

District Court judges are appointed by the Governor to ten-year terms, subject to Senate confirmation. They do not stand for election. The first Chief Judge of the Court was designated by the Governor, but all subsequent Chief Judges are subject to appointment by the Chief Judge of the Court of Appeals.

The District Court is divided into twelve geographical districts, each containing one or more political subdivisions, with at least one judge in each subdivision. Presently, there are 87 judges on the Court, including the Chief Judge. The Chief Judge is the administrative head of the Court and appoints administrative judges for each of the twelve districts, subject to the approval of the Chief Judge of the Court of Appeals. A Chief Clerk of the Court is appointed by the Chief Judge. Administrative Clerks for each district are also appointed, as well as commissioners who perform such duties as issuing arrest warrants and setting bail or collateral.

The District Court has jurisdiction in both criminal (including motor vehicle) and civil areas. It has little equity jurisdiction and has jurisdiction over juvenile cases only in Montgomery County. The exclusive jurisdiction of the District Court generally includes all landlord/tenant cases; replevin actions; motor vehicle violations; criminal cases if the penalty is less than three years imprisonment or does not exceed a fine of \$2,500, or both; and civil cases involving amounts not exceeding \$2,500. It has concurrent jurisdiction with the circuit courts in civil cases over \$2,500 but not exceeding \$10,000, and concurrent jurisdiction in misdemeanors and certain enumerated felonies. Since there are no juries provided in the District Court, a person entitled to and electing a jury trial must proceed to the circuit 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).

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In 1944, the people of Maryland recognized the need for providing administrative direction to the court system when they ratified what is now Article IV, Section 18(b) of the Constitution, providing that the Chief Judge of the Court of Appeals is "the administrative head of the Judicial system of the State." But it was not until 1955 that the General Assembly took the initial steps for the provision of professional administrative staff necessary to assist the Chief Judge in carrying out administrative responsibilities.

In the latter year, the General Assembly created the Administrative Office of the Courts, headed by a State Court Administrator appointed by and serving at the pleasure of the Chief Judge of the Court of Appeals, as provided in section 13-101 of the Courts Article. The basic function of the State Court Administrator and the Administrative Office itself is to provide the Chief Judge with advice, information, facilities, and staff to assist him in the performance of his administrative duties, and to implement court administration policies established by the Chief Judge, the Court of Appeals, and the General Assembly.

These administrative tasks include planning, research, providing staff support for the education and training of judges and nonjudicial personnel, preparation and administration of the Judiciary budget, liaison with the legislative and executive branches, staff support for the Maryland Judicial Conference and the Conference of Circuit Judges, the operation of information systems and the gathering and analysis of statistics and other management information, and assisting the Chief Judge in the deployment of judges to cope with temporary backlogs or to address shortages of judicial personnel (Code Courts Article, Section 13-101).