

Analysis of Activity for the Year Ended August 31, 1999

Overview

During the state fiscal year 1999, municipal courts operated in 854 Texas cities. Section 71.035 of the Texas Government Code and Sections 171.1 and 171.2 of the Texas Administrative Code require each court to submit a monthly activity report to the Texas Judicial Council. Statewide, the Council received 9,204 reports out of a possible 10,248 for the year (a 90 percent reporting rate).

Revenue collected by the reporting courts totaled \$407,447,777 for the year, a 10 percent increase over the previous year. The amount of revenue per disposition, excluding dismissals, averaged approximately \$136 dollars. The courts deposit this revenue in the treasury of the city where the court has jurisdiction; however, certain court costs on each case are remitted to special funds of the State.

Cases Filed

In fiscal year 1999, there were 7,287,465 new cases filed. As compared to 10 years ago, the total number of new cases filed during the fiscal year has grown by approximately 18 percent or over one million cases per year. Since last fiscal year, the number of new cases filed increased by nearly 3 percent.

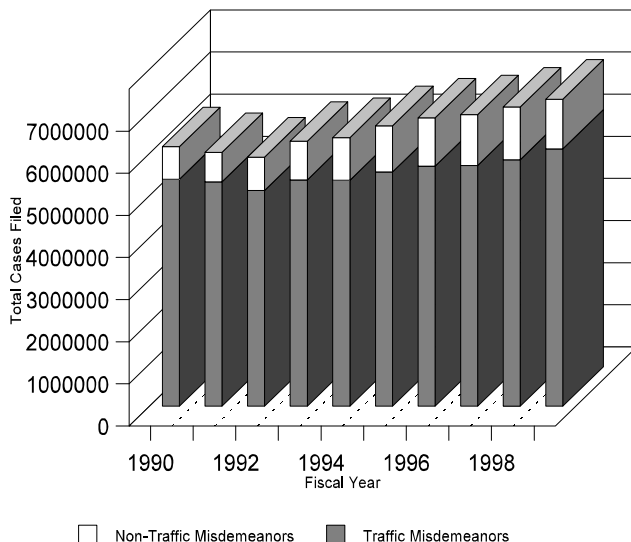
Traffic Cases Continue to Dominate Dockets

Of the total cases filed, traffic cases accounted for 84 percent, a 2 percent rise over last fiscal year; and non-traffic criminal cases accounted for the other 16 percent of the cases filed. Non-parking misdemeanors accounted for 82 percent of all traffic misdemeanors filed, with the remaining 18 percent for parking violations. Parking misdemeanors accounted for 15 percent of all cases filed.

HIGHLIGHTS

- The state had an average clearance rate (total cases disposed / total cases added) of 95 percent.
- Only 2 percent of the cases disposed at trial resulted in appeals, down from nearly 8 percent in 1990.
- Slightly under half of all dispositions occurred prior to trial. Most of these dispositions, 78 percent, were by payment of fine
- Of the 1,222,781 cases that went to trial and were not dismissed, 99 percent were tried before a judge alone.
- Of all cases receiving final judgment at trial (excluding cases dismissed at trial), 96 percent received a guilty verdict.
- Municipal courts issued an arrest warrant approximately every 16.7 seconds.
- In regards to juvenile activity, there were 81,260 transportation code offenses, 32,869 alcoholic beverage code offenses, and 2,540 DUI of alcohol offenses filed.

Figure 1: Docket Composition for the Past 10 Years



As Figure 1 indicates, the docket composition for the municipal courts has not changed drastically over the last 10 years; however, non-traffic misdemeanors does appear to be slowly becoming a larger part of the total caseload. Although the number of non-traffic misdemeanors filed in fiscal year 1999 decreased approximately 5 percent over 1998 filings, in comparison to 10 years ago, the number has increased by nearly 55 percent.

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(Continued)

In fiscal year 1999, state law violations made up 80 percent of all non-traffic misdemeanors filed, with violations of city ordinance accounting for the remaining 20 percent. As compared to fiscal year 1998, the number of cases involving state law violation has decreased by 7 percent, while cases involving a violation of city ordinance have remained the same.

Dispositions

The reporting municipal judges achieved a clearance rate (total cases disposed/ total cases added) of 95 percent. Total dispositions for traffic and non-traffic misdemeanors increased 3 percent to 6,933,398 for the year ended August 31, 1999, compared to the 6,725,706 total dispositions in fiscal year 1998.

As Figure 2 below indicates, slightly under half of the disposition in fiscal year 1999 occurred prior to trial. Most of these dispositions, 78 percent, were by payment of fine. Of the 1,222,781 cases that went to trial and were not dismissed, 99 percent were tried before a judge alone. Jury trials disposed of 8,321 cases. Of all cases receiving final judgment at trial (excluding cases dismissed at trial), 96 percent received a guilty verdict.

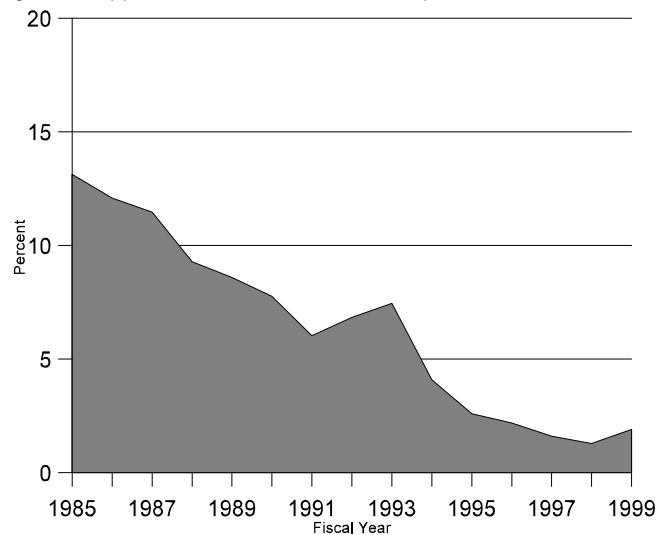
Appeals Continue to Decrease

The number of appeals filed as a percentage of all cases disposed at trial for fiscal year 1999 did not continue to decline as it has since 1993; however, the

number of appeals filed as a percent of dispositions still remained relatively low at approximately 2 percent. Figure 3 below displays the trend for the last 15 years.

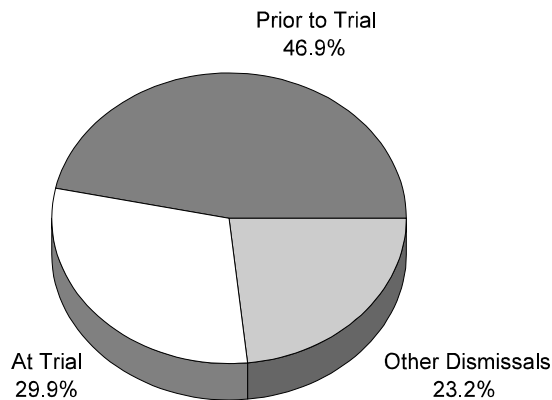
In accordance with the trend of past years, the total number of appeals filed has been decreasing while the number of cases disposed of at trial has been increasing. The 18,035 cases appealed in 1999 was a decrease of 12 percent from the number of cases

Figure 3: Appeals Filed as a Percent of Dispositions at Trial



appealed in fiscal year 1998. As compared to 1993, the number of cases appealed has decreased by 75 percent, while the number of cases disposed at trial has increased over 45 percent.

Figure 2: Case Dispositions



Other Activity

During fiscal year 1999, there were 1,992,988 arrest warrants issued, 4,782 search warrants issued, and 3,353 emergency protective orders given. Safety responsibility and driver's license suspension hearing were held 5,550 times.

In regards to juvenile activity, there were 81,260 transportation code offenses, 32,869 alcoholic beverage code offenses, and 2,540 DUI of alcohol offenses filed. Non-traffic fine-only offenses accounted for 80,026 of the juvenile cases filed.