

*Judicial Council of Georgia
Administrative Office of the Courts*

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Annual caseload statistics for the Georgia appellate and trial courts are now published in *Research Review*. Copies of this publication can be obtained by contacting the AOC.

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Editor, Ashley G. Stollar

Judicial Council of Georgia

June 2001

Chief Justice Robert Benham

Supreme Court

Presiding Justice Norman S. Fletcher

Supreme Court

Chief Judge G. Alan Blackburn

Court of Appeals

Presiding Judge J.D. Smith

Court of Appeals

Judge Walter Matthews

Council of Superior Court Judges

Rome

Judge J. Carlisle Overstreet

Council of Superior Court Judges

Augusta

Judge Leon M. Braun, Jr.

Council of State Court Judges

Hinesville

Judge Melodie H. Clayton

Council of State Court Judges

Marietta

Judge James F. Morris

Council of Juvenile Court Judges

Marietta

Judge William P. Bartles

Council of Juvenile Court Judges

Jackson

Judge Del Buttrill

Council of Probate Court Judges

McDonough

Judge Darin McCoy

Council of Probate Court Judges

Claxton

Judge Barrett Whittemore

Council of Magistrate Court Judges

Dalton

Judge James R. Thurman

Council of Magistrate Court Judges

Leesburg

Judge A. Blenn Taylor, Jr.

First District Administrative Judge

Brunswick

Judge H. Arthur McLane

Second District Administrative Judge

Valdosta

Judge Thomas D. Wilcox, Jr.

Third District Administrative Judge

Columbus

Judge Robert P. Mallis

Fourth District Administrative Judge

Decatur

Judge Elizabeth E. Long

Fifth District Administrative Judge

Atlanta

Judge William H. Craig

Sixth District Administrative Judge

McDonough

Judge Robert J. James

Seventh District Administrative Judge

Rome

Judge Walter C. McMillan, Jr.

Eighth District Administrative Judge

Sandersville

Judge Richard T. Winegarden

Ninth District Administrative Judge

Lawrenceville

Judge T. Penn McWhorter

Tenth District Administrative Judge

Winder

Georgia Appellate Courts

Georgia's appellate courts review both civil and criminal cases from the superior courts in 48 judicial circuits.



The State Judicial Building in Atlanta houses courtrooms for the Supreme Court and Court of Appeals.

Supreme Court

The Supreme Court of Georgia is composed of a Chief Justice, a Presiding Justice, and five Justices. The Supreme Court is one of the busiest appellate courts in the nation because of constitutional requirements and its varied appellate jurisdiction.

Court of Appeals

The court is composed of a Chief Judge, four Presiding Judges, and seven Judges.

On January 3, 2001, the Honorable G. Alan Blackburn took the oath of office to become Chief Judge of the Court of Appeals.



Senior Appellate Judge Harold R. Banke (right) swears-in new Chief Judge G. Alan Blackburn.

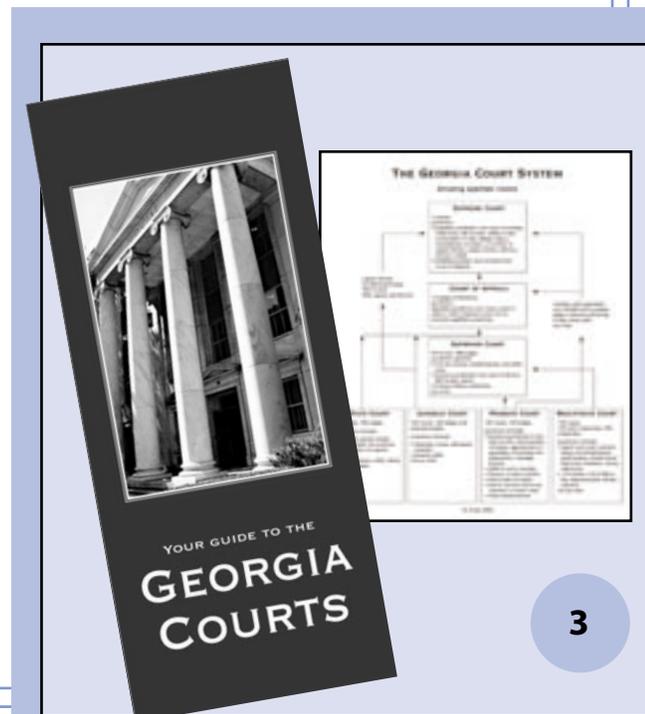
Georgia Trial Courts

Superior Court — Georgia's general jurisdiction trial court. In FY 2001, four new judgeships for the Superior Courts were approved by the Judicial Council. With authorization from the General Assembly, new seats were created in the Gwinnett, Augusta, Rome, and Atlanta Judicial Circuits, bringing the number of Superior Court judgeships to 187.

Georgia's other courts include:

- State Court* — limited jurisdiction, hears misdemeanor violations such as traffic cases and civil actions not within superior court jurisdiction; authority to review lower court decisions;
- Juvenile Court* — exclusive, limited jurisdiction over delinquent and unruly children under the age of 17 and deprived children under age of 18; concurrent jurisdiction with superior courts over certain serious offenses and child welfare matters;
- Probate Court* — exclusive, original jurisdiction for probate of wills, administration of estates, appointment of guardians and involuntary hospitalization of incapacitated adults and other dependent individuals;
- Magistrate Court* — jurisdiction limited to search and arrest warrants, felony and misdemeanor preliminaries, misdemeanor bad check violations, county ordinances, and civil claims of \$15,000 or less;
- Municipal Court* — serve incorporated municipalities, jurisdiction includes municipal ordinance violations, criminal warrants, and preliminary hearings.

The AOC provides a brochure entitled, "Your Guide to the Georgia Courts" to all courts. This publication describes the functions, jurisdiction, and appellate routes of each class of court. "Your Guide to the Georgia Courts" is updated annually.



Georgia Trial Courts

Innovative Solutions in the Courts

Alternative Dispute Resolution

Georgia's Office of Dispute Resolution released the results of its study, "Participant Satisfaction Survey of Georgia's Court-related ADR Programs." On the results published, Ms. Leila Taafe, Director of the Office of Dispute Resolution said, "Mediation offers a vastly different process that empowers [litigants] to settle their disputes without resorting to trial."

Drug Courts

Rather than sending defendants to jail, drug courts focus on rehabilitating offenders through treatment, community service works, and dismissal of charges upon graduation from a program.

The first drug court in Georgia became operational in Bibb County in 1994. By FY 2001 the trend of dealing with drug- and alcohol-related cases in drug courts had spread to seven established drug courts and five counties in which the process of implementing drug courts was underway.

Atlanta Community Court

"Traditional sentences may punish offenders, but do not address underlying problems an individual may have."
— Judge William Riley

In Atlanta's Community Court, Chief Judge Barbara Harris and Judge William Riley handle cases a little differently than normal. The court deals with offenders who commit quality of life crimes which might include prostitution, disorderly conduct, or minor drug offenses. The court hands down

alternative sentences that are visible and compensatory and that hold offenders accountable to the community they have harmed



Judge William Riley (above, center) deals with offenders charged with quality of life crimes.

The Appeal of Drug Courts*

- More effective supervision of offenders;
- Greater accountability for defendants;
- Greater coordination and accountability of public services;
- Creates more efficient court system by removing minor drug offenders.

Justice Issues Facing the Courts

Juvenile Justice

Juvenile Courts Funded by HB 182

In FY 2001, a number of circuits received state funding, through HB 182, to create new part-time or full-time judgeships or to make part-time positions full-time. Circuits who benefited from the funding in its first year are:

**Circuits with part-time judgeships:
Atlantic, Northern, Oconee, Toombs, and Waycross.**

**Circuits with full-time judgeships:
Ocmulgee, Middle, Dublin, and Tifton.**

**Circuits whose part-time judges became full-time:
Appalachian, Augusta, Cordele, Rockdale, and Towaliga.**

Informational Kiosks for Juvenile Courts

The AOC was awarded a \$37,280 federal grant to purchase informational kiosk centers which allow visitors to view educational videos about juvenile justice issues. Kiosks were placed in Chatham, Cherokee, DeKalb, Douglas, Floyd, Fulton, Walton, and Whitfield counties during FY 2001.

Girl Force in the Courts

The Council of Superior Court Judges coordinated "Girl Force in the Courts" for Take Your Daughter to Work Day on April 26, 2001. Girls from Cook Elementary School as well as the daughters of judicial branch employees were treated to a day of fun focused on learning about the courts.

Agencies involved in mentoring for Girl Force in the Courts included: the Supreme Court of Georgia, the Court of Appeals of Georgia, the Administrative Office of the Courts, Office of Commissions and Programs, the Council of Superior Court Judges, City of Atlanta Traffic Court, Fulton County Superior Court, and Fulton County Juvenile Court.



Justice Issues Facing the Courts

Domestic Violence

Conference: Building Bridges, Overcoming Obstacles

The Georgia Commission on Family Violence held its Seventh Annual Statewide Conference in Macon on September 21-22. The conference focused on the hurdles battered women and children face when escaping abusive relationships. Speakers at the conference included Lt. Governor Mark Taylor, Chief Justice Robert Benham, and Ms. Barbara Hart, Legal Director of the Pennsylvania Coalition Against Domestic Violence, the keynote speaker.

Domestic Violence Issues Highlighted at Capitol

Governor Roy Barnes joined those in attendance on February 13, 2001, in the Rotunda of the State Capitol to lobby the General Assembly for legislation to promote an end to violence against women. Judges and advocates from throughout the state attended the meeting.



Settlement Funds Award to Commission on Family Violence

On March 21, 2001, Attorney General Thurbert Baker awarded the Georgia Commission on Family Violence (GCFV), with the help of the AOC, \$50,000 for the Temporary Protective Order Registry and \$400,000 which GCFV distributed to DHR-certified domestic violence shelters throughout the state. The money came from a multi-state settlement with the Nine West Group.

Justice Issues Facing the Courts

Technology

www.georgiacourts.org

The Administrative Office of the Court's Web Design and Information Services Division debuted a new website for the Judicial Branch, designed to be a comprehensive site with links to the various classes of court, the Judicial Council, the Administrative Office of the Courts, and other judicial branch entities.

Web Design Consortium

With \$100,000 from the General Assembly, the AOC contracted with several colleges, universities, and technical institutes to provide custom web pages for clients in the courts.

- Kennesaw State University
- Georgia Southern University
- West Georgia Technical College

Probate Courts: On-line Form Submissions @ www.gaprobate.org

Website allows residents of Georgia, attorneys, and Probate Court personnel to fill out and file Probate Court forms online. Public visitors may download forms, access links to other legal links, and find information about any Probate Court in Georgia. Clerks and judges can retrieve forms filled out by users for editing and validation.

Protective Order Registry

The Georgia Commission on Family Violence sponsored the Georgia Protective Order Registry Pilot Project which is a web-based system that allows judicial personnel, law enforcement agencies, and others access to active protective orders at any time of the day or week. Participants in the pilot sites were Cherokee, Hall, Douglas, Wheeler, Barrow, Banks, and Jackson counties.

Pro Se Video for Spanish Speakers

The Judicial Council of Georgia released a Spanish language version of its video, "I Present My Case." The video is available to courts, social service agencies, and educational institutions. The companion guide includes useful information for pro se litigants such as a glossary of terms, suggested legal research steps, a trial checklist, and hints on case presentation.



Justice Issues Facing the Courts

Chief Justice's Commission on Indigent Defense

Chief Justice Robert Benham appointed a 24-member commission to study the status of indigent defense in the State of Georgia, develop a strategic plan for the future, and provide a time-table and method of implementation of the plan.

Chief Judge A. Harris Adams
State Court of Cobb County

Mr. R. William Ide
Attorney

Judge Stanley F. Birch
Eleventh Circuit Court of Appeals

Representative Curtis Jenkins
Chair, House Special Judiciary Committee

Senator Robert Brown
District 26

Mr. Robert E. Keller
District Attorney, Clayton Judicial Circuit

Mr. Charles C. Clay
Attorney, Brock, Clay, Wilson & Rogers

Prof. Paul Kurtz, Commission Reporter
Associate Dean, University of Georgia School of Law

Representative Terry L. Coleman
District 142

Mr. George O. Lawson, Jr.
Attorney, Lawson & Thornton

Flora Devine
Kennesaw State University

Mr. Charles T. Lester, Jr.
Attorney, Sutherland, Asbill & Brennan

Mr. C. Wilson DuBose
Chair, Indigent Defense Committee
State Bar of Georgia

Senator Michael S. Meyer von Bremen
State Judiciary Committee

Judge C. Andrew Fuller
Superior Courts, Northeastern Judicial Circuit

Mr. Charles R. Morgan, Commission Chair
BellSouth Corporation

Mr. Jerry Griffin
Association of County Commissioners of Georgia

Ms. Asia Mustakeem
Attorney, Powell, Goldstein, Frazer & Murphy

Representative Allen Hammontree
District 4

Judge William Ray
Superior Court, Gwinnett Judicial Circuit

Mr. Paul Holmes
CEO, Life of the South Insurance Company

Mr. Miller Pete Robinson
Attorney, Troutman & Sanders

Ms. Phyllis Holmen
Executive Director, Georgia Legal Services

Judge Lawton Stephens
Superior Courts, Western Judicial Circuit

Mr. Howard O. Hunter
Interim Provost, Emory University

Judge A. Blenn Taylor, Jr.
Senior Judge of the Superior Courts

Judicial Appointments and Elections

July 1, 2000 to June 30, 2001

Superior Courts: Appointments

Frank J. Jordan, Chattahoochee Circuit, 7/14/00

Robert E. Flournoy, III, Cobb Circuit, 7/14/00

Richard C. Sutton, Tallapoosa Circuit, 7/14/00

Jeffrey S. Bagley, Bell-Forsyth Circuit, 8/25/00

Kevin A. Wangerin, Towaliga Circuit, 8/30/00

Jerry W. Baxter, Atlanta Circuit, 8/31/00

Louisa Abbot, Eastern Circuit, 10/26/00

Lamar W. Sizemore, Macon Circuit, 12/00

David K. Smith, Cherokee Circuit, 1/01/01

Jackson Harris, Blue Ridge Circuit, 5/31/01

Dwayne H. Gillis, Waycross Circuit, 5/31/01

Superior Courts: Elections

Roger E. Bradley, Appalachian Circuit, 1/01/01

Stephen Scarlett, Brunswick Circuit, 1/01/01

Adele L. Grubbs, Cobb Circuit, 1/01/01

J. Stanley Smith, Jr., Dublin Circuit, 1/01/01

Kathy Palmer, Middle Circuit, 1/01/01

F. Gates Peed, Ogeechee Circuit, 1/01/01

John V. Harper, Southwestern Circuit, 1/01/01

Cynthia J. Becker, Stone Mountain Circuit, 1/01/01

J. Harvey Davis, Tifton Circuit, 1/01/01

State Courts: — Appointments

David L. Dickinson, State Court of Forsyth County, 8/25/00

Larry B. Mims, State Court of Tift County, 8/25/00

Bridgette Campbell, State Court of Cobb County, 10/26/00

Alan W. Jordan, State Court of Cherokee County, 10/26/00

Penny Brown Reynolds, State Court of Fulton County, 9/7/00

Pamela D. South, State Court of Gwinnett County, 2/2/01

State Courts: — Elected

Jerry M. Daniel, State Court of Burke County, 1/1/01

Charles Wynne, State Court of Hall County, 1/1/01

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