



2021 ANNUAL REPORT

Prepared for the
State of the Court Luncheon
September 22, 2021

Chief Judge Denise Page Hood

STATE OF THE COURT MESSAGE

September 22, 2021

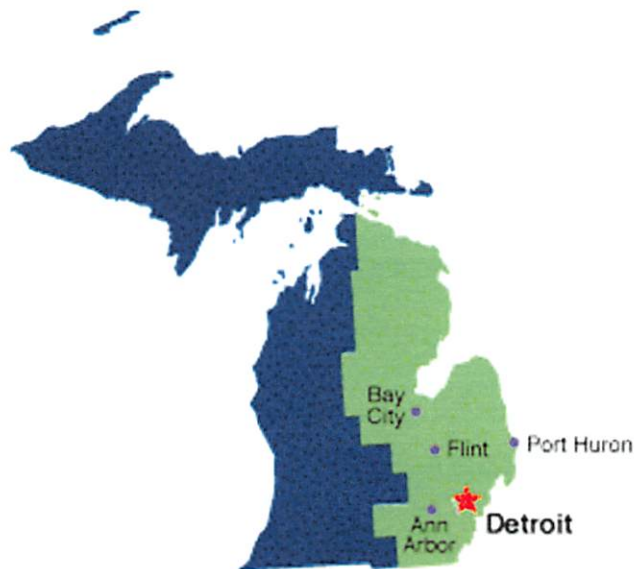
"The United States Courts are an independent, national judiciary providing fair and impartial justice within the jurisdiction conferred by the Constitution and Congress. As an equal branch of government, the federal judiciary preserves and enhances its core values as the courts meet changing national and local needs." The core values are: the rule of law; equal justice; judicial independence; accountability; excellence and service. Strategic Plan for the Federal Judiciary, September 2015, Judicial Conference of the United States.

Court Information

The Eastern District of Michigan is one of two federal district courts in the great State of Michigan. Our district is part of the Sixth Circuit, which is comprised of districts in Michigan, Ohio, Kentucky and Tennessee. The seat of the Sixth Circuit is located in Cincinnati, Ohio.

Our district includes the eastern half of the Lower Peninsula of Michigan, divided into two divisions – the Northern Division and the Southern Division. The Court's main office is located in Detroit at the Theodore Levin United States Courthouse. Other Southern divisional offices are located in Ann Arbor, Flint and Port Huron, and Bay City in the Northern Division.

The Eastern District of Michigan has 318 employees – 27 judicial officers, 71 staff working directly for judges, 87 Clerk's Office employees, 78 Probation employees, 31 Pretrial Services employees, and 24 other court staff (court reporters and staff attorneys).





*Photo does not include U.S. District Judge Stephanie Dawkins Davis who was appointed December 31, 2021

Judicial Officers in the Eastern District of Michigan

Judicial Officer	Date Appointed *	Appointing President
Denise Page Hood	6/16/1994 (A)	Bill Clinton
Bernard A. Friedman	4/20/1988 (Sr)	Ronald Reagan
Robert H. Cleland	6/19/1990 (Sr)	George H.W. Bush
Nancy G. Edmunds	2/10/1992 (Sr)	George H.W. Bush
Paul D. Borman	8/10/1994 (A)	Bill Clinton
Arthur J. Tarnow	5/22/1998 (Sr)	Bill Clinton
George Caram Steeh	5/22/1998 (Sr)	Bill Clinton
Victoria A. Roberts	6/29/1998 (Sr)	Bill Clinton
David M. Lawson	6/2/2000 (Sr)	Bill Clinton
Thomas L. Ludington	6/12/2006 (A)	George W. Bush
Sean F. Cox	6/12/2006 (A)	George W. Bush
Stephen J. Murphy, III	8/18/2008 (A)	George W. Bush
Mark A. Goldsmith	6/22/2010 (A)	Barack Obama
Gershwin A. Drain	8/8/2012 (A)	Barack Obama
Terrence G. Berg	12/7/2012 (A)	Barack Obama
Judith E. Levy	3/14/2014 (A)	Barack Obama
Laurie J. Michelson	3/14/2014 (A)	Barack Obama
Matthew F. Leitman	3/14/2014 (A)	Barack Obama
Linda V. Parker	3/17/2014 (A)	Barack Obama
Stephanie Dawkins Davis	12/31/2019 (A)	Donald J. Trump

* (A) Active Judge, (Sr) Senior Judge

Currently the Eastern District of Michigan has 13 active district judges and seven senior judges with caseloads. Earlier this year, Judges Victoria A. Roberts and David M. Lawson took senior status creating two vacancies on the bench. Our senior judges receive cases at substantially the same rate as district judges in active service.

Our Court has district judges on several prestigious national and circuit committees, including but not limited to the following:

Chief Judge Hood	<i>Judicial Conference Advisory Committee on Criminal Rules Sixth Circuit Pattern Jury Instructions Committee Sixth Circuit Civics and Outreach Committee</i>
Judge Ludington	<i>Judicial Conference Committee on the Administration of the Bankruptcy System</i>
Judge Murphy	<i>Judicial Conference Advisory Committee on Appellate Rules</i>
Judge Berg	<i>Judicial Conference Committee on Criminal Law</i>
Judge Levy	<i>Judicial Conference Committee on Defender Services</i>
Magistrate Judge Morris	<i>Federal Magistrate Judges Association Rules Committee</i>

MAGISTRATE JUDGES

Our Court also has seven magistrate judges – Magistrate Judge David R. Grand, Patricia T. Morris, Elizabeth A. Stafford, Anthony P. Patti, Kimberly G. Altman, Curtis Ivy, Jr. and Jonathan J.C. Grey. Due to the retirement of longtime Magistrate Judge R. Steven Whalen, Magistrate Judge Grand was appointed as Executive Magistrate Judge to success Magistrate Judge Whalen in that role. Additionally, Magistrate Judge Grey was appointed to fill the vacancy created when Magistrate Judge Whalen retired.

BANKRUPTCY COURT

Bankruptcy Judge Daniel J. Opperman was appointed as Chief Judge of the Bankruptcy Court on April 25, 2020 to a three-year term. There are currently six bankruptcy judges serving in the Eastern District of Michigan – Chief Judge Daniel J. Opperman, Judges Thomas J. Tucker, Mark A. Randon, Maria Oxholm, Joel D. Applebaum and Lisa S. Gretchko. Bankruptcy Judge Gretchko was appointed on April 5, 2021 to fill the vacancy created by the retirement of former Bankruptcy Judge Phillip J. Shefferly. Judge Tucker retired effective July 1, 2021 but was recalled by the Sixth Circuit. Judge Ed Ewell has been named by the Sixth Circuit to replace Judge Tucker, pending the usual background investigations.

The Bankruptcy Court's Clerk Katherine Gullo also retired last year. Todd Stickle was appointed as their new Clerk effective January 1, 2021.

Death of Marianne O. Battani

Judge Marianne O. Battani passed away on September 9, 2021 at the age of 77. Judge Battani was appointed by President William J. Clinton on June 2, 2000. She took senior status on June 9, 2012 and went on inactive status on December 31, 2020. Prior to taking the federal bench, Judge Battani worked in private law firms before being appointed by Governor William G. Milliken to a vacancy on the Detroit Common Pleas Court, then later he appointed her to Wayne County Circuit Court in 1982 where she served prior to being appointed to the federal bench. Judge Battani spent her early years with the Eastern District of Michigan located at the federal courthouse in Ann Arbor, and the later years at the Theodore Levin United States Courthouse in Detroit.

Retirement of Executive Magistrate Judge R. Steven Whalen

Executive Magistrate Judge R. Steven Whalen retired from the United States District Court for the Eastern District of Michigan on June 15, 2021. He was initially appointed to an eight-year term on September 11, 2002, and was reappointed to additional eight-year terms twice. One year after his initial appointment as magistrate judge, he was appointed as Executive Magistrate where he duties included chairing monthly meetings of the magistrate judges, serving as a liaison with the district judges, and supervising the court's staff attorneys. He spent his entire judicial career with our court in the Theodore Levin United States Courthouse in Detroit.

Appointment of Magistrate Judge Jonathan J.C. Grey

Magistrate Judge Jonathan J.C. Grey was appointed on August 24, 2021 to fill the vacancy created by the retirement of former Executive Magistrate Judge R. Steven Whalen. Prior to his appointment in the Eastern District of Michigan, Magistrate Judge Grey was most recently an Assistant United States Attorney for the Southern District of Ohio. He obtained his undergrad degree from Morehouse College and his Juris Doctor from Georgetown University Law Center. Magistrate Judge Grey is stationed at the Theodore Levin United States Courthouse.

Appointment of Court Administrator/Clerk of Court

Kinikia D. Essix became the Court Administrator and Clerk of Court for the United States District Court for the Eastern District of Michigan effective January 1, 2021. She assumed this position after serving as Financial Manager for the Court for the past eight years. During her time as Financial Manager, Ms. Essix also served as a court mentor with the Administrative Office of the United States Courts' internal audit program, and served as a panelist at the judiciary's national financial forum.

Prior to her promotion to Financial Manager of the Court in 2012, Ms. Essix held the positions of Financial Supervisor and Procurement Specialist. Her employment prior to the Court includes Reid & Reid, PC, Lear Corporation, Key Plastics and Citation Corporation.

Ms. Essix holds an Associate Degree in Business Administration and a Bachelor's Degree in Business Administration from Davenport University, and a Master of Public Administration degree from the University of Michigan in Dearborn. She is a graduate of Cass Technical High School in Detroit.

In assuming the role as Court Administrator and Clerk of Court, Ms. Essix is the chief executive officer of the Court and is responsible for the Clerk's Office, administrative functions effecting the Probation Department and Pretrial Services Agency, and works closely with the chief judge.

Ms. Essix was appointed following the exit of former Court Administrator/Clerk David J. Weaver, who retired after 33 years of service to the federal court system.

Court's Response to COVID-19

This year was another where Chief Judge Hood and the Bench deemed the safety of our staff a priority, and employees continued working remotely. The Reconstitution Committee continued to meet weekly to evaluate matters such as gating criteria, return to work factors, workplace safety, screening and testing, personal protective equipment, and contact tracing.

The Court conducted 9,646 remote proceedings this year and the Reconstitution Committee agreed to open the Court for in person matters only beginning in May. Since May 2020, the Court has conducted over 200 in person proceedings.

In addition to continuing to conduct grand jury sessions, in April 2021, the need to select a grand jury was evident, so a new way of conducting grand jury selection was developed and executed in Flint. Later in August, two additional grand juries were selected in Detroit. All providing for social distancing and the use of video feeds as necessary.

Naturalization ceremonies continued to be conducted at the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) where individual naturalizations continued to be conducted in a drive-up manner. Zoom continued to be the medium for conducting judicial proceedings and making them available to the public. Court meetings were conducted by Microsoft Teams and other interactive methods. The Court continued to operate very well.

Regarding pro se access to court proceedings, our Pro Se Case Administrator has continued to provide procedural assistance virtually by telephone and email. Since October 2020, 1,152 PDF documents have been uploaded to the Temporary Pro Se Document Upload Program. That is nearly a 500% increase over last year.

This year has seen a large percentage increase in pro se litigants and interactions over last year. Virtual procedural assistance has been provided to over 291 pro se litigants this year, a 67% increase over last year. In addition, the number of interactions increased by nearly 200%, 1,568 interactions (924 telephone and 644 email) compared with last year.

The Court's Reconstitution Committee developed protocols for the safe resumption of jury trials. The Court began holding jury trials in August 2021 and jury selections occur on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Courtrooms have been arranged for social distancing and some retrofitted with plexiglass barriers.

Last year, the Court began the year open to the public and ended with it being closed; but this year we are happy to report that as of September 7th, the Court has been open to the public. Court staff are working in the building in addition to working remotely. The pandemic is far from eradicated and the Reconstitution Committee will continue to meet every week to review COVID trends and discuss district wide issues and processes that are affected by the pandemic. Thank you for your patience during this unprecedented health crisis. We will continue to implement measures to create and maintain a safe environment for our staff, the Bench the Bar and the public.

Clerk's Office

During the past year, the Clerk's Office continued to successfully operate virtually with only a skeleton crew of in-person staff coming into the Court to perform essential duties such as processing mail, grand jury returns and name changes. The Clerk's Office also provided enhanced services via chat on the Court's website as well as providing a portal for pro se litigants to upload documents for filing. Over 3,200 cases were filed during this time period.

Succession Management Program

An additional eight participants successfully completed and graduated from the Succession Management Program (“SMP”) in February 2021. This was especially challenging for the second session because the program was conducted completely virtual. The SMP was designed to identify, train and maintain a steady, reliable source of leadership talent in the District Court. Deputy clerks were selected to participate in the program are provided an opportunity to develop leadership knowledge and skills in preparation for future leadership roles.

As a result, two graduates of the program were promoted to leadership roles in the Court in the past year.

Pro Se Clinic & Pro Se Administrator

The Court continues to be proactive in its efforts to address the goals of the *Strategic Plan for the Federal Judiciary* issued by the Judicial Conference to improve access to the courts for pro se litigants with the Pro Se Case Administrator position and the Pro Se Legal Assistance Clinic.

Our Pro Se Case Administrator works in the Clerk’s Office and since last fiscal year beginning October 1, 2020, has had 1,568 interactions with over 290 pro se litigants. These interactions range from referrals to the Pro Se Legal Assistance Clinic, answering procedural questions, to ensuring documents are properly completed. Since March 2020, assistance has been provided virtually by telephone and email. Also, the Court’s Representing Yourself internet page has been re-designed to include user-friendly information about how to file a case, legal assistance options, and legal research links. A chat option has also been added to the Court’s internet site as an additional means to provide expanded service to the public.

The Bench has also extended the operation of the Pro Se Legal Assistance Clinic pilot project, managed in collaboration with the University of Detroit Mercy Law School, through the winter term of 2022. The Clinic operates under the administration of Nicholas Schroek, Associate Dean of Experiential Education.

The Clinic, located in the Theodore Levin United States Courthouse, is open three days a week, Monday, Wednesday, and Friday from 1:00 pm to 5:00 pm. According to their most recent report of September 2021, the Clinic has assisted nearly 700 pro se litigants since opening on January 16, 2018. During the 2021 summer semester, ten students under the supervision of Barbara Patek, Clinical Director, provided over 1,600 hours of service to pro se litigants in the form of providing legal advice and preparing documents such as complaints, amended complaints, and responses to motions. The Clinic also directs pro se litigants to the correct court or social service agency, eliminating the filing of cases that would not meet the jurisdictional requirements, which saves judicial resources. Volunteer attorneys and a paralegal also provided additional support services to the Clinic as well as acting as mentors to the students.

Pro Se Prisoner Mediation Program

Judge Victoria Roberts introduced the Pro Se Prisoner Mediation Program to the Bench. This program allows pro se inmates who file prisoner civil rights lawsuits to participate in mediation.

The Bench approved the Pro Se Prisoner Early Mediation Program ("Program") until July 4, 2023. Since last fiscal year beginning October 1, 2020, 47 cases have been mediated. The mediations were temporarily suspended in March 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. When mediations resumed, they were conducted virtually using Zoom conferencing.

Magistrate Judge Kimberly G. Altman serves as the Mediation Referral Judge overseeing the Program. The program currently has 43 volunteer mediators who serve without compensation. The Michigan Department of Corrections and the Michigan Attorney General's Office continue to support the program and created a unit with a sole focus on the mediation programs in the Eastern and Western Districts of Michigan.

Pro Bono Program

The Court continues to work with the Eastern District of Michigan Chapter of the Federal Bar Association, exploring ways to increase participation on the Court's Pro Bono Panel while educating attorneys on the importance of providing pro bono services to the underserved.

Pro bono opportunities can be viewed online, and attorneys can accept appointments by completing an online form. The Bench requested pro bono attorneys for 18 cases, of which 8 requests were accepted. The pro bono panel consists of 72 attorneys.

Lawyers are encouraged to visit the website to consider selecting a case online.

Pretrial Services

In 2021, throughout the pandemic, Pretrial Services Officers continued to conduct pretrial investigations and monitor persons under pretrial supervision in the community, while adhering to safety guidelines to minimize the risk of exposure to Covid-19. Staff showed an amazing amount of perseverance, collaboration with stakeholders, and teamwork. Staff provided resources for persons on pretrial supervision to assist them acquiring employment, medical services, Covid-19 vaccinations, Covid-19 testing, food, substance abuse, and mental health treatment services.

Currently, the agency is comprised of 31 staff members, serving five Eastern District of Michigan Court locations. In June 2021, United States Pretrial Services Officer Marcus Hillie retired after serving over 20 years with the Pretrial Services Agency. Pretrial Services Officer Ryan Helms continues to serve as a temporary Firearms and Safety Instructor for the Federal Probation and Pretrial Academy in Charleston, South Carolina.

Pretrial Services Officer Heather McCamley served a yearlong remote temporary duty assignment for the Administrative Office, Probation and Pretrial Services Division as subject matter expert for various law enforcement applications.

In September 2020, a virtual internship program was created to assist university students in gaining knowledge of judiciary and acquiring working knowledge of pretrial services.

The Pretrial Services Agency operates a self-surrender group quarterly for defendants and their families to provide them with knowledge about the Bureau of Prisons before beginning their custodial sentence. Pretrial Services is also enhancing knowledge, skills, and abilities in evidence-based practices and learning core correctional practices to better assist our clients.

The year 2021 marks the four-year anniversary of the alternative to incarceration program (RESTART) operating in the Eastern District of Michigan. The program involves the collaborative efforts of Chief Judge Denise Page Hood, Judge Paul D. Borman, Magistrate Judge Elizabeth A. Stafford, along with representatives from the United States Attorney's Office, Federal Community Defenders, the Pretrial Services Agency, and the Probation Department. Participants work in conjunction with the RESTART team in learning social skills and cognitive restructuring. Successful completion of the program leads to diversion from the criminal justice system as the charges against participants are ultimately dismissed. Three participants successfully completed and graduated from the RESTART Program in July 2021.

In addition to the RESTART program, the Pretrial Services Agency worked in conjunction with the United States Attorney's Office and completed 23 pretrial diversion investigations. Defendants that successfully complete the diversion program could be diverted from the criminal justice system and avoid a federal conviction.

The district continually collaborates with others to have a positive impact with our colleges across the nation. In August 2021, Eastern Michigan Pretrial Services, along with the U.S. Probation and Pretrial Services Offices, for the Districts of Eastern Texas, Middle Florida (Pretrial Services), Minnesota, and Northern Ohio, joined together to host the judiciary's first national virtual leadership conference. The conference was attended by over 700 judiciary employees. The district was also selected to be a pilot district for the national implementation of the national probation and pretrial case management system being developed by the Administrative Office of the United States Courts (PACTS 360). Chief Pretrial Services Officer Patricia Trevino continues to serve on the National Pretrial Services Working Group and the National Pretrial Steering Committee. The groups collectively work on the development and implementation of national pretrial policy for the Administrative Office of the United States.

The United States Pretrial Services Agency is responsible for providing quality pretrial reports to the court and making pretrial release recommendations. For the period of July 1, 2020 to June 30, 2021, the Eastern District of Michigan Pretrial Services Agency received 888 initial appearances and completed 843 pre-bail reports. The table below represents pretrial interviews and reports completed in relevance to the sixth circuit.

Circuit	District Name	Cases Activated	Interview Status		Types Of Pretrial Services Report		
			Interviewed	Not Interviewed	Prebail Reports	Postbail Reports	No Reports Made
6	Kentucky-Eastern	469	293	176	313	44	112
	Kentucky-Western	293	242	51	248	20	25
	Michigan-Eastern	888	805	83	843	32	13
	Michigan-Western	346	258	88	302	28	16
	Ohio-Northern	1,145	986	159	1,133	4	8
	Ohio-Southern	723	644	79	517	138	68
	Tennessee-Eastern	574	546	28	562	2	10
	Tennessee-Middle	271	6	265	145	40	86
	Tennessee-Western	448	349	99	333	57	58
	Total	5,157	4,129	1,028	4,396	365	396

The table below represents the comparison distribution of the types of cases that were activated in the Eastern District of Michigan.

Charged Offense	12 Months Ending 2020/06/30				12 Months Ending 2021/06/30			
	Activated	% of Total	Nat Avg	% of Total	Activated	% of Total	Nat Avg	% of Total
Drugs	195	25.86%	243	25.21%	274	30.86%	264	32.01%
Escape/Obstruction	13	1.72%	12	1.26%	13	1.46%	15	1.80%
Firearms/Weapons	154	20.42%	102	10.63%	264	29.73%	123	14.92%
Immigration	129	17.11%	400	41.52%	62	6.98%	211	25.53%
Other	3	0.40%	45	4.72%	1	0.11%	25	3.02%
Property	146	19.36%	81	8.36%	150	16.89%	93	11.23%
Public Order	4	0.53%	13	1.40%	8	0.90%	18	2.24%
Sex Offenses	51	6.76%	31	3.23%	59	6.64%	35	4.27%
Violence	59	7.82%	35	3.68%	57	6.42%	41	4.97%
Total	754	100%	964	100%	888	100%	825	100%

The Eastern District of Michigan has a 55.2% release rate (excluding immigration cases) which higher than the national average for pretrial release.

H-14A Pretrial Services Release and Detention Cases for Michigan-Eastern - Excluding Immigration Cases

Charged Offense	12 Months Ending 2021/06/30				
	Detained	Released	Total Cases	Release %	Nat Release %
Drugs	73	115	188	61.2%	42.8%
Escape/Obstruction	6	4	10	40.0%	39.7%
Firearms/Weapons	136	109	245	44.5%	29.6%
Immigration	0	4	4	100.0%	36.5%
Property	15	116	131	88.5%	84.5%
Public Order	1	3	4	75.0%	88.8%
Sex Offenses	44	12	56	21.4%	37.2%
Violence	33	16	49	32.7%	32.0%
Total	308	379	687	55.2%	45.6%

From July 1, 2020 to June 30, 2021, the Pretrial Services Agency was responsible for supervising 1,131 defendants on bond. The department spent over \$300,000.00 for treatment services to address substance abuse, mental health, and sex offender therapy. Approximately \$100,000 was spent for the location monitoring program. From July 1, 2020 to June 30, 2021, over 3,000 drug screens were processed in the lab. The district is below national average for failure to appear, re-arrest, and percentage of total supervised clients revoked or technical violations. The table below represents national and Eastern District of Michigan Pretrial Services supervision outcomes.

District	Total Clients Supervised	FTA Violations			Rearrest Violations						Technical Violations					
		# of FTA	# of Clients	% of Total Supervised Clients	# of Rearrest Violations	# of Misdemeanors	# of Felonies	# of Petty	# of Clients	% of Total Supervised Clients	# of Technical Violations	# of Clients	% of Total Supervised Clients	# of Clients Revoked*	% Revoked Technical Violations	% of Total Supervised Clients Revoked for Technical Violations
National	53,723	1,011	840	1.6%	1,479	704	695	80	1,359	2.5%	15,675	9,456	17.6%	2,967	31.4%	5.5%
MIE	1,098	3	3	0.3%	11	6	4	1	11	1.0%	448	235	21.4%	43	18.3%	3.9%

Probation Department

The Eastern District of Michigan Probation Department created their own annual report. You can find it at the back of this annual report.

Budget

The fiscal year 2021 budget, which ends on September 30, 2021, provided a decrease in funding levels from the prior fiscal year for the Eastern District of Michigan.

The Court received its final FY 2021 budget in February 2021. The District Clerk's Office, Probation Department and Pretrial Services Agency payroll accounts were funded below their funding levels from the prior year. In fiscal year 2021, the District Clerk's Office authorized staffing remained consistent, the Probation Department decreased 5.7 work units and the Pretrial Services Agency increased 5.1 work units. The operational and information technology accounts were reduced by 25% for the District Clerk's Office, the

Probation Department and the Pretrial Services Agency. The Court was able to uphold local budget levels and maintain normal operational levels to the public and the Bar.

The final budget picture for fiscal year 2022 is not yet known and appears more challenging than in recent years. The House Appropriations Committee of the FY 2022 Financial Services and General Government (FSGG) Appropriations Bill provided the Judiciary with a 5.6% increase, respectively, above our 2021 budget level. Congress has not completed negotiations and it remains unclear what will become of the final FY 2022 appropriations bills.

We expect to be on a Continuing Resolution (CR) starting the beginning of the fiscal year, October 1, 2021 until a final budget is passed. The Court is anticipating reductions higher than it received in FY 2021.

I want to personally thank our outstanding staff for their continued hard work and good stewardship. I also want to thank Congress for making the Judiciary a funding priority in order to allow us to continue to provide the level of services that the Court historically has provided to the public and the Bar. Thanks are also due to the Judicial Conference Budget Committee.

I will continue to keep you informed on FY 2022 funding for the Judiciary as it progresses through the full Congress and ultimately the President of the United States.

Space & Facilities Projects

The \$140-million program to upgrade the Theodore Levin United States Courthouse in downtown Detroit has been completed after four years of construction starting in July of 2016 and substantially completed in the fall of 2020.

GSA, the U.S. Marshal Service and the District Court have several new projects underway at the Levin Courthouse in 2021. The following projects are currently in progress:

- Energy Savings Project for Lighting Upgrades throughout public spaces. LED lighting has replaced the older fluorescent lights throughout the public corridors in the courthouse. This project is now substantially complete.
- Energy Savings Project for the replacement of the steam system with a new hot water boiler system. This project is underway and scheduled to be substantially complete before the beginning of the heating season.
- Capital Security Project. This project is in the design phase. The scope of work focuses on increasing the safety of judges, staff, the public and prisoner movements through the courthouse. This project is scheduled to start construction in 2023 and to be completed in 2025.
- USMS Security System Upgrades. The USMS is underway with the design and procurement of a contractor for replacement of all security devices throughout the courthouse. This project is scheduled to start construction in 2022 and be completed by 2025.

At the Ann Arbor Courthouse, the court recently renovated the magistrate judge courtroom so it may be used for criminal trials. The jury box was expanded to seat 14 people, new attorney tables and the lectern have A/V upgrades for electronic evidence presentation. This renovation will allow the Ann Arbor Courthouse to conduct two jury trials simultaneously.

The District Court has several projects scheduled for construction this fall and others to be started early in 2022. The following projects are of note:

- IT Project
- Courtroom Upgrades
- Pretrial breakroom

Public Information

Public Information Officer David Ashenfelter responded to hundreds of inquiries the past year from local, national, and international news organizations, freelance journalists, bloggers and members of the public seeking information about civil and criminal cases handled by our Court. Most of the inquiries involved questions about upcoming court hearings, newsworthy developments in civil and criminal cases and rules and procedures for gaining video access to court hearings during the COVID-19 pandemic when our courthouses were closed to the public.

The Court has adopted a proactive approach to alerting news organizations and, by extension, the public about the important work of the bench at a time when cutbacks in the media have made it harder for journalists to devote time and energy covering the Court. Mr. Ashenfelter tracks scores of newsworthy civil and criminal cases and notifies journalists about important hearings and legal decisions.

Mr. Ashenfelter also handles the Court's credentialing program that permits journalists to enter our courthouses with cellphones.

Naturalization Ceremonies

In calendar year 2020, the Eastern District of Michigan naturalized 6,920 new citizens, down from 13,477 new citizens in 2019. Nationally, the U.S. Citizenship & Immigration Service (USCIS) naturalizes approximately 700,000-750,000 citizens each year.

Due to the pandemic, USCIS was closed for COVID from March 2020 until June 2020. The first (historical) Drive Through Naturalization Ceremony at USCIS was on June 4, 2020 with Magistrate Judge Elizabeth A. Stafford presiding.



USCIS and the Court organized Drive Through Naturalization Ceremonies, with the following instructions for each Drive Through Ceremony:

1. Applicants enter the public parking entrance of the USCIS building located at 11411 E. Jefferson Avenue and check in with an USCIS representative.
2. There are 10 applicants scheduled per hour to receive the oath. There were six ceremonies, three to four days a week.
3. Applicants will then be instructed to move forward in their vehicles to the 2nd check in that will have a Judge and USCIS representative there to administer the oath.
4. Applicants windows will be rolled up and they will be instructed when to roll down to receive the oath.
5. Applicants will not be permitted to leave their vehicles and to eliminate exposure are only permitted to have one to two additional people in their vehicles.
6. USCIS require all employees and visitors to wear face coverings while in public settings (this includes all ceremony activities). Hand sanitizer will be readily available.

The Drive Through Naturalization Ceremonies were performed June 2020 through October 2020 in order to assist USCIS with the back log of citizens that were waiting for their oaths. The due diligence of the District and Magistrate Judges presiding over these ceremonies were able to successfully provide these new citizens with their oaths.

In November of 2020, Naturalization Ceremonies were moved indoors at USCIS.

HOW THE CEREMONIES WORKED

Beginning in November, each ceremony increased to 30 candidates per hour throughout the day for up to six ceremonies. Ceremonies were scheduled twice a week.

As with all members of the public coming into the USCIS building, security guards are instructed to have each person read a series of four questions pertaining to any history with or exposure to COVID-19 as well as if the individual is exhibiting any symptoms. If they respond negatively to all of the questions, they are permitted to enter.

Social distancing and facial coverings are required at all times. At check-in, an Immigration Services Officer reviews a candidate's history since having been approved to attend a ceremony, including recent travel. They will assess any such "high-risk" activities per CDC guidance on a case-by-case basis and will escort folks out of the facility who have had engaged in such "high-risk" activity, to be scheduled for a ceremony at a later date.

The prospective new citizens will go through security, they will then be directed to USCIS to ensure their documentation is filled out and have their green cards. They are then guided into the Ceremony Room, where they will be checked in maintaining social distancing. The prospective new citizens will then move down to review their Certificate / name change (if applicable), and then be directed to their seat. Once all prospective new citizens are checked in, they will remain seated until the USCIS officer / Judge arrives. They will be asked to stand, raise their right hands and recite the oath. After which, they will be asked to be seated and remain seated until their name is called by the USCIS officer. Once all new citizens have exited the Ceremony Room, USCIS then sanitizes all chairs, places the welcome packets on the chairs to be ready for the next ceremony.

Ceremonies will continue to be brief, as was done with the drive-throughs: no speeches, just the oath and then a one-by-one issuance of the certificates to candidates as they exit, ensuring single-file crowd flow to minimize congregating. Judges were required to wear a mask while performing the ceremonies.

Here's a picture of the new setup at USCIS:



Many media outlets attended Drive Through and Indoor Naturalization Ceremonies.

Judicial Interns

Each year, the Court conducts a summer intern program in June and July for judicial interns in the Eastern District. This year, due to the efforts of our IT department and the dedication and increased participation of our judicial officers, the program thrived in a remote format. There were 45 participants this summer, which is about a two dozen less than usual. The program centered on lunchtime Zoom presentations by the judges of the Eastern District. This year 13 judges participated in this format (Hood, Tarnow, Lawson, Cox, Murphy, Berg, Levy, Michelson, Leitman, Davis, Whalen, Patti, and Altman), and the interns really enjoyed and appreciated the frank and open views shared by the Judges. The interns also had the opportunity to participate in a presentation by the Pretrial Service Agency (Patty Trevino) and the Probation Department (Tony Merolla), and were privy to 9 events offered by the office of the Federal Community Defender and 3 events hosted by the United States Attorney's Office.

Court History Program

The Court Historical Society reports that all work has resumed on the filming of a documentary about the Court. During the COVID delay, progress was made on editing segments that were previously recorded, and most all interviews are now complete. In addition to grant funding, including a pledge from the Court, the legal community provided strong financial support for the project. The film will be narrated by retired WDIV anchor Carmen Harlen. The film will cover the courthouses and focus on five historic cases that will educate the public on the effect that the federal judicial system has upon their lives.

A long-delayed issue of The Court Legacy has been published and distributed by email to members of the Society. Past issues of The Court Legacy, which were somehow lost during the website transition to another site, have been scanned and will be added to the current website in the coming months.

Historical Society officers have two-year terms so they remain: Matt Lund, President; Debra Geroux, Vice President; Kevin Ball, Secretary; and Jeff Raphelson, Treasurer.

Conclusion

The Court strives to uphold the mission of the federal judiciary and to deliver justice under the law to the public it serves. The Court is mindful of the importance of the Court to the community and ensures that the Court is open and accessible to all.

A special thank you to all of the court staff who have contributed to this annual report – Kinikia Essix, Maureen Flavin, Anthony Merolla, Patricia Trevino, Jennifer Hissong, Josh Matta, Robyn Ringl, Julie Owens, Richard Loury, David Ashenfelter, Michael Coker, Stephen English, Victoria Lung, Stephanie Miskowski, Crystal Flood and Judy Christie.

Following are some Court statistics you may find interesting.

COURT STATISTICS

