

Judiciary

General Overview

Article VI, Section 1 of the Michigan Constitution of 1963 provides that the judicial power of the State is vested exclusively in one court of justice. The court system includes the Supreme Court with seven justices, the Court of Appeals with four districts and 28 judges, the Circuit Court with 57 circuits and 221 judges, the Probate Court with 78 courts and 103 judges, the District Court with 105 districts and 258 judges, and four municipal courts with four judges. The Court of Claims hears all cases against the State and is a function of the 30th Circuit Court. The Michigan Supreme Court has general superintending control over all State courts. The State Constitution provides that the Supreme Court shall appoint an administrator of the courts and other assistants of the Supreme Court as may be necessary to aid in the administration of courts in Michigan.

Major Divisions and Programs

Supreme Court. This appropriation unit funds the Supreme Court and its staff, the State Court Administrative Office, Judicial Information Systems, Direct Trial Court Automation Support, Foster Care Review Board, Community Dispute Resolution, and The Judicial Institute.

Court of Appeals. The Court of Appeals is a State intermediate appellate court that consists of 28 judges elected at nonpartisan elections from four districts drawn on county lines. The jurisdiction of the Court of Appeals is provided by law.

Justices' and Judges' Compensation. This appropriation funds all of the costs of compensation for Supreme Court Justices and judges of the Court of Appeals. Salary for trial court judges (circuit, district, and probate) is funded by direct State payments and reimbursements to local units of government for local contributions to judges' salaries. The State does not pay for the salaries of Municipal Court judges.

Indigent Defense – Criminal. This appropriation unit provides funding for the Appellate Public Defender Program and Appellate Assigned Counsel Administration. State law requires the State Appellate Defender to handle 25% of indigent criminal appeals.

Indigent Civil Legal Assistance. Twenty-three percent of the State Court Fund is allocated by statute to indigent civil legal assistance (legal aid). The program is administered by the Michigan State Bar Foundation. The Foundation allocates funding to legal aid organizations that provide services throughout the State.

Trial Court Operations. This appropriation provides funding to local court funding units pursuant to court reform legislation passed in 1996. Counties receive formula funding based on case filings and the number of judges.