

CIRCUIT COURT

Court Services

Description

The Circuit Court of Henrico County (Fourteenth Judicial Circuit) is the trial court of general jurisdiction with the authority to try a full range of civil, criminal, and chancery/equity cases.

In civil cases, the Circuit Court exercises concurrent jurisdiction with the General District Court in money claims of one to fifteen thousand dollars, and original jurisdiction for claims over fifteen thousand dollars. Also included on the civil docket are condemnation trials.

In criminal cases, the Circuit Court has jurisdiction over the trials of misdemeanor and felony cases – offenses punishable by confinement in jails and/or other correctional institutions. Court costs and fines are assessed in court against those charged, and are reflected in the Circuit Court Clerk’s revenue estimates.

The Circuit Court also exercises jurisdiction in domestic and other chancery/equity cases. This includes all divorce matters, as well as disputes concerning wills and estates.

The Circuit Court exercises appellate jurisdiction over appeals of civil and criminal matters from the Henrico Juvenile and Domestic Relations District Court and the Henrico General District Court. Circuit Court judges also hear appeals from certain administrative agencies in the Commonwealth and Henrico County.

Objectives

- To administer justice fairly, according to applicable laws, in a timely manner.
- To operate an efficient and effective court system in the administration of justice for the citizens of Henrico County.

Budget Highlights

There are five judges elected to the Circuit Court by the General Assembly of Virginia, each for a term of eight years. One Judge is elected Chief Judge every two years, usually on a rotating basis. The Chief Judge serves as the administrative judge of the support staff, which consists of one part-time and four full-time clerical positions, and three law clerks. The Judges' salaries are paid directly by the Commonwealth. In 2007 the Judicial Council approved the position of a sixth judge, which was not approved by the General Assembly. It was again approved by the Judicial Council in 2008 and 2009, but not by the General Assembly.

The Department's approved budget of \$552,686 reflects an increase of 1.6 percent over the prior year approved budget. This increase is due to additional personnel costs for full time employees, part-time salaries, health care, and retirement. According to the 2007 State of the Judicial Report, caseload for the Fourteenth Circuit showed that 10,556 cases

Annual Fiscal Plan

<u>Description</u>	<u>FY08 Actual</u>	<u>FY09 Original</u>	<u>FY10 Approved</u>	<u>Change 09 to 10</u>
Personnel	\$ 436,870	\$ 466,517	\$ 475,191	1.9%
Operation	58,285	71,895	71,895	0.0%
Capital	9,720	5,600	5,600	0.0%
Total	<u>\$ 504,875</u>	<u>\$ 544,012</u>	<u>\$ 552,686</u>	<u>1.6%</u>
Personnel Complement	8	8	8	0

Performance Measures				
	FY08	FY09	FY10	Change 09 to 10
Workload Measures				
Full Time Judges	5	5	6	1
Jury Commissioners	6	6	6	0
Citizens Eligible to Serve as Petit Jurors	4,500	4,500	4,500	0
Citizens Called to Serve as Petit Jurors	4,200	4,200	4,200	0
Jury Panels	700	700	700	0
Grand Jurors Called to Serve	108	108	108	0
Grand Jurors on Master Panel	120	120	120	0

commenced in 2007, a decrease of 4.6 percent from 2006. Civil cases increased from 2,853 to 2,943, an increase of 3.2 percent. The five judges averaged 2,111 commenced cases per judge, ranking eighth among the 31 circuits. They averaged 2,135 concluded cases per judge, sixth highest in the state. The five judges in the Fourteenth Circuit averaged 589 civil cases each in 2007, ranking seventeenth among the 31 circuits. They also averaged 1,523 criminal cases per judge in 2007, ranking ninth among the 31 circuits.

Individual judges also actively participate in organizations, committees, and programs outside of their everyday duties in the courtroom. These include, but are not limited to, the Virginia Criminal Sentencing Commission, the Benchbook Committee, the Drug Court Program, Virginia Continuing Legal Education and Bench Bar Conference. The Judges

make themselves available for Three-Judge Panels at the request of the Chief Justice and any other committee or panel the Chief Justice may request of them. In addition to these activities, judges also participate in mock trials at the University of Richmond's School of Law, at local high schools, and those conducted for police officer training.

The number of civil, criminal, equity and other cases filed, transferred, and/or appealed from other courts determines the setting of the trial dockets. Attorneys and their clients determine the number of juries by their requests for jury trials. Each year, jury commissioners appointed by the Circuit Court consider 9,000 jury questionnaires to determine, by law, 4,500 eligible jurors to be randomly selected to serve. Since 2001, through a change in statute, jurors can also be called upon in certain condemnation trials, instead of condemnation commissioners.