

TEXAS COURT ACTIVITY

OVERVIEW OF ACTIVITY FOR THE YEAR ENDED AUGUST 31, 1993

APPELLATE COURTS

SUPREME COURT

The 1,171 applications for writs of error filed during fiscal year 1993 represented a 6.8 percent increase from the 1,096 applications filed in fiscal year 1992, and was 16.9 percent more than the 10-year average of 1,002.

The Court "passed on" (disposed of or otherwise acted upon) a total of 3,441 matters during fiscal year 1993, an increase of 20.2 percent from the 2,863 matters passed on in fiscal year 1992.

During the fiscal year 1993, the justices of the Supreme Court wrote 295 opinions (or an average of 32.8 opinions each), 26.6 percent more than the 233 opinions written in fiscal year 1992 and 44.6 percent more than the 10-year average of 204.

COURT OF CRIMINAL APPEALS

The 408 cases added to the docket of the Court of Criminal Appeals in fiscal year 1993 represent an increase of 2.0 percent from the 400 cases added during fiscal year 1992, which ended August 31, 1992.

Judges of the Court of Criminal Appeals wrote 679 opinions during fiscal year 1993, of which 519 (76 percent) were "deciding" opinions disposing of cases. The remainder were dissents, concurrences, and opinions on rehearings. Of the deciding opinions, 198 were signed and 321 were per curiam. During 1992, members of the Court wrote 493 opinions, 77 percent of which were deciding opinions.

COURTS OF APPEALS

The Courts of Appeals disposed of 9,654 total cases during the year, an average of 121 dispositions (63 criminal and 58 civil) per justice. The pending caseload increased from 8,915 at the beginning of the fiscal year to 9,016 at the end of the year.

A total of 9,420 cases was filed in the Courts of Appeals during the fiscal year, which included 5,364 criminal cases and 4,056 civil cases. This was a decrease of 13.8 percent from the 10,722 total new cases filed in fiscal year 1992. New criminal cases decreased 10 percent from the 5,960 filed in fiscal year 1992 and civil cases decreased 14.8 percent from the 4,762 filed in fiscal year 1992.

The average lapse of time between the filing of a civil case in a Court of Appeals and its disposition ranged from 6.0 months in the Sixth Court of Appeals in Texarkana to 12.5 months in the Twelfth Court of Appeals in Tyler. The average lapse of time in the 14 courts for civil cases was 8.3 months.

The average lapse of time between the filing of a criminal case in a Court of Appeals and its disposition ranged from 8.6 months in the Seventh Court of Appeals in Amarillo to 21.3 months in the Twelfth Court of Appeals in Tyler. The average lapse of time for the 14 courts was 11.5 months.

In fiscal year 1993, the justices of the Courts of Appeals wrote 9,379 opinions, 5.7 percent more than the 8,875 written in 1992.

TRIAL COURTS

DISTRICT COURTS

Thirty death sentences (compared to 40 in 1992) and 525 life sentences were assessed in the district courts during the year. Of the 206,212 criminal cases disposed by the district courts of Texas, 33.3 percent were disposed of in a period of less than two months from the date of indictment or information, 10.7 percent took two to three months, 9.3 percent took three to four months, and 46.7 percent took over four months.

Cases added to the criminal docket decreased 2.2 percent in the ten urban counties during fiscal year 1993 as compared to 1992. This compares to an increase of 3 percent in criminal filings for all other counties of the State. Criminal filings increased in seven of the ten urban counties: Hidalgo (5.1 percent), Denton (8.4 percent), Bexar (3.3 percent), El Paso (25.5 percent), Collin (1 percent), Dallas (1.5 percent), and Travis (1.7 percent). Counties reporting a decrease in criminal cases added to the docket were Harris (12 percent), Tarrant (1.5 percent), and Nueces (1 percent).

Civil cases accounted for 68.1 percent of all new cases filed during the fiscal year. The largest segment of civil cases filed (31.7 percent of new civil filings) were divorce actions.

During the fiscal year, the district courts disposed of 99.6 percent of the total cases added to their dockets, compared to 100.1 percent in 1992.

District courts handled 5.8 percent fewer divorce actions during 1993 than during 1992. During the fiscal year, 120,737 divorce cases, or 27.6 percent of all disposed civil (non-juvenile) cases, were handled by district courts. Some 10.2 percent of divorce cases were dismissed.

The total number of civil cases pending in the district courts on August 31, 1993, was 516,888 or slightly more than the 514,309 pending on September 1, 1992. Criminal cases pending increased 3 percent, from 156,285 to 161,041.

COUNTY-LEVEL COURTS

During the twelve-month reporting period, the county-level courts of the State disposed of 46.8 percent of the 1,323,263 total criminal, civil, and juvenile cases on their dockets (added during the year or carried over from the previous year).

From the number of cases reported, criminal cases constituted 75.5 percent (494,847) of the 655,829 new cases filed or appealed from lower courts. Civil cases accounted for 12.6 percent (82,403), probate cases represented 8.3 percent (53,720), and mental health cases represented 3 percent (19,922). New juvenile cases filed were 0.6 percent (4,223) of the total.

Total cases pending on the dockets of the county-level courts increased by 2.0 percent from 688,466 on September 1, 1992, to 703,570 on August 31, 1993.