

The Maine Judicial Branch 2022

MISSION

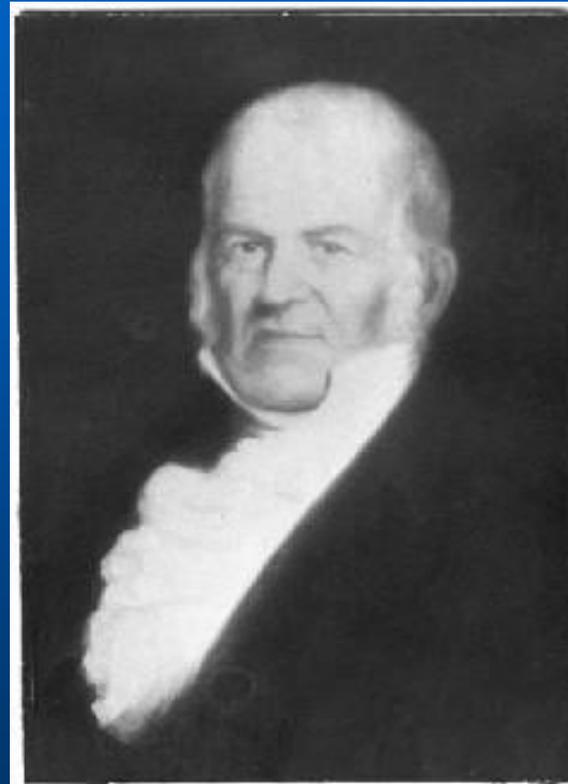
To administer justice by providing a safe, accessible, efficient and impartial system of dispute resolution that serves the public interest, protects individual rights, and instills respect for the law.

Courts In Maine

Federal Courts	Tribal Courts	Probate Courts	State Courts
<p>3 judges appointed for life by the president, confirmed by U.S. Senate</p>	<p>Passamaquoddy & Penobscot Courts</p>	<p>16 part-time elected county judges</p>	<p>56 trial judges & 7 appellate justices.</p>
<p>2 magistrates appointed to 8-year terms by the district judges</p>	<p>Judges chosen by the tribes</p>	<p>County courts</p>	<p>Appointed to 7-year terms (nominated by the Governor, approved by the Judiciary Committee, confirmed by the Senate)</p>
<p>2 bankruptcy judges appointed to 14-year terms by the 1st Circuit Court of Appeals</p>	<p>Courts authorized by federal law</p>	<p>No jury trials</p>	<p>8 family law magistrates appointed by the Chief Judge of the District Court with approval of Chief Justice</p>
<p>Jury trials</p>	<p>Jurisdiction similar to Maine District Court</p>	<p>Trusts, estates, adoptions, name changes, & guardianships</p>	<p>Jury trials</p>
<p>Civil and criminal cases</p>		<p>SJC prescribes rules for Probate Courts 4 MRS §8</p>	<p>Juvenile matters</p>
<p>No family law</p>			<p>Family law Criminal Civil Traffic & civil violations Small Claims</p>

History

- 1820 Supreme Judicial Court established
- 1930 Superior Courts established statewide
- 1965 District Court replaced 50 municipal courts
- 1976 unification of state courts (except Probate Courts)



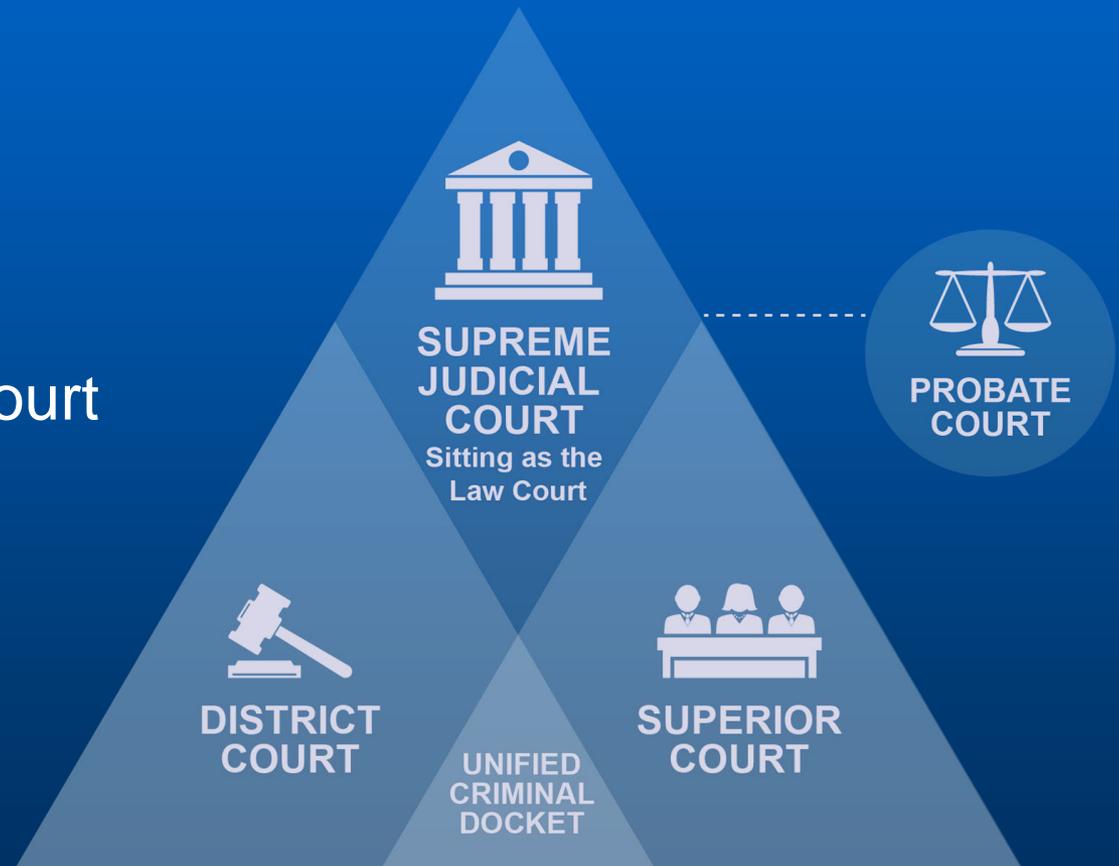
Prentiss Mellen
Chief Justice 1820-1834

At a Glance

- Population served - 1,372,247
- Geographic Area - 35,387 sq.mi.
- 34 courthouses (down from 42 in 2002)
- 56 trial judges
- FY '22 Violations Bureau filings 50,518
- FY '22 All other trial court filings 77,169
- FY '22 Total trial courts & VB 127,687
- FMI: <http://www.courts.maine.gov>

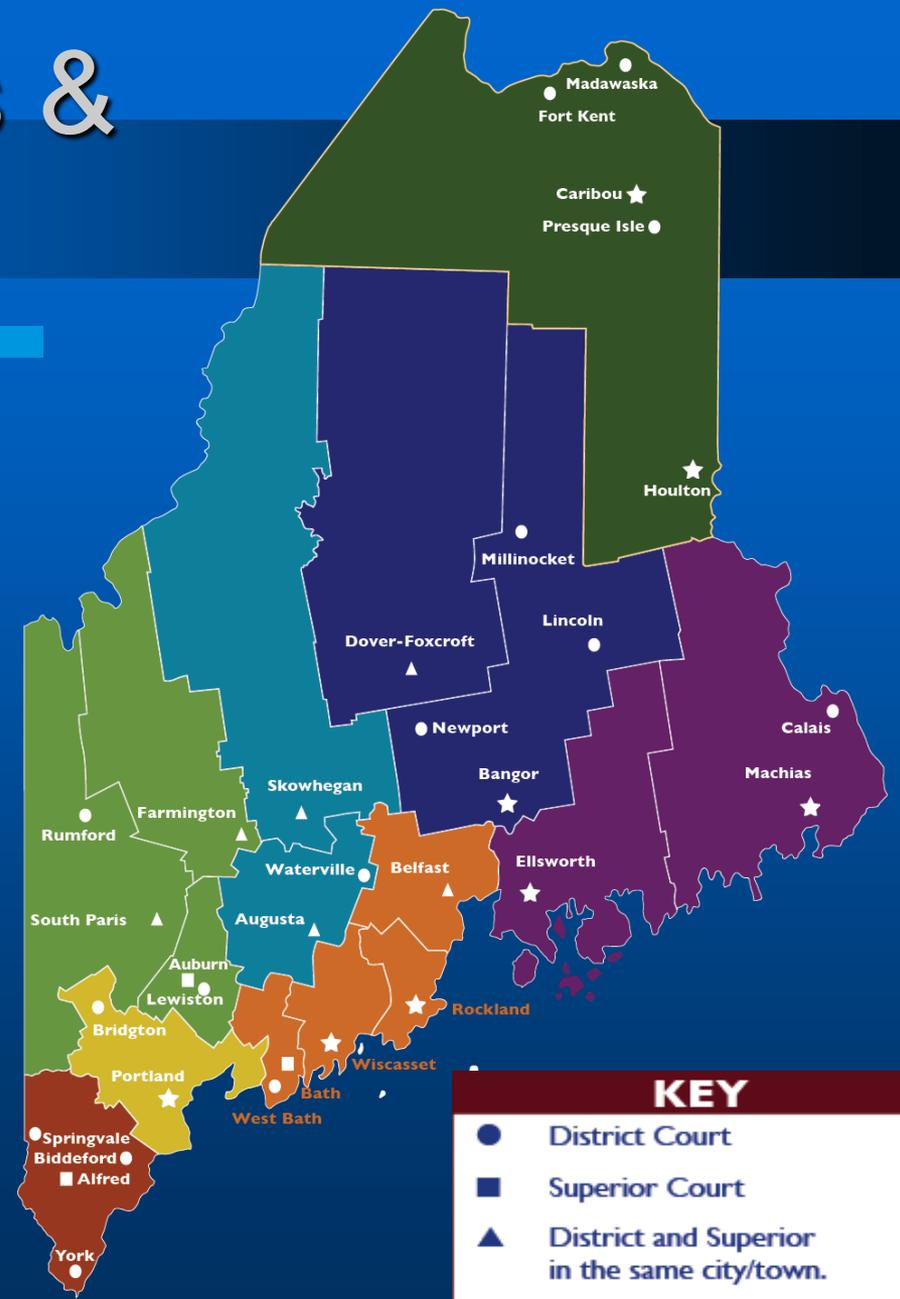
State Court Structure: 2 Trial Courts & 1 Appellate

- District Court
- Superior Court
- Supreme Judicial Court
- Probate Courts are County Courts



Court Locations & Regions

- 8 judicial regions
- Counties grouped together by color are part of a single region where resources and scheduling are coordinated
- 34 courthouses—10 are state-owned; 10 county-owned; 4 county-state joint ownership; 10 leased; 90 courtrooms
- Number of courthouses has been reduced through consolidation and new facilities



District Court

- **Total Civil Cases FY '22 – 12,889**
- **PFA (Abuse) – 5,452**
- **PFH (Harassment) – 2,581**
- **Juvenile – 962**
- **Small Claims – 2,405**
- **FEDs (Evictions) – 4,090**
- **Mental Health Commitments – 1,040**

District Court continued

- **Contract – 2,486**
- **Money judgments – 778**
- **Divorce w/ children – 1,892**
- **Divorce w/o children – 2,420**
- **Paternity/Parental rights – 1,482**
- **Family post judgment – 3,775**
- **Child protective – 1,075**

District Court Criminal & Juvenile

- **962 juvenile cases**
- **40,535 UCD cases, shared jurisdiction with Superior Court for adult criminal**

Court Alternative Dispute Resolution Services FY 22

- All disputed family matters, other than protection from abuse and protective custody, referred to mediation – 3,602 mediation sessions
- Small claims – 542 cases mediated
- FEDs (Evictions) – 664 cases mediated
- Foreclosure – 430 cases mediated

Superior Court Filings FY 2022

- 40,535 UCD – Joint jurisdiction with District Court
- 2,157 Civil
- 69 Business & Consumer Docket

Superior Court

- 17 locations – one per county except for Aroostook which has two: Caribou & Houlton
- The Superior Court hears criminal and civil cases, except family matters, juvenile, small claims, and civil violations
- The Superior Court also hears appeals from state agencies and local government decisions
- Civil jury trials *only* take place in Superior Ct

Jurors

- Absolutely critical to the functioning of criminal & civil justice
- Constitutionally mandated for criminal and civil trials
- Drawn from drivers' license list, state ID holders, people who have asked to be added
- Paid \$15/day; \$0.45/mile
- Judges are flexible in responding to juror scheduling challenges

Supreme Judicial Court - 480 appeals filed in FY 2022

The Supreme Judicial Court is the governing body of the Judicial Branch and, sitting as the Law Court, is the court of final appeal.



Supreme Judicial Court

- Regulates the practice of law
- Establishes rules of procedure: civil, criminal, probate, family, electronic court systems (new as of 2020)
- Admits lawyers to the bar
- Establishes ethical rules of conduct for judges, lawyers, and guardians
- Disciplines lawyers and judges

Supreme Judicial Court

- Appeals of family, civil, and criminal cases from the District and Superior Courts, and the UCD
- Appeals from the Probate Courts
- Appeals of decisions of the Public Utilities Commission and the Workers' Compensation Board

Supreme Judicial Court



Pictured from left (2022): A.J. Connors; A.J. Humphrey (retired); A.J. Mead; C.J. Stanfill; A.J. Jabar; A.J. Horton; A.J. Lawrence

Chief Justice Valerie Stanfill

A.J. Joseph Jabar

A.J. Andrew Mead

A.J. Andrew Horton

A.J. Catherine Connors

A.J. Rick Lawrence

A.J.: VACANT

The Chief Justice



- Is the head of the Judicial Branch
- Prepares the JB budget with the State Court Administrator
- Responsible for efficient operation of the branch
- Appoints the “Chiefs” of the Trial Courts
- A new Associate Justice will be appointed during the 131th Leg.

Chief Justice Valerie Stanfill

Appointment of Judges and Justices

- Nominated by the Governor
- Reviewed by the Judiciary Committee
- Confirmed by the Senate
- Serve 7-year terms
- May be reappointed for additional terms

Clerks of Court

- Primary contact for the public
- Staff the windows and phones to answer questions
- Staff the courtrooms, create court record
- Schedule court hearings and provide notices to parties
- Record payments and other info (protection orders, bail, warrants, and extradition)
- Clerk staff comprise more than half of the entire staff of the Judicial Branch.

State Court Administrator

- The SCA reports to the Chief Justice and manages the business affairs of the courts
- The SCA heads the Administrative Office of the Courts
- The AOC provides operational support to the courts



Amy Quinlan

Administrative Office of the Courts

The AOC:

- Oversees operations of the Judicial Branch including human resources & tech resources
- Collects statistical information
- Oversees the JB budget and financial affairs
- Develops and implements statewide JB policy and procedures
- Maintains the physical facilities
- Provides court security through the marshals
- Provides education & training programs
- Prepares the annual report
- Maintains web site: <http://www.courts.maine.gov>

eCourts and eFileMaine

- Launch of electronic court processes is underway
- eCourts Public Portal: find and pay fines in traffic violation cases since 2018
- eFileMaine: launched in 2020 in Bangor courts and the BCD where most civil and family cases are required to be eFiled
- Paused rollout to conduct a Point in Time Assessment to review project progress and address challenges identified during the pandemic
- Project adjustments are in process. New project milestones will be announced in early 2023

COVID-19 and the Courts

- Courts fully reopened August 2021
- Courts remained open through the pandemic. Focus was on cases involving life or liberty issues
- Struggle to balance access to justice w/ public safety
- Shortage of marshals = some courts are not open to the public on some days
- Jury trials: were not held during the pandemic. Are currently being scheduled in all parts of the state.
- Criminal backlog still exists. Will be looking to 131st Leg. for assistance with resources and creative solutions

Remote hearings and mediations

- Zoom licenses purchased for conducting remote proceedings (Zoom platform best-suited for complex or multi-party proceedings)
- While successful, holding remote or hybrid hearings does not yet replicate pre-COVID resolution numbers
- Problems with remote technology: compatibility with current systems; all parties maintaining a strong connection to avoid freezing and delays

Helpful Information

- Judges cannot discuss individual cases.
- Judicial Branch happy to help with the provision of info and statistics. Patience needed due to antiquated data system.
- Need something? Please contact Barbara Cardone, Director of Communications, or Julie Finn, Legislative Analyst

Questions?

