

2001 Annual Report

The background of the cover is a faded, grayscale image. In the foreground, the head and crown of the Statue of Liberty are visible on the left side. In the background, the dome of the United States Capitol building is visible, centered towards the right. The overall image has a soft, ethereal quality with a light blue and white color palette.

David R. Ellspermann
Clerk of the Circuit Court

Marion County, Florida



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**DAVID R. ELLSPERMANN
CLERK OF THE CIRCUIT COURT
MARION COUNTY, FLORIDA**

To the People of Marion County,

The Clerk of the Circuit Court has held the role of public trustee in local government since the enactment of the 1838 State Constitution. The other constitutional officers were, for the most part, appointed by the governor or the legislature until the constitutional revision of 1885 made them elected officers as well. Throughout the years, through the constitution's revision and statutory change, the citizens have increased the duties and responsibilities of the Clerk more than any other elected officer at the local level.

The Clerk of the Circuit Court as part of the court and county, is an often unseen, yet inextricable part of everyday life. The Clerk is charged with being the keeper of the county's public records, the custodian of county funds, the auditor and chief financial officer of the county, the ex-officio clerk to the Board of County Commissioners and the Clerk to the County and Circuit Courts. The Clerk serves as an elected "public trustee" and sets in place, at the county level, a system of "checks and balances" which has proven to serve the public well.

This 2001 Annual Report represents a two-fold effort to provide the people of Marion County with a concise description of the duties and functions of the Clerk of the Circuit Court and reflect on the accomplishments of a year spent in the successful administration of essential services to the County.

We are proud of our past service and enthusiastic about the challenge yet to come. We affirm our total commitment to the people of this community and endeavor to develop a more efficient and effective system of operation.

Sincerely,

David R. Ellspermann
Clerk of the Circuit Court
Marion County

GENERAL INFORMATION

MARION COUNTY

Marion County was created by the Florida Legislature on March 14, 1844 from land formerly part of Alachua, Hillsborough, and Orange Counties. There have been no significant boundary changes since then. The County was named in honor of General Francis Marion, famed as the “Swamp Fox” of the Revolutionary War.

Marion County covers a land area of 1,579 square miles, making it the fifth largest county in the state in terms of geographic area. The estimated April 1, 2001 population of 264,277 residents ranks Marion County as the 17th largest of Florida’s 67 counties. In addition to Ocala, which is the county seat and primary population area, there are four other incorporated municipalities located within the County: Belleview, Dunnellon, McIntosh, and Reddick.

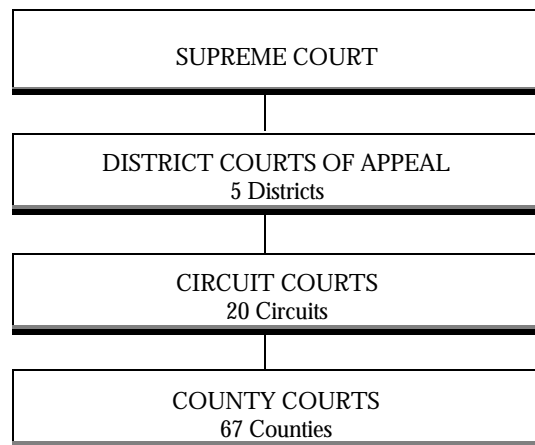
The County operates under a commission/administrator form of government, with a governing board consisting of five county commissioners elected at-large to staggered four year terms. Each commission member must meet district residency requirements. In addition to the Board of County Commissioners, there are five elected Constitutional Officers performing specifically designated governmental functions: The Clerk of the Circuit Court, Property Appraiser, Sheriff, Supervisor of Elections, and Tax Collector.

STRUCTURE OF THE FLORIDA STATE COURTS SYSTEM

The State of Florida is divided into twenty judicial circuits. Together with the five District Courts of Appeal and the Florida Supreme Court they comprise Florida’s Unified Judicial System. The Supreme Court of Florida provides overall administrative direction for the Florida Courts.

Each judicial circuit is composed of a circuit court and one or more county courts, depending on the number of counties the circuit serves. Marion County, along with Citrus, Hernando, Lake, and Sumter Counties, make up the Fifth Judicial Circuit.

COURT SYSTEM



FUNCTIONS AND DUTIES OF THE CLERK

The Clerk of the Circuit Court is a *public officer* in the service of the government and the people, who derives the position from a legally authorized election and whose duties are defined by the State Constitution and implemented and expanded upon by numerous state statutes, regulations, county ordinances, and judicial orders. The very nature of the Office and the extent of services being provided mandates that the Clerk's actions and decisions be constantly subjected to public evaluation and restraint.

The Clerk of the Circuit Court is characterized as one whose duties are not purely ministerial, but rather an integral part of the whole County governmental process. As an officer of the Court, the Clerk is endowed with certain authority to aid and promote the judicial process. Additionally, the Clerk's authority as an elected county officer with responsibilities as auditor and custodian of all county funds allows the Clerk to provide a check and balance function on behalf of local government and the citizens of Marion County.

The origins of the Clerk's Office extend into early English history. In time past, the custody of court records was entrusted to one of the judges. However, it soon became apparent that the judge alone was unable to preside over the argument, record the proceedings, and issue writs. Consequently, the Office of the Clerk of Courts was created. Subordinate judicial officials were chosen from among the clergy, the only literate group at the time. Thus, the name *clerk* is derived from the Latin *clericus* meaning clergyman. In the colonies officers of the common pleas courts were known as county clerks, a title utilized in most states today.

The functions and duties of the clerk varies from state to state. In most jurisdictions the clerk is generally vested with a large number of administrative duties. In Florida the Clerk of the Circuit Court is an official mandated by Article V, Section 16 of the State Constitution. The Clerk is not only the Clerk of the Circuit and County Courts, but also the County Treasurer, Budget Officer, Recorder, Auditor, Finance Officer, Clerk of the Value Adjustment Board, and Ex-Officio Clerk to the Board of County Commissioners.

ORGANIZATIONAL FUNCTIONS

FINANCE & BUDGET

- ★ Provides effective and efficient accounting and administrative services for various governmental entities
- ★ Invests available county funds
- ★ Maintains custody of all county funds and collects and disburses the funds
- ★ Processes accounts payable and county payroll
- ★ Audits all county expenditures
- ★ Administers the county's federal and state grant programs
- ★ Reviews the management and accounting controls within county government
- ★ Maintains the county's fixed asset accounting system
- ★ Manages county bond issues
- ★ Assists in the preparation and review of budgets, preparing revenue estimates for various Board funds and balances the budget for presentation to the Board.

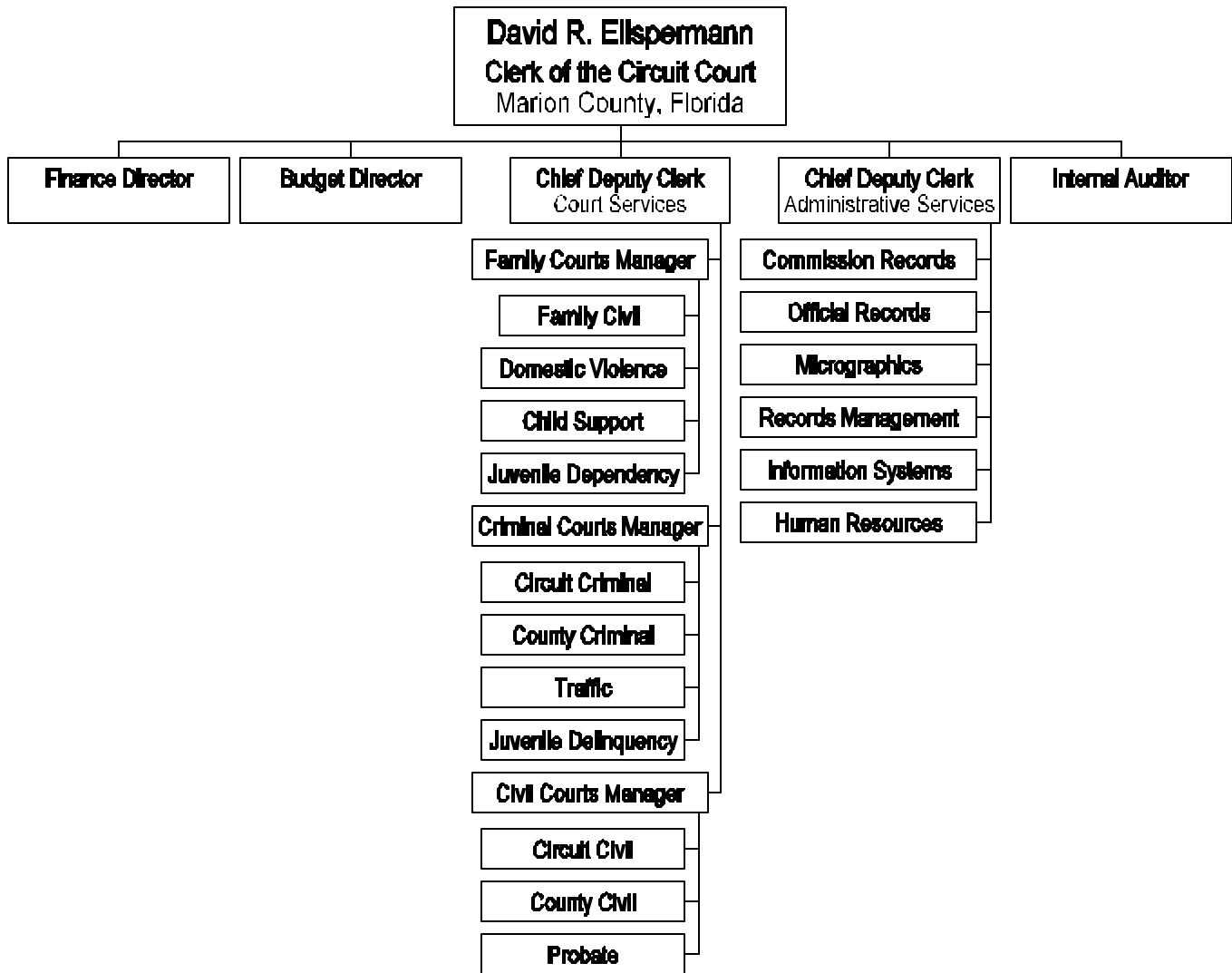
COURTS MANAGEMENT

- ★ Attends each session of court
- ★ Prepares and maintains court calendars (dockets)
- ★ Documents the receipt of and filing all court related documents
- ★ Oversees jury selection and processes juror payments
- ★ Receives and disburses payments of all monetary penalties assessed by the Court
- ★ Provides operational data and compiles and monitors statistics for statewide reporting requirements.

ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES

- ★ Records and indexes all instruments required or authorized to be recorded in one general series of "Official Records" books
- ★ Processes tax deed applications and conducts sales
- ★ Collects and disburses documentary stamps and intangible taxes for the Department of Revenue
- ★ Maintains public microfilm libraries and a records storage facility
- ★ Processes marriage license applications and solemnizing marriages
- ★ Accepts applications and administers oaths for passport purposes through authorization of the U.S. Department of State
- ★ Attends all Board of County Commissioners' meetings
- ★ Produces, indexes, and distributes the official minutes of the meetings
- ★ Maintains all county resolutions, ordinances, contracts, papers, and instruments of the Board.

ORGANIZATION CHART



COURT CASELOAD COMPARISON

FOR CALENDAR YEARS
2000 & 2001

Circuit Court Division	2000 Cases	2001 Cases	Actual Change	% Change
Family Law	4,850	5,288	438	9 %
Circuit Civil	2,332	2,719	387	16 %
Probate Estates	1,734	1,881	147	8 %
Guardianship	176	190	14	7 %
Mental Health	845	1,010	165	19 %
Felony	4,440	4,955	584	13 %
Juvenile Delinquency	2,740	2,553	-187	-7 %
Juvenile Dependency	261	319	58	22 %
TOTAL CIRCUIT FILINGS	17,378	18,915	1,537	+8 %

County Court Division	2000 Cases	2001 Cases	Actual Change	% Change
County Civil	807	790	-17	-2 %
Summary Claims	4,493	4,251	-242	-5 %
Misdemeanor & Criminal Traffic	10,614	11,064	450	4 %
Traffic Infractions	28,789	30,337	1,548	5 %
TOTAL COUNTY FILINGS	44,703	46,443	1,740	4 %



FAMILY CIVIL

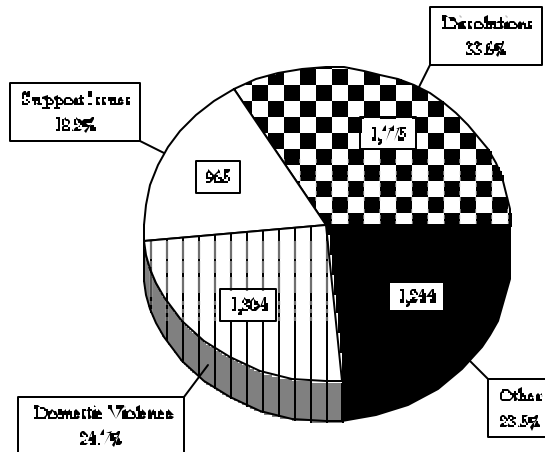


In the year 2001, there were 5,288 new family civil cases filed, a 9% increase over the 4,850 cases filed in 2000. The Circuit Court Family Civil Division has jurisdiction over domestic relations matters such as:

- simplified dissolution
- dissolution
- child or spouse support
- domestic violence
- adoption
- annulment

- paternity
- change of name
- change of custody
- repeat violence
- foreign judgments, etc

FAMILY CATEGORIES





CIRCUIT CRIMINAL

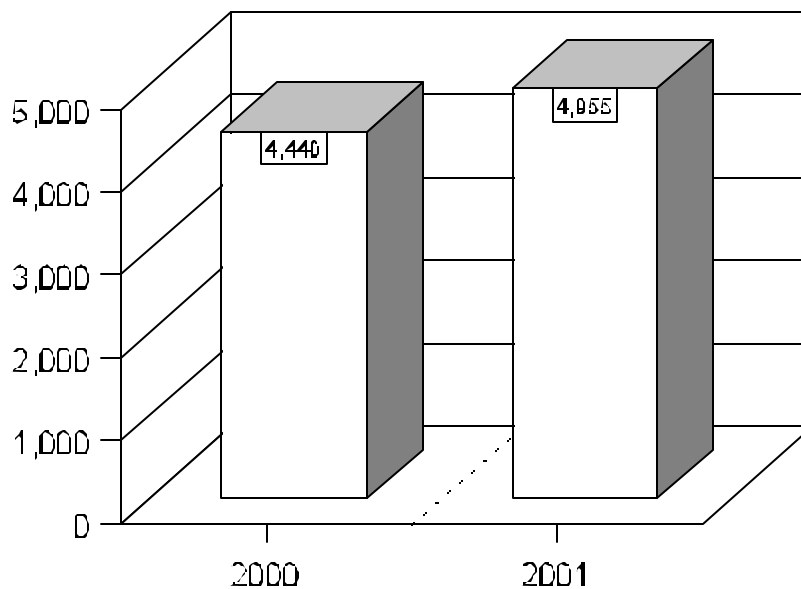


The Circuit Court has jurisdiction over all defendants accused of committing crimes that have been designated by the State Legislature as felonies. A felony is a criminal offense punishable by death or imprisonment in a state penitentiary. Felonies are classified into the following degrees:

- ★ A *Capital Felony* is punishable by death or life imprisonment without eligibility for parole.
- ★ A *Life Felony* is punishable by a term of life imprisonment and by a fine not to exceed \$15,000.00
- ★ A *First Degree Felony* is punishable by a term of imprisonment not to exceed 30 years and by a fine not to exceed \$10,000.00
- ★ A *Second Degree Felony* is punishable by a term of imprisonment not to exceed 15 years and by a fine not to exceed \$10,000.00
- ★ A *Third Degree Felony* is punishable by a term of imprisonment not to exceed 5 years and by a fine not to exceed \$5,000.00

There were 4,955 felony cases filed in 2001, a 13% increase over the 4,440 cases filed in 2000.

FELONY CASELOAD





JUVENILE



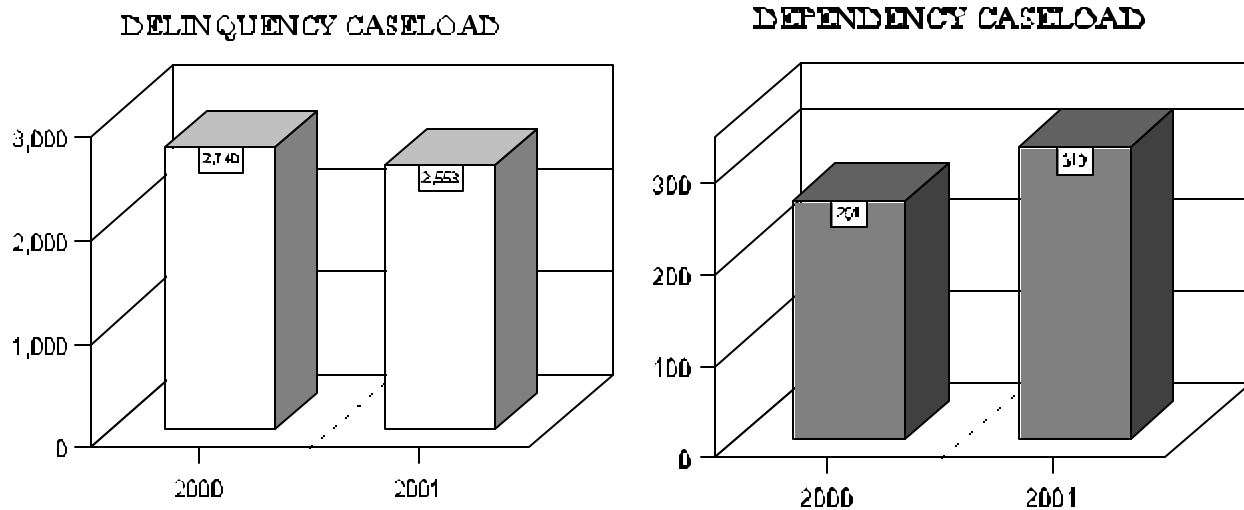
The Circuit Court has jurisdiction over all cases in which a child is alleged to have committed a delinquent act or violation of law, in addition to cases in which a child is alleged to be dependent.

A delinquent complaint is filed by a law enforcement officer when a juvenile is alleged to have committed a felony, misdemeanor, contempt of court or violation of a local ordinance.

A total of 2,553 new juvenile delinquent cases were filed in 2001. This represents a 7% decrease from the 2,740 cases in 2000.

Dependency proceedings involve juveniles who have been abandoned, abused, or neglected by parents or a custodian; children who have been surrendered for the purpose of adoption; or children in need of services who are persistent runaways, habitually truant or uncontrollable.

A total of 319 new juvenile dependency cases were filed in 2001, a 22% increase from 2000.



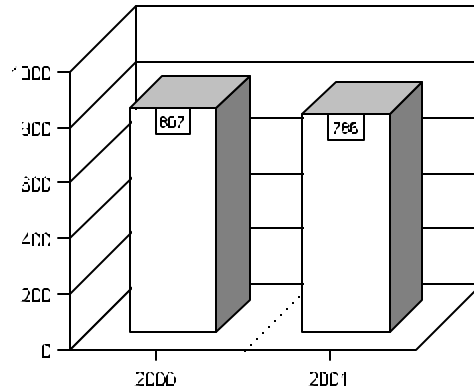


COUNTY COURT CIVIL



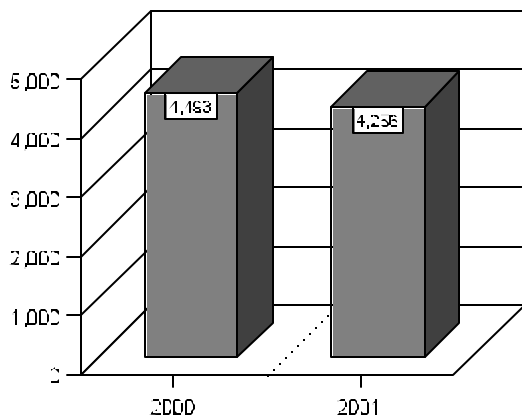
The County Court has jurisdiction over civil actions in which the matter in controversy does not exceed the sum of \$15,000.00. Claims of more than \$5,000.00 but less than \$15,000.00 are categorized as county civil actions.

There were 790 new county civil cases filed in 2001, a 2% decrease from the cases filed in 2000.



SUMMARY CLAIMS

Cases filed pursuant to the Florida Rules of Summary Procedure are categorized as summary claims, formerly known as small claims. In 2001 there were 4,251 of these types of cases filed. This is a 5% decrease from the 4,493 cases in 2000.



Most landlord / tenant disputes are heard by the County Court. In 2001 there were 1,418 eviction cases filed.



COUNTY CRIMINAL



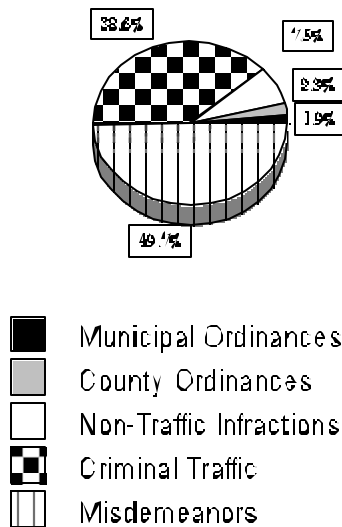
The County Court has jurisdiction over all defendants accused of committing crimes which have been designated as misdemeanors. A misdemeanor is a criminal offense which is punishable by imprisonment in a county correctional facility. Misdemeanors are classified into the following degrees:

- ★ A *First Degree Misdemeanor* is punishable by a term of imprisonment not to exceed one year in the county jail and by a fine not to exceed \$1,000.00.
- ★ A *Second Degree Misdemeanor* is punishable by a term of imprisonment not to exceed 60 days in the county jail and by a fine not to exceed \$500.00

The caseload statistics on the pie chart below include violations of:

- ★ *County and Municipal Ordinances* which are local regulations punishable by a fine less than \$500.00 and/or imprisonment in a county jail for less than 60 days.
- ★ *Criminal Traffic Laws* which are defined by the Florida Rules of Court as a violation that may subject a defendant upon conviction to incarceration.
- ★ *Civil Infractions* which are non-criminal violations punishable by a monetary penalty only.

COUNTY CRIMINAL CASELOAD



The Clerk's Office processed 11,064 new cases in 2001. 49.7% of the total cases filed dealt with misdemeanors. Criminal traffic accounted for 38.6% and the remaining were non-traffic infractions, county and municipal ordinances.



TRAFFIC

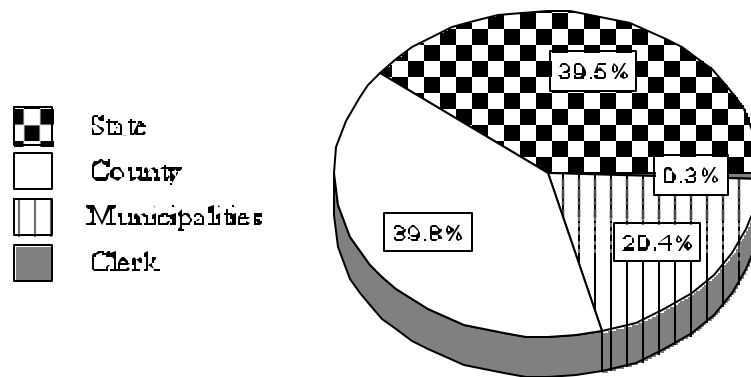


The County Court has jurisdiction over non-criminal violations of law which have been designated by the State Legislature as civil infractions. An infraction is punishable by a civil penalty not to exceed \$500.

New civil infraction cases totaling 30,337 were filed in 2001, a 5% increase over 2000. The civil infraction caseload consists of Uniform Traffic Citations for pedestrian, bicycle, nonmoving and moving violations and parking citations.

In 1975 the Legislature created Chapter 318 of the Florida Statutes which provides for the statewide uniform disposition of traffic infractions. This Chapter, along with the Rules of Traffic Procedure, authorizes the Clerk to dispose of the less serious traffic infractions in a summary manner and to accept payment of fines and civil penalties. The total amount collected for traffic infractions in 2001 was \$2,324,627.43, of which \$925,556.97 was remitted to the State, \$931,251.77 was returned to the County, \$478,070.81 was distributed to the municipalities in which the infraction occurred and the remaining \$7,747.88 was retained by the Clerk.

REMITTANCE





APPELLATE PROCEEDINGS

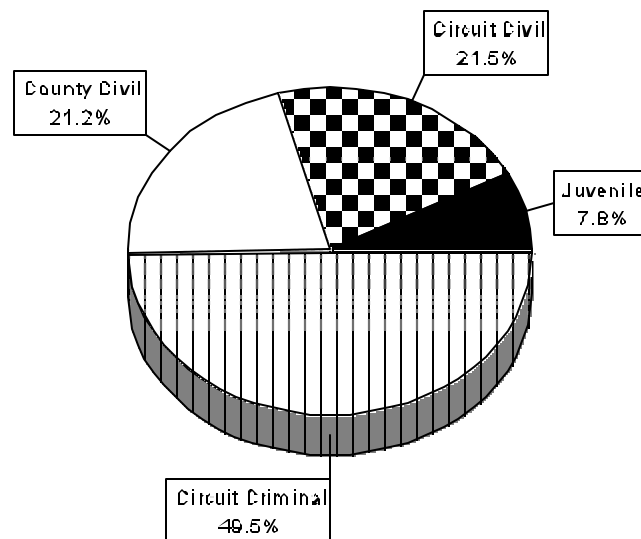


When a case is appealed the Clerk prepares a Record of Appeal for the appellate court to review and indexes the instruments contained therein.

Circuit Court cases in the Fifth Judicial Circuit are appealed to the Fifth District Court of Appeals in Daytona Beach, Florida. A total of 307 appeals were filed in 2001, that is 96 more than filed in 2000. These appeals consisted of 66 circuit civil, 152 circuit criminal and 24 juvenile cases.

County Court cases are appealed to the Circuit Court of the Fifth Judicial Circuit. A total of 65 appeals were filed in 2001, a 41% increase of the 46 filed in 2000.

APPELLATE CASELOAD





CHILD SUPPORT



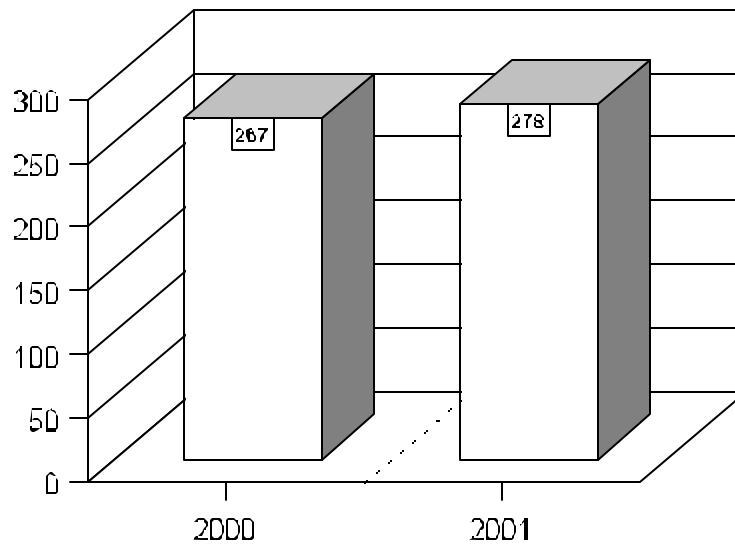
A change in Florida's child support enforcement law created the State of Florida Disbursement Unit (FLSDU) located in Tallahassee. Marion County initiated the process of support payments through this facility in response to federal law changes. Checks continue to be sent out the day after the payment is received.

In December, 2001 there was a total of 10,118 active cases being paid through the central depository.

Of those cases, 7,106, or 70.23%, are considered IV-D cases in which the absent parent is receiving financial assistance from the State and Federal Government. The monies collected on these cases is transmitted to the Florida Department of Revenue as reimbursement for the public assistance given through the Aid to Dependent Children program.

The Clerk's Office Voice Response System continues to have information on all Child Support and Alimony accounts 24 hours a day, seven days a week. In 2001 there were 92,929 calls reported. The system averaged 278 calls per day and can be accessed at (352) 369-2152. The caller must use their Social Security Number and Case Number to access account information.

AVERAGE CALLS PER DAY





ELECTRONIC DEPOSITIONS

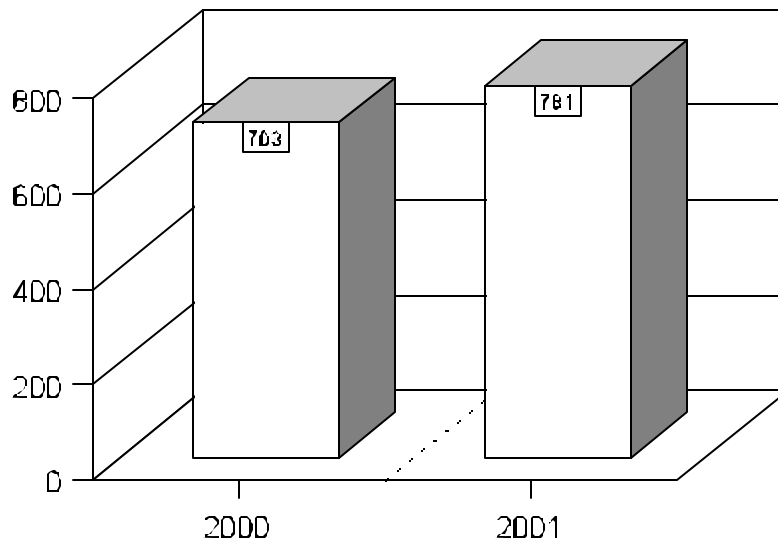


The Clerk of the Circuit Court operates an electronic deposition program for the State Attorney and Public Defender. The Clerk records depositions in criminal and juvenile delinquency proceedings. This program eliminates the necessity of expending county funds for an official court reporter to take the depositions.

The Clerk schedules the depositions, operates the audio recording equipment, maintains the original cassette tapes, and makes duplicate copies of the recordings for the attorneys when requested.

In 2001, 781 witnesses were scheduled to give depositions before the Clerk's electronic technician. These depositions were scheduled over 289 hours throughout the year, an average of 24 hours per month.

DEPOSITIONS HELD





JURY MANAGEMENT

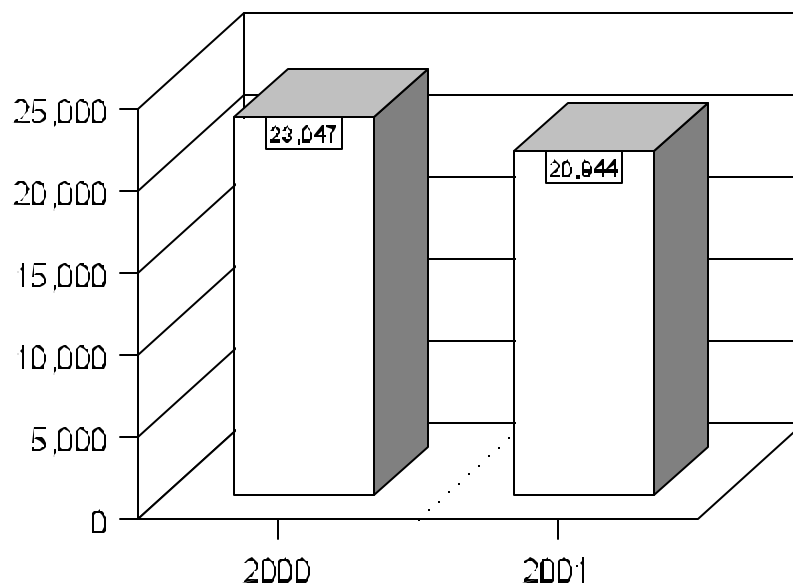


The Florida Legislature has given the Clerk of the Circuit Court a number of responsibilities relative to the selection and payment of jurors. Section 40.01, Florida Statutes, provides that jurors shall be taken from the male and female persons at least 18 years of age, who are citizens of the United States and legal residents of this state and their respective counties and who possess a driver's license or identification card issued by the Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles pursuant to chapter 322 or who have executed the affidavit prescribed in section 40.011.

A calendar of cases set for trial is prepared as cases before the Courts progress. The Clerk will randomly select a list of individuals who will be summoned at least 14 days prior to the court proceeding.

A total of 20,944 persons were summoned for jury duty in 2001, representing a 10% decrease from 2000. Of the total summoned, 64% were unavailable for service due to mandatory disqualification, inability to serve summons, or failing to appear. The remaining 36% were available for duty as jurors.

JURORS SUMMONED





JUROR COMPENSATION



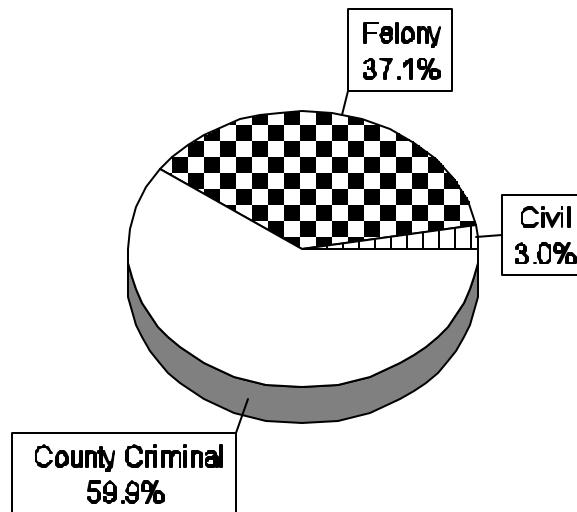
Jurors are compensated for their service according to Florida law in the following manner:

- ★ For the first three (3) days of service a juror is not entitled to any compensation if he or she is regularly employed and will continue to receive regular wages while serving as a juror. Otherwise, the compensation is \$15.00 per day.
- ★ On the fourth day of service and each day thereafter, all jurors are compensated at the rate of \$30.00 per day.
- ★ “Regular Employment” is defined as full-time employment and part-time, temporary, and casual employment, as long as the employment hours of a juror can be reasonably determined by a schedule or by custom and practice established during the 3-month period preceding the term of service as a juror. A juror who receives unemployment benefits does not lose those benefits because he/she receives juror compensation.

The Clerk’s Office disbursed \$66,451.00 to jurors as compensation for their service in 2001.

There were 167 jury trials in 2001. In the Circuit Court 5 juries were sworn to hear civil cases and 62 juries were sworn to hear felony cases. In the County Court 100 juries were sworn to hear misdemeanor cases.

JURY TRIALS BY CATEGORY



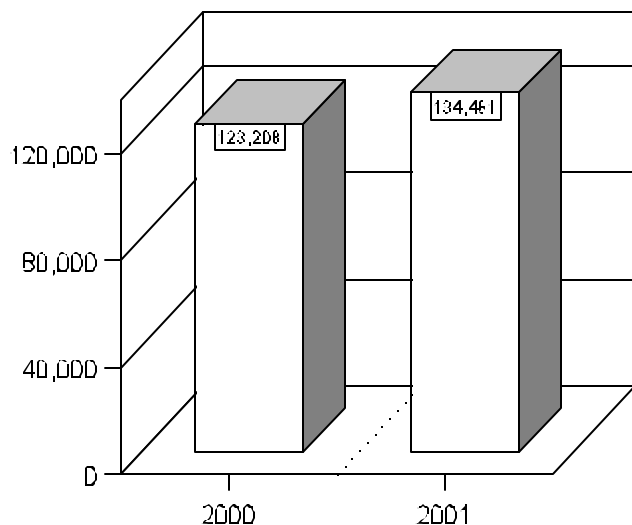
COUNTY RECORDER

OFFICIAL RECORDS

The Clerk is the recorder of all instruments required or authorized to be recorded in one general series of "Official Records" books. Upon payment of the statutory fees the Clerk records and indexes a variety of important documents which in most cases are related to real estate. Examples of such documents include deeds, mortgages, liens, contracts, affidavits, subdivision plats, surveys, declarations of condominium, bills of sale, judgments, certificates of military discharge, and declarations of domicile. In 2001 the Clerk of the Circuit Court recorded, verified and indexed 134,481 documents in the Official Records. The Clerk's Office was recording an average of 540 documents per day.

Once a document has been recorded and indexed in the Official Records Division, the Records Management Division is responsible for making sure that a permanent, archival copy of that document exists. This very important copy is produced by making one master copy on silver halide microfilm and two duplicate copies on diazo microfilm. One roll of microfilm is sent to our vault at National Underground Storage in Boyers, Pennsylvania, where it can be retrieved if the original roll, stored locally in the Clerk's vault, is destroyed.

Documents Recorded



The microfilm process is used by the Clerk's Office because it has been scientifically certified as capable of storing images for up to 500 years, thereby exceeding the State's archival standards for Official Records.

In 2001 the 134,481 documents recorded in the Official Records required the microfilming of approximately 390,000 images, producing 195 rolls of microfilm. Thus, nearly 1,550 pages were microfilmed on a daily basis.

COUNTY RECORDER

As the County Recorder, the Clerk also serves as the custodian and controller of archival records, both for the Clerk's operations and the operations of the Board of County Commissioners. A records management/retention program assists user agencies in the identification, classification (according to published State Records Schedules), and inventorying of all their documents, papers, letters, maps, books, tapes, photographs and files, as well as visual and sound recordings.

These records are *public* records and as such are vital not only to the government and court system of Marion County, but also to the citizens of the county and state.

The strong enforcement of Florida's Public Records Law continues to play an important part in the manner in which public records are managed. In carrying out the responsibility of organizing and controlling the large volume of records created by the courts and county government, the challenge that must be met by the Clerk is to ensure that public information remains open and accessible to all citizens in an efficient and effective manner.

In 2001, the Clerk's Office captured approximately 390,000 images on 195 rolls of microfilm. As technology expands the means by which government can attain and store information, the means by which public business is transacted has likewise expanded. The Clerk of the Circuit Court is committed to safeguard the public's right to know by responding to these changes with the most efficient information technology resources available.

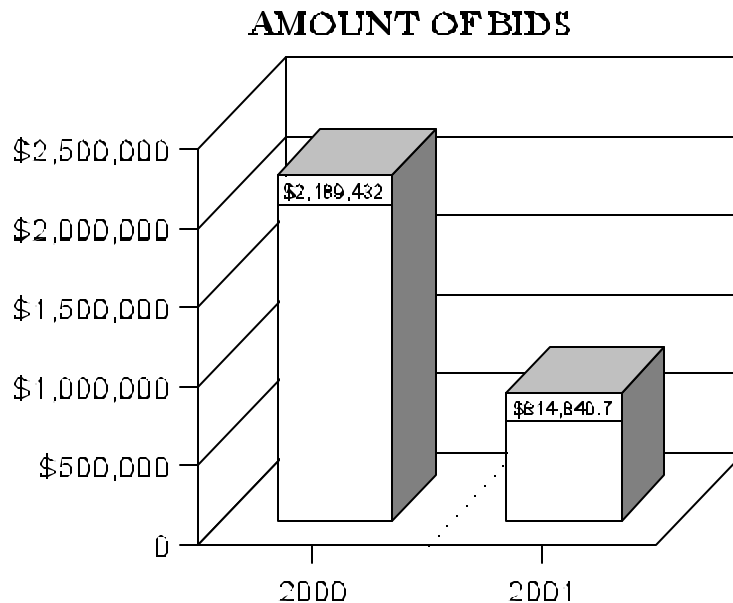
COUNTY RECORDER

TAX DEEDS

The Clerk of the Circuit Court sold 236 tax deed applications during 18 public sales in 2001. The total amount of bids equaled \$814,840.68, a 63% decrease over the amount of bids in 2000. However, a large portion of the applications brought up for tax deed sales were initiated by Marion County. Of those Marion County applications not sold or redeemed, 496 properties were added to the List of Lands Available for Taxes.

Real estate taxes in Marion County become due every year on November 1, payable through March 31 of the following year, with discounts allowed for early payments and a 3% penalty imposed beginning April 1. Parcels remaining unpaid by mid-April are advertised in the local newspaper for three consecutive weeks in May in an effort to notify the property owners of the outstanding tax liability.

A tax certificate sale must be held on or before June 1. This is a public auction where a tax certificate is sold to the party who will pay the delinquent tax for the property owner at the lowest interest rate when redemption is made. A certificate is an interest bearing lien and the interest rate varies from 0% to 18%. Certificates are sold on any items remaining unpaid at the time of the sale. Once a certificate is sold, the property owner may redeem the certificate by payment of the delinquent taxes and penalty, advertising fees, plus interest.



COUNTY RECORDER

If the certificate is not redeemed within two years, the certificate holder may begin proceedings for a tax deed sale.

Upon application for a tax deed by the certificate holder, a tax and title search is performed by an abstract company to determine whether any other taxes are outstanding for the property. If so, the applicant pays the amount due and it becomes part of the starting bid at the actual tax deed sale. Once the search is completed, certification is made to the Clerk of the Circuit Court and the application is delivered to the Clerk. The item is then scheduled for public sale and again advertised for four consecutive weeks prior to the sale.

Tax deed sales, which are open to the public, are conducted by the Clerk of the Circuit Court on the first floor of the Judicial Center in the Jury Assembly room. The sales are held once or twice a month on Wednesdays beginning at 9:00 a.m. The starting bid is the accumulated total of all delinquent taxes, penalties, advertising fees, tax search costs and fees that were paid by the certificate holder who applied for the tax deed. If no one bids on the property, it is sold to the applicant at the opening bid. If, however, the applicant is not the highest bidder, he or she will be reimbursed the amount paid up to that point.

Immediately after the auction, the recording fees and the documentary stamp taxes must be paid. The bid amount must be paid within 24 hours of the tax deed auction.

A tax deed is then issued by the Clerk to the highest bidder. The deed transfers ownership of the property from the owner who defaulted on payment of the property taxes to the highest bidder.

MARRIAGE LICENSES

The Clerk of the Circuit Court issued 2,062 marriage license applications in 2001, representing a 5% decrease from the number issued in 2000.

When two people desire to marry in the State of Florida, they must first obtain a marriage license from the Clerk's Office. There are no residency requirements in Florida; therefore, a couple may apply for the license and have the marriage solemnized anywhere within the State. Since applicants for a marriage license are not required to take a blood test, the license is issued within minutes of making application. Both applicants may take a premarital preparation course given by a provider registered with the Clerk of Court and receive a \$32.50 discount on their marriage license. Applicants not wishing to take the marriage preparation course will not receive the discount and will have a mandatory three day waiting period from the date the license is issued.

To obtain a marriage license, both parties must complete an application at the Clerk's Office. If either party has been married in the past, the month, day and year the prior marriage was dissolved must be reported on the application. Both applicants must also show proof of identification and take an oath by which they swear or affirm the furnished information is true and correct.

If either applicant is under the age of 18 years but at least 16 years of age, the license cannot be issued unless the parents or guardian of the minor file a written, notarized consent to the marriage. Parental consent is not required, however, if both parents of the minor are deceased or the minor has been married previously.

The fee for a marriage license is \$88.50. From this amount the Clerk's Office remits \$30.00 to the Department of Children and Family Services for the purpose of funding domestic violence centers; \$7.50 is remitted to the State Treasury for deposit in the Displaced Homemaker Trust Fund; \$4.00 is remitted to the Bureau of Vital Statistics; and \$25.00 is remitted to the Florida Supreme Court for deposit in the Family Courts Trust Fund.

MARRIAGES SOLEMNIZED

Once issued by the Clerk, a marriage license is valid for sixty (60) days. The marriage may be solemnized by a regularly ordained minister or other ordained clergy, a judicial officer including a retired judicial officer, a clerk of the circuit court, or a notary public. The Clerk's office performed 498 marriage ceremonies in 2001, an 8% increase over the number performed in 2000.

PASSPORTS PROCESSED

The Clerk of the Circuit Court accepts passport applications as an agent for the Passport Office of the United States Department of State. Once filed with the Clerk's Office, the applications are submitted to the U.S. Passport Agency and a passport is normally mailed to the applicant within six weeks. The Clerk's Office in 2001 processed 2,691 passport applications, an 8% decrease from 2000.

A birth certificate, which must be submitted to the Passport Office with the application, should include the date the certificate was filed in the registrar's office, along with the registrar's signature and official seal. A naturalized citizen must also submit his or her naturalization papers. The Passport Agency will not accept documents such as a "Notification of Birth Registration" or "Birth Announcement".

If a birth certificate does not exist, an affidavit to that effect from the custodian of birth records in the state or county of birth will be accepted. The affidavit must be accompanied by at least two documents that substantiate the date of birth, such as a baptismal certificate, family Bible record, certified copy of school record, or an old insurance policy. The birth certificate or other documents will be returned with the passport.

Two photographs of the applicant, both of which should be 2 inches wide and 2 inches long, must also be attached to the application.

The U.S. Passport Agency charges a processing fee of \$45.00 for an adult applicant and \$25.00 for an applicant under 16 years of age. A check or money order made payable to *U.S. Department of State* should be attached to the application. The clerk's fee of \$15.00 may be paid by cash, check or money order.

The applicant must also show proof of identification and take an oath by which he or she swears the furnished information is true and correct. A driver's license or a photo ID card issued by a State Division of Drivers Licenses or U.S. Armed Forces are acceptable forms of identification.

A passport issued to an adult is valid for ten (10) years and may be renewed within five (5) years. A child's passport, which is valid for five (5) years, is not renewable.

EX-OFFICIO CLERK TO THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

The Florida Constitution provides for the Clerk to act as Ex-Officio Clerk to the Board of County Commissioners. In this capacity, a primary responsibility of the Clerk is to record and index minutes for the Board of County Commission meetings. The entire meeting is electronically recorded by the Clerk and the audio tapes are available to the public for listening purposes or purchase the following morning. This recording by an independent elected official assures the integrity of the minutes.

Regular meetings begin at 9:00 a.m. and are held on the first and third Tuesdays each month, with workshops scheduled on the alternate Tuesdays and at such other times as may be necessary. The meetings, which are open to the public, are normally held at the Commission Auditorium in the County Government Complex. An agenda listing those items to be discussed at each meeting and the persons scheduled to appear is available at the office of the Board of County Commissioners.

The Clerk's Office attended and recorded the minutes of 111 Board meetings in 2001. These meetings, which lasted anywhere from 30 minutes to all day, resulted in 975 pages of minutes.

The Clerk's Office also maintains the papers and instruments of the Board of County Commissioners. These documents are available for the public to view and obtain photocopies. In 2001, the Clerk of the Circuit Court processed 36 new Ordinances and 523 new Resolutions that were adopted by the Board. Additionally, the Clerk processed 201 petitions for review before the Value Adjustment Board.

CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER

The Clerk of the Circuit Court serves as the chief financial officer of Marion County. The Clerk is responsible for the collection, custody and disbursement of funds for the Board of County Commissioners (BCC). Along with the handling of County monies, the Clerk is responsible for the related accounting and financial reporting. Accounting includes not only cash transactions, but also all property owned by the BCC.

The independent custody of BCC funds helps ensure safeguarding of taxpayer dollars. The Clerk of the Circuit Court administers an investment program, investing a yearly average of approximately \$114 million. The philosophy regarding investments is to ensure the safety of principal, maintain liquidity and obtain the highest yield possible. The nearly \$9 million in interest earnings from this program represent about 4.98% of the County's total revenue. This income assists in offsetting the need to increase taxes and user fees paid by Marion County citizens.

The administration of long-term debt is another financial responsibility of the Clerk. The Clerk is responsible for the timely payment of principal and interest, as well as ensuring the BCC complies with its various bond requirements. This function helps to ensure that Marion County maintains the highest credit rating possible, which in turn reduces interest costs paid by taxpayers.

The Clerk maintains the accounting records and issues checks to vendors. Annually, more than 25,000 payments are made to vendors.

In addition to issuing checks to vendors, the Clerk also issues payroll checks to County employees. Bi-weekly payments, totaling approximately 34,000, of salaries and wages are made annually to approximately 1,300 county employees.

The Clerk also maintains records on approximately 9,500 items of real and tangible personal property (land, buildings, vehicles and equipment) acquired or disposed of by the County. The Clerk conducts an independent inventory of the \$60,000,000 worth of County tangible personal property (equipment) annually.

In addition to receiving, safeguarding and disbursing BCC funds, the Clerk also has the responsibility for preparing the County's annual financial statements. The Clerk has received the national award of Government Finance Officers Association's Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting for the last fifteen years.

BUDGET DIRECTOR

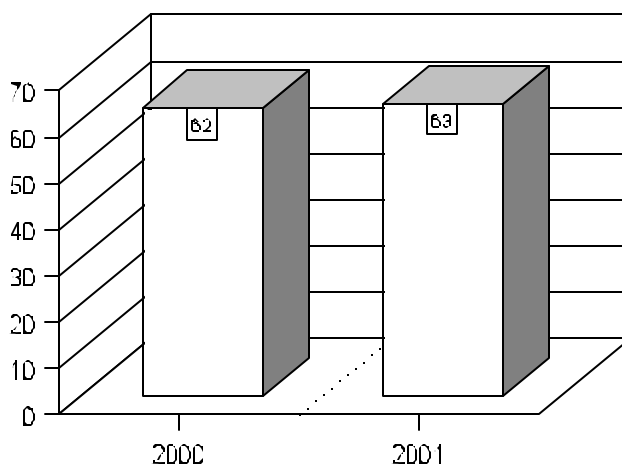
The Clerk of the Circuit Court, as Budget Officer for the Board of County Commissioners, is responsible for the preparation and monitoring of the County's Annual Budget. The budget includes funding for all operations of the County including the Board of County Commissioners, Clerk of the Circuit Court, Property Appraiser, Sheriff, Supervisor of Elections and Tax Collector. The Clerk is responsible for administering a budget that for fiscal year 2001/2002 totaled approximately \$324 million.

The Clerk compiles in excess of 2,000 individual expenditure accounts and is responsible for accurately estimating over 650 individual revenue accounts. The County's budget is segregated into 63 separate fund entities for fiscal year 2001/2002. The total number of County funds increased by 1 over the 62 funds included in fiscal year 2000/2001.

The Clerk is responsible for preparation of the annual budget documents, facilitating County Commission budget workshops, and assisting in final adoption of the County's property tax rates and budgets. The Clerk monitors the budget to ensure that expenditures remain within budgetary constraints.

The Clerk serves the citizens of Marion County by providing the means for an accurate and financially sound budget. The Clerk also ensures that citizens are informed in all aspects of the budget process. Budget information is available for review in the Clerk's office. The annual budget is on file at the main branch of the Marion County Public Library and summary budget information may be viewed on the Clerk's Internet web site.

COUNTY FUND ENTITIES

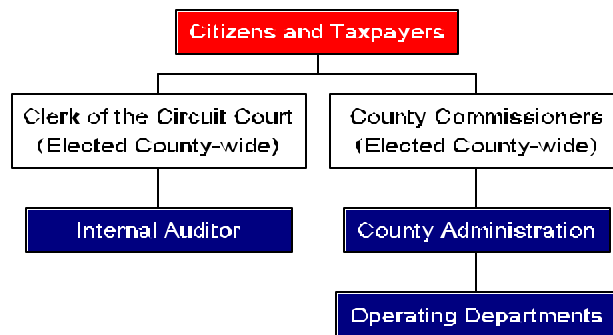


INTERNAL AUDITOR

The Clerk of the Circuit Court serves as chief financial officer, accountant and auditor for the Marion County Board of County Commissioners (BCC). The Clerk has established the Internal Auditor position because of the importance of government compliance with laws, policies, established procedures and accountability for the use of public funds while exercising its power and performing its duties.

The Internal Auditor is responsible for auditing and reviewing the functions, activities and programs under the direction of the BCC. The Internal Auditor is organizationally independent and has no direct responsibility for, or authority over, any BCC function, activity, or program subject to audit and review. The fundamental objective of internal auditing is to assist all members of management to discharge their responsibilities. This objective is met by furnishing management with analyses, appraisals and recommendations concerning the activities reviewed.

The Clerk's mission is to serve the citizens and taxpayers of Marion County through the performance of independent, objective reviews and evaluations of all relevant activities under the BCC. The Internal Auditor assists County administrators and department managers in achieving the best utilization and administration of taxpayer resources in order to improve County operations and ensure that the County is fulfilling its fiduciary responsibilities to its citizens and taxpayers.



CONCLUSION

For over 150 years, the Clerk of the Circuit Court has been elected by the people of Florida as the protector of the public trust. Whether as an officer of the court or serving in the many constitutional and statutory roles of county officer, the Clerk of the Circuit Court has maintained the constitutional doctrine of “checks and balances” at the local level.

The Clerk of the Circuit Court maintains the constitutional doctrine of “checks and balances” at the local level, evidenced as follows:

- ★ The Clerk provides the “checks and balances” for local government as accountant and auditor for the Board of County Commissioners; collector and distributor of statutory assessments; and guardian of the public records, public funds, and public property.
- ★ The Clerk provides the “checks and balances” for the courts by ensuring that the court's orders, judgments, and directives are carried out within the parameters allowed by law; collecting and distributing court assessed payments (i.e., fines, court costs, and child support), and statutory service charges; preparing, filing, and maintaining valuable court records; providing vital statistical data to the Supreme Court and various state agencies.
- ★ The Clerk provides protection to the citizens by ensuring that the taxpayer’s money is handled according to law; providing access to public records; auditing reports of guardians in guardianship cases; providing assistance to citizens in accessing the court system; processing and maintaining court documents and ensuring that litigants’ court cases are handled in a timely manner.

The Clerk is a public officer in the service of the government of the people, who derives the position from a legally authorized election and whose duties are continuous in nature and defined by rules prescribed by government. The Clerk's duties are not purely ministerial, but rather an integral part of the whole county governmental process.