

ADMINISTRATIVE PLAN FOR THE ELEVENTH JUDICIAL DISTRICT – WEST

INTRODUCTION

Pursuant to Administrative Order Number 14, the circuit judges of the Eleventh Judicial District-West tender for the Arkansas Supreme Courts approval this administrative plan.

CASE ALLOCATION AND ANTICIPATED WORKLOAD

Recognizing that each Judge has the authority to hear, and must be prepared to hear, any type of case, this plan allocates the cases to our six Circuit Judges based upon the statistics provided by the AOC. Accordingly, with the effective date of this plan, the Circuit Clerks will assign all cases in this Circuit as follows:

	GUYNN	WYATT	NORTON	HARRIS	DENNIS	BROWN
Criminal	66%	0%	0%	0%	34%	0%
Civil	0%	70%	0%	0%	30%	0%
Domestic Relations	0%	0%	50%	50%	0%	0%
Probate	0%	0%	50%	50%	0%	0%
Juvenile	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	100%

In 2022, 5,804 new cases were filed in this District. The new cases were assigned as follows:

Judge Alex Guynn	578
Judge Robert H. Wyatt, Jr.	914
Judge Mac Norton	1262
Judge Leon Jamison	1240
Judge Jodi R. Dennis	732
Judge Earnest Brown, Jr.	1074

As of May 31, 2023, 1,999 new cases have been filed in this district. Based on our current plan they have been assigned as follows:

Judge Alex Guynn	192
Judge Robert H. Wyatt, Jr.	391
Judge Mac Norton	440
Judge Jackie Harris	440
Judge Jodi R. Dennis	270
Judge Earnest Brown, Jr.	266

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

Judge Dennis will specifically be assigned by the Circuit Clerks of both counties all Department of Correction criminal cases filed and all post-conviction inmate filings. When a Department of Correction criminal case is assigned to Judge Dennis, a case from her Division will be assigned to either Judge Guynn or Judge Wyatt in order to more evenly divide the cases between these three Judges.

Judge Guynn will be assigned all Civil Forfeiture cases filed by the Prosecuting Attorney in both Jefferson and Lincoln Counties.

Due to the high number and complexity of homicide cases, Judge Wyatt will continue to be included in the random assignment of homicide cases.

Judge Guynn presides over drug court. All cases where a Defendant will be participating in the "drug court" program shall be transferred to Judge Guynn. Judge Guynn shall transfer a criminal case to the judge who transfers a Defendant to "drug court". If the defendant has more than one case, Judge Guynn shall transfer a like number of cases to the judge who transfers the defendant to drug court. The authority for the drug court is attached as Exhibit 1 to this Plan.

DEFENDANTS IN JAIL

The State District Judges in Jefferson and Lincoln Counties, Judge Kim Bridgforth, Judge John Kearney and Judge Phillip Green conduct first appearances, bond hearings, plea and arraignments and Rule 8.1 hearings Monday through Friday for those Defendants arrested and incarcerated in the Jefferson and Lincoln County Detention Centers. In the absence of a District Judge, a Circuit Judge will conduct the hearings.

PERIODIC MEETINGS

The judges of this circuit agree that periodic meetings will be beneficial to the administration of justice and will meet at least quarterly, if necessary.

RANDOM ASSIGNMENT OF CASES

Other than in criminal cases where the Defendant has prior or pending cases, the Circuit Clerks shall use Contexte to randomly assign cases.

STATE DISTRICT COURT JUDGES

With this distinction, the State District Court Judges will have authority, pursuant to Administrative Order Number 18, to handle some matters that were previously exclusive to the Circuit Courts.

While recognizing that the State District Court Judges maintain a full-time docket, the State District Court Judges shall have the following additional authority if a circuit judge is not available:

1. To sign ex-parte orders of protection pursuant to Ark. Code Ann. §§ 9-15-201 through 217;
2. To sign ex-parte emergency involuntary commitments pursuant to Ark. Code Ann. §§ 20-47-209 and 210;
3. To sign ex-parte orders in Forcible Entry and Detainers and Unlawful Detainer pursuant to Ark. Code Ann. § 18-60-312;
4. Any other matters allowed pursuant to Administrative Order Number 18 that from time to time may become necessary or expedient to be exercised by said District Courts.

When a State District Court Judge signs any ex-parte order allowed pursuant to this Plan, the State District Court Judge shall coordinate with the Circuit Court where the case originated for the scheduling of the return hearing.

JUVENILE DRUG COURT AND FAMILY TREATMENT DRUG COURT

The Sixth Division (Juvenile Division) operates a Juvenile Division Drug Court (see attached) and a Family Treatment Drug Court. The authority for these specialty courts is attached as Exhibit 2 to this Plan.

JUVENILE TRANSFER HEARINGS

When a petition to transfer a criminal charge is filed under A.C.A. § 9-27-318, this judicial district agrees to have the transfer hearing conducted in the juvenile division of the circuit court. If the juvenile division of the circuit court denies the petition, the case shall remain in the original criminal division of the circuit court. If the juvenile's criminal charges are transferred and converted into delinquency charges under A.C.A. § 9-27-318, the case will then remain in the juvenile division.

REASSIGNMENT OF SUBJECT MATTER

The issue of burn-out was first raised by the Arkansas Supreme Court in a *per curiam* opinion several years ago. The Court recognized that a judge assigned to a particular subject matter may, in time, request an assignment to hear other type subject matters of cases other than those currently assigned to that judge.

To remedy the situation and to address the issue of burn-out of all judges, as a vacancy occurs in one or more of the six divisions of circuit court, the use of seniority will be utilized to allow a sitting judge to relocate his/her division of court into the facilities of the vacant judicial division and to assume all or part of the case type currently assigned that division as long as it is consistent with the current Case Assignment Plan. The most senior judge would have the first option to elect to fill the vacancy. The next senior judge would then have the option to relocate, and so on. All subsequent vacancies created by this relocation would then be filled in a like manner using seniority. No sitting judge could be removed from his/her existing caseload or chambers using this process. No judge would change division designation or vacate the sub-district designation assigned to that particular division of court because they elected to relocate to another courtroom and

chambers space. Nothing in this judicial plan shall alter or circumvent any provision of the *Hunt Decree*.

REASSIGNMENT OF CASES

If any judge who is a party to this agreement leaves the bench the most senior judge remaining shall have the option to assume the parting judges docket which shall occur when the Administrative plan is revised or if there is no appointment to fill that position. Nothing in this judicial plan shall alter or circumvent any provision of the *Hunt Decree*.

RECUSALS

If a judge recuses in the criminal, civil, domestic relations or probate division, the Circuit Clerk shall first assign the case on a random basis to a judge who normally hears cases in the particular subject matter.

For recusals in a delinquency case in the juvenile division, the Circuit Clerk shall assign that case randomly to a division of circuit court that normally hears criminal cases. (1st or 5th division). In any other recusal from the juvenile division (i.e. DHS or FINS cases), the Circuit Clerk shall randomly assign the case to a judge who normally hears cases in the domestic relations division of circuit court. (3rd or 4th division). These changes allow for judges and attorneys to maintain more continuity because the case type is most similar and allows better docket management as attorneys who more regularly appear carry over.

If all judges who hear cases in a particular subject matter recuse, the Circuit Clerk shall assign the case randomly to another judge whether or not that judge routinely hears

cases in the subject matter. If all judges in the District recuse, a special judge shall be requested as provided in Administrative Order No. 16.


MISCELLANEOUS

The circuit judges of this circuit recognize that any judge may act for another judge in his absence or in an emergency or other unusual circumstances and may sign routine uncontested matters or orders arising therefrom.

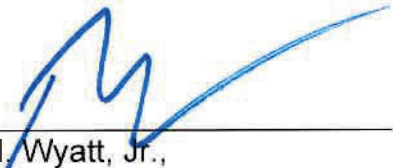
The Circuit Judges of the Eleventh Judicial District – West, by unanimous vote, also elected Robert H. Wyatt, Jr., Second Division Circuit Court Judge, as the Administrative Judge. His term will expire January of 2025.

The effective date of this Administrative Plan is January 1, 2024.

SIGNED AND APPROVED, this 28 day of June, 2023.




Alex Gwynn
Circuit Judge, First Division



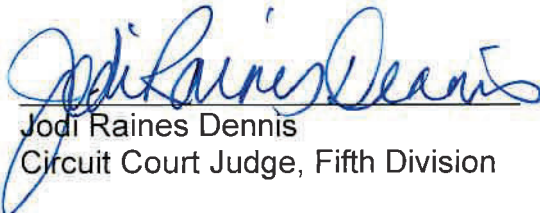
Robert H. Wyatt, Jr.,
Administrative Judge
Circuit Court Judge, Second Division



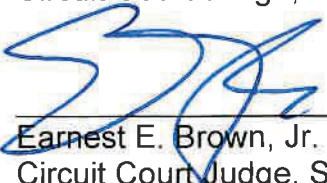
C. Mac Norton
Circuit Court Judge, Third Division



Jackie Harris
Circuit Court Judge, Fourth Division



Jodi Raines Dennis
Circuit Court Judge, Fifth Division



Earnest E. Brown, Jr.
Circuit Court Judge, Sixth Division