

**HALL COUNTY COURT, DISTRICT NINE  
HALL COUNTY COURTHOUSE  
111 W 1<sup>ST</sup> STREET, STE. #1  
GRAND ISLAND, NE 68801-6016  
Phone: (308) 385-5135 TDD: (800) 833-7352 Fax: (308) 385-5138**

**JUDGES  
ALFRED E. COREY, III.  
BRYAN S. MCQUAY  
GERALD R. JORGENSEN  
JOHN P. RADEMACHER**

**CLERK MAGISTRATE  
STEPHANIE SMITH**

January 30, 2026

Justice John R. Freudenberg  
Nebraska Supreme Court  
Nebraska State Capitol  
P.O. Box 98910  
Room 2210  
Lincoln, NE 68509  
Email: [ashley.jenkins@nejudicial.gov](mailto:ashley.jenkins@nejudicial.gov)

Dear Supreme Court Justice Freudenberg and Members of the Commission,

On behalf of the County Court Judges in the Ninth Judicial District, we are asking that you declare a vacancy created by the retirement of Judge Arthur Wetzel. Judge Wetzel will be missed on the bench in Grand Island but we wish him the best in his retirement. Since Judge Wetzel retired, we reached out to neighboring judges to assist us with his caseload. Currently, we have judges coming three days a week to Grand Island on average to assist us with his cases and are very grateful for this support. We recognized early on that trying to find coverage for all five days would be very difficult. As a result, both Judge McQuay and I have taken on additional responsibilities to make sure that participants in the legal system are receiving their day in court on a timely basis. Currently, the Ninth District has four county court judges – two in Hall County (Judge Corey and Judge McQuay) and two in Buffalo County (Judge Jorgensen and Judge Rademacher). In 2023, the Nebraska Legislature created a fifth county court judge for the Ninth District.

To provide a comparative analysis of the caseload in the Ninth District and specifically in Hall County, it would be informative to review data from 2020 to 2025. Based on the annual reports published by the State of Nebraska Administrative Offices of the Courts since 2020, the reported numbers for annual caseload reports and weighted caseload reports are listed below for the Ninth Judicial District and for Hall County:

**Exhibit 11**

County Court Annual Caseload Report (Fiscal Year)  
Ninth Judicial District/Hall County

<u>Cases Filed</u>	<u>Adult</u>	<u>Hall</u>	<u>Juvenile</u>	<u>Hall</u>
2020	19,040	11,544	925	641
2021	18,238	10,662	734	518
2022	17,326	10,514	807	606
2023	17,139	10,693	705	530
2024	19,533	12,356	638	395
2025	21,659	13,683	627	397

County Court Weighted Caseload Report  
Ninth Judicial District/Hall County

<u>Fiscal Year</u>	<u>Current Need for Judges</u>	<u>Workload Per Judge</u>	<u>Hall</u>
2020	4.46	1.12	2.71
2021	4.50	1.12	2.73
2022	4.43	1.11	2.72
2023	4.11	1.03	2.57
2024	4.09	0.82	2.54
2025	4.07	0.81	2.50

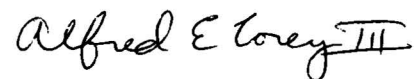
Reviewing the most recent annual caseload reports, adult case numbers in the Ninth District are rising and are more than 2,600 in the fiscal year 2025 compared to the fiscal year 2020. Of that total of 21,659 for the fiscal year 2025, Hall County has over 13,600 of those cases. While juvenile cases numbers have decreased, Hall County still accounts for over 63% of the cases filed in the Ninth District in the fiscal year 2025. In just reviewing the annual caseload reports from 2024 and 2025, the following categories increased in Hall County: misdemeanors, traffic, civil and small claims with protection orders remaining the same number. Hall County has needed between 2.50 and 2.73 judges over the past five years. Regarding the most recent weighted caseload report, the Ninth District has a need for 4.07 judges with a workload of 0.81 per judge. Hall County has a need for 2.50 judges.

As of the 2020 United States Census, Hall County, Nebraska had a population of 62,895. Currently, Hall County has the largest high school in the State of Nebraska with Grand Island Senior High. In a recent news segment on NTV from October 29, 2025, the Grand Island Public Schools said their data showed Grand Island could grow 20,000 people within the next twenty-five years. Grand Island Public Schools is looking at buying land in southwest Grand Island for a new elementary school as well as will have to consider if another high school needs to be built. The Grand Island Independent stated in a recent article on November 1, 2025 that Grand Island's population could grow between 7,000 people and 20,000 people over the same period. The University of Nebraska at Omaha's Center for Public Affairs Research states that Hall County's population by 2050 is projected to be almost 71,000 people. While these figures are different,

they all show that Hall County's population is projected to grow. In evaluating our district in 2023, the Ninth District Judicial Resources Work Group stated that Grand Island and Kearney were the fourth and fifth largest cities in Nebraska. The work group suggested that population trends showed both counties increasing with a significant population having interpreter needs. In reviewing the exhibits provided at the last Judicial Resources Commission meeting from November 2025, exhibit 7 stated that Hall County's caseload increased 26% from 2021 to 2025 while Buffalo County's cases increased in the same period by 5%. Hall County's increase is greater than the statewide increase. Overall, our caseloads continue to increase and evidence suggests that Hall County's population will continue to grow over the next twenty-five years. Additional factors that should be considered in filling this position include significant increases in self-represented litigants and the need for language interpretation.

We respectfully request that the Judicial Resources Commission declare that a county court judicial vacancy exists in the Ninth District due to the retirement of Judge Wetzel, with the primary office located in Grand Island, Hall County, Nebraska. Should you have any questions, do not hesitate to contact me. Judge Bryan McQuay will be present at the hearing on February 13, 2026 to answer any questions from the Commission. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Alfred E. Corey III". The signature is written in a cursive style with a distinct "III" at the end.

Alfred E. Corey III  
Hall County Court Judge