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## Illinois Circuit Court General Information

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The court of "original jurisdiction" is the circuit court. Effective December 3, 2012, as a result of Public Act 97-0585, Illinois is now divided into twenty-four circuits, six of which are single county circuits (Cook, DuPage, Kane, Lake, McHenry and Will). The remaining eighteen circuits contain two to twelve counties per circuit.

In Illinois, the circuit court is the court of original jurisdiction. There are twenty-four circuits in the state. Six are single county circuits (Cook, DuPage, Kane, Lake, McHenry and Will) and the remaining eighteen circuits comprise as few as two and as many as twelve counties each. Except for redistricting of the general assembly and ruling on the ability of the governor to serve or resume office, the circuit court has jurisdiction for all matters properly brought before it. The circuit court shares jurisdiction with the Supreme Court to hear cases relating to revenue, mandamus, prohibition, and habeas corpus. If the Supreme Court chooses to exercise its authority in a case of these types, the circuit court loses jurisdiction. The circuit court is also the reviewing court for certain state agency administrative orders. There are two types of judges in the circuit court: circuit judges and associate judges. Circuit judges are elected for a six year term and may be retained by voters for additional six year terms. They can hear any circuit court case. Circuit judges are initially elected either circuit-wide, from the county where they reside or from a sub-circuit within a circuit, depending on the type of vacancy they are filling. Associate judges are appointed by circuit judges of that circuit, pursuant to Supreme Court Rule 39, for four-year terms. An associate judge can hear any case, including criminal cases punishable by a prison term of one year or more (felonies) if the associate judge receives special authorization by the Supreme Court. Circuit judges in a circuit elect one of their members to serve as chief circuit court judge. The chief circuit judge has general administrative authority in the circuit, subject to the overall administrative authority of the Supreme Court. The chief judge can assign cases to general or specialized divisions within the circuit.

### Circuit Court Administrative Matters

**Conference of Chief Circuit Judges:** The Conference of Chief Circuit Judges is comprised of the chief circuit judges from the twenty-four Illinois judicial circuits. In 2015, and due to the retirement of former Conference Chairperson Judge Elizabeth A. Robb, Chief Judge of the Eleventh Judicial Circuit, in December, 2014, Judge Joseph G. McGraw, Chief Judge of the Seventeenth Judicial Circuit and former vice-chairman of the Conference, was elected to serve as chairperson of the Conference in January. Judge David A. Hylla, Chief Judge of the Third Judicial Circuit, was elected to serve as the new vicechairperson. The Conference meets regularly to discuss issues related to the administration of justice in the circuit courts and other matters referred to the Conference by the Supreme Court. The Administrative Office serves as secretary to the Conference.

**Conference Committees and Activities:** The Conference has several established committees which address particular issues, and provide information and recommendations. Conference Committees active during 2015 include the Article V Committee; Chief Circuit Judges Manual Committee; Executive Committee; Orientation Committee; and the Technology Committee. From time to time, the Conference may establish an ad hoc or special committee convened to study specific short-term subject matter such as the Conference's Special Committee on Extended Media Coverage to address issues related to the Supreme Court's Policy for Extended Media Coverage in the Circuit Courts of Illinois, or the Jury Representation Committee to study whether any issues exist that relate to the disproportionate minority representation in jury pools.

During 2015, the committees of the Conference considered topics in several areas. The Article V Committee developed and studied multiple proposals that could impact Supreme Court Rule 529 and the bond amount, total assessment and the percentage distribution of monies that result from these minor traffic and conservation cases resolved without a court appearance. The Article V Committee also recommended the Conference approve numerous electronic citation programs in counties throughout the state. The Special Committee on Extended Media Coverage made recommendations on notice provisions in the Supreme Court's Policy for Extended Media Coverage in the Circuit Courts of Illinois. The Jury Representation Committee continued to collect and analyze data related to the minority representation in jury pools from the most diverse counties in the state, and also consulted with an expert from the Center for Jury Studies at the NCSC as it continues to study this issue for possible recommendations to the Conference and Court in the next year. The Executive Committee continued to review policies and issues related to court reporting services and a shortfall within the Court Reporting Services budget; while the Chief Circuit Judges Manual Committee continued with revisions and updates to the Chief Circuit Judge Manual. The Technology Committee provided updates on the work of the Supreme Court's e-Business Policy Advisory Board and Technical Committee, which address policy and technical issues related to electronic business programs utilized in the courts, including the consideration of mandatory e-filing of civil cases. The Orientation Committee, along with staff from the Administrative Office, met with and provided all new Chief Circuit Judges with information and tools to help guide them in their new administrative role. Ongoing throughout the year, the Special Committee on Standardized Forms disseminated and reviewed many court forms developed for use by the Commission on Access to Justice, including forms and orders related to the expungement and sealing of cases, civil protection orders, mortgage foreclosure, and court interpreter requests. All of the many Conference committees continued to monitor and analyze new legislation, Supreme Court rules, policy and forms relevant to the committee's focus and the administration of justice in the trial courts as it is introduced and adopted.

In the interest of furthering the knowledge and skills of its members, the Conference hosted a variety of presentations focused on judicial and trial court issues. For example, the Supreme Court Committee on Strategic Planning requested the Conference's assistance in implementing a Court User Survey in each courthouse, and later reported on the results of the survey. The Special Supreme Court Committee for Justice and Mental Health Planning presented the Problem-Solving Court Certification Standards for the Conference's review and feedback. The Access to Justice Commission spoke about the genesis of Illinois standardized forms and Rule 10-101; while the Civil Justice Division explained the Court Interpreter Registry, Testing and Certification Program. Lastly, the Director of Illinois DCFS informed the Conference about Child Sex Trafficking and the role for the courts.