

# A Year in Review: Trial Activity and Case Filings in the Jefferson Circuit Court

Chief Circuit Judge Eric J. Haner

Each year, the Jefferson Circuit Court takes stock of its work—not simply to report numbers, but to better understand how those numbers reflect the evolving demands placed on our bench, our staff and the attorneys who practice before us. The 2025 calendar year presents a particularly meaningful opportunity for reflection. The data shows both a continued increase in filings and a notable resurgence in trial activity, underscoring what many practitioners have experienced firsthand: Jefferson Circuit Court remains a high-volume, high-demand trial court.

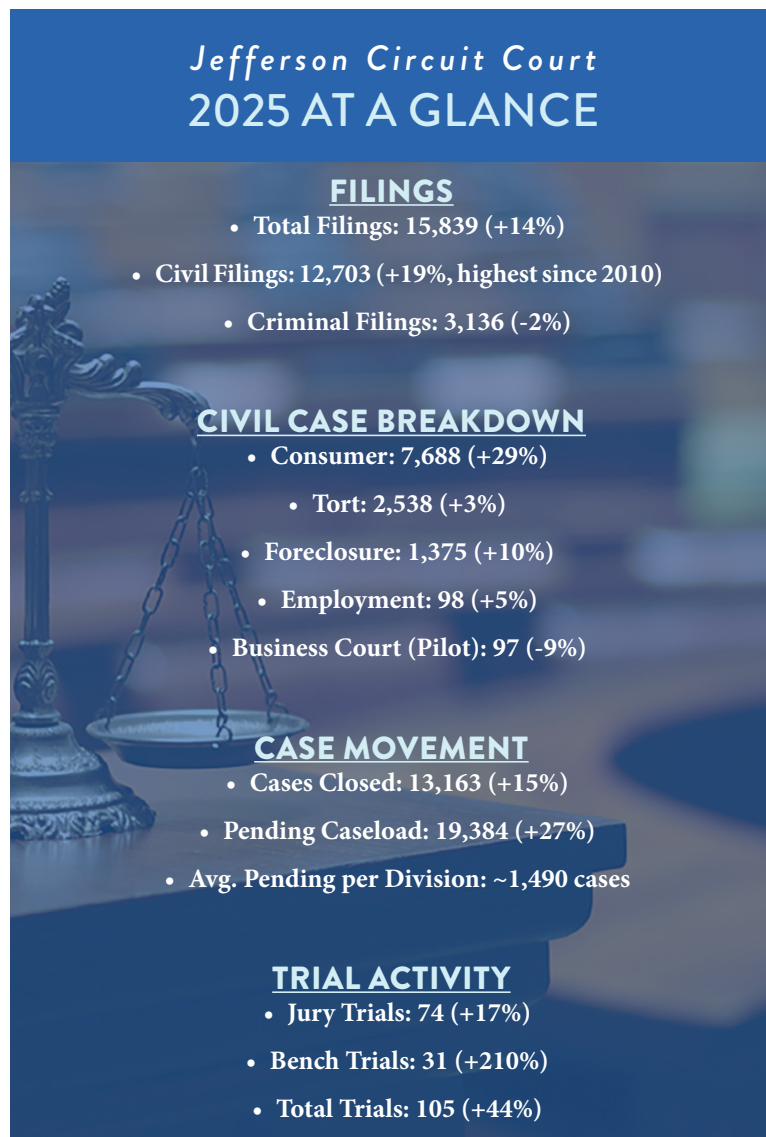
In 2025, the Court saw a significant increase in total case filings. A combined 15,839 cases were filed, including 12,703 civil filings and 3,136 criminal filings. This represents a substantial rise from 2024, when total filings were 13,849—an increase of approximately 14% year-over-year. Notably, the 2025 civil filing total represents the highest level in more than a decade, surpassing every year since 2010. The growth is not an anomaly but part of a broader upward trajectory. Since 2022, total filings have steadily climbed from 11,292 to 12,107 in 2023, 13,849 in 2024, and now 15,839 in 2025.

Civil filings, in particular, have driven much of this growth. The jump from 10,657 civil filings in 2024 to 12,703 in 2025 represents an increase of approximately 19%. A closer examination of specific case types helps illustrate where this growth is occurring.

Tort filings increased from 2,463 cases in 2024 to 2,538 in 2025, a rise of roughly 3%, continuing a steady pattern of growth in what are often among the most resource-intensive matters on our docket. Foreclosure filings also rose, from 1,249 in 2024 to 1,375 in 2025, an increase of about 10%. Employment cases saw a more modest increase, from 93 to 98 filings, or approximately 5%, but nonetheless represents a consistent and often complex area of litigation.

Perhaps most notable is the growth in consumer-related filings, which increased from 5,976 cases in 2024 to 7,688 in 2025—a rise of approximately 29%. This category alone accounts for a significant portion of the overall increase in civil filings and represents a high-volume segment of the Court’s docket. Although many of these cases are not individually complex, they frequently involve numerous filings that require court review and entry of orders, creating sustained demands on judicial time and administrative resources.

The Circuit Court continues to operate a Business Court pilot project, which handles civil



cases falling within certain case types defined in the Business Court Rules. These cases are allocated between the Court’s two designated Business Court divisions—Division One and Division Three. In 2024, the Business Court saw 107 filings, compared to 97 filings in 2025. While these cases represent a relatively small portion of overall civil filings, they are often more specialized, more complex and more time-consuming, and require a greater commitment of judicial time and resources, often involving sustained judicial attention over the life of the case. At the same time, Business Court cases tend to reach resolution more quickly than other civil matters, due in large part to the mandatory case management protocols established by the Business Court Rules.

Criminal filings, while comparatively stable, also remain a significant component of the Court’s workload, with more than 3,100 new criminal cases filed in 2025. While the number of criminal filings is lower than civil filings, criminal cases occupy a substantial portion of the Court’s weekly docket and require a significant share of judicial time on the bench.

Equally important is how the Court has responded to this influx. In 2025, the Court closed 13,163 cases, up from 11,460 in 2024—an increase of approximately 15%. While this represents a meaningful rise in dispositions, the pace of new filings continues to outstrip closures. As a result, pending caseload has grown, with 19,384 cases pending at the close of 2025, compared to 15,215 at the end of 2024—an increase of roughly 27%. Spread across the Court’s 13 divisions, that equates to an average of approximately 1,490 pending cases per division. While the exact caseload in each division fluctuates, this provides a general sense of the typical caseload carried by each circuit judge.

For practitioners, there are several takeaways from the 2025 data. The likelihood of trial, particularly in civil cases, continues to increase. While settlement remains the resolution of choice in many cases, more matters are proceeding through to adjudication. Preparation and timeliness are also more important than ever. With fuller dockets and limited flexibility, delays in motion practice, discovery or trial readiness can have ripple effects beyond a single case.

Trial activity in 2025 further illustrates the Court’s workload. After several years of fluctuation influenced by pandemic-related disruptions and subsequent recovery, trial volume has continued to rebound. In 2025, the Court conducted 105 total trials, consisting of 74 jury trials and 31 bench trials, compared to 73 total trials in 2024. Jury trials increased by approximately 17%, and bench trials increased by approximately 210%. The 74 jury trials conducted in 2025 represent the highest number since 2019, with the exception of 2022, when jury trials resumed following their suspension during the pandemic.

When viewed in a broader historical context, the 2025 trial numbers reflect continued recovery following the disruptions of 2020 and 2021. While trial volume has not returned to levels seen in earlier decades—when annual jury trials routinely exceeded 100, just as recent as 2018—the upward trend in recent years reflects a steady growth in trial activity.

The 2025 data reflects a court that is not only active but steadily growing in both volume and complexity. As filings increase and trial activity continues to rebound, the demands on the Jefferson Circuit Court—and those who practice before it—will remain significant. At the same time, it remains to be seen how recent changes in the judicial budget may impact court operations and our collective ability to manage these increasing caseloads. With that in mind, the Court remains committed to working collaboratively with the bar to ensure that, even in the face of evolving challenges, cases are handled efficiently, fairly and with the level of attention they deserve.

Judge Eric Haner presides in Division One of the Jefferson Circuit Court, and is the Chief Regional Judge. ■



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