

**MINUTES OF THE PUBLIC HEARING OF  
THE NEBRASKA JUDICIAL RESOURCES COMMISSION  
FEBRUARY 13, 2026**

Pursuant to the press release issued January 30, 2026, the public hearing of the Nebraska Judicial Resources Commission was held on the 13<sup>th</sup> day of February 2026, in the Nebraska Supreme Court Courtroom, State Capitol Building, in Lincoln, Nebraska.

*AGENDA ITEM I:* The Chair called the proceedings to order at approximately 10 a.m. The proceedings included a Zoom videoconferencing option for Commission members. Roll Call by Ashley Jenkins.

**PRESENT** (\* denotes Zoom attendance)

Justice John R. Freudenberg  
Judge Travis O’Gorman\*  
Judge Anne Paine\*  
Judge Matthew Kahler\*  
Kenneth Hartman  
Ron Temple\*  
Jacqueline Tessendorf\*  
Robert Parker\*  
Darlene Starman  
Nancy McCabe  
Roxanne Kracl\*  
Maria Whitmore\*  
Brian Phares\*  
Taylor Gage

**EXCUSED**

Jane Langan Mach  
Meagan Spomer  
Cydnianna Hall

*AGENDA ITEM II:* The Chair confirmed that all Commission members had received and reviewed the minutes from the November 21, 2025, hearing. On a voice vote the commissioners unanimously accepted the minutes of November 21<sup>st</sup>.

*AGENDA ITEM III:* The following exhibits were received and considered by the Commission, and are attached to these minutes:

- Exhibit 1: Meeting Agenda
- Exhibit 2: Minutes of the November 21, 2025, hearing
- Exhibit 3: Retirement letter from Judge Jodi L. Nelson, District Court Judge, 3<sup>rd</sup> Judicial District, dated December 4, 2025
- Exhibit 4: Press release from Governor Pillen appointing Judge Derek R. Vaughn, District Court Judge, 4<sup>th</sup> Judicial District, as Associate Supreme Court Justice dated November 10, 2025
- Exhibit 5: Retirement letter from Judge Donna Farrell Taylor, County Court Judge, 7<sup>th</sup> Judicial District, dated January 16, 2026
- Exhibit 6: Resignation letter from Judge Arthur S. Wetzel, County Court Judge, 9<sup>th</sup> Judicial District, dated October 2, 2025
- Exhibit 7: Retirement letter from Judge James M. Worden, County Court Judge, 12<sup>th</sup> Judicial District, dated November 21, 2025
- Exhibit 8: County Courts Weighted Caseload Report Fiscal Year 2025
- Exhibit 9: District Courts Weighted Caseload Report Fiscal Year 2025
- Exhibit 10: Letter from Judge LeAnne M. Srb dated November 10, 2025, re: request to declare judicial vacancy – 4<sup>th</sup> Judicial District, District Court
- Exhibit 11: Letter from Judge Alfred E. Corey, III, dated January 30, 2026, re: request to declare judicial vacancy – 9<sup>th</sup> Judicial District, County Court
- Exhibit 12: Letter from Hon. John M. Gerrard, NSBA President, dated February 9, 2026, re: NSBA Judicial Resources Committee recommendations
- Exhibit 13: Letter from Judge James M. Worden dated February 2, 2026, re: request to declare judicial vacancy – 12<sup>th</sup> Judicial District, County Court
- Exhibit 14: Letter from Judge Aaron J. Conn dated February 10, 2026, re: request to declare judicial vacancy – 12<sup>th</sup> Judicial District, County Court

- Exhibit 15: Letter from Vicky A. Kenney (undated) re: request to declare judicial vacancy – 9<sup>th</sup> Judicial District, County Court
- Exhibit 16: Letter from Benjamin W. Shanahan (undated) re: request to declare judicial vacancy – 9<sup>th</sup> Judicial District, County Court
- Exhibit 17: Letter from Marty Klein dated February 12, 2026, re: request to declare judicial vacancy – 9<sup>th</sup> Judicial District, County Court

*AGENDA ITEM IV:* The public hearing was conducted, and the Commission received and considered public testimony from: Judge Bryan S. McQuay, 9<sup>th</sup> District, County Court; Judge Kristen D. Mickey, 12<sup>th</sup> District, County Court; and Corey Steel, State Court Administrator.

(a): It was moved by Brian Phares and seconded by Darlene Starman to declare a judicial vacancy in the District Court, 3<sup>rd</sup> Judicial District, due to the retirement of Judge Jodi L. Nelson, with the primary location being Lincoln, Lancaster County, Nebraska. On a roll call vote the motion passed unanimously.

(b): It was moved by Ken Hartman and seconded by Nancy McCabe to declare a judicial vacancy in the District Court, 4<sup>th</sup> Judicial District, due to the appointment of Judge Derek R. Vaughn to the Supreme Court, with the primary location being Omaha, Douglas County, Nebraska. On a roll call vote the motion passed unanimously.

(c) It was moved by Ron Temple and seconded by Taylor Gage to declare a judicial vacancy in the County Court, 7<sup>th</sup> Judicial District, due to the retirement of Judge Donna Farrell Taylor, with the primary location to be determined in consultation with the successful applicant. On a roll call vote the motion passed unanimously.

(d) It was moved by Maria Whitmore and seconded by Darlene Starman to declare a judicial vacancy in the County Court, 9<sup>th</sup> Judicial District, due to the resignation of Judge Arthur S. Wetzel, with the primary location being Grand Island, Hall County, Nebraska. On a roll call vote the motion passed unanimously.

(e) It was moved by Maria Whitmore and seconded by Judge Anne Paine to declare a judicial vacancy in the County Court, 12<sup>th</sup> Judicial District, due to the retirement of Judge James M. Worden, with the primary location being Gering, Scotts Bluff County, Nebraska. On a roll call vote the motion passed unanimously.

*AGENDA ITEM V:* The Chair noted that the next public hearing of the Judicial Resources Commission will be held on Friday, May 1, 2026, at 10:00am (CST).

*AGENDA ITEM VI:* There being no other matters, the Commission adjourned.

Respectfully submitted:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John R. Freudenberg", written in a cursive style.

Justice John R. Freudenberg  
Chair

**JUDICIAL RESOURCES COMMISSION HEARING**  
**Friday, February 13, 2026 – 10 a.m. CST**

**Exhibit List**

*This exhibit list is updated as of February 13, 2026, and will continue to be updated as more information is received.*

- Exhibit 1: Meeting Agenda
- Exhibit 2: Minutes of the November 21, 2025, hearing
- Exhibit 3: Retirement letter from Judge Jodi L. Nelson, District Court Judge, 3<sup>rd</sup> Judicial District, dated December 4, 2025
- Exhibit 4: Press release from Governor Pilleen appointing Judge Derek R. Vaughn, District Court Judge, 4<sup>th</sup> Judicial District, as Associate Supreme Court Justice dated November 10, 2025
- Exhibit 5: Retirement letter from Judge Donna Farrell Taylor, County Court Judge, 7<sup>th</sup> Judicial District, dated January 16, 2026
- Exhibit 6: Resignation letter from Judge Arthur S. Wetzel, County Court Judge, 9<sup>th</sup> Judicial District, dated October 2, 2025
- Exhibit 7: Retirement letter from Judge James M. Worden, County Court Judge, 12<sup>th</sup> Judicial District, dated November 21, 2025
- Exhibit 8: County Courts Weighted Caseload Report Fiscal Year 2025
- Exhibit 9: District Courts Weighted Caseload Report Fiscal Year 2025
- Exhibit 10: Letter from Judge LeAnne M. Srb dated November 10, 2025, re: request to declare judicial vacancy – 4<sup>th</sup> Judicial District, District Court
- Exhibit 11: Letter from Judge Alfred E. Corey, III, dated January 30, 2026, re: request to declare judicial vacancy – 9<sup>th</sup> Judicial District, County Court
- Exhibit 12: Letter from Hon. John M. Gerrard, NSBA President, dated February 9, 2026, re: NSBA Judicial Resources Committee recommendations
- Exhibit 13: Letter from Judge James M. Worden dated February 2, 2026, re: request to declare judicial vacancy – 12<sup>th</sup> Judicial District, County Court

- Exhibit 14: Letter from Judge Aaron J. Conn dated February 10, 2026, re: request to declare judicial vacancy – 12<sup>th</sup> Judicial District, County Court
- Exhibit 15: Letter from Vicky A. Kenney (undated) re: request to declare judicial vacancy – 9<sup>th</sup> Judicial District, County Court
- Exhibit 16: Letter from Benjamin W. Shanahan (undated) re: request to declare judicial vacancy – 9<sup>th</sup> Judicial District, County Court
- Exhibit 17: Letter from Marty Klein dated February 12, 2026, re: request to declare judicial vacancy – 9<sup>th</sup> Judicial District, County Court

**HEARING AGENDA**  
**JUDICIAL RESOURCES COMMISSION**  
**Friday, February 13, 2026 – 10 a.m. CST**  
**Supreme Court Courtroom, State Capitol, Lincoln, Nebraska**

- I. Call meeting to order; roll call of members.
- II. Approve minutes from JRC Annual meeting held November 21, 2025.
- III. Identify/receive exhibits to be considered by commission during public hearing.
- IV. Conduct public hearing concerning the following:
  - a. Whether a judicial vacancy exists in the office of the District Court, 3<sup>rd</sup> Judicial District, due to the retirement of Judge Jodi L. Nelson, and if so, whether to recommend a primary office location.
  - b. Whether a judicial vacancy exists in the office of the District Court, 4<sup>th</sup> Judicial District, due to the appointment of Judge Derek Vaughn to the Supreme Court, and if so, whether to recommend a primary office location.
  - c. Whether a judicial vacancy exists in the office of the County Court, 7<sup>th</sup> Judicial District, due to the retirement of Judge Donna Farrell Taylor, and if so, whether to recommend a primary office location.
  - d. Whether a judicial vacancy exists in the office of the County Court, 9<sup>th</sup> Judicial District, due to the resignation of Judge Arthur S. Wetzel, and if so, whether to recommend a primary office location.
  - e. Whether a judicial vacancy exists in the office of the County Court, 12<sup>th</sup> Judicial District, due to the retirement of Judge James M. Worden, and if so, whether to recommend a primary office location.
- V. Adjourn

**MINUTES OF THE PUBLIC HEARING OF  
THE NEBRASKA JUDICIAL RESOURCES COMMISSION  
November 21, 2025**

Pursuant to the press release issued November 7, 2025, the Annual Meeting and public hearing of the Nebraska Judicial Resources Commission was held on the 21<sup>st</sup> day of November 2025, in the Nebraska Supreme Court Courtroom, State Capitol Building, in Lincoln, Nebraska.

*AGENDA ITEM I:* The Chair called the proceedings to order at approximately 10 a.m. The proceedings included a Zoom videoconferencing option for Commission members. Roll Call by Ashley Jenkins.

**PRESENT** (\* denotes Zoom attendance)

Justice John R. Freudenberg  
Judge Travis O’Gorman\*  
Judge Anne Paine  
Judge Matthew Kahler  
Jane Langan Mach  
Kenneth Hartman  
Ron Temple\*  
Meagan Spomer\*  
Jacqueline Tessendorf  
Robert Parker  
Darlene Starman  
Nancy McCabe\*  
Roxanne Kracl  
Cydnianna Hall\*  
Maria Whitmore  
Brian Phares\*  
Taylor Gage

**EXCUSED**

Robert Parker  
Roxanne Kracl

*AGENDA ITEM II:* The Chair confirmed that all Commission members had received and reviewed the minutes from the August 15, 2025, hearing. On an informal voice vote the commissioners unanimously accepted the minutes of August 15<sup>th</sup>.

*AGENDA ITEM III:* The following exhibits were received and considered by the Commission, and are attached to these minutes:

- Exhibit 1: Meeting Agenda
- Exhibit 2: Minutes of the August 15, 2025, hearing
- Exhibit 3: Retirement letter from Judge C. Jo Petersen dated August 1, 2025
- Exhibit 4: Resignation letter from Judge James G. Kube dated October 1, 2025
- Exhibit 5: District Courts Weighted Caseload Report Fiscal Year 2025
- Exhibit 6: County Courts Weighted Caseload Report Fiscal Year 2025
- Exhibit 7: Judicial Resources Commission Supportive Data for 2025 Annual Meeting
- Exhibit 8: Judicial Retirement Forecast
- Exhibit 9: Other Factors Affecting Judicial Resources
- Exhibit 10: Letter from Saunders County Bar Association dated November 13, 2025, re: request to declare judicial vacancy – 5<sup>th</sup> Judicial District, County Court.
- Exhibit 11: Letter from Catrina K. Harris dated November 13, 2025, re: request to declare judicial vacancy – 5<sup>th</sup> Judicial District, County Court.
- Exhibit 12: Letter from Hon. John M. Gerrard, NSBA President, dated November 13, 2025, re: NSBA Judicial Resources Committee recommendations.

Exhibit 13: Letter from Judge Stephen R.W. Twiss dated November 18, 2025, re: request to declare judicial vacancy – 5<sup>th</sup> Judicial District, County Court.

Exhibit 14: Letter from Christopher M. Johnson dated November 19, 2025, re: request to declare judicial vacancy – 5<sup>th</sup> Judicial District, County Court.

*AGENDA ITEM IV:* The public hearing was conducted, and the Commission received and considered public testimony from: Judge Stephen R. Twiss, 5<sup>th</sup> District, County Court; Amy Prenda, Deputy State Court Administrator; Bill Mueller, Nebraska State Bar Association; and Hazel Delgado, Director of Research and Data.

(a): It was moved by Jacqueline Tessoroff and seconded by Judge Anne Paine to declare a judicial vacancy in the County Court, 5<sup>th</sup> Judicial District, due to the retirement of Judge C. Jo Petersen, with the primary office location being Seward, Seward County, Nebraska. On a roll call vote the motion passed unanimously.

(b): It was moved by Judge Matthew Kahler and seconded by Meagan Spomer to declare a judicial vacancy in the District Court, 7<sup>th</sup> Judicial District, due to the resignation of Judge James G. Kube, with the primary office location to be determined in consultation with the successful applicant. On a roll call vote the motion passed unanimously.

*AGENDA ITEM V:* Annual Meeting topics under Neb. Rev. Stat. § 24-1205:

(a): The Commission took up whether it is appropriate to recommend adding a judgeship in any judicial district. No motions were made on this issue.

(b): The Commission took up whether it is appropriate to recommend reducing a judgeship in any judicial district. No motions were made on this issue.

(c): The Commission took up whether to recommend any judicial district boundaries, or number of judicial districts, should be changed

for the district or county courts. No motions were made on this issue.

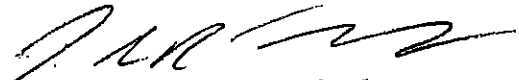
(d): The Commission took up whether to make any recommendations for the more balanced use of existing judicial resources. No motions were made on this issue.

*AGENDA ITEM VI: 2026 quarterly meeting dates:*

(a): The Chair advised the Commission of the dates for the 2026 meetings: February 13, May 1, August 14, and November 20.

*AGENDA ITEM VII: There being no other matters, the Judicial Resources Commission hearing was adjourned by the Chair.*

Respectfully submitted:



Justice John R. Freudenberg  
Chair

KRISTIN D. CEBALLOS  
Bailliff

**JODI L. NELSON**  
DISTRICT JUDGE  
THIRD JUDICIAL DISTRICT  
THE JUSTICE AND LAW ENFORCEMENT CENTER  
575 SOUTH 10TH  
LINCOLN, NEBRASKA 68508  
PHONE 402-441-7371 FAX 402-441-3833

ANDREA SEEFUS  
Court Reporter

RECEIVED

DEC 15 2025

Office of the Chief Justice

Governor Jim Pillen  
1445 K Street  
Lincoln, NE 68508

December 4, 2025

Dear Governor Pillen,

Twenty years ago this month I accepted then-Governor Dave Heineman's appointment to be a district court judge for the Third Judicial District, namely, Lancaster County. I write today to announce that I will retire, effective January 31, 2026.

It has been an absolute honor, distinct privilege, and highlight of my career to have had this opportunity to serve the citizens of Lancaster County and the State of Nebraska as a district court judge. I have loved this job. It has been such a joy to work with my colleagues on the bench both here in Lancaster County and throughout the state, as well as the talented lawyers who have practiced before me. Without a doubt, they are some of the most hard-working, conscientious, and dedicated people you could find anywhere.

I have also been fortunate to spend my career working with my amazing court staff, or better said, my court family. Each day they have worked hard to serve those that utilize the court with efficiency, grace, and professionalism. I owe them a debt of gratitude for their service. I could not have done this job without them.

Respectfully,



Jodi L. Nelson

District Court Judge

cc: Chief Justice, Jeffrey J. Funke

# **Gov. Pillen Appoints Derek Vaughn as Associate Supreme Court Justice**

**November 10, 2025**

**CONTACT:**

Laura Strimple, (402) 580-9495

## **Gov. Pillen Appoints Derek Vaughn as Associate Supreme Court Justice**

**LINCOLN, NE** – Today, Governor Jim Pillen announced his appointment of the Honorable Derek Ray Vaughn of Omaha to the Nebraska Supreme Court, representing the Second Judicial District. His appointment fills the vacancy left by Justice Miller-Lerman who stepped down Oct. 31 after 33 years of service.

"Judge Vaughn has notable experience as a judge and as a prosecutor," said Gov. Pillen. "He has a heart for the Omaha community and a long-standing history of public service. His integrity and commitment to the law are evident and I'm pleased to promote him to this role on the Nebraska Supreme Court."

Standing next to his wife Jacqueline, his children Raionna and Darius, and other family members including his mother Shirley, Justice Vaughn offered his profound appreciation.

"I'm grateful to Gov. Pillen for this amazing opportunity," said Justice Vaughn. "I look forward to continuing my service to the people of Nebraska."

Since August 2023, Justice Vaughn has been a district court judge in Douglas County. Prior to that, he was a county court judge for 10 years, also in Douglas County. He spent several years in the Douglas County Attorney's Office, handling criminal and civil cases as well as a considerable caseload for the county's problem-solving courts.

Justice Vaughn has been an adjunct instructor at several regional colleges and universities including the University of Nebraska – Omaha (UNO), Midland University and Dana College. He has served on a number of boards including the City of Omaha Parks and Recreation Advisory Board, the Urban League of Nebraska Board of Directors, the Nebraska Coalition for Juvenile Justice and the Office of Violence Prevention Advisory Board.

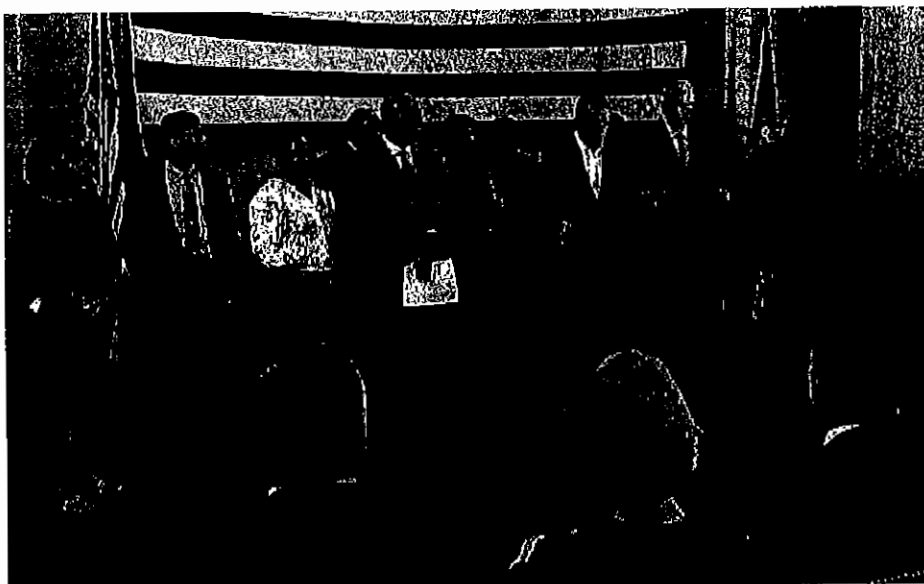
Justice Vaughn is part of the Nebraska Bench Media Committee, which works to foster positive and professional relationships between attorneys, courts and the media. He is also involved with the Salem Baptist Church and is a coordinator for the Zion Baptist Church Wild Game Feast.

During today's announcement, Lieutenant Governor Joe Kelly talked about his longstanding friendship with Justice Vaughn, which began more than 20 years ago when they were both prosecutors. Lt. Gov. Kelly highlighted a few of the things that made Justice Vaughn a great fit for the state Supreme Court -- one of those being Justice Vaughn's love of community and things he did "off of the bench."

"He's a people person," continued Lt. Gov. Kelly. "He likes to meet people, he likes to learn about what they're doing, what they're up to and he listens. Listening is a great part of the job."

Justice Vaughn has a bachelor's degree in secondary education and earned his juris doctor from the University of Nebraska – Lincoln (UNL) College of Law.

The Nebraska Supreme Court Second Judicial District consists of Douglas County.



# ANTELOPE COUNTY COURT

DONNA FARRELL TAYLOR  
COUNTY JUDGE

KRISTINA SEHI  
CLERK MAGISTRATE

Seventh Judicial District  
501 MAIN STREET  
PO BOX 26 NELIGH, NE 68756  
Phone (402) 887-4650  
Fax (402) 887-4160

ROSS A. STOFFER  
COUNTY JUDGE

January 16, 2026

The Honorable Jim Pillen  
Governor of the State of Nebraska  
P.O Box 94848  
Lincoln, NE 68509-4848

Re: Notice of Judicial Retirement-Judge Donna Farrell Taylor-County Judge 7<sup>th</sup> District

Dear Governor Pillen:

Please accept this letter as official notice of my intended retirement from the County Bench of the 7<sup>th</sup> Judicial District. It has been my distinct pleasure to have served the citizens of the State of Nebraska for nearly 25 years. I am so grateful for the opportunity Governor Johanns provided by having the confidence to appoint me.

My last day of service will be February 11, 2026.

My work has been aided by the professional and loyal service of our Clerk Magistrates and court staff, both past and present. Over the years, we have weathered together many challenges and changes in how our service to the people is administered.

The camaraderie of my fellow judges in the 7<sup>th</sup> judicial district and all of the County Judges of the State of Nebraska have provided friendship, support and a feeling of solidarity in a profession that can be isolating.

The professionalism and expertise of our attorneys and attorneys visiting our judicial district make me proud to be a member of the 7<sup>th</sup> judicial district bench and bar.

The opportunity to serve the families and litigants appearing before me reminds me time over time that we are a diverse people, and each litigant brings his or her own uniqueness to the court system, enriching my experience as a judge and growth as a person.

All of this I will miss as I enter the next phase of my life.

Sincerely,

Donna Farrell Taylor

**COUNTY COURT, DISTRICT NINE**

Hall County Courthouse

111 W. 1st St., Suite #1

Grand Island, Nebraska 68801

Phone :(308)385-5135 Fax :(308)385-5138 TDD :(800)833-7352

**Judges**

Arthur S. Wetzel

Alfred E. Corey III

Bryan S. McQuay

Gerald R. Jorgensen

John P. Rademacher

**Clerk Magistrate**

Stephanie R. Smith

RECEIVED

OCT -6 2025

Office of the Chief Justice

October 2, 2025

Governor Jim Pillen

1445 K Street

Lincoln, NE 68508

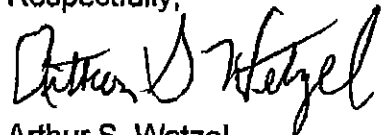
Dear Governor Pillen,

I wish to notify you of my resignation as County Court Judge for the Ninth Judicial District. My last day will be January 2, 2026. I am ready for retirement; however, it has been a pleasure and honor to serve the Ninth Judicial District and specifically, Hall County.

I was appointed by Governor Heineman in 2011. One of my greatest experiences has been the ability to work with various clerk magistrates, clerk staff, bailiffs, and other court personnel. As to Hall County, I can ensure you that these are very dedicated employees who make the system run. It has been an honor to work with them.

I have obviously met various county judges and district judges throughout the years who are dedicated to the citizens that they serve. Thank you for receiving this letter and I hope for your continued support of our state judiciary.

Respectfully,



Arthur S. Wetzel

cc: Chief Justice Jeffrey Funke  
Corey Steele

COUNTY JUDGES  
KRISTEN D MICKEY  
JAMES M WORDEN

CLERK MAGISTRATE  
DIANNE LANA



SCOTTS BLUFF COUNTY COURT  
TWELFTH JUDICIAL DISTRICT

November 21, 2025

The Honorable Jim Pillen  
Governor of the State of Nebraska  
1445 K Street  
P.O. Box 94848  
Lincoln, NE 68509

Dear Governor Pillen,

It has been an honor to serve as a county judge in the Twelfth Judicial District the last 21 years.

I cannot envision a job comparable to that of a county judge in the Panhandle of Nebraska. I have seen the best and worst of people. I have tried to be diligent and just in the administration of my duties.

I would like to thank the incredible Scotts Bluff County Court team. They are a second to none.

Finally, I would like to provide a word of encouragement; the county court bench is comprised of judges that care deeply about the people they serve and laws they are bound to enforce.

Please accept this letter of retirement effective February 9, 2026.

Sincerely;

James M. Worden  
Scotts Bluff County Judge

SCOTTS BLUFF COUNTY COURT  
1725 10<sup>TH</sup> STREET  
GERING, NE 69341

# County Courts

## Weighted Caseload Report



**Fiscal Year 2025**

July 1, 2024, to  
June 30, 2025

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# Weighted Caseload Report

## Nebraska County Courts Weighted Caseload Report

Nebraska has a district court in each of its 93 counties, organized into 12 Judicial Districts. Pursuant to Neb. Rev. Stat. § 24-301.02, the Legislature determines the number of district court judges who serve in each judicial district, and the geographic boundaries of each judicial district. An objective assessment of judicial workload allows informed decisions about district boundaries and the number of judges needed to timely resolve the cases in each judicial district.

To assist in evaluating judicial workloads, Neb. Rev. Stat. § 24-1007(1) requires the Nebraska Administrative Office of the Courts and Probation (AOC) to compile judicial workload statistics based on caseloads weighted by category of case. These weighted caseload statistics are used by the Judicial Branch, the Judicial Resources Commission, and the Legislature to evaluate judicial need, and guide decisions and recommendations on how best to allocate judicial resources across the state.

To ensure the validity, uniformity and accuracy of the AOC's judicial workload statistics, a statewide judicial time study was conducted in 2019-2020 under the direction and leadership of the National Center for State Courts. For a full description of the judicial time study and the recommended weighting methodology and standards, see *Nebraska Judicial Workload Assessment Final Report (October 2020)* (this is noted on tables in this report with an asterisk) on the Nebraska Supreme Court Website. Because this Weighted Caseload Report uses the methodology and standards from the 2020 workload assessment, direct comparison to archived reports is not recommended.

Weighted caseload statistics approximate the number of judges a district needs to handle the current caseload based upon the calculations of a three-year rolling average of case filing data. Therefore, when weighted caseload statistics are examined in conjunction with other compelling and critical metrics, they provide a vital part of an objective and standardized assessment of judicial needs and the fair allocation of judicial resources across juvenile courts in the State of Nebraska.



**Corey R. Steel**

**Nebraska State Court Administrator**

**Nebraska Supreme Court**

**Administrative Office of the Courts & Probation**

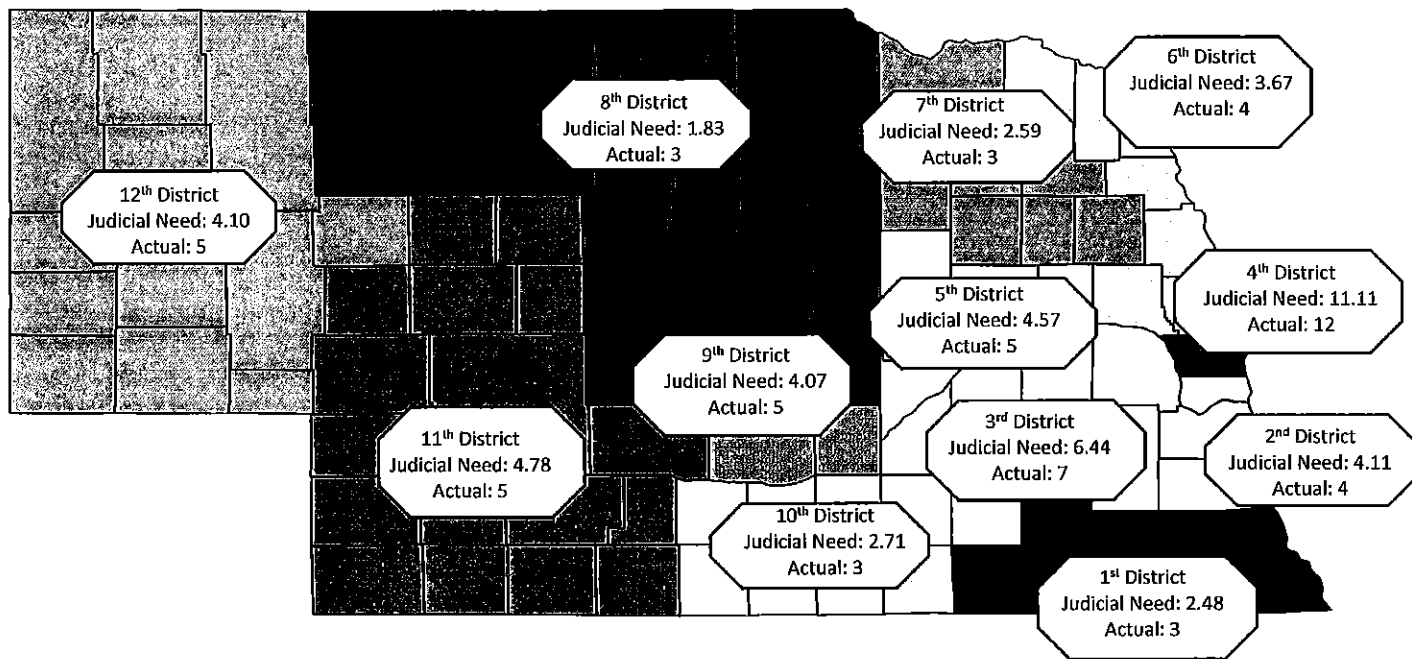
Rm. 1211 State Capitol | P.O. Box 98910 | Lincoln, NE 68509

T 402.471.3730 | F 402.471.2197

[www.supremecourt.nebraska.gov](http://www.supremecourt.nebraska.gov)

# Weighted Caseload Report

## Nebraska County Court Judicial Needs Fiscal Year 2025 (July 1, 2024 – June 30, 2025)



Note: Differences between the total District Court Need for Judges and the sum of individual counties is due to rounding to the nearest one-hundredth.

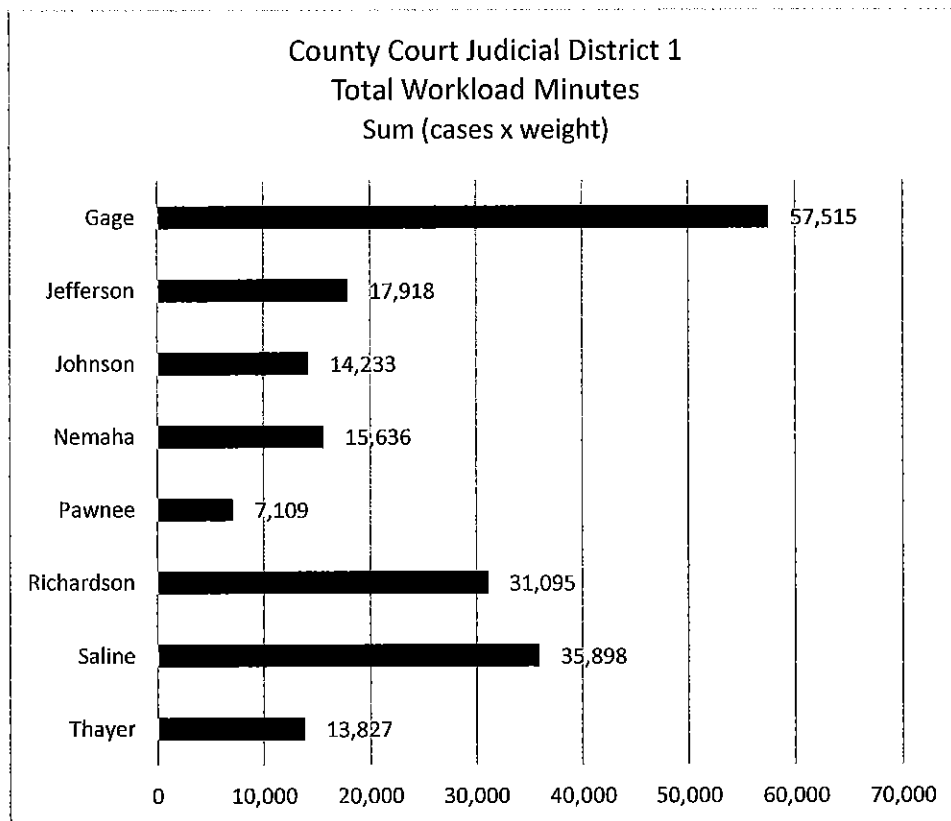
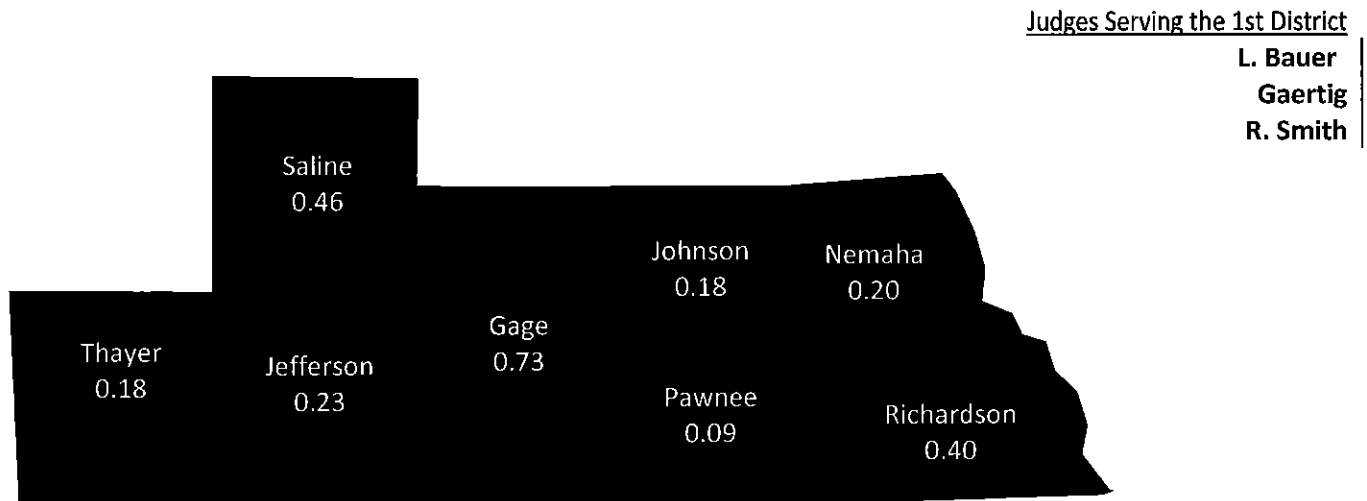
# Weighted Caseload Report

## 1<sup>st</sup> Judicial District – County Court

County court need for judges: 2.48  
 Current number of judges: 3  
 Workload per judge: 0.83

**NOTE:** An additional **0.01** is given due to Judge R. Smith being assigned to Problem-Solving Court cases in Fillmore County (District Court) and Otoe County (District Court).

### Predicted judicial resources need by county



# Weighted Caseload Report

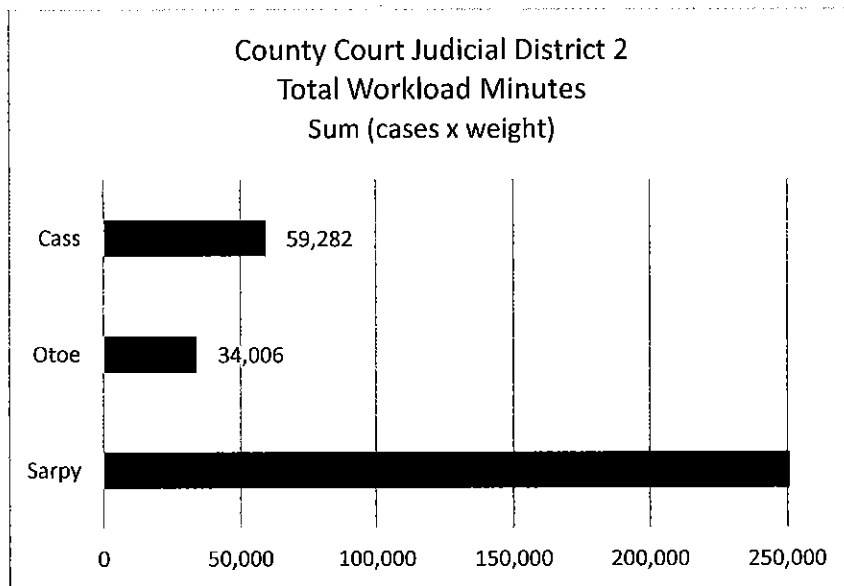
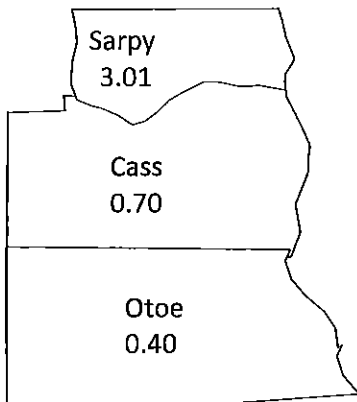
## 2<sup>nd</sup> Judicial District – County Court

County court need for judges: 4.11  
Current number of judges: 4  
Workload per judge: 1.03

Predicted judicial resources need by county

### Judges Serving the 2nd District

Freeman  
Hutton  
Palm  
Partsch



# Weighted Caseload Report

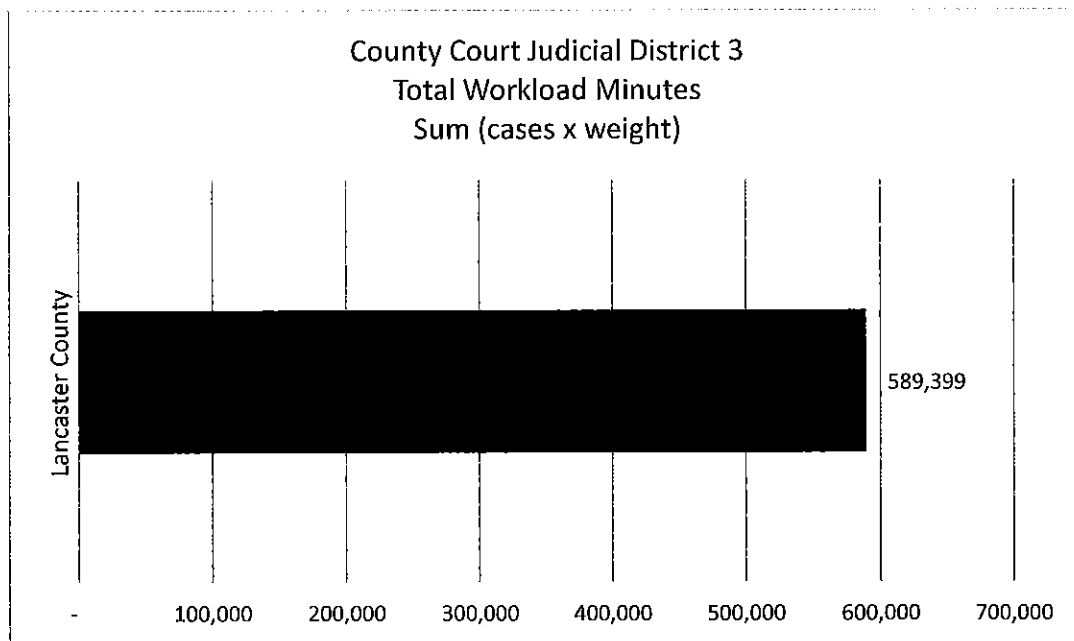
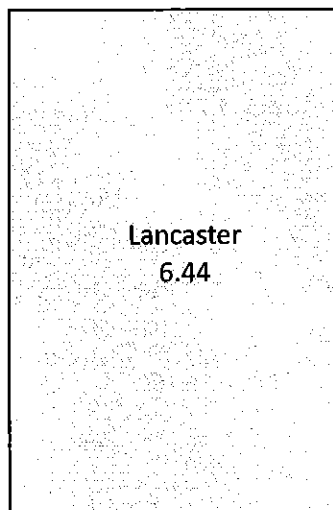
## 3<sup>rd</sup> Judicial District –County Court

County court need for judges: 6.44  
Current number of judges: 7  
Workload per judge: 0.92

Predicted judicial resources need by county

### Judges Serving the 3rd District

Acton  
Dalton  
Parsley  
Phillips  
Reuter  
Yardley  
Zimmerman



# Weighted Caseload Report

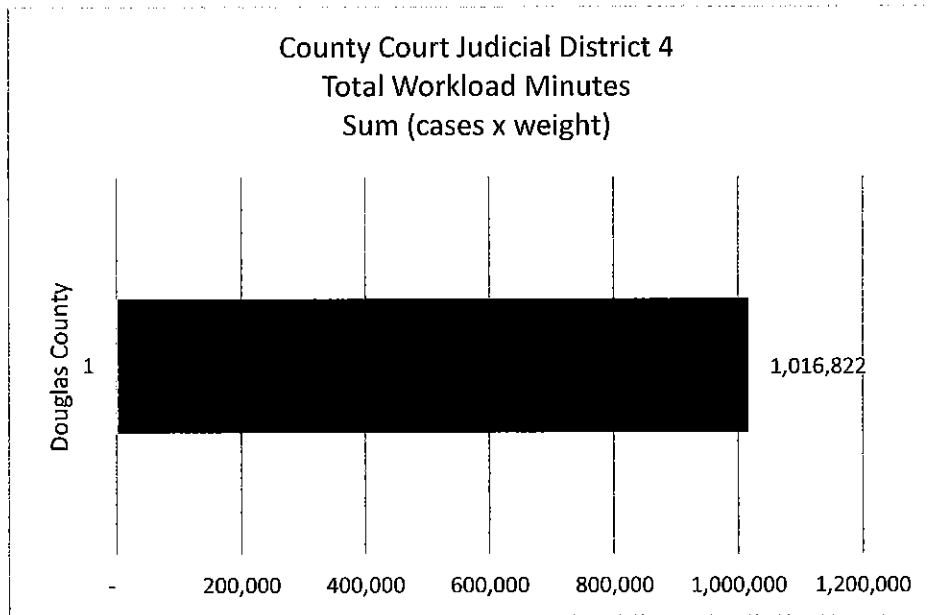
## 4<sup>th</sup> Judicial District –County Court

County court need for judges: 11.11  
 Current number of judges: 12  
 Workload per judge: 0.93

Predicted judicial resources need by county

### Judges Serving the 4th District

- Finley
- Forsberg
- Hansen
- Harmon
- Hendrix
- Huber
- Keim
- Kleine (Marcuzzo)
- Lohaus
- McDermott
- Mosby (Lowe)
- Shearer

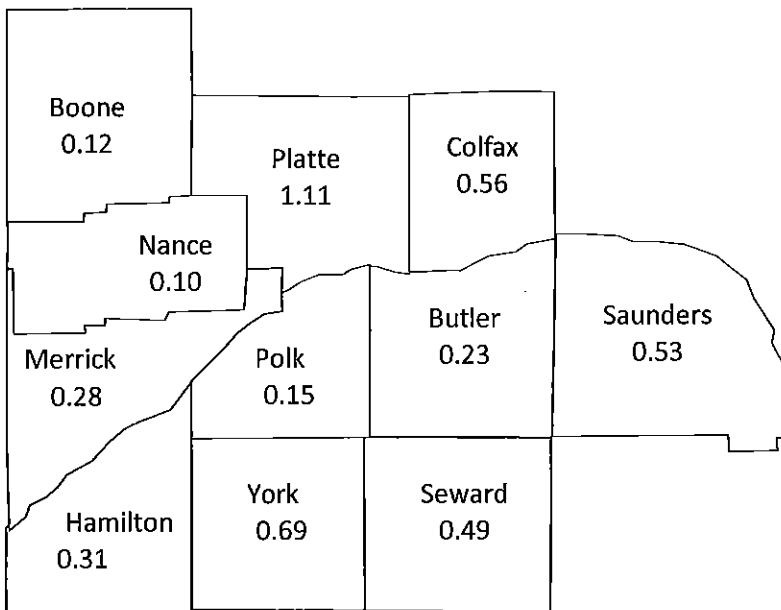


# Weighted Caseload Report

## 5<sup>th</sup> Judicial District - County Court

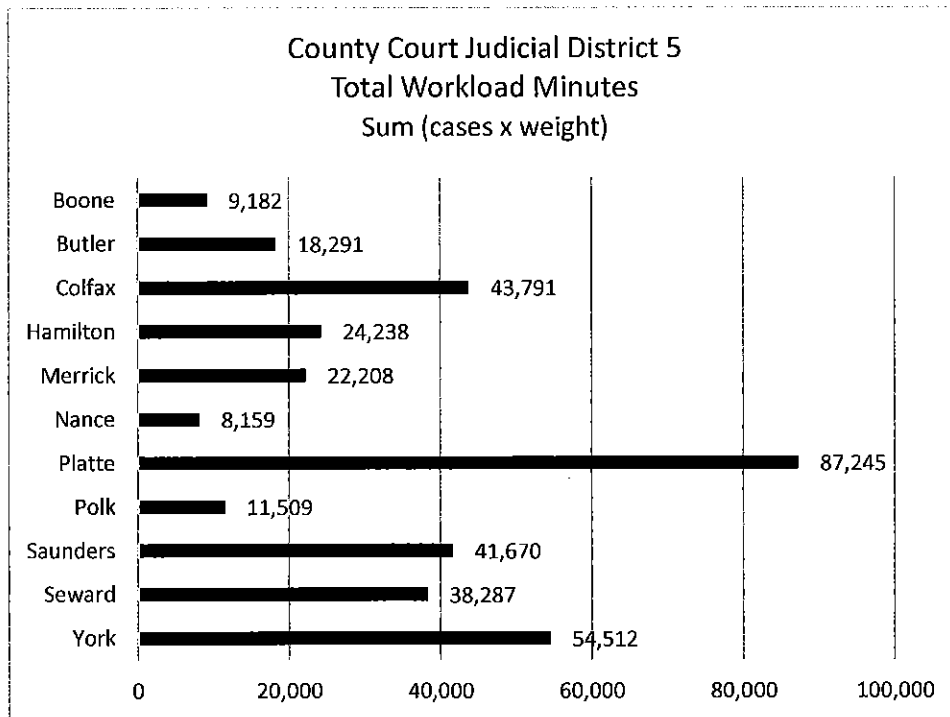
County court need for judges: 4.57  
 Current number of judges: 5  
 Workload per judge: 0.91

Predicted judicial resources need by county



### Judges Serving the 5th District

- Homolka
- Kracl
- Lange
- Petersen
- Twiss

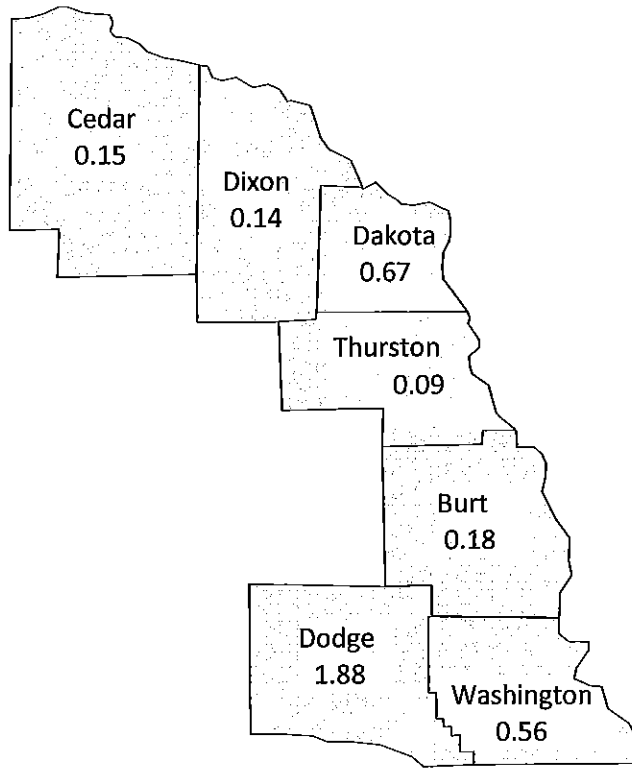


# Weighted Caseload Report

## 6<sup>th</sup> Judicial District – County Court

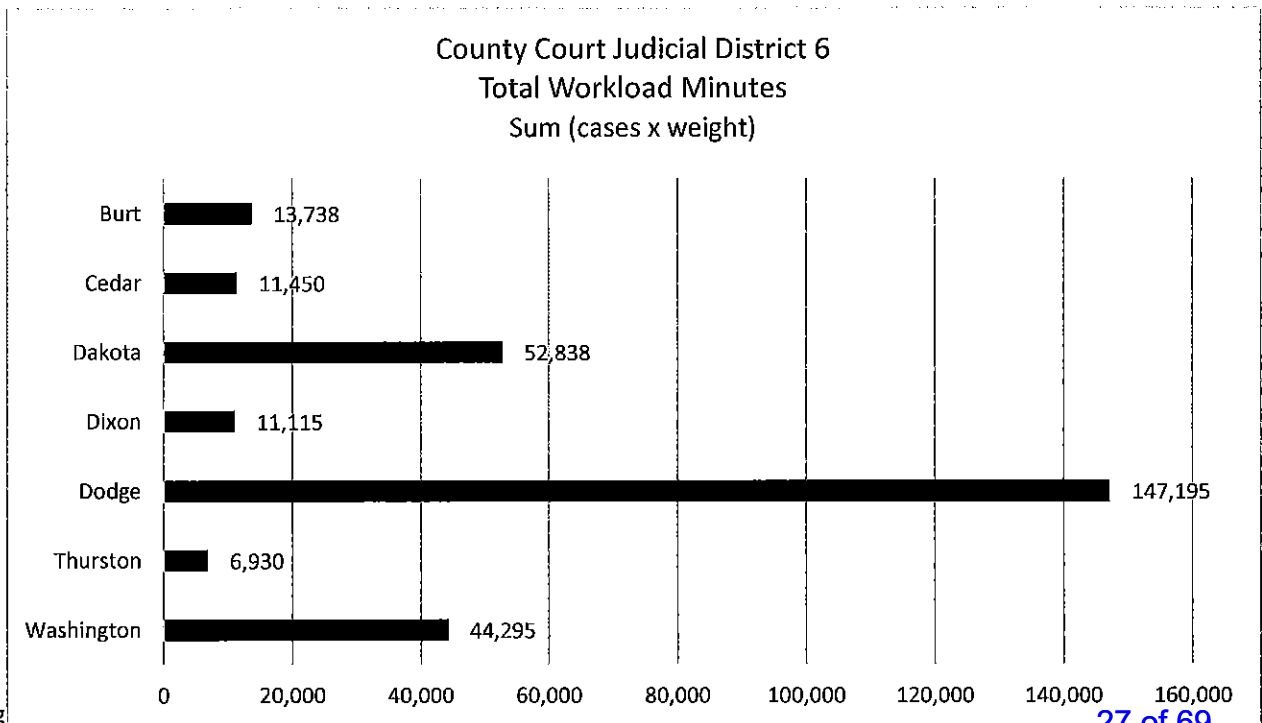
County court need for judges: 3.67  
 Current number of judges: 4  
 Workload per judge: 0.92

Predicted judicial resources need by county



### Judges Serving the 6th District

Barron  
 S. Bauer  
 Klein  
 Matney

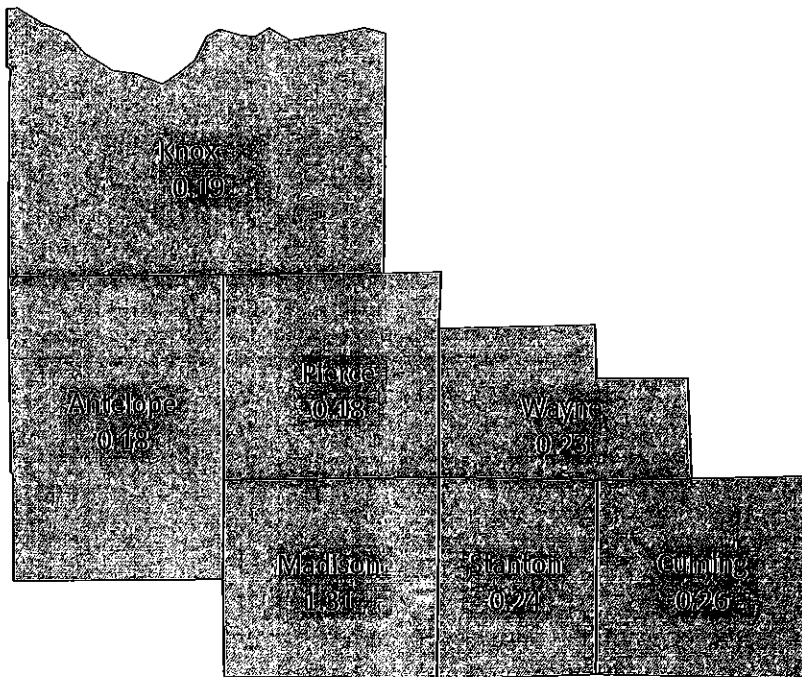


# Weighted Caseload Report

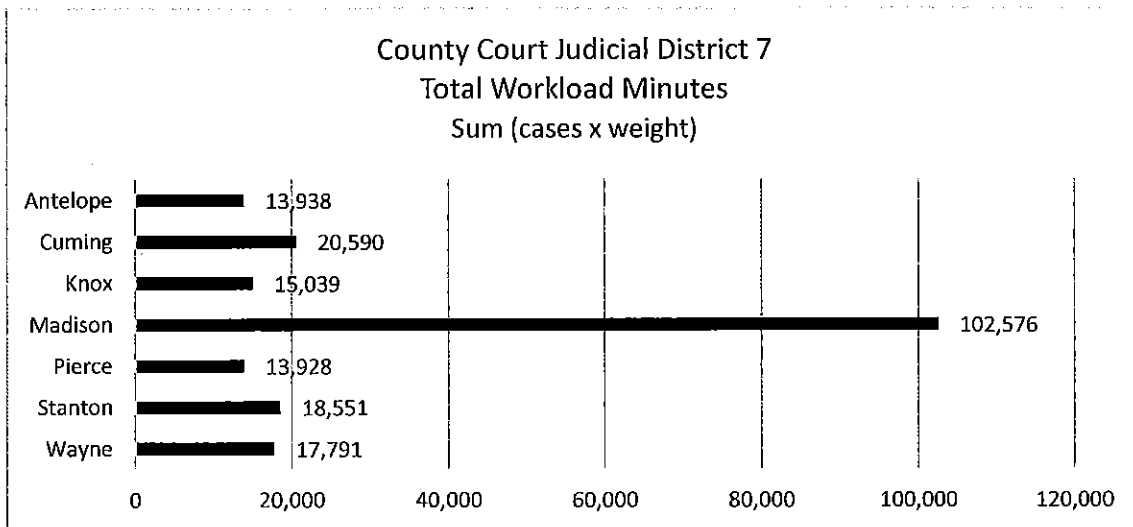
## 7<sup>th</sup> Judicial District – County Court

County court need for judges: 2.59  
 Current number of judges: 3  
 Workload per judge: 0.86

Predicted judicial resources need by county



Judges Serving the 7th District  
 Vacant (Long)  
 Stoffer  
 Taylor



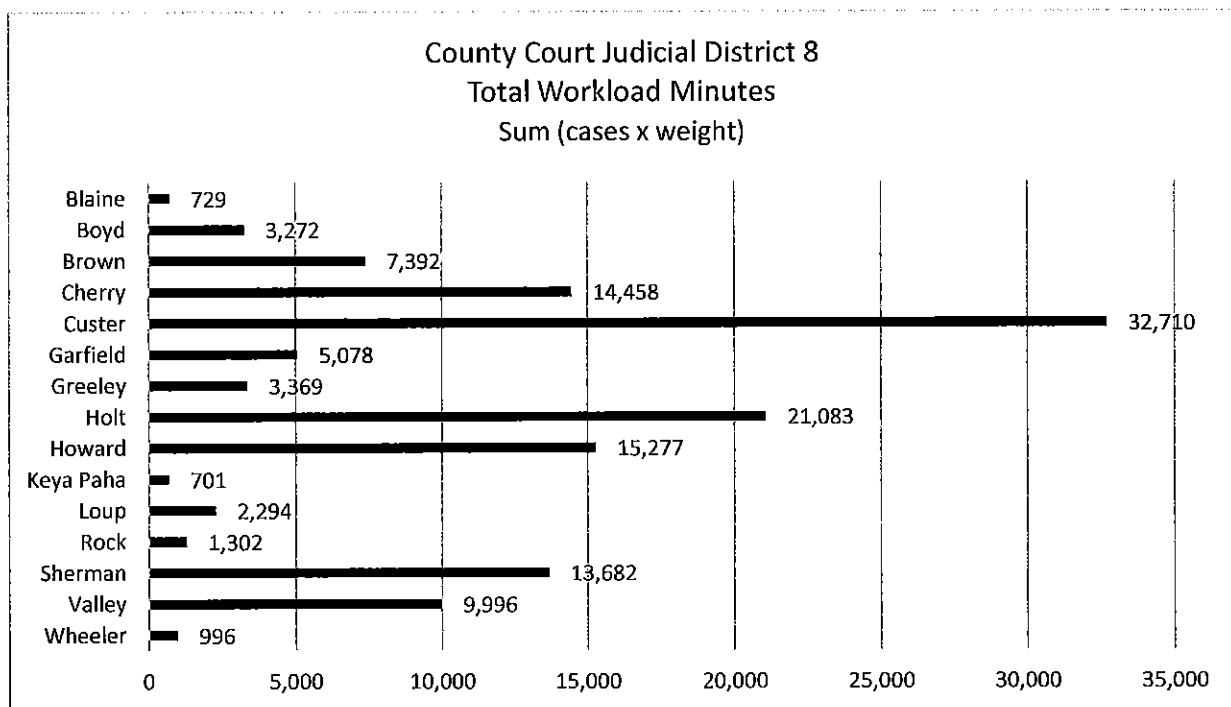
# Weighted Caseload Report

## 8<sup>th</sup> Judicial District – County Court

County court need for judges: 1.83  
 Current number of judges: 3  
 Workload per judge: 0.61

Predicted judicial resources need by county

Judges Serving the 8th District			
Cherry	0.20	Keya Paha	0.01
Brown	0.10	Rock	0.02
Blaine	0.01	Loup	0.03
Custer	0.45	Garfield	0.07
Boyd	0.05	Valley	0.14
Holt	0.29	Sherman	0.19
Wheeler	0.01	Howard	0.21
Greeley	0.05		

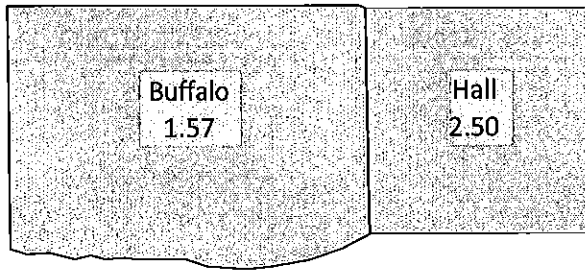


# Weighted Caseload Report

## 9<sup>th</sup> Judicial District – County Court

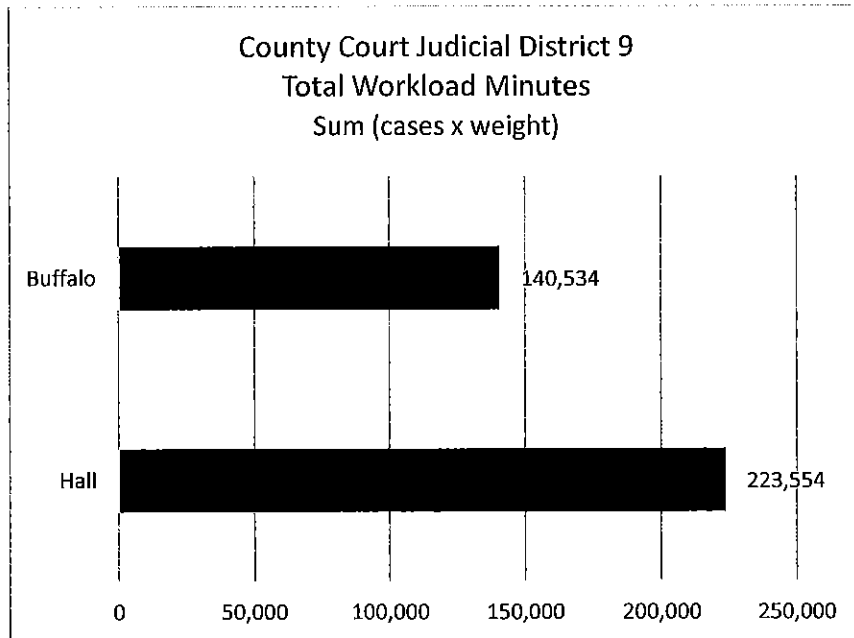
County court need for judges: 4.07  
Current number of judges: 5  
Workload per judge: 0.81

Predicted judicial resources need by county



### Judges Serving the 9th District

Corey  
Jorgensen  
McQuay  
Rademacher  
Wetzel



# Weighted Caseload Report

## 10<sup>th</sup> Judicial District – County Court

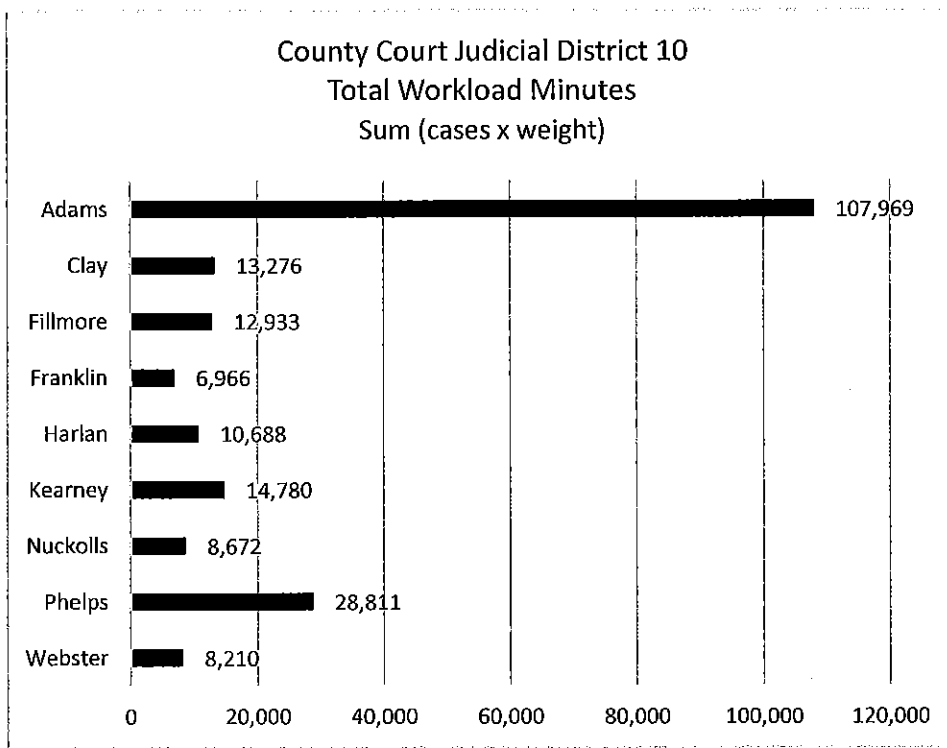
County court need for judges: 2.71  
 Current number of judges: 3  
 Workload per judge: 0.90

Predicted judicial resources need by county

Judges Serving the 10th District

Burns  
 Mead  
 Nelsen-Pacey (Hoeft)

Phelps 0.37	Kearney 0.19	Adams 1.38	Clay 0.17	Fillmore 0.16
Harlan 0.14	Franklin 0.09	Webster 0.10	Nuckolls 0.11	

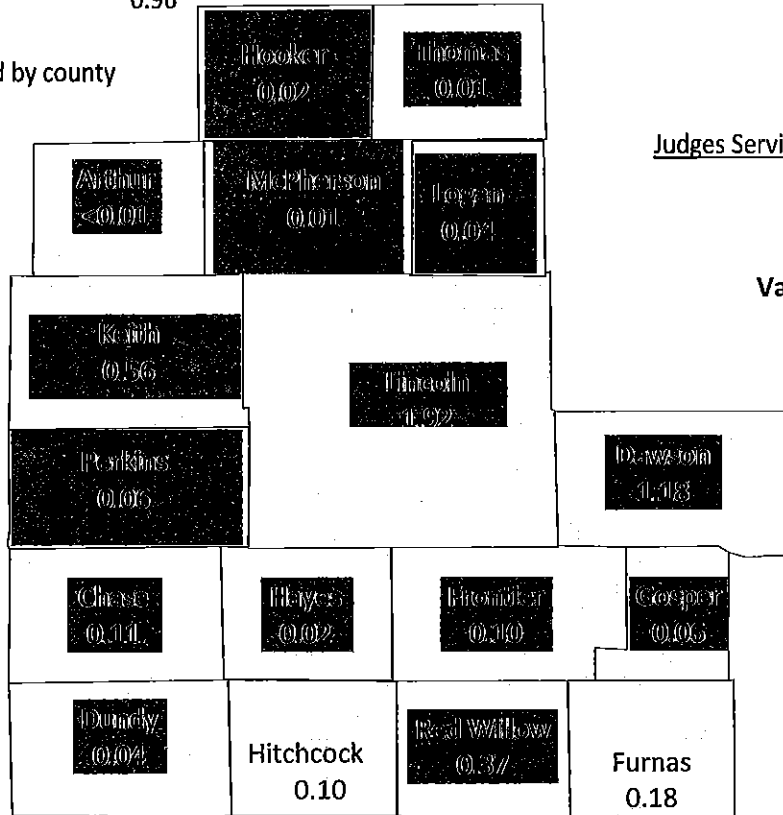


# Weighted Caseload Report

## 11<sup>th</sup> Judicial District – County Court

County court need for judges: 4.78  
 Current number of judges: 5  
 Workload per judge: 0.96

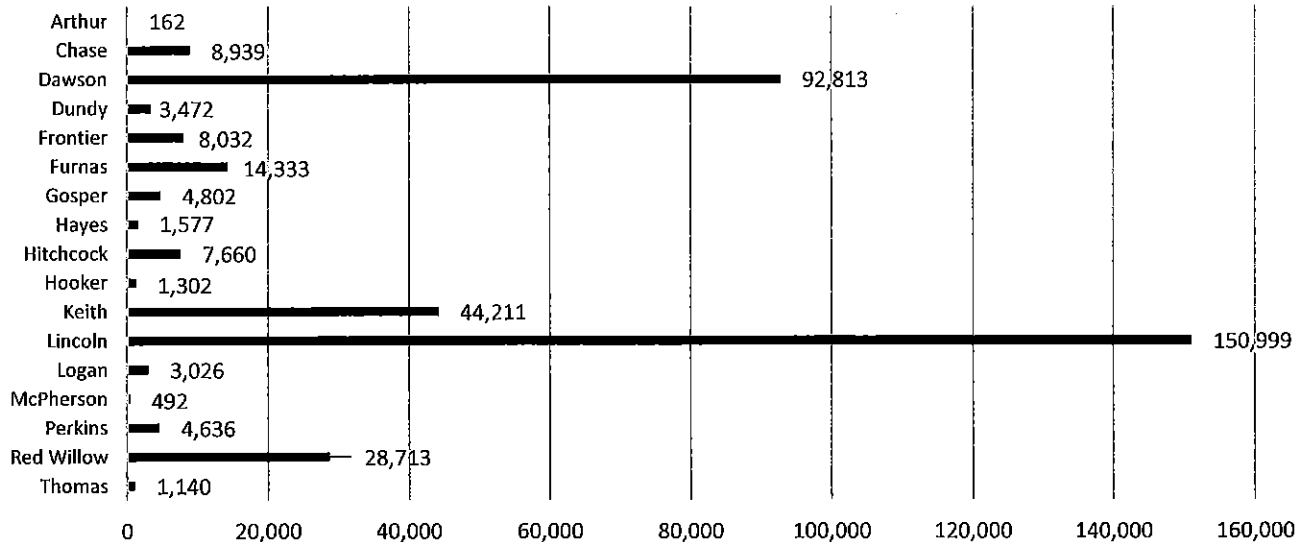
Predicted judicial resources need by county



Judges Serving the 11th District

- Jay
- Paine
- Roberts-Connick
- Vacant (Steenburg)
- Wightman

County Court Judicial District 11  
 Total Workload Minutes  
 Sum (cases x weight)

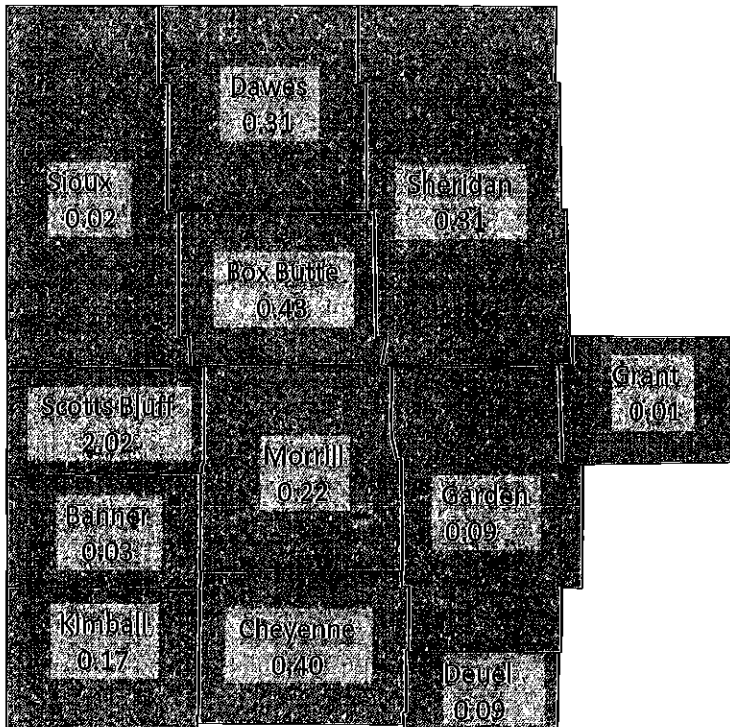


# Weighted Caseload Report

## 12<sup>th</sup> Judicial District – County Court

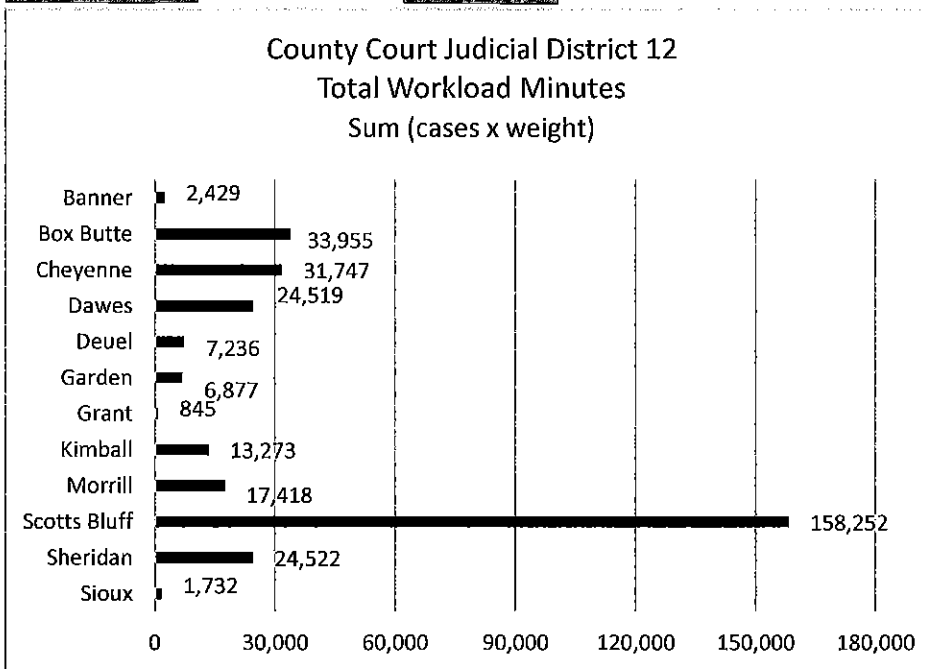
County court need for judges: 4.10  
 Current number of judges: 5  
 Workload per judge: 0.82

Predicted judicial resources need by county



### Judges Serving the 12th District

- Conn
- Mickey
- Roland
- Wess
- Worden



# Weighted Caseload Report

## Court Case Type Categories and Weights – Appendix

District Court Case Types	Case Weight* (minutes)
Problem Solving Court Cases	683
Protection Orders	32
Civil	219
Class I Felony	367
Other Criminal	149
Domestic Relations	97
Appeals	343
Administrative Appeals	540
County Court Case Types	Case Weight* (minutes)
Protection Orders	32
Felony	26
Misdemeanor	23
District Court: Adult Problem-Solving Court	683
Traffic	1
Civil	8
Probate	61
Guardianship/Conservatorship	133
Small Claims	30
Adoption	92
Domestic Relations	97
Juvenile: 3A Children	487
Juvenile: Delinquency	100
Juvenile: Status Offender 3B	37
Juvenile: Mentally Ill and Dangerous 3C	265
Juvenile: Bridge to Independence (B21)	58
Juvenile: Interstate Compact Hearings/Filings	2
Juvenile: Problem-Solving Court Cases	654
Separate Juvenile Court Case Types	Case Weight* (minutes)
Adoption	49
Domestic Relations	26
Juvenile: 3A Children	487
Delinquency	136
Status Offender 3B	54
Mentally Ill and Dangerous 3C	265
Bridge to Independence B21	36
Interstate Compact Hearing/Filings	2
Problem Solving Court Cases	654



## **Research and Data**

**Operations Division**

**Administrative Office of the Courts & Probation**

**Chief Standing Bear Justice Administration Building**

**521 S. 14th Street Suite 300 | Lincoln, NE 68508**

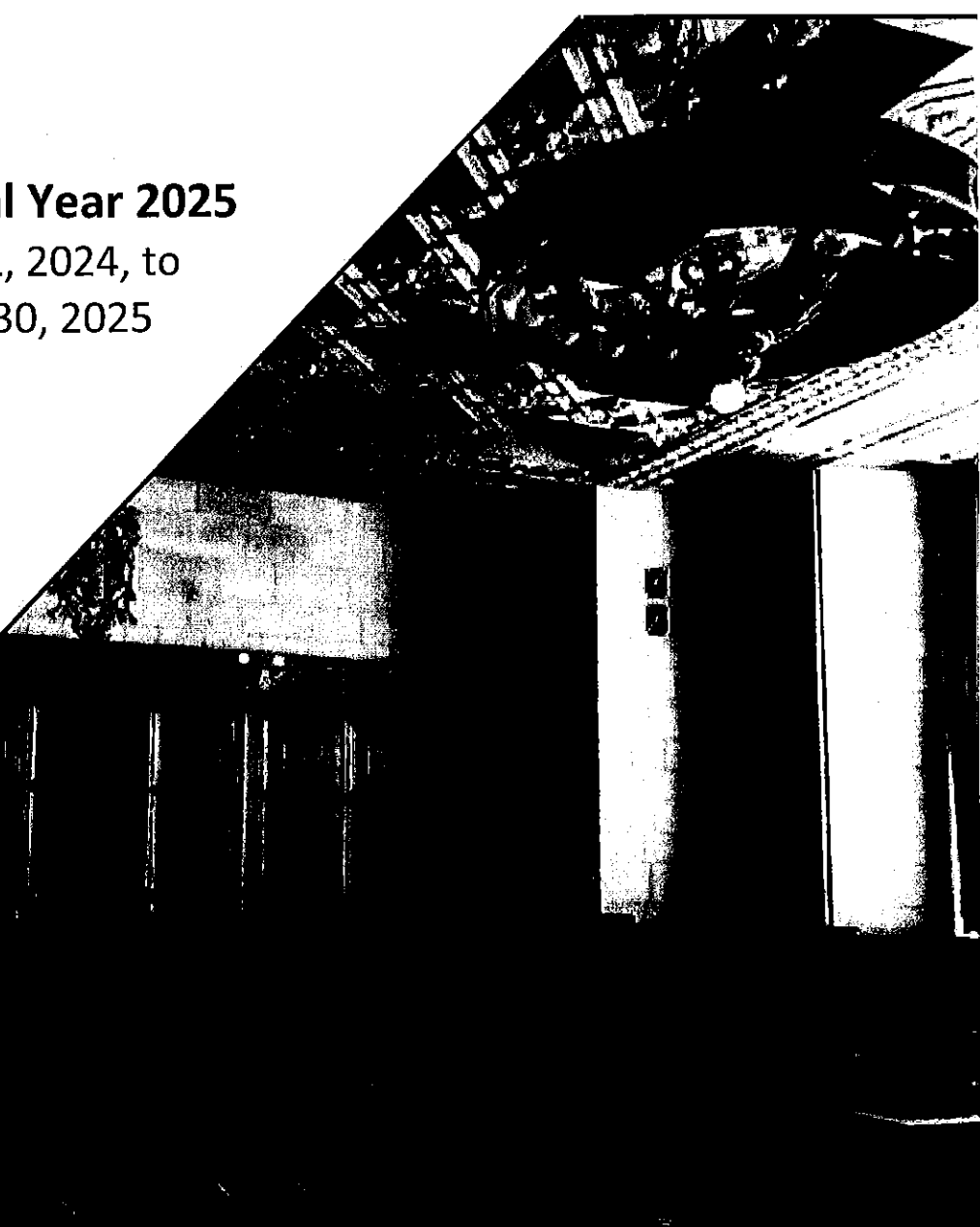
**T 531.739.8100 | F 402.471.2197**

# District Courts

## Weighted Caseload Report



**Fiscal Year 2025**  
July 1, 2024, to  
June 30, 2025



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# Weighted Caseload Report

## Nebraska District Courts Weighted Caseload Report

Nebraska has a district court in each of its 93 counties, organized into 12 Judicial Districts. Pursuant to Neb. Rev. Stat. § 24-301.02, the Legislature determines the number of district court judges who serve in each judicial district, and the geographic boundaries of each judicial district. An objective assessment of judicial workload allows informed decisions about district boundaries and the number of judges needed to timely resolve the cases in each judicial district.

To assist in evaluating judicial workloads, Neb. Rev. Stat. § 24-1007(1) requires the Nebraska Administrative Office of the Courts and Probation (AOC) to compile judicial workload statistics based on caseloads weighted by category of case. These weighted caseload statistics are used by the Judicial Branch, the Judicial Resources Commission, and the Legislature to evaluate judicial need, and guide decisions and recommendations on how best to allocate judicial resources across the state.

To ensure the validity, uniformity and accuracy of the AOC's judicial workload statistics, a statewide judicial time study was conducted in 2019-2020 under the direction and leadership of the National Center for State Courts. For a full description of the judicial time study and the recommended weighting methodology and standards, see *Nebraska Judicial Workload Assessment Final Report (October 2020)* (this is noted on tables in this report with an asterisk) on the Nebraska Supreme Court Website. Because this Weighted Caseload Report uses the methodology and standards from the 2020 workload assessment, direct comparison to archived reports is not recommended.

Weighted caseload statistics approximate the number of judges a district needs to handle the current caseload based upon the calculations of a three-year rolling average of case filing data. Therefore, when weighted caseload statistics are examined in conjunction with other compelling and critical metrics, they provide a vital part of an objective and standardized assessment of judicial needs and the fair allocation of judicial resources across juvenile courts in the State of Nebraska.

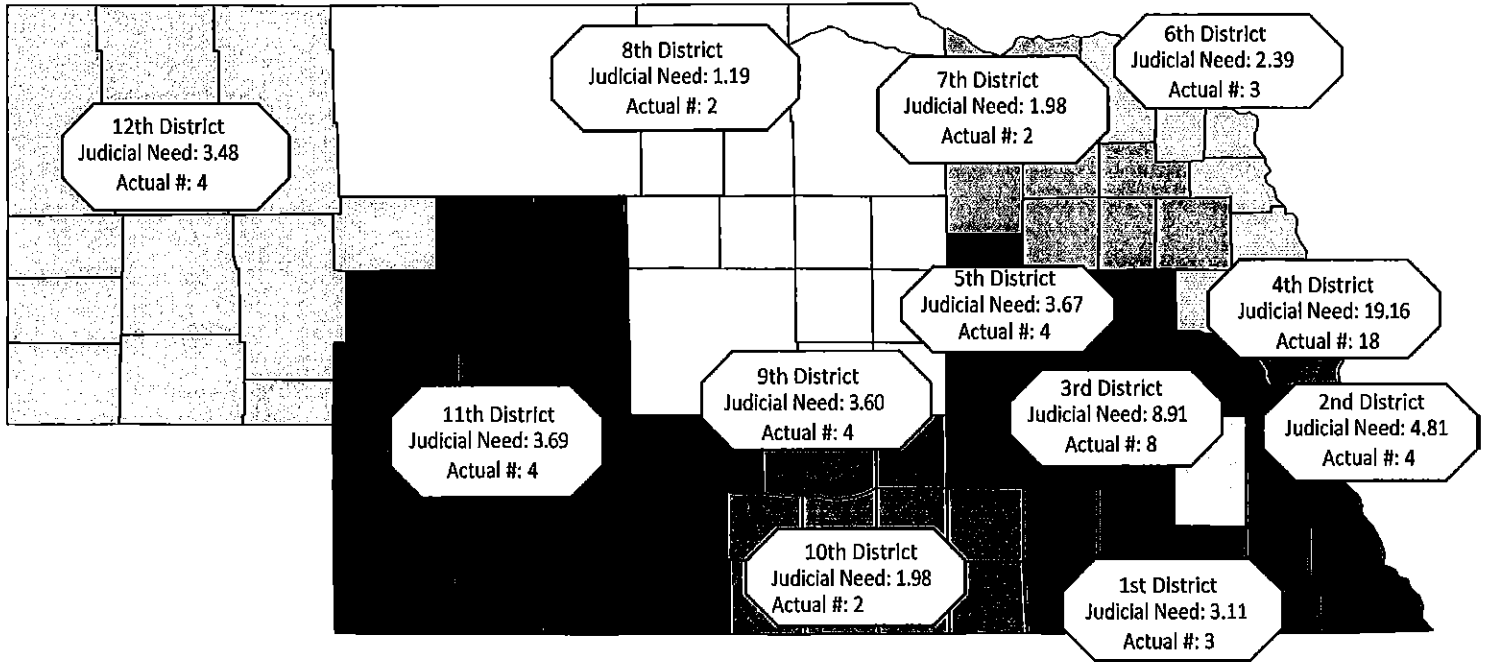


**Corey R. Steel**  
**Nebraska State Court Administrator**  
**Nebraska Supreme Court**  
**Administrative Office of the Courts & Probation**  
Rm. 1211 State Capitol | P.O. Box 98910 | Lincoln, NE 68509  
T 402.471.3730 | F 402.471.2197  
[www.supremecourt.nebraska.gov](http://www.supremecourt.nebraska.gov)

# Weighted Caseload Report

## Nebraska District Court Judicial Needs

Fiscal Year 2025 (July 1, 2024 – June 30, 2025)



Note: Differences between the total District Court Need for Judges and the sum of individual counties is due to rounding to the nearest one-hundredth.

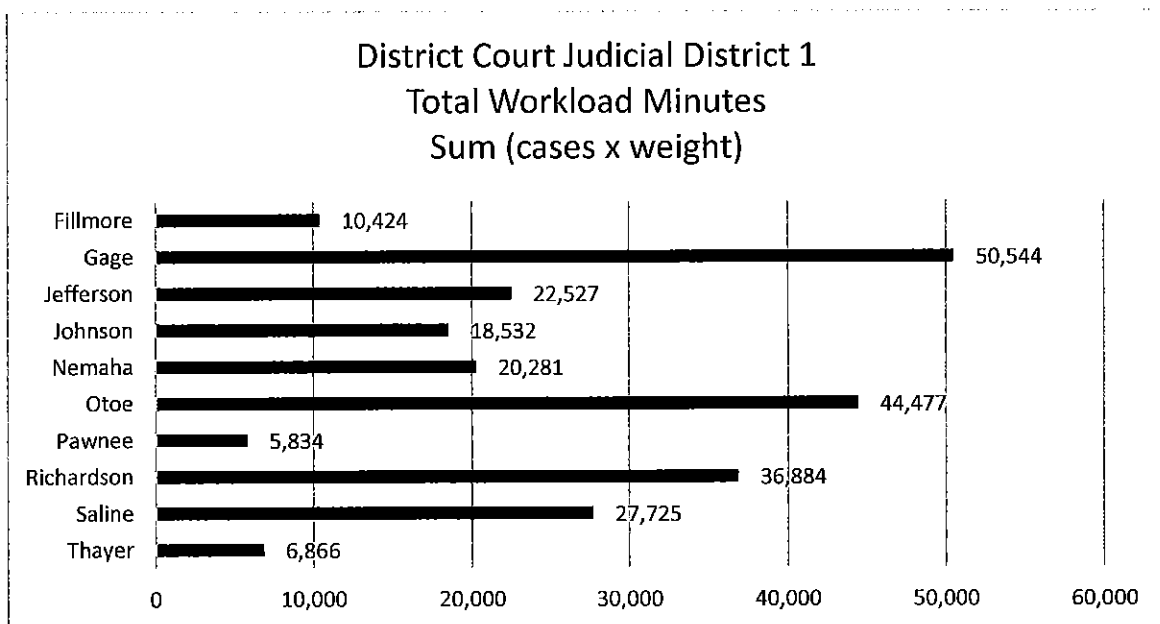
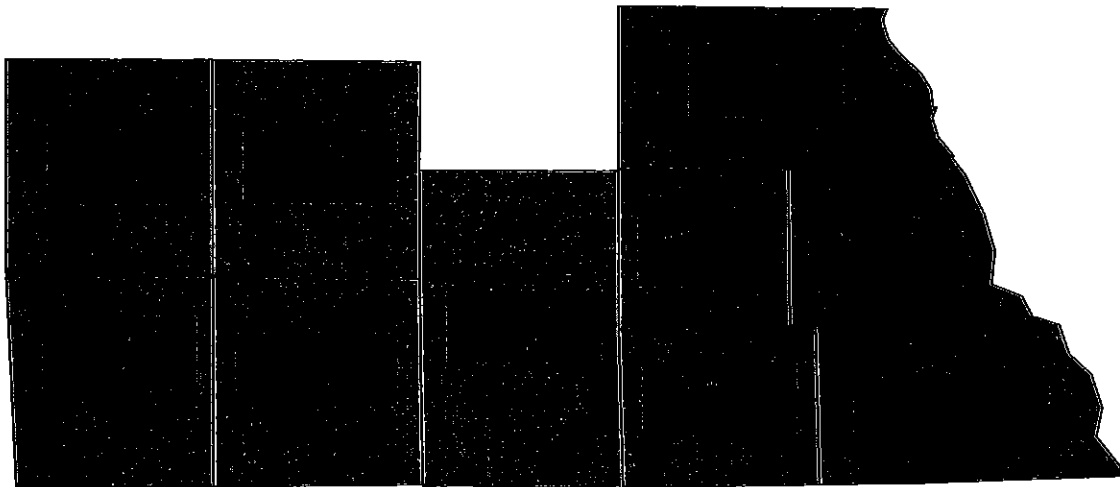
# Weighted Caseload Report

## 1<sup>st</sup> Judicial District – District Court

District court need for judges: 3.11  
 Current number of judges: 3  
 Workload per judge: 1.04  
 Predicted judicial resources need by county

### Judges Serving the 1st District

Bargen  
 Schreiner  
 J. Smith

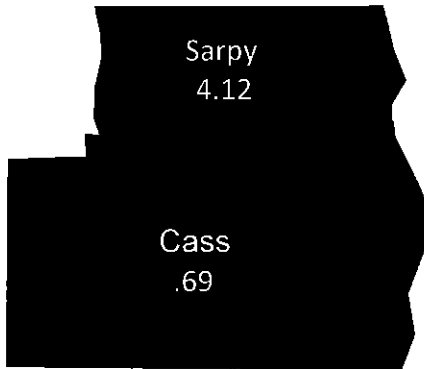


# Weighted Caseload Report

## 2<sup>nd</sup> Judicial District – District Court

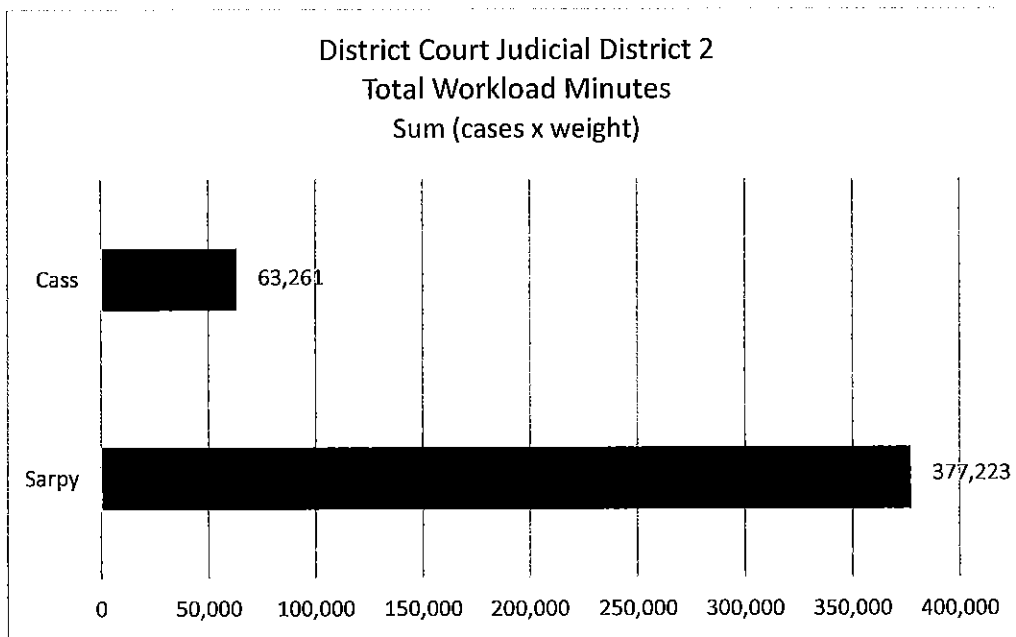
District court need for judges: 4.81  
Current number of judges: 4  
Workload per judge: 1.20

### Predicted judicial resources need by county



### Judges Serving the 2nd District

Cox  
Martinez  
M. Smith  
Thompson

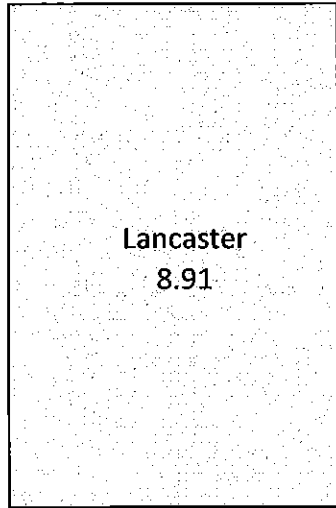


# Weighted Caseload Report

## 3<sup>rd</sup> Judicial District – District Court

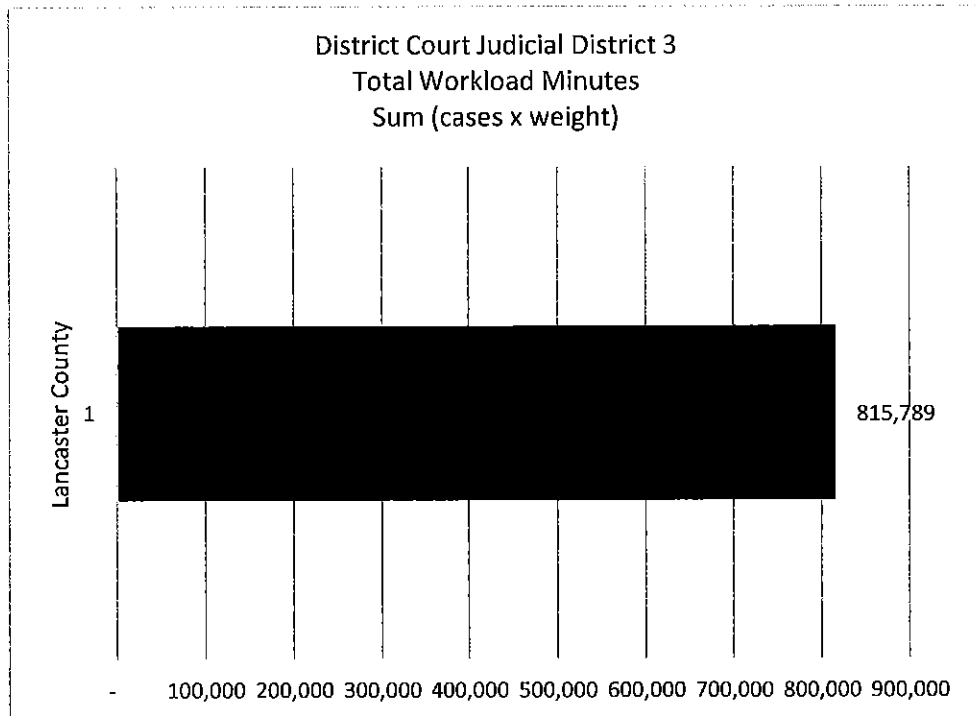
District court need for judges: 8.91  
 Current number of judges: 8  
 Workload per judge: 1.11

### Predicted judicial resources need by county



### Judges Serving the 3rd District

- Ideus
- Jacobsen
- Maret
- McManaman
- Mellor
- Nelson
- Post
- Strong

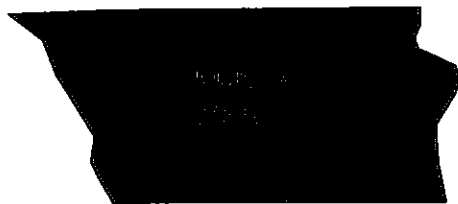


# Weighted Caseload Report

## 4<sup>th</sup> Judicial District – District Court

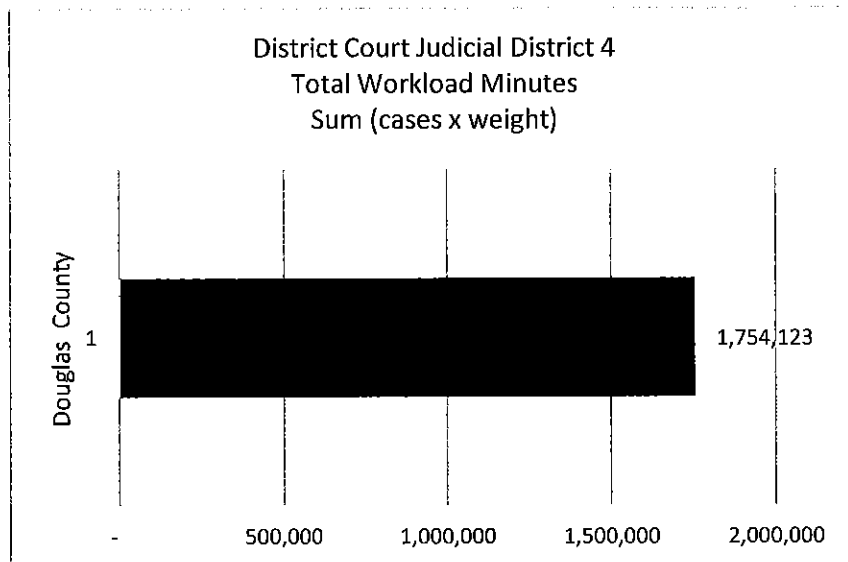
District court need for judges: 19.16  
 Current number of judges: 18  
 Workload per judge: 1.06

### Predicted judicial resources need by county



### Judges Serving the 4th District

- Alioth**
- Bataillon**
- Benson**
- T. Burns**
- Derr**
- Dougherty**
- Engleman**
- Keane**
- Lindberg (Bowie)**
- Lux**
- Masteller**
- Miller Pankonin**
- Polk**
- Vacant (Retelsdorf)**
- Srb**
- Stratman**
- Vaughn**
- Wheelock**

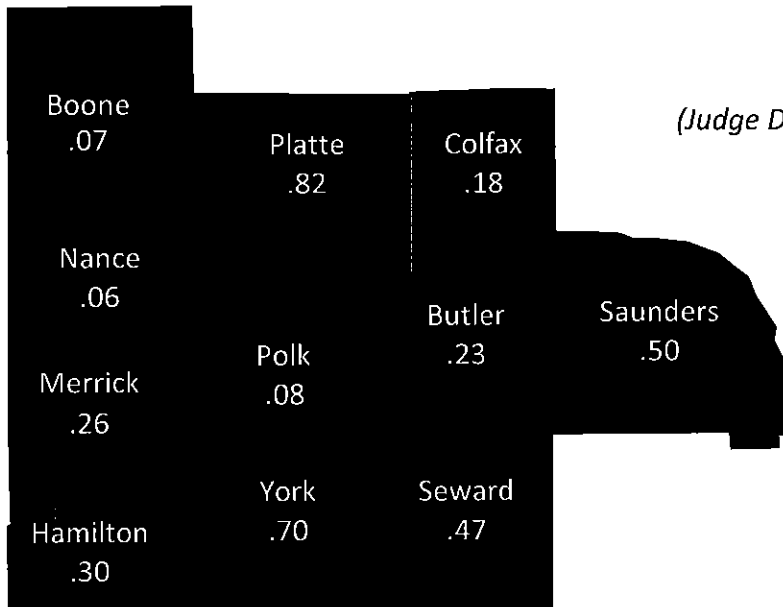


# Weighted Caseload Report

## 5<sup>th</sup> Judicial District - District Court

District court need for judges: 3.67  
 Current number of judges: 4  
 Workload per judge: 0.92

### Predicted judicial resources need by county

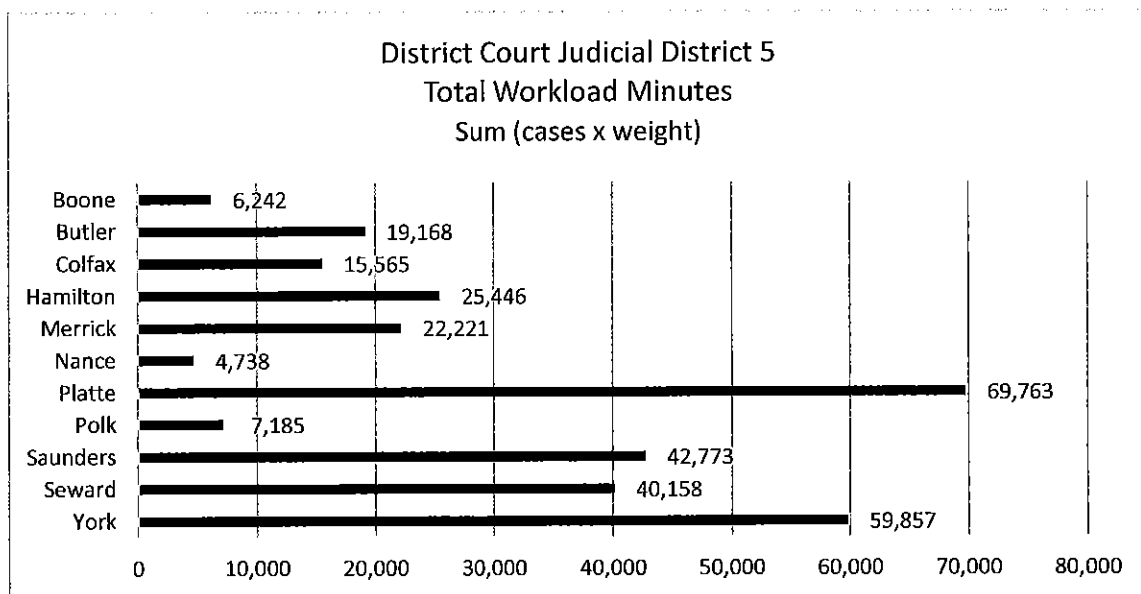


### Judges Serving the 5th District

**Vacant\***

*(Judge Doele was sworn in July 17<sup>th</sup>, 2025 – after caseloads were calculated)*

**Daugherty**  
**Marroquin**  
**Stecker**

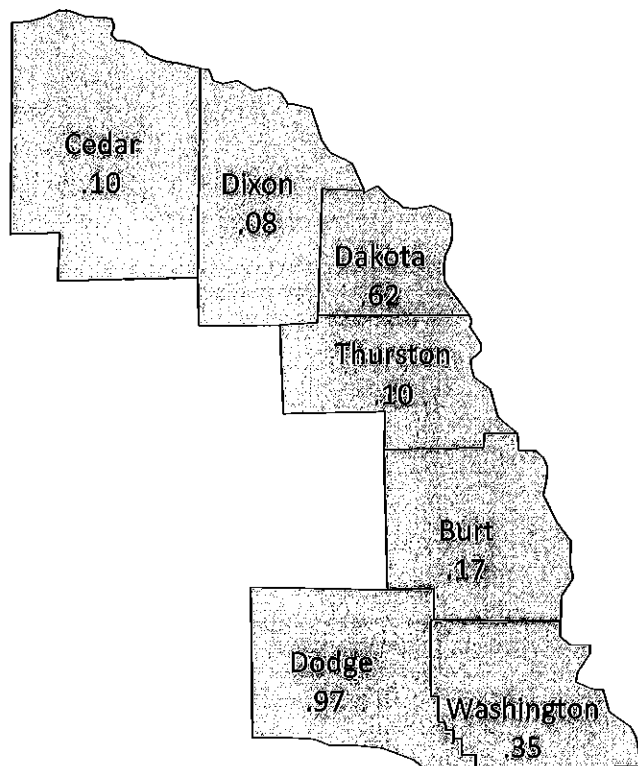


# Weighted Caseload Report

## 6<sup>th</sup> Judicial District – District Court

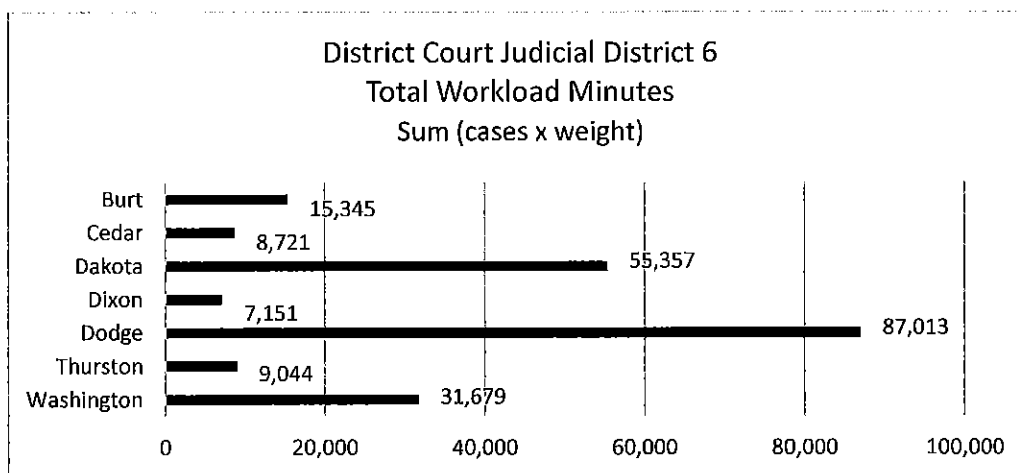
District court need for judges: 2.39  
Current number of judges: 3  
Workload per judge: 0.80

### Predicted judicial resources need by county



### Judges Serving the 6th District

Hall  
Meismer  
Blackman

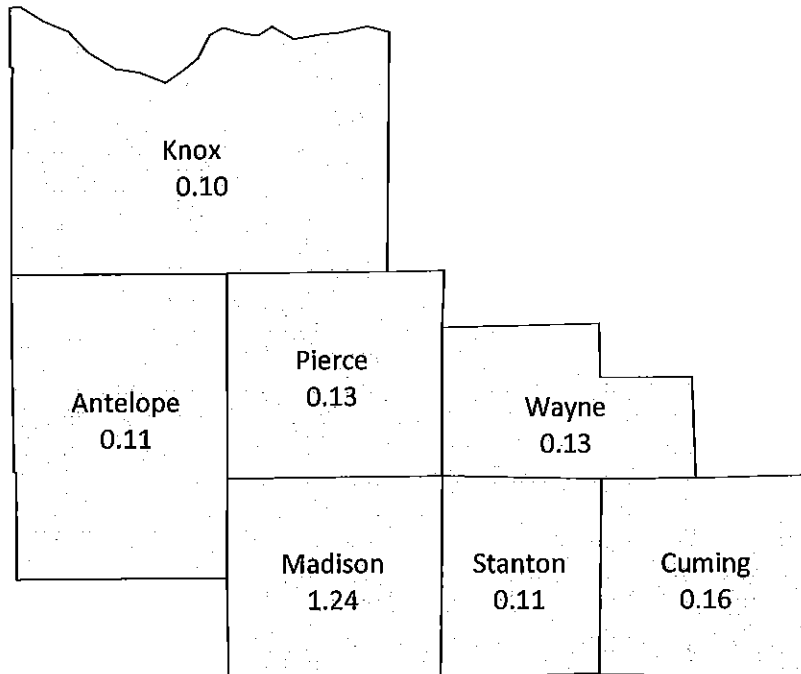


# Weighted Caseload Report

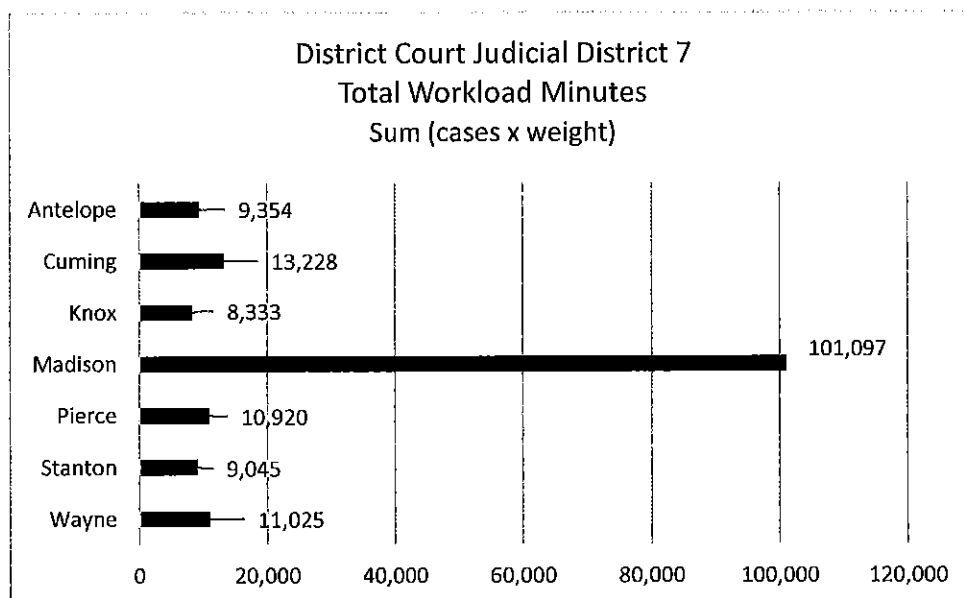
## 7<sup>th</sup> Judicial District – District Court

District court need for judges: 1.98  
Current number of judges: 2  
Workload per judge: 0.99

### Predicted judicial resources need by county



Judges Serving the 7th District  
**Long (Johnson)**  
**Kube**



# Weighted Caseload Report

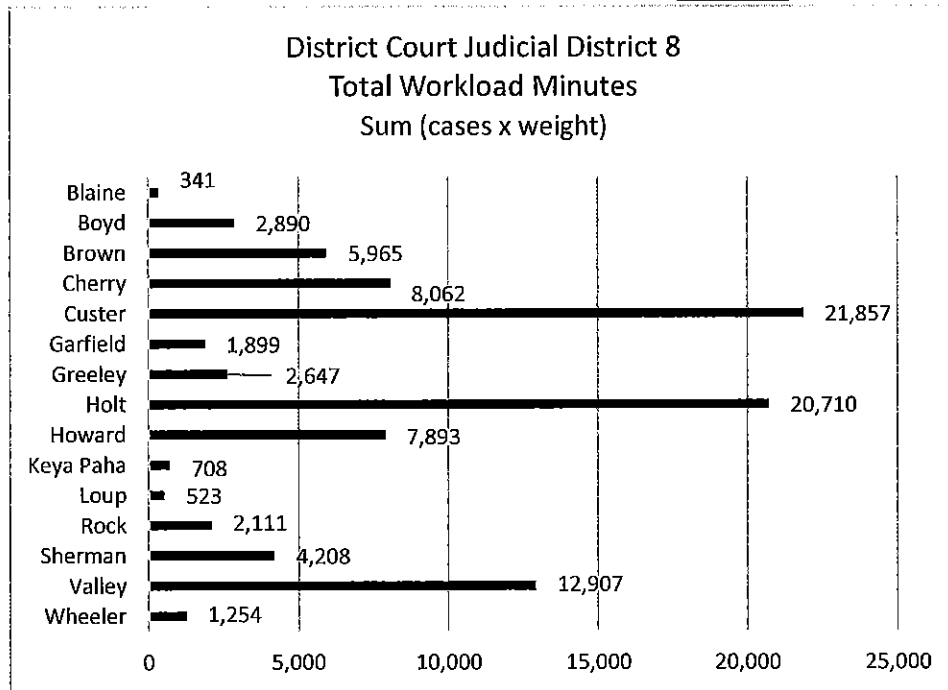
## 8<sup>th</sup> Judicial District – District Court

District court need for judges: 1.19  
 Current number of judges: 2  
 Workload per judge: 0.60

### Predicted judicial resources need by county

#### Judges Serving the 8th District

Cherry .10	Keya Paha .01		Boyd .04		Kozisek Noakes
	Brown .08	Rock .03	Holt .26		
	Blaine <.01	Loup .01	Garfield .02	Wheeler .02	
	Custer .28		Valley .16	Greeley .03	
			Sherman .05	Howard .10	



# Weighted Caseload Report

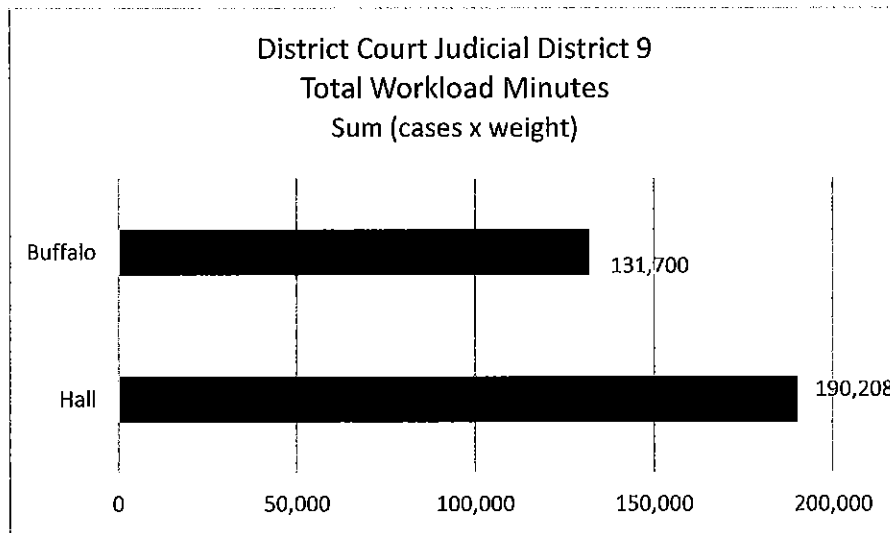
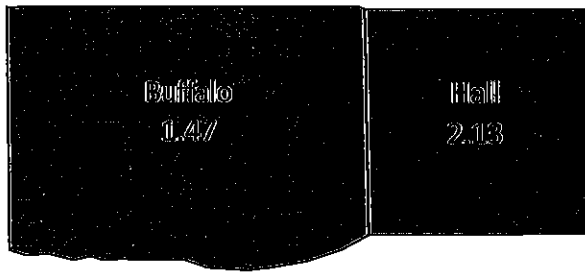
## 9<sup>th</sup> Judicial District – District Court

District court need for judges: 3.60  
Current number of judges: 4  
Workload per judge: 0.90

### Predicted judicial resources need by county

### Judges Serving the 9th District

**Butler**  
**Lee**  
**Marsh**  
**Ramsey (Carson)**



# Weighted Caseload Report

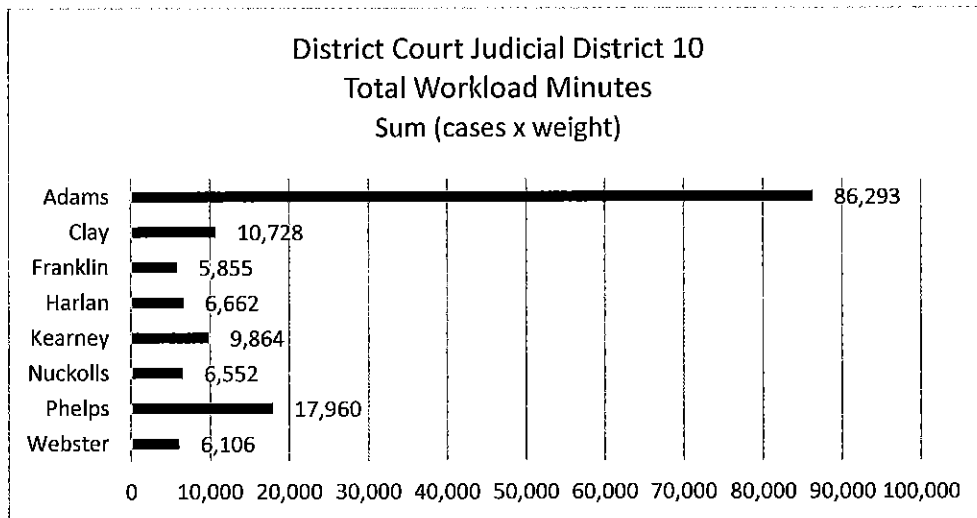
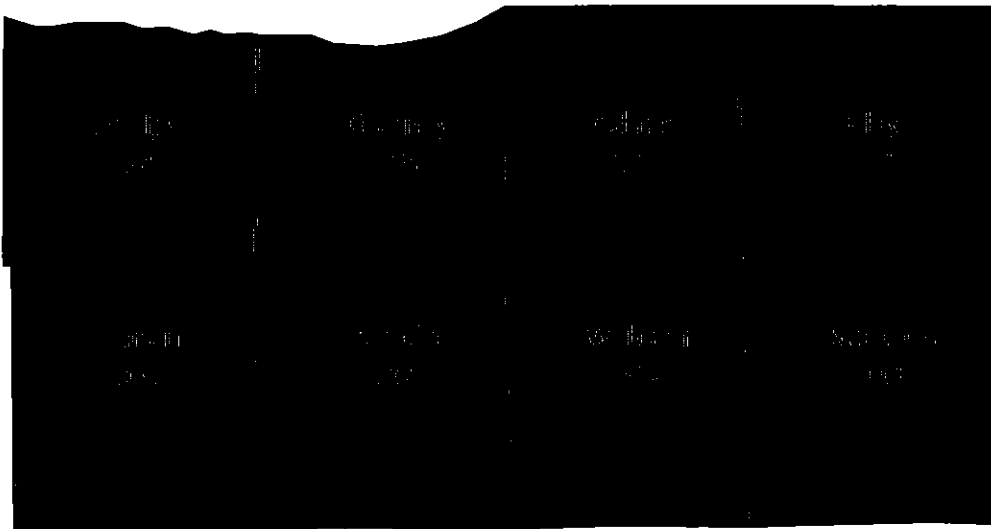
## 10<sup>th</sup> Judicial District – District Court

District court need for judges: 1.98  
 Current number of judges: 2  
 Workload per judge: 0.99

### Predicted judicial resources need by county

#### Judges Serving the 10th District

Farquhar  
 Hoeft



# Weighted Caseload Report

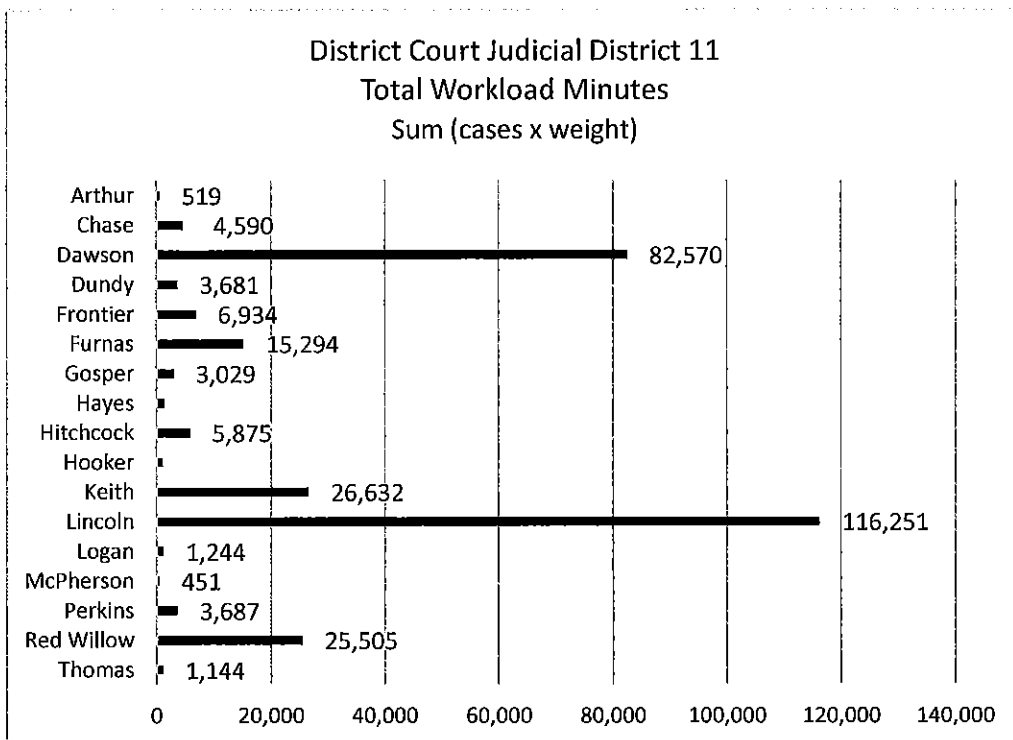
## 11<sup>th</sup> Judicial District – District Court

District court need for judges: 3.69  
 Current number of judges: 4  
 Workload per judge: 0.92  
 Predicted judicial resources need by county



### Judges Serving the 11th District

Heng  
 Vacant (Neher)  
 Piccolo  
 Volkmer

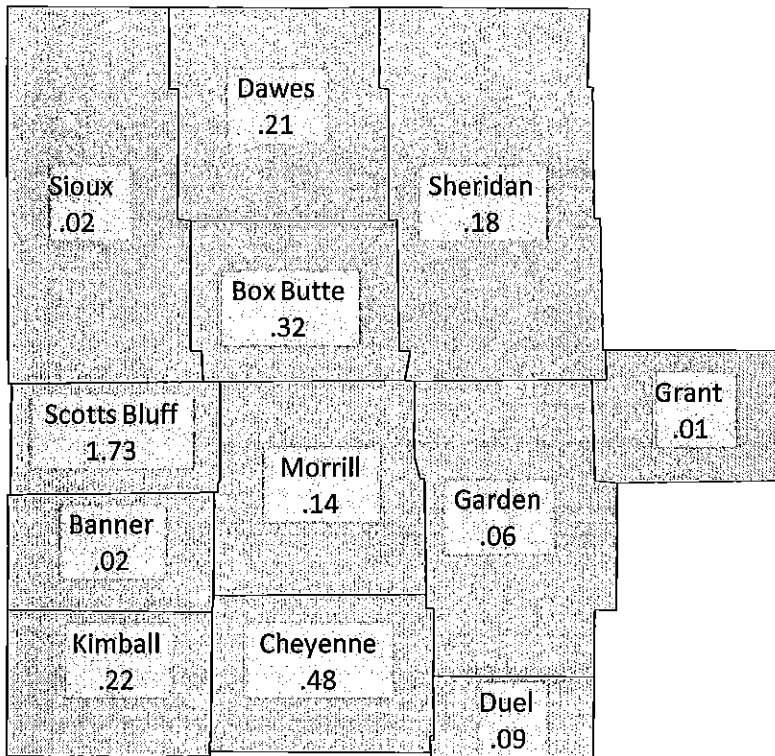


# Weighted Caseload Report

## 12<sup>th</sup> Judicial District – District Court

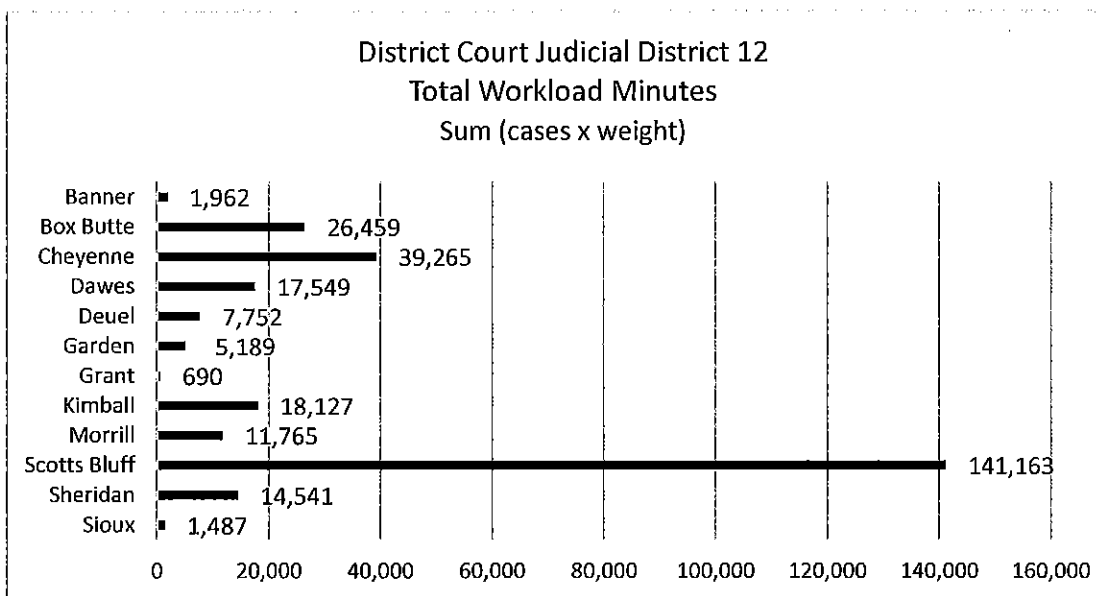
District court need for judges: 3.48  
 Current number of judges: 4  
 Workload per judge: 0.87

### Predicted judicial resources need by county



### Judges Serving the 12th District

**Dobrovlny**  
**Miller**  
**O’Gorman**  
**Weimer**



# Weighted Caseload Report

## Court Case Type Categories and Weights – Appendix

District Court Case Types	Case Weight* (minutes)
Problem Solving Court Cases	683
Protection Orders	32
Civil	219
Class I Felony	367
Other Criminal	149
Domestic Relations	97
Appeals	343
Administrative Appeals	540
County Court Case Types	Case Weight* (minutes)
Protection Orders	32
Felony	26
Misdemeanor	23
District Court: Adult Problem-Solving Court	683
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Domestic Relations	97
Juvenile: 3A Children	487
Juvenile: Delinquency	100
Juvenile: Status Offender 3B	37
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Juvenile: Bridge to Independence (B21)	58
Juvenile: Interstate Compact Hearings/Filings	2
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Separate Juvenile Court Case Types	Case Weight* (minutes)
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Domestic Relations	26
Juvenile: 3A Children	487
Delinquency	136
Status Offender 3B	54
Mentally Ill and Dangerous 3C	265
Bridge to Independence B21	36
Interstate Compact Hearing/Filings	2
Problem Solving Court Cases	654



## **Research and Data**

**Operations Division**

**Administrative Office of the Courts & Probation  
Chief Standing Bear Justice Administration Building**

**521 S. 14th Street Suite 300 | Lincoln, NE 68508**

**T 531.739.8100 | F 402.471.2197**



State of Nebraska  
**District Court of Nebraska**  
 Fourth Judicial District

JUDGE LEANNE M. SRB  
 HALL OF JUSTICE  
 OMAHA, NEBRASKA 68103-0410  
 402-444-6936  
 FAX 402-996-6010

AMANDA VODVARKA  
 BAILIFF

MARY MOKEVER RPR, CRR  
 STENOGRAPHER

November 10, 2025

Judicial Resources Commission  
 c/o Kara Nielsen  
 State Capital Building  
 P.O. Box 98910  
 Lincoln, NE 68509  
 Kara.nielsen@nejudicial.gov

RE: Request to Declare Judicial Vacancy

Dear Justice John R. Freudenberg and Members of the Commission:

Please accept this letter as written testimony in support of the request of the Judges of the Fourth Judicial District Court that the Judicial Resources Commission determine the existence of a judicial vacancy in the District Court of the Fourth Judicial District. The vacancy is due to Judge Derek R. Vaughn being appointed to the Nebraska Supreme Court effective November 2025. The Judges are requesting that the Judicial Resource Commission add this issue to its Friday, November 21, 2025 annual meeting agenda.

When a Judge is appointed to another bench, other District Judges manage that Judge's cases, in addition to their own cases, until the Judicial Resources Commission declares a vacancy and a Judge is appointed.

Additionally, the 2024 Nebraska Judicial Branch Weighted Caseload Report concluded this District Court has a need for **18.96 judges**. The 2024 Annual Fiscal Year Caseload Report for the Fourth Judicial District Court reflects the existence of over 12,300 cases filed for the 2024 fiscal year. These numbers reflect the trend this judicial district is experiencing in attaining pre-COVID level case filings. By category for fiscal year, 2024 are as follows:

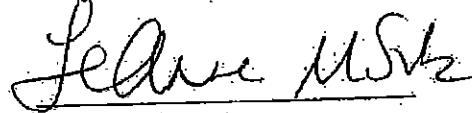
Criminal Felony Class 1:	491
Criminal Other:	8,355
Problem Solving Court:	185
Domestic Relations:	8,760
Protection Orders:	2,344
Civil:	2,094
Appellate Action:	61
Administrative Appeals:	14
<b>TOTAL CASES:</b>	<b>12,304</b>

Accordingly, the Judges of the Fourth Judicial District Court respectfully request that the Judicial Resources Commission declare that a judicial vacancy exists in the District Court of the Fourth Judicial District due to the appointment of Judge Derek R Vaughn to the Nebraska Supreme Court.

Please accept this letter as submitted testimony from the District Court of the Fourth Judicial District in support of declaring a vacancy.

Thank you for your consideration. Please do not hesitate to contact me should you have any questions.

Very Sincerely Yours,



LeAnne M. Srb  
Presiding Judge  
Fourth Judicial District

CC: Judge Peter C. Bataillon  
Judge J. Russell Derr  
Judge Marlon A. Polk  
Judge Timothy P. Burns  
Judge Duane C. Dougherty  
Judge Kimberly Miller Pankonin  
Judge Shelly R. Stratman  
Judge Horacio J. Wheelock  
Judge James M. Mastellar  
Judge Tressa M. Alioth  
Judge T. Olon Engleman  
Judge Jeffrey J. Lux  
Judge Molly B. Keane  
Judge Katie L. Benson  
Judge Ryan M. Lindberg  
Sheri Larsen, Douglas County District Court Administrator

**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

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

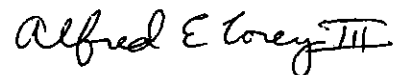
Reviewing the most recent annual caseload reports, adult case numbers in the Ninth District are rising and are more than 2,600 in the fiscal year 2025 compared to the fiscal year 2020. Of that total of 21,659 for the fiscal year 2025, Hall County has over 13,600 of those cases. While juvenile cases numbers 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,



Alfred E. Corey III  
Hall County Court Judge

# Nebraska State Bar Association

*"Helping lawyers help people"*



February 9, 2026

Hon. John R. Freudenberg  
Nebraska Supreme Court  
State Capitol, #2210  
Lincoln, NE 68509

Dear Justice Freudenberg:

On behalf of the NSBA Judicial Resources Committee ("the Committee"), I wish to convey to the members of the Judicial Resources Commission our recommendation regarding the vacancies being taken up by the Judicial Resources Commission at their February 13, 2026, hearing.

After reviewing the Judicial Weighted Caseload Reports ("Judicial Workload Assessment") for FY 2025, the Committee concluded that the State's justice system will not have adequate judicial resources available unless the current vacancies are filled expeditiously. Therefore, the Committee recommends declaring a vacancy:

1. In the District Court, 3<sup>rd</sup> District with a primary office location in Lancaster County;
2. In the District Court, 4<sup>th</sup> District with a primary office location in Douglas County;
3. In the County Court, 7<sup>th</sup> District with the primary office location outside of Madison County, to be determined in consultation with the successful applicant;
4. In the County Court, 9<sup>th</sup> District with a primary office location in Hall County; and
5. In the County Court, 12<sup>th</sup> District with a primary office location in Scotts Bluff County.

Thank you for your consideration of the recommendations set forth herein. Please include this letter with the materials provided to Judicial Resources Commission members before your February 13th hearing.

Sincerely,

Hon. John M. Gerrard  
NSBA President

Cc: Corey Steel  
Liz Neeley

COUNTY JUDGES

KRISTEN D MICKEY  
JAMES M WORDEN

CLERK MAGISTRATE  
DIANNE LANA



STATE OF  
**NEBRASKA**  
JUDICIAL BRANCH

SCOTTS BLUFF COUNTY COURT  
TWELFTH JUDICIAL DISTRICT

February 2, 2026

Justice John R. Freudenberg  
Nebraska Supreme Court  
P.O. Box 98910  
Lincoln, NE 68509

Dear Judicial Resources Commission Members:

I have had the honor of serving on the county bench in Scotts Bluff County, in the 12<sup>th</sup> Judicial District for more than 21 years. Over those 21 years I have been a witness to many changes. I handle multiple protection orders every week. A few years ago, local law enforcement decided to use blood tests when investigating driving under the influence. The blood draws often require a warrant signed by a judge in the middle of the night. I have answered that call as many as three times in one week between midnight and 3:00 a.m.

Although our juvenile case load has remained steady, with a few ups and downs, the severity of cases has increased; sexual assault and incest used to be an anomaly. Now, they appear on the docket in Scotts Bluff County with much more frequency.

After I had been on the bench just a few years, my friend Judge Camerer experienced a life changing accident and was never able to return to the bench. For approximately 12 months I was the only judge in Scotts Bluff County. The other judges in the district, and a few from outside the district assisted as they could. However, most days, I was the only judge. I received all the calls for search warrants, I did all the emergency detention hearings and handled the majority of contested cases. I took it as a personal challenge to provide the judicial services the people of Scotts Bluff County deserved. Unfortunately, good intentions don't always carry the day. I found my patience was not what it once was, both at work and with my family. It was a tremendous relief when this commission filled Judge Camerer's position.

Scotts Bluff County is in a unique position geographically as well. There is only one sitting county judge less than an hour's drive and he is approximately 55 minutes. There are a total of 4 county judges within a 2-hour drive of Scotts Bluff County Court. If there is only one Judge in Scott Bluff County and that judge is, for any reason, unable to work for any unusual amount of time, the case load would be extremely difficult, if not impossible, to cover. Finally, a county judge is part of the community he or she serves. Over the years I have become

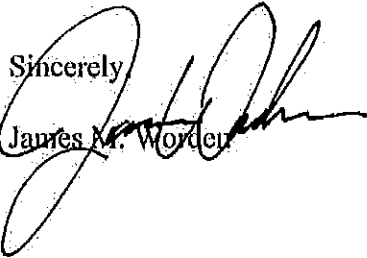
Exhibit 13

SCOTTS BLUFF COUNTY COURT  
1725 10<sup>TH</sup> STREET  
GERING, NE 69341

1 of 2  
60 of 69

familiar with the mental health providers, substance counselors, school administrators, businesses, and churches. Those relationships have helped me in matching people with solutions. It would be hard, if not impossible, for a judge to come here once a week from out of town to develop the same knowledge and relationships.

I'm sure you will have the case numbers at your disposal. It is my hope the information I have provided, when considered with the numbers, will encourage you to find Scotts Bluff County needs 2 county judges.

Sincerely  
  
James M. Worden

STATE OF NEBRASKA  
TWELFTH JUDICIAL DISTRICT  
COUNTY COURTS

February 10, 2026

Justice John R. Freudenberg  
Nebraska Supreme Court  
P.O. Box 98910  
Lincoln, Nebraska 68509  
Emailed to: ashley.jenkins@nejudicial.gov

Dear Justice Freudenberg and Members of the Commission:

Please accept this letter as written testimony in support of the request of the County Judges of the Twelfth Judicial District to declare that a vacancy exists in the office of the County Court, Twelfth Judicial District, due to the retirement of Judge James Worden.

As you are probably aware, the Twelfth Judicial District includes twelve counties: Sheridan, Dawes, Sioux, Grant, Box Butte, Morrill, Scotts Bluff, Banner, Kimball, Cheyenne, Deuel and Garden. The district has for quite some time had five county court judges, two of which were primarily based out of Scotts Bluff County. There was a logical reason for this as a high number of the district's caseload originates in Scotts Bluff County. With Judge Worden's well-deserved retirement comes the specter of covering his large caseload with the remaining four judges in the district. This has been arranged whereby Judge Roland (based in Sidney), Judge Wess (based in Alliance) and I (based in Chadron) have agreed to cover roughly five days per month in Scotts Bluff County. This is in addition to Judge Mickey (based in Gering) covering multiple other dates. Just for some perspective, each of those five travel days for Judge Roland will involve two hours and thirty minutes round trip. That's roughly twelve hours and thirty minutes just on the road per month. And while videoconferencing is a great tool that can be utilized on many occasions, it will be unlikely that such videoconferencing can be utilized for hearings such as those just mentioned. These four to five days per judge per month are normal motion days in Scotts Bluff County Court – not special evidentiary hearing and trial dates. In other words, the hearings on the four to five motion days per month for each judge will entail the entire workday. Videoconferencing will likely be impractical for such hearings.

While Judge Roland will be taking two and a half hours on each of his trips to and from Gering, Judge Wess will be closer to three hours roundtrip to and from Gering. This means that Judge Wess will need to travel roughly fifteen hours per month to help in Scotts Bluff County. Likewise, I will be traveling approximately three hours and forty minutes roundtrip to and from Gering on each individual trip during this interim period. That means that I will spend approximately eighteen hours and twenty minutes of windshield time per month just to preside over court in Scotts Bluff County. I ask you to keep in mind that the above windshield hours merely constitute monthly travel to Scotts Bluff County. They do not include the drive-time each

of us dedicates to monthly travel to our normal counties such as Sioux, Grant, Morrill, Deuel, Kimball, Garden and Banner.

Additionally, the time each of the remaining four judges in our district will be required to devote to both the additional travel mentioned above and courtroom duties approximately five times per month will detract from each of our abilities to be in our offices conducting legal research or writing written decisions that are a requirement of our profession. I believe that none of the remaining four judges in our district have court bailiffs, judicial assistants, legal interns or law clerks that could assist with some of the administrative and judicial tasks that are required outside of the courtroom. Speaking for myself, the drive time, combined with in-court time will leave my schedule only able to accommodate approximately two to three full days per month for the scheduling of any evidentiary hearings or trials over this interim coverage period.

Admittedly, my schedule should still allow for approximately three to four half days per month to set aside for other matters. Nonetheless, it is impractical to believe that these few additional days and half days can be utilized solely for in-court hearings; much of that time will need to be devoted to legal research, writing and preparation for upcoming hearings. Keeping such a schedule is ultimately unworkable and will damage the dispensation of justice for the public.

Finally, I will not bore the commission members with the weighted caseload reports for the relevant years; this information is more than likely already in the record. Nonetheless, I conducted a little research of my own by calculating the raw caseload numbers for the calendar years 2024 and 2025. After comparing the numbers (between Criminal, Traffic, Juvenile, Small Claims, Civil, Probate and Adoption), the raw case count in the Twelfth District climbed from 2024 to 2025. The case count across the district for 2024 was 19,294 while for 2025 it was 19,781, a rise of 487 cases or approximately a 2.5% increase. Obviously, case counts fluctuate over time but combined with the factors mentioned above relating to travel as well as various time constraint pressures which will of necessity be imposed upon the remaining four county court judges in our district, it is self-evident that declaring a vacancy and permitting Judge Worden's seat be filled is the prudent and reasonable thing to do.

Fortunately, this Commission determined that there was still a need for a fifth county court judge in the Twelfth Judicial District in 2022 upon the retirement of Judge Harford. I appreciate this Commission making that determination then and suggest the need for five judges still exists. Based on the Weighted Caseload Report for the fiscal year 2025, the Twelfth Judicial District had a Workload per judge of 0.82 (this was even before the raw numbers I mentioned above). I recall a Nebraska Bar Association article written sometime in 2022 (I believe) suggesting that if the workload per judge in a district was less than a 0.60 (I believe), then in that event a district should not declare a vacancy and the seat should move elsewhere. I also recall that the article mentioned that if the workload per judge was 1.15 or above, an additional judgeship should be created for that district. The Twelfth's numbers (as of the 2025 Weighted Caseload Report) sit somewhere between both extremes.

As part of the meeting set for February 13, 2026, the Commission is also set to consider whether a county court judge should be replaced in the Ninth Judicial District because of the recent retirement of Judge Wetzal. The Ninth Judicial District has a workload per judge factor of 0.81, which is less than the Twelfth. I do not wish to be understood as "advocating" specifically for the

Ninth district but would ask that if the Commission were to fill the Ninth District seat, it would only be fair to likewise fill the Twelfth District seat. Furthermore, when the Nebraska legislature passed a law during the 2023 legislative session creating the fifth county judge in the Ninth Judicial District, they must have done so – in part - based on the County Courts Weighted Caseload Report for the fiscal year 2022 (running from July 1, 2021 to June 30, 2022) which indicated a need for county court judges at 4.43 and a Workload per judge of 1.11 in the Ninth. At that time of course, the Ninth District only had four judges. But the legislature must also have considered the County Courts Weighted Caseload Report for the *calendar* year 2022 (running from January 1, 2022 to December 31, 2022) which indicated a need for county court judges at 4.12 and a Workload per judge of 1.03. As stated above, the need for county judges in the Twelfth (4.10) now stands higher than that of the Ninth (4.07). Both seats should be filled.

Finally, I apologize for not appearing in person. It is approximately 392 miles from Rushville to Lincoln, and I'd already scheduled (prior to receipt of notice of Judge Worden's retirement date) an out-of-state travel day. I would ask that this Commission not construe my absence as in any way apathetic about Judge Worden's replacement. For the aforementioned reasons, I respectfully request that you fill the county judge vacancy created by the retirement of Judge Worden. Thank you.

Respectfully yours,

  
Aaron J. Conn  
Presiding Judge  
Twelfth County Court Judicial District



## Hall County Public Defender

117 E 1<sup>st</sup> St Ste 2

Grand Island, Nebraska 68801

P 380.385.5016 | F 308.385.5029 | TDD 800.833.7352

VICKY A. KENNEY | JEFF E. LOEFFLER | SIDNEA L. BROWN | ERIC S. KLEVELAND | EDWINA M. HEISE

JESSICA S. FAUSS | JASON J. SANFORD

Dear Members of the Judicial Resources Committee,

I am writing to urge the Committee to find that a continued need exists within the 9th Judicial District to fill the vacancy due to Judge Arthur Wetzel's retirement, and if recommendation is made as to the primary office location, that location be Hall County.

While docket numbers may reflect a temporary decrease in pending cases, that snapshot does not accurately reflect the long-term realities of this district and specifically Hall County. In my over twenty years of experience practicing within this judicial district, it has been the norm—rather than the exception—for our County Court Judges to carry substantial and often overwhelming caseloads. In fact, there have been multiple instances in the past where Hall County was required to rely on judges from other districts and Buffalo County to assist with docket management due to volume and scheduling demands.

Based on this historical pattern, I believe the present reduction in numbers is temporary and that case filings will return to what has long been considered "normal" levels for this district. Until any decrease in cases is sustained consistently over several years, it is premature to conclude that the need for this judgeship no longer exists. Maintaining adequate judicial resources is critical to ensuring timely access to justice, efficient case resolution, and fairness for litigants.

For these reasons, I respectfully request that the Committee find that with the retirement of Judge Arthur Wetzel, there is a judicial vacancy in the 9th Judicial District and the primary office location for this vacancy should be Hall County. Thank you for your time, careful consideration, and continued service to our judicial system.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Vicky A. Kenney".

Vicky A. Kenney  
Hall County Public Defender

SHANAHAN LAW FIRM, L.L.C.

Dear members of the Judicial Resources Committee,

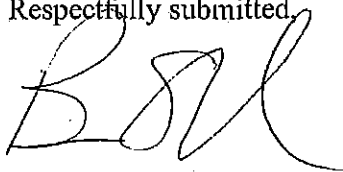
I am writing in regards to the 9<sup>th</sup> Judicial District vacancy due to Judge Arthur Wetzel's retirement. I am urging you to find that due to the retirement of Judge Wetzel, there is a judicial vacancy that needs to be filled with the primary office location in Hall County, Nebraska.

I have practiced law in Hall County for 7 years, primarily from the position of Hall County Deputy Attorney. It is the norm for our County Court docket to be filled with overwhelming caseloads, so much so that judges from Buffalo County would travel to Hall County to assist with docket management.

As President of the local Hall County Bar Association, I have spoken with multiple attorneys regarding Judge Wetzel's vacancy, and there is a strong consensus that this position should be filled as soon as possible. Leaving this vacancy unfilled risks unnecessary delays, inefficiencies, and strain on the court system of Hall County.

For these reasons, and on behalf of the Hall County Bar Association, I respectfully request that the Judicial Resources Committee take prompt action to fill this vacancy to ensure the continued fair and efficient administration of justice in Hall County.

Respectfully submitted,



Benjamin W. Shanahan  
President of Hall County Bar Association



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# Hall County Attorney

**MARTY KLEIN**

231 S. Locust PO Box 367

Grand Island NE 68802-0367

Telephone (308) 385-5150

Fax (308) 385-5111

Child Support (308) 385-5160

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February 12, 2026

Judicial Resources Commission  
c/o Nebraska Supreme Court  
P.O. Box 98910  
Lincoln, NE 68509

Re: Need for a County Court Judgeship in the Ninth Judicial District – Hall County

Members of the Commission:

I write in support of a determination that a judicial vacancy exists within the Ninth Judicial District and that the position should be filled in **Hall County**.

Hall County is one of the most active and demanding county court jurisdictions in Nebraska. The volume of filings alone places extraordinary pressure on the court, its staff, prosecutors, defense counsel, and law enforcement. Beyond the raw numbers, the *nature* of the caseload further distinguishes Hall County from many other jurisdictions in the state.

According to the Nebraska Judicial Branch's *FY 2025 County Court Annual Caseload Report*, Hall County's county court handled **approximately 13,683 total adult case filings** between July 1, 2024 and June 30, 2025, making it one of the heaviest county court dockets in the state outside of the largest urban counties.

In addition, Hall County bears a large juvenile docket. Again, according to the Nebraska Judicial Branch's *FY 2025 County Court Annual Caseload Report*, Hall County's county court handled **approximately 459 total juvenile case filings** between July 1, 2024 and June 30, 2025, making it one of the heaviest county court dockets in the state outside of the largest urban counties.

A comparison of the 3<sup>rd</sup> largest (Sarpy County – 213,530 residents), 4<sup>th</sup> largest (Hall County – 63,291 residents) and 5<sup>th</sup> largest (Buffalo County – 52,076 residents) counties in Nebraska illustrates that while Hall County's caseload is substantial and well above peer counties and warrants additional judicial resources.

Exhibit 17

<b>County / Court</b>	<b>Adult County Court Filings (Misd., Traffic, Civil, etc.)</b>	<b>Total Juvenile Filings</b>	<b>Juvenile Abuse/Neglect (3(a)) Filings</b>
<b>Hall County</b>	13,683 – adult county court filings (Nebraska Judicial Branch)	397 – county court juvenile filings (Nebraska Judicial Branch)	62 – juvenile 3(a) filings (Nebraska Judicial Branch)
<b>Buffalo County</b>	7,976 – adult county court filings (Nebraska Judicial Branch)	230 – county court juvenile filings (Nebraska Judicial Branch)	64 – juvenile 3(a) filings (Nebraska Judicial Branch)
<b>Sarpy County</b>	22,952 – adult county court filings (Nebraska Judicial Branch)	~786 – separate juvenile court total (based on Sarpy Separate Juvenile Court FY 2024) ( <a href="http://supremecourt.nebraska.gov">supremecourt.nebraska.gov</a> )	~152 – separate juvenile 3(a) children (total for Sarpy Separate Juvenile Court in FY 2024) ( <a href="http://supremecourt.nebraska.gov">supremecourt.nebraska.gov</a> )

Abuse/neglect cases, status offenses, and juvenile delinquency matters require prompt hearings, intensive judicial oversight, and continuing review. These cases are time-sensitive and emotionally charged, often involving detention decisions, placement issues, and coordination with multiple agencies. The existing judicial resources are stretched thin in attempting to provide the level of supervision and timeliness these families and children deserve.

The county court must also manage substantial civil, small claims, probate, guardianship/conservatorship, and traffic caseloads. Each of these areas carries statutory timelines and public expectations for prompt access to the court. When judicial capacity is limited, scheduling delays inevitably follow, affecting litigants, victims, and attorneys alike.

Grand Island's role as a regional hub compounds the workload. With major transportation corridors, a large workforce, and a growing and diverse population, Hall County experiences a steady inflow of cases that might otherwise be distributed across smaller communities. Law enforcement activity reflects this reality, and the court's docket mirrors it.

The demand for judicial services in Hall County consistently exceeds the capacity that can reasonably be absorbed without another judge. Additional judicial resources would:

- improve timely access to hearings and trials,
- reduce backlogs and continuances,
- allow more meaningful attention to juvenile and problem-solving matters,
- enhance consistency in pretrial supervision and compliance, and
- promote overall efficiency for all justice system partners.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the Commission to find that a vacancy exists and to authorize that the open county court judgeship be filled in Hall County. Doing so will materially improve the administration of justice for the citizens of the Ninth Judicial District.

Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Marty Klein". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "M" and a long, sweeping tail.

**MARTY KLEIN**  
**HALL COUNTY ATTORNEY**  
**[martink@hallcountyne.gov](mailto:martink@hallcountyne.gov)**

**(308) 385-5150**