

Senate Bill 2002
House Appropriations Committee
Education and Environment Division

Testimony Presented by Sally Holewa
State Court Administrator
March 6, 2025

Good morning, Chairman Nathe and members of the Committee. For the record, my name is Sally Holewa. I am the State Court Administrator. I will be providing an overview of the major changes in the Judicial Branch appropriation request. Our director of finance will be following me to provide the line-item details.

The Judicial Branch appropriation funds the personnel, programs, and operating costs of the Supreme Court, the district courts, and the Judicial Conduct Commission and Attorney Disciplinary Board (JCCDB). Our appropriation request for the 2025-2027 biennium is **\$165,960,657**. This is an increase of **\$36,263,245** over our 2023-2025 base budget. The increase comes primarily from two areas: IT and Salaries and Benefits. The increase in IT costs is mostly in the maintenance of necessary software and equipment but also includes some discretionary IT projects. In addition to the regular cost to continue salaries and health insurance increases, the increase in salary and benefit costs includes an increase in judge salaries, a market adjustment to the court's compensation pay grid, and a request for 22 additional FTEs.

Salary and Wages

Personnel costs are the largest share (83%) of the court's budget. Our appropriation request includes an increase of **\$6,751,956** for increases in health insurance and for salary increases of 3% in each year of the year of the biennium for staff salary. The appropriation request also includes **\$2,078,868** for judicial officer increases, **\$2,038,816** to adjust our compensation system to the market rate, and **\$4,889,232** for 22 new FTE.

Judicial Officer Raises

There are others people here today who will be testifying about the need to increase judicial salaries, so I will keep my remarks on this subject short. Our judicial salaries are falling behind. In 2007, the legislature made a choice to bring North Dakota judge salaries to a comparable level with neighboring states. We were able to obtain and hold parity with them for several years but have since fallen far behind them. We are requesting that North Dakota judicial salaries be raised to the equivalent of the national average. This equates to a 12.1% increase for the chief justice, 11.1% for the other justices, and 7.7% for the presiding judge, other judges of the district court, and judicial referees.

The current salary for a district court judge is \$171,113.00. Every district has a presiding judge who is paid slightly higher to handle administrative duties in addition to their duties as a judge. The current salary for a presiding judge is \$175,975.00. Under the proposed increase, the salary for a district court judge would rise to \$184,366.00 on July 1, 2025. The salary for a presiding judge would rise to \$189,528.00 on July 1, 2025. Including the 8 presiding judges, we currently have a total of 55 district court judges.

The current salary for a supreme court justice is \$186,484.00. The Chief Justice has a higher salary because he is the administrative head of the judicial branch in addition to his adjudicative duties. The current salary for the Chief Justice is \$191,758.00. Under the proposed increase, the salary for a supreme court justice would rise to \$207,249 on July 1, 2025. The salary for the Chief Justice would rise to \$214,896.00 on July 1, 2025. Including the Chief Justice, there is a total of 5 supreme court justices.

District court referees are appointed by the presiding judge of a district to assist the judges in managing their caseloads. By court policy, they are paid 80% of the salary of a district court judge. We currently have 5 referees serving in 3 judicial districts.

Adjustment to Compensation System

The court system uses an 11-step/21-year compensation grid that is pegged to market level at mid-point of the grid. The system is designed to start employees at a training

wage that increases until it reaches market level or the mid-point of the step system. The grid periodically needs to be adjusted to maintain market position because of changes in the demand for labor and increases in the cost-of-living. The last time we adjusted our pay grid to market level was in 2013. A compensation study that we completed in 2024 shows that our mid-point has slipped 13.20% from where we were in 2015. To regain market level, we are requesting a 3% adjustment of the grid. The cost to make this adjustment is **\$2,038,816**.

Vacant FTE Pool and Accrued Leave Payouts

The next 3 items on your agency worksheet are in regard to the vacant FTE pool and funding for accrued leave payouts. Our Director of Finance is familiar with how those processes work and is the best person to speak to the accounting necessary for these line items.

New FTEs

District court services are available in all 53 counties, but we do not have a judge or an office in every county. We have judges chambered in 19 counties, juvenile court offices in 10 counties, state-employed clerks of court in 14 counties and administrative offices in 4 counties.

Juvenile Court Staff (4.5 FTEs)

- .5 FTE administrative assistant for juvenile court to convert a current part-time position in Grand Forks to a full-time position.
- 1 FTE administrative assistant for juvenile court in Fargo
- 1 FTE juvenile court officer in Fargo
- 1 FTE administrative assistant for juvenile court in Minot
- 1 FTE juvenile court officer in Minot

District Court Administrative Assistant

- 1 FTE administrative assistant for the unit administrator's office located in Bismarck. This would restore one of the two positions that were lost due to budget reductions in 2016 and free up time that the unit administrator is spending doing clerical work.

Deputy District Unit Administrator

- 1 FTE deputy unit administrator
Unit 4, which encompasses Ward, Williams and the 4 other northwestern counties, is the only administrative unit that operates without a deputy unit

administrator. The position should have been filled in 2004 but instead was converted to a juvenile court officer position and moved to Bismarck to fill an acute shortage in the juvenile court. This decision has created a situation where the unit administrator, without any assistance or back-up, has to perform all of her duties as well as those specifically assigned to deputy administrators such as risk management and annual audits of the clerks of court offices within the unit.

IT Staff (5 FTEs)

- 2 FTE programmers
- 2 FTE network analysts
- 1 FTE technology coordinator

The court system currently has an IT department that consists of an IT director and 12 staff to support 4,000 internal and external clients. Since 2000, we have added only two additional staff to this department and both were positions converted from other departments when a vacancy occurred. This staffing level leaves us unable to meet the demands for service, leading to delays in creating new programs, responding to requests for data, and inhibiting the ability to adequately staff the office throughout the day due to the need to physically install and upgrade equipment and provide training to court staff and others.

District Court Staff Attorney

- 1 FTE staff attorney for the Self-Help Center

The self-help center was established in 2014. On average, the Center responds to over 1,600 requests for service every year. The Center has also developed 800 instructions, guides and forms for self-represented litigants. It is staffed by one attorney, who also serves as the law librarian, and one paralegal. Additional assistance is provided by the assistant law librarian. Another attorney is needed to meet the heavy demand for services and to provide for regular review of current forms as well as creating new resources as time allows.

Supreme Court Administrator staff

- 1 FTE staff attorney

There are currently three staff attorneys within the office of the state court administrator. They provide legal research, policy interpretation and guidance to clerks of court, juvenile court personnel, division directors, program managers and others. They also staff supreme court committees, draft legislation, rules and policies, provide training to judges and court staff and serve as faculty for continuing legal education programs. They frequently serve as members or staff to interagency committees and task forces.

Supreme Court Deputy Clerk

- 1 FTE deputy supreme court clerk

The Supreme Court has operated with 4 deputy clerks of court since the late 1970s. This would add one additional deputy clerk.

Supreme Court Administrative Assistant

- .5 FTE administrative assistant

This would convert a current half-time administrative position to a full-time position.

Office of Guardianship and Conservatorship (SB 2029) (5 FTEs)

If it passes as amended by the Senate, SB 2029 will create an Office of Guardianship and Conservatorship responsible for overseeing the expenditure of over \$15 million in public funds for guardianship services, licensing of professional guardians, establishing a complaint process, and providing education for guardians and conservators. Our appropriation request includes **\$326,140** for operating expenses and **\$1,168,488** for 5 new FTE positions to set up the administrative structure to handle the new financial, educational and oversight responsibilities assigned to the Commission. The new FTEs include:

- 1 FTE director responsible for the administrative oversight of the Office, which would include oversight for \$15 million in public expenditures for guardianship services, staff management, program management, and support for an operations committee and a complaint review board.
- 1 FTE administrative assistant to assist the director with general office tasks and provide logistical and clerical support to the complaint review board and operations committee.
- 1 FTE accountant analyst responsible for auditing and payment of invoices, office expenses and program expenditures.
- 1 FTE monitoring program manager whose responsibilities would include a combination of conducting random financial reviews, assigning court visitors, responding to questions from guardians, conservators and others, and creating continuing education sessions for guardians and conservators.
- 1 FTE paralegal to assist the staff attorney in investigating concerns that are filed with the complaint review board.

Court Navigator (1 FTE)

We are requesting **\$309,742** to establish a court navigator position within our self-help center. This includes 1 FTE staff attorney at a cost of \$293,624 plus \$16,118 in operating costs. A court navigator is an attorney who has been given special authority to provide legal assistance to self-represented litigants in completing forms and answering legal questions related to specific proceedings.

Allied Legal Professional Program (1 FTE)

We are requesting **\$364,574** to implement an Allied Legal Professional Program. This includes 1 FTE staff attorney at a cost of \$293,624 and \$70,950 in operating costs.

Allied Legal Professional programs have been successful in other states in mitigating attorney shortages by providing cost-effective legal advice and assistance for specified proceedings. Allied Legal Professionals must pass examinations and be licensed by the Board of Law Examiners. We anticipate building education and testing for up to 5 areas of law, including landlord-tenant, consumer debt collection and family law.

Treatment Courts (Specialized court dockets)

We are requesting **\$373,476** for temporary staff and operating expenses to establish 3 new specialized court dockets. These include an Indian Child Welfare Court in Devils Lake, a Mental Health Court in Mandan, and a Veteran's Court in Fargo. Each of these courts would be staffed by a part-time temporary coordinator at a cost of \$86,592 per position, plus operating costs for a total of \$124,492 per court. Additional written testimony in support of these courts has been submitted online. There may be others here today who wish to testify in regard to these courts.

Judges' Retirement System

We have two remaining participants in the former judges' retirement system. This retirement system was put in place in the early 1950s and was eventually replaced by the current judge's retirement plan administered by NDPERS. We are requesting a *decrease* of **\$13,666** for that program due to the continued decline in participating members.

IT System Maintenance and Enhancements

Each year there are increases associated with data processing, software licensing and equipment. We are requesting **\$2,059,179** to cover those increases to allow us to continue necessary IT operations. In addition to the software and maintenance costs increases, there is a significant amount of equipment such as printers, scanners, credit card machines, assisted listening devices and external microphones used in the courts that must be periodically upgraded or replaced.

Law Library Subscriptions

We are requesting **\$73,882** to cover increases in our law library subscriptions. These subscriptions cover the legal research resources used by justices, judges, referees, staff attorneys, law clerks and paralegals within the court system.

Credit Card Processing and Bank Fees

We are requesting **\$293,000** to cover increases in credit card processing and banking fees. Credit cards are used to pay civil filing fees, document fees, traffic fines, bail, bond, restitution and court fines.

Operating Costs

We are requesting **\$409,699** to cover a range of small increases in various operating costs. There is a detailed list on page 13.

Interpreter fees

We are requesting **\$125,500** to cover increased costs for interpreter fees. Between January 1, 2023 and June 30, 2024, we used interpreters for 1,589 court hearings, covering the need for American Sign Language and 39 foreign languages. Laws requiring the court to utilize interpreters have been on the books since North Dakota's territorial days. While it is tempting to consider interpreters a luxury for defendants, they are in fact just as necessary for the judge to be able to explain what is happening and to understand what the defendant is communicating.

Clerk of Court Contract fees

We are requesting an increase **\$189,428** for the clerk of court services that we obtain through contracts with 39 counties. The increase is to cover salary increases that the counties have already given to clerk staff and the increased costs for credit card fees. Individual contract amounts are based on (a) the number and types of cases filed during the period of January 2022 through January 2024, (2) the clerk of court staff salary set by the county and in effect on January 2024, (3) a proportional amount of health insurance cost, and (4) an additional 10% to reimburse the county for overhead costs.

Since 2001, clerk of court services are delivered in two ways in North Dakota. In fourteen counties,¹ the state employs the personnel for this office. In the remaining 39 counties, the state contracts with the county to perform those duties under NDCC 27-05.2-02. The contracts for those counties are calculated using the court's workload assessment formula. This formula determines the amount of work required based on the number and types of cases filed using a rolling two-year average. The total budget for this service is \$4,687,536. More information about the clerks of court can be found on pages 14-15.

Rural Attorney Recruitment Program

We are requesting additional funding in the amount of **\$36,000** to cover the state share of the six rural attorney recruitment contracts that are already in place. The rural attorney recruitment program was created by the legislature in 2021 to provide funding for attorneys willing to live and work in rural areas of the state. Under the program, each attorney is entitled to receive \$45,000 payable in equal annual installments over 5 years. The state is responsible for 50% of the cost of the contract.

Family Mediation Program

The court has had a family mediation program since 2008. This program has proven to be a great success for resolving disputed parental rights and responsibilities and grandparent visitation issues. The program has an historic average settlement rate of 71% and satisfaction rate by parties of 87%. Prior to implementing the program, 27% of cases were re-opened within 3 years to litigate issues with parenting time or parenting responsibility. That rate has now dropped to just 17%. We are requesting an increase of **\$138,200** to allow us to continue to accept all cases that are referred to the program.

¹ The fourteen counties where clerk offices are state employees are: Barnes, Burleigh, Cass, Grand Forks, McKenzie, Morton, Ramsey, Richland, Rolette, Stark, Stutsman, Walsh, Ward, and Williams. Five counties are eligible to transfer clerk services to the state but have elected to retain those services. Those counties are: Dunn, McHenry, McLean, Mercer and Mountrail.

Guardian ad litem program

A lay guardian ad litem is a non-lawyer who is appointed by the court to advocate for children who are the subject of a child in need of protection or services case. This program has nothing to do with the adult guardianship and conservatorship cases that are the subject of SB 2029.

The court currently administers the lay guardian ad litem through a contract with Youthworks. Youthworks provides a staff of 2 full-time positions and 13 part-time positions to handle more than 2,000 cases referred to them by the courts per year. A task force that examined the lay guardian ad litem system this summer determined that the most effective way to reduce turnover, increase skills and meet the request for more involvement with the children was to convert some of the part-time positions to full-time. The cost to make those changes is **\$935,768**. I believe there are others here today who can provide expert testimony on this program and the need for increased funding.

With 54 locations and more than 100 courtrooms statewide, we have equipment that regularly needs to be replaced. Our appropriation request includes funds to replace a number of audio and video systems for courtrooms, and similar equipment that are used on a daily basis.

IT Equipment Lease

There are two large items IT equipment costs that I specifically want to bring to your attention because of their cost and because of their importance. The first is the **\$874,216** lease payment for the blade servers and disk drives. This equipment holds all of our court records and is vital to our operation. We used to buy these items and replace them every few years but switched to leasing last biennium. Leasing allows us access to upgrades as they are released and allows for more predictable budgeting and better pricing.

Case Management System Migration to Cloud-Based Storage (District Court)

We are requesting **\$758,000** for migrating the district court case management system to the cloud. This is not the same as the cloud-based subscription fee for the supreme court case management system.

Our current software vendor is shifting its business away from on-premise solutions and will discontinue support in 2028. A move to the cloud-based version of the software in 2026 will put us in the best bargaining position with the company, allow us utilize our existing hardware through its full lifecycle and make more informed choices about what replacement hardware we will need.

Clerk Filing Software

We are requesting **\$1,250,000** to implement AI for clerk filings. This is a product that is offered by our current case management software vendor and is being used successfully in courts in Texas and Florida. The South Central Judicial District is currently short 9 deputy clerks of court. This project would help fill that need and reduce the burden on current staff that is created by chronic turnover and staff shortages.

Problem-Solving Court Case Management System

We are requesting **\$780,000** to implement a new case management system for problem-solving courts. This software would be used by the 6 adult drug courts, the Richland County Treatment Court, the 5 juvenile drug courts, both the current and planned veterans courts, and the planned mental health court and Indian Child Welfare Court.

Digital Evidence Management System

We are requesting **\$980,000** to implement a digital evidence management system. This is a software system that allows litigants to upload evidence into the software, share it with opposing counsel, mark it as an exhibit and play the evidence in court during trials or other court proceedings. Evidence is stored and managed within the system rather than on external storage devices.

Court Records Access System

We are requesting **\$960,000** for the necessary migration to a new version of the software we use to provide public and attorney access to court records. Our case management software company is discontinuing support for the current portal that allows the public to search court records and for attorneys to search records and access court documents.

Cloud-Based Storage Fees (Supreme Court Case Management System)

This is the other necessary item that I referenced above. It is **\$866,100** for the subscription fee for cloud hosting the Supreme Court's case management system and the records within it. Both this and the lease of the blades are essential to the court system's ability to continue to use electronic records and maintain the history of court cases.

Courtroom Audio and Video Systems

We are requesting **\$1,586,700** to replace courtroom audio and video systems. Statewide, we have 100 courtrooms and all have fully integrated video, audio, amplification and recording systems. Routine maintenance and upgrades to equipment is necessary to ensure the usability of the rooms. The request for this biennium includes 27 interactive cameras, 50 sound racks, 12 jury selection microphone systems, 15 assisted listening device systems and 6 courtroom speaker replacements.

Cass County Courtroom Equipment

The court is responsible for providing necessary equipment for courtrooms. We are requesting **\$100,000** for equipment in Cass County. This includes \$75,000 to equip the new courtroom they are building and \$25,000 to replace equipment in the media and interpreter room in an existing courtroom.

Coteau Room Camera and Projector

By statute, the Coteau Room here at the Capitol is a legislative hearing room. However, through an interagency agreement we share this space when the legislature is not in session. The camera and projector in that room are due for replacement at a cost of **\$10,000**.

Furniture for Judge Chambers

We have judicial chambers in all 53 counties. We are requesting **\$22,500** to replace furniture in 3 judicial chambers.

Workstation and Cubicles

We are requesting **\$360,000** to replace 48 workstations and cubicles in various offices around the state.

Copy Machines

We are requesting **\$75,000** to replace 4 large capacity copy machines and 2 medium capacity copy machines.

Folding Machines

We are requesting \$72,600 to replace 6 folding machines. These machines are used for high volume mailing such as overdue payment notices and jury summons.

Workload Studies

The court uses time and motion studies to determine how many staff are needed and where staff should be located. We are requesting one-time funding of **\$466,500** to update the clerk of court and juvenile court staffing studies, and to develop a new study to determine staffing levels for staff attorneys, law clerks and paralegals. The \$155,500 cost per study is based on responses we received to a recent Requests for Proposals for the judicial workload study.

Conclusion

Additional information about the court system that is not specifically related to our appropriation request, can be found starting on page 16. I will be happy to run through that information or let you review it on your own at some other time, depending on the preference of the committee chair.

Don Wolf, our Director of Finance, will provide more details of our budget request in his presentation.

Miscellaneous Operating Cost Adjustment (2025-27 Biennium)

	SC	DC	JCC/DB	Total
Travel	\$14,200	\$136,000	\$5,000	\$155,200
Pro supplies	(\$2,264)	\$89,305		\$87,041
Food and clothing	\$0	\$12,450		\$12,450
Misc. supplies	\$0	(\$13,800)		(\$13,800)
Office supplies	\$250	(\$15,488)		(\$15,238)
Postage	\$100	\$63,870		\$63,970
Printing	(\$7,900)	\$3,100		(\$4,800)
Office equip and furniture	\$800	(\$1,780)		(\$980)
Insurance	\$384	\$163	\$24	\$571
Equipment rent	\$0	(\$6,300)	(\$1,500)	(\$7,800)
Building rent	\$750	(\$1,000)		(\$250)
Repairs	\$0	\$27,900		\$27,900
Pro development	\$32,700	\$85,530		\$118,230
Operating fees	\$7,197	(\$13,950)		(\$6,753)
Professional services	\$10,000	(\$27,900)		(\$17,900)
Medical supplies	\$0	(\$11,300)		(\$11,300)
IT software supplies	\$0	\$0	\$1,000	\$1,000
IT equipment under \$5,000	\$0	\$0	\$1,658	\$1,658
IT data processing	\$0	\$0	\$10,074	\$10,074
IT communications	\$0	\$0	\$1,128	\$1,128
IT contractual services	\$0	\$0	\$2,000	\$2,000
Total	\$56,217	\$326,800	\$19,384	\$402,401

COURT ADMINISTRATION

CLERKS OF COURT

The clerk of district court works under the direction of the trial court administrator and is responsible for planning, directing, organizing and supervising all personnel assigned to the office of the clerk. This position is responsible for maintaining all court records and developing office operational procedures associated with all district court cases involving criminal, civil, restricted, traffic, or other cases filed with district court.

North Dakota Century Code, Chapter 27-05.2, states that the North Dakota Supreme Court shall provide clerk of district court services in each county in the state. The Supreme Court may provide such services through clerks of district court, deputies, and assistants who are employees of the state judicial system or through service agreements with the counties.

While the court has assumed the responsibility for the expenses of operating the clerk's offices statewide, only a portion of the clerks have transferred to state employment. A distinction is made based on

number of staff in each office. In offices of five or more, the clerk and staff are required to become state employees unless the county chooses to keep the clerk functions and forgo any state funds to support the office.

For offices ranging in staff size from one to four, the county retains the option to transfer the clerk and deputies to state employment. Finally, the smallest counties are ineligible to transfer the clerk position to state employment.

When a county transfers clerk responsibility to the state, the clerk position becomes a classified position within the court's employee classification and compensation system. In those counties that chose to retain clerks and staff as county employees, and those that are ineligible to transfer, the county can continue to choose whether the clerk must run for election or whether the office will be an appointed one. Under state law, counties can choose to combine positions and decide if a combined position will be an appointed or elected position.

TOTALS	County-Contract	39
	State-Employed	14
	Total Clerks	53
	Combined Offices	25
	Separate Offices	14
	Total	39
	Elected	27
	Appointed	12
Total	39	

Eligible for
Transfer
to State



DUNN
MCHENRY
MCLEAN
MERCER
MOUNTRAIL

State
Employed Clerk of
Court
Offices



BARNES RICHLAND
BURLEIGH ROLETTE
CASS STARK
GRAND FORKS STUTSMAN
MCKENZIE WALSH
MORTON WARD
RAMSEY WILLIAMS

COUNTY-EMPLOYED CLERKS OF COURT METHOD OF ATTAINING OFFICE

County Name	Full-Time /Part-Time	Role: Combined / Separate	Elected	Eligible to be transferred to State Employment
Adams	Part-time	Recorder	as Recorder	No
Benson	Part-time	Separate	as Clerk	No
Billings	Part-time	Recorder	as Recorder/Clerk	No
Bottineau	Full-time	Separate		No
Bowman	Part-time	Recorder	as Recorder	No
Burke	Full-time	Recorder	as Recorder	No
Cavalier	Full-time	Separate		No
Dickey	Full-time	Separate		No
Divide	Full-time	Recorder	as Recorder	No
Dunn	Full-time	Recorder	as Recorder/Clerk	Yes
Eddy	Part-time	Recorder	as Recorder/Clerk	No
Emmons	Part-time	Recorder	as Recorder/Clerk	No
Foster	Full-time	Separate		No
Golden Valley	Part-time	Recorder	as Recorder/Clerk	No
Grant	Part-time	Recorder	as Recorder/Clerk	No
Griggs	Part-time	Recorder	as Recorder/Clerk	No
Hettinger	Part-time	Recorder	as Recorder/Clerk	No
Kidder	Part-time	Recorder	as Recorder	No
Lamoure	Full-time	Separate		No
Logan	Part-time	Recorder	as Recorder	No
McHenry	Full-time	Separate	as Clerk	Yes
McIntosh	Part-time	Recorder	as Recorder/Clerk	No
McLean	Full-time	Separate		Yes
Mercer	Full-time	Separate		Yes
Mountrail	Full-time	Separate		Yes
Nelson	Part-time	Recorder	as Recorder/Clerk	No
Oliver	Part-time	Recorder	as Recorder	No
Pembina	Full-time	Recorder	as Recorder/Clerk	No
Pierce	Part-time	Separate		No
Ransom	Full-time	Separate		No
Renville	Part-time	Recorder	as Recorder	No
Sargent	Part-time	Recorder & Treasurer & Clerk	as Recorder/ Clerk/Treasurer	No
Sheridan	Part-time	Recorder	as Recorder/Clerk	No
Sioux	Part-time	Recorder & Treasurer & Clerk	as Recorder/Treasurer	No
Slope	Part-time	Recorder	as Recorder/Clerk	No
Steele	Part-time	Recorder		No
Towner	Part-time	Recorder	as Recorder	No
Traill	Full-time	Separate	as Clerk	No
Wells	Full-time	Separate		No

North Dakota Courts by the Numbers

Supreme Court

5 – Number of Justices on the Supreme Court

10 years – Length of Term

4 - Number of Justices initially reaching the bench through gubernatorial appointment

335 – Number of new Supreme Court cases filed in 2024

District Courts

55 – Number of District Court Judges

6 years– Length of Term

36 – Number of current district court judges initially reaching the bench through gubernatorial appointment

5 - District Court Referees appointed by the presiding judges

12 - Chambered cities

8 - Judicial Districts

4 - Administrative Units

53 – Clerks of District Court

14 – Number of Clerk of Court offices under state employment

5 – Number of Clerk of Court offices eligible to transfer to state employment

20,479 district court cases re-opened in 2024

168,304 new district court cases filed in 2024

Municipal Courts

73 – Number of Municipal Courts

54 – Number of Municipal Court Judges

21 – Number of municipal court judges who have a law degree

4 years– Length of Term

55 – Number of Municipal Court Clerks

80 – Number of contracts the district courts have with municipalities to hear some or all of their ordinance cases

Unknown – Number of cases filed in municipal courts

Juvenile Court

10 – Number of Juvenile Court Offices

4 – Number of juvenile court offices staffed by a single person

7,341 – Number of new cases referred in 2024

Specialized Court Dockets

6 - Number of juvenile drug courts

82– Number of active participants in juvenile drug court in 2024

6 – Number of adult drug courts

1 – Number of veterans treatment courts

8 – Number of cases supervised by Veterans court in its first year

1 – Number of domestic violence courts

95 – Number of referrals to domestic violence court in 2024
646 – Number of cases supervised by DV court since its inception

Court Services

Self-Help Center

2 - Number of Staff employed in the self-help center
800 - Number of forms and guides available through the self-help center
1,585 - Number of direct requests made to the Self-Help Center in 2024
16,609 - Number of direct requests received by the Self-Help Center since its inception in July 2015

Family Mediation Program

777 - Number of cases sent to family mediation program in 2024
67% - Percentage of cases fully or mostly resolved through the family mediation program in 2024

Expedited Family Mediation Program

269 - Number of requests for the expedited mediation program since its inception in June 2020
61% - Percentage of cases resolved through the expedited mediation program

Guardianship Monitoring Program

355 - Average number of new guardianship cases filed each year
85 - Number of cases referred to the monitoring program in 2024
19 - Number of cases in 2024 referred to Adult Protective Services, Protection & Advocacy or Social Security Administration as a result of a review by the Guardianship monitoring program
300 - Average number of individuals trained annually
3,669 - Number of guardianship cases that were active in 2024

Judicial Conduct Commission & Attorney Disciplinary Board

37 – Number of new judicial conduct complaints filed in 2024
174 – Number of new attorney conduct complaints filed in 2024

State Board of Law Examiners

3,064 – Number of law licenses issued in 2024
1,585 - Number of North Dakota licensed attorneys who actually reside in North Dakota

Finances

384 – Number of FTEs excluding judicial officers
.07 % - Percent of General Fund dollars appropriated to the Judicial Branch for the 2024-2023 biennium
83% - Percent of Judicial Branch Budget Spent on Salaries & Wages
\$26.9 Million – Average amount of money collected by the district courts during a biennium

2024 ND Courts by the Numbers

