

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, chancery/equity, and criminal cases.

In civil cases, the Circuit Court exercises concurrent jurisdiction with the General District Court in money claims of one to twenty-five thousand dollars, and original jurisdiction for claims over twenty-five 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 or other correctional institutions. Court costs and fines are assessed in court against those charged.

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, guardianships and partition suits.

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. 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 a sixth judge for the Circuit Court, but as of 2016 the sixth judge has not been approved by the General Assembly. Fines and costs against those found guilty in certain felony and misdemeanor cases from Henrico charges are assessed by the judges. These fines and costs are collected by the Circuit Court Clerk's Office.

The Circuit Court's budget for FY2017-18 is \$605,993. This represents an increase of \$48,399 or 8.7 percent from the FY2016-17 budget. This increase was driven by updated estimates for personnel including a 2.5 percent salary increase and rising health care costs. The operating component remained flat from the previous fiscal year.

Annual Fiscal Plan

Description	FY16 Actual	FY17 Original	FY18 Approved	17 to 18
Personnel	\$ 489,947	\$ 501,850	\$ 550,249	9.6%
Operation	46,189	54,344	54,344	0.0%
Capital	0	1,400	1,400	0.0%
Total	\$ 536,136	\$ 557,594	\$ 605,993	8.7%
 Personnel Complement	 8	 8	 8	 0

Circuit Court Services (cont'd)

Performance Measures				
	FY16	FY17	FY18	Change 17 to 18
Workload Measures				
Full Time Judges	5	5	5	0
Jury Commissioners	4	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

Service levels of this court are governed by the number of cases filed each year – criminal, civil law, chancery law (including divorces) along with those carried over from the past year, and requests for juries. According to 2015 Caseload Statistical Information, the most recent available, the caseload for the Fourteenth Circuit showed 12,125 cases (civil and criminal) commenced in 2015, with an average of 2,425 per judge. There were 5,253 total criminal cases commenced, with an average of 1,050 per judge. In 2015, there were a total of 6,872 civil cases commenced, with an average of 1,374 per judge. The total number of cases (civil and criminal) concluded was 11,446, with an average of 2,289 per judge.

The Circuit Court responds to telephone inquiries from citizens and other courts, coordinates with the Sheriff on the security of the courthouse, provides internships to law students, and contributes to

educational programs to improve the administration of justice.

Individual judges also actively participate in organizations, committees, and programs outside of their everyday duties in the courtroom, including but 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 conducted by the University of Richmond School of Law, local high school students, and for police officer training.