

JUSTICE OF THE PEACE COURT



CHIEF MAGISTRATE ALAN G. DAVIS

Resourcefulness is the ability to use the resources available in a clever manner to overcome difficulties. We often think of this in relation to sayings such as, “Do more with less” or “Make the most out of what you have.” Being resourceful is less about having all the resources you need than it is about effectively and appropriately using the resources you have.

Innovation is the process of making changes in something established by introducing new methods, ideas or products. Some might consider innovation more in terms of

technology giants and the latest-greatest gadgets that make our lives simpler and more efficient. But innovation is also about improving processes.

While these concepts may seem to be slightly in tension with one another, I have always thought of the Justice of the Peace Court as a resourcefully innovative organization. Our limited access to cutting-edge technology would seem to restrict opportunities for innovation, but countless times over the years we have found creative ways to combine changing processes and practices with the available technology to develop something new for the betterment of our criminal and civil justice systems. Sometimes those improvements are focused on discrete and unique circumstances, but just as often they result in ground-breaking modifications to the way that we – or our partners or users – do business.

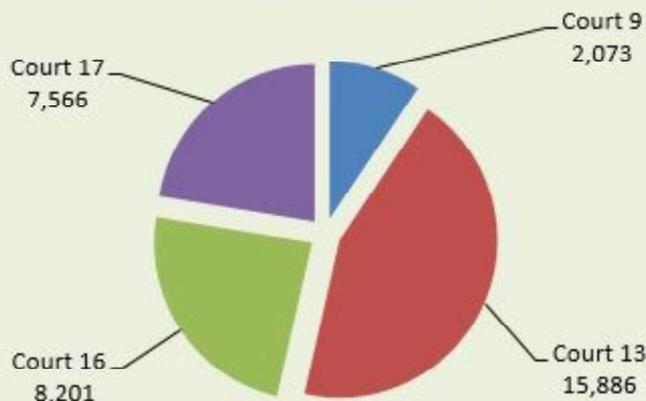
With well over 300,000 cases moving through the Justice of the Peace Court system, our

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**TOTAL JUSTICE OF THE PEACE CIVIL CASES FILED
BY COURT FY 2018**



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collective mindset is one of having to efficiently and fairly handle the matters before us. Without improvements to how our work is carried out, we would never be able to do so. With a “can do” attitude, a willingness to never fall into the trap of “doing things the way we’ve always done them” and a fantastic set of criminal and civil justice partners who have been agreeable to our suggestions, the Justice of the Peace Court has accomplished remarkable systemic improvements over the years.

Beginning with our first automation project in the 1980s, we have led the Delaware Judiciary in the movement toward elimination of paper and processes that slow down the system until it threatens to stall. While somewhat antiquated by today’s standards, our

adoption of videophone technology to quickly handle warrant applications and presentment of arrested individuals led to the establishment of a statewide videophone court that annually saves the State of Delaware millions of dollars in transportation costs and reduces the risk to public and officer safety presented by moving arrestees physically through our court locations.

The creation of the Voluntary Assessment Center eliminated the forthwith presentment of traffic violators and replaced a cumbersome non-centralized mail-in process. Even further, the adoption of electronic tickets and online payments for those tickets has additionally modified the work of the Voluntary Assessment Center such that we have been able to designate those same personnel as a call

center for most of our court locations. In that function, they are the first point of contact for most phone calls to the Court, and are able to answer in excess of 75% of those inquiries, without having to transfer the call to a specific court location. This has tremendously reduced the impact of “basic information calls” on our clerical staff in the served court locations so that they can focus on the core work of case processing.

The Justice of the Peace Court readily adopted the

CAPISSES CLEARED BY JUSTICE OF THE PEACE COURT FOR OTHER COURTS FY 2018



civil e-filing processes that came with a new case management system a decade ago. As the judiciary moves to a new, unified e-filing system, we expect to adapt to the nuanced changes a new system will bring. The Court looks forward to the ability to transfer cases

more seamlessly to our sister courts, as a case moves out of the Justice of the Peace Court system and into the Court of Common Pleas and Family Court for further proceedings.

We have also been innovative in our approach to cases that stay within the jurisdiction of the Justice of the Peace Court. The implementation of calls of the calendar for traffic cases has brought relief to the public in the form of being able to meaningfully dispose of a case at arraignment through a plea bargaining process with the arresting agency. In some Justice of the Peace Court locations, that has virtually eliminated traffic trials, as some agencies have plea rates in the realm of 90% or greater. This is obviously also a benefit to the police agencies, since their road officers have significantly fewer

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trial dates scheduled, allowing those officers to attend to other matters.

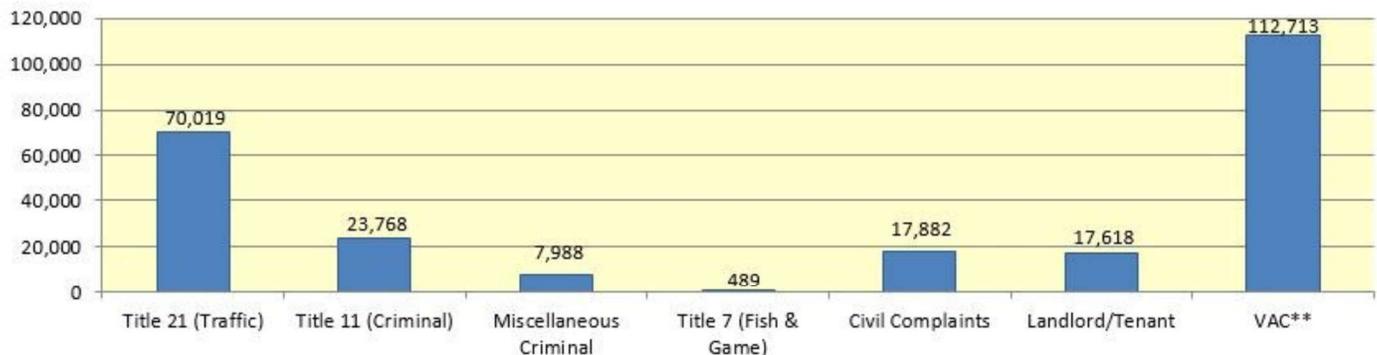
In the past fiscal year, we have continued our efforts to improve processes and leverage the technology available to us for the benefit of the criminal and civil justice systems. On the criminal side, as a predicate to our project directed at reducing our 24-hour footprint in the future, we began piloting the use of electronic signatures on warrant applications. This step alone will eliminate some timing issues, wasted paper resources, and equipment replacement needs that occur with the need to fax paperwork back and forth as an adjunct to video proceedings. As a further step we have also tested the use of Skype to eliminate the need for an officer to go to a standard videophone location to swear to the warrant.

Both tests have gone exceedingly well, and we have begun rolling the process out to additional police agencies for further testing with an eye toward full implementation of the electronic signatures by early 2019. That will be followed closely by the expanded use of the Skype access. We believe this change marks an improvement on par with, if not exceeding, the impact of the original implementation of

the videophone system. Eventually, and with a few other improvements to the system, an officer will be able to investigate a crime, write and swear to a warrant and – if the defendant is in custody – conduct the initial presentment all without leaving the location of the event. If the defendant is to be released, he or she can be released right on the spot. If the defendant is to be detained, the officer may never have to go to a court or police station. While that is down the road a bit, it is a very exciting prospect for the future.

On the civil side, we have also embarked on an electronic procedure that will eliminate a serious choke point in the completion of some civil service of process. Previously, long arm service of process on out-of-state defendants had to be accomplished through a complicated, multi-layered practice that was burdensome to the court’s filers as well as court personnel. It involved multiple checks being issued, the physical transportation of paperwork between civil court locations, several duplicative steps for court clerks and the need for a Constable to hand deliver materials on a regular basis to the Secretary of State’s office. With an electronic filing solution worked out with the Secretary of State’s office, the court will be able to directly file these

**NUMBER OF JUSTICE OF THE PEACE COURT FILINGS* BY TYPE
FY 2018**



*Criminal filings are by defendant.

**Voluntary Assessment Center.

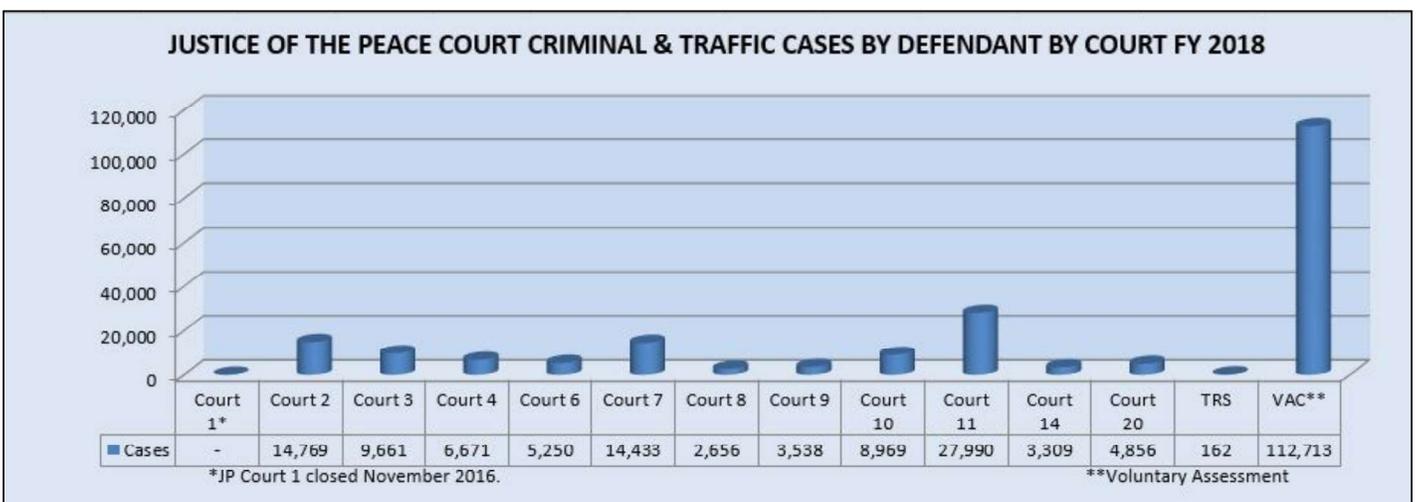
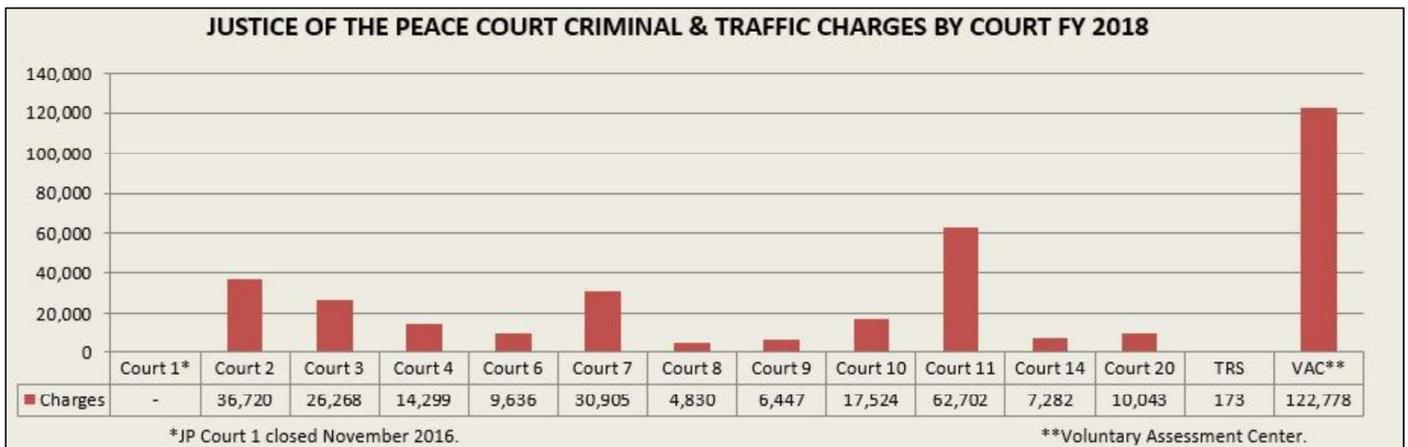
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documents and ease the burden of filers as well by eliminating some additional check writing and paperwork. We estimate that this step will save hundreds of hours of clerical and constable time each year.

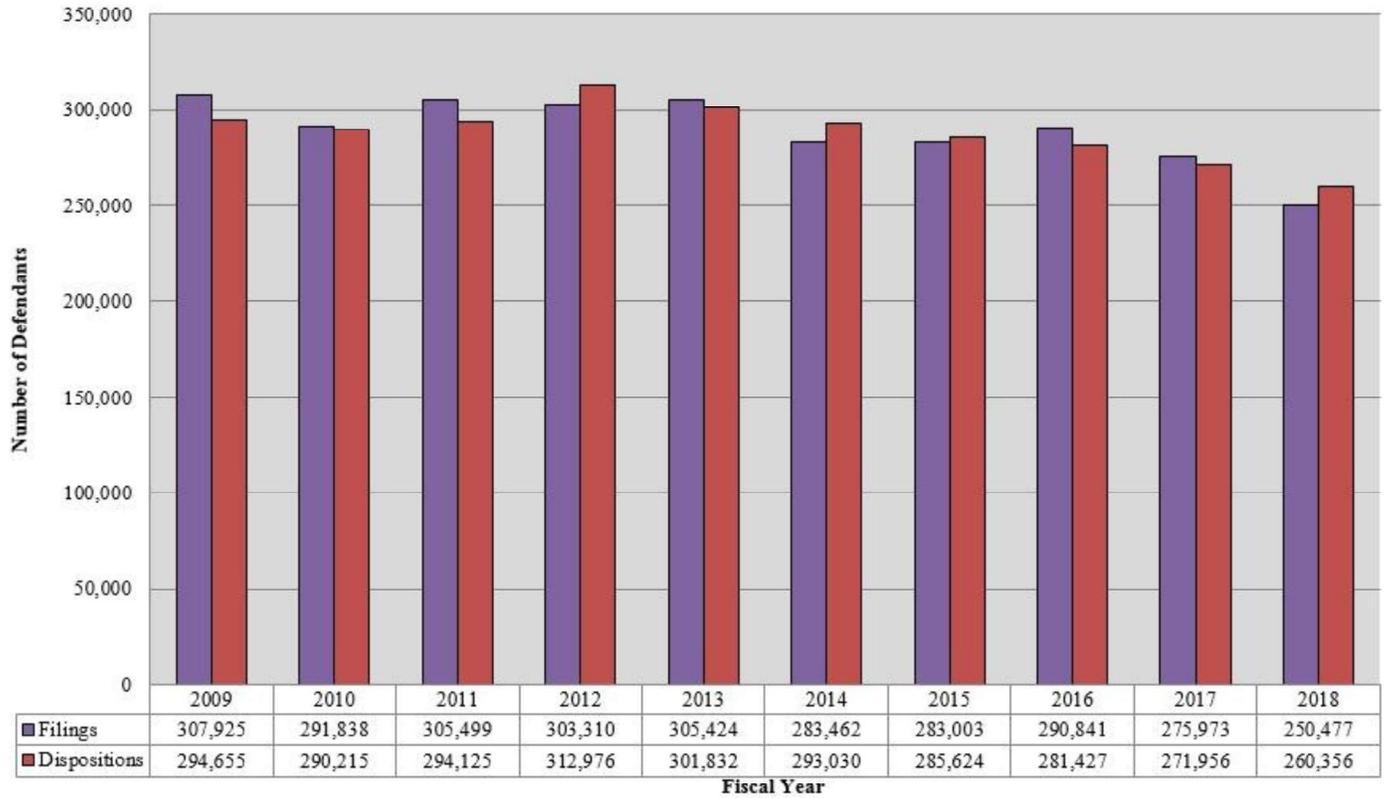
use the tools, time and talents available to us to make the criminal and civil systems work more smoothly for staff, judges, our justice partners and our court users. ♦

This Court is not one to rest on its laurels. While these are excellent improvements for the system, we have many more in the works. We will continue to



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Justice of the Peace Court Civil & Criminal/Traffic Filings and Dispositions by Fiscal Year*



* Criminal filings and disposition information is by defendant.



Justice of the Peace Court 7 in Dover

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NEW CASTLE COUNTY JUDGES

Sitting, front row (left to right):

Susan Ufberg, Katharine Ross, Deputy Chief Magistrate Sean McCormick, Kerry Taylor, Nina Bawa, Amanda Moyer.

Standing, middle row (left to right):

Peter Burcat, Senior Judge William Moser, Susan Cline, Senior Judge Marilyn Letts, Roberto Lopez, Shameka Booker, Beatrice Freel, Cheryl McCabe-Stroman.

Standing, back row (left to right):

Christopher Portante, Gerald Ross, John Potts, Alexander Peterson, III, Thomas Brown, William Young, James R. Hanby, Sr.

Not pictured:

Bracy Dixon, Jr., Emily Ferrell, Carmen Jordan-Cox, Thomas Kenney, Vincent Kowal, Shelley Losito, Mary Ellen Naugle, Marie Page, Maria Perez-Chambers, David Skelley.

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KENT COUNTY JUDGES

Sitting, front row (left to right):

Nicole Alston-Jackson, Deputy Chief Magistrate Cathleen Hutchison, Jamie Hicks.

Standing, back row (left to right):

Dwight Dillard, D. Ken Cox, W.G. Edmanson II, Michael Sherlock, Kevin Wilson, James Murray.

Not pictured:

Pamela Darling, Alexander Montano, Dana Tracy.

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SUSSEX COUNTY JUDGES

Sitting, front row (left to right):

Leah Chandler, Jana Mollohan, Stephani Adams, Mirta Collazo.

Standing, middle row (left to right):

James Horn, Michelle Jewell, Deputy Chief Magistrate Sheila Blakely, Deborah Keenan.

Standing, back row (left to right):

Richard Comly, John Hudson, W. Patrick Wood, Scott Willey, Christopher Bradley, Larry Sipple, John McKenzie.

Not pictured:

John Adams, William Boddy, III, Jennifer Sammons.