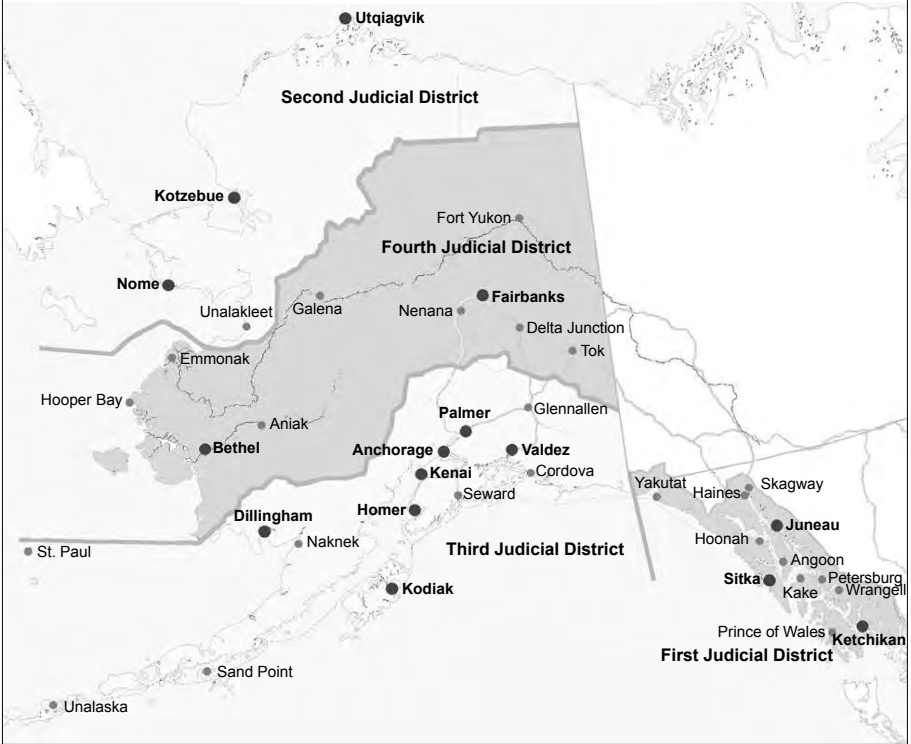


Alaska Court System Annual Report FY 2022

July 1, 2021 – June 30, 2022

Alaska Court Locations, FY 2022



Alaska Court System Annual Report FY 2022

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Hulahula River, Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (Second Judicial District)

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Introduction

Great Seal of the State of Alaska and dais, Alaska Supreme Court courtroom, Boney Courthouse, Anchorage

The Alaska Court System

The government of the State of Alaska is divided into three separate but equal branches: the *executive*, the *legislative*, and the *judicial*. By providing for checks and balances, this division prevents the concentration of governmental power in one or another function. The federal government and the governments of most other states are also structured in this way.

Although the terms *judicial branch* and *court system* are often used interchangeably, in fact, the Alaska judicial branch contains three separate entities: the *Alaska Court System*, the *Alaska Judicial Council*, and the *Alaska Commission on Judicial Conduct*, each with a function established in the state constitution.

Alaska has a unified, centrally-administered court system, totally funded by the state. Municipal governments do not maintain separate court systems. There are four levels of courts in the Alaska Court System, each with different powers, duties, and responsibilities. The *Superior Court* and *District Court* are *trial courts*, which initially hear and decide court cases. The *Supreme Court* and *Court of Appeals* are *appellate courts*, which review and decide appeals from decisions made by the trial courts. Title 22 of the Alaska Statutes sets out the jurisdiction and responsibilities of each court.

The Supreme Court and the Superior Court were established in the state constitution. In 1959, the legislature created a District Court for each judicial district and granted power to the Supreme Court to increase or decrease the number of District Court judges. In 1980, the legislature created the Court of Appeals.

The Chief Justice of the Alaska Supreme Court is the administrative head of the Alaska Court System. An administrative director is appointed by the chief justice with concurrence of the Supreme Court. The director supervises the administration of all courts in the state.

The Supreme Court sets out the rules governing the administration of all courts and the rules of practice and procedure for civil and criminal cases.



Nome Courthouse (Second Judicial District) is located in a multi-agency building, the Aullaqisaaq Center. "Aullaqisaaq" in the Inuqiaq language means "in the beginning" or "a new beginning" or "the start of a journey."

How Alaskans Choose Their Judges

The Alaska constitution provides for the selection of judges by merit; that is, judges are selected on the basis of their qualifications, rather than on their political or social connections. Alaska was one of the first states to adopt merit selection of judges. Today, over thirty other states select some or all of their judges in this way.

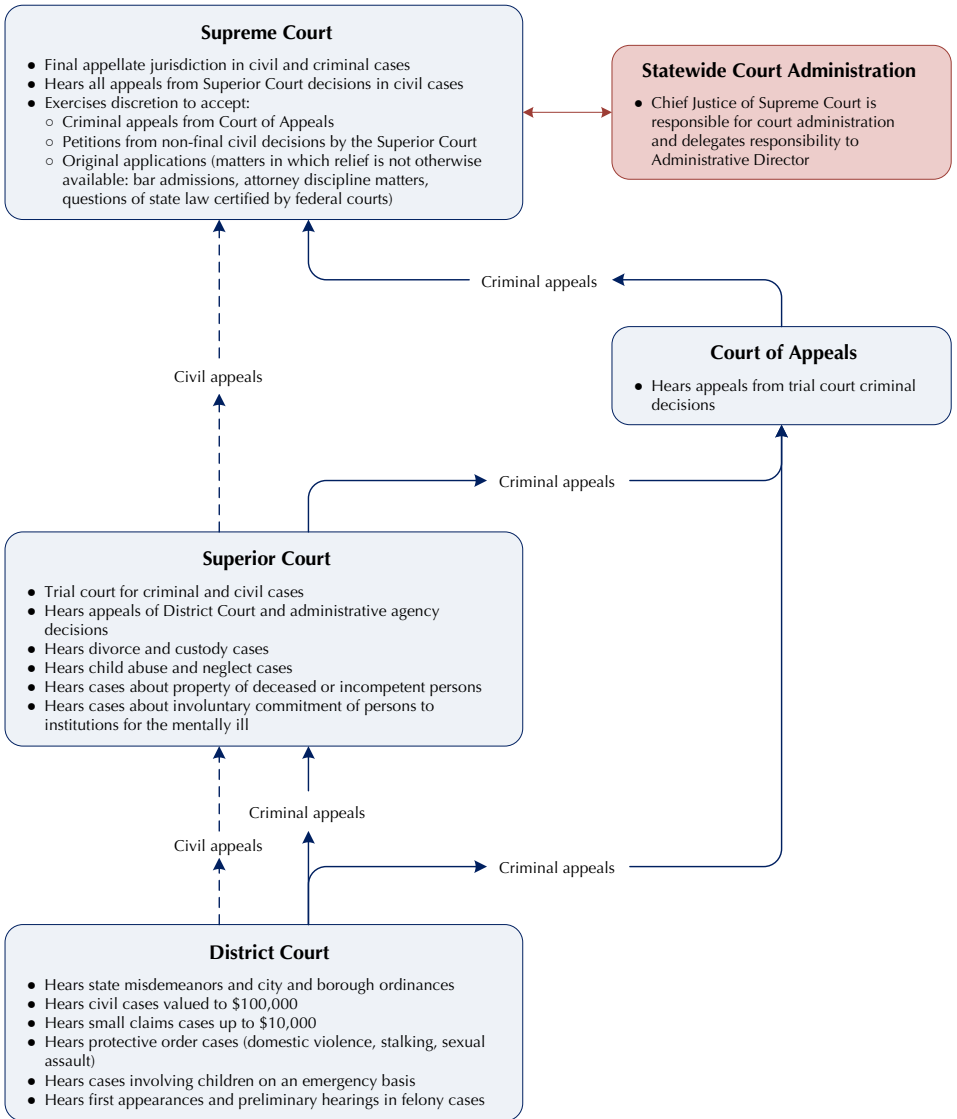
The Alaska Judicial Council, an independent citizens' commission, investigates and evaluates applicants for judicial positions for all courts except magistrate judge courts. The council sends the names of the most qualified applicants to the governor. The governor must make an appointment from this list. (Magistrate judges are selected according to a different process.)



Coastal wetlands, Bering Land Bridge National Preserve
(Second Judicial District)

After serving for a specified period of time, all justices and judges in Alaska must stand regularly for approval by voters on a non-partisan ballot in a general election. This is called *retention*. The Judicial Council evaluates the performance of judicial officers standing for retention election. The evaluation includes a survey of attorneys, peace and probation officers, court employees, and others regarding the conduct of individual judges. Prior to the election date, the council provides detailed information from this evaluation to the public and makes recommendations regarding the retention of individual judges.

Alaska Court System Structure





Year in Review

Introduction

The Alaska Court System is pleased to present its FY 2022 annual report. Once again, the report illustrates how the court works to meet its responsibilities to Alaskans. In FY22 the court system demonstrated the ability and capacity to adapt to change — whether required by crises or by long-term challenges. It continues to offer a stable forum for settling disagreements within a framework of law.

This report includes an overview of court operations, detailed discussion of various court initiatives, a list of judicial officers and senior administrators who served during FY22, summary budget information, and case data highlights. (The online version of this report (<https://courts.alaska.gov/admin/index.htm#annualrep>) contains comprehensive case data.)

Working within the framework established by the state and federal constitutions, the Alaska Court System serves everyone, of any religious, ethnic, racial, educational, or economic background.

Challenges

Opportunities

During FY22, the pandemic continued to pose problems periodically at various court sites throughout the state. In addition, in January, flooding in the Palmer courthouse — one of the busiest sites — caused the building



Cottonwood in autumn, Noatak River (Second Judicial District)

to be unusable for an extended period. Judges and other court system employees responded to these disruptions and others with flexibility and creativity. Judges conducted hearings by telephone or Zoom, and staff and judges used courtroom space as offices. A Palmer trial moved to Anchorage to keep cases moving. The court system has continued operating without ever closing. And increasingly, the court is using the experience it has gained from handling the various crises to refine and improve its operations.

Many pandemic modifications have proven to have value beyond the emergency. The court will continue to conduct remote proceedings, using Zoom and teleconferencing. It is an adaptation suited to the realities of the state's climate and geography, making access simpler and more efficient for all involved. Use of video livestreaming for some open hearings and trials will continue, to ensure public access to court processes.

Beyond meeting the demands of emergencies, the court is also adapting to more long-term challenges. One of these is a major demographic change: The Alaska population is aging. The percentage of the population that is over sixty-five has grown by over eighty percent over the last decade. This will affect court services in different ways. The particulars of some of the ways the court is meeting this and other challenges are discussed in later segments of this report.

In continuing to meet its obligations to Alaskans, the court must ensure security.

Court System Security

Several events over the last four years have posed threats to Alaska court security. The major earthquake in November 2018, the covid pandemic beginning in 2020, and the cyber-attack in spring 2021 have each presented security challenges. In responding to these events, the court system has gained a heightened awareness of the importance of emergency planning in securing the safety of personnel and facilities and ensuring the continuity of court operations. In FY 2022, the court system established a new position of Director of Security and Emergency Preparedness. This position will oversee all facets of court security statewide and will work to coordinate emergency planning in all areas.

Security is multi-faceted, involving personnel, physical facilities, and cybersecurity. Both the pandemic and the major earthquake in the Anchorage area presented questions of physical safety as well as affecting the ability of the court system to serve Alaskans in a timely fashion. The cyber-attack affected the safety of technology operations. In successfully solving the problems presented by these crises, court system administration gained valuable experience that will guide the court system in refining its Continuity of Operations Plan.

Continuous training for all judicial employees on their responsibilities in given situations will become a routine component in security planning, with materials particularized for work position and location. The Director of Security and Emergency Preparedness will work closely with court facilities management and information services to identify needs related to security and to streamline the budgeting process. The position will also involve working with the other components of state government that have a part in regular court operations, such as the Department of Public Safety and the Department of Administration.



Fall colors along the Noatak River (Second Judicial District)

Communication with Alaskans

The court system's website continues to be a primary channel for communication with Alaskans statewide. The website provides both timely news on court operations, including responses to the covid pandemic, and detailed information on the range of court services. In addition to the website, the court system also uses various social media to provide the public with current updates on court-related matters.

The court communications team issues press releases on important judicial matters and court programs and works with journalists to expand understanding of court operations and processes, correct misinformation and inaccuracies in reported news stories, and facilitate contact with judges.

Website

The landing page on the website displays the general court system covid advisory. Links from the landing page lead to a detailed covid response page and to court system Facebook and Twitter accounts. The covid response page is regularly updated to reflect details on scheduling and procedure changes related to the pandemic. During FY22, website administrators continued to refine the site to make it as user-friendly and accessible as possible. Particular attention is being given to those sections devoted to court self-help services for those who represent themselves in civil cases.

The Media and Community Resources section of the website now includes a Most Requested Case Files page, added in FY22. This page lists links to the case files of both trial court and appellate court cases of particular note. It makes all motions, orders, and other public documents associated with a case easily accessible to news media and the general public. Included on the page in FY22 were several cases associated with election issues.

Social Media

Over the last several years, various social media platforms, particularly Facebook and Twitter, have become important tools for keeping the public up-to-date on court operations and in responding to the immediate demands of crises such as the pandemic, the cyber-attack in 2021, and the Palmer courthouse flood in winter 2022.

Facebook enables the communications team to send out regular notices on court services, judicial appointments, employment opportunities,



Alaska Court System Facebook post on Palmer Courthouse closing, 5 Jan 2022

important in communicating about unexpected court changes with wide, sudden impact, such as the flooding and closure of the Palmer courthouse.

The court system also uses Instagram and LinkedIn.

Public Access to Court Proceedings

Most court proceedings are open to the public and to the press. This openness is important to maintaining the integrity and transparency of the judicial branch. The safety demands of the covid pandemic made in-person access to trials and other hearings problematic and required the court system to find alternate ways to ensure continued public access. Under authorization from the Supreme Court, the court system began to stream open hearings first on YouTube and beginning in FY22, on its own streaming server: <https://stream.akcourts.gov/>. This streaming will continue for some matters, although in-person attendance is again possible in most situations. Livestreaming permits Alaskans who live off the road system or far from the court community to observe court proceedings.

Access to Justice Services

Over the last twenty years, the Alaska Court System has developed a variety of programs to help Alaskans obtain justice-related assistance. The court has gathered many of these into its Access to Justice Services department. Some of these programs offer assistance to those representing themselves in court cases. Others provide alternative dispute resolution. In FY22, Access

judicial decisions, and schedule changes. The court also uses the platform to link to other sources of information on court-related issues, such as news media articles.

Twitter has been particularly helpful in making court press releases and updates on high profile cases quickly available to the general news media.

As in previous years, in FY22 the immediacy of both Facebook and Twitter was

to Justice Services launched a new eviction diversion program, which is discussed later in this annual report. In addition, a two-year federal Elder Justice Opportunity grant from the Administration for Community Living made possible an adult guardianship and conservatorship self-help phone line. The department also initiated an on-line program to coach parents on protecting children during divorce or custody disputes.

The court's website provides extensive information on Access to Justice Services programs, as well as links to instructional videos and online courses. The forms necessary for advancing matters through court processes and guidance on procedures are also available through the website.

Access to Justice Services includes the Early Resolution Program for family law cases; the Family Law Self-Help Center; co-parenting classes; parenting dispute resolution; various mediation programs; guardianship and conservatorship initiatives; the eviction diversion program; and language access services. It also encompasses the state jury office and the forms department.

Several specific Access to Justice programs developed during FY22 are discussed in detail later in this annual report.

Jury Trials and Jurors

From the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020, conducting jury trials has been one of most difficult tasks for court systems throughout the country. Both the Alaska Constitution and the U.S. Constitution guarantee the right to trial by jury. The pandemic has presented unprecedented problems for the Alaska Court System in meeting this guarantee, but it has also advanced administrative knowledge and revealed possibilities for more effective service.

Although in the first year of the pandemic the Alaska Court System found it necessary to curtail the trial schedule and suspend most jury trials. It was possible for some cases to proceed, and as a matter of policy, the court system continued to summon jurors on a regular schedule. By the end of FY22, jury trials in all types of cases — civil, criminal, delinquency, probate, and presumptive death — had resumed on a regular basis.

A series of orders from the Alaska Supreme Court, the chief justice, and the presiding judges of the four judicial districts have provided timely direction on the process for jury trials and have set parameters for remote participation via teleconference and videoconference.

Jury trials have presented a particularly difficult challenge throughout the pandemic because they involve many people working in close physical proximity: jurors, judge, court clerk, parties, attorneys, witnesses, and sometimes, law enforcement personnel and interpreters. In addition, most trials must remain open to the general public and media. Ordinary

Looking Forward

The Alaska Court System is exploring modification to court rules on jury selection to incorporate knowledge gained during the pandemic. In addition, jury administrators are continuing to expand the use of electronic communication in working with potential jurors and the general public. In-person public access to trials is now possible again, and selected cases will also be livestreamed.

prevent spread of the virus by having fewer people in the courthouse, the court system began to summon smaller selection pools, staggering them over more time. The effectiveness and efficiency realized with this practice warrant adopting it on a permanent basis. In addition, potential jurors can now complete the initial questionnaire online, essentially expediting the voir dire stage of the trial.

Court administration has also further expanded its use of email and texting to communicate with jurors, resulting in significant cost savings in printing and mailing. In addition, the court system has found that social media, such as Facebook, present an effective way for keeping jurors

courtroom design and layout do not offer enough space for the distancing demanded by the nature of this pandemic, but over the months, the court system adapted courtroom arrangements to ensure safety. Plastic shields were installed, and trial participants were spread over the courtroom. In some trials, parties, witnesses, and attorneys were able to participate by phone or Zoom. Livestreaming has permitted public and media access.

Modifications in the jury selection process initially spurred by the pandemic have increased its efficiency in general. To



Creek Street, Ketchikan (First Judicial District)

FY22 Jury Figures

Slightly more than 10,000 people appeared statewide for jury duty in FY22 – 2689 for grand juries and 7457 for trial juries. The total is double the number who appeared in FY21. In FY20, when the pandemic began, around 17,00 people appeared.

Jurors were summoned for 257 trials in FY22, with 2307 sworn. These totals include criminal and civil trials as well as probate, presumptive death, and delinquency trials. Of the total number of trial cases, 199 cases actually went to trial; 58 folded before trial. In FY21, 76 cases proceeded to trial.

Grand juries continued to sit in the twelve designated sites throughout the year. The term of a grand jury varies from location to location.

Juror expenses totaled just over \$900 thousand in FY22. In FY21, at the height of the pandemic, expenses totaled around \$310 thousand; and in FY20, at the start of the pandemic, slightly under \$1 million. Of the FY22 total, about \$526.5 thousand was juror pay. Travel, lodging, and meals totaled about \$380 thousand. Trials in the Bethel region, where jurors are flown in from surrounding villages, accounted for over three-quarters of this figure.

In calling potential jurors, the court system uses a numerically random system designed in accordance with state statutes and Alaska Rules of Court. By law, an Alaska juror must be a state resident and a U.S. citizen, at least eighteen years old, of sound mind and in possession of natural faculties, and able to speak or read English. The list of applicants for a Permanent Fund Dividend serves as the basis for identifying state residents.

and the public informed of events that impact trials, such as delays and suspensions. Such media also permit inexpensive, helpful redundancy in communication with the public.

Throughout the pandemic, Alaska court administrators have worked with other state entities, including the Departments of Law, Public Safety, and Corrections and the Office of Public Advocacy and the Public Defender Agency in providing for the continued integrity of the trial process. In addition, they have continued to share their experience with administrators from other state court systems through the National Center for State Courts.

Law Library

The Alaska State Court Law Library serves legal information needs statewide. It is the main law library system open to the general public as well as to legal practitioners. The library offers comprehensive access to Alaska legal resources as well as access to resources for the federal government and other states.

The main library and central administration are in Anchorage in the Boney Courthouse. There are two additional staffed branches in the Fairbanks and Juneau courthouses and thirteen unstaffed or computer-access-only branches at smaller court sites around the state.

In FY22, the law library continued to develop its digital holdings and expand access to various research tools. Public computers in all library



*Martin Islands off Point Martin, Gulf of Alaska
(Third Judicial District)*

locations offer Westlaw Edge, the Lexis Digital Library, HeinOnline, VitalLaw, the entire NOLO library, the entire NCLC library, and all Nutshells and Hornbooks from West Academic. Most recently, the library added the entire American Bar Association collection in the Lexis Digital Library. It is available online to Alaska Bar

members via individual username and password and to the general public on library computers.

Professional library staff provide research assistance on-site in the three staffed libraries or by phone and email throughout the state. In response to the restrictions imposed by the Covid-19 pandemic, the library added an additional toll-free line to handle inquiries and requests for assistance. Although the branches have now reopened to the public with regular hours, the toll-free lines will continue in operation.

Most legal research now occurs online. Statutes, law reviews and journals,

opinions, and other tools are available in electronic format. Library patrons throughout the state have access to all electronic resources through the computers at each of the sixteen sites. Books and other hard-copy resources, including older materials not accessible virtually, are still available for borrowing by court personnel and members of the Alaska Bar Association, and everyone can use these materials on-site in staffed locations.

The library's web pages are a primary tool in delivery of its services to the Alaska public (<http://www.courts.alaska.gov/library/index.htm>). They provide comprehensive information on all holdings, a catalog search function, and links to government and other research sites throughout the country and abroad. The library regularly posts information on new acquisitions. The library system is also a member of the Federal Depository Library Program.

E-Filing

The court system broadly expanded the use of electronic filing of case documents in FY22. By the end of the fiscal year, almost half of the court sites statewide were using e-filing in some types of cases, with all sites expected to move to the new system by the end of 2023. E-filing greatly reduces the amount of paper generated in case management and eliminates the need for some in-person transactions. Parties and attorneys use TrueFiling, a web-based program, to file and serve documents in new and existing cases. The program is being used in criminal and minor offense cases and in general civil cases, with the exception of CINA, probate, and commitment cases.

Looking Forward

In FY23, the court system will continue the statewide implementation of e-filing and advance the use of electronic evidence management and on-line dispute resolution.

When TrueFiling becomes available in a court location, its use is mandatory. In the interest of justice, however, in the event of outages or malfunctions making e-filing impossible or impracticable, parties may file paper documents.

The court system has developed an e-filing webpage that provides updates on the use of the system and links to extensive training materials, including videos and scheduled webinars. The web pages include a list of those courts that have implemented the system.

Electronic Evidence Management

The court system is also adopting a cloud-based electronic evidence management system developed by Thomas Reuters that will facilitate the admission and exchange of evidence and the presentation of evidence in court, both in person and remotely. The platform, entitled Case Center, permits the uploading and organization of documents, images, video, and audio for a case. It enables parties in a case to review materials, add notes, and make redactions.

Online Dispute Resolution

The court system has begun developing an online dispute resolution platform for parties to resolve civil disputes in areas such as debt collection, small claims, and parenting plans. Using negotiation and mediation, parties will work toward agreement online. Each side will be able to provide relevant information and propose possible solutions. If they reach an agreement, a judge will review the terms to ensure it meets legal requirements.

Parties will be able to use the platform asynchronously; that is, the opposing sides will not need to be using the platform at the same time. This approach to dispute resolution will also provide flexibility and convenience, making it possible for parties to avoid taking time from work or juggling childcare. The platform should become available in FY23.

Therapeutic Courts

For certain defendants exhibiting mental health or drug or alcohol problems, Alaska's therapeutic courts provide an alternative to the ordinary criminal court process. Repeat criminal offenders often exhibit mental health or addiction problems that contribute to their criminal behavior. The therapeutic courts present an option that addresses these problems as part of the adjudication process. They help willing offenders deal with behavioral and addiction issues while still providing protection for the community.

The courts structure an extended, individualized case plan as part of a plea agreement. If the offender follows the plan and completes the program, there is a more favorable legal resolution. The offender works with a team — judge, prosecutor, defense attorney, probation officer, treatment provider, and others. The defendant is supported in recovery, while still

held accountable, and the usual adversarial nature of the criminal process is de-emphasized. Completing the individualized plan usually takes at least a year or longer, depending on the type of court.

The individual programs require frequent communication between the offender and members of the team. In FY 2022, the therapeutic courts were able to return to more in-person hearings and meetings after being dependent on telephonic and video communication during the early months of the pandemic.

Alaska now has fourteen therapeutic courts in six communities — Anchorage, Fairbanks, Juneau, Kenai, Palmer and Sitka. The courts serve different types of offenders. Two courts — the CINA Therapeutic Court in Anchorage and the Families with Infants and Toddlers (FIT) Court in Palmer — focus specifically on families with open CINA cases in which addictions have undermined family stability. A new veterans court in Fairbanks began accepting referrals in late 2021.

Two therapeutic courts are joint state-tribal courts: the Henu' Community Wellness Court in Kenai with the Kenaitze tribe and the Healing to Wellness Court with the Sitka tribe.

In FY22 the court system participated in a legislative task force focused on enhancing the effectiveness of the therapeutic courts. The task force included representatives from the executive branch agencies that participate in the work of the therapeutic courts as well as alumni of the court programs.

Children's Issues

In FY22, the Department of Law, with the Office of Children's Services, filed 2233 CINA (Child-in-Need-of-Aid) cases with the Alaska Court System. Of these, 1434 were filed to determine whether a child should be adjudicated formally as a child in need of aid — that is, whether the state should assume custody to ensure the child's well-being. Another 799 filings were petitions to terminate parental rights. The total CINA case filings were 12 percent lower than in FY21 and 18 percent lower than in FY20.

CINA cases tend to be very complex, with many hearings and many participants over the length of the case — the children themselves, parents, guardians, other family members, tribes, attorneys, guardians ad litem, and caseworkers from the Office of Children's Services. A recent change in the Rules of Court has expanded the types of situations in which the court may order the appointment of an attorney for the individual child. A CINA case may also involve a mediator.

The court system continues to participate in the federally-funded Court Improvement Program (CIP). This program enables the court system to work with state executive branch divisions such as the Office of Children’s Services and with other entities, including Alaska Native organizations, to improve the handling of CINA cases.



Wild rose, Squirrel Creek (Third Judicial District)

In FY22, the statewide CIP committee completed the development of its CINA Laws eLearning Course. The course, which has been designed for professional practitioners in this area, comprises four modules: the Office of Children’s Services (OCS) practice model — how a case comes into court; the roles and responsibilities of CINA participants; CINA state and federal laws; and CINA court and administrative proceedings (<https://courts.alaska.gov/cip/cina-course.htm>).

The statewide curriculum committee also completed the development of the ICWA eLearning Course for CINA practitioners. Many CINA cases in Alaska involving Alaska Native children are governed by provisions in ICWA — the federal Indian Child Welfare Act. The online course includes a series of video vignettes exploring the complexities of the history and relationship between Alaska Natives and the federal government prior to the enactment of ICWA (<https://courts.alaska.gov/cip/icwa-course.htm>).

Also, CIP offered several trainings in FY22 for the various professional participants in CINA cases: judges, magistrate judges, attorneys, guardians ad litem, CASA volunteers, ICWA workers, and mediators:

- A two-part Zoom training in January and February 2022 on CINA, the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA), Alaska law and CINA case chronology and phases;
- A training in April 2022 addressing issues for attorneys representing youth and children in CINA cases;
- Training on adoption and guardianship subsidies in autumn 2021.

In addition, the Office of Children’s Services and the court began a data sharing project to streamline and improve the exchange of information in CINA cases.

CIP funding also made possible in-person attendance for CINA practitioners at the National Conference on Access to Justice for Children and Families and the National Conference on Parent Representation, as well as the National Association of Counsel for Children (NACC)

conference. The program also facilitated online training through the NACC Red Book course in child welfare law.

In addition, in FY22, the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges selected Fairbanks as a site for its Implementation Sites Project. The project, which is funded by the Department of Justice, provides courts with training, technical assistance, and tailored support from a site manager to improve the handling of dependency cases and better the lives of families and children.

Adult Guardianships and Conservatorships

The Alaska population is aging. According to figures from the Alaska Department of Labor, Alaska's overall statewide population grew 3.4 percent between 2010 and mid-2021. The population aged 65 and over, however, grew 82 percent over the same period, from just under 55,000 people to slightly over 100,000. This dramatic growth in the size of the elderly population has implications for the work of the Alaska Court System, particularly regarding adult guardianships and conservatorships.

In FY22, the court received a two-year federal Elder Justice Opportunity grant from the Administration for Community Living to focus on improving the court's handling of guardianship cases. The grant is helping the court to:

- Increase court proficiency with guardianship cases;
- Improve case monitoring, especially regarding financial issues;
- Identify less restrictive options than full guardianship;
- Provide telephonic self-help assistance for the public in navigating the court guardianship and conservatorship processes and forms.

The project will result in statewide protocols for handling these cases as well as more training for judicial officers and guardianship case court visitors.

In addition, the court continues to expand the guardianship and conservatorship section of its self-help center website (<https://courts.alaska.gov/shc/guardian-conservator/index.htm>). Among the resources available through this section is a three-module online course developed by the court system to provide education for the public and newly appointed family guardians on guardianship and conservatorship issues.

The court system's Access to Justice Services section will administer this grant.

Eviction Diversion

In FY22, the court system launched the Eviction Diversion Program

Looking Forward

A National Center for State Courts grant awarded in July 2022 is helping to develop the Eviction Diversion Program and fund its coordinator position. Alaska is one of twelve states selected competitively to receive grants as part of the NCSC's Eviction Diversion Initiative.

within its Access to Justice Services division. Forestalling eviction benefits both landlords and tenants and helps to stabilize housing within the broader community. Through the program, the court system will facilitate mediation between landlords and tenants, either before or after a formal eviction case is filed, to see if resolution can be reached. This helps both sides achieve better outcomes. In addition, the diversion program offers

information about housing law, the eviction process, rental relief, housing and financial counseling, and legal services.

Language Interpretation Needs

The need for foreign language interpretation in Alaska court cases dropped only slightly during the height of the Covid-19 pandemic. In FY22 it returned to pre-pandemic levels, with the court system receiving 1,302 requests for interpretation. There was a need for interpreters in 39 different languages and American Sign Language. The languages most frequently requested were Spanish, Samoan, Tagalog, Korean, and Yup'ik. There was also a significant number of requests for Somali, Hmong, Russian, and Mandarin Chinese. Requests came from courts in all four judicial districts, but two-thirds were from Anchorage.

Requests for interpreters arose most commonly in criminal, civil, and CINA cases: criminal, 655; civil cases, 350; and CINA cases, 119. The other requests occurred in probate, delinquency, small claims, and minor offense cases, in jury situations, and with customer service.

Most interpretation took place either by telephone or video remote. On-site interpretation is significantly lower than it was before the pandemic, with only three occurrences in FY22. Even before the pandemic the court



*Arnica, Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge
(Fourth Judicial District)*

system used telephonic and video technology to provide interpretation with qualified and certified interpreters. In adapting to the restrictions imposed by the pandemic, it has continued to refine its capacity for providing interpretation by Zoom and other video remote means.

In addition to foreign language interpretation, the court system also provided interpretation in American Sign Language. In FY 2022 there were 152 requests for ASL interpretation, covering all types of cases, across all four districts. ASL interpreters worked either on-site or by video remote.



*Bear tracks in the Great Kobuk Sand Dunes
(Second Judicial District)*

The court system has continued to expand language access information on its website. In FY22, it added more translated materials, including instructions for filling out petitions for domestic violence protection orders in the ten most requested languages.

Professional Development

The Alaska Court System emphasizes continued professional development and education for its judicial officers. After two years of restrictions due to the pandemic, in FY22 the Alaska Court System was able to resume holding in-person conferences. In addition to those for judges and magistrate judges, the court system also put on a conference for clerks of court.

Justices and judges from throughout the state came together in Anchorage in April 2022 for a three-day conference covering a spectrum of judicial topics. Outside speakers addressed the complex interaction between state criminal law and the military, including the potential impact of criminal convictions on military service and the interplay between military and civilian authorities. The speakers also discussed how military status may affect domestic relations cases. Other conference sessions covered current

issues related to the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA), competency issues, and case law related to probation conditions. One session treated retention election issues, and another, the ethics involved with denial of requests for disqualification. District Court judges attended a breakout session to discuss questions that arise with their specific case types. One afternoon, participants chose from among a series of short mini-sessions addressing: the Supreme Court; the Court of Appeals; CINA cases and trauma-informed courts; online dispute resolution; probate and guardianship rules; and inclusivity in the courts. The judges also received updates on therapeutic courts, the Access to Justice Services department, and court administrative issues.

In January 2022, the court conducted its annual Newer Judge Conference for judges who have taken the bench within the previous three years. During the three-day conference, more experienced judges led training sessions for their newer colleagues. Topics covered a spectrum of judicial responsibilities. Included were sessions on the “nuts and bolts” of trial work, such as handling evidence and managing objections, working with juries, and sentencing. Practices and ethics related to self-represented litigants were the focus of two other presentations. Other sessions addressed issues related to bail, domestic relations cases, and District Court work involving collections and defaults. Conference training

also encompassed professional effectiveness as a manager-employer and the use of technology.

Magistrate judges from throughout the state gathered in April 2022 for the annual Magistrate Judge Conference. Sessions focused on topics pertinent to magistrate judge work. An expert speaker from Outside addressed substance use and the science of addiction. Another program entitled “The Art of Perception” invited participants to consider different perspectives and viewpoints through artwork. One morning included sessions on procedural fairness, alternative dispute resolution, and settlement. A panel discussed judicial



Launch of Black Brant IX sounding rocket, Poker Flat Research Range (Fourth Judicial District)

outreach and the ethics of community involvement; and there was a session on bail considerations. The magistrate judges also received updates on recent appellate opinions and court administrative matters. Training on the e-filing system now being adopted throughout the state was provided. Finally, the magistrate judges were able to choose among several short mini-sessions:



*Black brant goose, Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge
(Fourth Judicial District)*

making the court more inclusive; determining credibility in domestic violence proceedings; handling guardianships and conservatorships; writing masters reports, and handling busy dockets.

In FY22, it became more possible for judges to travel Outside for training. Programs for both new and more experienced judges took place at the National Judicial College. Online training opportunities provided by national organizations such as the National Judicial College, the National Center for State Courts, the ABA, the Association of Family and Conciliation Courts, and others were also available.

Clerks of Court

The Alaska Clerks of Court also participated in an in-person conference in April 2022. Participants attended sessions on domestic violence post pandemic, domestic violence secondary trauma, and aspects of people dealing with cognitive issues. Court administrators provided updates on legislative issues, the adoption of e-filing, and court administrative issues. Others spoke on the therapeutic courts, access to justice services and ethics and social media. The clerks also attended sessions on information services and human resource retention and recruitment. Representatives from Alaska Legal Services and the Alaska State Commission on Human Rights also addressed the conference.

Court Facilities

In January 2022, Alaska weather again presented a challenge to ordinary court operations. An extreme winter storm caused pipes to burst in the Palmer courthouse, and over 76,000 gallons of water flooded the building, necessitating its closure for several weeks. Despite the



Palmer Courthouse flooding in January 2022 (Third Judicial District)

disruption, judicial officers and other court personnel maintained regular court operations, either working remotely or using courtrooms temporarily as offices. After Facilities Management completed the drying out and initial restoration tasks, the courthouse was able to reopen the public counter and resume grand jury work in February. By the end of the fiscal year in June, judicial offices, jury assembly room, clerk's office, some court rooms and some public areas were again in use, with final restoration to be completed in autumn 2022.

The court system facilities department oversees the physical operation of buildings at over forty court sites across the state, including lease management, routine and deferred maintenance, and security-related details. At many of these sites the department also handles grounds and parking lots, including landscaping and snow removal.

Looking Forward

The court system has begun planning an expansion for the courthouse in Palmer. Palmer is one of the busiest courts in the state.

The court system owns seven buildings: the Nesbett Courthouse, the Snowden Administrative Building, and two smaller administrative buildings in Anchorage; the Rabinowitz

Courthouse in Fairbanks; and the courthouses in Kenai and Palmer. It utilizes space in buildings owned by other state government entities at eleven sites and leases facilities from local governments, Native organizations, and private owners at twenty-seven locations.

In the aftermath of the flooding in Palmer, the court system also began the planning for an expansion of that courthouse, which is one of the busiest in the state. It is anticipated that preliminary design and budget estimates will be ready for the FY25 budget cycle. Also in FY22, Facilities Management continued planning a security-based renovation of court facilities in Kotzebue, where the court occupies space in the DMVA Armory Building.

Among additional developments, several courthouses received upgrades in security in varying areas in FY22. The new position of Director of Security will be working closely with the facilities department on security-related issues.

In Bethel, the court system is working on the possible development of a justice center that would house court facilities as well as the offices for several executive branch entities at one site. The goal is to make it simpler for the public to access state government services. The court system is obtaining preliminary design options for the purpose of discussion with other state government entities.



Nesbett Courthouse, Anchorage (Third Judicial District)



Alaska Peninsula and eastern Aleutian Islands from NASA's MODIS instrument, 15 May 2014



Justices, Judges, and Senior Court Administrators

Ice crystals during thaw, Phelan Creek, Fielding Lake State Recreational Site (Fourth Judicial District)

July 1, 2021 – June 30, 2022

Justices — Alaska Supreme Court

Daniel E. Winfree (2007), Chief Justice
Peter J. Maassen (2012)
Susan M. Carney (2016)
Dario Borghesan (2020)
Jennifer S. Henderson (2021)

Statewide Court Administration

Stacey Marz, Administrative Director
Doug Wooliver, Deputy Administrative Director

Judges — Court of Appeals

Marjorie K. Allard (2012), Chief Judge
Tracey Wollenberg (2017)
Bethany Harbison (2018)
Timothy W. Terrell (2020)

Clerk of the Appellate Courts

Meredith Montgomery

First Judicial District

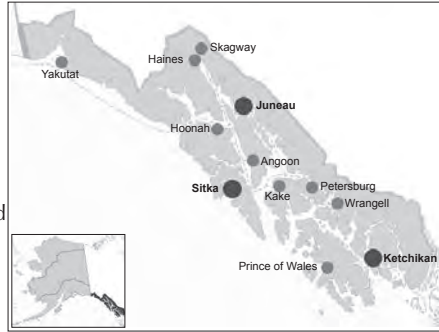
Amy G. Mead, Juneau (2018), Presiding Judge
James Kwon, Area Court Administrator (resigned 2022)
Emily Wright, Area Court Administrator

Judges — Superior Court

William B. Carey, Ketchikan (2008; retired 2022)
Marianna Carpeneti, Juneau (2021)
Daniel E. Doty, Ketchikan (2022)
Katherine H. Lybrand (2022)
Philip M. Pallenberg, Juneau (2007; retired 2021)
M. Jude Pate, Sitka (2018)
Daniel Schally, Juneau (2018)
Trevor N. Stephens, Ketchikan (2000; retired 2022)

Judges — District Court

Kevin G. Miller, Ketchikan (1999)
Kirsten L. Swanson, Juneau (2016)



Magistrate Judges

Kay Clark, Prince of Wales (2004; retired 2022)
Orion Hughes-Knowles, Haines / Yakutat / Hoonah / Skagway; Juneau (2021)
Rachel Newport, Petersburg / Wrangell / Kake (2020)
Amanda Schulz, Ketchikan (2010)
Pamela Stahla-Kernin, Sitka / Angoon (2020)
Emily Wright, Juneau (2020; resigned 2022)

Second Judicial District

Paul A. Roetman, Kotzebue (2010),
Presiding Judge
Brodie Kimmel, Area Court Administrator

Judges — Superior Court

Romano D. DiBenedetto, Nome (2017)
*David Roghair, Utqiagvik (2021)
Nelson Traverso, Utqiagvik (2019; retired 2021)

Magistrate Judges

Colleen Baxter, Utqiagvik (2022)
Heidi Ivanoff, Unalakleet (1998)
Aaron Michels, Kotzebue (2016)
Pamela Smith, Nome (2019)



**Also served in another judicial position in FY22.*

Third Judicial District

William F. Morse, Anchorage (2002),
Presiding Judge
Carol McAllen, Area Court Administrator

Judges — Superior Court

Eric A. Aarseth, Anchorage (2005)
Rachel Ahrens, Valdez (2019)
John C. Cagle, Palmer (2019)
Dani Crosby, Anchorage (2015)
Catherine M. Easter, Anchorage (2012)
Una S. Gandbhir, Anchorage (2018)
Josie W. Garton, Anchorage (2018)
Jason Gist, Kenai (2018)
Andrew Guidi, Anchorage (2010)
Lance E. Joanis, Kenai (2018)
Kari Kristiansen, Palmer (2006)
Yvonne Lamoureux, Anchorage (2017)
Erin B. Marston, Anchorage (2012)
Thomas A. Matthews, Anchorage (2018)
Jack R. McKenna, Anchorage (2021)
Gregory A. Miller, Anchorage (2011;
retired 2022)
Andrew Peterson, Anchorage (2018)



Peter Ramgren, Anchorage (2019)
Christina Reigh, Dillingham (2017)
Kevin M. Saxby, Anchorage (2012)
Bride Seifert, Homer (2019)
Kristen C. Stohler, Palmer (2019)
Herman G. Walker, Anchorage (2015)
Stephen B. Wallace, Kodiak (2019)
Jennifer K. Wells, Kenai (2017)
Jonathan A. Woodman, Palmer (2016)
Adolf Zeman, Anchorage (2020)

Judges — District Court

* Amanda L. Browning, Palmer (2021)
Jo-Ann M. Chung, Anchorage (2011)
Brian K. Clark, Anchorage (2003)
Leslie Dickson, Anchorage (2012)
Martin C. Fallon, Kenai (2019)
Michael J. Franciosi, Anchorage (2017)
J. Patrick Hanley, Anchorage (2005)
Tom V. Jamgochian, Palmer (2020)

Michael B. Logue, Anchorage (2018)
Kari L. McCrea, Anchorage (2017)
David A. Nesbitt, Anchorage (2019)
Shawn D. Traini, Palmer (2019)
David R. Wallace, Anchorage (2009)
Pamela S. Washington, Anchorage
(2010)

Magistrate Judges

Judson Adams, Glennallen / Valdez
(2018)
Kay Adams, Cordova (2008)
Michael Aiello, Dillingham / Naknek /
Unalaska (2019)
Marika Athens, Anchorage (2021)
David Bauer, Anchorage (2011)
Sidney Billingslea, Anchorage (2013)
Katherine Chung, Anchorage (2021)
Suzanne Cole, Anchorage (1997)
Anna Cometa, Palmer (2020)
Craig Condie, Palmer (2010)
Michelle Higuchi, Kenai (2021)
Elisia Kupris, Anchorage (2022)

Jennifer Manculich, Anchorage (2018)
Donna McCready, Anchorage (2013)
Heather O'Brien, Anchorage (2018)
George Peck, Seward (1976; resigned
2022)
Robert Polley, Anchorage (2017)
Matthew Slodowy, Anchorage (2018)
Michael Smith, Anchorage (2015)
James Stanley, Anchorage (2011;
deceased 2021)
Kimberley Sweet, Kenai (2018)
Christina Teaford, Anchorage, Seward
(2008)
Dawson Williams, Kodiak (2007)

*Also served in another judicial position in FY22.

Fourth Judicial District

Terrence P. Haas, Bethel (2018),
Presiding Judge
Candice Duncan, Area Court
Administrator

Judges — Superior Court

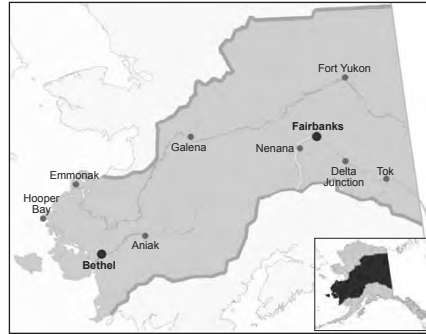
Brent Bennett, Fairbanks (2019)
Patricia L. Haines, Fairbanks (2021)
Paul R. Lyle, Fairbanks (2008)
Michael A. MacDonald, Fairbanks
(2007)
Nathaniel Peters, Bethel (2017)
Earl A. Peterson, Fairbanks (2019)
Thomas I. Temple, Fairbanks (2018)

Judges — District Court

Maria Bahr, Fairbanks (2021)
Matthew Christian, Fairbanks (2013)
William T. Montgomery, Bethel (2018)
Benjamin A. Seekins, Fairbanks (2012)

Active Pro Tem Judges

Joel H. Bolger
William B. Carey
Steve W. Cole
Robert L. Eastaugh
Dana A. Fabe
Natalie K. Finn
Gregory L. Heath
Donald D. Hopwood
David Mannheimer
Warren W. Matthews
Michael P. McConahy



Magistrate Judges

Darlene Johnson-Edwards, Emmonak
(2000)
Paul Korchin, Aniak / St. Mary's / Hooper
Bay (2021)
Risa C. Leonard, Fairbanks (2021)
Jeffrey May, Nenana / Galena / Fort Yukon
(2018)
Spenser J. Ruppert, Fairbanks (2021)
Bruce G. Ward, Bethel (2012)
Yvette Young, Delta Junction / Tok (2018)

Patrick J. McKay
Michael A. MacDonald
Gregory A. Miller
Anna M. Moran
Gregory J. Motyka
Nancy J. Nolan
Philip M. Pallenberg
Eric B. Smith
Trevor N. Stephens
Michael L. Wolverton
Mark I. Wood

Deputy Magistrates, Clerks of Court, and Rural Court Administrators

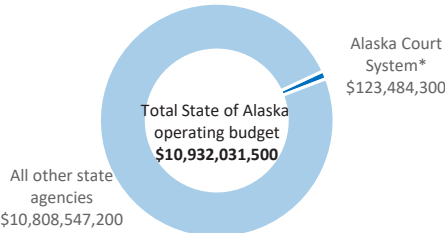
Susan Adams, Anchorage
Natalie Alexie, Bethel
Kimberly Bates, Glennallen
Jennifer Benda, Valdez
Cheryl Bird, Emmonak
Brielle Boswell, Valdez
Lauren Burnham, Tok
Raúl Calvillo, Fourth Judicial District
Denice Chappell, Kenai
Barbara Cloud, Palmer
Robert Colvin, Kotzebue
Suzanne Cowley, Kodiak
Brandi Davis, Ketchikan
Annalisa DeLozier, Fourth Judicial District
Eve Dickman, Glennallen
Rebecca Duffy, Unalaska
Jenna Durst, Petersburg
Rae Ann Filla, Delta Junction
Jennifer Findley, Juneau
Bridgit Gillis, Kenai
Michelle Hall, Juneau
Amy Jo Howard, Sitka
Regina Johnson, Bethel
Clayton Jones, First Judicial District
Taylor Kelso, Naknek
Albert Kookesh, Angoon

Lori Marvin, Third Judicial District
Ruth Meier, Fairbanks
Natalie Monroe, Palmer
Stacey Nemanic, Ketchikan
Jenny Nicoli, Aniak
Tonya O'Connor, Dillingham
Dawn Osenga, Seward
Cynthia Percy, Anchorage
Arlene Peter, Fort Yukon
Pamela Pitka, Galena
Kimberly Rice, Prince of Wales (Craig)
Sheri Ridgeway, Wrangell
Linda Rios, Anchorage
Caitlin Rothbert, Haines
Melissa Samuels, Second Judicial District
Peggy Sherman, Glennallen
Zachary Singleton-Havner, Utqiagvik
Tessa Tate, Fairbanks
Samantha Thompson, Nenana
Sarah Tipikin, Homer
Lorraine Tomaganuk-Moses, Hooper Bay
Crystal Toolie, Nome
Jan Tronrud, Skagway
Jolene Watkins, Angoon
Niccole Williams, Hoonah

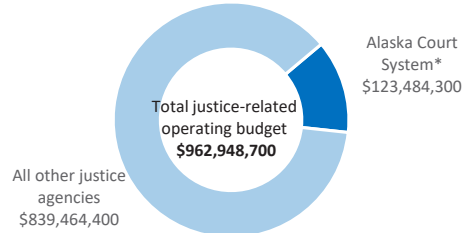
Court Statistical Highlights

Alaska Court System Budget

State of Alaska Operating Budget, FY22



Justice-Related Operating Budget, FY22



* Alaska Court System budget figure includes Alaska Judicial Council and Alaska Commission on Judicial Conduct.

Filings and Dispositions by Case Type, FY22

Alaska Supreme Court	Filings	Dispositions
Civil appeals	192	169
Petitions for hearing	78	66
Petitions for review	53	57
Bar / original applications	13	15
Total	336	307

Alaska Court of Appeals	Filings	Dispositions
Merit appeals	88	190
Sentence appeals	15	18
Petitions	46	43
Bail appeals / original applications	9	11
Total	158	262



Anaktuvuk River (Second Judicial District)

Further FY 2022 Alaska Court System data are available at:

Alaska Court System Statistical Report FY 2022

<https://courts.alaska.gov/admin/index.htm#annualrep>

The online document includes data on case filings and dispositions for both trial and appellate courts for all case types for FY22, as well as comparative figures for previous fiscal years. It also includes summary analyses of the figures from both trial and appellate courts.

Superior Court	Filings	Dispositions
Felony	6,736	6,750
CINA	2,233	2,091
Delinquency	601	401
Domestic relations	3,600	3,329
General civil	2,299	2,298
Probate	6,746	5,489
Total	22,215	20,358

District Court	Filings	Dispositions
Misdemeanor	18,076	19,723
Minor offense	49,804	48,869
Small claims	3,896	3,091
Civil protective order	7,333	7,156
General civil	5,366	5,504
Total	84,475	84,343



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Caribou, Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (Second Judicial District)

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Sod house, Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge (Fourth Judicial District)



*Eruption of Cleveland Volcano, Aleutian Islands, as seen from the International Space Station, 23 May 2006
(Third Judicial District)*



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