

For Immediate Release

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT  
SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF INDIANA  
Kristine Seufert, Clerk of Court

## Southern District of Indiana Joins Push for Additional Judgeships

Indianapolis, Indiana – November 18, 2024: Federal courts across the nation face a worsening shortage of Article III judges, resulting in countless Americans suffering delays in the resolution of their legal matters. The Southern District of Indiana is joining the push for Congress to pass the JUDGES Act, a bill that would add 66 district judgeships, two new circuit judgeships, and convert or extend certain existing temporary judgeships to improve access to justice and to meet increasing case filings in the federal courts. One of those additional district judgeships would be in the Southern District of Indiana, where the weighted caseload in the year ending June 30, 2024, ranked nineteenth in the United States and third in the Seventh Circuit.

Heavy caseloads are a longstanding issue in the Southern District of Indiana. Continuing a generally upward trend over the last decade, this district has maintained a weighted caseload per judgeship much higher than the national average—between 23-78% above the general standard. The current weighted filings per active judgeship is 689 (574 excluding a multidistrict litigation (MDL) case), which is 60% higher than the standard for establishing additionally judgeships (and 33% higher even when excluding the MDL). Not only are weighted filings in this district between 20-70% percent higher than the general standard used for determining need (430 weighted filings per judgeship), but this court's weighted filings are nearly 24% higher than the national average of 554 (as of June 30, 2024) filings per judgeship.

Chief Judge Tanya Walton Pratt said: "The strain of operating in excess of full capacity for an extended period of time continues to exhaust the ability of judges and staff to respond in a timely and appropriate fashion to the cases that are filed here and further hinders the court's ability to respond to its caseload efficiently. In the end, it is the litigants of the Southern District of Indiana who suffer when there is a delay in deciding their cases. As such, the Southern District of Indiana urgently needs the additional judgeship that the JUDGES Act would provide."

The Subcommittee on Judicial Statistics first recommended the addition of a temporary judgeship to the Southern District of Indiana in 1996. One permanent judgeship was recommended in eight subsequent Judicial Conference sessions, and two permanent judgeships were recommended twice. These prior recommendations have each been approved by the Judicial Council of the Seventh Circuit, by the Subcommittee on Judicial Resources, and by the Judicial Conference.

Congress has never acted on any of those recommendations – until now. While the Senate unanimously passed the JUDGES Act, which is sponsored by Senator Todd Young of Indiana, the legislation is currently pending in the House of Representatives. Judges, including Chief Judge Pratt, are reaching out to members of the House to encourage swift action.

The Administrative Office of the United States Courts (AOUSC) recently published an article on the ongoing need for additional judgeships. It can be accessed at <https://www.uscourts.gov/news/2024/11/18/need-additional-judgeships-litigants-suffer-when-cases-linger>.