

WELCOME TO

The United States District Court

for the

Eastern District of Tennessee



Patricia L. McNutt

Clerk of Court

The Eastern District of Tennessee is one of 94 federal court districts in the United States. Each district operates separately. Our district has jurisdiction in 41 East Tennessee counties, reaching generally from Bristol on the north to Chattanooga on the south. *(Please see diagram on page 5.)*

There are four divisions of the Eastern District of Tennessee, and we have offices in each of those divisions, at Greeneville, Knoxville, Chattanooga, and Winchester. The Knoxville office serves as the headquarters for the district. The names of the divisions are the Northeastern Division (Greeneville), the Northern Division (Knoxville), the Southern Division (Chattanooga) and the Winchester Division.

The nine districts in the states of Tennessee, Kentucky, Ohio and Michigan make up the Sixth Circuit. There are 13 circuits in the United States Court system. *(Please see diagram on page 6.)*

Court Structure

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The federal courts handle both civil and criminal matters. They are, however, courts of “limited” jurisdiction because they only handle cases involving either matters arising under federal law or matters of state law arising between parties of different states.

Appeals from the district courts go to the circuit courts, and appeals from the circuit courts go to the United States Supreme Court.

The federal courts are separate from the state court system, such as the circuit courts, chancery courts, and criminal courts in each county. Appeals from the state courts go to the Tennessee Court of Appeals and the Tennessee Court of Criminal Appeals, and appeals from those courts then go to the Tennessee Supreme Court. Appeals from the Tennessee Supreme Court go to the United States Supreme Court, not the U.S. district courts.

The Judges

The district judges of our court are Article III judges, that is, they are appointed by the President of the United States, with approval of the Senate, under authority of Article III of the United States Constitution. They are appointed to lifetime terms.

We also have magistrate judges. They are appointed by the district judges and serve eight-year terms. Their duties are much like those of the district judges, except they do not have authority to try criminal cases, except misdemeanors. They can try civil cases by consent of the parties and do try a number of civil cases each year.

At the present, there are two district judges and two magistrate judges domiciled in the Knoxville division, two district judges and two magistrate judges domiciled in the Chattanooga division, and one district judge and one magistrate judge domiciled in the Greeneville division. The Winchester Division does not have a resident judge.

The Clerk

The clerk of the court is appointed by the district judges. Everyone who works for the clerk is a deputy clerk. Deputy clerks have different job descriptions, such as docketing deputy, courtroom deputy, financial deputy, procurement deputy, etc., but all are deputy clerks.

We have 46 deputy clerks serving throughout the district in the four divisional offices.

The Court Family

Each of the judges has a secretary or administrative assistant. Each district judge has two law clerks, and each magistrate judge has one law clerk with certain exceptions. The law clerks are lawyers. The judges and their staffs are generally referred to as chambers staff.

While members of the chambers staffs and the clerk's staff are separate, we all work together toward the same end.

The clerk of the court serves as the court's chief administrative officer, managing all of the non-judicial functions of the court.

The duties of the deputy clerks are varied. At the heart of the work is maintaining the records of the more than 1,700 civil cases and more than 300 criminal cases filed in this district each year. In addition, deputy clerks assist in the courtroom, administer the court's jury system, respond to inquiries from the public and from members of the bar, operate the court's automated systems, keep track of the court's budget and expenditures, and maintain property and personnel records.

Other Units of the Court

There are other units of the U.S. District Court. They are the U.S. Pretrial Services Office and the U.S. Probation Office. Each of these offices is headed by a chief, who serves much like the clerk, heading up the pretrial services and probation staffs in the divisional offices. Their mission is to investigate and supervise defendants and offenders.

The Pretrial Services officers investigate defendants who are charged with federal crimes and who are awaiting a court hearing. They prepare reports that the court relies on in deciding whether to release or detain defendants while they are awaiting trial.

The Probation Office, in general, is responsible for providing the judges the necessary background on criminal defendants to help the judges have as full an understanding as possible of the individuals who are to be sentenced. The probation officers also supervise offenders released on probation by the court and those who are on parole or on supervised release status after they complete their prison sentence.

The U.S. Bankruptcy Court is part of the federal court system, but it operates independently of the district courts. There is, however, close cooperation between the district court and the bankruptcy court because, from time to time, bankruptcy rulings are appealed to the district court. The bankruptcy court has its own judges and its own clerk and deputy clerks.

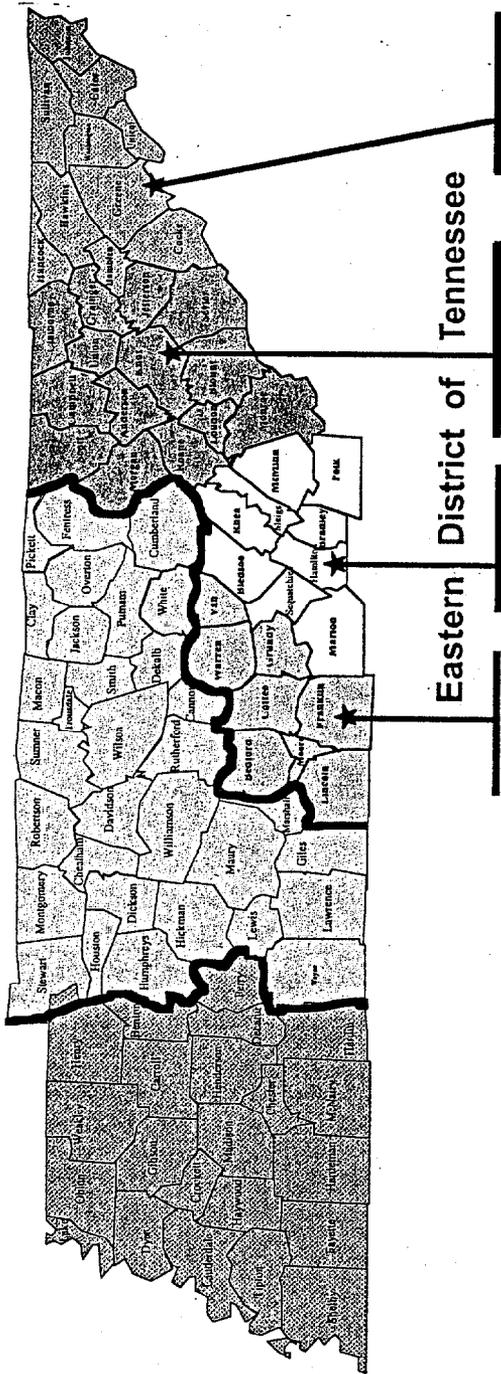
Non-Judiciary Offices

Two offices with which the clerk's office has considerable contact are not judiciary offices but rather units of another branch of government, the Justice Department. These are the U.S. Marshals Service and the U.S. Attorney's Office.

The Marshals Service is responsible for security for the court and the judges. The Court Security Officers who are stationed at the public entrances to the courthouses work under the supervision of the Marshals Service. They are employed by a private firm that works under contract to the Marshals Service. These officers are routinely referred to as CSOs. These officers, who can be identified by their blue and gray suits, differ from the deputy U.S. marshals who are government employees. The deputy U.S. marshals have a number of duties related to the court, among which is taking charge of criminal defendants when they are remanded to the custody of the government.

The U.S. Attorney's Office is responsible for prosecuting persons charged with violating federal criminal laws. That office also represents the government in a variety of matters involving federal civil laws.

Another office with which the clerk's office has contact is the Federal Community Defender's Office, a private firm that operates on a government contract to represent indigent persons charged with violating federal criminal laws.



The four divisions:

Northeastern

Northern

Southern

Winchester

Winchester (8 counties)

1. Bedford
2. Coffee
3. Franklin
4. Grundy
5. Lincoln
6. Moore
7. Warren
8. Van Buren

Southern (9 counties)

1. Bledsoe
2. Bradley
3. Hamilton
4. McMinn
5. Marion
6. Meigs
7. Polk
8. Rhea
9. Sequatchie

Northern (14 counties)

1. Anderson
2. Blount
3. Campbell
4. Claiborne
5. Grainger
6. Jefferson
7. Knox
8. Loudon
9. Monroe
10. Morgan

Northeastern (10 counties)

1. Carter
2. Cocke
3. Greene
4. Hamblen
5. Hancock
6. Hawkins
7. Johnson
8. Sullivan
9. Unicoi
10. Washington

