

# FAQ: Ohio's District Courts of Appeals



## What are district courts of appeals?

Ohio's court system consists of three levels: 1) local municipal, county, and/or common pleas courts and other lower courts, often referred to as the "trial courts", 2) intermediate appellate courts, or district courts of appeals, and 3) the Supreme Court of Ohio, our highest court, and final arbiter. District courts of appeals are the middle step in our three-tiered system. In Ohio, district courts of appeals are organized into twelve districts encompassing all 88 counties in the state. The number of judges on each district court of appeals varies between four and twelve depending on the [district's size](#) and caseload.

## What do district courts of appeals do? What kind of cases do they hear?

The primary purpose of district courts of appeals is to hear appeals from local courts. When hearing a case on appeal, the district court of appeals generally assigns each case to a random three-judge panel. Cases can range from challenges to laws enacted by the General Assembly, to criminal cases, to civil disputes. District courts of appeals also have original jurisdiction to hear writs of habeas corpus and mandamus.

Additionally, recent law changes will soon allow for previously unappealable orders, like a temporary restraining order, or preliminary injunction issued by a lower court, to be appealed to a higher court.

## How are judges selected?

Judges are elected in even-numbered years to six-year terms. Prior to 2022, judges running for district courts of appeals were selected in non-partisan elections; however, current Ohio law requires a judge's political party affiliation to appear next to their name on the ballot. District courts of appeals judges must be an attorney with at least six years of experience practicing law. In case of a vacancy, the Governor appoints a replacement for the rest of the term.

## Do judges on district courts of appeals have term limits?

No. There is no limit on the number of terms a judge can serve on a district court of appeals, but the Ohio Constitution has age limits for all judges in the state. A person may not be appointed or elected to any judicial office if they will reach 70 years of age on or before the day they would take office.

## Why should I vote in a district court of appeals election?

Just like justices on the Supreme Court of Ohio, judges serving on district courts of appeals have the power to interpret our constitution and laws, set precedent, and resolve cases. In 2023, Ohio's district courts of appeals heard over 7,500 cases with an average caseload of 654 cases per district.<sup>1</sup> Before casting a vote, you should make sure you know which candidates interpret the law in the same way you do, and how they feel about issues you care passionately about.