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COURTS

ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE OF THE COURTS

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Report of the Courts of Washington

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New task forces focus on inequities

With court funding problems standing in the way of efforts to improve the efficiency and operation of the state justice system, judicial leaders have created two task forces to focus on funding.

Civil Equal Justice Task Force

The Washington State Supreme Court established the 19-member Task Force on Civil Equal Justice with the mission to study the

“unmet civil justice needs of the poor and vulnerable in Washington State, including the unmet needs of those who suffer disparate access barriers.”

A similar study in Oregon found common unmet legal needs included family law services — particularly child

custody and domestic violence help — housing advocacy and employment law issues.

The task force is co-chaired by Supreme Court Justice Charles W. Johnson and Division One Appeals Court Judge Mary Kay Becker, and includes appellate and trial court judges, attorneys, legislators, representatives of low-income residents and legal service programs, a member appointed by the Governor’s Office, and others.

Their task includes oversight of a comprehensive study of the civil justice needs of the poor; exploring consequences when the poor and vulnerable cannot access legal services; quantifying what funding is needed to provide essential services; and recommendations for administration of civil equal justice services.

Court Funding Task Force

As local and state budget problems grew worse and courts were threatened with numerous cuts, the Washington State Board for Judicial Administration created the Court Funding Task Force in mid-2002.

Chaired by M. Wayne Blair, former president of the Washington State Bar Association, the task force’s mission is “to develop and implement a plan to achieve stable, adequate, long-term funding of Washington trial courts and provide equal justice throughout the state.”

The task force was created at the request of the Superior Court Judges’ Association and the District and Municipal Court Judges’ Association — partially because of budget concerns and partially because every effort to improve court operations in the previous 25 years had recommended stabilization of court funding as a major cornerstone of any improvement effort.

One factor noted continually over the years was Washington’s rank as 50th in the nation in the percentage of state money spent on courts and legal services versus county and city money spent on courts and legal services.

For instance, Washington courts receive 14.7 percent of their funding from the state and 85.3 percent from counties and cities. Connecticut courts, on the other hand, receive 92.2 percent of their funding from the state and 7.8 percent from counties and cities. Other states fall somewhere in between.

The task force includes five workgroups focusing on different areas: Problem definition, courts of limited jurisdiction, funding alternatives, public education and implementation strategies.



A chance at amnesty

In an effort to reduce the number of outstanding court fines — and holds placed on more than 700,000 drivers' licenses throughout Washington for unpaid fines — courts around Washington took part in a unique “collection amnesty” program in October.

During the month, nearly 100 district and municipal courts around the state agreed to waive interest and a large percentage of collection fees on traffic tickets if drivers would come forward to pay their outstanding fines.

Thousands of drivers jumped at the opportunity.

Washington courts closed more than 10,000 cases and collected \$1.85 million in outstanding fines in the one-month program. In addition, some citizens with revoked licenses began the process of regaining their licenses through established relicensing programs, with the help of court staff members.

The one-month amnesty project began in Skagit County District Court, which experimented with the idea in 2001 and found it to be successful. Skagit court officials then worked to coordinate it state wide in 2002 for courts interested in trying the program.

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“The new rule assures that the defendant will be assigned a very qualified attorney,” said Joanne Moore, director of the Office of Public Defense.



Qualifying for capital cases

The Washington State Supreme Court took another step in 2002 to ensure that defendants in capital cases with court-appointed attorneys get the best defense possible.

In June, the Court adopted new standards that:

- * Require judges to appoint two attorneys with a minimum of five years' experience to work on capital cases;
- * Require one of the attorneys to be chosen from a list of attorneys approved by the Capital Counsel Panel as being qualified to represent defendants for the three levels of death penalty cases — trials, appeals and personal restraint petitions;
- * Prohibit attorneys from serving on more than one active trial court capital case at a time.

The new rule was proposed by the Washington State Office of Public Defense at the request of Supreme Court Chief Justice Gerry Alexander. It became effective January 1, 2003.

The OPD is an agency of the judicial branch created by legislators in 1996 to oversee the constitutional right to counsel in Washington. Reports on its activities can be found at www.opd.wa.gov.

In 1998, the Supreme Court created the Capital Counsel Panel to identify attorneys with the proficiency and commitment to provide quality court-appointed representation in death-penalty cases. The Panel — made up of a retired judge, two public defenders, two criminal defense attorneys and an alternate private practice attorney — keeps an updated list of those lawyers as a resource for judges needing to appoint lawyers to capital cases.

Until the new rule was adopted, appointment from the list was voluntary for judges.

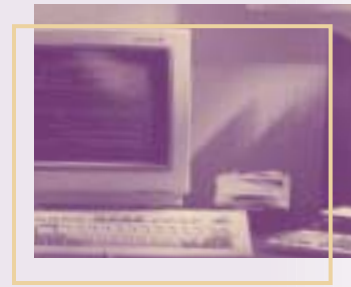
Now, only in unusual circumstances where a Finding of Fact has been entered to justify the decision can attorneys be appointed where neither is on the Capital Counsel list.

“The new rule assures that the defendant will be assigned a very qualified attorney,” said Joanne Moore, director of the Office of Public Defense.

The rules only pertain to attorneys appointed by courts to represent indigent defendants. Defendants hiring their own attorneys are not affected by the changes.



“Find Your Court Date” became so popular after it appeared that technicians had to change the way information was routed to keep up with the demand.



Court date easier to find

About mid-way through 2002, keeping track of court dates got a little easier for Washington residents.

The Administrative Office of the Courts unveiled a new automated system for tracking court dates online for district and municipal courts in the state. The program, called “Find Your Court Date,” will eventually be available for all superior courts as well.

Find Your Court Date allows people to log on to the Washington Courts website at www.courts.wa.gov, then to input a valid

name or case number and receive information on any court proceedings that are scheduled to happen in the future (the site does not track past court activity). Attorneys can also use the site by entering their Washington State Bar Association membership numbers to get information on all proceedings for which they are scheduled.

Though the site offers as up-to-date information as possible, court users are still advised to call their courts the morning of their appearance, and to check court schedules when they arrive at the court.

Only Seattle Municipal Court is not involved in the program because it uses a different information system.

Find Your Court Date uses information from the AOC’s Judicial Information System, which provides automated information to almost all Washington courts. Find Your Court Date became so popular after it appeared that technicians had to change the way information was routed to keep up with the demand.



Mandatory education

New mandatory education requirements for Washington State judges were established by court rule in 2002 by the state Supreme Court at the recommendation of the Washington State Board for Court Education (BCE).

A system for approving and tracking educational credits, and for regular communication with judges, was under development by the end of the year at the Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC). The education requirements were recommended as a way to reinforce the commitment of the judicial branch to an independent and competent judiciary.

The educational requirements include:

- * All judicial officers, including appellate court judges, commissioners and part-time judges, must complete 45 credits of continuing education in every three-year period beginning January, 2003.
- * Six credits must involve judicial ethics.
- * All judicial officers must attend judicial college within 12 months of appointment or election to their positions.
- * Judicial conferences and classes sponsored by the Board for Continuing Education (BCE) and other recognized judicial education providers will qualify for credit, and some teaching, writing, self-study and community activities may count toward the requirement.
- * The decision on what qualifies for the requirement will be made by a committee of judges from all court levels according to standards approved by the Supreme Court. The Administrative Office of the Courts will remind judges at the end of each year how many credits they have compiled and whether deadlines are approaching to complete their requirements.
- * Only judges pro-tempore are excused from the requirements.



All judicial officers, including appellate court judges, commissioners and part-time judges, must complete 45 credits of continuing education



Task force tackles time-for-trial rules

Responding to increasingly clogged courtroom calendars, and concern over criminal charges dropped or reduced because of speedy-trial violations, the Washington State Supreme Court in March established the Time-For-Trial Task Force to study the issue.

After several months of intense review and debate, task force members developed recommendations for broad changes to the state's complex time-for-trial court rules.



The recommendations are intended to reduce chances that criminal cases will be dismissed because of scheduling technicalities, to simplify and clarify speedy-trial provisions, increase court

accountability, and maintain harsh penalties for trial delays.

The right to a speedy trial is guaranteed by both the U.S. Constitution and the Washington state constitution. Any changes to time-for-trial rules would have to be adopted by the state Supreme Court.

Chaired by Seattle University School of Law professor David Boerner, the task force included prosecutors, judges, defense attorneys, legislators and citizens.

Adopted by the state Supreme Court in 1973, the time-for-trial rules require defendants confined to jail to be tried within 60 days of arraignment, and those released after arraignment to be tried within 90 days. The rules include narrowly defined exceptions, and a common cause of violations involves rules regarding defendants who are charged but cannot be located to bring to trial.

The rules had not been reviewed since 1980.

Task force members studied speedy-trial rules in other states and learned that Washington courts don't maintain statistics on the number

of charges affected by time-for-trial violations. However, an examination by the task force on charges impacted in Snohomish County suggested that more than 200 criminal cases a year throughout Washington involve charges dropped or reduced because of violations.

The recommendations include:

- * Maintaining the 60/90 day requirement for bringing a defendant to trial after arraignment, to protect the right to a speedy trial.
- * A "cure" period to give courts an additional but brief time after the defendant's 60/90 day period is over in which to get the case heard. A motion to cure must be brought to court no later than five days after the period expires.
- * A 30-day buffer after an interruption in the time period — such as time set aside for a mental health evaluation — so that parties have at least 30 days to prepare when the clock starts again.
- * Simplifying and clarifying some key terms and specific beginning and ending dates in the current rules.
- * New standards for determining whether prosecutors acted with "due diligence" in locating defendants for trial, including having judges decide at the beginning of a case which steps are necessary based on the circumstances of the case. The goal is to reduce the number of convictions overturned for lack of due diligence, which is currently not well defined or established before the case is heard.



The information arrived in daily newspapers across the state in late August in the fourth Judicial Voter Pamphlet...

Voters get more information on Judges

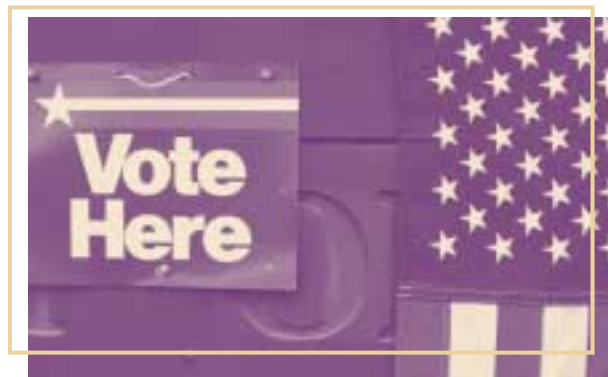
More than a million Washington voters received in-depth information on judicial candidates in 2002, far more information than they would have received just four elections earlier.

The information arrived in daily newspapers across the state in late August in the fourth Judicial Voter Pamphlet to be published and distributed by the Washington Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC). The pamphlet includes information on contested judicial races for the Supreme Court, court of appeals, district courts and mid-term superior court vacancies. The pamphlet also includes the professional qualifications of every judicial candidate.

An additional resource for voters in 2002 included a Video Voters Guide on Washington Supreme Court candidates, created by TVW at the request of the AOC.

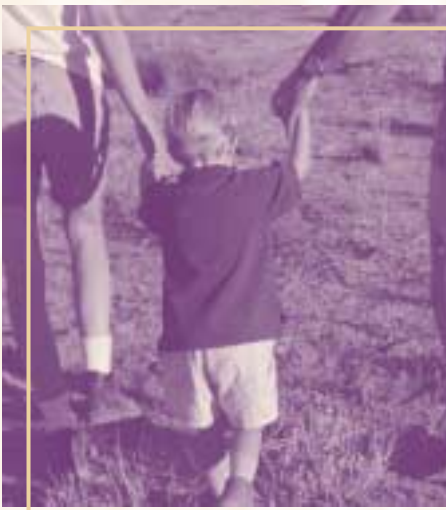
The Washington State Supreme Court first authorized a judicial voter pamphlet in 1996 to ensure voters would receive information before September primaries, when many judges are elected. Judicial elections take place every other year. Also, voter pamphlets distributed by the Secretary of State's office do not include information on all judicial positions and are not required to include the qualifications of judicial candidates.

In 1996, an independent commission reviewing all aspects of the judicial selection process recommended creation of the voter pamphlet. It is estimated that the hard-copy pamphlet now reaches 1.2 million residents across the state.



Indigent parents get equal justice

Low-income parents involved in child welfare cases were reunited with their children in significantly more cases during a pilot program in two Washington courts than they were before the program began, a 2002 study found.



The program to improve legal representation for indigent parents was so successful, state lawmakers extended its funding and program operators hope to eventually expand it throughout the state.

Results of the two year Parents' Representation Pilot Program, a project of the Washington State

Office of Public Defense (OPD), were released in January, 2003. The pilot project was created at the direction of the 2000 Legislature in response to concerns about equal justice for parents and a 1999 study found that indigent parents were provided only about one third the legal resources as state welfare officials moving to limit or terminate parental rights.

While state court costs are paid by the state, indigent parents' legal costs are paid by counties. In recent years, state costs for foster care and adoption procedures have risen.

The Parents' Representation project included:

- * Contracting with additional attorneys to represent parents in Benton-Franklin and Pierce County juvenile courts, the two pilot sites;
- * Adding paralegals and social workers to indigent defense staffs;

- * Funds to employ investigative and expert services;
- * Creating a new model for representing parents in dependency and termination proceedings;
- * Training attorneys and others in working with the new model.

The model emphasizes communication with parent clients, better preparation of cases and better oversight of parents' abilities to participate in services.

"It works," said Joanne Moore, director of OPD. "Just giving people reasonable resources and a reasonable chance to reunite their families, it makes sense."

The National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges evaluated the program in late 2002, and found that substantially more families were reunited with the help of the additional legal resources.

After results of the project were announced, legislators extended funding for the program in the two counties. Another evaluation is scheduled to be released in late 2004.

Moore hopes that when state budget problems ease, the program can expand. In RCW 13.34.020, state lawmakers declared the safety and welfare of children to be paramount, and families to be "a fundamental resource of American life which should be nurtured."



Caseload Highlights

SUPREME COURT HIGHLIGHTS

Filings

* Washington's Supreme Court received a grand total of 1,538 new cases in 2002, including 680 petitions for review (44.2% of total new caseload), 428 discretionary reviews (27.8% of new caseload), 159 attorney admission and discipline matters (10.3%), 124 personal restraint petitions (8.1%), 68 notices of appeal (4.4%), 78 other reviews (expenditures of public funds, actions against state officers, cases certified from federal court, and miscellaneous motions for review - a combined 5.1% of new caseload), and one death penalty case.

* Attorney admission and discipline matters were down 34.0% over the prior year, with 159 cases in 2002 as contrasted with 241 in 2001. Expenditures of public funds went up 21 cases (from 40 to 61). Otherwise, Supreme Court caseload was comparable in size and make-up to 2001.

* While petitions for review continued, as in recent years, to split fairly evenly between criminal (53.8%) and civil (46.2%) matters, only four (5.9%) of 2002's 68 notices of appeal were criminal in nature. This is a shift from the historically stable split of 15-20% criminal, and 80-85% civil.

Dispositions

* The Supreme Court disposed of 1,328 appeals, petitions for review, and other reviews, combined. This generally kept pace with the 1,369 new cases filed in those review types during the same time period.

* Two-thirds (67.2%) of dispositions were reviews that were not accepted. Opinions were written for 129 cases (9.7% of all dispositions). The remain-

ing dispositions were transfers to the Court of Appeals (8.9%), dismissals (5.3%), and other terminations (9.0%).

Pending

* At year's end, the Supreme Court had 602 cases pending decision. This is 7.1% higher than the 562 cases pending at the end of 2001, but is still below 2000's high of 735 cases.



* Over half (60.3%) of the pending cases were set and awaiting hearing. A quarter (26.4%) of the pending cases were not yet ready for setting, as further pleadings were awaited.

Opinions/orders were in process for just under a tenth (8.8%) of pending cases, and the remaining 3.5% were stayed.

COURT OF APPEALS HIGHLIGHTS

Filings

* Washington's Court of Appeals received 4,323 new cases in 2002. These were distributed between the three divisions of the court. Division I (Seattle), which serves Northwestern Washington, received 1,830 cases (42.3%). Division II (Tacoma), which serves Southwestern Washington, received 1,569 cases (36.3%). Division III (Spokane), serving Eastern Washington, received 924 cases (21.4%).

* The majority (72.3%) of the new statewide appellate caseload were notices of appeal. Approximately a fifth (18.6%) of the 2002 filings were personal restraint petitions, and the remaining 9.2% were discretionary reviews. These proportions are comparable across divisions.

* A little more than half (53.5%) of the notices of appeal are criminal in nature, with the remaining 46.5% civil. This pattern is most closely mirrored in Division III, in which 54.5% of notices of appeal are criminal. Division II has a slightly heavier (57.2%) criminal appeal caseload relative to civil, and Division I experienced the most even criminal/civil split (49.7% / 50.3%).

* Statewide caseload is up 2.6% over 2001 filings. The increase is directly attributable to Division II's 10.0% jump to 1,569 cases - making 2002 the largest filings-year ever for that Division. Division I and Division III filings remained fairly level with the prior year.

* Increases in statewide criminal and civil notices of appeal in 2002 (up 6.4% and 3.5% respectively), were largely offset by an 11.6% decline in notices of discretionary review. Personal restraint petitions remained level, with a negligible 12-case (1.5%) increase to 802 in 2002. Viewed individually, it is Division II which departs most markedly from that pattern: criminal and civil notices of appeal and personal restraint petitions all rose notably (11.1%, 12.2%, and 13.4%, respectively), and were only negligibly offset by a 12-case drop in notices of discretionary review. These trends combined to continue Division II's steady climb in filings over the last three years.

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COURT OF APPEALS HIGHLIGHTS, CONT.

Dispositions

* Washington's Court of Appeals disposed of 4,306 cases in 2002, a figure roughly equivalent to the prior year's 4,324 dispositions. This figure also keeps pace with the 4,323 filings received by the Court this year. This suggests the Court is not accumulating additional backlog statewide.

* The same holds true for divisions I and III. While Division II's 1,410 dispositions slightly exceeded year-2001 dispositions (up 0.9%), they fell 159 cases short of keeping pace with the notable (10.0%) increase in filings. Division II's gap between disposition rate and filing rate was experienced across all case types except notices of discretionary review, for which 114 were filed in 2002 and 121 disposed.

* Statewide, 42.9% of dispositions were by opinion, a quarter of which were published. Dismissals made up 37.0% of dispositions. Commissioners rulings accounted for 12.7%, and the remaining 7.4% were either transferred/certified to the Supreme Court or another division, not accepted, or terminated for some other reason (such as petitioner's withdrawal). These proportions are comparable with the prior year.

Pending

* Consistent with a statewide disposition rate on par with the filing rate, the Court of Appeals' pending caseload remained fairly stable in 2002.

* The divisions ranged from a flat pending-caseload trend relative to last year (Division III) to a 7.5% decline in Division I (down 128 cases). Division I's drop is the second in two years, and brings their pending caseload to its lowest level since 1987.

* The majority of statewide cases pending at the end of 2002 were awaiting parties' briefs (60.3%). This pattern is approximated in all three divisions.

Time In Process

* All divisions decreased filing-to-opinion time for all notices of appeal disposed in 2002 relative to 2001 by 7.3% to 9.2%.



* Statewide, 75% of criminal appeals received an opinion within 573 days or less - a 110-day decrease since 1998, when the Court substantially revised the reporting model and redoubled efforts to promote timeliness.

Similarly, 75% of civil appeals received an opinion in 532 days or less - a 113-day decrease since 1998.

Note:

Due to time lag between filing a notice of appeal in trial court and appellate court receipt of the case, current year filings are slightly under-counted (roughly 2 percent). Previous year filings will be recalculated annually to include all cases received late. Although this will provide more accurate statistical reporting, it may cause current year filing totals to vary in future court reports.

SUPERIOR COURT HIGHLIGHTS

Overall Court Activity

* Superior courts in Washington State received 285,729 new case filings in 2002. This is a small 1.9% increase over 2001 filings.

* For three of the last four years, Washington's filing rate held stable at 47 cases per 1,000 population. The minor exception was 2000's rate of 48 cases per 1,000.

* Overall filings are made up of the following types of cases: civil (40.2%), criminal (15.7%), domestic/URESAs (13.2%), juvenile offender (9.4%), juvenile dependency (7.6%), probate (5.5%), adoption/paternity (4.5%), mental illness (3.1%), and guardianship (0.9%).

* Just as with the statewide total, filings held constant relative to prior years for most case types. Only juvenile dependency filings experienced a significant drop - from 23,903 in 2001 to 21,577 in 2002 (-9.7%). Only civil cases experienced a notable increase - from 107,919 last year to 114,798 in 2002 (+6.4%).

* Washington's superior courts resolved 275,638 cases in 2002, a volume comparable to the prior year's 274,597 cases.

* A statewide total of 712,395 proceedings were conducted in Washington's general jurisdiction courts. Of those, 9,240 (1.3%) were trials. The trials were predominately domestic/URESAs (28.5%), criminal (26.7%), and civil (18.2%) in nature.



Criminal Activity

* Criminal filings totaled 44,799 cases in 2002 - only 1.1% more than the 44,307 filed in 2001.

* Criminal filings are made up of the following case types, in descending order: controlled substance (29.6%), theft/burglary (23.3%), other felonies (17.3%), assault (12.2%), sex crimes (5.6%), robbery (2.6%), motor vehicle theft (2.4%), appeals of lower court criminal cases (1.5%), homicide (0.6%), and misdemeanors or gross misdemeanors (0.6%). The remaining 4.4% represents non-charge filings, in which a case is opened for conducting preliminary appearances to determine whether formal charges will be filed; if they are, the case is counted as a criminal case as of the date the information is filed.

* Only sex crimes (up 13.2%) and robbery (down 10.7%) experienced notable change from prior year filings.

* Appeals of lower-court criminal cases continued their several year decline, dropping from 995 in 1998 to 673 in 2002. This may be related to declining non-traffic misdemeanor filings in the limited jurisdiction courts over the last 5 years

Civil Activity

* Civil filings increased for the second year in a row, with 114,798 cases statewide in 2002 (up 6.4% over 2001's 107,919 cases).

* However, the bulk of that 6,879-case increase was a 5,149-case increase in "other matters filed with the clerk." These are primarily handled administratively, usually do not require court time, and are generally resolved and completed at the time they are filed. They include tax warrants, abstracts of judgment, foreign judgments, and other matters.

* The remaining 1,730 case-filing rise was created by small increases in torts, commercial, civil harassment, administrative law review, other petitions and complaints, and appeals of lower court civil cases, partially offset by small decreases in meretricious relationship, property rights, and domestic violence cases.

* Although the absolute increase in civil harassment cases is modest



statewide (up 690 cases from 2,227 to 2,917), the trend is significant, as 2002 was the third year of proportionally notable jumps of 30-31% each year.

* The overwhelming majority (98.9%) of civil cases continue to be resolved without trial (through settlement, dismissal, arbitration, default/summary judgment, or other pre-trial resolution).

* Only 1,238 civil cases went to trial in 2002. Of those, 797 (64.4%) were decided by the court, and 395 (31.9%) received jury verdicts. The remaining 46 (3.7%) were dismissed or settled after trial commencement.

Domestic Activity

* Domestic filings saw little change in 2002 relative to 2001. Notable changes were evident in only two causes which make up very small portions of the overall domestic caseload:

URES/ UIFSA and miscellaneous domestic (0.8% and 4.1% of the total caseload, respectively).

* There has been no discernible pattern in Uniform Interstate Family Support Act (URES/ UIFSA) trends in recent years, with filings alternating increases and declines yearly. In 2002, there were 293 such filings statewide, up from the prior year's 250 cases, but not yet returned to 1998's 374 cases.

* Miscellaneous domestic matters continued their steady climb from 777 statewide in 1998 to 1,562 in 2002 - a 101.0% increase in four years.

* The majority of domestic cases are dissolutions. In 2002, they constituted 81.7% of all domestic case filings.

* Proceedings per resolution continued to rise over the last six years, from 1.9 in 1997 to 2.6 in 2002.

Juvenile Activity

* Total juvenile offender filings moderated their steady decline since 1998, with a modest 1.3% drop to 26,753 cases.

* The majority (51.3%) of juvenile offender cases are misdemeanors or gross misdemeanors. Theft/burglary is the second most-common juvenile offense, representing 13.4% of total offender filings.

* Following two years of homicide filings numbering in the low 20's, juvenile homicide cases returned to pre-2000 levels, at 11 cases.

* Controlled substance cases climbed 10.1% in 2002, to a total of 816 statewide. Robbery increased a very modest 3.8% from 340 cases in 2001 to 353 cases in 2002. Theft/burglary rose a negligible 1.3%, from 3,538 to 3,585. All other types of juvenile offender cases remained fairly stable, or declined.

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SUPERIOR COURT HIGHLIGHTS, CONT.

* Of the 15,887 juvenile offenders sentenced in 2002, half (50.0%) were placed on detention or community supervision, 6.3% were committed to state institutions, and 4.6% were committed to local institutions. Other sentencing options were employed for the remaining 39.0%.

* Detention/community supervision was employed 12.3% less in 2002 than in 2001, while commitment went up (state 8.9%, local 55.8%), as did other sentencing alternatives (up 7.2% over the prior year). In 2002, there were approximately 1.4 state commitments for every local commitment, returning from a peak of 2.4 in 2000 to a level comparable to that experienced in 1998 (1.5).

* Juvenile dependency filings declined 9.7% in 2002, to 21,577. This drop was largely attributable to a 13.5% fall in truancy, but all case types experienced modest declines or near-level filings.

* Juvenile dependency proceedings dropped relative to the prior year, but at a lesser rate (-1.5%) than the overall decline in filings (-9.7%), suggesting the number of proceedings per case may be on the rise. In 2002, the ratio of proceedings to case resolutions was 3.9, as contrasted with 2001's ratio of 3.6.

COURTS OF LIMITED JURISDICTION HIGHLIGHTS

New Display Format Summary

* In 2002, the Courts of Limited Jurisdiction in Washington State experienced an overall increase in activity compared to 2001, with the following

highlighted changes to non-parking activity:

- a 13.8% increase in the number of cases filed;
- an 8.2% increase in contested proceedings; and
- an 8.7% increase in the number of dispositions.



Filings

* There were over 2 million cases filed in Washington's courts of limited jurisdiction during calendar year 2002.

* Parking infractions, which are generally handled administratively, contributed just under 570,000 case filings to the total. The nearly 1.5 million remaining cases represent the core judicial caseload filings for the year.

* Traffic infraction cases, at 984,587 filings, made up the largest portion (66.6%) of the non-parking filings, followed by non-traffic misdemeanor cases (9.1%), other traffic misdemeanor cases (8.4%), civil cases (7.4%), non-traffic infraction cases (2.8%), DUI/physical control cases (2.8%), small claims cases (1.8%), petitions for protection orders related to domestic violence and anti-harassment (0.9%), and felony complaints (0.3%).

Dispositions

* Dispositions are counted at the charge rather than the case level. For infractions and misdemeanors, there may be more than one charge per case.

* Charge dispositions, like filings, were up from 2001, with those in core judicial (non-parking) caseload increasing by 8.7%.

* The case type with the largest number of charge dispositions (Traffic Infractions), increased by 13.7%, accounting for much of the increase in non-parking dispositions.

Proceedings

* The 8.2% increase in contested non-parking proceedings was driven by the 10.9% increase in contested traffic infraction hearings, an increase of just over 11,000 proceedings from 2001.

* Jury trials, which constitute 2.5% of contested proceedings, increased 0.6%. Non-jury trials and contested small claims continued their decline of the last few years, dropping from 23,773 in 1998 to 18,359 in 2002 (a 22.7% decline).

Revenue

* Washington's courts of limited jurisdiction collected \$145,700,664 in fines, forfeitures, penalties and assessments in connection with core judicial (non-parking) cases - a 15.4% increase over the 2001 level. This increase was primarily driven by the 22% increase in revenue from non-parking traffic infractions.

* The amount collected under the 30 percent Public Safety and Education Assessment shot up by 12.2% in 2002. This came in sharp contrast to last year's 1.8% decrease, and was more in line with the trends of 1998 to 1999 (up 9.1%) and 1999 to 2000 (up 8.3%).







WASHINGTON
COURTS

ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE OF THE COURTS

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