

Analysis of Activity for the Year Ended August 31, 1999

New Cases Added

In fiscal year 1999, there were 396 district courts in Texas; however, the 76th Legislature created several new district courts. Beginning on September 1, 1999, 9 new district courts were implemented and another 7 are to be implemented on January 1, 2000. After January 1, 2001 there will be 418 districts courts operating in the State.

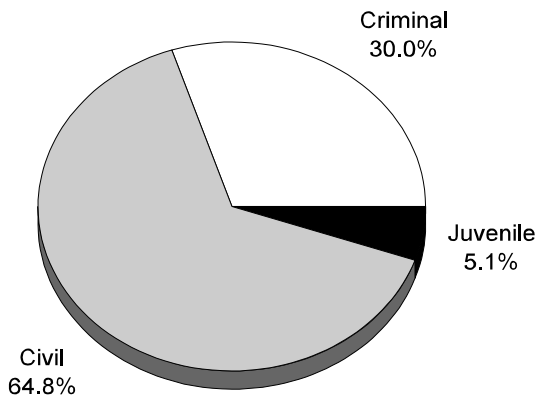
During the 1999 fiscal year, the district courts experienced a one percent increase in the number of new cases added during the reporting year-- from 696,314 cases in 1998 to 700,578 in 1999. The number of new criminal cases decreased 3 percent from 1998 additions, civil cases increased 3 percent, and juvenile cases decreased 4 percent.

As Figure 1 below indicates, civil cases accounted for 454,175, or 65 percent, of all cases

HIGHLIGHTS

- The number of new cases filed in fiscal year 1999 increased one percent from filings in the previous year.
- Juvenile cases accounted for approximately 5 percent of all cases added.
- The district courts disposed of 96 percent of all cases on their docket (cases added plus cases carried over from the previous year).
- Thirty-two percent of all criminal cases disposed and 33 percent of all civil cases disposed in fiscal year 1999 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 62 percent and capital murders at 61 percent.
- The district courts imposed 36 death sentences and 329 life sentences in fiscal year 1999.

Figure 1: Total Cases Added (714,392)



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 35,909, or 5 percent, of the total cases added in the district courts.

Criminal cases constituted 210,494, or 30 percent, of the total cases added during the year. Of those criminal cases, 20 percent were felony cases (other than DWI), 19 percent involved drug possession, 11 percent involved drug sales or manufacturing, 11 percent involved a charge of theft (including auto theft), 9 percent burglary, 7 percent assault or attempted murder, 6 percent felony DWI, 5 percent sexual assault, 4 percent were misdemeanor cases, 11 percent involved assault (including sexual assault), 3 percent robbery, and 1 percent were homicide (including capital murder) cases.

added during the fiscal year. Family law matters (other than divorce actions) was the largest segment of civil cases added, constituting 40 percent of the civil case additions. Other types of cases that made-up the additions to the civil dockets were: divorce actions constituting 26 percent, tax cases constituting 11 percent, accounts and contract cases constituting 5

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Dispositions

During the fiscal year 1999, the district courts disposed of 96 percent of the total criminal, civil and juvenile cases added to their dockets, as compared to 100 percent in 1998. In a breakdown by type of case, 98 percent of the criminal cases added were disposed, 96 percent of the civil cases added, and 93 percent of the juvenile cases added to the dockets were disposed of during the year.

An average of 1,703 cases per judge statewide were disposed of in fiscal year 1999, as compared to 1,763 cases per judge during 1998.

Of all civil cases disposed during the fiscal year, 24 percent were by non-jury trials, and approximately 48 percent of these non-jury trials were in divorce cases. Of the total civil cases disposed, 36 percent were family law cases (including show cause motions but not divorces), divorce case dispositions constituted 27 percent, and tax cases 12 percent. Of all civil cases, 11 percent were dismissed for want of prosecution, and 16 percent were dismissed at the request of the plaintiff.

In criminal cases during fiscal year 1999, the defendant entered a plea of guilty in 39 percent of the criminal cases disposed. Including these pleas, the

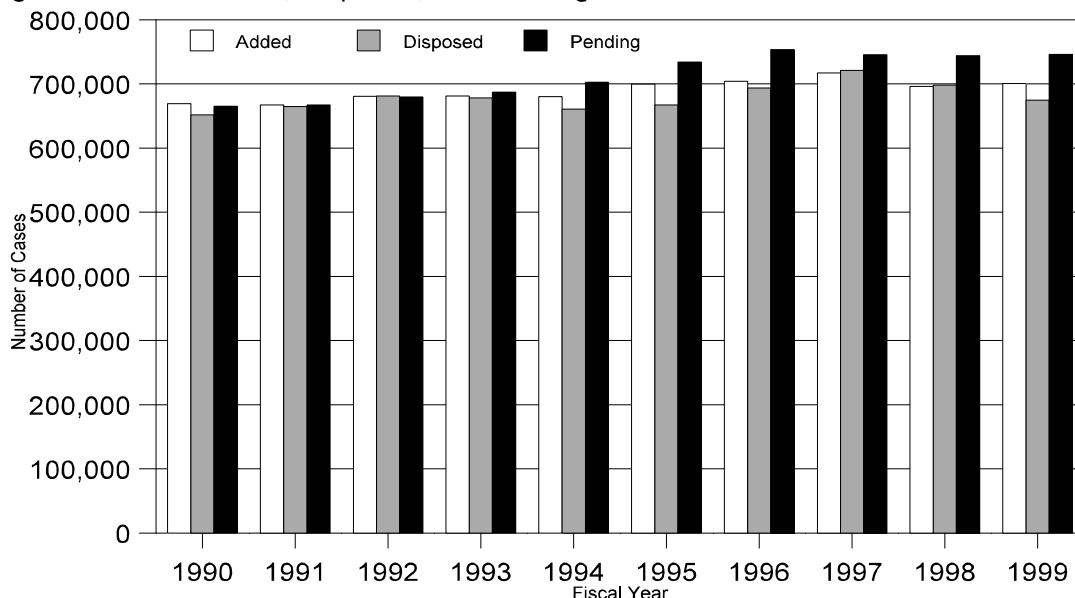
defendant was convicted in 41 percent of the disposed cases, and acquitted in less than one percent. In 15 percent of the criminal dispositions, the defendant was placed on deferred adjudication. Dismissals accounted for 14 percent of the disposed cases. Transfers and other dispositions made up the remaining 29 percent of the total cases disposed.

Of these dismissals, 25 percent were because the defendant was convicted in another case, 9 percent were because the case was re-filed, 8 percent were because of insufficient evidence, 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 74 percent of the time, and was acquitted 26 percent of the time.

Among the criminal cases, the categories with the highest rate of disposition by conviction were felony DWI at 62 percent and capital murders at 61 percent. The highest rate of disposition by dismissal was capital murder cases at 29 percent, followed by sexual assault of an adult at 27 percent, and indecency with or sexual assault of a child at 22 percent. The lowest rate of dismissal was for felony DWI cases at 9 percent.

Figure 2: Cases Added, Disposed, and Pending



Analysis of Activity for the Year Ended August 31, 1999

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Disposition Rates

As Figure 3 indicates, of the 206,746 criminal cases disposed by the district courts, 32 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 56 percent of the cases disposed. Probation was continued in 6 percent of the cases and revoked in less than 5 percent of the cases. Dismissals and other dispositions occurred in 32 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.

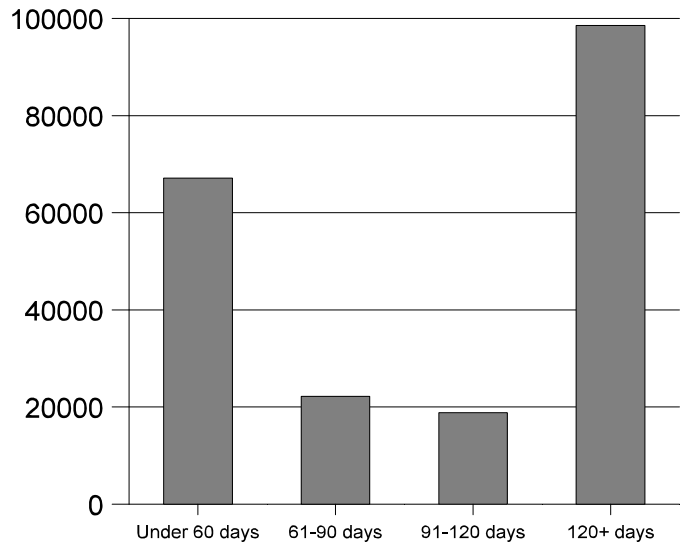
Tax cases tend to stay on the docket for long periods of time compared to other categories of cases. In fiscal year 1999, as in fiscal year 1998, 30 percent of the tax cases filed during the year, or carried over from the previous year, were disposed of by the district courts. Approximately 50 percent of tax case dispositions were either dismissed for want of prosecution or by the plaintiff.

District courts disposed of 10 percent less personal injury-type cases during 1999 than during 1998. Eighteen percent of the personal injury-type cases ended in agreed judgments, 2 percent ended in default judgements, and 30 percent were dismissed by the plaintiff.

Cases Pending

At the end of fiscal year 1999, there were 746,257 total civil, criminal and juvenile cases pending in the district courts. The 545,712 civil cases pending in the district courts on August 31, 1999 represented a 1 percent increase over the 539,273 of the previous year. The 181,781 criminal cases pending was a 3 percent decrease in comparison to 188,329 cases at the end of fiscal year 1998, and the 18,764 juvenile cases

Figure 3: Age of Cases Disposed (Criminal)



was 14 percent more pending cases than at the end of fiscal year 1998.

At the end of the fiscal year there were 8,649 post conviction writs of habeas corpus and 2,320 other writs of habeas corpus. There were also 2,214 contempt, extradition and other separately docketed proceeding, and 25156 bond forfeiture proceedings.

Death Sentences Imposed

In fiscal year 1999, there were 36 death sentences and 329 life sentences assessed in the district courts during the year. In the previous fiscal year, there were 36 death sentences and 374 life sentences.