court on a wide range of stewardship responsibilities, including:

- Recommending standards for the selection, placement, and preservation of fine art displayed in the Moyer Judicial Center.
- Providing recommendations to the Thomas J. Moyer Judicial Center Foundation regarding the acquisition of new artwork.
- Advising the Court on exhibitions of fine art throughout the building.
- Offering guidance on architectural and structural repairs, renovations, and improvements to the facility.

Activities of the Commission in 2025

The Commission held 4 meetings during 2025, focusing on ongoing stewardship, current preservation needs, and preparations for long-term planning projects. The year's work reflects the Commission's ongoing commitment to protecting the Moyer Judicial Center as both a historic landmark and the centerpiece of Ohio's judicial identity. The year's work reflects the Commission's continued commitment to protecting the Moyer Judicial Center as both a historic landmark and the centerpiece of Ohio's judicial identity.

Portrait Presentations

In 2025, the Court voted to accept three portraits on permanent loan from the Moyer Judicial Center Foundation:

- Former Chief Justice Eric Brown
- Former Justice James Patrick Celebrezze
- Former Justice Evelyn Lundberg Stratton

Court staff coordinated portrait presentation ceremonies for former Justice Stratton and Chief Justice Brown, celebrating their contributions and preserving their legacies within the halls of the Judicial Center.

Commission Members

Ashley Bartman Watson, Chair
Apps M. Akpofure
Joy C. Bledsoe
Brodi J. Conover
Michael D. Farley
Rick W. Grady

Justin Nigro
Nancy Recchie
Marques Hillman Richeson
Mary Rody
Staff Liaison: Keely McWhorter

Legacy of Retired Justice Stratton Honored During Portrait Dedication

A reminder of the lasting impact retired Justice Evelyn Lundberg Stratton made on courts in Ohio and nationwide will permanently hang on the walls of the Thomas J. Moyer Ohio Judicial Center.

On behalf of the Thomas J. Moyer Foundation, Chief Justice Sharon L. Kennedy accepted a portrait of her friend and colleague, who served on the Supreme Court of Ohio from 1996 until her retirement at the end of 2012.

Born to missionary parents in Thailand, Justice Stratton's path to the bench was unlike any other. She attended boarding schools throughout Asia and, at 18, returned to the United States alone with just \$100 in her pocket. She went on to earn her juris doctorate from the Ohio State University College of Law and, at the age of 34, became the first woman elected as a judge on the Franklin County Common Pleas Court in 1988.

She earned her nickname, "The Velvet Hammer," as a reflection of her ability to be firm and decisive in sentencing while treating everyone who came before her with dignity and respect.

Then in 1996, Justice Stratton reached new heights in her career when appointed as a justice on the Ohio Supreme Court. She credits her parents for many of her accomplishments and the ability to pave the path for other women.

Retired Justice Stratton was honored for her service and contributions to courts nationwide with a portrait painted by artist Frank Morris.

Her compassion for people shone through in her work at the Court and beyond. She led the way for adoption reform, shaped mental health and veterans treatment courts, and advocated for the visually impaired.

Justice Stratton formed the Court's Advisory Committee on Mental Illness & the Courts, which is composed of mental health and criminal justice professionals, as well as law enforcement officers, who are dedicated to mental health initiatives in the court system.



When presented with the opportunity to have a portrait dedicated to her life's work, Justice Stratton was at first resistant, but her family was adamant that there is a greater meaning behind the ceremony. Her youngest son, Tyler Stratton, explained that the portrait is a reminder to everyone who passes it to do what is right in the world, not what it is easy. Further, he said it is up to those able to look out for those who cannot protect themselves, just as his mother did.



Dedication to Service Highlighted During Former Chief Justice Portrait Presentation

His service as chief justice of the Supreme Court of Ohio was brief, but his time dedicated to ensuring justice has spanned decades and continues today.

After the unexpected death of Chief Justice Thomas J. Moyer in 2010, then Gov. Ted Strickland needed to appoint a replacement. The governor turned to Franklin County Probate Court Judge Eric S. Brown, knowing his background in public service and political courage.

Former Gov. Strickland was among those who unveiled a portrait of former Chief Justice Brown during a ceremony at the Court. Former Chief Justice Brown was accompanied by his family, including his wife and their two daughters.

The former governor recognized the entire family for their dedication to public service.

Former Chief Justice Brown served nine months in the role and was not elected to serve another term. However, his time in public service didn't end. He went on to serve eight years as a member of the Columbus City School Board of Education.

Former Chief Justice Brown noted his true intent when joining the legal profession was focused on community-level engagement and ensuring

that anyone in his hometown of Cleveland could have the assistance of a lawyer when they needed one. However, he added he was proud to be part of the Supreme Court and proclaimed that the Court has played an essential role in shaping the progress of the Buckeye State.

The ceremony was led by Justice Jennifer Brunner, who has known the former chief justice since she became a practicing attorney in the 1990s. She noted that his career included serving as an assistant attorney general, a magistrate and judge, and a school board member before and after holding judicial posts.

On behalf of the Thomas J. Moyer Foundation, Chief Justice Sharon L. Kennedy accepted the portrait painted by Gregory Gibson, a retired attorney who has painted several portraits of prominent judges.

In his closing remarks, former Chief Justice Brown sounded the alarm of Ohio's significant challenge in providing access to justice for all its residents, especially in rural areas where a shortage of attorneys makes it difficult for people to receive adequate legal assistance. He challenged the next generation of Ohioans to answer the call to fulfill Ohio's legal needs.



NURTURED BY STRONG MEN



Supreme Court Celebrates America 250

The Supreme Court launched its America 250 celebration in 2025 with several initiatives including the web and social media series "This Day In History," the new "Women In Law" exhibit, an Off-Site Court session in Defiance County, and the unveiling of an exhibit on "Ohio's Foundational Documents."

This 18-month commemoration of the 250th anniversary of the United States is a comprehensive and thoughtful tribute to Ohio's enduring legacy. Through a diverse range of initiatives and events, the celebration invites all Ohioans to connect with state's past, present, and future.

Building on the successes of 2025, the celebration continues in 2026, honoring the nation's history and Ohio's significant contributions to its legal and cultural fabric. The coming year will feature monthly themes, special events, educational exhibits, and community engagement activities, providing numerous opportunities for the public to participate.

Looking Ahead: 2026 Monthly Themes and Key Events

The Court has organized a year-long calendar of events and exhibits aligned with each month's America 250-Ohio Commission theme, ensuring a continuous and engaging celebration throughout 2026. These monthly themes explore different facets of Ohio's identity and heritage, offering unique perspectives on the state's impact on the nation.

- **January 2026:** Ohio's Firsts & Originals: The year begins by highlighting Ohio's pioneering spirit.
- **February 2026:** Ohio Works: This month honors innovation and labor, with a focus on Black History Month.
- **March 2026:** Ohio Entertains: Celebrating Ohio's influence on music, entertainment, and film.
- **April 2026: Ohio Moves:** Transportation takes center stage, highlighted by the Off-Site Court session in Carroll County.
- **May 2026:** Ohio Creates: A celebration of arts, culture, and literature.
- **June 2026:** Ohio Outdoors: Exploring the state's natural resources and scenic beauty.
- **July 2026:** Ohio Gathers: In alignment with Independence Day celebrations, this month encourages community and homecoming.
- **August 2026:** Ohio Goes to the Fair: Honoring the tradition of the Ohio State Fair and county fairs across the state.
- **September 2026:** Ohio Plays: Highlighting Ohio's passion for sports and recreation.
- **October 2026:** Ohio Food & Farms: Exploring Ohio's rich agricultural heritage.
- **November 2026:** Ohio Serves: Dedicated to honoring veterans, first responders, and frontline heroes.
- **December 2026:** Future Ohio: The celebration concludes by looking ahead and imagining Ohio in 2076.

Engagement Across Multiple Platforms

To reach audiences statewide, the Supreme Court will highlight America 250 through public events, digital content, and strategic communications. The Court News Ohio and Court's social media channels will feature regular content, including the "Legal Legacy" and "Historic County Courthouse" series, which align directly to the monthly themes.

Monthly showcase exhibits in the Thomas J. Moyer Ohio Judicial Center will provide in-person experiences for visitors, offering tangible connections to Ohio's history and its continuing role in shaping the nation's future.

Learn more and see the initiatives at supremecourt.ohio.gov/AM250.



For more information about
the work of the Court, visit
www.SupremeCourt.ohio.gov.

PUBLISHED BY
THE SUPREME COURT *of* OHIO
May 2026