



Washington County  
Attorney's Office

# Annual Report 2022



15015 62nd Street N  
Stillwater, MN 55082



[www.co.washington.mn.us](http://www.co.washington.mn.us)



(651) 430-6115



[WCA@co.washington.mn.us](mailto:WCA@co.washington.mn.us)





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# MESSAGE FROM THE COUNTY ATTORNEY

*Beyond the pandemic, moving in the right direction*



Welcome to the Washington County Attorney's Office's annual report for 2022. This report marks my first opportunity as elected county attorney to recognize the tremendous effort and commitment of our attorneys and staff. As you will see in this report, the dedicated and hard-working employees of the office handled more criminal and civil litigation and provided more legal services than ever before while strengthening relationships with law enforcement, county departments, community advocates, and citizens. Our entire team is truly outstanding, and I am very proud to work with them on a daily basis. This annual report represents a snapshot of this office's work in 2022 on behalf of the citizens of Washington County, but it does not tell the entire story of its achievements. That story is best reflected in the community's confidence that we were there for them when they needed help.

Under my leadership, this office remains committed to protecting public safety, serving the community, and providing sound legal advice to county government. Our dedicated prosecutors filed 1,327 criminal complaints in 2022. In the Juvenile Division, we addressed the problem of increased serious juvenile delinquency and returned to pre-pandemic numbers of child protection court filings. Due to the new normal of remote hearings, more court appearances were required by our staff. Our Victim/Witness coordinators worked with over 2,057 victims, often through very difficult experiences. The Civil Division attorneys continued to protect the vulnerable, assist county contracting and other business, and facilitate required public hearings to keep our community informed. Every division in the office met the increased workload with passion and professional commitment.

We worked hard to better protect our citizens and serve our county by also instituting a number of initiatives, (violent crime deterrence, truancy, and protecting the vulnerable) that focuses on data collection and enables the office to better hold criminals accountable and keep families safe. As part of this initiative, prosecutors, investigators, and analysts work together as a team to gather data and intelligence, analyze the information to support investigations and prosecutions, and guide violent crime enforcement priorities.

In 2022, as the office emerged from the pandemic, we engaged with our community, law enforcement partners, and citizens with renewed energy. Over 1,040 people attended more than 30 presentations by the office in areas of police training and crime prevention. Community engagement and law enforcement training are among my top priorities as County Attorney.

I remain deeply grateful for the opportunity to serve as the Washington County Attorney and look forward to working with you and our communities to make a difference in the quality of life for all citizens of Washington County.

Thanks everyone for your support!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'K. G. May', written over a white background.

# ADMINISTRATIVE DIVISION

## DIVISION OVERVIEW

The Administrative Division is responsible for planning and executing a comprehensive range of administrative services that support the mission of the Washington County Attorney and the work of all 56 employees within the office. Under the direction of the County Attorney, it develops and implements operating policies and procedures to protect public safety while being fiscally prudent. Thanks to the County Attorney's fiscal restraint, the operating cost of the office is well below other metropolitan area offices.



**Brent Wartner**  
First Assistant County Attorney



**Jenn Baltaian**  
Administrative Services Manager



**Jenny Nelson**  
Office Supervisor



**Laura Perkins**  
Public Information Manager



**Karen Fontaine**  
Executive Assistant



**Jeri Peck**  
Office Specialist

The division is overseen by the **First Assistant Brent Wartner**, who is the principal advisor to the County Attorney on administrative matters. The Administrative Division provides guidance on the management and use of the office's financial, human, and physical resources, systems and information management, automated litigation support, case management, records management, and media relations. The administrative staff must work closely with all divisions to ensure compliance with and implementation of all policies, standards and mandates of the office.

## SYSTEMS, INFORMATION AND OFFICE MANAGEMENT

**Administrative Services Manager Jennifer Baltaian** is responsible for the effective management of our 7.6-million-dollar annual budget, support services matters, and technological resources and initiatives. During the past decade, progress in automation has tremendously increased the efficiency and cost-effectiveness of the office. For example, the implementation of our case management system, (LENS 9.0) permits the sharing of information with other law enforcement agencies, such as the Sheriff's Office, District Court, local police departments, the Minnesota Bureau of Criminal Apprehension, and other outside governmental agencies, which greatly increases the overall efficiency of the office. Jennifer Baltaian, with the assistance of supervisor Jenny Nelson, is responsible for management of office legal support services staff consisting of 13 legal assistants, 4 paralegals and an office specialist position.

**Office Supervisor Jenny Nelson** is responsible for the day-to-day workflow of the office and supervises support staff and the front desk staffing, operation, and customer service. She also coordinates office operations and processes to ensure that policies and procedures are followed and updated as needed. Jenny manages special projects such as office record retention and the office "Evidence.com" program and coordinates with other agencies on the use and efficiency of that program and other similar programs.

**In 2022, over 1,040 people attended over 30 presentations both in-person and virtually sponsored by County Attorney's Office.**

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## **PUBLIC RELATIONS AND MEDIA**

As the **Law Enforcement Public Information Manager, Laura Perkins** leads public information efforts for the County Attorney, the County Sheriff, and their respective staff. She serves as the liaison between the County and the media, other governmental agencies, and the public. Laura facilitates the office responses to a variety of requests, including press conferences, media requests for statements and interviews, and community events. While information regarding pending cases must be safeguarded to ensure effective prosecution, this need must be balanced with the public's right to know.

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## **EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT TO THE COUNTY ATTORNEY**

**Executive Assistant Karen Fontaine** works closely with the County Attorney and First Assistant in planning, developing, and implementing all aspects of the office. Karen participates in the operation, organization and planning of the County Attorney's office for matters that affect the office, its duties, operations and responsibilities. She coordinates the office responses to a multitude of requests, community events, website content, published materials and assists with public relations and media.

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## **CUSTOMER SERVICE**

In 2022, the County Attorney's Office main phone line handled over 2,500 phone calls. The processing and fielding of each of these calls can range from case status inquiries to attorney and victim/witness coordinator assignments, directions, or other general inquiries.

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## **PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT**

The Administrative Division prepares the long- and short-range strategic planning for the office, including participation in the county-wide strategic plan. The Administrative Division coordinates purchasing and inventory tracking to ensure fiscal responsibility and maintain the yearly budget of the office. The division also pursues state and federal partnerships and funding in an effort to minimize requests for additional local funding.

# CIVIL DIVISION



**Sue Tice**  
Civil Division Head

**"Civil Division attorneys are dedicated to addressing and solving the legal needs of every County Department."**

The Civil Division acts as Washington County's civil lawyer, assisting all County Departments in achieving successful solutions. In addition, the division provides legal services and advice to the County Board and County Administrator. The work of the Civil Division is very diverse as it touches the breadth of issues facing Washington County.

The division is comprised of experienced legal support professionals and attorneys who are subject matter experts. Our mission is to provide timely civil legal services of the highest quality for the benefit of not only Washington County departments and leadership, but also for the benefit of the citizens of Washington County.

In addition, the responsibilities of the Civil Division include:

## TAX APPEALS

The Civil Division represents the County in property tax appeals brought by Washington County property owners. The Division attorneys are recognized as leaders throughout the state of Minnesota in litigating tax appeals. The decision to litigate these cases is founded in the belief of fairness in taxation. From 2020 through 2022, the Civil Division saw an 11% increase in these types of referrals, exceeding pre-pandemic levels for tax appeal referrals.

## CIVIL COMMITMENTS

In collaboration with Washington County Department of Social Services and other community partners, the Civil Division remains committed to protecting vulnerable individuals and those unable to provide adequate care for themselves. The Division is responsible for the civil commitment of individuals who are developmentally disabled, chemically dependent, mentally ill, mentally ill and dangerous, sexual psychopaths, and sexually dangerous persons. From 2020 through 2022, the Civil Division saw a 7% increase in these types of referrals, exceeding pre-pandemic levels for commitment referrals.

## MEDICAL ASSISTANCE REIMBURSEMENT & COLLECTION

Medical Assistance (MA) is Minnesota's Medicaid program for people with low incomes.

Federal and state laws require counties and other local agencies to recover costs that the MA program pays for its members under certain circumstances through estate recovery. Estate recovery is a law that requires the County to make claims against the estates of certain deceased MA members or the estates of deceased members' surviving spouses to recover the amount of MA paid for certain health care services. Estate recovery occurs only after the MA member dies.

Continuing its very successful collaboration with the Washington County Community Services Department, in 2022 the Civil Division assisted in the collection of MA reimbursement from estates, resulting in \$934,686.88 being collected - more than a 128% increase in the amount of MA reimbursement collected in 2021.

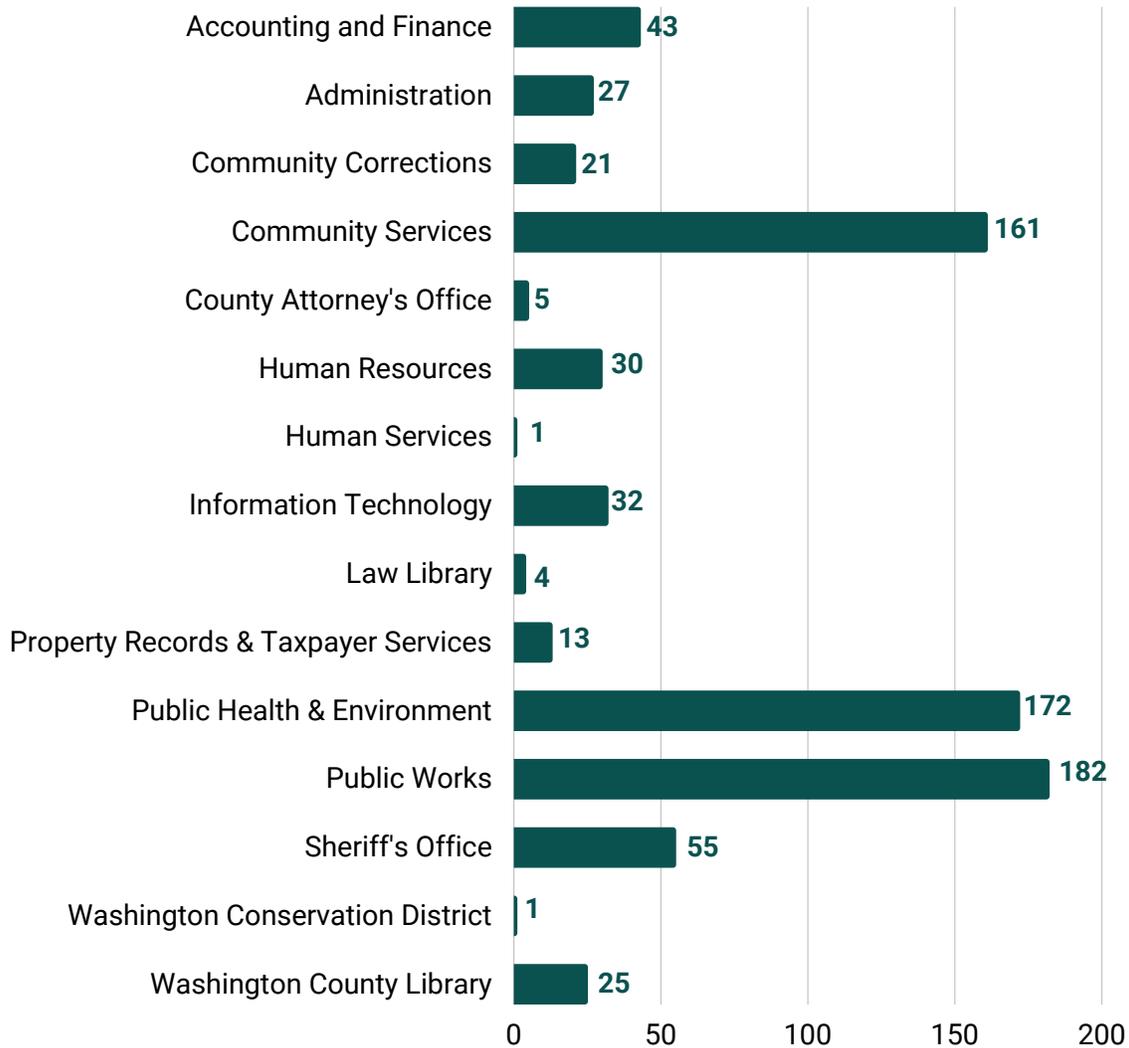
## CONTRACTS

The Civil Division provides legal advice to all County Departments concerning contracts and reviews draft contracts to ensure compliance with legal and policy requirements. From 2020 through 2022, the Civil Division has seen a 31% increase in these types of referrals, returning to a pre-pandemic level for contract review referrals. Civil Division attorneys also have been integral in participating in a workgroup to revise the county-wide Procurement Policy.

## CHILD SUPPORT & PATERNITY

While partnering with the Washington County Community Services Child Support Unit, the Civil Division is assigned the responsibility to establish paternity and pursue child support and reimbursement of public assistance. In this way, the Civil Division directly impacts the financial well-being of children and families in Washington County. From 2021 through 2022, the Civil Division saw a 7% increase in these types of referrals.

## CONTRACT REVIEWS & LEGAL OPTIONS



## RECYCLING & ENERGY BOARD

The Ramsey/Washington Recycling & Energy Board is a joint powers board with an annual budget of approximately \$54 million dollars that owns and operates a waste processing facility in Newport, turning waste into energy. The Civil Division provides legal advice to the R&E Board on all matters and assists the Board in exploring additional alternatives to landfilling the waste produced in Washington and Ramsey Counties. In addition to the contract reviews provided to all county departments in 2022, the Civil Division also reviewed roughly 500 contracts and grants for the R&E Board.

## PARTNERSHIP ON WASTE & ENERGY

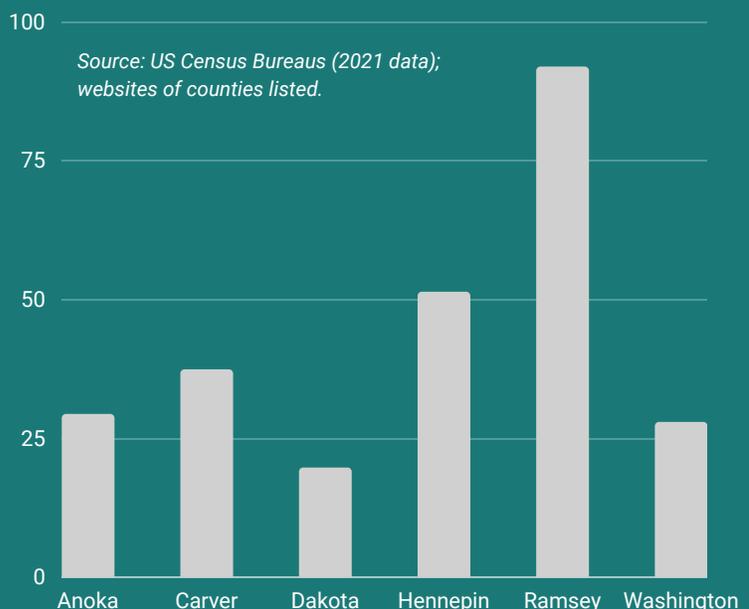
The Civil Division also advises the Partnership on Waste and Energy, a joint powers board consisting of Commissioners from Washington, Ramsey, and Hennepin Counties that focuses on legislation related to waste management in the three counties.

## GOLD LINE JOINT POWERS BOARD

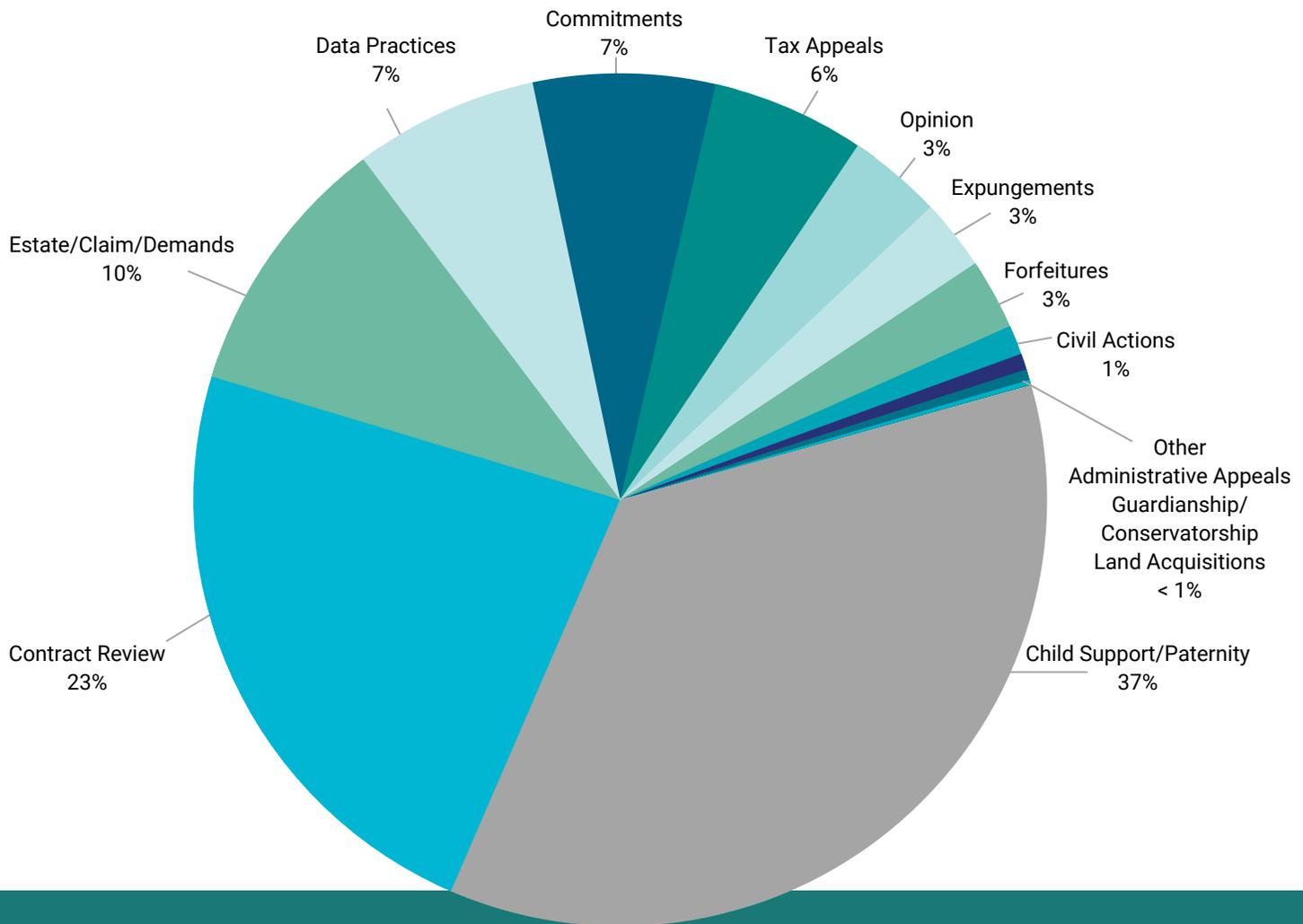
The Gold Line Joint Powers Board is a \$500-million-dollar venture between Washington and Ramsey Counties to construct an approximately 10-mile-long dedicated bus rapid transit line between Woodbury and downtown St. Paul. The Civil Division provides legal representation for all aspects of this project, from governance to contract reviews.

### SOUND FISCAL MANAGEMENT FOR LEGAL SERVICES IN WASHINGTON COUNTY

	<i>Cost Per Capita</i>
Anoka County	\$29.38
Carver County	\$37.41
Dakota County	\$19.73
Hennepin County	\$51.38
Ramsey County	\$91.92
<b>Washington County</b>	<b>\$27.94</b>



# CIVIL DIVISION BY THE NUMBERS 2022



## WORKLOAD DISTRIBUTION BY FILE ASSIGNMENTS

Child Support/Paternity	<b>1056</b>	Expungements	<b>79</b>
Contract Review	<b>683</b>	Forfeitures	<b>79</b>
Estate/Claim/Demands	<b>296</b>	Civil Actions	<b>33</b>
Data Practices	<b>206</b>	Other	<b>18</b>
Commitments	<b>203</b>	Administrative Appeals	<b>12</b>
Tax Appeals	<b>171</b>	Guardianship/Conservatorship	<b>5</b>
Opinions	<b>105</b>	Land Acquisitions	<b>1</b>

# CRIMINAL DIVISION

The Criminal Division is led by Nick Hydukovich, Criminal Division Head, and Tom Wedes, Assistant Criminal Division Head. Twelve prosecutors in the Criminal Division are responsible for prosecuting all felony and select gross misdemeanor crimes that occur in Washington County, in addition to all misdemeanor crimes that occur in townships in the county. Criminal Division prosecutors are responsible for prosecuting all types of criminal offenses, from first-degree murder to sexual assault, drug trafficking, and carjackings. Attorneys in the Criminal Division also handle the large number of appeals in criminal cases.

During the past year, Criminal Division prosecutors have continued to hold violent criminals accountable. For example, our prosecutors earned a first-degree murder conviction last summer in a case in which a man stabbed his wife to death. After a two-week jury trial, the defendant was found guilty and sentenced to life in prison. Criminal Division prosecutors continue to prosecute several other pending homicide cases.

**“Our prosecutors hold criminals accountable for their actions, and in doing so, ensure that victims are given a strong voice in the courtroom and beyond.”**

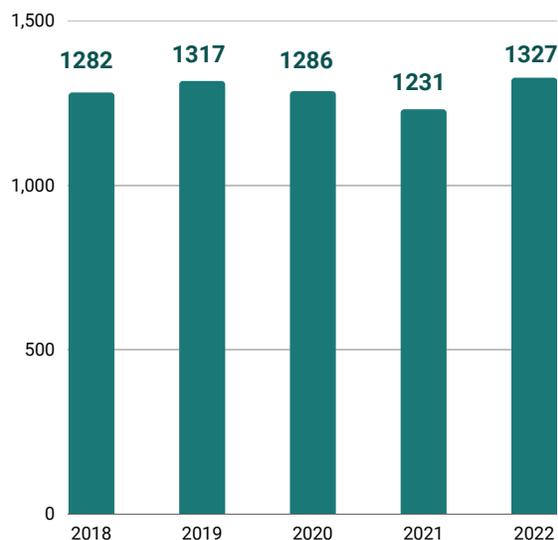


**Nick Hydukovich**  
Criminal Division Head



**Thomas Wedes**  
Assistant Criminal Division Head

We also vigorously prosecute high-level drug dealers. At the same time, County Attorney Magnuson continues the work begun by previous County Attorney Orput of recognizing that a significant portion of lower-level drug- and theft-related crimes are the direct result of addiction. Accordingly, Criminal Division prosecutors actively engage drug users in our robust drug diversion program, which provides an opportunity in the right circumstances for drug users—not dealers—to get the chemical dependency treatment and pro-social and cognitive skills programming necessary to lead sober and productive lives in lieu of a criminal conviction.



**CRIMINAL COMPLAINTS**



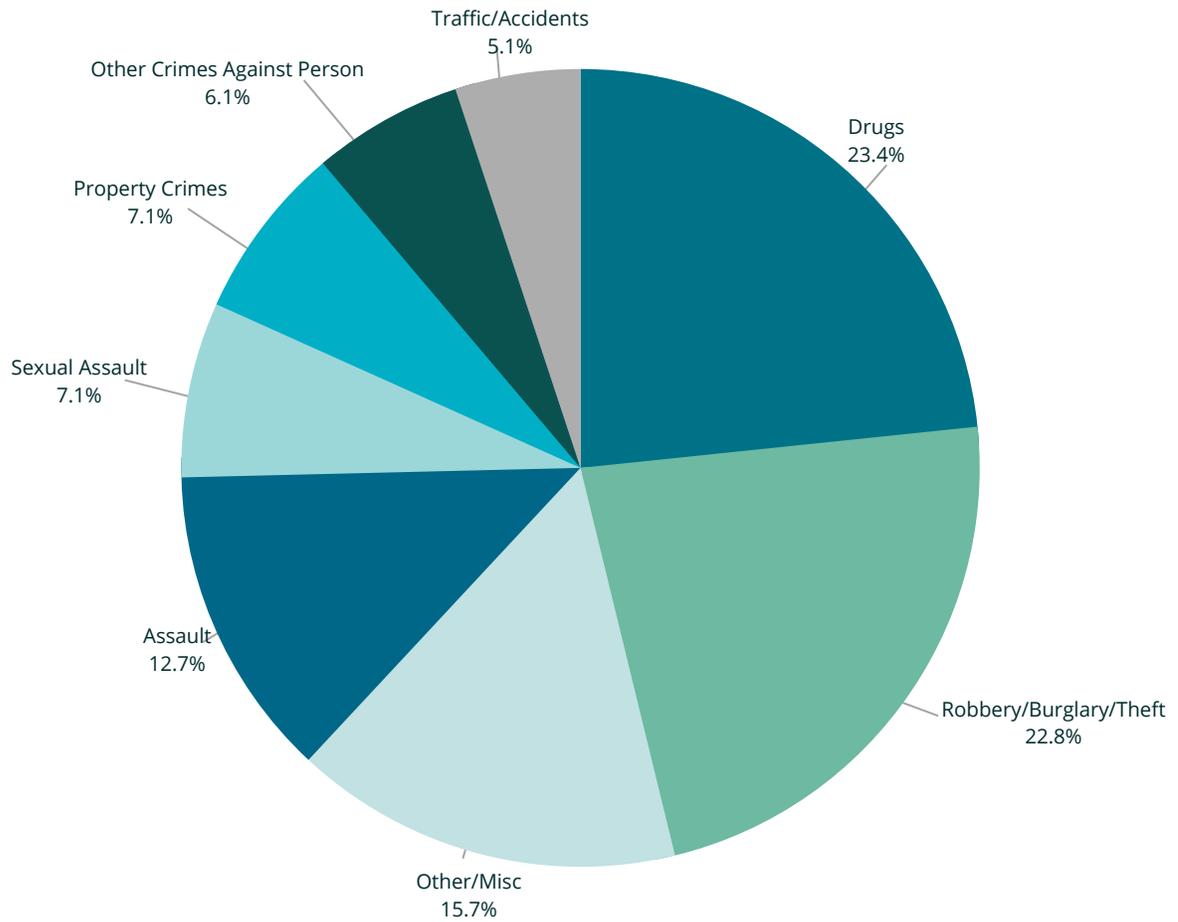
Similarly, the Washington County Attorney's Office continues to be involved in the efforts of the Washington County Opioid Task Force. Our countywide multi-disciplinary team has done impactful work in partnering with the Hazelden Betty Ford Foundation, resulting in tangible outcomes including community education and outreach, offering medication assisted treatment (MAT) in the jail, mandatory MAT education for defendants in drug court, streamlining and expansion of treatment options, and developing social services and law enforcement outreach teams.

The Criminal Division, as well as its Juvenile Division counterpart, continues to offer law enforcement the assistance of our automobile theft prosecutors to assist in any carjacking, catalytic converter theft, and automobile theft investigations. Our office prioritizes these cases, as well as the vital work done by the East Metro Sex Trafficking Task Force and our other task forces.

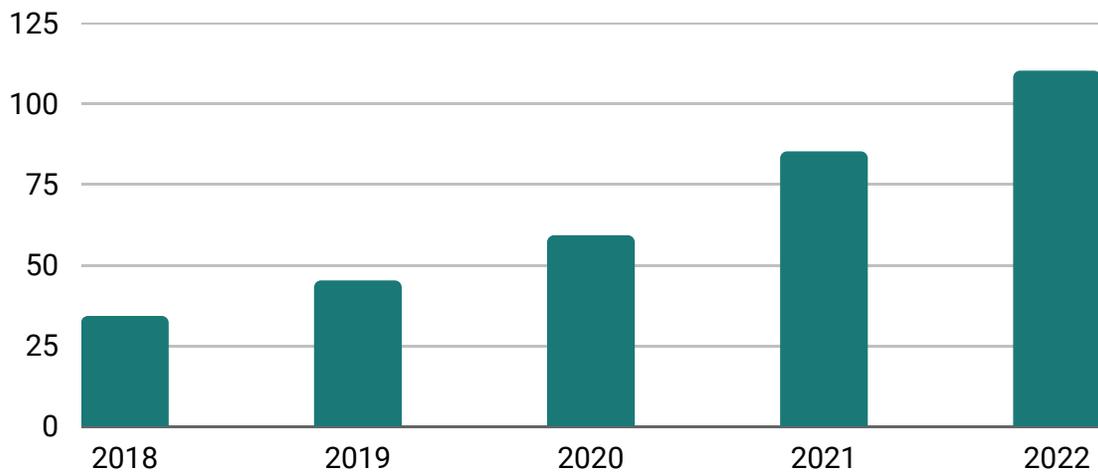
Finally, Criminal Division prosecutors frequently offer training to law enforcement agencies throughout the county regarding all areas of criminal law. Our prosecutors are providing robust training for law enforcement officers that will result in even better outcomes in criminal prosecution and continued strong relationships between our prosecutors and law enforcement officers.



# ADULT CASES BY CRIME TYPE 2022



## FLEEING POLICE IN A MOTOR VEHICLE





# SERVING VICTIMS OF CRIME

Serving victims is at the forefront of the mission of the Criminal Division, and the division's Victim/Witness Coordinators play crucial roles in our successes. Our mission is to protect the rights and aid victims and witnesses in understanding and participating in the criminal justice process and addressing individual needs caused by victimization.

Our Victim/Witness Coordinators ensure that crime victims are informed of their rights as defined by Minnesota Statute 611A. Minnesota law gives victims several specific rights, including the right to be informed of criminal charges being filed, to attend court hearings, to be informed of plea offers, to provide victim impact statements at the time of sentencing, to obtain restitution for losses suffered as the result of a crime, and to be informed of post-conviction matters, including appeals and expungements. Victim/Witness Coordinators also work with community-based programs to help victims find resources and support groups in the community that can help the victim deal with the impact a crime has in their life.

**"Our goal is to make sure victims are informed, provided resources, and given the opportunity to have their voice heard."**

Victim/Witness Coordinators also play a crucial role in preparing cases for trial. Coordinators work with victims and other witnesses to prepare them for the process of testifying at trial. Testifying can be a nerve-racking, painful, and anxiety-inducing event. The coordinators accompany victims to court and make sure victims and other witnesses know when and where their testimony is needed. Coordinators also provide a crucial line of communication between the victims or witnesses and the assigned attorney who is working the case. The Victim/Witness Coordinators provide a necessary and vital role in the Criminal Division cases. One of the Victim/Witness Coordinators plays a similar role in the Juvenile Division, assisting victims of juvenile delinquency, traffic, and petty offenses.

In addition to their other duties, our coordinators act as a liaison to other criminal justice agencies, including the community corrections department and law enforcement.

# STAFF DIRECTORY



**Rick Allen**  
Assistant County Attorney  
Juvenile Division



**Natalie Anderson**  
Legal Assistant  
Criminal Division



**Jenn Baltain**  
Administrative Services Manager



**Marc Berris**  
Assistant County Attorney  
Criminal Division



**Kris Braml**  
Legal Assistant, Senior  
Juvenile Division



**Pamela Brandt**  
Legal Assistant, Senior  
Criminal Division



**Stuart Campbell**  
Assistant County Attorney  
Civil Division



**Jamie Cole**  
Legal Assistant, Senior  
Criminal Division



**Justin Collins**  
Assistant County Attorney  
Criminal Division



**Patrick Collins**  
Assistant County Attorney  
Civil Division



**Sumayah Dieng**  
Legal Assistant, Senior  
Criminal Division



**Kelley Doolan**  
Victim/Witness Coordinator



**Amanda Fehlen**  
Criminal Analyst



**Karen Fontaine**  
Executive Assistant



**Tom Frenette**  
Assistant County Attorney  
Criminal Division



**Scott Haldeman**  
Assistant County Attorney  
Criminal Division



**Emma Hause**  
Victim/Witness Coordinator



**Jeniffer Hawthorne**  
Legal Assistant, Senior  
Criminal Division



**Pam Hughes**  
Paralegal  
Civil Division



**Nick Hydukovich**  
Criminal Division Head



**Andrew Jackola**  
Assistant County Attorney  
Civil Division



**Erin Johnson**  
Assistant County Attorney  
Juvenile Division



**Shawna Kish**  
Victim/Witness Coordinator



**Wade Kish**  
Assistant County Attorney  
Criminal Division



**Vicky Krawczeski**  
Paralegal  
Civil Division



**Jamie Kreuser**  
Assistant County Attorney  
Juvenile Division



**Joe Kvam**  
Legal Assistant, Senior  
Juvenile Division



**Theresa Leverty**  
Paralegal  
Juvenile Division



**Kari Lindstrom**  
Assistant County Attorney  
Civil Division



**Tricia Loehr**  
Assistant County Attorney  
Juvenile Division



**Kevin Magnuson**  
County Attorney



**Abigail Maruish**  
Assistant County Attorney  
Civil Division



**Scott May**  
Assistant County Attorney  
Juvenile Division



**Jean Mersch**  
Paralegal  
Criminal Division



**Morgan Miller**  
Assistant County Attorney  
Criminal Division



**Jenny Nelson**  
Office Supervisor



**Jessica Oertel**  
Assistant County Attorney  
Civil Division



**Caitlin Ohrogge**  
Legal Assistant, Senior  
Civil Division



**Jeri Peck**  
Office Specialist



**Laura Perkins**  
Public Information Manager



**Reilly Ramirez**  
Legal Assistant, Senior  
Juvenile Division



**Keshini Ratnayake**  
Assistant County Attorney  
Criminal Division



**Justin Richardson**  
Assistant County Attorney  
Criminal Division



**John Ristad**  
Assistant County Attorney  
Civil Division



**Tony Spector**  
Assistant County Attorney  
Criminal Division



**Sue Tice**  
Civil Division Head



**Betsey Urbas**  
Assistant County Attorney  
Juvenile Division



**Christine VonDeLinde**  
Victim/Witness Coordinator



**Brent Wartner**  
First Assistant County Attorney



**Thomas Wedes**  
Assistant Criminal Division Head



**Kayla Wengronowitz**  
Assistant County Attorney  
Criminal Division



**Tony Zdroik**  
Juvenile Division Head



**James Zuleger**  
Assistant County Attorney  
Civil Division

# EAST METRO HUMAN TRAFFICKING TASK FORCE



**Scott Haldeman**  
Assistant County Attorney

The East Metro Human Trafficking Task Force (EMHTTF) is a multijurisdictional unit that was assembled to combat the commercial sex trade across Washington County. Scott Haldeman serves as an Assistant Washington County Attorney supporting the EMHTTF. Amanda Fehlen is a dedicated criminal analyst to the EMHTTF, while Shawna Kish provides victim/witness coordinator services.

The task force consists of Sgt. Paul Stenglein of the Washington County Sheriff's Office, Paul Kroshus of the Woodbury Police Department, Joe Groppoli of the Oakdale Police Department, and Brian Campbell of the Cottage Grove Police Department. Brandon Spaeth, of the Department of Homeland Security, is also embedded with the EMHTTF. Additionally, Homeland Security provides the task force with invaluable resources during undercover operations.

The EMSHTF addresses both the supply and demand of human trafficking by conducting undercover sting operations, leading to numerous arrests in Washington County. Additionally, the EMHTTF spends a significant amount of time conducting recovery operations, where officers pose as buyers. Recovery operations are designed to provide human trafficking survivors resources and support rather than criminal prosecution.



**Washington County Tip Line**  
**651-430-7825**  
**National Human Trafficking**  
**Resource Center Hotline**  
**888-373-7888**

**“The East Metro  
Human Trafficking  
Task Force unites  
several jurisdictions  
across Washington  
County to combat the  
commercial sex trade  
and provide services  
and resources for  
victims.”**

The EMHTTF successfully prosecuted several cases in 2022. Additionally, multiple illicit massage parlors were shut down and are pending prosecution. The EMHTTF continues to adjust to stay ahead of the ever-changing marketplace for buyers. Education and outreach are also important parts of raising awareness in Washington County.

# DRUG TASK FORCE

The Washington County Drug Task Force (DTF) investigates cases involving the illegal selling, buying, and possession of controlled substances. The DTF is a partnership between the Washington County Sheriff's Office, Cottage Grove Police Department, Woodbury Police Department, and Forest Lake Police Department. The DTF is also responsible for drug abuse prevention and education in the community. The Washington County Attorney's Office prosecutes offenses and litigates forfeiture proceedings based on the DTF investigations.



**Justin Collins**  
Assistant County Attorney



**In 2022, the DTF made 94 arrests, dismantled three large-scale drug-trafficking organizations, and seized \$3.4 million worth of drugs, 51 firearms, and a total of \$134,000 in cash and assets.**



## AUTO THEFT GRANT

The Washington County Attorney's Office provides a specific prosecutor to specialize in adult auto theft prosecution. By focusing identified prosecutors on auto theft cases, we are aggressively working to streamline the time between incident and charging as well as focusing on firmer penalties for repeat offenders. Additionally, the Washington County Attorney's Office partners with different community groups to provide outreach and awareness on steps citizens can take to help reduce the chances of becoming victim of an auto theft type of crime, which include removing the keys from their vehicle, locking it when left unattended, and removing important items such as purses, wallets and electronic devices from their vehicles.



**Tom Frenette**  
Assistant County Attorney



## MOTOR VEHICLE THEFTS CHARGED BY YEAR

## VULNERABLE ADULT PROTECTION

This office is committed to protecting the public from the dangers of fraud and other exploitation crimes, which is frequently directed at vulnerable adults with devastating personal suffering and economic consequences. The best protection is public awareness and prevention before it happens, and our attorneys continually conduct community outreach to alert and inform citizens about potential scams, swindles, and frauds. At these presentations, we educate the community about the different systems and resources to protect vulnerable adults and bring public awareness to the growing issue. When necessary, our Civil Division attorneys intervene with court protective proceedings to establish guardianships and conservatorships over vulnerable adults. In addition, the Criminal Division of the office aggressively prosecute offenders who financially or physically victimize the elderly and vulnerable.



**Kari Lindstrom**  
Assistant County Attorney



**Tony Spector**  
Assistant County Attorney

## EXPUNGEMENT INITIATIVE

Prosecutors are ministers of justice, and our office believes that we have a responsibility to help rehabilitated people who have paid their debt to society. Long after people have atoned for the harm they caused and fulfilled their obligations to the justice system, criminal records and the collateral consequences serve as barriers to jobs, housing, education and more, preventing people from serving as productive members of our community.



According to a statutory criteria on certain low-level crimes, an individual has an opportunity to expunge a criminal conviction. This is an economic benefit to society and a recognition that rehabilitation and atonement should be rewarded. To meet this goal, our office provides a service to people, if they qualify, to seal their criminal record at no cost to them. Since Tom Wedes, Assistant Criminal Division Head, and Jean Mersch, Paralegal, began the program, the office has processed over 800 applications. From these applications, over 173 petitions have been submitted to the Court for expungement orders to seal these records. This streamlined process that has been enacted reduces costs for the office by eliminating unnecessary paperwork and limiting staff time.



## VETERANS PROGRAM

Our highly successful program is a unique partnership among the criminal justice system, the Department of Veterans Affairs, and local treatment providers.

The veterans program promotes public safety while supporting veterans and their families through a coordinated effort between the veteran services delivery system, community-based

services, and the court – thereby leaving no veteran behind. This program recognizes the unique problems facing veterans and how problem solving courts can help by recognizing the disabilities that military men and women returning from active deployment develop and identifying resources to assist the justice involved veterans. The program strives to identify veterans, offer them assistance, assess their needs, and help them solve their problems.

# JUVENILE DIVISION



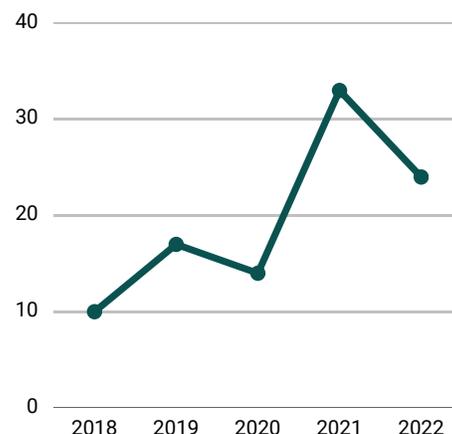
**Tony Zdroik**  
Juvenile Division Head

**“Our work involves both protecting Washington County children and promoting the public safety through diligent prosecution.”**

The Juvenile Division prosecutes all juvenile delinquency cases filed in Washington County Court. In doing so, the Juvenile Division seeks to promote public safety through the prosecution of juvenile crimes while taking into consideration the special circumstances of juvenile offenders. Juvenile Division attorneys also represent Washington County Community Services in child protection matters that involve Washington County children who have been abused or neglected by a parent or legal custodian. Additionally, a dedicated Juvenile Division attorney is assigned to handle all truancy matters. Through partnerships between Community Services and schools, services are provided to the family to address school attendance issues and avoid court intervention.

In the area of juvenile delinquency in 2022, our juvenile prosecution team sought continued detention for all juveniles who were repeat offenders and presented a danger to community safety. In the most serious of cases, the juvenile prosecution team filed motions for certification to adult court. The focus areas for the juvenile prosecution team were criminal offenses such as burglary, assault, and property crimes including motor vehicle theft.

**Overall, the juvenile offense numbers were consistent from previous years, but a close look at juvenile auto theft prosecution showed the following:**



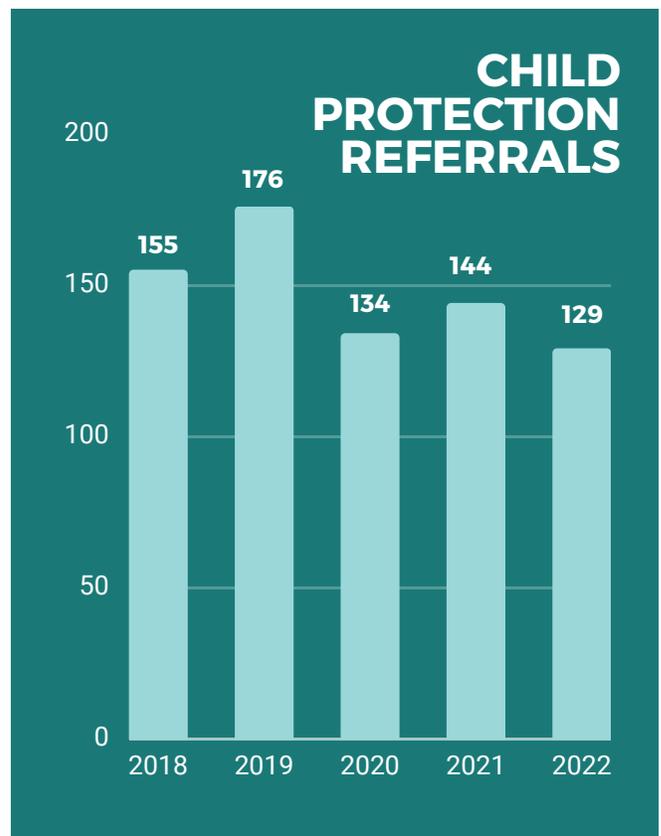
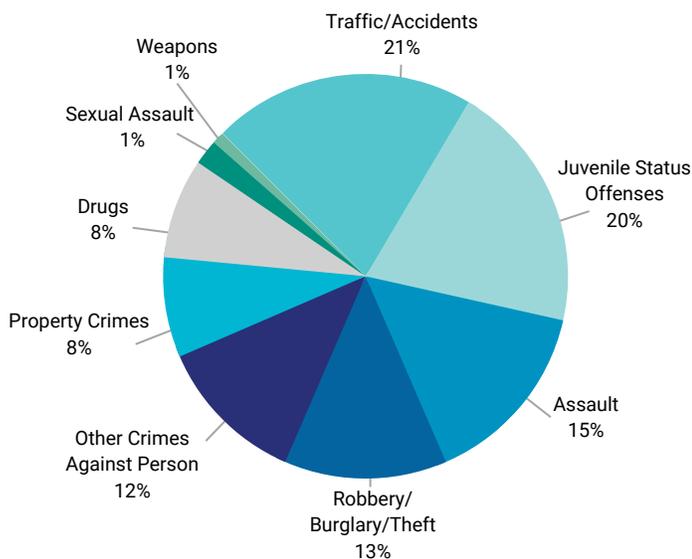
Due to increased numbers of specific offenses, the juvenile division employed specific strategies to effectively prosecute those cases. One prosecutor was assigned to handle all motor vehicle theft cases to ensure knowledge and consistency of the caseload. Also, regular coordination and discussion with law enforcement on those cases enhanced the efforts of our law enforcement partners and improved outcomes.



In addition, the juvenile prosecution team made efforts to collect data for all auto theft related cases. The offenses included in the statistics involved juveniles who were either charged with the theft of a motor vehicle or who were in possession of a motor vehicle reported stolen. The numbers also reflected cases where a firearm or force was used by the juvenile defendant to steal the motor vehicle. Those cases, often referred to as “carjacking,” amounted to 14 of the 98 cases charged in the five years from 2018 to 2022. Even though these cases were rare in Washington County, all involved a significant impact on the victim and community involved. Carjacking cases are the type of serious offense that the juvenile prosecution team has submitted a motion for certification to adult court. For example, the County Attorney’s Office charged a case involving a 17-year-old who, with accomplices, committed four separate carjacking offenses in less than an hour in Woodbury. That juvenile also had similar pending charges in other counties. Through collaboration with those counties, a resolution was reached where the juvenile was certified to adult court and sentenced to just under 100 months in prison.

In 2022, the Juvenile Division continued to represent Washington County Community Services in very complex child protection matters. Although the number of referrals dipped slightly, the serious nature of those cases did not. As seen over the last several years, serious mental health and chemical health issues continue to affect parents’ ability to provide consistent care for some Washington County children. The Juvenile Division filed 43 child protection petitions last year, and in nearly every case, the children involved were placed out of the home of their parent or legal custodian. The goal of all those cases was to provide services to the family to reunite the children with their parent or legal custodian, however in cases where a child cannot be safely reunited, our office seeks to terminate parental rights. In 2022, the Juvenile Division filed approximately 38 termination of parental rights petitions or other permanency cases.

## JUVENILE CASES BY CRIME TYPE



# TRUANCY



**Betsey Urbas**

Assistant County Attorney

In 2022, the Washington County Truancy Intervention Program continued to support students aged 12-17.5 years old and their families via both in-person connections and virtual forums to assist in removing barriers to consistent school attendance. A total of 478 students were referred to our initial stage of outreach, the Attendance Intervention Meeting (AIM), where Assistant County Attorney Betsey Urbas provided students and their families with useful information and guidance regarding the tremendous significance of high school graduation.

**“The Washington County School Attendance Intervention Program brings together children, parents, school staff, and County representatives as collaborative partners to foster consistent school attendance by identifying the causes of truancy, implementing effective interventions, and providing comprehensive support in order to give all children the educational opportunities they deserve.”**

If AIM was unsuccessful with a student, the next step in the process was for Betsey and truancy Social Workers Nicole Dahlstrom, Gina Morrison, Kasia Heurh, and Alea Jascor, to meet one-on-one with the student and develop a diversion plan. In 2022, there were 248 students that needed school diversion meetings. In very few cases, this level of intervention was not successful and ultimately 23 students were petitioned to court for higher levels of intervention and support services that result in monitoring by a district court judge.

As part of ongoing outreach efforts, Betsey continued the office’s annual training for School Administrators and School Resource Officers on August 3, 2022. 78 individuals attended this in-person, day-long training on critical topics including teen dating violence and suicide prevention. Jostens, with whom the office had previously partnered with for our annual "Pledge to Graduate" drawing, sponsored a speaker for this training on the topics of school culture, social emotional learning, and staff/student recognition as it relates to and impacts overall school culture, graduation rates, attendance rates, and discipline rates.

# 2022 PLEDGE TO GRADUATE

For the 2021-2022 school year, the office sponsored a drawing online with the purpose of recognizing and encouraging students to graduate. Students could sign a "Pledge to Graduate" from high school and enter the drawing online. The winners of the drawing were awarded an iPad or tablet. This is the ninth year the County Attorney's Office has sponsored this event.

## EAST RIDGE HIGH SCHOOL WOODBURY

WINNER AWARDED  
MAY 19, 2022



## WHITE BEAR LAKE HIGH SCHOOL

WINNER AWARDED  
MAY 24, 2022

# COMMUNITY OUTREACH

The County Attorney's Office presented to other county staff, attorneys, legal assistants, paralegals, social workers, judges, law clerks, child support officers, prison staff, law enforcement, and others. The return to the community in 2022 was a welcomed experience, as our team gave presentations on crime prevention and other subjects to numerous community groups.

## NIGHT TO UNITE



## WASHINGTON COUNTY FAIR



## LAW ENFORCEMENT CEREMONY



## LUMBERJACK DAYS PARADE

*\*sponsored by WCAO*



## SCHOOL ADMINISTRATOR TRAINING



## APPLEWOOD POINTE FRAUD PRESENTATION



# STAFF SERVICE AWARDS

MILESTONES IN 2022



**Cathy Rochel - 45 Years**  
Executive Assistant



**Kari Lindstrom - 25 Years**  
Assistant County Attorney



**Vicky Krawczeski - 20 Years**  
Paralegal



**Brent Wartner - 10 Years**  
First Assistant County Attorney



**Sue Steffen Tice - 10 Years**  
Civil Division Head



**Tom Wedes - 10 Years**  
Assistant Criminal Division Head



**Pam Hughes - 10 Years**  
Paralegal



**Tom Frenette - 5 Years**  
Assistant County Attorney



**Joe Kvam - 5 Years**  
Senior Legal Assistant

## STAFF ENGAGEMENT



The Social Activities Committee helps plan, organize, and execute office-wide social functions on various holidays. Since October of 2022, the SAC has helped organize events for Halloween, Festivus, and the

Chinese New Year. The all-volunteer cast includes Jasmine Miller, Jeniffer Hawthorne, Jeri Peck, Jessica Oertel, John Ristad, Keshini Ratnayake, Pamela Brandt, Scott Haldeman, and Tricia Loehr.



## STAFF RECOGNITION

Staff celebrating 20, 25 and 35 years of employment were honored by the Board of Commissioners over breakfast at the Lake Elmo Inn Event Center. Staff also celebrated Administrative Professional Day in April at the Lowell Inn.



## CRIMINAL HEAVY HITTERS

The “Heavy Hitter” Award is a travelling trophy awarded to the prosecutor who has successfully tried a jury trial. That prosecutor keeps the bat symbolizing the award until another prosecutor has similar success in a jury trial.





## LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT RECOGNITION

*Cathy Rochel*

### OVER 45 YEARS OF DEDICATED SERVICE

After working in government since high school, Cathy Rochel, Executive Assistant in the County Attorney's Office, retired at the end of the year in 2022. Cathy's commitment to public service is unmatched and over her 45-plus-year career she worked in all areas of the office. We are forever grateful for Cathy and the joy she brought to the office with her positive attitude and enthusiasm for helping people.





## HONORING A LIFETIME OF SERVICE

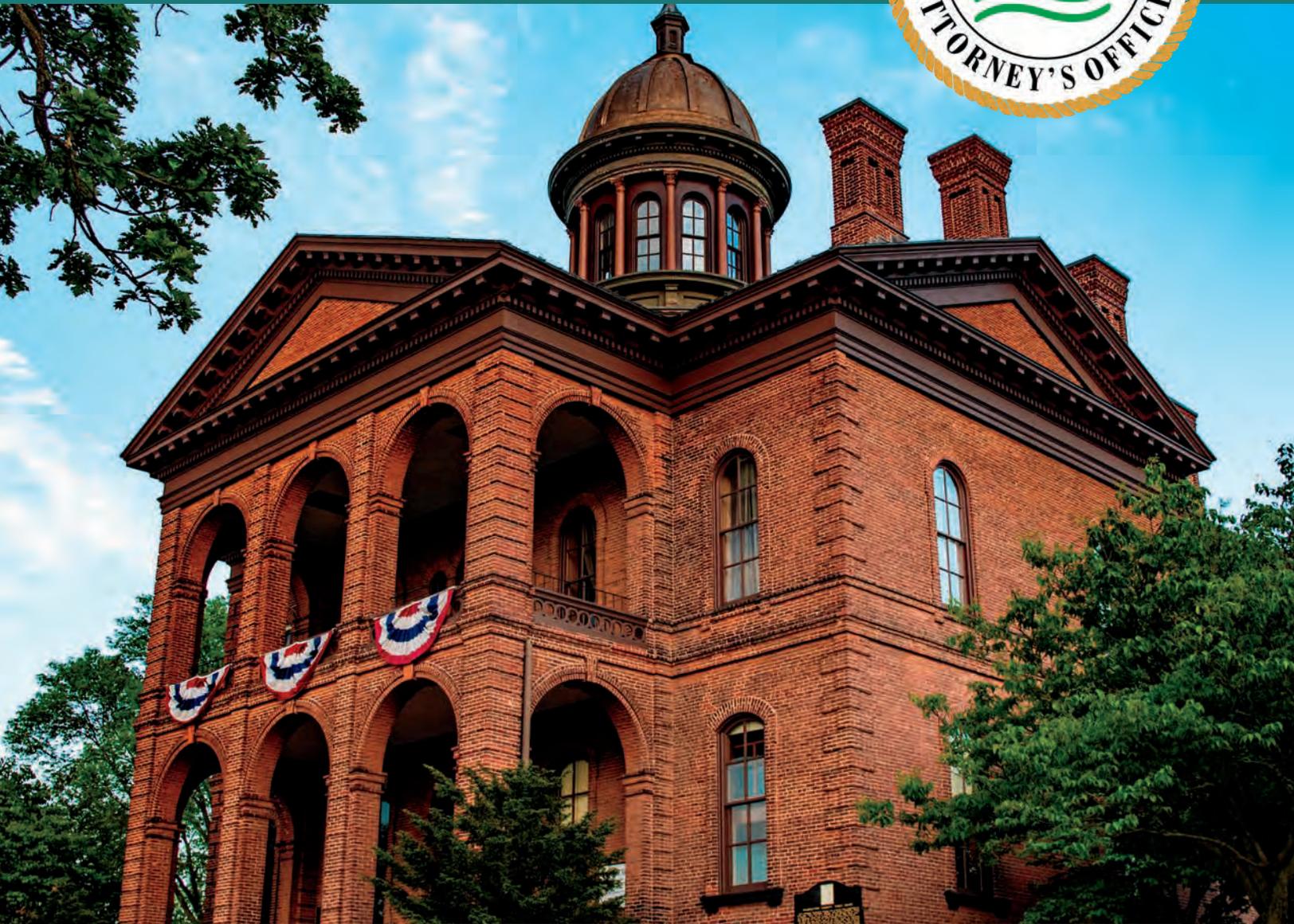


A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Pete Orput".

### **FIERCE ADVOCATE & PASSIONATE CHAMPION FOR JUSTICE**

It is with bittersweet feelings that we gratefully acknowledge the dedication and passion of Pete Orput. Pete was first elected County Attorney in 2010 and faithfully served as the prosecutor of the people of Washington County until his death on April 3, 2022. Despite battling Parkinson's disease and being diagnosed with advanced cancer, Pete continued to serve as the prosecutor for the people in Washington County. He dearly loved the job and wholeheartedly believed it was a position that when done correctly changed lives for the better. This annual report is a memorial to his legacy and ongoing contributions as county attorney.





## MISSION

*We promote justice and public safety through vigorously prosecuting crime, protecting those in need, and providing quality legal representation for Washington County.*

*Washington County: a great place to live, work and play... today and tomorrow.*

This publication is made possible through the efforts of the Washington County Attorney's Office in association with local law enforcement agencies. Funds are utilized to convert property that aided in or was used in the commission of criminal offenses to a public benefit. No taxpayer dollars have been expended in the printing of this publication.