

**From:** [Steve McConnico](#)  
**To:** [Tracy Christopher](#)  
**Cc:** [Randy Howry](#); [ralden@byrddavis.com](mailto:ralden@byrddavis.com); [drichards@rrsfirm.com](mailto:drichards@rrsfirm.com); [mgreer@adjtlaw.com](mailto:mgreer@adjtlaw.com); [Vernis McGill](#); [Jaclyn Daumerie](#)  
**Subject:** ACTL Austin Chapter - Central Docket System  
**Date:** Tuesday, March 4, 2025 12:07:54 PM  
**Attachments:** [2025-03-04 CJ Christopher Ltr.pdf](#)

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Chief Justice Christopher,

Please see the attached correspondence regarding the above referenced subject matter.

Thank you,

Steve McConnico

Scott Douglass & McConnico

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March 4, 2025

Chief Justice Tracy E. Christopher  
Chair, Supreme Court Advisory Committee  
14th Court of Appeals  
301 Fannin, Room 245  
Houston, Texas 77002

Re: Study Concerning Replacement of the Central Docket System: Comment from the Austin Chapter of the American College of Trial Lawyers

Dear Members of the Supreme Court Advisory Committee:

The Austin Chapter of the American College of Trial Lawyers writes this letter in support of Travis County's Central Docket System. We have been informed of Justice Blacklock's February 7, 2025 correspondence to the Supreme Court Advisory Committee in which he requests that the Committee study "the replacement of the central-docketing system" and that the Committee "propose draft rule amendments accomplishing this objective." We have also been informed that the Committee will meet March 7, 2025 to consider input from various interested stakeholders and then advise Justice Blacklock and the Texas Supreme Court of its findings and recommendations. Thank you for your work on this Committee and thank you for this opportunity to offer comments. We hope and believe that your analysis will show that Travis County Central Docket System is flexible, fair and extremely efficient. Speaking on behalf of all Fellows of the Austin Chapter of the American College of Trial Lawyers, we support Travis County's Central Docket System and believe that is the most effective and efficient system in the State of Texas.

To be clear, the central-docketing system in Travis County is a hybrid system. Complex cases, administrative appeals and high-conflict litigation generally get special assignments to specific judges. Plus, Travis County employs a one judge-one family model for all child welfare cases. In addition, with the new Business Court, many Travis County cases involving complex business disputes will be filed in this new court.

It has been suggested that it is difficult for parties to rely upon consistent and predictable rulings with multiple judges involved in the central-docketing system. In fact, our experience has been just the opposite. Our Fellows have been involved in trying cases in Travis County for decades. Our experience is that the central-docketing system is extremely efficient. It allows the

March 4, 2025

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assignment of a particular judge to a particular case when the circumstances warrant. Travis County Local Rule 2.6 establishes that process and although it is utilized, many attorneys and litigants nevertheless prefer the central-docketing system because of its efficiency. The central-docketing system is a lawyer/client driven docket. A party can file a motion and have it heard in a few weeks. A party can file a case and have it tried in less than a year. And the central-docketing system is predictable in that if your case is reasonably near the top of the docket sheet, you will go to trial. This efficiency saves litigants time and money. No system is perfect, but the central-docketing system carries out the efficient administration of justice and it has for a long time.

Our experience in Harris, Dallas, and Tarrant is not always the same. Scheduling a hearing and completing a jury trial in those counties takes longer, sometimes much longer. The data shows this. Historically, Travis County has one of the highest clearance rates for its cases. For the reporting period of March 2024 to December 2024, the clearance rate was 94% for civil cases and 93% for family law cases in Travis County. <https://www.tx.courts.gov/reporting-to-oca/districtcounty-court-level-reporting>. Below are other factors that help establish that the Travis County Central Docket is a mechanism for timely access to justice:

- 1) The efficiency of our system is largely accomplished by allowing lawyers and litigants to choose when and for how long to set their hearings and trials, and empowering the Court Administrator, working with the Local Administrative District Judge, to fairly and evenly distribute hearings and trials to all available judges. This system requires all judges to handle their share of the workload and makes it impossible for any judge to avoid handling their fair share.
- 2) To the extent the Legislature and the Supreme Court are concerned about non-productive trial courts and ineffective judges, Travis County's Central Docket System could serve as a model for other Texas counties.
- 3) If a litigant wants a court setting in Travis County, they call or go online to Court Administration and select a date and time and announce how long is needed. The Court Administrator assigns the matters among the available judges to maximize the number of hearings and trials reached. The assignments are made by the end of the week before scheduled hearings or trials, at the latest. If hearings pass or take less time than announced, the Court Administrator reassigns matters to reach even more cases.
- 4) Litigants can be heard in civil and family matters usually within three to four weeks – sooner if the hearing is an emergency. Most cases go to jury trial within a year or two of filing, even sooner where the parties agree. An emergency judge is available every non-holiday weekday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

- 5) In general, there are two methods of trial court administration nationwide: (1) an individual-calendar system and (2) a master-calendar system. Many local trial court systems, including Travis County's civil and family courts, have a hybrid version.
- 6) In Travis County, this hybrid system allows complex and high-conflict litigation to be assigned to a specific judge and requires assignment of administrative appeals to specific judges – while simpler cases are resolved efficiently and without delay by available judges.
- 7) Approximately 30 percent of the matters handled by Travis County Civil and Family Judges are either (1) determined by the court number where the case is filed (submission matters) or (2) by specialized assignments for reasons of complexity, subject matter (administrative appeals), or conflict. In addition, Travis County employs the one-judge-one-family model for all child welfare cases.

We know that access to justice is an important priority of the Texas Supreme Court. We submit that access to justice includes the ability to efficiently access justice. For all of these reasons, we respectfully suggest that there is no need to fix something that is not broken. In fact, it is our opinion that the central-docketing system is a model for the efficient access to justice. We invite the members of this committee to tour our courthouse and witness our central docket in action. We know that the doors are open to our judges, including our Presiding Judge Amy Clark Meachum and our Court Administrator, Warren Vavra, for you to ask questions and understand how our hybrid system works. Finally, the Austin Fellows of the American College of Trial Lawyers will gladly appear before the Committee to share our experiences with the Travis County Central Docket.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Steve McConnico

SMc:ra

March 4, 2025

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With the support of Fellows of the Austin Chapter of the American College of Trial Lawyers:

Casey L. Dobson

Christopher M. Gunter

D. Douglas Brothers

Daniel R. Richards

David A. Sheppard

David M. Gonzalez

David P. Boyce

Dicky Grigg

Edwin G. (Gerry) Morris

Eric J.R. Nichols

Eugene W. (Chip) Brees II

George B. Butts

Gregg R. Brown

Jay Harvey

Jerry K. Clements

John J. McKetta III

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Kim Bueno

Lawrence L. Germer

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Melvin D. Bailey

Missy K. Atwood

Randy R. Howry

Ray Chester

Robert C. Alden

Scott R. Kidd

Shannon H. Ratliff

Terri S. Harris

Terry O. Tottenham

Thomas B. Wright

Thomas H. Watkins

Thomas Monroe Bullion III

Tom Harkness

Tommy Jacks

William O. Whitehurst

March 5, 2025

Via email – [kwooten@scottdoug.com](mailto:kwooten@scottdoug.com)

Kennon Wooten

Re: Travis County's central-docketing system

Dear Kennon:

The current and past 5 presidents of the Austin Chapter of the American Board of Trial Advocates ("ABOTA") write this letter in support of Travis County's central-docketing system. We cannot speak for every single individual Austin ABOTA member, but we are confident that the central-docketing system has widespread support amongst those litigants and lawyers trying cases in Travis County. Travis County's central-docketing system is a model for the efficient access to justice.

First, thank you for your work as vice chair of the subcommittee appointed by the Texas Supreme Court Advisory Committee to study the central-docketing system used by some counties in Texas, including Travis County. We believe that your analysis will show that Travis County's central-docketing system is flexible, fair, and very efficient. And we suspect that a majority of the comments that you will receive from lawyers and clients who actually adjudicate disputes in Travis County will support keeping this system in place.

The focus of any analysis should be on the litigants; those who seek the efficient administration of justice through the Travis County court system. Our judges in Travis County are smart. They work very hard. And the central-docketing system allows our judges to carry out the efficient administration of justice for those litigants every day.

The central-docketing system is flexible. It allows the assignment of a particular judge to a particular case when the circumstances warrant same. Travis County Local Rule 2.6 establishes that process and although it is utilized, many attorneys and litigants (injured individuals and corporate clients alike) nevertheless prefer the central-docketing system because of its efficiency. The central-docketing system is a lawyer/client driven docket. A party can file a motion and have it heard in a few weeks. A party can file a case and have it tried in less than a year. And the central-docketing system is predicable in that if your case is reasonably near the top of the docket sheet, you will go to trial. This efficiency saves litigants' time and money. No system is perfect, but the central-docketing system carries out the efficient administration of justice and it has for a long time.

4926-4854-3006

Scott Douglass & McConnico LLP | Attorneys at Law

Kennon Wooten  
March 5, 2025  
Page 2

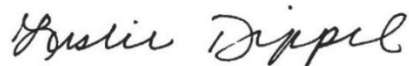
I know that access to justice is an important priority of the Texas Supreme Court. We would submit that access to justice includes the ability to efficiently access justice. For all of these reasons, we respectfully suggest that there is no need to fix something that is not broken. In fact, it is our opinion that the central-docketing system is a model for the efficient access to justice.

Thank you again for your hard work. Please let us know if we can help in any way.

Sincerely,



Ryan Squires  
President of Austin ABOTA (2025)



Leslie Dippel  
Immediate Past President of Austin ABOTA (2024)



Laura Sharp  
Past President of Austin ABOTA (2023)



Matt Dow  
Past President of Austin ABOTA (2022)



Karen Burgess  
Past President of Austin ABOTA (2021)

*/s/ Dan Richards (with permission)*

Dan Richards  
Past President of Austin ABOTA (2020)

## MEMORANDUM

To: Pete Schenkkan  
From: Daniela Peinado Welsh  
Date: Thursday, March 6, 2025  
Re: Reader's Guide to Central-Docketing materials (by page # in notebook)

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### **Memo from Rules of Judicial Administration Subcommittee (Feb. 28) page 5**

- A central-docketing system uses a master calendar. All matters in all cases set for a particular day are randomly assigned among all judges available, and redistributed that day as resolved..
- “Many courts, especially those in urban areas with comparatively large civil caseloads, employ a master calendar system.” National Center for State Courts Guide.
- In a single-calendar system, all actions handled by the judge to which a case is assigned.
- Both are in fact hybrids. Single calendar systems use master uncontested, consent, emergency, and ancillary calendars. Travis County specially assigns agency judicial review and other complex cases, and has a one-judge-one-family for child-welfare cases.
- “District Judges may exchange districts, or hold courts for each other when they deem it expedient, and shall do so when required by law[.]” Tex. Const. art. V § 11; *see also* Tex. Gov't Code § 24.003 (may “sit for another district court”); *id.* § 74.092 (administrative judge shall “supervise the expeditious movement of court caseloads”); *id.* § 74.094 (new business court rule); Tex. R. Civ. P. 330(e) (may “exchange benches or districts from time to time”).
- A central docket concern is judges hearing motions without case background. A Travis County electronic docket-notes platform enables each judge to check all prior rulings in the case.

### **Exhibit 1, Supreme Court of Texas Referral Letter (Feb. 7) page 19**

- Chief Justice Blacklock asked SCAC to study statewide single-calendar requirement. In his State of the Judiciary Address, he said, “it’s hard for me to see how assigning a different judge for each hearing throughout the life of a case promotes efficient and uniform justice.”

### **Exhibit 2, Article regarding Bexar County Policy (Feb. 14) page 21**

- A Bexar County judge challenged its central docket system; the Fourth Court denied relief. Her practice focused on cases in Children’s Court, Bexar County does not have a one-judge-one-family model, and she says its central docket retraumatizes children who must repeat the painful testimony.

### **Exhibit 3, Comments Submitted to Subcommittee (Feb. 18–28) page 29**

- 37 comments-- 30 in support of central-docketing, several others of balancing of interests. The highly compressed time period means many others did not hear in time to comment
- Worth reading through for different perspectives and vivid anecdotes. ”

### **Exhibit 4, Data Reported by Administrative Judicial Region (Dec. 2024) page 83**

- Texas’s highest clearance rates are in the 3rd Administrative Judicial Region, of which Travis County is the biggest part.

### **Exhibit 5, Letter from Travis County District Judges (Feb. 26) page 85**

- “Hybrid” system allows both specialized assignments and master calendar. Court Administrator master calendar management maximizes efficiencies and access to justice.



## Vernis McGill

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**From:** Anderson, Ryan G. <Ryan.Anderson@bexar.org>  
**Sent:** Thursday, March 6, 2025 4:42 PM  
**To:** Kennon Wooten  
**Cc:** Alvarado, Judge Rosie; Arteaga, Judge Antonia; Budd, Elyssa  
**Subject:** Bexar County Civil District Courts OCA Performance Measures 2016-January 2025.pdf  
**Attachments:** Bexar County Civil District Courts OCA Performance Measures 2016-January 2025.pdf

**EXTERNAL**

Kennon:

Attached are the OCA's performance reports for the Bexar County Civil District Courts from 2016 through January 2025. It provides a little bit clearer picture than the 1182 reports of where Bexar County stands in terms of disposing of cases. As you will note in reviewing the attachments, Bexar was comfortably above the 90% overall disposition rate (combining Civil and Family cases) every year until 2020, when Covid hit and the courts had to adjust their systems on the fly. As part of reorganizing our systems to address the challenges of the pandemic, we suspended our DWOP docket in April 2020. As would be expected, our disposition rates fell sharply. We first discussed restarting the docket late in 2023, and I met with the District Clerk's office to request that they reinstate the DWOP docket in January 2024. As you know, the courts are captive to the District Clerk's office as far as getting the notices out under Rule 165. The District Clerk's office did not restart the docket until August 2024, and even then it was a very small "test" docket as they trained a new crew to handle that responsibility. The DWOP docket did not really get going until December 2024, which led to a noticeable uptick in our disposition rate. The January 2025 performance report shows the continued upward trend of the disposition rate as a direct result of the reinstatement of the DWOP docket. Although the February report has not been posted, our preliminary report shows an overall disposition rate of 97%.

On the whole, we believe that a central docket is not an impediment to (and actually supports) the efficient maintenance of civil and family dockets, in addition to its many other benefits.

Please feel free to call me with any questions you might have. I can always be reached on my cell phone at 210-316-2496. I started as General Administrative Counsel in January 2022, following nearly 30 years of litigating cases throughout Texas and have a pretty balanced view of the systems employed in Bexar and Travis Counties and how they stand up to docket management in other areas of the State. While central dockets certainly can give rise to issues (as is the case with any system involving human beings), I believe that any shortcoming can be addressed by a firm commitment to continuous improvement and, more importantly, that the benefits to litigants and taxpayers far outweigh any shortcomings.

Thank you.

Ryan G. Anderson  
General Counsel – Bexar County Civil District Courts  
Bexar County Courthouse, Fifth Floor  
100 Dolorosa  
San Antonio, Texas 78205

(210) 335-1107

**District Court Performance Measures**  
**Clearance Rate and Backlog Index from January 1, 2016 to December 31, 2016**  
**(Counties Listed in Alphabetical Order)**

County	2023 Population	CIVIL CASES		FAMILY CASES		CRIMINAL CASES		JUVENILE CASES	
		Clearance Rate	Backlog Index	Clearance Rate	Backlog Index	Clearance Rate	Backlog Index	Clearance Rate	Backlog Index
Bexar	2,087,679	91.8%	1.3	93.2%	0.8	98.9%	0.3	97.3%	0.1
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>2,087,679</b>	<b>91.8%</b>	<b>1.3</b>	<b>93.2%</b>	<b>0.8</b>	<b>98.9%</b>	<b>0.3</b>	<b>97.3%</b>	<b>0.1</b>

\* Indicates Zero Cases Reported

Run Report Date: 3/6/2025 10:41 am

**District Court Performance Measures**  
**Clearance Rate and Backlog Index from January 1, 2017 to December 31, 2017**  
**(Counties Listed in Alphabetical Order)**

County	2023 Population	CIVIL CASES		FAMILY CASES		CRIMINAL CASES		JUVENILE CASES	
		Clearance Rate	Backlog Index	Clearance Rate	Backlog Index	Clearance Rate	Backlog Index	Clearance Rate	Backlog Index
Bexar	2,087,679	87.6%	1.3	99.5%	0.9	97.4%	0.2	99.0%	0.1
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>2,087,679</b>	<b>87.6%</b>	<b>1.3</b>	<b>99.5%</b>	<b>0.9</b>	<b>97.4%</b>	<b>0.2</b>	<b>99.0%</b>	<b>0.1</b>

\* Indicates Zero Cases Reported

Run Report Date: 3/6/2025 10:54 am

**District Court Performance Measures**  
**Clearance Rate and Backlog Index from January 1, 2018 to December 31, 2018**  
**(Counties Listed in Alphabetical Order)**

County	2023 Population	CIVIL CASES		FAMILY CASES		CRIMINAL CASES		JUVENILE CASES	
		Clearance Rate	Backlog Index	Clearance Rate	Backlog Index	Clearance Rate	Backlog Index	Clearance Rate	Backlog Index
Bexar	2,087,679	94.7%	1.3	105.5%	0.9	97.4%	0.3	102.9%	0.2
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>2,087,679</b>	<b>94.7%</b>	<b>1.3</b>	<b>105.5%</b>	<b>0.9</b>	<b>97.4%</b>	<b>0.3</b>	<b>102.9%</b>	<b>0.2</b>

\* Indicates Zero Cases Reported

Run Report Date: 3/6/2025 10:54 am

**District Court Performance Measures**  
**Clearance Rate and Backlog Index from January 1, 2019 to December 31, 2019**  
**(Counties Listed in Alphabetical Order)**

County	2023 Population	CIVIL CASES		FAMILY CASES		CRIMINAL CASES		JUVENILE CASES	
		Clearance Rate	Backlog Index	Clearance Rate	Backlog Index	Clearance Rate	Backlog Index	Clearance Rate	Backlog Index
Bexar	2,087,679	84.4%	1.5	106.2%	0.9	98.8%	0.3	101.8%	0.2
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>2,087,679</b>	<b>84.4%</b>	<b>1.5</b>	<b>106.2%</b>	<b>0.9</b>	<b>98.8%</b>	<b>0.3</b>	<b>101.8%</b>	<b>0.2</b>

\* Indicates Zero Cases Reported

Run Report Date: 3/6/2025 10:54 am

**District Court Performance Measures**  
**Clearance Rate and Backlog Index from January 1, 2020 to December 31, 2020**  
**(Counties Listed in Alphabetical Order)**

County	2023 Population	CIVIL CASES		FAMILY CASES		CRIMINAL CASES		JUVENILE CASES	
		Clearance Rate	Backlog Index	Clearance Rate	Backlog Index	Clearance Rate	Backlog Index	Clearance Rate	Backlog Index
Bexar	2,087,679	75.0%	2.1	74.0%	1.3	84.4%	0.4	67.3%	0.4
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>2,087,679</b>	<b>75.0%</b>	<b>2.1</b>	<b>74.0%</b>	<b>1.3</b>	<b>84.4%</b>	<b>0.4</b>	<b>67.3%</b>	<b>0.4</b>

\* Indicates Zero Cases Reported

Run Report Date: 3/6/2025 10:55 am

**District Court Performance Measures**  
**Clearance Rate and Backlog Index from January 1, 2021 to December 31, 2021**  
**(Counties Listed in Alphabetical Order)**

County	2023 Population	CIVIL CASES		FAMILY CASES		CRIMINAL CASES		JUVENILE CASES	
		Clearance Rate	Backlog Index	Clearance Rate	Backlog Index	Clearance Rate	Backlog Index	Clearance Rate	Backlog Index
Bexar	2,087,679	76.8%	2.4	76.7%	1.5	98.0%	0.5	133.2%	0.6
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>2,087,679</b>	<b>76.8%</b>	<b>2.4</b>	<b>76.7%</b>	<b>1.5</b>	<b>98.0%</b>	<b>0.5</b>	<b>133.2%</b>	<b>0.6</b>

\* Indicates Zero Cases Reported

Run Report Date: 3/6/2025 10:55 am



**District Court Performance Measures**  
**Clearance Rate and Backlog Index from January 1, 2022 to December 31, 2022**  
**(Counties Listed in Alphabetical Order)**

County	2023 Population	CIVIL CASES		FAMILY CASES		CRIMINAL CASES		JUVENILE CASES	
		Clearance Rate	Backlog Index	Clearance Rate	Backlog Index	Clearance Rate	Backlog Index	Clearance Rate	Backlog Index
Bexar	2,087,679	79.5%	2.6	91.5%	1.5	108.0%	0.4	101.3%	0.4
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>2,087,679</b>	<b>79.5%</b>	<b>2.6</b>	<b>91.5%</b>	<b>1.5</b>	<b>108.0%</b>	<b>0.4</b>	<b>101.3%</b>	<b>0.4</b>

\* Indicates Zero Cases Reported

Run Report Date: 3/6/2025 11:01 am

**District Court Performance Measures**  
**Clearance Rate and Backlog Index from January 1, 2023 to December 31, 2023**  
**(Counties Listed in Alphabetical Order)**

County	2023 Population	CIVIL CASES		FAMILY CASES		CRIMINAL CASES		JUVENILE CASES	
		Clearance Rate	Backlog Index	Clearance Rate	Backlog Index	Clearance Rate	Backlog Index	Clearance Rate	Backlog Index
Bexar	2,087,679	72.6%	2.8	87.5%	1.7	109.6%	0.3	106.2%	0.3
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>2,087,679</b>	<b>72.6%</b>	<b>2.8</b>	<b>87.5%</b>	<b>1.7</b>	<b>109.6%</b>	<b>0.3</b>	<b>106.2%</b>	<b>0.3</b>

\* Indicates Zero Cases Reported

Run Report Date: 3/6/2025 10:56 am

**District Court Performance Measures**  
**Clearance Rate and Backlog Index from January 1, 2024 to December 31, 2024**  
 (Counties Listed in Alphabetical Order)

County	2023 Population	CIVIL CASES		FAMILY CASES		CRIMINAL CASES		JUVENILE CASES	
		Clearance Rate	Backlog Index	Clearance Rate	Backlog Index	Clearance Rate	Backlog Index	Clearance Rate	Backlog Index
Bexar	2,087,679	77.1%	2.7	89.5%	1.9	97.0%	0.2	99.5%	0.3
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>2,087,679</b>	<b>77.1%</b>	<b>2.7</b>	<b>89.5%</b>	<b>1.9</b>	<b>97.0%</b>	<b>0.2</b>	<b>99.5%</b>	<b>0.3</b>

\* Indicates Zero Cases Reported

Run Report Date: 3/6/2025 10:56 am

**District Court Performance Measures**  
**Clearance Rate and Backlog Index from January 1, 2025 to January 31, 2025**  
**(Counties Listed in Alphabetical Order)**

County	2023 Population	CIVIL CASES		FAMILY CASES		CRIMINAL CASES		JUVENILE CASES	
		Clearance Rate	Backlog Index	Clearance Rate	Backlog Index	Clearance Rate	Backlog Index	Clearance Rate	Backlog Index
Bexar	2,087,679	115.6%	24.4	91.4%	22.5	86.8%	5.5		
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>2,087,679</b>	<b>115.6%</b>	<b>24.4</b>	<b>91.4%</b>	<b>22.5</b>	<b>86.8%</b>	<b>5.5</b>		

\* Indicates Zero Cases Reported

Run Report Date: 3/6/2025 2:40 pm