

All Things Judicial Highlights Case Backlog Reduction Strategies and Successes



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Date 2023-08-30 11:31

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
August 30, 2023

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Strategies implemented since 2021 have reduced pending cases by 25% compared with the backlog at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic.

RALEIGH — The latest episode of [All Things Judicial](#) highlights Judicial Branch strategies and successes in reducing the pending case backlog in the North Carolina court system. We explore the challenges of holding court during the pandemic and the strategies implemented to reduce pending cases by 25%. This episode is hosted by [North Carolina Administrative Office of the Courts](#) (NCAOC) Director [Ryan Boyce](#) and guests include NCAOC Research Policy and Planning Manager Emily Mehta, Chief District Court Judge Scott Ussery, and elected District Attorney Jon David. Judge Ussery and DA David represent [Bladen](#), [Brunswick](#), and [Columbus](#) counties.



"Chief Justice Newby arrived in 2021 and his first order of business was issuing a statewide order that allowed local judicial officials, like Judge Ussery and DA David, to resume jury trials," said Director Boyce on the podcast. "They are the ones who knew their districts, and the Chief's vision was to give these folks the authority to hold, or not to hold, jury trials based on their districts' needs."

With trials postponed during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, the pending case count peaked at 1.2 million cases. The latest statewide figures indicate that the case backlog has been reduced to 900,000, which represents a 25% reduction. State court dockets are in better shape now than they were even before COVID. Creativity on the local level is one factor credited with this success.

"We got approval to go off-site and we went five miles down the road and found a gymnasium, cafeteria, and media center, and for 11 months we held court," said Judge Ussery on the podcast. "We did everything we could as the stakeholders in our community to make sure the system didn't stop."

Other successful backlog reduction strategies included installing advanced technology in courthouses, streamlining case management processes, and relying on the Judicial Branch's most import resource—its people.

"I work around heroes and they understand that with the enormous responsibilities of this job come service and sacrifice," said DA David on the podcast. "This was simply a challenge to overcome and we found a strategy to protect and serve our communities against this difficult backdrop."

MORE INFORMATION

All Things Judicial is a podcast about the important role of the North Carolina Judicial Branch in state government. The podcast follows a bi-monthly release schedule with each new episode available for download every other Wednesday and can be found on all podcast apps and on [NCCourts.gov](#).

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About North Carolina Judicial Branch

The [North Carolina Judicial Branch](#) is an equal and distinctively separate branch and core function of government. More than 7,000 Judicial Branch employees statewide administer justice in courthouses in North Carolina's 100 counties. The [Judicial Branch budget for FY 2021–22](#) was \$672.4M, 86.2% of which is used to pay salaries and the remaining 13.8% is used for operations. The Judicial Branch receives only 2.59% of the overall State budget.

About North Carolina Administrative Office of the Courts

The North Carolina Administrative Office of the Courts (NCAOC) is the administrative agency for the [North Carolina Judicial Branch](#), providing administrative services to help the North Carolina court system operate more efficiently and effectively, taking into account each courthouse's diverse needs, caseloads, and available resources.

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