

**IN THE SUPERIOR COURTS OF THE WEST GEORGIA JUDICIAL CIRCUIT  
STATE OF GEORGIA  
CARROLL & HEARD COUNTIES**

**STANDING ORDER NUMBER 1**

**IN RE: CASE ASSIGNMENT**

Effective January 1, 2025, the Clerks of the Superior Court of the West Georgia Judicial Circuit shall assign cases to the judges of the West Georgia Judicial Circuit according to the following parameters, rules and procedures:

**I. CIVIL CASES**

Civil cases shall be assigned when they are filed with the Clerk of Court. In assigning civil cases, the Clerks shall utilize the random assignment functionality that is a part of their respective case management software programs

**II. CRIMINAL CASES**

Criminal cases shall be assigned when the warrant is filed with the Clerk of Superior Court. It is the intention of this Order that the Clerk of Superior Court receive criminal warrants for filing as soon as is reasonably practicable. The Clerks shall randomly assign criminal cases by utilizing the random assignment functionality that is a part of their respective case management software programs or by implementing a random manual assignment system of their choosing subject to the approval of a majority of the judges of the Circuit.

It is the intention of this order that criminal cases be distributed among the judges in the percentages set forth in this Order so that each judge receives his or her proportionate share of serious felony cases and each judge receives his or her proportionate share of felony cases that are not serious felonies. "Serious felony" cases are those cases defined as such in the *Georgia Court Guide to Statistical Reporting (as updated on November, 2023)*. Uniform Appeal cases shall be assigned as hereafter set forth. In any situation wherein a defendant is accused of a misdemeanor and there is no related felony case, the misdemeanor case shall be treated the same as a non-serious felony case for purposes of assignment.

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GA. CARROLL COUNTY  
CLERK COURT  
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SUPERIOR COURT  
CARROLL COUNTY GEORGIA

Warrants shall be assigned from the lowest warrant number. However, when a Clerk receives multiple warrants on the same defendant, and those warrants charge both serious and non-serious felony offenses, the Clerk shall assign the warrants on that defendant based upon the lowest serious felony warrant number (i.e. the lowest serious felony warrant on a defendant shall take precedence over a lower non-serious felony warrant on the same defendant).

### **III. CASE ASSIGNMENTS**

#### **A. Carroll County.**

The Clerk of the Superior Court of Carroll County shall assign cases as follows:

- **Criminal Cases**
  - Judge John Simpson- 25%
  - Judge Dennis Blackmon- 25%
  - Judge Dustin W. Hightower- 25%
  - Judge Erica Tisinger- 25%
- **Civil Cases**
  - Judge John Simpson- 15%
  - Judge Dennis Blackmon- 35%
  - Judge Dustin W. Hightower- 25%
  - Judge Erica Tisinger- 25%
- **Civil Domestic Violence**
  - Judge John Simpson – 100%
  - Judge Dennis Blackmon- 0%
  - Judge Dustin W. Hightower- 0%
  - Judge Erica Tisinger- 0%

Judge John Simpson shall be assigned 100% of all Child Support Enforcement and 100% of all Domestic Violence cases.

**B. Heard County**

The Clerk of the Superior Court of Heard County shall assign cases as follows:

- **Criminal Cases**
  - Judge John Simpson- 0%
  - Judge Dennis Blackmon- 0%
  - Judge Dustin W. Hightower- 50%
  - Judge Erica Tisinger- 50%
- **Civil Cases**
  - Judge John Simpson- 100%
  - Judge Dennis Blackmon- 0%
  - Judge Dustin W. Hightower- 0%
  - Judge Erica Tisinger- 0%
- **Civil Domestic Violence**
  - Judge John Simpson – 100%
  - Judge Dennis Blackmon- 0%
  - Judge Dustin W. Hightower- 0%
  - Judge Erica Tisinger- 0%

Judge John Simpson shall be assigned 100% of all Child Support Enforcement and 100% of all Domestic Violence cases.

The cumulative breakdown of case assignments is reflected below:

	CARROLL COUNTY		HEARD COUNTY	
	Criminal	Civil	Criminal	Civil
Judge Dennis Blackmon	25%	35%	0%	0%
Judge John Simpson	25%	15%	0%	100%
Judge Dustin W. Hightower	25%	25%	50%	0%
Judge Erica Tisinger	25%	25%	50%	0%

#### **IV. UNIFIED APPEAL CASES.**

Upon the filing of a notice of intent to seek the death penalty in any case in any county of the circuit, the Judges of the Circuit shall confer and consider the distribution of death penalty cases among the judges of the Circuit, the respective pending case load, and allocation of resources for the handling of such a case. After such conference, the Chief Judge shall assign the case regardless of any prior assignment made by the Clerk.

#### **V. COMPANION AND RELATED ACTIONS**

It is the responsibility of the Clerk of Court to assure that companion and related cases are assigned to the same judge in accordance with Uniform Superior Court Rule 3.2. The random assignment system employed by the Clerks shall apply to the earliest case filed. Thereafter, all actions involving substantially the same parties, or substantially the same subject matter, or substantially the same factual issues, whether pending simultaneously or not, shall be assigned to the same judge. Whenever such action is refiled, or a derivative or companion action is filed or refiled, or a defendant is reindicted on a previous charge, or is indicted on a subsequent charge while still under charges or serving a confinement or probated sentence on a previous action, or co-defendants are indicted separately, such actions shall be assigned to the judge to whom the original action was or is assigned.

Generally, such actions will be assigned to the judge to whom the action with the lower action number is assigned. In the event that it comes to the attention of the Clerk or any party or attorney involved in a case that any case is related to another case assigned to a different judge, that fact shall be made known to the judges affected, who shall confer to determine whether a transfer pursuant to Uniform Superior Court Rule 3.3 is appropriate.

#### **VI. MANUAL ASSIGNMENT**

Should any Clerk decide to assign cases manually, the random method of assignment chosen shall be reduced to writing and submitted to the judges of the Superior Court for approval.

#### **VII. EXCLUSIVE CONTROL – BALANCING THE CASELOAD**

The Clerks shall run case assignment reports every six months to determine whether their random assignment systems have fairly distributed the cases in accordance with the current Case Assignment Order. Such reports shall be sent to each judge in the circuit by January 15th and July 15th of each year.

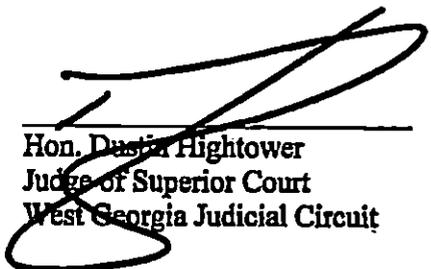
The judge to whom any action is assigned shall have exclusive control of such action, except as provided in these rules, and no person shall change any assignment except by written order of the judge affected and as provided in these rules. In this regard, an assigned judge may transfer an assigned action to another judge with the latter's consent, in which event the latter becomes the assigned judge.

**VIII. EFFECT ON PREVIOUS STANDING ORDERS**

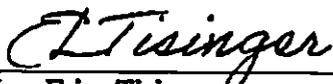
This Order supersedes all previous Standing Orders addressing case assignment, which, upon the effective date of this Order, are rescinded.

SO ORDERED this the 1<sup>st</sup> day of January, 2025.

  
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Hon. John Simpson  
Chief Superior Court Judge  
West Georgia Judicial Circuit

  
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Hon. Dustin Hightower  
Judge of Superior Court  
West Georgia Judicial Circuit

  
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Hon. Dennis Blackmon  
Judge of Superior Court  
West Georgia Judicial Circuit

  
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Hon. Erica Tisinger  
Judge of Superior Court  
West Georgia Judicial Circuit