

# Analysis of Activity for the Year Ended August 31, 2000

## New Cases Added

In fiscal year 2000, there were 414 district courts in operation in Texas. The 76<sup>th</sup> Legislature, in 1998, approved the creation of 22 new district courts. On September 1, 1999, 9 new district courts were implemented and another 9 were implemented during the year. As of January 1, 2001 it is expected that there will be 418 districts courts operating in the State.

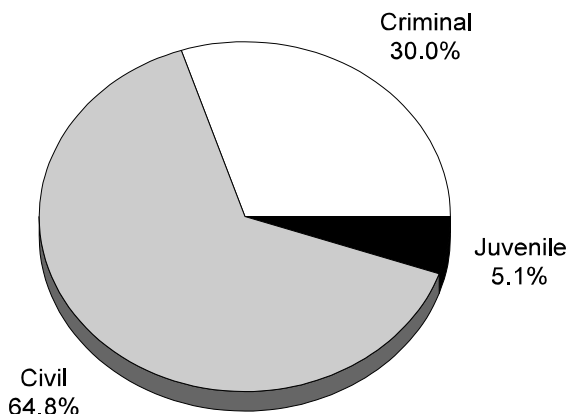
During the 2000 fiscal year, the district courts experienced a six percent increase in the number of new cases added during the reporting year-- from 700,578 cases in fiscal year 1999 to 746,015 in 2000. The number of new criminal cases increased 5 percent from 1999 additions, civil cases increased 7 percent, and juvenile cases increased 3 percent.

As Figure 1 below indicates, civil cases accounted for 65 percent (486,320) of all cases added

## HIGHLIGHTS

- The number of new cases filed in fiscal year 2000 increased 6 percent from filings in the previous year.
- Civil cases accounted for 65 percent of cases added, criminal cases 30 percent, and juvenile 5 percent.
- The district courts disposed of 97 percent of all cases added to their dockets, one percent more than in FY 1999.
- Forty-four percent of all criminal cases disposed and 27 percent of all civil cases disposed in fiscal year 2000 were disposed in 60 days or less.
- Among the criminal cases, the categories with the highest rate of disposition by conviction were felony DWI at 64 percent and capital murders at 59 percent.
- The district courts imposed 24 death sentences and 330 life sentences in fiscal year 2000

Figure 1: Total Cases Added (746,015)



percent, accounts and contract cases constituting 5 percent, injury or damage (other than those involving a motor vehicle) constituting 4 percent, injury or damage involving a motor vehicle constituting 4 percent, and other civil cases constituting 10 percent.

Juvenile cases (Title 3 of the Texas Family Code) accounted for 36,813 or 5 percent, of the total cases added in the district courts.

Criminal cases constituted 222,882, or 30 percent, of the total cases added during the year. Of those criminal cases, 22 percent involved drug possession, 20 percent were felony cases (other than DWI), 11 percent involved drug sales or manufacturing, 9 percent involved a charge of theft (not including auto theft), 9 percent burglary, 8 percent assault or attempted murder, 6 percent felony DWI, 5 percent sexual assault, 3 percent were misdemeanor

during the fiscal year. Family law matters (other than divorce actions) was the largest segment of civil cases added, constituting 42 percent of the civil case additions. Other types of cases that made-up the additions to the civil dockets were: divorce actions constituting 25 percent, tax cases constituting 11

# Analysis of Activity for the Year Ended August 31, 2000

(Continued)

cases, 1 percent were murder of voluntary manslaughter cases, and .2 percent were capital murder cases.

## Dispositions

During the fiscal year 2000, the district courts disposed of 97 percent of the total criminal, civil and juvenile cases added to their dockets, as compared to 96 percent in 1999. In a breakdown by type of case, 99 percent of the criminal cases added were disposed, 97 percent of the civil cases added, and 94 percent of the juvenile cases added to the dockets were disposed of during the year.

An average of 1,751 cases per judge statewide were disposed of in fiscal year 2000, as compared to 1,704 cases per judge during 1999.

Of all civil cases disposed during the fiscal year, 24 percent were by non-jury trials, and approximately 46 percent of these non-jury trials were in divorce cases. Of the total civil cases disposed, 38 percent were family law cases (not including divorces), divorce case dispositions constituted 26 percent, and tax cases 11 percent. Of all civil cases, 11 percent were dismissed for want of prosecution, and 15 percent were dismissed at the request of the plaintiff.

In criminal cases during fiscal year 2000, the

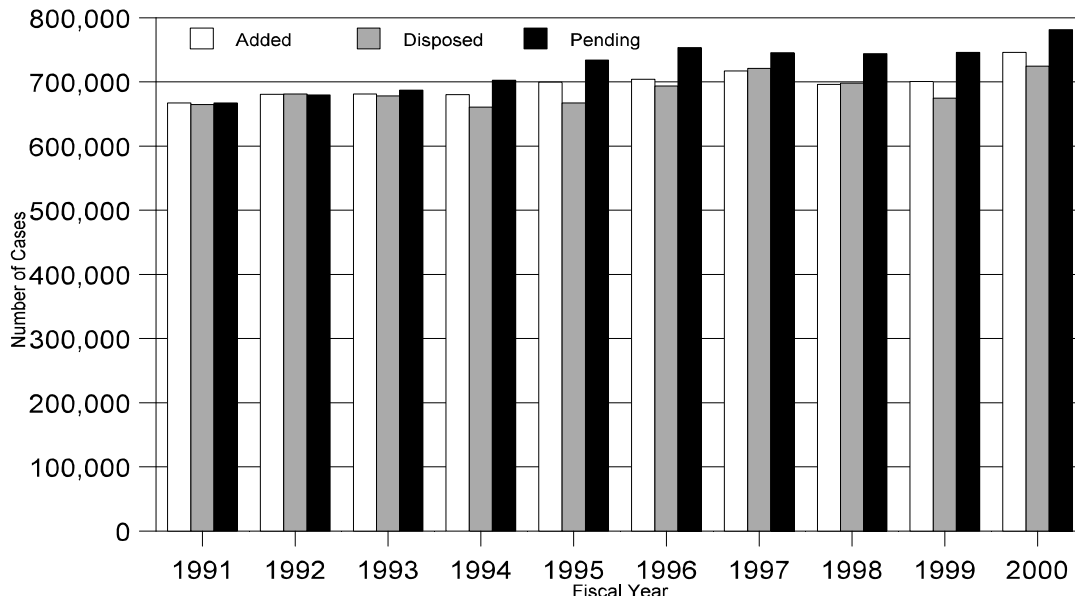
defendant entered a plea of guilty in 39 percent of the criminal cases disposed. Including these pleas, the defendant was convicted in 41 percent of the disposed cases, and acquitted in less than one percent. In 16 percent of the criminal dispositions, the defendant was placed on deferred adjudication. Dismissals accounted for 15 percent of the disposed cases. Transfers and other dispositions made up the remaining 27 percent of the total cases disposed.

Of these dismissals, 25 percent were because the defendant was convicted in another case, 9 percent were due to insufficient evidence, and 8 percent were because the case was re-filed, and 2 percent were because the defendant was not apprehended.

In those cases in which the defendant pleaded not guilty, the defendant was found guilty 73 percent of the time, and was acquitted 27 percent of the time.

Among the criminal cases, the categories with the highest rate of disposition *by conviction* were felony DWI at 64 percent, capital murders at 59 percent, followed by murder or voluntary manslaughter at 53 percent. The highest rate of disposition by dismissal was sexual assault of an adult at 29 percent, capital murder cases at 28 percent, and indecency with or sexual assault of a child at 22 percent. The lowest rate of dismissal was for robbery cases at 2 percent.

Figure 2: Cases Added, Disposed, and Pending



# Analysis of Activity for the Year Ended August 31, 2000

(Continued)

## Disposition Rates

As Figure 3 indicates, of the 219,655 criminal cases disposed by the district courts, 33 percent were disposed of in a period of less than two months from the date of indictment or information, 11 percent took two to three months, 9 percent took three to four months, and 48 percent took over four months.

Of juvenile cases handled by the district courts, a finding of delinquent conduct or conduct indicating a need for supervision (CINS) was entered in 57 percent of the cases disposed. Probation was continued in 6 percent of the cases and revoked in 5 percent of the cases. Dismissals and other dispositions occurred in 31 percent of the cases disposed.

Of the 434,335 civil dispositions during the year, the courts disposed of 27 percent of the cases in under three months, 20 percent in three to six months, 20 percent in six to twelve months, 10 percent in twelve to eighteen months, and 23 percent in over eighteen months.

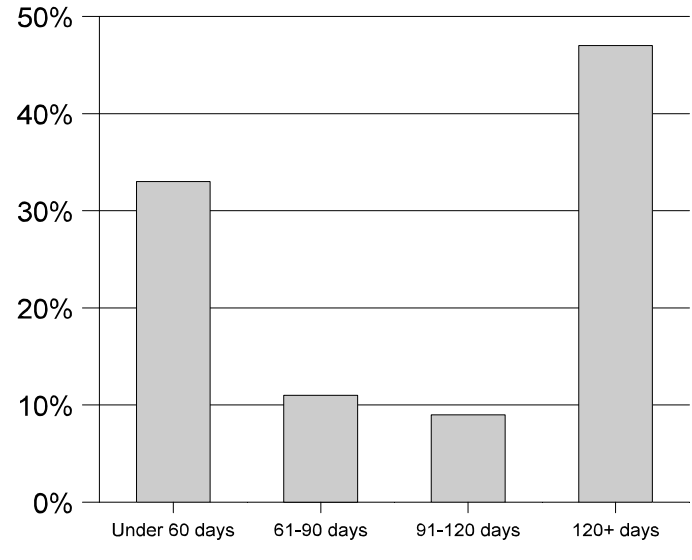
Tax cases tend to stay on the docket for long periods of time compared to other categories of cases. In fiscal year 2000, approximately 30 percent of the tax cases filed during the year, or carried over from the previous year, were disposed of by the district courts, leaving 123,875 cases pending at the end of the year. Forty-four percent of tax case dispositions were dismissed by the plaintiff, for want of prosecution.

## Cases Pending

At the end of fiscal year 2000, there were 781,237 total civil, criminal and juvenile cases pending in the district courts. The 571,066 civil cases pending in the district courts on August 31, 2000 represented a 5 percent increase over the 545,712 of the previous year. The 190,423 criminal cases pending was a 3 percent decrease in comparison to 181,781 cases at the end of fiscal year 1999, and the 19,748 juvenile cases was 5 percent more pending cases than the 18,764 at the end of fiscal year 1999.

At the end of the fiscal year, there were 10,153 post conviction writs of habeas corpus and 2,809 other writs of habeas corpus. There were also 2,101 contempt, extradition and other separately docketed proceeding, and 26,998 bond forfeiture proceedings.

Figure 3: Age of Cases Disposed (Criminal)



## Death Sentences Imposed

In fiscal year 2000, there were 24 death sentences and 330 life sentences assessed in the district courts during the year. In the previous fiscal year, there were 36 death sentences and 329 life sentences.