

# SUPERIOR COURT



## PRESIDENT JUDGE JAN R. JURDEN



# SUPERIOR COURT

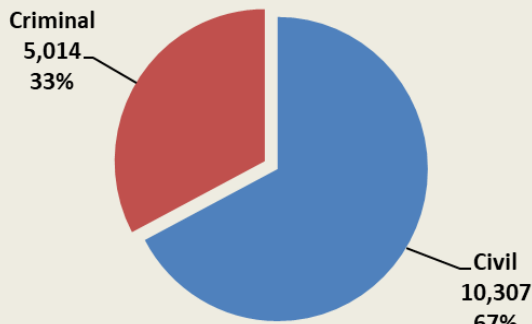
The Superior Court looks back on 2023 with pride in the accomplishments of the Judicial Branch, and gratitude for the teamwork of all that enabled the Superior Court and our sister courts to effectively address pandemic backlogs, continue our efforts to enhance diversity, equity and inclusion, both internally and externally; and improve access to, and the administration of, justice. The last several years have made it clear that we stand as one unified branch with a shared vision. As discussed below, 2023 is no exception in that regard.

The year 2023 was a very busy one for the Court. In April, the high stakes *Dominion*

*v. Fox News* defamation case captivated the public and drew intense media attention. The case was one of the largest ever filed in the Superior Court and required all hands on deck. For months leading up to the trial date, the trial judge, the Hon. Eric M. Davis met regularly and often with a team comprised of, among others, chambers staff, prothonotary staff, security officers, the Chief Staff Attorney, court reporters, jury services staff, court administration, Capitol Police, and members of the Administrative Office of the Courts. The extensive planning, cooperation, collaboration and coordination overseen by Judge Davis was masterful, and the parties expressed their appreciation for the Court staff and all who helped make the pretrial phase and the jury selection seamless. The Court is proud of all those who helped ensure that the Court provided a fair, prompt, efficient, forum to assist the parties in resolving their dispute.

As the Court managed this high-profile matter (which required extensive resources and personnel for months), the Court experienced record increases in its civil filings. An increase of 2,425 civil filings in 2023

**NUMBER OF SUPERIOR COURT FILINGS  
BY TYPE, FISCAL YEAR 2023**



*Continued on next page*

# SUPERIOR COURT

resulted in a 31% increase over the civil filings in 2022 (7,882 compared to 10,307). Included in those FY 2023 civil filings were 1,527 product liability cases and 683 Mass Tort cases (Zantac, Pelvic Mesh, etc.). Also, due to the national recognition of our judicial officers' experience and expertise in handling Complex Commercial Litigation (CCLD) matters, the number of CCLD cases rose by 20% (126 compared to 159). Mortgage foreclosure filings more than doubled the filings in the previous year (580 compared to 1,215) as did Writ of Possession matters (14 compared to 39). Weapon Relinquishment and Lethal Violence Protective Order civil case filings increased from 39 in 2022 to 48 in 2023. Following the General Assembly's passage of legislation modifying the expungement statute, the Court saw a 37% increase in the number of filings from the previous year.

On the criminal side, although the number of criminal filings reduced slightly from 5,427 to 5,014 (approx. 8%), the number of criminal trials remained the same as the previous year.

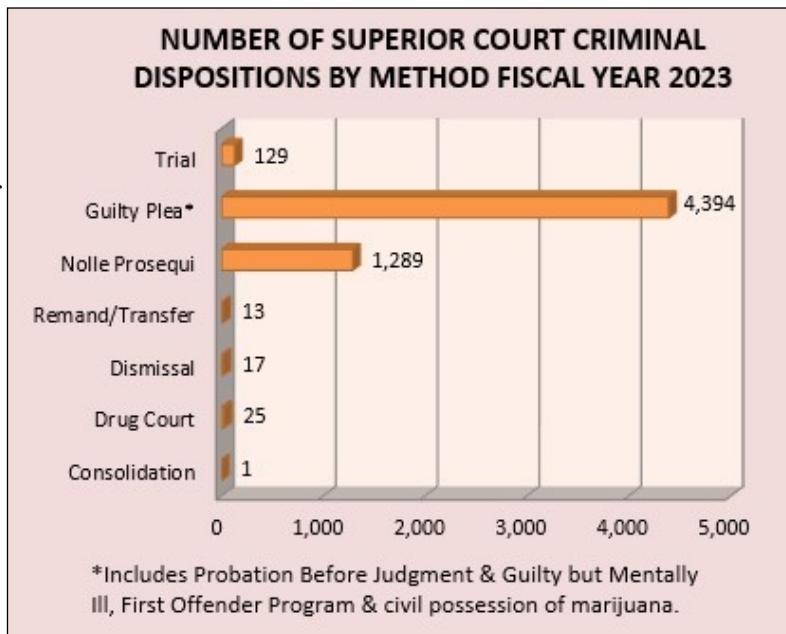
While staffing shortages and retention challenges remain, efficiencies from the innovative use of technology, and the excellent support from the Judicial Information Center headed by Ken Kelemen, greatly assisted the Court in its day-to-day operations. The Court's ability to provide access to justice and efficiently manage its caseloads and court events depends on our dedicated staff and technology.

Under the superb leadership of the Chief Justice and the Administrative Office of the Courts, through various initiatives, the Superior Court continues its

efforts to foster and embed diversity, equity and inclusion in all our internal and external operations. With the assistance of the Delaware State Bar Association (DSBA), we had the opportunity to work for eight weeks this past summer with first and second-year law students through its Diversity Clerkship Program. We worked closely with these students and hope their summer experience will make them

want to stay and practice law in Delaware. This is just one way we are consciously trying to develop a "pipeline." Another is encouraging high school students who are interested in learning about the law and law-related job opportunities to participate in our High School Internship Program, conceived and overseen by Commissioner Lynne Parker. Thanks to the hard work and vision of Commissioner Parker,

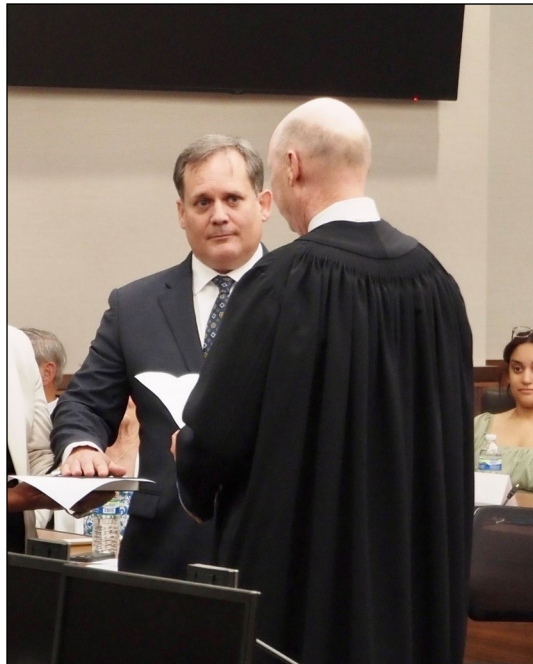
and with the full support of the Judges and Court staff, 2023 marked the 7th year of this program. Many of these students go on to pursue law-related careers and most aspire to go to law school. The Court also partners with Howard High School through a co-op program. The Court provides Howard with our casual/seasonal job opportunities, and Howard provides interested students' resumes. The students' co-op experiences have led to some becoming full-time Court employees after graduation. The Superior Court also worked with the Leading Youth Through Empowerment (LYTE) program and its partnership with the Department of State's Future Leaders Internship Initiative (FLii). The purpose of LYTE/FLii is to create pathways to careers in state government for local Delaware students. High school students are placed with the courts (or state agencies) for two consecutive summers. We hope that the students' experience will encourage



# SUPERIOR COURT

them to apply for Judicial Branch jobs following graduation.

In 2023, the Court happily welcomed two new judicial officers – the Hon. Sean P. Lugg and the Hon. Kathleen M. Miller – in 2023. Prior to joining the Superior Court bench, Judge Lugg served as deputy attorney general with the Delaware Department of Justice for over 25 years, and continues to serve on commissions, working groups and Inns of Court that focus on technology and the law. His extensive trial and appellate experience, coupled with his strong technology background, will enhance the Court’s ability to increase the use of technology in the future. Prior to joining the bench, Judge Miller served as a partner at Smith, Katzenstein & Jenkins LLP, and over the last 30 years has represented clients in all Delaware courts. She served as President of the Delaware State Bar Association from 2021 to 2022, during which time she conceived and launched the DSBA Diversity Clerkship Program referenced

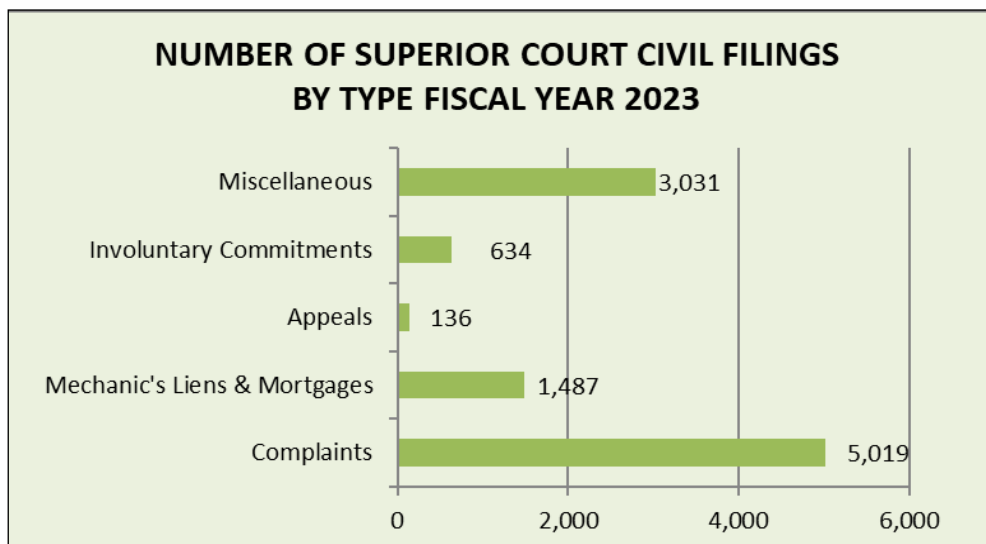


*Chief Justice Collins J. Seitz, Jr. (right) administers the Oath of Office to the Hon. Sean P. Lugg at his investiture on July 27, 2023.*

above and remains active on the committee overseeing the program.

The Court is extremely proud of our beloved former colleague, the Hon. Abigail M. LeGrow, who was elevated to the Supreme Court in 2023. Her legal acumen, work ethic, professionalism, collegiality and leadership as the civil administrative judge contributed greatly to the Court and those we serve. We are honored to have served with her.

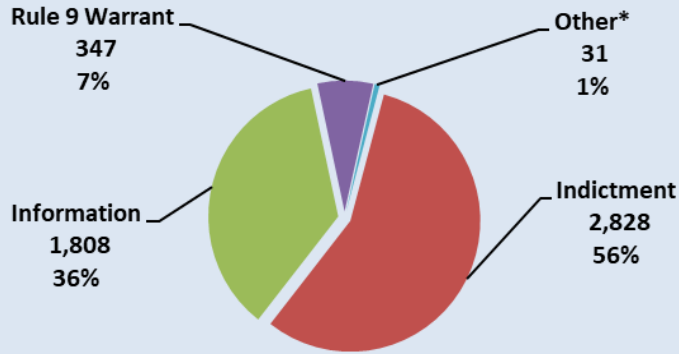
The mission of the Superior Court (now 191 years-old) is to serve the public by providing fair, prompt and well-reasoned decisions in all matters coming before the Court. We see our mission in the 21st century including far more obligations and responsibilities for the Court, and for the Judicial Branch as a whole. Thanks to the strong leadership of our Chief Justice, a shared commitment to equal justice for all, and a shared vision of a rich, diverse, equitable and inclusive justice system, we welcome that expanded mission and will continue to work together to fulfill it. ♦



*Continued on next page*

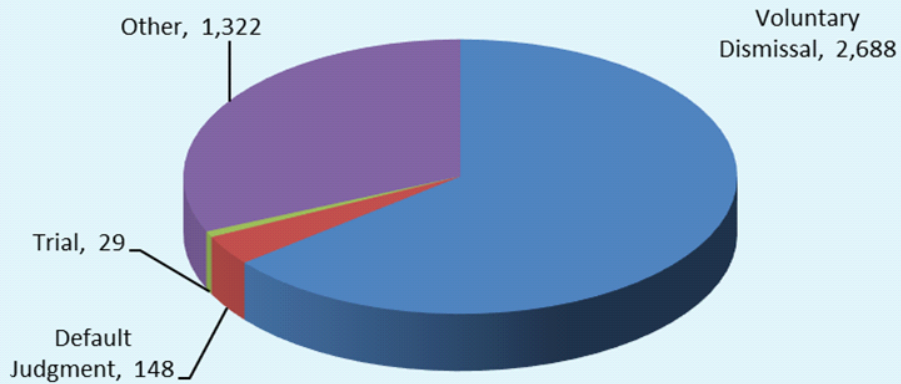
# SUPERIOR COURT

**NUMBER OF SUPERIOR COURT CRIMINAL FILINGS BY TYPE FISCAL YEAR 2023**



\*Includes appeals, transfers, reinstatements, and severances.

**NUMBER OF SUPERIOR COURT CIVIL COMPLAINT DISPOSITIONS BY METHOD FISCAL YEAR 2023**



**SUPERIOR COURT CIVIL & CRIMINAL FILINGS & DISPOSITIONS BY FISCAL YEAR**



# SUPERIOR COURT



## SUPERIOR COURT JUDGES

***Back Row (left to right):*** Judge Sean P. Lugg; Judge Danielle J. Brennan; Judge Robert H. Robinson; Judge Francis J. Jones Jr.; Judge Meghan A. Adams, Judge Mark H. Conner, Judge Reneta L. Green-Streett, Judge Patricia A. Winston; Judge Kathleen M. Miller

***Middle Row (left to right):*** Judge Sheldon K. Rennie; Resident Judge Jeffrey J Clark; Judge Vivian L. Medinilla; Judge Paul R. Wallace; Judge Ferris W. Wharton; Judge Noel Eason Primos; Resident Judge Craig A. Karsnitz

***Front Row (seated left to right):*** Resident Judge Charles E. Butler; Judge Calvin L. Scott Jr.; President Judge Jan R. Jurden; Judge Mary Miller Johnston; Judge Eric M. Davis

*Continued on next page*

# SUPERIOR COURT



## SUPERIOR COURT COMMISSIONERS

*Left to right:* Commissioner Janine M. Salomone, Commissioner Alicia B. Howard, Commissioner Martin B. O'Connor, Commissioner Andrea M. Freud, Commissioner Lynne M. Parker.