
MONTANA JUDICIAL BRANCH BASICS

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January 2025

- ❑ Case filings (2024)
 - Supreme Court: 767
 - District Courts: 57,082
 - *Youth Court/Juvenile Probation 3,604 juvenile offenders*
 - Courts of Limited Jurisdiction: 219,168
- ❑ 2025 biennium budget
 - \$121.5 million (\$60,432,325 in FY24 and \$61,029,451 in FY25) is less than 1% of the total state budget.
- ❑ Programs funded through Judicial Branch budget:
 - Supreme Court, including Office of Court Administrator, which includes all drug treatment courts, information technology for all courts, board and commission support, and general administrative support
 - Water Court
 - Clerk of Supreme Court
 - State Law Library
 - District Courts (including juvenile probation), excluding courtroom/ office space and Clerks of District Court
 - County reimbursements for trial expenses including juries and other costs
 - Courts of Limited Jurisdiction, judges' training and court technology support (case management system, computers, connectivity).
- ❑ Montana's District Courts:
 - 51 District Court Judges covering 56 counties - each judge requires a law clerk, a court reporter, and a judicial assistant
 - The six largest districts represent 69% of the caseload
 - Statewide caseloads increased by almost 20% between 2010 and 2024
 - Increases occurred in all case types, but are especially problematic in time-consuming cases such as child abuse and neglect and criminal matters
 - 2024 workload studies show a need for **11 new judges**
- ❑ Managing the Workload:
 - Priority cases (child abuse and neglect, criminal, youth court, etc.) must be placed on the docket ahead of other cases by statute
 - Drug courts and pretrial programs are proven to reduce recidivism and incarceration
 - Youth Court prevention and intervention programs reduce District Court caseloads and populations at state and county youth correctional/detention facilities
 - Pro-se litigants – resources and forms are provided through the Law Library and the self-help law program
 - General civil litigation, often involving businesses and individuals, suffer the biggest delays. The volume of priority cases simply fills all available court and judge time in larger districts.