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Texas Courts of Appeals Finish a Strong Fiscal Year

Austin—Ensuring that Texans receive timely and consistent decisions in appellate cases is vital to our system of justice. During the most recent fiscal year, Texas’s fourteen courts of appeals continued a strong trend of advancing these goals.

Coming off their most productive year since 1989, Texas courts of appeals had another strong year, issuing over 10,225 opinions in civil and criminal cases. The courts resolved more cases than were filed and ended the year with the lowest number of pending cases since 1990. The courts reduced the average time between filing and disposition for criminal cases to 8.8 months and for civil cases to 7.4 months—the shortest average civil disposition time since 1989.

Jeff Rose, Chief Justice of the Third Court of Appeals in Austin and Chairman of the Council of Chief Justices, stated, “The courts of appeals continue to work hard to provide timely, well-reasoned opinions in the face of challenging dockets. Through the efforts of the justices and court staff, along with the support given to us by the Legislature, we are proud to have had such a productive year.”

The Texas court system is divided into three broad levels of courts, with trial courts, courts of appeals and two high courts—the Supreme Court and Court of Criminal Appeals. Except in death-penalty cases, the fourteen courts of appeals are the first place to appeal, and often the last, for individuals seeking review of a decision of the trial courts. Each year, between 10,000 and 12,000 civil and criminal cases are appealed to the courts of appeals.

The Third Court of Appeals, based in Austin and serving central Texas, had a particularly productive year. Faced with one of the fastest growing dockets in the state, the Court disposed of 25% more cases than were filed. The Court also met its goal of resolving 100% of its child-protection cases within an accelerated 180-day time frame. Five of the Court’s justices ranked among the top ten most productive appellate justices in the state. In fact, Justice David Puryear ranked first in Texas, issuing more opinions than any other Texas judge. Chief Justice Jeff Rose stated, “I am proud of each of our judges and staff for their hard work this year in delivering timely justice to the people of central Texas. Through their efforts, the Third Court of Appeals just finished one of its most productive years.”