

Miller Bowen
Milton Gerson
James S. Stafford, *Administrative Clerk*

Allegany, 1981
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A proposed constitutional amendment in 1969, which was ratified by the voters in the State at the November 1970 general election, brought into existence the Maryland District Court, a statewide court of limited jurisdiction. The initial implementing legislation for the court was contained in Chapter 528 of the Acts of 1970, which was supplemented by Chapter 423, Acts of 1971, and by other 1971 legislation.

The court commenced operation on July 5, 1971, and functions on a statewide basis in every county in the State and Baltimore City. The District Court is a court of record, and replaces entirely the theretofore existing justices of the peace, trial magistrates, the People's Courts in certain counties, Baltimore City, and the Municipal Court of Baltimore City. It has uniform jurisdiction throughout the State and, in Montgomery County only, it has also been given juvenile court jurisdiction. Although the District Court is a court of limited jurisdiction it has been given greatly expanded jurisdiction over the courts that it replaced.

In accordance with constitutional provisions, the first chief judge of the District Court was appointed by the governor. Subsequent chief judges will be appointed by the chief judge of the Court of Appeals from among the judges of the court. By statute the State is divided into twelve judicial districts. In addition to the chief judge, eighty-six associate judges are authorized by law. District Court judges are appointed by the governor for ten-year terms, subject to confirmation by the Senate. At the expiration of a ten-year term, the governor is required to present the name of the judge to the Senate for confirmation for an additional ten-year term. Judges must meet the same qualifications set out in the Constitution for judges of the appellate courts and circuit courts and they must devote full time to their judicial duties. They are prohibited from engaging in any way in the practice of law.

Within the District Court system there is a chief clerk appointed by the chief judge. The chief judge also designates from among the judges an administrative judge and appoints an administrative clerk for each District. In addition, a District Court clerk for each county within a district and all other necessary court employees are appointed. Commissioners are appointed by the administrative judge of the district with the approval of the chief judge to function in each county and in Baltimore City as may be needed. The commis-

sioners perform functions similar to the old committing magistrates with respect to issuance of arrest warrants, setting bail, or other terms of pre-trial release pending a hearing or incarceration prior to hearing.

The District Court has jurisdiction in criminal, traffic, and civil matters. In criminal cases the court may conduct preliminary hearings in felony cases and it has original non-jury jurisdiction over misdemeanors, whether common law, statutory, or established by ordinance, and over criminal violations of State and local regulations. In addition, the court has jurisdiction over certain enumerated felonies if the amount or value of the goods taken or obtained by the party charged does not exceed \$500.

The traffic jurisdiction of the court extends to almost every violation of the vehicle law, except for special offenses committed by juveniles.

In civil cases, the District Court has exclusive jurisdiction if the amount claimed does not exceed \$2,500 and in cases involving landlord and tenant replevin, forcible entry and detainer, and grantee suits regardless of amount involved. Where the claim exceeds \$2,500 and up to a maximum of \$5,000, it has concurrent jurisdiction with the trial courts of general jurisdiction. If the amount in controversy in a civil suit is in excess of \$500, then either party has the right to demand a jury trial, in which event, upon timely demand being made, the case will be transferred from the District Court to a trial court of general jurisdiction. In criminal and traffic cases a right to trial by jury exists only if the punishment for the crime exceeds confinement for a period of more than three months. The State may not demand a jury trial.

Appeals from decisions of the District Court are taken to the Circuit Court in the county in which the judgment was rendered. In Baltimore City criminal and traffic case appeals are taken to the Criminal Court of Baltimore City and civil cases to the Baltimore City Court. In criminal and traffic cases and in civil cases of less than \$500 the appeal shall be tried *de novo* unless the parties agree to an appeal on the record. In civil cases involving claims of more than \$500 the appeal shall be on the record. The time for noting an appeal in all cases is within thirty days from the date of judgement in the District Court (Code 1957, Art. 26, secs. 139-157; Code Courts Article, secs. 1-601 through 1-608, 2-601 through 2-607, 4-301 through 4-304, 4-401 through 4-530, 6-403, 7-301, 7-302, 9-201, 11-402, 11-701 through 11-703, 12-401).