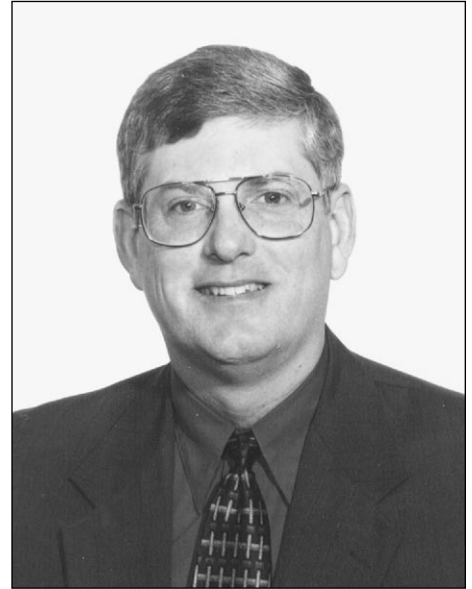


2005 Caseload – The Year in Review

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In this month's column I present year-end caseload information for the Circuit Court. At the time this article is being written, the information is hot off the stove. I realize it will be a month or two old when this article is published; nevertheless, I want to present the information so that the readers have an indication of the activity that took place here during 2005.

For purposes of comparison, caseload information for 2003 and 2004 is also provided. The information will give the reader a glimpse of short-term trends regarding the filing of new cases and petitions in this Circuit Court. Those who are interested will find more detailed caseload information at the Supreme Court's Web site. At www.courts.michigan.gov/scao/resources/publications/reports/statistics.htm#annual you will find caseload information for each circuit, probate and district court. The information is also compiled for the southeast Michigan region and the state.

On the following page is a table showing the number of new cases and petitions filed and disposed for the years 2003-2005. The information is presented for the Family and Civil/Criminal divisions. Many cases are reopened each year, so the "Number Filed" columns include reopened cases for both divisions. Reopened cases should be considered when comparing the numbers of cases and petitions filed with those disposed in a given period of time.

An explanation as to what's included in a couple of the case types listed above is in order. "Other Civil" cases include all case numbers wherein the suffix (for those who are familiar with the Circuit Court's case numbering system) begins with a "C." These are contract cases that

include such areas as business claims, condemnation, environment, forfeiture, and labor relations. This category is distinguished from "General Civil" which is a catchall for cases that do not fit nicely into the various civil case types listed in the table above. Examples of these cases include attachment proceedings; proceedings to restore, establish or correct records; claim and delivery matters; and garnishments.

Under the domestic category you will see a reference to "interstate." These cases generally involve child support issues (i.e., enforcement or modification of a court order) where one party is not in Michigan or an order was issued in another state.

Before I conclude, here are a couple of statistics that are not shown in the table but might be of interest. A total of 704 trials were conducted in 2005 – 443 jury and 261 non-jury. The number of trials in 2004 and 2003 was 676 and 673, respectively. Jury trials took an average of 2.6 days; bench trials an average of 1.0 day. This does not include the time necessary to select juries. We also conducted 1,550 hearings comprising 534 days of hearing time.

Last year was a busy year. Caseload data only begins to tell the story. The State Court Administrative Office, in its 2005 report on judicial resources, determined that our court does not have a sufficient number of judges. Our judges continue to bear one of the highest average caseloads among circuit courts in this state, yet despite having such a high caseload and being understaffed, this court was able to dispose of more cases than the number filed and reopened. That's evidence of the hard work and commitment of the judges and employees of this circuit court.

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On the Circuit

CASE/PETITION TYPE	NUMBER FILED			NUMBER DISPOSED		
	2003	2004	2005	2003	2004	2005
1. Appeals	1,176	1,049	1,069	1,160	1,121	1,135
2. Civil	7,781	7,274	7,260	8,456	8,343	8,416
a. Auto Negligence	998	867	758	1,024	1,060	937
b. Medical Malpractice	291	195	200	266	261	288
c. Contracts	2,335	2,412	2,242	2,639	2,622	2,618
d. Housing & Real Estate	833	737	765	843	871	866
e. Pers. Injury (non-auto)	739	622	582	874	820	720
f. General Civil	1,190	1,201	1,450	1,361	1,260	1,558
g. Other Civil	1,395	1,240	1,263	1,449	1,449	1,429
3. Criminal	5,921	6,050	6,119	6,761	6,775	6,873
a. Non-Capital	5,594	5,795	5,828	6,405	6,467	6,566
b. Capital	325	252	291	354	308	307
4. Reopened cases	1,346	1,247	1,252			
Subtotal Civil/Criminal	16,224	15,620	15,700	16,377	16,239	16,424
4. Domestic	6,915	7,647	7,739	7,395	7,839	7,805
a. Divorce with children	2,654	2,519	2,570	2,814	2,815	2,618
b. Divorce no children	2,581	2,596	2,496	2,745	2,706	2,584
c. Paternity	531	825	938	602	750	863
d. Custody	155	171	137	203	158	164
e. Interstate	337	428	414	341	413	423
f. Other Support	604	1,056	1,127	644	944	1,088
g. Other Domestic	53	52	57	46	53	65
5. Juvenile	4,503	4,802	4,836	4,516	4,801	4,462
a. Delinquency	3,528	3,891	3,918	3,547	3,874	3,492
b. Abuse & Neglect	527	517	603	496	509	646
c. Juvenile Traffic	448	394	315	473	418	324
6. Adoptions	436	424	413	427	442	441
7. Pers. Protect. Order	3,808	3,752	3,211	3,609	4,205	3,946
8. Name Change	482	452	484	458	433	556
9. Reopened cases	706	743	800			
Subtotal Family	16,850	17,820	17,483	16,405	17,720	17,210
Total Circuit Court	33,074	33,440	33,183	32,782	33,959	33,634