



What is the Court of Common Pleas?

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. Each county in the state has its own Court of Common Pleas, and the number of judges presiding in each court is determined by population. The number of judges elected in each county is set forth by ORC 2301.02. The powers of Common Pleas Courts in Ohio are set forward by the Ohio General Assembly and the Ohio Revised Code Title 23.

What do Courts of Common Pleas do? What kinds of cases do they hear?

The Court of Common Pleas are the trial courts of the state court system – meaning evidence and testimony are presented, witnesses are heard, and either a judge or jury renders a verdict. Cases are brought to the Court of Common Pleas by citizens and local governments. Depending on its size and caseload, counties may have their cases designated among different divisions. Divisions of the Court of Common Pleas may include:

The Auditor has many other diverse responsibilities, including:

- General Divisions have original jurisdiction over criminal felony cases and civil cases where the financial dispute between parties exceeds \$15,000.. (Note, misdemeanor cases are typically heard in local municipal courts).
- Domestic Relations Divisions have jurisdiction over proceedings involving divorce, annulment, spousal support, custody agreements, etc.
- Juvenile Divisions hear cases related to charges brought against youth that would be considered criminal if committed by an adult. Juvenile Divisions also hear cases related to child abuse, non-payment of child support, truancy, and those that contribute to the delinquency of a minor.
- Probate Divisions have jurisdiction over issuance of marriage licenses, adoption proceedings, probate of wills, guardianship, and supervision of the administration of estates.

How are Common Pleas judges Selected?

Judges are elected to the Court of Common Pleas for six-year terms through non-partisan elections. If a judicial vacancy occurs at the Court Common Pleas, the Governor appoints the successor. To be appointed or elected to the court, judges must have at least 6 years experience in the practice of law.

Do Court of Common Pleas judges have term limits?

No. There is no limit on the number of terms a judge can serve on a Court of Common Pleas. However, the Ohio Constitution places an age limitation 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 Court of Common Pleas judicial races?

Judges serving on the Court of Common Pleas make decisions on court cases that have a direct impact on your and your neighbors' lives, and in a given year these courts hear more than 500,000 new cases. 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.