

## **Overview - District Court**

### Mission Statement

The 77th District Court is committed to providing the public fair and efficient judicial service in an atmosphere of respect to all persons, and in cooperation with the funding unit.<sup>1</sup>

### Overview

Citizens have more contact with District Court than any other court in the state. District Court has exclusive jurisdiction of all civil litigation up to \$25,000.00 and handles garnishments, eviction proceedings, land contract and mortgage foreclosures and other proceedings. In the criminal field, the District Court handles all misdemeanors where punishment does not exceed one year, relevant proceedings including arraignment, setting and acceptance of bail, trial and sentencing. It also conducts preliminary examinations in felony cases.

The District Court includes a small claims division, for civil cases up to \$5,000. In these cases, litigants agree to waive their right to a jury, rules of evidence, representation by a lawyer and the right to appeal from the District Judge's decision. If either party objects, the case will be heard by the general civil division of the District Court.

By statute, District Judges have the authority to appoint Magistrates. Magistrates may set bail and accept bond in criminal matters, accept guilty pleas and sentence for traffic, motor carrier and snowmobile violations, dog, Department of Natural Resources and marine law violations. The Magistrate may also issue arrest and search warrants authorized by the prosecutor or municipal attorney. Attorney Magistrates may hear small claims cases. Magistrates may, at the direction of the Chief Judge, perform other duties allowed by statute.

District Judges are elected for six-year terms on nonpartisan ballots, under the same requirements as Circuit Judges.

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<sup>1</sup> Adapted from <http://www.accesskent.com/Courts/63dc/>