



2021 ANNUAL REPORT



2021

Annual Report

Maureen O'Connor

CHIEF JUSTICE

Sharon L. Kennedy

Patrick F. Fischer

R. Patrick DeWine

Michael P. Donnelly

Melody J. Stewart

Jennifer Brunner

JUSTICES

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INTERIM ADMINISTRATIVE DIRECTOR

DEAR OHIOANS:

2021 will likely live in the shadow of 2020, the year the pandemic shut down the world.

In many ways, 2021 called for greater adjustment, greater fortitude, and strength on the part of all Ohioans as we continued to face the morphing pandemic, without any sense of when, or if, it would end.

The Supreme Court of Ohio and all Ohio courts demonstrated, during this new phase of change, that the judiciary continues to be an anchor of our society; fair, impartial, and more accessible than ever.

I am proud to present the annual report of the Supreme Court of Ohio.

In the report, you will see the Court's efficient management of cases balanced with careful deliberation. Health and safety of those seeking justice was the top priority and we were able to achieve it without delaying or denying justice to the citizens who sought redress in this court of last resort.

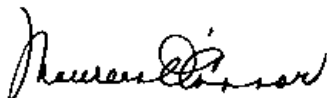
An overriding theme you will read about is the use of technology to advance the administration of justice, not just at the Supreme Court of Ohio but across all Ohio courts. The technology advancements began as far back as 2015, when the Supreme Court of Ohio awarded its first tech grants to local courts. It was accelerated by the pandemic Stay at Home orders in 2020, with additional grants to meet local court technology needs. And a robust round of 2021 funding, bringing the total investment of \$32 million over seven years. The technological evolution in Ohio courts will continue thanks to the many dedicated volunteers who served on the iCOURT Task Force. Read about their work and recommendations in this report.

The Supreme Court of Ohio must continue to be the flagbearer for technological advancement, the conduit for best practices, and the harbinger of equal treatment under the law. But it is not possible without the hard work, innovative thinking, and commitment of courts to the citizens of their communities across Ohio. The bench, staff, and bar have shown their willingness to step out of their comfort zone and become a more responsive, more transparent, and more accessible justice system for the people of Ohio.

With all we have accomplished amid challenging times, there is much work left to be done. Courts must continue to examine their work, particularly growing in our understanding of how data can be used to guide decision-making and ensure justice is administered evenly and even-handedly for all citizens. Courts must continue to look for opportunities to rehabilitate and provide a hand up when people afflicted by addiction, mental illness, or poverty end up in the courtroom. And we must all act with kindness, fairness, and civility.

Thank you for your support of justice.

God Bless,



Maureen O'Connor
Chief Justice

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THE SUPREME COURT OF OHIO



CHIEF JUSTICE MAUREEN O'CONNOR

Since becoming just the 10th chief justice in Ohio history, Maureen O'Connor has led significant reforms and improvements in the Ohio judicial system, including improving access to justice by advocating for constitutional bail practices and ability to pay assessments for court fines and fees. She also is spearheading the creation of a statewide criminal sentencing database and the implementation of a uniform sentencing entry to establish standardized data for felony sentencing. The chief justice also established a task force to study grand jury proceedings in Ohio, created a committee to examine the administration of the death penalty, and led efforts of an eight-state initiative to combat the nation's opioid epidemic. Chief Justice O'Connor joined the Supreme Court in January 2003 and was elected twice as chief justice, in 2010 and 2016. She is past president of the national Conference of Chief Justices and former chair of the National Center for State Courts Board of Directors. [Full biography.](#)



JUSTICE SHARON L. KENNEDY

Justice Sharon Kennedy was first elected to the court in 2012 and was re-elected in November 2014 and 2020. She began her judicial career at the Butler County Court of Common Pleas, Domestic Relations Division. While serving as the administrative judge, she improved the case management system and worked with the General Assembly to resolve access to justice problems that families faced. Before joining the judiciary, she was a solo practitioner with a general practice and served the legal needs of families, juveniles, and the less fortunate. She began her justice system career as a police officer in the City of Hamilton. In 2021, she received the Freedom Award by the American Nationalities Movement. [Full biography.](#)



JUSTICE PATRICK F. FISCHER

Justice Patrick F. Fischer joined the Supreme Court after being twice elected as a judge on the Ohio First District Court of Appeals. An honors graduate of Harvard Law School and Harvard College, Justice Fischer began his legal career with a clerkship for U.S. District Court Judge William Bertelsman. In 1987, he went to work for the law firm of Keating Muething & Klekamp and four years later became a partner in the trial department, litigating throughout the country. He was named to Best Lawyers in America, Top 50 Lawyers in Cincinnati, and Top 100 Lawyers in Ohio. Justice Fischer was elected as the 157th Justice of the Supreme Court of Ohio on Jan. 1, 2017. [Full biography.](#)



JUSTICE R. PATRICK DeWINE

Justice R. Patrick DeWine served on the First District Court of Appeals and on the Hamilton County Common Pleas Court prior to that. He has served as an adjunct professor at the University of Cincinnati College of Law for the past nine years. Before becoming a judge, he practiced law for 13 years and began his legal career as a law clerk for the Honorable David A. Nelson on the U.S. Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals. He also served in local government, as a member of the Hamilton County Board of Commissioners and Cincinnati City Council. Justice DeWine began his first term on the Supreme Court on Jan. 2, 2017, following his election in 2016. [Full biography.](#)



JUSTICE MICHAEL P. DONNELLY

Before joining the state court, Justice Michael P. Donnelly served as a judge on the Cuyahoga County Court of Common Pleas, General Division, for 14 years, from 2005 to 2018. He was an assistant Cuyahoga County prosecutor from 1992 until 1997 and went on to practice civil litigation for seven years, representing plaintiffs and injured workers in asbestos litigation, personal injury lawsuits, and workers' compensation claims. Justice Donnelly is a past chairperson of the Supreme Court's Commission on Professionalism. He began his first term on the Supreme Court in January 2019, following his statewide election in 2018. [Full biography.](#)



JUSTICE MELODY J. STEWART

Prior to joining the Supreme Court, Justice Melody J. Stewart served on the Eighth District Court of Appeals – elected to an unexpired term in 2006 and twice re-elected to full terms. Justice Stewart has more than 30 years of combined administrative, legal, and academic experience. She was an administrator for a health-care management company, a music teacher, a civil defense litigator, and a law school administrator and professor before being elected to the court of appeals. Justice Stewart was elected in November 2018 to a full term as the 161st justice of the Supreme Court of Ohio. In 2021 she received the NBA Region VI Living Legend Award and the St. Thomas Moore Award. [Full biography.](#)



JUSTICE JENNIFER BRUNNER

Prior to joining the high Court, Justice Jennifer Brunner served on the Tenth District Court of Appeals. Earlier in her career, she served on the Franklin County Court of Common Pleas. In 2006, Justice Brunner was elected Ohio's first female Secretary of State. In 2008, then Secretary Brunner received the bipartisan John F. Kennedy Profile in Courage Award for her public service, which recognizes public officials who demonstrate politically courageous leadership. She is the first of two Ohioans to receive the award since its inception in 1989. Justice Brunner became the 162nd justice of the Supreme Court of Ohio on Jan. 2, 2021. [Full biography.](#)



New Addition to the Court

Justice Jennifer Brunner began a full term as the 162nd justice of the Court on Jan. 1.

Due to COVID restrictions, she became the first justice to be sworn in virtually.

Chief Justice O'Connor administered the oath of office to Justice Brunner on Jan. 3 from the new justice's rural home in northeast Ohio. The event was videotaped and released online the next day.

After taking her oath of office, Justice Brunner said her review of Supreme Court documents in the days before her official start caused a flash back to when she was a young attorney: "I was sitting in the Supreme Court when it was at 30 E. Broad Street, how much I revered what the Court did and that this was the law Ohio that I was reading. I realized now I will be a participant in that concept, and I take it very seriously. I want you to know that I carry with me all dreams and hopes of the people of Ohio."

"I never pictured myself being a Supreme Court justice, but now that I'm here, I couldn't be happier," Justice Brunner said during the ceremony.

Justice Brunner was elected to the Court in November 2020, winning the seat over former Justice Judith L. French.

Before being elected to the high court, Justice Brunner sat as a judge for six years on the Tenth District Court of Appeals and for five years on the Franklin County Common Pleas Court.

She made history in 2007 when she became the first woman to serve as Ohio secretary of state.

In 2008, then-Secretary Brunner received the [John F. Kennedy Profile in Courage Award](#) for her public service. The award recognizes "a public official (or officials) at the federal, state, or local level whose actions demonstrate the qualities of politically courageous leadership." She is the first of two Ohioans to have received the award.

She has 17 years of private law practice experience, having founded her own law firm in 1988. Justice Brunner's solo and law firm private practice was centered in election and government law, including campaign finance

and election litigation. She also assisted clients with legislative and rule drafting, multi-state, and federal FCC telecom compliance for providing low-income cellular service, computer law and government contracting, criminal appellate work and general litigation.

Justice Brunner was born in Springfield, Ohio, the oldest of four children. She spent her formative and adult years in Columbus. She graduated from Columbus public schools, from college at Miami University with a degree in sociology-gerontology, cum laude, and from law school at Capital University Law School, with honors. She gave birth to her first child while in law school.

Justice Brunner has been married since 1978 to attorney Rick Brunner, who grew up on a farm in Columbiana County, near Alliance, Ohio. They have three adult children and six grandchildren and maintain a farm in the area where he grew up.



2021 Year in Review

JAN

FEB

MARCH

APRIL

Jan. 2

Justice Jennifer Brunner is sworn in as the 162nd justice on the Supreme Court of Ohio.

Jan. 28

Supreme Court Civic Education offers the first of 49 live virtual tours of the Moyer Judicial Center, helping students and teachers remain engaged in citizenship education despite the ongoing pandemic.



Feb. 16

The Supreme Court announces a collaboration with the Ohio Board of Pharmacy to create the Ohio Automated Rx Reporting System, a first-of-its-kind program between the judicial and healthcare systems establishing direct notification to prevent pharmaceutical misuse. The program reports information from active adult drug-court participants directly to the state's prescription drug monitoring program.

Feb. 22

The Court's Dispute Resolution Section releases a toolkit of best practices for Ohio juvenile courts in their efforts to get adequate care for children. Lucas County is a model court in this arena.

Feb. 23 - 24

The Court holds the two-day bar exam for more than 360 aspiring attorneys. The test is conducted remotely due to the continuing COVID-19 pandemic.

Feb. 24

The President of the United States continues the National Emergency due to COVID-19.

Feb. 25

The Supreme Court releases "Prejudice and Progress: A History of Racial Justice in Ohio," a documentary exploring the history of racial injustice and the legal journeys of African Americans in Ohio.



March 5

Chief Justice Maureen O'Connor sends a letter to the ACLU defending the work of drug courts, calling their work a "Rescue mission for Ohioans." Calling out errors by the ACLU, the Chief's letter was in response to its published report that casted doubt on the effectiveness of drug courts.

March 26

The Judicial College hosts an online seminar for Ohio juvenile courts to educate judges and staff on the unique challenges faced by LGBTQIA+ youth.

March 24 - 26

The Judicial College welcomes new magistrates during a three-day virtual orientation. In 2021, the Judicial College delivered quality professional education via in-person, live online and webinars, with 40,712 participants in 334 courses.



March 30

The Ohio Supreme Court approves changes to the Ohio Rules of Superintendence that further expand bail reform by requiring that counties' first option in their pretrial processes is to release an individual on nonmonetary personal recognizance before resorting to formal bail and to also adopt uniform bail schedules in counties with more than one municipal or county court.

March 31

Forms for Orders of Protection used by all Ohio courts are adopted by the Court. Modernization included changes in the laws as well as adding dating violence protocols and covering domestic violence, stalking, and juvenile protection orders.

April 30

The Court announces the February Ohio Bar exam pass rate was 54.3%, the highest for a February exam since 2016.

MAY

May 4

Ohio Primary Election Day. On recommendation from the Ohio Secretary of State due to a deficiency in election workers due to COVID-19, the Commission on CLE granted attorneys CLE for training and service as precinct officials during the primary.



May 7

Justice R. Patrick DeWine instructs a course for the Cleveland Metropolitan Bar Association – one of 12 CLE seminars he conducted during the year – detailing the specifics of the Supreme Court’s appellate process and providing practical suggestions for advocates.

May 13

Chief Justice O’Connor accepts the 2021 Outstanding Public Service Award from John Glenn College of Public Affairs at The Ohio State University because her work embodies an interconnected and collaborative approach to addressing problems citizens and communities face, most notably the opioid epidemic and fighting racial injustice.

JUNE

May 14

Justice Melody Stewart accepts the 2021 Nettie Cronise Lutes Award from the Ohio State Bar Association for excellence in the legal profession. The award is named for the first woman licensed to practice law in Ohio and Justice Stewart was recognized for her legal professionalism and opening doors to the profession for other women and girls.

May 19

The Court’s Advisory Committee on Children and Families develops a best practices toolkit to help local courts understand the options for handling cases involving juveniles.



May 20

Justice Stewart was honored with the Living Legend Award from the National Bar Association Region VI.

June 2

The Ohio Supreme Court awards \$8.6 million to 143 local court projects to upgrade technology making it possible for people to access to justice more easily.

June 15

The Supreme Court standardizes responsibilities of child-custody evaluators and for the first time setting minimum education standards.

JULY

June 16

The Court publishes a guide to best practices to improve how courts manage child abuse, neglect, and dependency case proceedings.



July 1

Amendments to the Supreme Court Rules for the Government of the Bar of Ohio, Amendments to the Rules of Superintendence for the Courts of Ohio, and Rule changes for civil, criminal, and appellate practice and procedure, as well as Rules of Evidence take effect in Ohio’s courts this day.

July 2

Results from an annual survey sponsored by the Supreme Court and the Ohio Access to Justice Foundation show 56% of responding attorneys indicate they represented clients pro bono during 2020, averaging 24% more hours per attorney over 2019.

July 22

The Advisory Committee on Children and Families, Subcommittee on Adult Guardianship publishes a toolkit with direction for probate courts in monitoring guardianships to ensure best practices for those who have a decision-making role over people and estates.

AUG

July 22

Justice Kennedy received the Freedom Award from the American Nationalities Movement. The freedom medal recognizes leaders who work to unite Americans of all nationalities for a common understanding of our responsibilities as citizens of the United States.

July 26

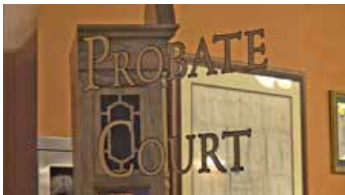
The iCOURT Task Force, formed to study Ohio courts' use of technology during the COVID-19 pandemic, releases its report with recommendations for the post-pandemic era.

July 27 – 28

The two-day bar exam, held remotely for 964 examinees, included 824 first-time applicants who passed at a rate of 82.3%.

Aug. 17

The Court approves the adoption of a new standard probate form for use by those seeking to correct their birth certificate.



Aug. 24

The Court adopts an amendment allowing lawyers admitted to practice in other states to provide legal services remotely from Ohio.

SEPT

Sept. 1

New custody-evaluator-training guidelines are effective this day.

Sept. 2

Chief Justice O'Connor uses her State of the Judiciary speech to emphasize proactiveness from Ohio's judges on evictions, bail, and COVID in Ohio's courts.

Sept. 3

A new Supreme Court resource, the Judicial Guide to Eviction Diversion, advises judges on strategies to assist both landlords and tenants on how to avert evictions.

Sept. 7

The Court releases a documentary called "Crying for Answers," the second in its video series exploring racial injustice.

Sept. 10

On the eve of the 20th anniversary of 9/11, Supreme Court Security Officer Jason Thomas shares recollections from his rescue mission at Ground Zero on that tragic day.



Sept. 22

The self-study cap for Continuing Legal Education is waived due to the continuing COVID-19 pandemic causing the cancellation of live, in person CLE.

OCT

Sept. 29 - Oct. 1

The Judicial College holds its second training of the year for new magistrates. In 2021, a total of 104 new magistrates completed the program, virtually.

Oct. 1

Justice Melody Stewart accepts the St. Thomas More Award for her contributions to the legal profession, presented by the Lawyers Guild of the Catholic Diocese of Cleveland.



Oct. 7

Justice Patrick F. Fischer presents the sixth episode of "Reflections from the Bench," his ongoing video-interview program with former justices. This episode featured former Justice James Celebrezze, who sadly passed away months before the video premiered.

Oct. 12

The Court lifts continuing legal education caps on self-study credits as the spread of COVID-19 continues to prevent in-person CLE programs.

Oct. 14

The Court's Commission on Continuing Legal Education issues sanctions for 146 attorneys who failed to comply with CLE requirements.

NOV

DEC

Oct. 20

The Court adopts child welfare law to the fields of law subject to specialization designation in Ohio.

Oct. 22

The Court announces 703 examinees passed the July bar exam, a passage rate of 73.4%.

Oct. 25

Justice Donnelly shares his experiences with plea deals in a book titled "Punishment Without Trial: Why Plea Bargaining Is a Bad Deal" by University of North Carolina School of Law professor Carissa Byrne Hessick.

Oct. 26 - 27

Nearly 900 people attend two days of oral arguments at the University of Akron School of Law, marking the first time in two years that the Ohio Supreme Court held off-site court sessions. The justices heard six cases before law school students, high school students and members of the public, with everyone following pandemic guidelines for social distancing and facial coverings.



Nov. 2

General Election Day. Due to a continuing precinct election official shortfall in Ohio due to COVID-19, 402 attorneys received four hours of CLE for completing training and serving on Election Day.

Nov. 4

The Court suspends the state law licenses of 240 attorneys who failed to register with the Office of Attorney Services for the biennium beginning Sept. 1.

Nov. 8

Chief Justice O'Connor presides over the fall 2021 bar admissions ceremony, held virtually due to the ongoing pandemic.

Dec. 6

The Court awards grants to two juvenile courts to hire safe harbor coordinators to help survivors of human trafficking.

The Court's Office of Court Services creates a smartphone app that allows local courts and communities to better support veterans.



Dec. 6 - 9

The Judicial College New Judge Orientation was completed by 112 new judges.

Dec. 15

The Civic Education staff completes the last of 40 in-person tours of the Court building for adult and college groups.

Supreme Court Adept at Change Management as Pandemic Persists

The nature of the American justice system requires consistent application of established law with improvements to the administration of justice.

The ongoing global pandemic from COVID-19 persisted, and accelerated, into 2021. More than 1.3 million Ohioans contracted coronavirus in 2021 and 18,186 Ohioans died from COVID 19, more than the previous year.

The Supreme Court of Ohio prioritized the safety of Ohio citizens and officers of the courts, on balance with continuing to administer justice in a fair and efficient manner that not only enabled, but increased access to justice.

Some temporary administrative adjustments were made as the Court monitored the state's rate of infection, vaccination, hospitalization, and death in Ohio. Law students and other applicants took the Ohio bar examination remotely in February and July – the February test being the first Ohio used the Uniform Bar Exam. The tests, which are administered by the Supreme Court of Ohio, marked the second and third times they were conducted remotely – the first occurring in October 2020. Likewise, the Supreme Court's two bar admissions ceremonies in 2021 were held virtually, with nearly 800 new attorneys being admitted to the Ohio bar.

The Court allowed lawyers and judges more flexibility to fulfill their biannual Continuing Legal Education (CLE) requirements by waiving administrative rules that limited the number of CLE hours allowed by self-study. CLE providers responded to the cancellation of live events with increasing course availability to include participation live online, by webinar, and a limited number in person, as safety permitted. The Supreme Court's Judicial College expanded its course offerings and delivered more courses to educate more individuals in 2021 than any year in the College's 45-year history. The flexibility and responsiveness ensured legal practitioners continued to grow in their expertise while avoiding the spread of COVID-19. Educational requirements for guardians ad litem (GAL), court-appointed individuals representing a child's interests, were also able to be satisfied by remote participation in training through amended Rules of Superintendence.

For the May primary election and November general election, in partnership with the Ohio Secretary of State, the Court encouraged lawyers to play a vital role in facilitating democracy by serving as poll workers. Training and serving as election officials, attorneys filled a critical need from a shortfall of precinct officials caused by the pandemic. Attorneys received four hours of CLE credit.

When the pandemic hit, the more than 300 local courts across the state acted, reshaping the way they work, and turning to technology to fortify this essential branch of government, amid an unprecedented medical and societal challenge. The digital modernization of courtrooms and court administration around the state was accompanied by the establishment of the iCOURT Task Force and Report, which you can read about in detail later in this report. The Supreme Court began making technology funding available to local courts in 2015. The largest annual investment in technology grants and expertise went to local courts in 2021; Chief Justice Maureen O'Connor made a total of \$8.65 million in awards for 143 local court initiatives.


Regular communication with local courts was key to ensuring consistent operation of justice in a timely manner. Chief Justice O'Connor sent frequent updates to judges around the state, with guidance and best practices on subjects from probation officers as a vaccine priority group, to eviction alternatives and case management, to maintaining a safe and secure courthouse. Each of the 88 counties in Ohio had courts making strides in the administration of justice and was generous in sharing best practices and learning from each other.

Citizens of Ohio can be confident in its judiciary. In 2021, it has proven that the rule of law and the administration of justice provides society with a reliable foundation.



SUPREME COURT DECISIONS

The Supreme Court issued many opinions in 2021, some dealing with highly anticipated legal issues. The following is a sampling of rulings that drew public interest.

 Click to watch archived video of oral arguments.

Teachers, Staff Must Have Peace Officer Training or Experience to be Armed at School

Ohio school teachers, administrators, and staff members aren't permitted to carry firearms while on duty unless they have completed basic peace officer training or have had 20 years of experience as a peace officer, the Court ruled in June.

In a 4-3 decision, the Court struck down a 2018 Madison Local School District Board of Education "firearm authorization policy" that allowed up to 10 designated employees who held concealed-handgun licenses and met other training requirements to carry concealed weapons in a school safety zone.

A group of parents challenged the Butler County school district's decision, which was drafted in the wake of a 2016 shooting at Madison Junior-Senior High School that wounded four students.

Writing for the Supreme Court majority, Chief Justice O'Connor stated a school employee must meet the training-or-experience requirements that apply to those persons employed by schools as special police officers or security guards if the employee "goes armed" during the time the employee is performing job duties, whatever those duties might be.

▶ [2020-0612](#). *Gabbard v. Madison Local School Dist. Bd. of Edn.*, [165 Ohio St.3d 390](#), [2021-Ohio-2067](#).

Cincinnati Billboard Tax Violates the First Amendment

A Cincinnati excise tax on billboard advertising imposed in 2018 to help close a \$2.5 million city budget deficit violated the billboard operators' First Amendment rights.

The Court in September permanently enjoined the city of Cincinnati from enforcing an excise tax on billboard advertising imposed in 2018 to help close a \$2.5 million city budget deficit, holding that it violated the billboard operators' First



Amendment rights.

Writing for the Supreme Court majority, Justice Kennedy stated that regardless of whether the city intended to censor the billboard messages or not, "a selective tax creates the intolerable potential of self-censorship by the press and abuse by governmental actors aimed to suppress, compel, or punish speech."

The Court majority reversed the decision of the First District Court of Appeals, which concluded that the tax did not impinge on the billboard owners' First Amendment rights. The Court reinstated a permanent injunction granted by the Hamilton County Common Pleas Court.

▶ [2020-0931](#). *Lamar Advantage GP Co., L.L.C. v. Cincinnati*, [Slip Opinion No. 2021-Ohio-3155](#).

Closed Online School Cannot Challenge Order to Repay State \$60 Million

The State Board of Education's decision that a defunct online community school must return \$60 million because it inflated enrollment figures is final and cannot be appealed, the Court ruled in October.

In a 4-3 decision, the Court affirmed the state school board's determination that the Electronic Classroom of Tomorrow (ECOT) must repay the state and that, under R.C. 3314.08, the state

school board's decision is final and not subject to an appeal in common pleas court.

The decision ends two attempts by ECOT to challenge the board's order.

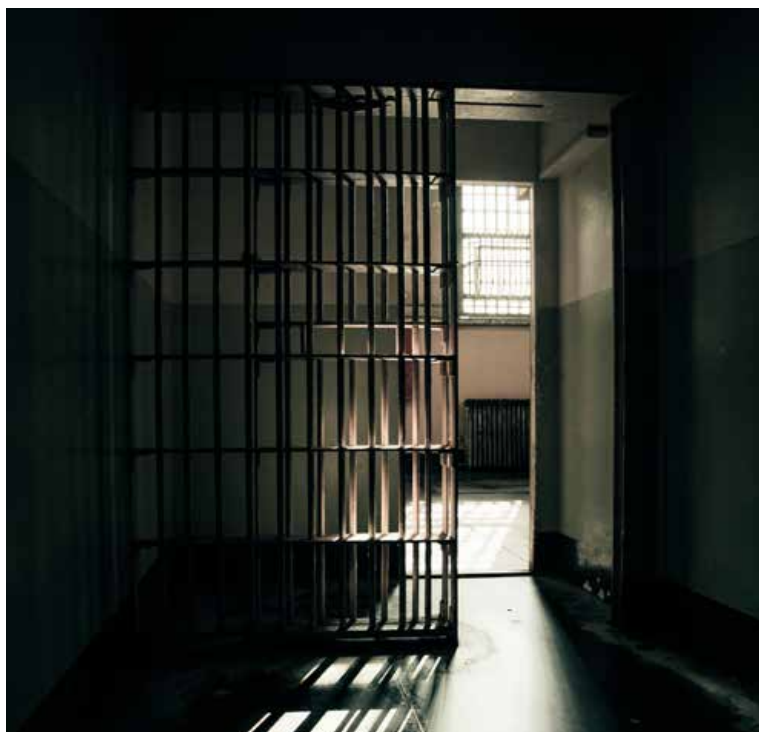
The Court split on whether the use of the word "final" should be interpreted by its plain meaning or as a legal term of art signifying that a matter may be appealed to a higher legal authority.

Writing for the Court majority, Justice DeWine explained that the General Assembly created a two-step process for reviewing a charter school's public funding. First, the Ohio Department of Education makes a determination whether a charter school must repay money to the state, which the charter school may appeal to the state school board. Second, the state school board reviews the appeal, and its review is "final."

▶ [2020-0182](#). *Electronic Classroom of Tomorrow v. State Bd. of Edn.*, [Slip Opinion No. 2021-Ohio-3445](#).

Marsy's Law Allows Victim to Challenge Order Granting Former Spouse's Gun Rights

A Warren County judge wrongfully restored the gun possession rights of a man convicted of misdemeanor domestic violence, the Court ruled in November. The Court ruled the victim, the man's ex-wife, could invoke Marsy's Law to block the judge's ruling.



In a 4-3 decision, the Court ruled that Warren County Common Pleas Court Judge Robert Peeler was not authorized by state law to grant Roy Ewing's petition for relief from his federal firearms restriction.

Jamie Suwalski, Ewing's ex-wife and victim of Ewing's domestic violence offense, contested Judge Peeler's decision by seeking a writ of prohibition from the Twelfth District Court of Appeals. Ewing appealed the Twelfth District's decision in favor of Suwalski to the Supreme Court. Judge Peeler did not appeal the decision or participate in the case.

Writing for the Court majority, Chief Justice O'Connor wrote that under Marsy's Law and the specific circumstances of this case "a writ of prohibition was the appropriate way" to address the matter.

► [2020-0755](#). *State ex rel. Suwalski v. Peeler*, [Slip Opinion No. 2021-Ohio-4061](#).

Ohio's Execution Protocol Valid without Going through Rulemaking

Ohio's existing execution protocol to carry out death sentences by

lethal injection can be applied without the Department of Rehabilitation and Correction submitting it through the state's formal rulemaking procedures, the Court ruled in October.

In a unanimous opinion, the Court rejected the claim by two death-row inmates that the execution protocol is a "rule" under Ohio law and must be ratified through a formal process. The Court ruled that under R.C. 111.15(A), the 21-page protocol is an "order respecting the duties of employees," which is exempt from the rulemaking process.

Writing for the Court, Justice Fischer noted the inmates argued the protocol cannot be an "order" regarding employee duties because it affects non-employees, namely the inmate being executed. However, he wrote that while non-employees are impacted by the execution process, "the protocol amounts to an instruction manual on how to perform an execution," and "nearly all of it deals with the duties" of the employees carrying out the execution.

► [2020-0676](#) and [2020-0683](#). *O'Neal v. State*, [Slip Opinion No. 2021-Ohio-3663](#).

Stop of Driver Based on Shout of 'That Lady is Drunk' Permitted

A state trooper was parked in a service station lot doing paperwork when a customer directed the officer's attention to another patron's car and yelled: "Hey, you need to stop that vehicle. That lady is drunk."

The trooper stopped the driver, revealing her intoxication, and the Court ruled in June that this intervention did not violate the woman's constitutional rights.

In a unanimous decision, the Supreme Court ruled the unknown informant's tip and the officer's own observations were sufficient to permit the officer to briefly detain Sherry Tidwell without violating her constitutional rights against unlawful searches and seizures.

The decision reversed a First District Court of Appeals ruling that upheld Tidwell's contention that the stop was unlawful and she could not be charged for driving under the influence of alcohol.

Writing for the Court, Justice Donnelly stated that given the circumstances and the information available to the officer, it was reasonable for him to approach the vehicle in a public area and briefly detain the driver to make "a most basic inquiry as to whether an immediate danger to public safety existed."

► [2020-0290](#). *State v. Tidwell*, [165 Ohio St.3d 57](#), [2021-Ohio-2072](#).

Mom's Cocaine Conviction Vacated for State's Failure to Establish Venue

The mere presence of cocaine in a woman's system at the time that she gave birth in a Seneca County hospital was not sufficient to charge her with felony cocaine possession in Seneca County, the Court ruled in September.

In a unanimous decision the Supreme Court vacated the conviction of Kelly Foreman. She was charged with cocaine possession after drug testing of her

newborn child, identified as J.B., showed the presence of cocaine metabolites. Foreman challenged her conviction, claiming the state failed to prove venue because there was no evidence that she possessed cocaine in Seneca County.

Writing for the Court, Chief Justice O'Connor stated that to establish venue in the charging county, the state must prove she had control over the substance that was "assimilated into" her body.

"Foreman, by her own admission, ingested cocaine several times during her pregnancy. However, once she ingested the cocaine and it was assimilated into her body, she no longer had control over it," Chief Justice O'Connor wrote. "Consequently, at the time of J.B.'s birth, Foreman was unable to exercise restraint, direct influence, or exert power over the cocaine that she had previously ingested."

► [2020-0866](#). *State v. Foreman*, [Slip Opinion No. 2021-Ohio-3409](#).

Violent-Offender Registration Duties Can Be Imposed Retroactively

A 2019 state law requiring certain felons to register as violent offenders can be imposed on those who committed their crimes before the law took effect, the Court ruled in October.

A divided Supreme Court determined that applying the registration requirements in "Sierah's Law" did not violate the Ohio Constitution's prohibition against retroactive laws.

In the Court's lead opinion, Justice Kennedy wrote that imposing the registration requirement is not an additional punishment or such a burden on a criminal offender that it can be considered a violation of the constitution. She noted that the Court has found more burdensome offender-registration requirements, such as sex-offender registration, to be constitutional when applied retroactively.

The Court rejected two legal challenges by men who committed crimes shortly before the new law took effect but



image: istock/flyparade

were sentenced soon after. The decision also resolves a split among Ohio appeals courts, affirming the Twelfth District Court of Appeals' retroactive application of Sierah's Law and reversing a Fifth District Court of Appeals' decision holding it unconstitutional.

► [2020-0544](#) and [2020-0625](#). *State v. Hubbard*, [Slip Opinion No. 2021-Ohio-3710](#).

Warrantless Arrest Did Not Violate Rights

A police officer is not required under the U.S. or Ohio constitutions to secure an arrest warrant every time circumstances demonstrate that it is practicable to obtain a warrant, the Court ruled in November.

The Court rejected the claim by LeAndre Jordan that his arrest as he left a Cincinnati cellphone store was unconstitutional because the police did not have an arrest warrant. Police had suspected Jordan was involved in a burglary eight days earlier.

Writing for the Supreme Court majority, Chief Justice O'Connor stated that under R.C. 2935.04, once an officer has probable cause to believe that a suspect committed a felony, a warrantless arrest in

public is constitutional even if there was sufficient time for an officer to obtain an arrest warrant.

► [2020-0495](#). *State v. Jordan*, [Slip Opinion No. 2021-Ohio-3922](#).

Seizing Suspect's Clothing at Hospital Illegal, but Did Not Affect Conviction

A police officer's seizure of socks and underwear from a hospital room violated the constitutional rights of a teenage boy accused of killing his elderly neighbor, but excluding the evidence from the clothes would not have changed the outcome of the criminal proceedings, the Court ruled.

A Court majority affirmed in November the convictions of Jacob LaRosa, who was 15 when he pled no contest to multiple charges arising from a March 2015 incident, which culminated in the murder of 94-year-old Marie Belcastro in her Niles home. LaRosa was sentenced to life imprisonment without the possibility of parole for aggravated murder, along with an additional 30 years in prison on other counts.

The Court unanimously concluded that a Trumbull County Common Pleas Court incorrectly denied LaRosa's request to suppress the evidence obtained from the clothes he wore when taken to a hospital after his mother discovered blood on him. However, the justices were divided 4-3 on whether the error had a substantial impact on LaRosa's decision to plead no contest.

Writing for the Court majority, Justice Fischer noted the police collected evidence of the victim's DNA from LaRosa's body and other clothes located at his home. Because any evidence from the socks and underwear would have been "duplicative" of what the prosecution already obtained, the trial court's decision to allow the illegally seized evidence was "harmless error," Justice Fischer wrote.

► [2020-0337](#). *State v. LaRosa*, [165 Ohio St.3d 346, 2021-Ohio-4060](#).



image: istock/askolds

Three-Month Period to Oppose Arbitration Award is Not Guaranteed

State law provides for a three-month period to seek a court order to vacate, modify, or correct arbitration awards. But that limitation period is the maximum amount of time in which to file; it is not a guaranteed amount of time in which to file, the Court ruled.

A court majority found in May that the ousted manager of a large Massillon warehouse and distribution facility waited too long to contest a 2018 arbitration award, and that his indications to the Cuyahoga County Common Pleas Court that he would formally dispute the award within the next three months were insufficient. Writing for the Court majority, Justice Brunner stated that once the other owners of the property sought a court order to confirm the award, the manager was required to promptly reply with a motion to oppose confirmation.

The Court ruled that [R.C. 2711.13](#) gives a party to an arbitration three months to apply to a court to confirm the award. But once a party seeks to confirm, any party that wishes to oppose confirmation must respond with a motion to vacate, modify, or correct the award on the date of or before the hearing on the application to confirm. The manager failed to file any motion before the hearing date, which resulted in the award being confirmed, the Court concluded.

► [2020-0015](#). *BST Ohio Corp. v. Wolfgang*, 165 Ohio St.3d 110, 2021-Ohio-1785.

State Can Pursue Volkswagen for Emission-Control Tampering Scandal

Although Volkswagen agreed to a federal settlement over its manipulation of emissions-control systems, federal law doesn't prevent Ohio from invoking state law to sue the carmaker for tampering with the systems.

A divided Supreme Court ruled in June that the federal Clean Air Act does not preempt Ohio from invoking its anti-tampering law when it comes to efforts Volkswagen made to defeat pollution control standards. The decision allows the state to pursue claims on a portion of the estimated 14,000 vehicles sold or leased in the state identified in 2016.

Writing for the Court majority, Justice Fischer stated the federal government, through the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, has exclusive authority to sanction Volkswagen for any emission violations from new vehicles and new engines, but the federal law does not exclude state oversight after a vehicle or engine is sold.

Justice Fischer noted that Ohio's law, [R.C. 3704.16\(C\)\(3\)](#), does not create or adopt any emission-control standards and only applies to tampering that takes place after a vehicle has been sold or rented.

► [2020-0092](#). *State ex rel. Yost v. Volkswagen Aktiengesellschaft*, 165 Ohio St.3d 213, 2021-Ohio-2121.

Fortified Mailbox Owners Not Responsible for Pickup Driver's Paralyzing Injuries

A Huron County couple is not liable for the severe injuries suffered by a motorist whose truck slid off a rural road and struck the couple's heavily fortified mailbox, the ruled in November.

Noting the facts of the case are "undisputedly tragic," the Court ruled 5-2 that landowners owe no duty to protect motorists who leave the regularly traveled portion of road and strike an object in the right-of-way. In Ohio, "right-of-way" is the general term for property near the side of a public road that is devoted to transportation purposes, the opinion stated.

Writing for the Court majority, Chief Justice O'Connor stated the Court has repeatedly ruled political subdivisions, landowners, and others owe a duty of care to drivers if they create hazards that "affect the safety of ordinary travel on the road." Because Matthew and Diane Burr's mailbox did not affect the safety of ordinary travel on the regularly traveled portion of Young Road, they are not responsible for the injuries suffered by Cletus Snay, she concluded.

► [2020-1057](#). *Snay v. Burr*, [Slip Opinion No. 2021-Ohio-4113](#).

Insurance Doesn't Cover Nightclub's Sewer Damage

"Sewage" is included under an insurance policy exclusion that prevents coverage for damage caused by "water that backs up or overflows from a sewer."

An exclusion written into a United Specialty Insurance Co. policy provides that damage suffered by the Bank Nightclub in Akron in 2014 is not covered, the Court ruled in October.

The 5-2 ruling reversed a decision of the Ninth District Court of Appeals. The Court also noted that this case marked the first time it had been asked to interpret a water exclusion provision found in "just about every commercial and personal-property insurance policy issued in Ohio."

Writing for the Court majority, Justice Fischer rejected the argument that the exclusion applies only to pure forms of water like rainwater, and noted that water that backs up from a sewer is obviously going to contain sewage. While the exclusion is included in nearly all policies, consumers can protect themselves from sewage damage by purchasing readily available additional coverage from insurers, the Court majority observed.

🔗 [2020-0405](#). *AKC, Inc. v. United Specialty Ins. Co.*, [Slip Opinion No. 2021-Ohio-3540](#).

Regulator Improperly Granted Approval for FirstEnergy-Affiliate to Operate

The Public Utilities Commission of Ohio improperly allowed First Energy Advisors to begin operations without first determining that the company was fit and capable of complying with Ohio law.

In a unanimous decision, the Court ruled in October the PUCO failed to follow state law and commission rules when it certified FirstEnergy Advisors, an affiliate of FirstEnergy Corp., as an electric service provider in April 2020.

After groups raised concerns that the new company had an unfair competitive advantage



because of its close ties to parent company FirstEnergy Corp., the PUCO deferred most of the issues to an ongoing "audit case" of FirstEnergy Corp. rather than address them in FirstEnergy Advisors' application, the Court stated. The PUCO also issued only a "barebones" two-paragraph decision that failed to explain the legal and factual basis for its decision.

Writing for the Court, Justice DeWine noted state law requires the PUCO to show "in sufficient detail" the facts in the record upon which it based its certification order, and the reasoning followed to reach its conclusions.

"The order here does neither," Justice DeWine wrote.

🔗 [2020-1009](#). *In re Application of FirstEnergy Advisors for Certification as a Competitive Retail Elec. Serv. Power Broker & Aggregator*, [Slip Opinion No. 2021-Ohio-3630](#).

Cleveland Solar Power Selling OK'd if Properly Acquired

Cleveland Public Power (CPP) can sell electricity generated from a suburban solar farm, but only if it can prove that it did not purchase the power solely to sell it outside of the city limits, the Court ruled in December.

A divided Supreme Court rejected arguments from Cleveland Electric Illuminating Company (CEI) that the municipal power company was creating an "artificial surplus" of electricity for the sole purpose of selling the power outside of Cleveland at a discounted rate.

In the Court's lead opinion, Justice Stewart wrote that under the Ohio Constitution, a municipal utility cannot acquire surplus product for the sole purpose of selling it outside of its boundaries, but may acquire excess capacity for other purposes, such as lowering costs, and then sell the excess product.

The decision affirmed an Eighth District Appeals Court decision, which ruled that CPP did not have to purchase only the exact amount of power it needs to serve territorial customers. The Supreme Court upheld the Eighth District's determination that CPP has not yet demonstrated that its purchase of power from a solar array built over a former municipal landfill in Brooklyn, Ohio, is for any other purpose than selling it back to the city of Brooklyn.

🔗 [2020-0277](#). *Cleveland Elec. Illum. Co. v. Cleveland*, [Slip Opinion No. 2021-Ohio-4463](#).



Amendments to Rules of Court

The Ohio Rules of Court are the regulations courts of Ohio must follow in adjudicating cases. Rules of court often carry the force of law by governing how legal matters are handled. The justices of the Ohio Supreme Court establish the rules of court. Proposed amendments to the rules are made public and the public is given opportunity to comment on them. The justices vote on proposed rule amendments after consideration of the public's feedback.

About two dozen amendments to the Ohio rules of court and related forms went into effect in 2021, half of which were to the Rules of Superintendence for the Courts of Ohio. Among the rule changes were:

- Amended Superintendence Rules 48 through 48.07 increased guardians ad litem (GAL) training requirements, as well as other GAL-related changes;
- A new Superintendence Rule 36.33, which sets the standards for magistrates presiding over a specialized docket in criminal cases;
- A change to Appellate Rule 21 requires all oral arguments before the appeals court's 12 districts to be recorded by audio or video and made available to the public;
- Changes to criminal rules making it clear that plea hearings and applications for search warrants can be conducted remotely and allow magistrates to preside over specialized dockets on a temporary basis;
- Amended Rule 91 in the Rules of Superintendence for Ohio, which establishes requirements for custody evaluators, how custody evaluations should be conducted and what is to be expected of an evaluator, including their education and licensure requirements, initial training and continuing education, evaluation components, evaluator responsibilities, and ethical considerations;
- Amended Rules 16.30-16.32 in the Rules of Superintendence for the Courts of Ohio establishes an option for mediation in some civil-stalking orders;
- Changes made to the Ohio Rules of Professional Conduct and the Rules for the Government of the Bar of Ohio recognizes technology allows an attorney to practice the law of his or her own state from anywhere and will allow a lawyer admitted to practice in another state to provide legal services remotely from Ohio with stated conditions.

2021 Rules of Court Amendments

RULES OF SUPERINTENDENCE FOR THE COURTS OF OHIO

Sup.R. 80 – 89: Registered Foreign Language and Sign Language Interpreters (*Jan. 1*)

Sup.R. 48 - 48.07: Guardians Ad Litem (*Jan. 1*)

Sup.R. 36.20 – 36.32 and Appendix I: Specialized Docket Certification (*Jan. 1*)

Sup.R. 17: Assigned Judge Compensation (*Jan. 12*)

Sup.R. 16.14, 16.21, and 16.30 - 16.32: Civil Stalking Order Mediation (*April 15*)

Sup.R. 10 – 10.05 and related forms: Protection Order Forms (*April 15*)

Standard Probate Forms 17.8, 23.0 – 23.7, 27.7, and 29.0 – 29.4 (*May 1*)

Sup.R. 66.05: Guardian Background Checks (*June 1*)

Standards 15 and 16 of Appendix C - Communication Devices in the Court and Information Technology Operations Security (*July 1*)

Sup.R. 5.02: Bail Bond Schedule (*July 1*)

Sup.R. 36.33: Specialized Dockets, Use of Magistrates (*July 1*)

Standard Probate Form 30.0 - Correction of Birth Record (*Aug. 3*)

RULES FOR THE GOVERNMENT OF THE BAR OF OHIO

Gov.Bar R. I(4): Board of Bar Examiners/Term of Office and Term Lengths (*March 2*)

Gov.Bar R. VI(4): Military Service Data (*July 1*)

Gov.Bar R. VII: Unauthorized Practice of Law (*July 1*)

Appendix VI: Privacy Law Specialization (*July 1*)

Appendix VI: Child Welfare Law Specialization (*Nov. 1*)

OHIO RULES OF PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT

Prof.Cond.R. 5.5: Out-of-State Licensed Attorney with Ohio Office (*Sept. 1*)

OHIO RULES OF CIVIL PROCEDURE

Civ.R. 16, 26, 34, 37, and 75 (*July 1*)

OHIO RULES OF CRIMINAL PROCEDURE

Crim.R. 11, 19, 33, and 41 (*July 1*)

OHIO RULES OF APPELLATE PROCEDURE

App.R. 4 and 21 (*July 1*)

OHIO RULES OF EVIDENCE

Evid.R. 601 (*July 1*)

RULES OF PRACTICE FOR THE SUPREME COURT OF OHIO

S.Ct.Prac.R. 3.02, 3.03, 3.05, 3.06, 3.09, 3.11, 3.13, 12.08, and 13.03 (*Jan. 1*)

S.Ct.Prac.R. - 5.08 and 14.03 - Apportionment Cases (*Sept. 24*)

Foundation Laid to Build Statewide Sentencing Database

The Ohio Criminal Sentencing Commission, an affiliate of the Supreme Court of Ohio, unveiled the Ohio Sentencing Data Platform for courts to enter felony criminal sentencing information. It's an initial step in the development of a tool toward improved administration of justice.



Franklin County common pleas judge, Jaiza N. Page, addresses the audience.

The Ohio Criminal Sentencing Commission, an affiliate of the Supreme Court of Ohio, unveiled the Ohio Sentencing Data Platform for courts to enter felony criminal sentencing information. It's an initial step in the development of a tool toward improved administration of justice.

There currently is no central index that compiles and tracks felony sentencing information across trial courts in Ohio. The goal of the statewide database is to track a criminal offense from an arrest through the post-sentencing

phases. By collecting standardized data for felony sentencing from all 88 counties, the platform will provide information to help judges make more informed sentencing decisions.

“The sentencing data platform will empower courts with reliable information, and it will help many others,” said Chief Justice Maureen O’Connor. “Prosecutors can use the data to help them with sentencing recommendations, and defense counsel can use this evidence to compare sentencing recommendations among similarly situated offenders.”

Court Enters Sentencing Data Partnership with University

A partnership agreement among the Supreme Court, the sentencing commission, and the University of Cincinnati will advance this effort toward criminal justice reform. The university’s information technology programmers will build the digital interface to connect courts.

Courts in Allen, Cuyahoga, Delaware, Franklin, Hancock, Highland, Lake, Lawrence, Morgan, and Summit counties started piloting the project in 2021.

Improving Court Operations Through Technology

The catalyst of the unexpected global pandemic accelerated modernization of courts which relied on technology to stay open. On May 14, 2021, the Improving Court Operations Using Remote Technology (iCOURT) Task Force delivered its report and recommendations on the future use of technology in Ohio courts to the Supreme Court of Ohio, more than a month ahead of schedule.

The 25-member task force examined a wealth of data, surveyed thousands of judges, court officials, attorneys, litigants, and justice partners, such as guardians, interpreters, and probation officers. The goal was to learn about needs and opportunities as well as technical hurdles, practical and legal concerns, and to reimagine how courts can better administer and ensure justice going forward.

The task force provided 97 detailed recommendations by which courts should join the digital 21st century. The lessons learned in the past year are a blueprint for the judiciary's future. The Supreme Court of Ohio provided courts with \$6 million in grants in 2020 to acquire laptops, Zoom licenses, cameras and more. It would be more than a short-term investment; it was an investment in the future of access to the legal system.

Applauding the task force's thorough and thoughtful work, Chief Justice Maureen O'Connor encouraged Ohio courts to embrace technology with the speed they did in 2020 and continue to evolve. "The task force's recommendations present that framework – one that builds on courts' momentum and innovation during the pandemic and modernizes the courts to ensure that justice is served fairly and equitably."

Among the task force's key recommendations:

Set Minimum Standards for Technology

Identify a base level for court use of technology – similar to the courthouse security and facility standards – which all courts could adopt cost-effectively. Video-conference platforms, which courts have relied on for remote proceedings during the pandemic, should also have base standards including security of the platform, ADA compliance, and a method to control disruptive viewers.

"The last year arguably moved the judiciary from a system that was technology driven to a system that is technology dependent in order to effectively administer justice," the task force noted. "It has

also highlighted that not all courts are operating at the same levels – whether due to the lack of resources to purchase necessary equipment, the lack of knowledge on how to implement technological solutions, or the lack of desire to embrace change."

The report detailed several ideas to support local courts in enhancing their use of tech and staying relevant for the future. And by the end of 2021, implementation had already begun. The Court distributed another \$8.6 million to local courts for technology. The funding was used to add efficiencies, ease operation of the courts and provide remote access to courts when in-person was not possible.

Surmount Public's Barriers to Accessing Virtual Courts

Because the public's access to the courts is fundamental for justice, courts must seek to remove obstacles to participation in a justice system that increasingly operates online – in particular, by reducing barriers to the internet, equipment, and technology know-how.

The report pointed out that rural areas in Ohio lack reliable and affordable internet service, while in large urban areas many people aren't connected because of the cost. Even if people have smartphones – described in the report as "the most common gateway to the internet" – they may not be able to afford data plans or might have Wi-Fi access just at work.

Court staff must stay aware of these impediments, the task force emphasized, and take steps that would make accessing courts and ensuring justice easier. A few of the ideas suggested: offer free wireless internet for the public at courthouses; design online court services for cellphones; explain online services and remote hearing procedures clearly and concisely, with attention to those in need of special accommodations; and expand electronic filing.

Remote Court Breaks Down Barriers

Some courts are now using phone apps to remind parties of their court appointments. In other courts, tenant-landlord disputes are being mediated online, and live streaming is breaking down barriers, so people get their day in court. A mother, paralyzed in an accident was able to attend a hearing virtually to transfer custody of her children to their grandmother. She could not be physically transported to the hearing but Zoom took her there.

Weigh Constitutional Concerns, Jury Trials, and Victim Rights

Constitutional issues in criminal cases – the right of defendants to be present during all stages of their proceedings and to confront witnesses – and the interplay of those rights with courts’ new ways of using tech were addressed by the task force. Considering the U.S. and Ohio constitutions and case law, the task force developed recommendations for civil and criminal jury trials.

The task force also sifted through civil, criminal, juvenile, domestic relations, probate, and appellate court rules, identifying where court rules need to be updated. Some of those amendments will take effect July 1, 2022.

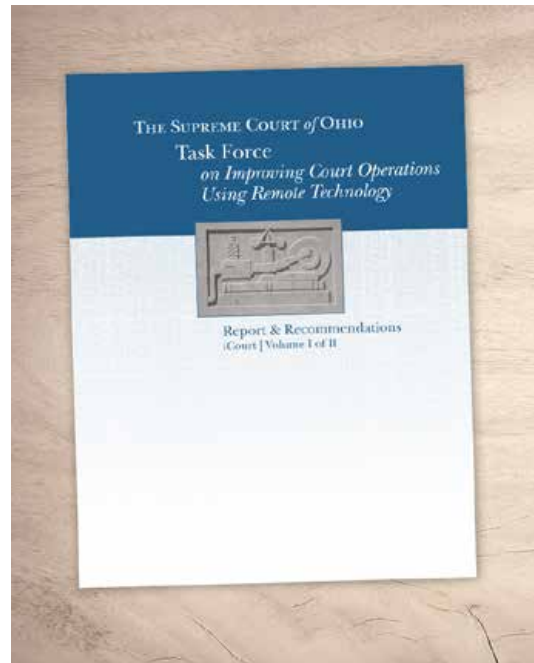
Track Statistics and Adapt Along the Way

The task force pressed courts to gather data to assess what’s working and adjust as they institute new approaches.

“[T]he speed at which new technology is implemented and its expansive scope necessitate courts ensure that no unintended consequences occur,” the report stated. “Thus, the evaluation of its use is crucial, so courts have a true understanding of the impact, both positive and negative, that remote technology is having on their court operations and ultimately the administration of justice.”

The exhaustive framework proposed by the task force represents an opportunity for courts to retain the best from the struggles of the pandemic.

Since the Tech Grant program began in 2015, the Supreme Court has provided a total of \$32 million to local courts for online dockets, filing, and more. The largest infusion of technology funding came in 2020 and 2021.



“Looking forward, I want Ohio’s courts to have a structure in place to decide the manner in which to conduct a hearing, whether in person, hybrid, or remote.”

- Chief Justice O’Connor

NEW TOOLS TO MANAGE EVICTION CASES

Supreme Court of Ohio staff worked tirelessly in 2021 to develop guidance and best practices for local courts to handle eviction cases in anticipation of the federal and statewide eviction moratoriums ending.

For the first eight months of 2021, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) extended its 2020 order temporarily halting residential evictions to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

Chief Justice Maureen O'Connor emphasized courts' responsibilities to help avoid housing evictions during her State of the Judiciary address to hundreds of Ohio judges in early September.

"Now, more than ever, courts need to be proactive to divert tenants and landlords away from formal court action and instead seek rental assistance or alternative forms of dispute resolution," Chief Justice O'Connor said. "Early interventions in eviction cases are the keys to preserving tenancy."

Among the Supreme Court's evictions-related resources developed in 2021 were:

- A [Judicial Guide to Eviction Diversion](#), which outlines strategies to divert landlord-tenant disputes. The new guide was intended to help municipal and county courts connect tenants and landlords to state and federal emergency rental-assistance funds, and how to collaborate with community resource agencies. The toolkit provides sample court forms and letters for judges and case parties.
- [Strategies for Addressing a Backlog of Eviction Cases](#), was released in June. It includes case management guidance and a checklist to manage eviction cases in a timely manner, as well as steps to utilize mediators and alternative dispute resolution methods, reallocate or retrain staff to handle evictions, and hold "settlement" events or night court, among other suggestions.





“Early interventions in eviction cases are the keys to preserving tenancy.”

- Chief Justice O'Connor

LEADERSHIP, GUIDANCE, AND FUNDING

In mid-September, Chief Justice O'Connor joined forces with Senator Sherrod Brown, and Lakewood Municipal Judge Patrick Carroll for a public event in Lakewood to increase awareness of eviction relief resources.

In addition to the Supreme Court's new judicial guide on evictions as a valuable resource, they encouraged community partners to seek funds from the U.S. Department of Treasury's Emergency Rental Assistance Program to help those financially impacted by COVID-19.

Sen. Brown, as chairman of the Senate's Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs Committee, was a central figure in the federal legislation that led to relief funds being transferred to local community action agencies in Ohio. Those organizations distribute the rental and utilities aid to at-risk applicants.

“Ohio's courts are venues to connect those in need to the rental assistance dollars distributed by the federal government and as a vessel to resolve disputes between all parties,” Chief Justice O'Connor said.

TECHNOLOGY IS AN IMPORTANT TOOL

The Court followed up on one of its 2020 recommendations: holding online eviction mediation and settlement sessions. The pilot program Online Dispute Resolution (ODR) led 17 Ohio courts to handle evictions, foreclosures, small claims, and family cases online. The Supreme Court sponsored the project, which was supported by a grant from the federal State Justice Institute. Statewide partnership with Ohio Legal Help, the Ohio Access to Justice Foundation, and the Ohio State Bar Association provided guidance.

“Working online increases the capacity for mediators to help parties resolve their cases,” said Chief Justice O'Connor. “It's another example of our courts finding technological solutions during this crisis.”

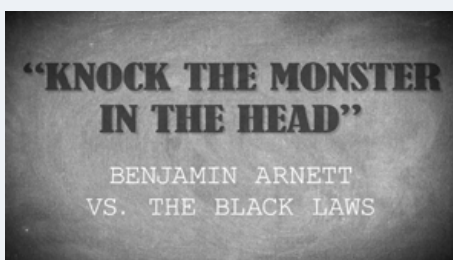
Evictions and small claims cases started in the Cleveland Housing Court, as well as municipal courts in Akron, Darke County, Franklin County, Garfield Heights, Hamilton County, Van Wert County, and Youngstown.

Piloting online foreclosure cases were the common pleas courts of Franklin, Montgomery, and Warren counties.

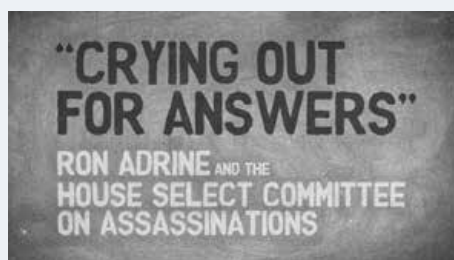


Black History Docuseries Premieres

This year, the Court released the first two videos in a documentary series exploring racial injustice and the legal journeys of African Americans in the state. The series is called “Prejudice and Progress: A History of Racial Justice in Ohio.”



▶ The inaugural video – released in February and titled “Knock the Monster in the Head: Benjamin Arnett versus The Ohio Black Laws” – covers the work of pioneering state Rep. Benjamin Arnett. He battled the “Black Laws,” a Northern version of the South’s Jim Crow statutes that denied free Black Americans their full rights in society.



▶ The second feature, “Crying for Answers,” highlights the reflections of retired Cleveland Municipal Court Judge Ronald Adrine on the 1968 assassination of Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. As a young lawyer in the 1970s, Judge Adrine was chosen as an investigator for the U.S. House Select Committee on Assassinations, which looked into the killings of King and President John F. Kennedy.

Court Continues Public's Access to Justice

As the COVID-19 pandemic extended into its second year, the Supreme Court of Ohio held every scheduled oral argument session and every scheduled case.



Return of In-Person Oral Arguments

After 17 months of hearings via videoconference due to the pandemic, the justices came back to the main Courtroom to hear cases.

In September, the oral arguments resumed at the Thomas J. Moyer Ohio Judicial Center, with a few precautions. Clear plastic dividers were set up between each justice's space on the bench. Attorneys were required to wear masks in the Courtroom except while speaking at the lectern before the Court. Surfaces were disinfected.

As in 2020, no scheduled oral argument sessions before the justices were postponed this year.

ORAL ARGUMENTS IN NUMBERS

ORAL ARGUMENT SESSIONS BROADCAST AND STREAMED LIVE TO THE PUBLIC

100%

ORAL ARGUMENT SESSIONS ARCHIVED ONLINE



Court Resumes Off-Site Program

After a two-year hiatus due to COVID-19, the Supreme Court of Ohio resumed its annual program of conducting oral arguments in local Ohio communities.

In October, 900 community members, including 757 students from 12 local high schools, joined the justices in person at the University of Akron in Summit County to hear arguments in six cases, over two days.

The Supreme Court looks forward to the opportunity to give students a front-row perspective on this unique feature of the highest court in the state. The Court hopes the unique civic education experience will be an early step on a lifelong path of informed citizenship.

To date, 42,266 Ohioans – including 33,362 students – have had the opportunity to watch oral arguments in person, as part of Off-Site Court.

32 ORAL ARGUMENT SESSIONS

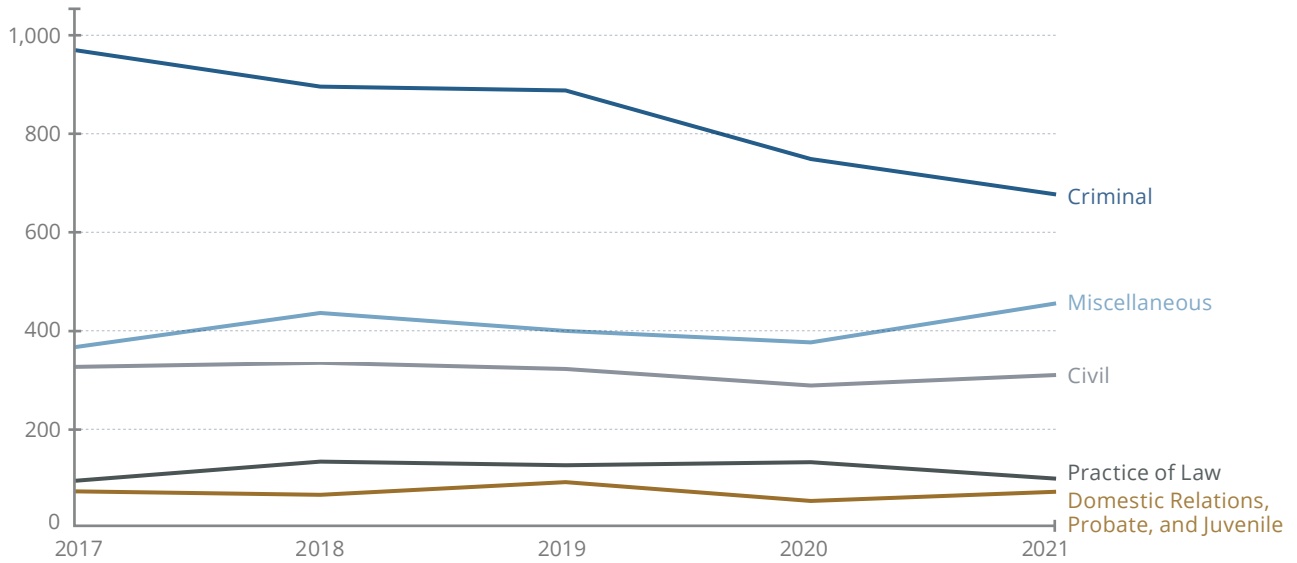
110 CASES HEARD



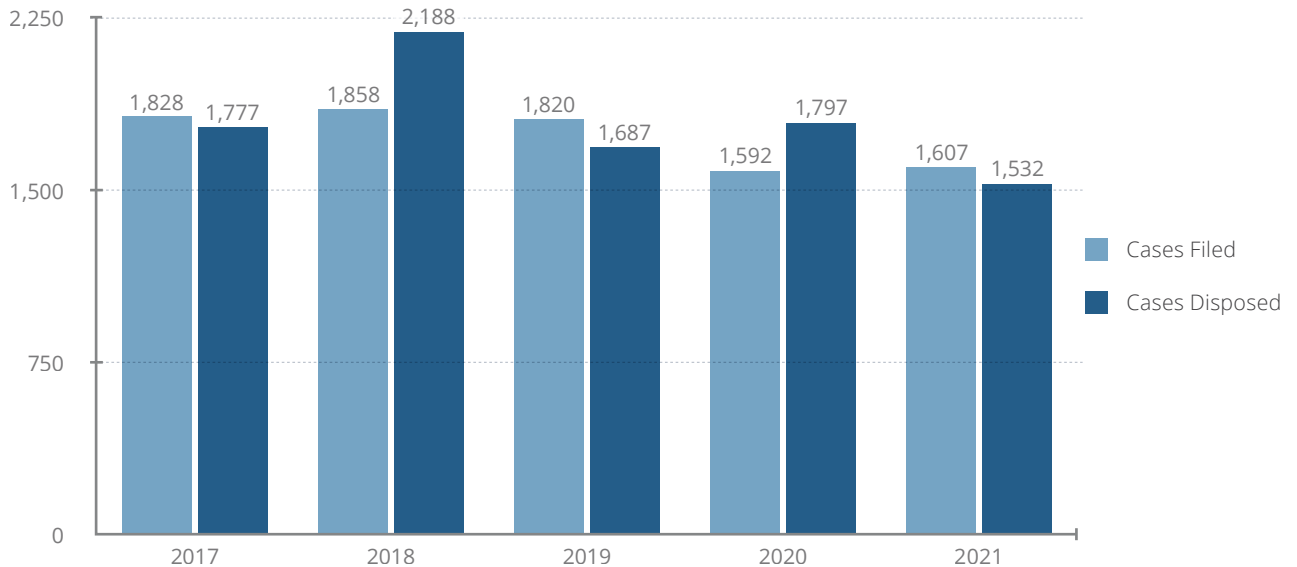
Case Statistics

Just over 1,600 cases were filed with the Ohio Supreme Court in 2021.

Cases Filed, 2017 - 2021



Cases Filed and Disposed, 2017 - 2021



Cases Filed in 2021

1,603 Jurisdictional Appeals

| | |
|-----|---|
| 987 | Jurisdictional Appeals |
| 5 | Death Penalty Postconviction Appeals |
| 18 | Appeals Involving Termination of Parental Rights/Adoption |
| 53 | Appeals from App.R. 26(B) Applications |

447 Merit Cases

| | |
|-----|---|
| 265 | Original Actions |
| 57 | Habeas Corpus Cases |
| 75 | Direct Appeals (Cases Originating in Court of Appeals) |
| 11 | Certified Conflicts |
| 2 | Certified Conflicts Involving Termination of Parental Rights/Adoption |
| 5 | Appeals from Board of Tax Appeals |
| 3 | Appeals from Public Utilities Commission |
| 1 | Appeals from Power Siting Board |
| 0 | Death Penalty Cases |
| 1 | Appeals from App.R. 26(B) Application in Death Penalty Case |
| 3 | Certified Questions of State Law |
| 0 | Appeals from Denial of DNA Testing in Capital Case |
| 1 | Appeals of Contest of Election under R.C. 3515.15 |
| 0 | Petition Challenges pursuant to Article II, Section 1g of the Ohio Constitution |
| 0 | Contests of an Election pursuant to R.C. 3515.08 |
| 18 | Cases Purporting to Invoke Unspecified Original Jurisdiction |
| 5 | Redistricting Cases |

97 Practice of Law Cases

| | |
|----|---|
| 91 | Disciplinary Cases |
| 4 | Bar Admission Cases |
| 1 | Unauthorized Practice of Law Cases |
| 1 | Other Matters Relating to the Practice of Law |

1,607 Total Cases Filed

2021 Cases Disposed

967 Jurisdictional Appeals¹

| | |
|-----|---|
| 902 | Jurisdictional Appeals ² |
| 3 | Death Penalty Postconviction Appeals |
| 13 | Appeals Involving Termination of Parental Rights/Adoption |
| 49 | Appeals from App.R. 26(B) Applications |

431 Merit Cases

| | |
|-----|---|
| 240 | Original Actions |
| 48 | Habeas Corpus Cases |
| 57 | Direct Appeals (Cases Originating in Court of Appeals) |
| 7 | Certified Conflicts |
| 0 | Certified Conflicts Involving Termination of Parental Rights/Adoption |
| 12 | Appeals from Board of Tax Appeals |
| 4 | Appeals from Public Utilities Commission |
| 1 | Appeals from Power Siting Board |
| 3 | Death Penalty Cases |
| 1 | Appeals from App.R. 26(B) Application in Death Penalty Case |
| 1 | Certified Questions of State Law |
| 0 | Appeals from Denial of DNA Testing in Capital Case |
| 1 | Appeals of Contest of Election under R.C. 3515.15 |
| 0 | Petition Challenges pursuant to Article II, Section 1g of the Ohio Constitution |
| 15 | Other Merit Cases |
| 41 | Jurisdictional Appeals Accepted for Merit Review ³ |

134 Practice of Law Cases

| | |
|-----|------------------------------------|
| 118 | Disciplinary Cases |
| 9 | Bar Admission Cases |
| 7 | Unauthorized Practice of Law Cases |

1,532 Total Cases Disposed

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

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

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

Cases Pending on December 31, 2021

227 Jurisdictional Appeals

| | |
|-----|---|
| 227 | Jurisdictional Appeals |
| 0 | Death Penalty Postconviction Appeals |
| 0 | Appeals Involving Termination of Parental Rights/Adoption |
| 0 | Appeals from App.R. 26(B) Applications |
| 0 | Petitions to Transfer Board of Tax Appeals Appeal from Court of Appeals |

307 Merit Cases

| | |
|-----|---|
| 93 | Original Actions |
| 16 | Habeas Corpus Cases |
| 45 | Direct Appeals (Cases Originating in Court of Appeals) |
| 15 | Certified Conflicts |
| 2 | Certified Conflicts Involving Termination of Parental Rights/Adoption |
| 5 | Appeals from Board of Tax Appeals |
| 3 | Appeals from Public Utilities Commission |
| 1 | Appeals from Power Siting Board |
| 7 | Death Penalty Cases |
| 2 | Certified Questions of State Law |
| 0 | Appeals from App.R. 26(B) Application in a Death Penalty Case |
| 0 | Appeals from Denial of DNA Testing in Capital Case |
| 6 | Other Merit Cases |
| 5 | Redistricting Cases |
| 107 | Jurisdictional Appeals Accepted for Merit Review |

21 Practice of Law Cases

| | |
|----|------------------------------------|
| 19 | Disciplinary Cases |
| 1 | Bar Admission Cases |
| 1 | Unauthorized Practice of Law Cases |

555 Total Cases Pending

| | Jurisdictional Appeals | Merit Cases | Practice Of Law Cases | Total |
|-------------------|------------------------|-------------|-----------------------|-------|
| Cases Filed | 1,063 | 447 | 97 | 1,607 |
| Case Dispositions | 967 | 431 | 134 | 1,532 |

95%
CLEARANCE RATE

In Memorium



James Patrick
CELEBREZZE

138th Justice
1983-1985

Born Feb. 6, 1938; Died Feb. 10, 2021

Justice James P. Celebrezze had the distinction of serving on the Supreme Court of Ohio along with his brother Frank Celebrezze, who was chief justice at the same time. It is the only time siblings have served on the high court together.

“I had to watch my p’s and q’s. If not, I’d hear about it,” Justice James Celebrezze said in a 2020 interview with current Justice Patrick F. Fischer, who interviewed the former justice for a segment of [“Reflections from the Bench.”](#)

Justice Celebrezze died on Feb. 10, 2021, at the age of 83 in Cleveland. He served 23 years as an Ohio jurist, including two years as an Ohio Supreme Court justice, from 1983 to 1985. He was the Court’s [138th justice](#).

Born in Cleveland in 1938 he graduated with a bachelor’s degree from Ohio State University in 1960. After graduation, he joined the U.S. Army, serving for two years. After leaving the service, he taught in the Cleveland school district from 1962 to 1968.

In 1964, Celebrezze was elected to serve Ohio’s 4th district in the Ohio House of Representatives, a position he held until 1974. During this time, he attended Cleveland-Marshall Law School and earned his law degree in 1967.

Justice Celebrezze presided as a judge on the Cuyahoga County Domestic Relations Court (1980 to 1981 and 1991-2009) and the Eighth District Court of Appeals from 1981 to 1983 before winning a seat on the Supreme Court to complete an unexpired term. He lost his bid to retain the seat for a full term.

Earlier in his career and in between stints of public service, he was an attorney at law

from 1967 to 1991. From 1975 to 1978, he served as the Brook Park city law director. He also served as a military judge in the Navy as part of the Judge Advocate General Corps for more than 20 years.

Possibly the most significant decision of his Supreme Court career involved a workers’ compensation opinion. Writing for the 6-1 majority, Celebrezze held that a person who is gradually injured by a continually repeated job task, such as heavy lifting, can become disabled and receive job injury payments ([Village v. General Motors Corp., 1984](#)).

This decision erased the “sudden mishap” rule that was used to determine when a person injured on the job was entitled to compensation.

His daughter, Judge Leslie Ann Celebrezze, has carried on his legal legacy by being elected to succeed her father when he retired from the Cuyahoga County Domestic Relations Court in 2009.

In addition to Judge Leslie Ann Celebrezze, the former justice was survived by his Daria, his wife of 54 years, and children James Jr. and Nicholas, an attorney who also served as a state representative.

In Memorium



Andrew (Andy) Grant
DOUGLAS

139th Justice
1985-2002

Born July 5, 1932; Died Sept. 23, 2021

Former Justice Andy Douglas, the 139th justice of the Ohio Supreme Court, passed away Sept. 23, 2021 at the age of 89. Justice Douglas served three terms on the Court, from 1985 to 2002.

Former Justice Andy Douglas, the [139th justice](#) of the Ohio Supreme Court, passed away Sept. 23, 2021 at the age of 89. Justice Douglas served three terms on the Court, from 1985 to 2002.

Born in Toledo in 1932, he attended the University of Toledo, where he earned his law degree in 1959. From 1954 to 1956, he served in the U.S. Army.

In 1960, Justice Douglas co-founded the law firm Winchester & Douglas, where he practiced for 20 years before being elected to the Sixth District Court of Appeals in 1980. During that time, at age 29, he became one of the youngest members elected to Toledo City Council. He was re-elected nine times, serving until 1980.

In early 2019, Justice Douglas sat for a video interview with current Justice Patrick F. Fischer for a series called "[Reflections from the Bench](#)." Justice Fischer talked with Justice Douglas about his early life as a member of an immigrant family from Scotland living in a poor section of Toledo, as well his years on the Supreme Court.

In that interview, Justice Douglas talked about hearing all four DeRolph cases challenging the constitutionality of how Ohio funds public schools, as well as being the only member of the Supreme Court who was among the majority ruling in each of the four decisions.

"I came from a public school," Justice Douglas explained. "I knew that the

educational opportunities were determined by a child's ZIP code, as opposed to the fact that they should have had an equal education."

During a 1997 commencement address to Cleveland-Marshall College of Law students, Justice Douglas shared his philosophy with the aspiring lawyers: "As you traverse the rocky terrain of the modern practice of law, always keep this principle in mind... Endeavor to give your clients advice which will advance their interests while also furthering the interests of justice. I can think of no greater comfort than laying down your head on your pillow each night knowing, on that day you helped somebody. We, in our profession, can do that each and every day."

Justice Douglas could not run for a fourth term on the Supreme Court, as he reached the mandatory retirement age of 70 in 2002. He retired Dec. 31, 2002, and joined the Columbus law firm Crabbe, Brown & James as a partner. He also served as executive director of the Ohio Civil Service Employees Association (OCSEA.) Most recently, Justice Douglas served of counsel with Columbus law firm Mazanec, Raskin & Ryder Co., LPA. He continued to practice law until his death.

He is survived by Sue Pohlman, his wife of 12 years, as well as his four children, Cindy, Robert, Andy, and David. His first wife, Joan, died in 1966.

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 69 sitting Ohio appellate court judges to sit temporarily on the Supreme Court. The Court thanks the court of appeals judges who served as visiting judges for Supreme Court oral arguments in 2021.



HON. MICHAEL T. HALL
SECOND DISTRICT

*In re: Judicial Campaign Complaint
Against Karen Kopich Falter*

Case No. 2020-0407

January 13



HON. SEAN C. GALLAGHER
EIGHTH DISTRICT

*In re: Judicial Campaign Complaint
Against Karen Kopich Falter*

Case No. 2020-0407

January 13



HON. STEPHEN W. POWELL
TWELFTH DISTRICT

*In re: Judicial Campaign Complaint
Against Karen Kopich Falter*

Case No. 2020-0407

January 13



HON. PATRICIA A. DELANEY
FIFTH DISTRICT

*State of Ohio ex rel. (Dave
Yost), Ohio Attorney General v.
Volkswagen, et al.*

Case No. 2020-0092

January 26



HON. MARK L. PIETRYKOWSKI
SIXTH DISTRICT

State of Ohio v. Abdul S. Azeen

Case No. 2020-0143

January 27



HON. W. SCOTT GWIN
FIFTH DISTRICT

ECOT v. Ohio State Bd. of Ed., et al.

Case No. 2020-0182

March 2

*R. David Scott, et al. v. Abubakar
Atiq Durrani, M.D., et al.*

Case No. 2020-0206

March 3



HON. WILLIAM A. KLATT
TENTH DISTRICT
*R. David Scott, et al. v. Abubakar
Atiq Durrani, M.D., et al.*
Case No. 2020-0206
March 3



HON. CHRISTINE MAYLE
SIXTH DISTRICT
*Ohio State Bar Association
v. Harvey Bruce Bruner*
Case No. 2020-1533
May 11



HON. ANITA LASTER MAYS
EIGHTH DISTRICT
*Lamar Advantage GP Company,
LLC, et al. v. City of Cincinnati,
Ohio, et al.*
Case No. 2020-0931
June 16

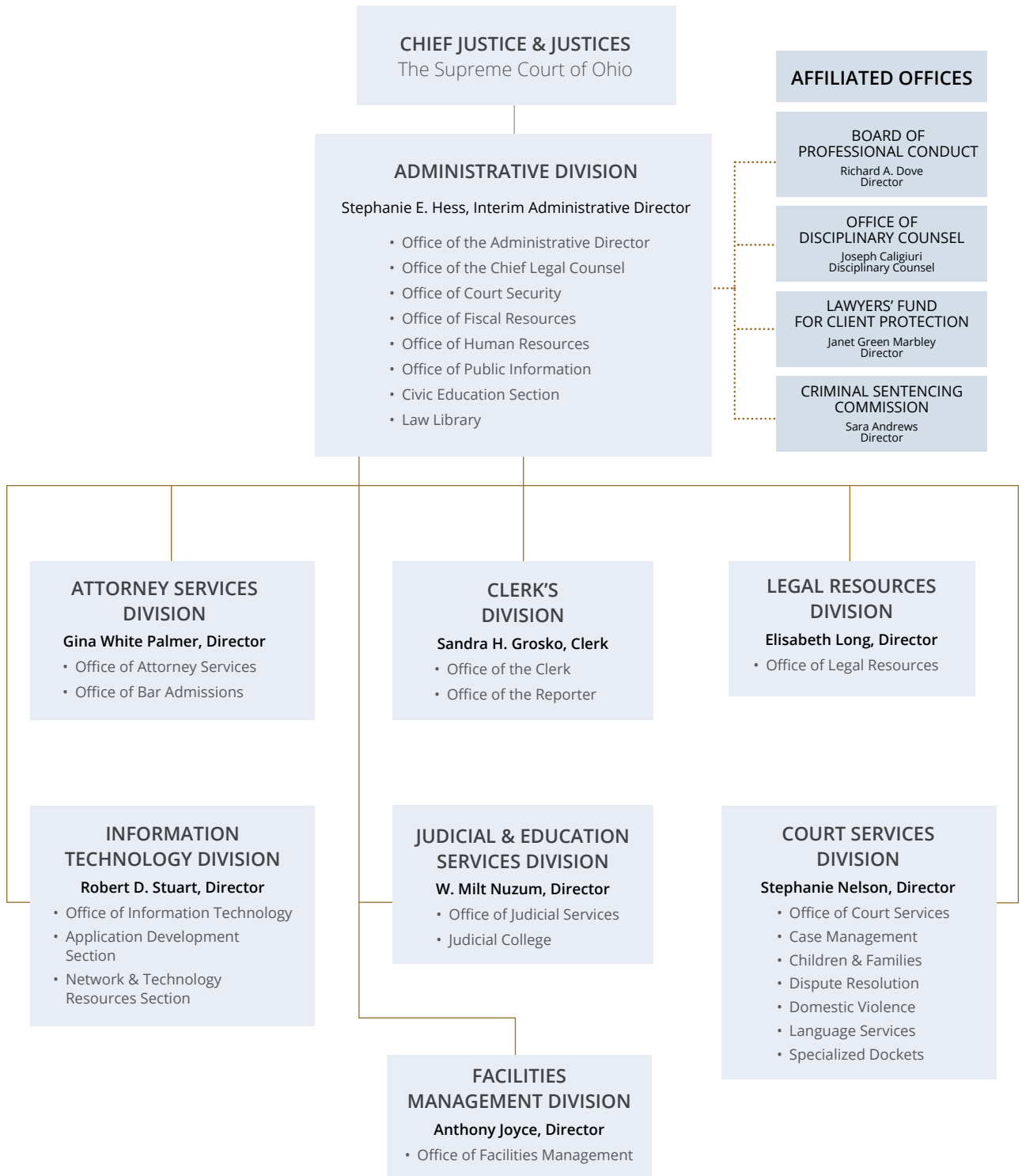


HON. ROBIN N. PIPER III*
TWELFTH DISTRICT
*Ronald M. Jezerinac, et al.
v. Mo M. Dioun, et al.*
Case No. 2020-0743
September 7

* Judge Piper III was the only judge who participated in in-person oral arguments in 2021, all other visiting judges participated remotely.

THE SUPREME COURT *of* OHIO

2021 ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE



ADMINISTRATIVE OPERATIONS

ADMINISTRATIVE DIVISION

The Administrative Division is the lead division of the Supreme Court. It assists in developing and communicating the long-term vision, values, and direction of the Court and the judicial branch of Ohio government. The Administrative Division includes the offices of the Administrative Director, Chief Legal Counsel, Court Security, Fiscal Resources, Human Resources, Law Library, and Public Information. This division also oversees Court communication and outreach and provides support to the Court and Ohio judiciary in the areas of fiscal, human resources, and records management.

ATTORNEY SERVICES DIVISION

The Attorney Services Division assists the Supreme Court in its regulation of the practice of law in Ohio. This division includes the Office of Bar Admissions.

CLERK'S DIVISION

The clerk of the court supervises the filing of all case-related items and maintains all case files in matters pending before the Supreme Court. In addition, the office maintains case dockets, the journal of Court orders, and relevant trial, appellate, board, and agency records. The office prepares and issues Court orders, schedules oral arguments and other case-related matters for the Court's consideration, and coordinates interagency communication in death-penalty cases. The division includes the Office of the Reporter, which publishes Supreme Court, appellate, and trial court opinions.

COURT SERVICES DIVISION

The Office of Court Services supports trial and appellate courts in the administration of justice. Its staff provides traditional and innovative services in response to and with respect for the needs of the courts and the public.

FACILITIES MANAGEMENT DIVISION

The Facilities Management Division ensures the secure and efficient operation of the Moyer Judicial Center and maintains internal and external comfort, cleanliness, and building standards. The division provides building management services to Supreme Court employees and other building tenants, and ensures the safety and comfort of guests.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY DIVISION

The Information Technology Division operates the Supreme Court's information technology systems and processes. The division also develops and implements the Ohio Courts Network, provides guidance to Ohio courts on technology-related matters, and facilitates the development of statewide information-technology standards for Ohio courts.

JUDICIAL & EDUCATION SERVICES DIVISION

The Office of Judicial Services is the lead office of the division, which includes the Ohio Judicial College. The Office of Judicial Services coordinates the management of division projects and provides oversight of the judges' database, support services for the creation of new judgeships, and the assignment of visiting judges. The Judicial College provides educational programs for Ohio's judges and non-judicial court personnel, as well as training for those Ohioans who serve as guardians ad litem and adult guardians.

LEGAL RESOURCES DIVISION

The Office of Legal Resources assists in resolving complex legal issues pending before the Supreme Court.

AFFILIATED OFFICES

In addition to its eight divisions, the Supreme Court has four affiliated offices with quasi-independent status because of the nature of their work: Office of Disciplinary Counsel, Ohio Board of Professional Conduct, Lawyers' Fund for Client Protection, and Ohio Criminal Sentencing Commission.

Complete descriptions of all Supreme Court offices and the affiliated offices are available at sc.ohio.gov/AdminOffices.

Judiciary/Supreme Court OPERATING EXPENDITURES

The Supreme Court of Ohio/Judiciary GRF budget totals **\$195.2 million**, which is used to support the operation of the Moyer Judicial Center, as well as the payment of the salaries of Ohio judges and district court of appeals staff.

| | Expenditures FY 2021* | Percent of Total | Budgeted FY 2022** | Percent of Total |
|---|--------------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|
| OHIO JUDICIARY | | | | |
| Courts of Appeals Judges | \$14,337,711 | 7.3% | \$15,216,757 | 7.4% |
| Trial Court Judges | \$96,152,746 | 49.2% | \$101,222,038 | 49.3% |
| TOTAL OHIO JUDICIARY | \$110,490,457 | 55.6% | \$116,438,795 | 56.7% |
| COURT OF APPEALS STAFF | \$31,267,762 | 16.0% | \$34,459,042 | 16.8% |
| SUPREME COURT | | | | |
| Supreme Court of Ohio Operations | \$47,370,218 | 24.3% | \$49,642,049 | 24.2% |
| Ohio Center for Law-Related Education | \$200,000 | 0.1% | \$200,000 | 0.1% |
| Ohio Courts Network Initiative | \$5,458,923 | 2.8% | \$3,829,540 | 1.9% |
| County Law Library Resources Board | \$217,530 | 0.1% | \$408,000 | 0.2% |
| Civil Justice Program Fund | \$274,843 | 0.1% | \$350,000 | 0.2% |
| SUPREME COURT TOTAL | \$53,521,514 | 27.4% | \$54,429,589 | 26.5% |
| OHIO JUDICIARY & SUPREME COURT TOTAL | \$195,279,733 | | \$205,327,426 | |

* Includes encumbrances and all fund sources.

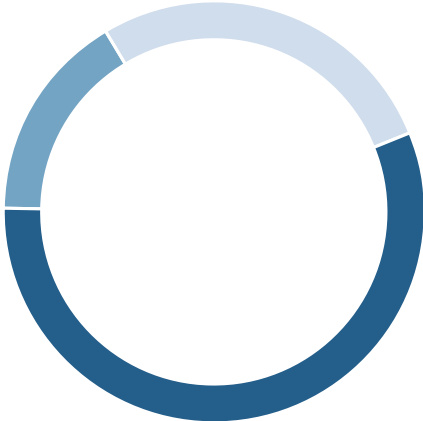
** Budget is as of January, fiscal year 2022.

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

SOURCE: State of Ohio OAKS Fin System

Ohio Judiciary/Supreme Court

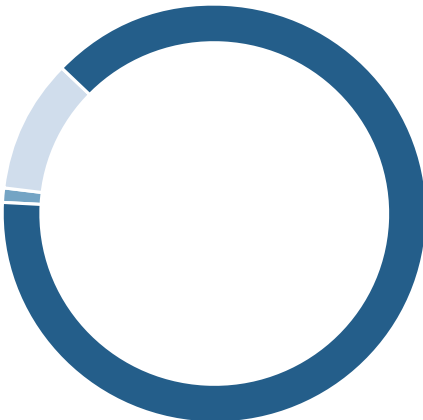
Fiscal Year 2021 Total Expenditures



- \$110,490,457
Ohio Judiciary
- \$53,521,514
Supreme Court
- \$31,267,762
Court of Appeals Staff

Supreme Court of Ohio

Fiscal Year 2021 Total Expenditures



- \$47,370,218
Ohio Supreme Court Operations
- \$5,458,923
Ohio Courts Network Initiative
- \$692,373
Ohio Center for Law-Related Education, County Law Library Resources Board, and Civil Justice Program Fund

Professional Excellence Recognized



Other award recipients were Carol Taylor, publications manager in the Office of Public Information; Karen Osmond, assistant disciplinary counsel for the Disciplinary Counsel; and Dean Hogan, judicial services program manager in the Office of Judicial Services.



For the first time, Professional Excellence Awards were given to an entire department. Along with the Office of Bar Admissions, eleven employees received the highest honor given to Court employees. Winners within Bar Admissions include bar admissions assistant director Tiffany Kline; bar admissions manager Elizabeth Arcos; attorney services counsel Alexis Preskar; administrative assistant Lori Robison-Embry; and bar admissions specialists Amie Chapman, Ashlea Glaser, Michelle Vasquez White, and Cypress Williams.

Employees Distinguished for Quality Service

The Supreme Court of Ohio recognized employee excellence and years of service in its 17th annual ceremony. The event was held privately on Dec. 13. The Court honored 32 employees for their length of service to the judiciary.



Carol C. Durley
35 Years of Service



Meletha Dawson
20 Years of Service



Christine A. Einloth
15 Years of Service



Robert D. Stuart
15 Years of Service



Sandra H. Grosko
25 Years of Service



Mark Dutton
20 Years of Service



Anthony T. Joyce
15 Years of Service



Richard L. Wardell
15 Years of Service



Janet Greene Marbledy
25 Years of Service



Douglas H. Kohrt
20 Years of Service



Brandee E. Preston
15 Years of Service



Katrina M. Webb
15 Years of Service



Lori M. Robison-Embry
25 Years of Service



Damon A. Asbury
15 Years of Service



Shannon B. Scheid
15 Years of Service

10 YEARS OF SERVICE

Stephen M. Kahler
Erin N. Waltz

5 YEARS OF SERVICE

Sara D. Andrews
Katherine H. Biancamano
John A. Groom
Alyssa A. Guthrie
Jeffrey Jablonka

Sarah E. Jeu
Karen S. Loy
Gregory P. Mathews
Jesse T. Mosser
Douglas M. Nelson

Alan Ohman
Michelle A. Ridgway
Colleen P. Rosshirt
Igor Stavniychuk
Daniel F. Trevas

Staff Notes

Retirements



A large gathering of Supreme Court staff honored Carol Durley in September during a reception in which Chief Justice O'Connor presented her with a plaque to congratulate her on her 36 years of service to the Court. For many years, Carol served as the Court's main receptionist.



Senior Judicial Attorney Timothy Riordan retired in September after 30 years of public judicial service, including 25 years on the Eighth District Court of Appeals and the last five serving on the Supreme Court staff of Justice Melody Stewart, shown right.



Anthony Schroeder, an assistant reporter in the Office of the Reporter of Decisions, was hailed during a staff gathering in July to honor his 30 years of service to the Court. Anthony began his service in 1991.

Frank Rutherford retired in November after 14 years of service to the Court. He served as a maintenance mechanic on the Facilities Management staff. Tony Joyce presented Frank with a plaque at his retirement reception.



Edward Miller, director of the Office of Public Information, was joined by his wife Anne, at his retirement reception in December, where the justices and staff thanked him for his five and a half years of service to the Court.



Sherry Wells retired in September after 13 years at the Court. She served as a judicial services program assistant, where she worked on training materials for judges and court personnel.

George Smith retired in January after 13 years of service to the Court. George served as a court security officer.



Civic Education Wins National Award

The Supreme Court of Ohio's Civic Education Program was honored with the Sandra Day O'Connor Award for the Advancement of Civics Education from the National Center for State Courts.

The annual award honors an organization, court, program, or individual that has promoted, inspired, improved, or led an innovation or accomplishment in the field of civics education related to the justice system.

The Supreme Court's program was selected for its multi-faceted approach to civics education, continued program expansion, longevity, and its ability to be replicated in other jurisdictions around the country.

The Civic Education Program engages students and adults through on-site exhibits in the Court's Visitor Education Center and through lessons developed

for teachers and students that are aligned with the Ohio Department of Education's learning standards.

The program was recognized for its ability to respond and adapt to changes brought on by the pandemic.

In her nomination letter, Chief Justice Maureen O'Connor credited the two-person civic education staff – Manager Sara Stiffler and Coordinator Mason Farr – with taking the program to “new heights this past year in creating breakthrough classroom materials.

“When COVID-19 closed our building for court sessions and tours, Ms. Stiffler and Mr. Farr accelerated their offerings,” the chief justice wrote. “They increased their work on new remote curricula and educational videos and switched from in-person to remote tours for school children learning at home.”



Left: Chief Justice O'Connor and Civic Education coordinator, Mason Farr, accept the Sandra Day O'Connor Award.

The National Center for State Courts, headquartered in Williamsburg, Virginia, is a nonprofit court organization dedicated to improving the administration of justice by providing leadership and service to the state courts.

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Boards, Commissions, Advisory Committees, and Task Forces

The Court relies on the volunteer services of dozens of committed judges, attorneys, clerks, court administrators, and private citizens who serve on the Supreme Court's many boards, commissions, advisory committees, and task forces. These bodies help the Court provide oversight to Ohio courts, regulate the practice of law, and provide efficient and helpful services to the judicial branch of Ohio government. To learn more about these bodies and the nature of their work, refer to sc.ohio.gov.

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