

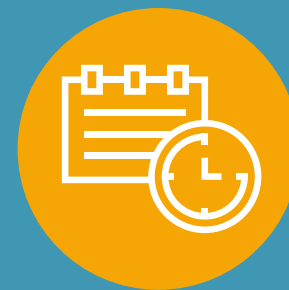
SOUTH DAKOTA
UNIFIED JUDICIAL SYSTEM

Proposed Merger of Fourth and Seventh Judicial Circuits



BACKGROUND

Last study of circuit boundaries was in 1999 when the Eighth Circuit was eliminated.



Discussion of consolidating Fourth Circuit and Seventh Circuit was had at that time.



Supreme Court's role is to consider boundaries to ensure efficient workload distribution and ability to meet the needs of court users.

- Changing Demographics
- Court Caseload Data
- Connected Communities and Trade Areas
- Use of Personnel and Positions



BACKGROUND

Circuit boundaries create an artificial line that tends to limit ability to allocate resources.

Assignment of Judges and Ability to Assist in Event of Conflicts or Workload Increases

- Sturgis Motorcycle Rally
- Magistrate Judge Assistance in Current Seventh Circuit
- Conflict Cases and Disqualifications
- Responsiveness to Day-to-Day Demands

Clerk of Courts Office Work-Sharing

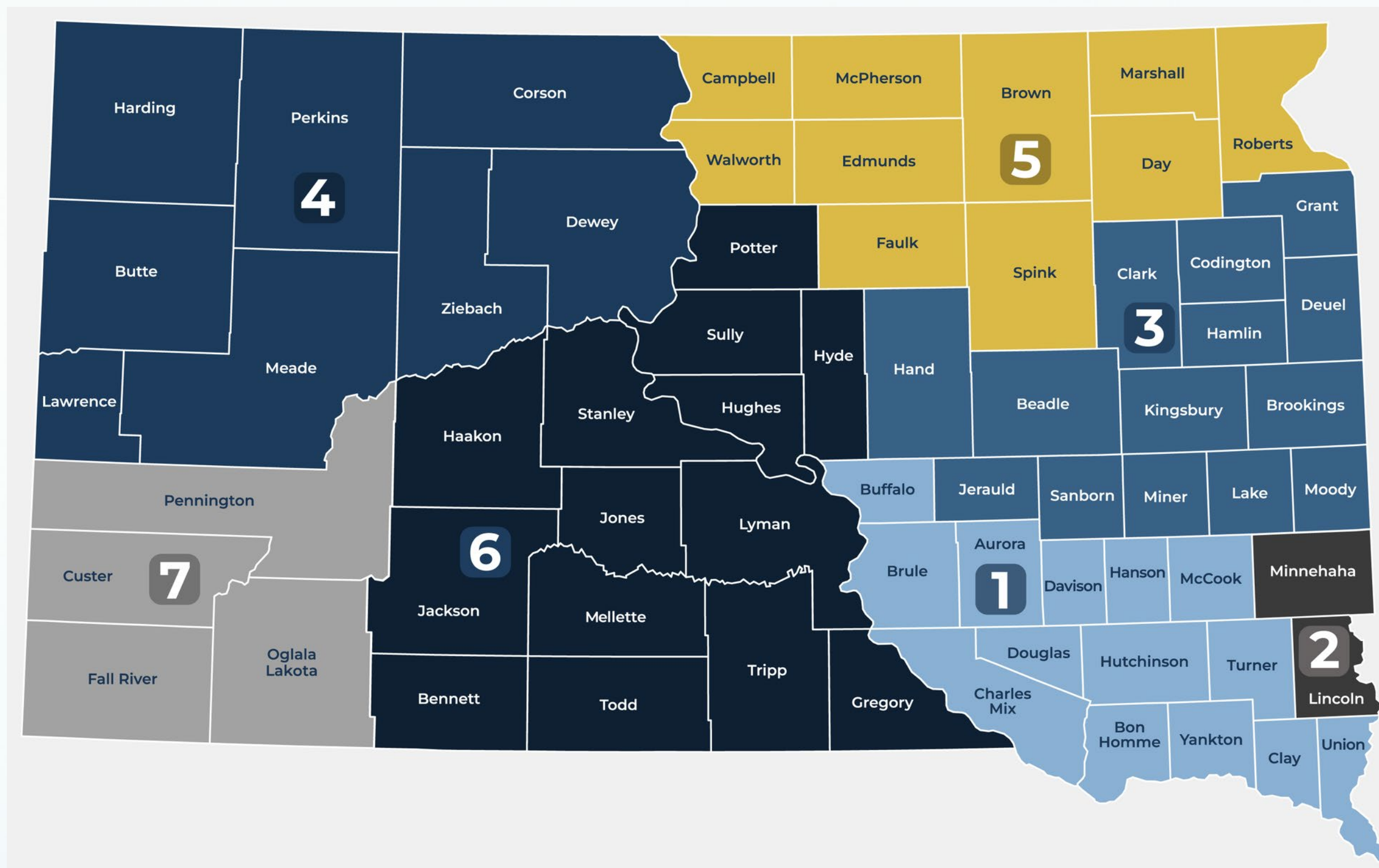
- Need to Redistribute Work
- Keep Offices Open to Allow Access for Public

Court Services Supervision

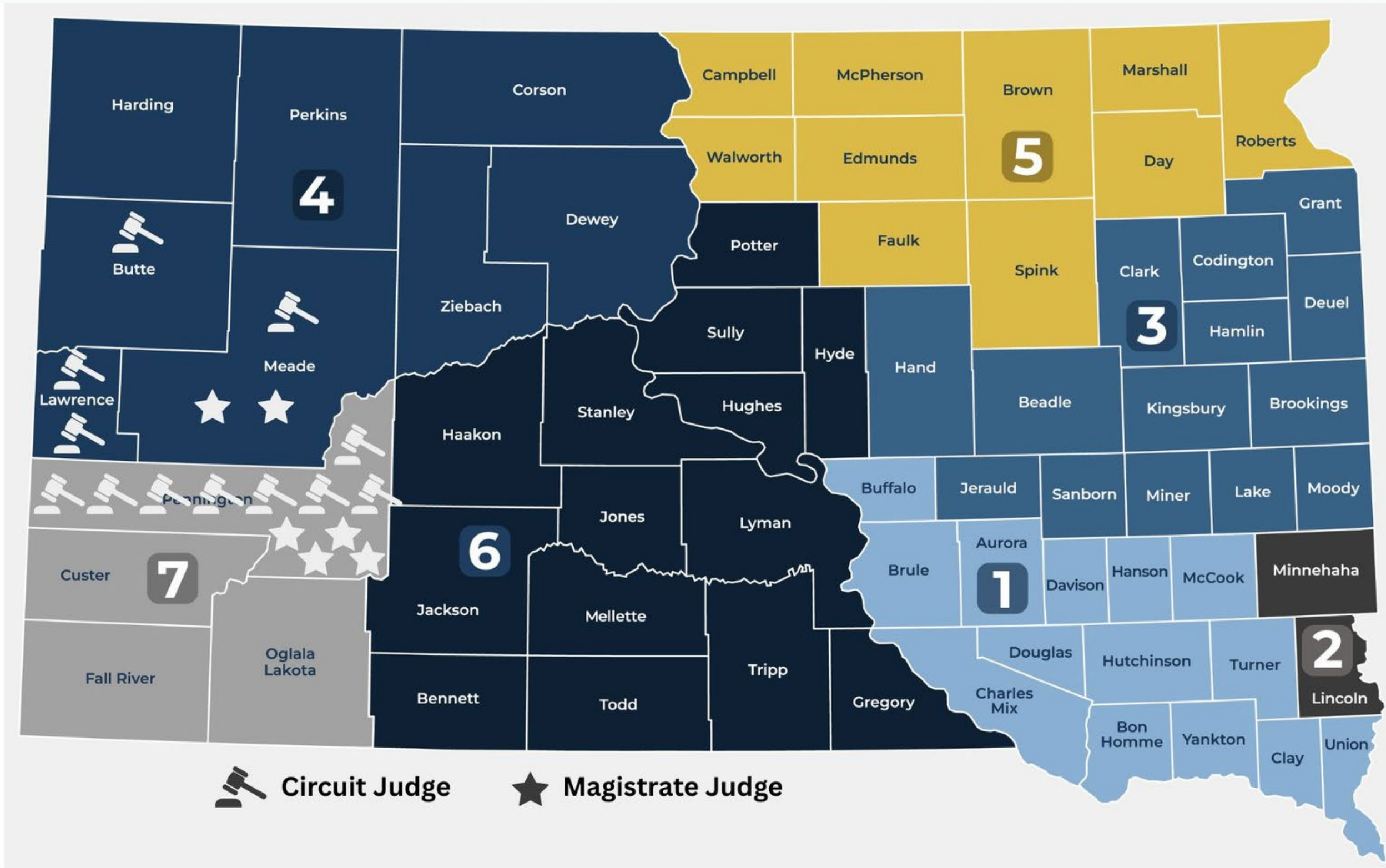
- Limit Barriers to Available Resources and Services
- Recognize Work/Travel and Home Across Communities



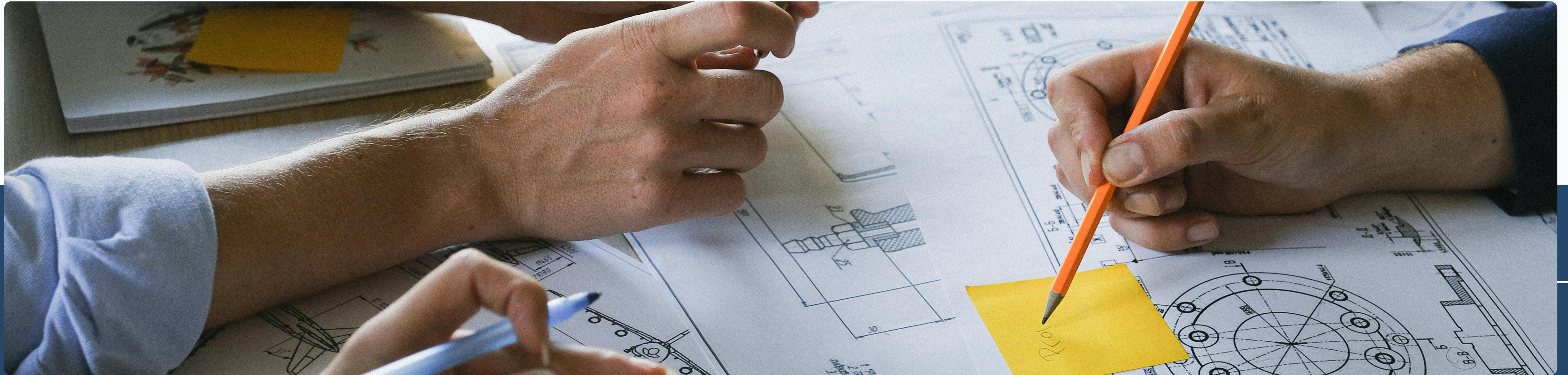
CURRENT JUDICIAL CIRCUITS



LOCATION OF JUDGES



WHAT PROPOSAL DOES NOT CHANGE



Judges' Duty
Stations



Employees'
Duty Stations



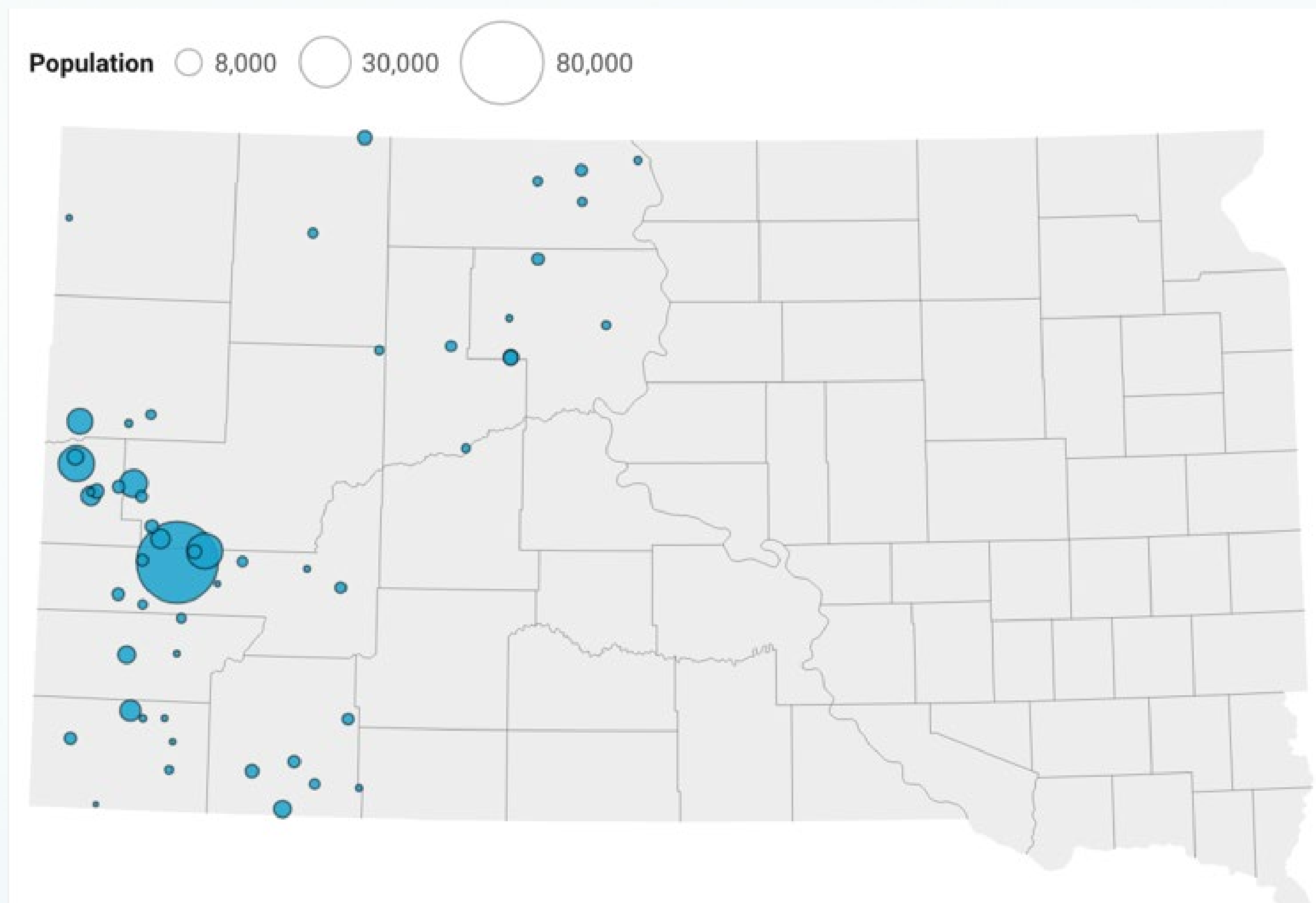
Office
Hours



Treatment Court
Locations or
Service Areas

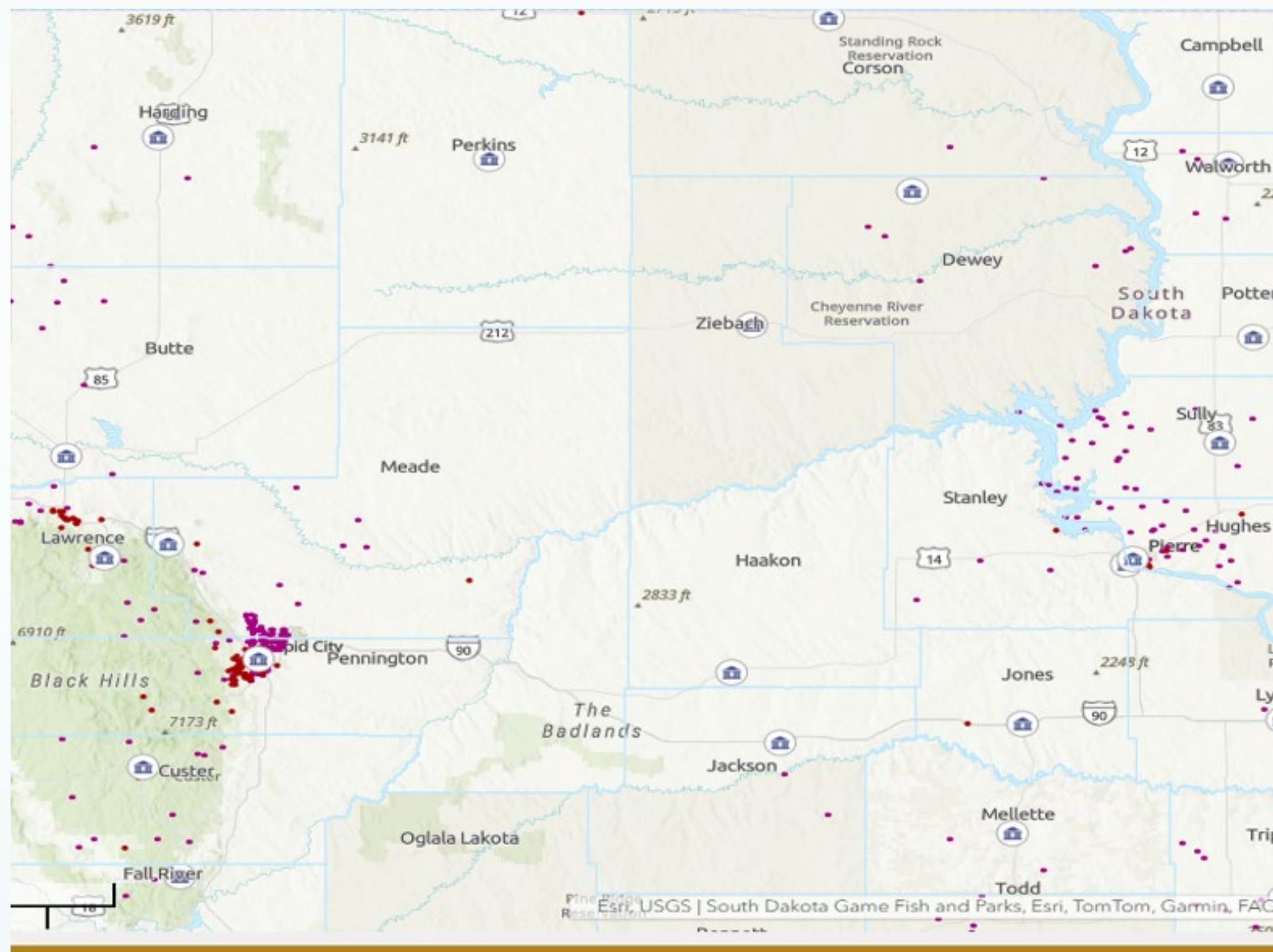
POPULATION CENTERS

Population
Clusters Around
Pennington,
Meade, Lawrence
and Butte Counties



ACTIVE ATTORNEYS BY LOCATION

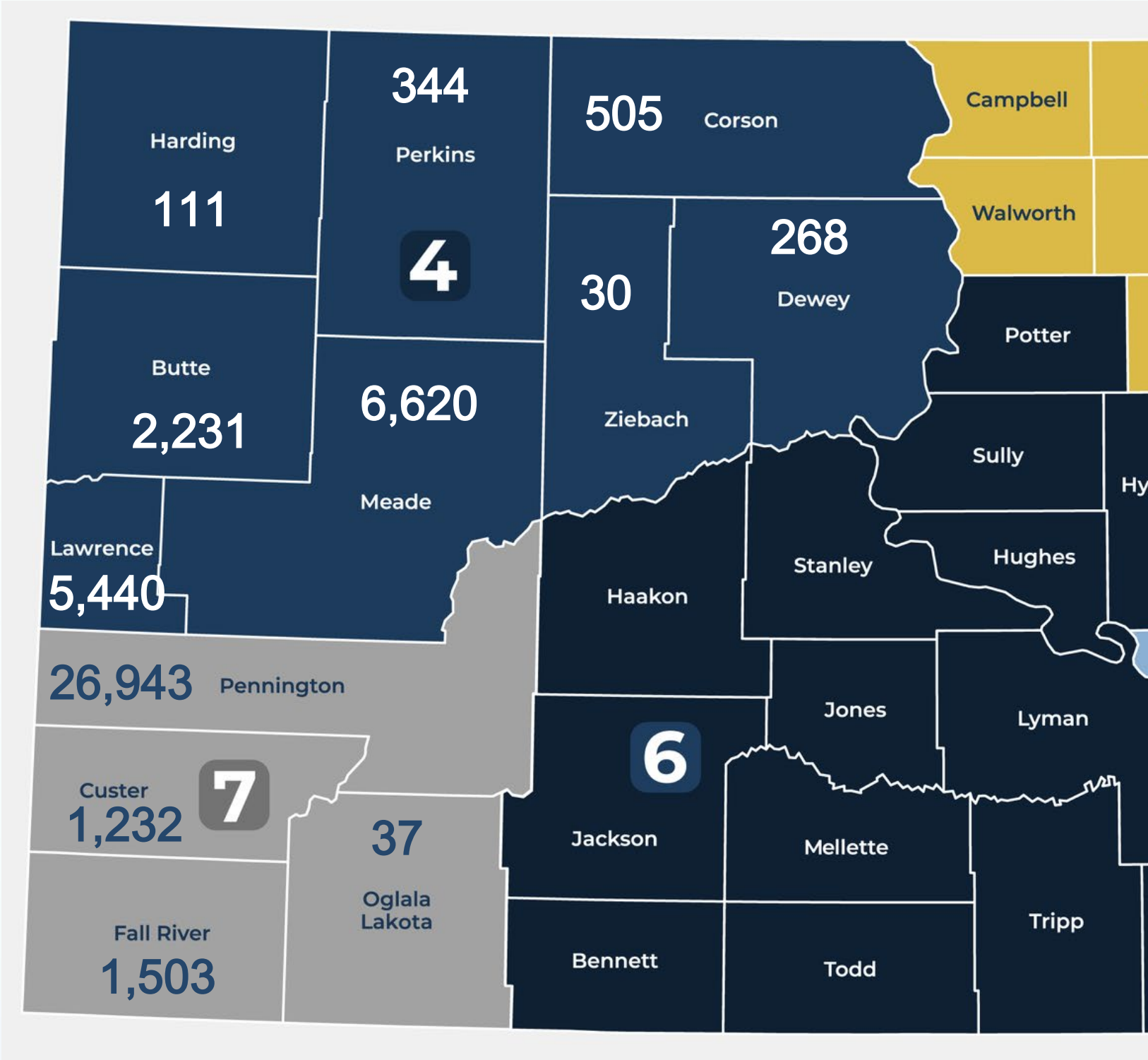
1 Dot =
1 Attorney



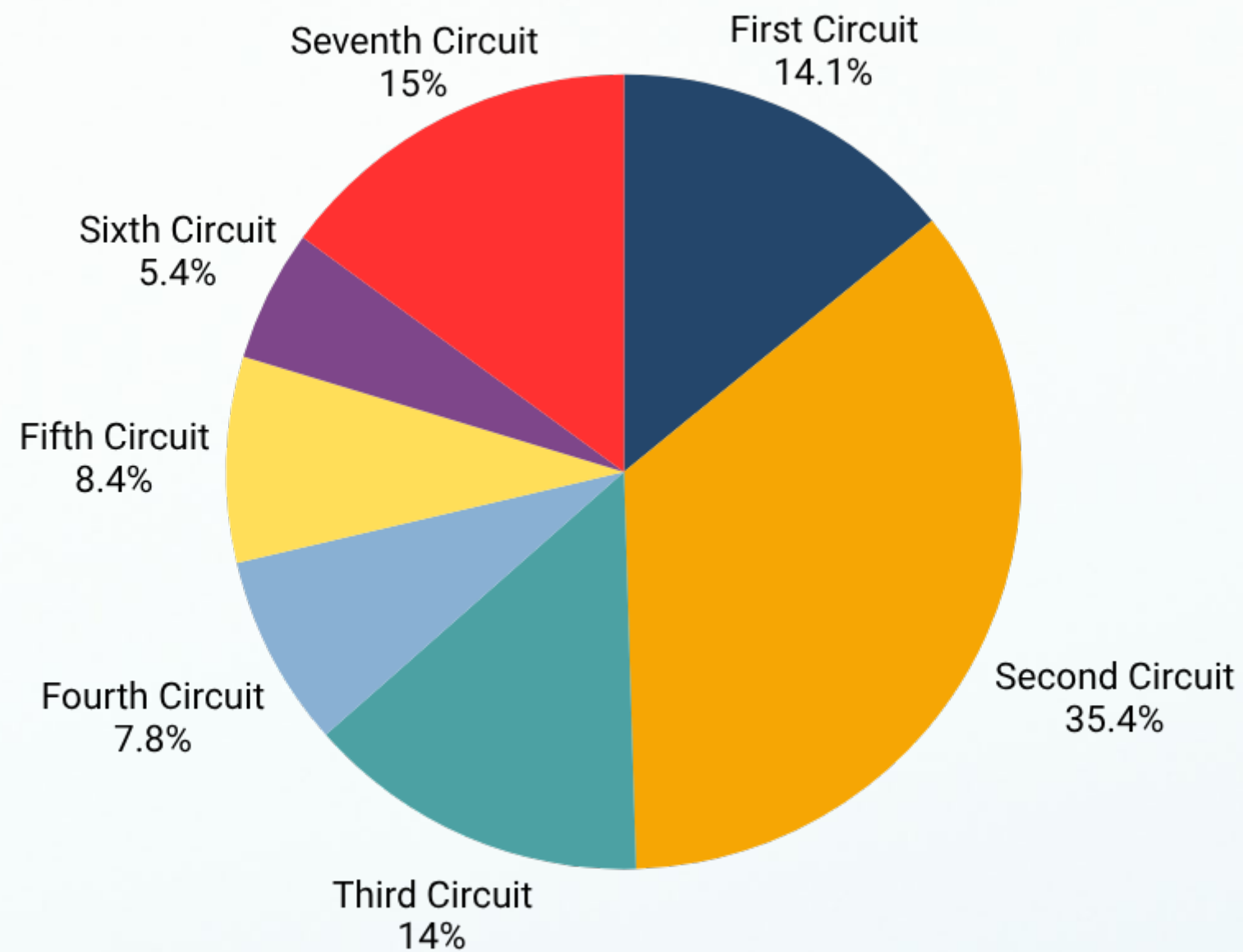
Source: NCSC Legal
Access Risk Indicator Map

TOTAL FILINGS BY COUNTY

Case filings reflect same pattern.



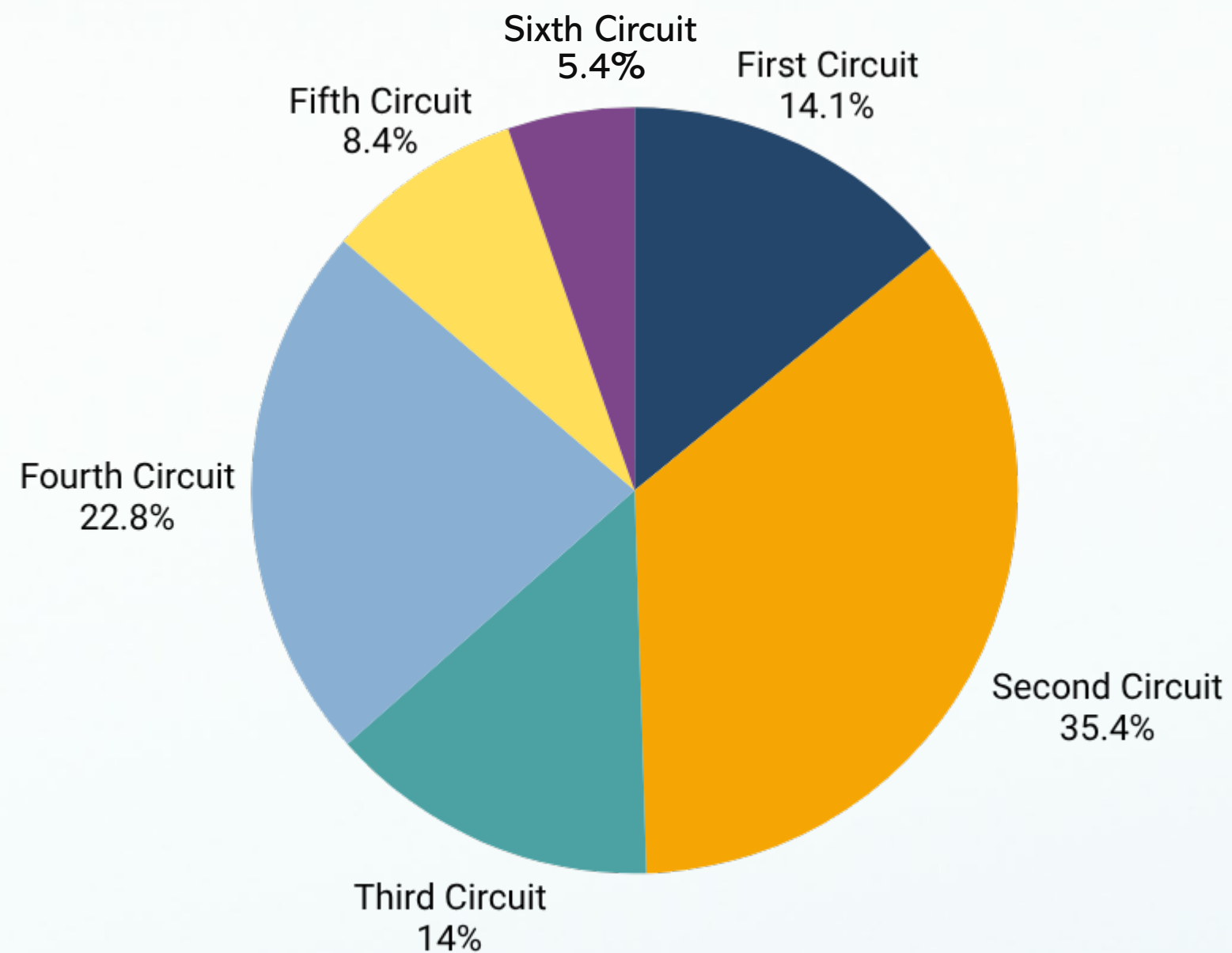
CURRENT FILINGS BY CIRCUIT



	Civil	Criminal	Total
First Circuit	8,096	19,917	28,013
Second Circuit	22,551	47,808	70,359
Third Circuit	8,575	19,190	27,765
Fourth Circuit	4,364	11,185	15,549
Fifth Circuit	4,339	12,291	16,630
Sixth Circuit	2,593	8,054	10,647
Seventh Circuit	8,683	21,032	29,715
Totals	59,201	139,477	198,678



PROPOSED FILINGS NEW CIRCUIT

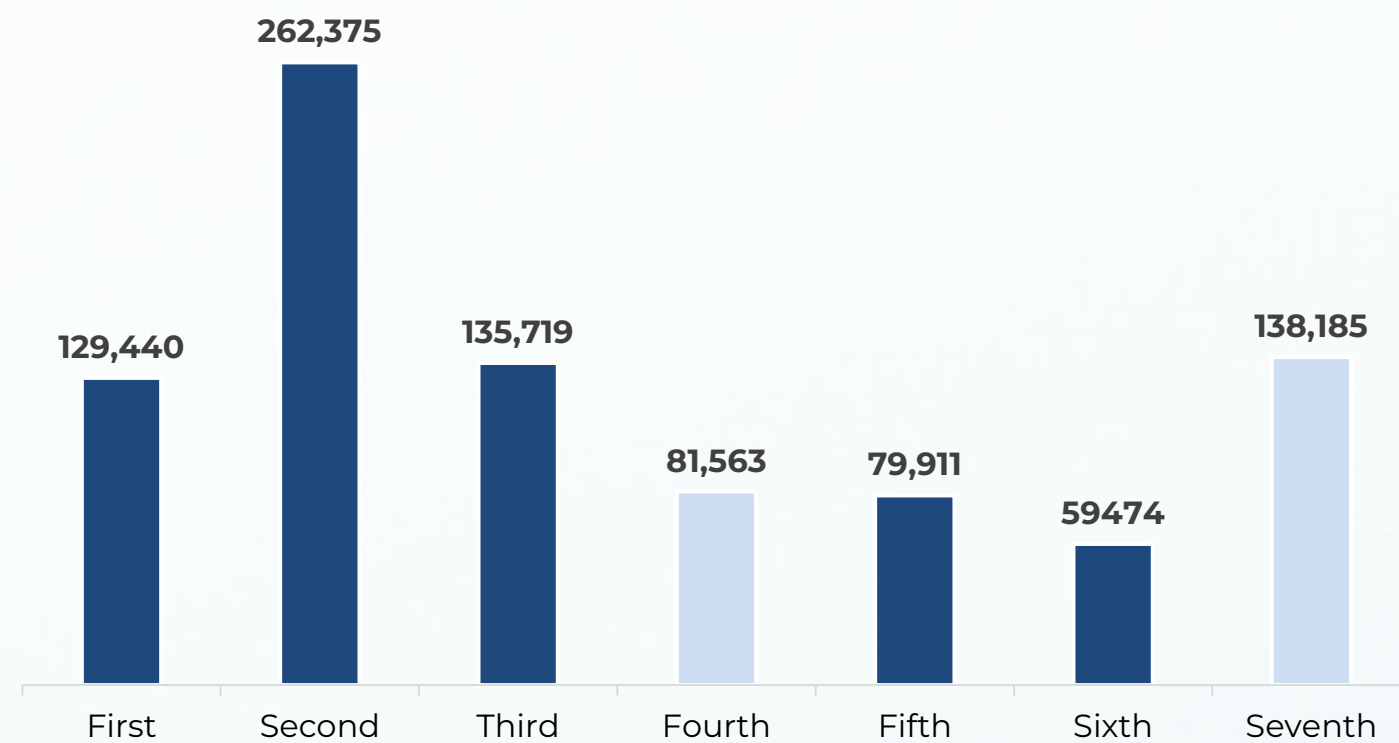


	Civil	Criminal	Total
First Circuit	8,096	19,917	28,013
Second Circuit	22,551	47,808	70,359
Third Circuit	8,575	19,190	27,765
Proposed Fourth Circuit	13,047	32,217	45,264
Fifth Circuit	4,339	12,291	16,630
Sixth Circuit	2,593	8,054	10,647

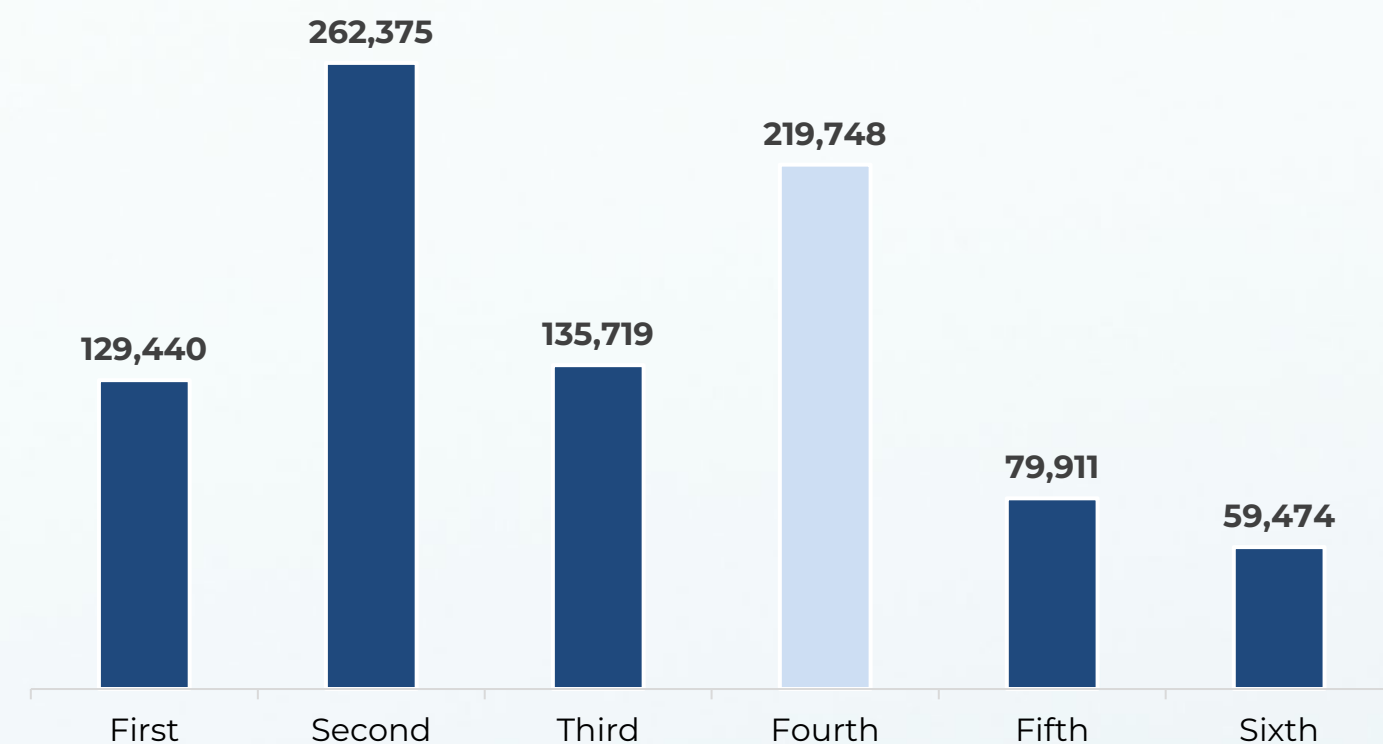


POPULATION DISTRIBUTION BY CIRCUIT

Current Population Distribution by Circuit

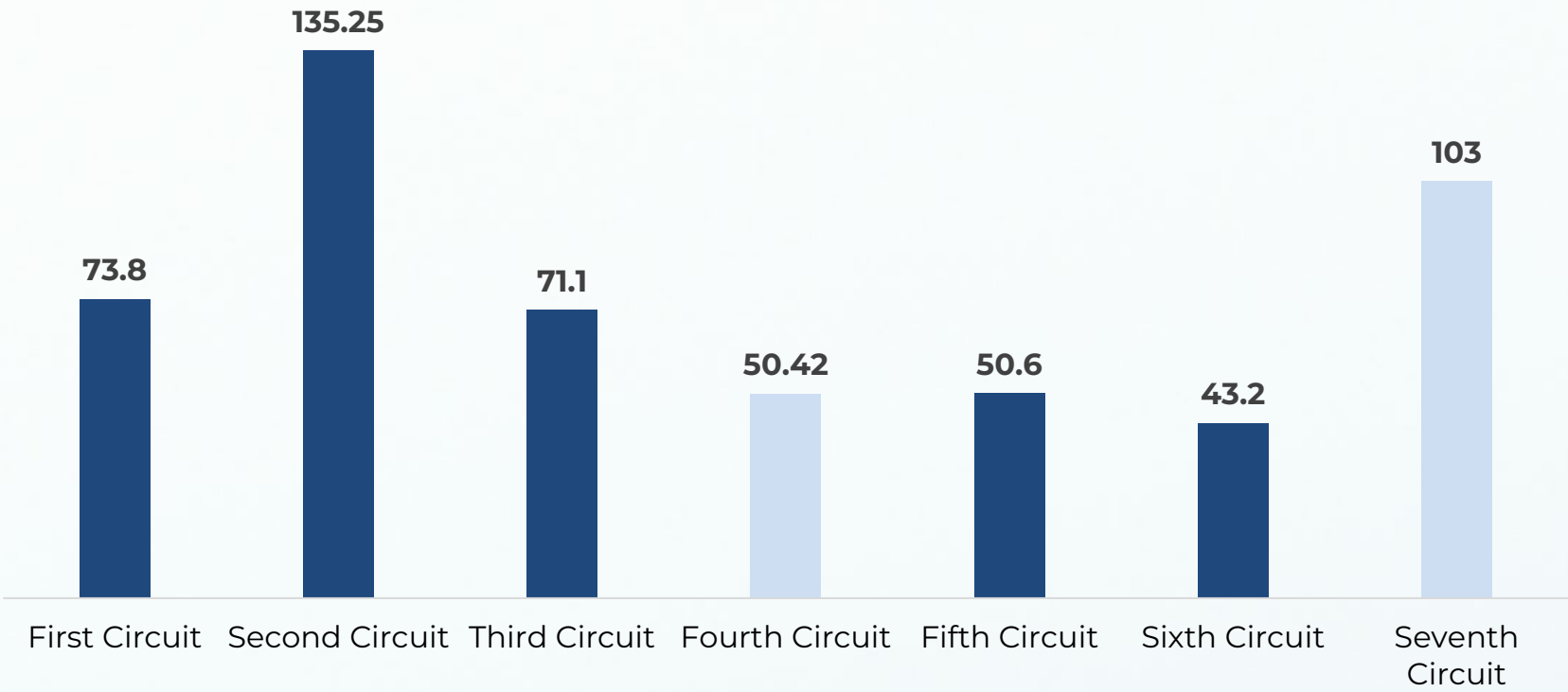


Proposed Population Distribution by Circuit

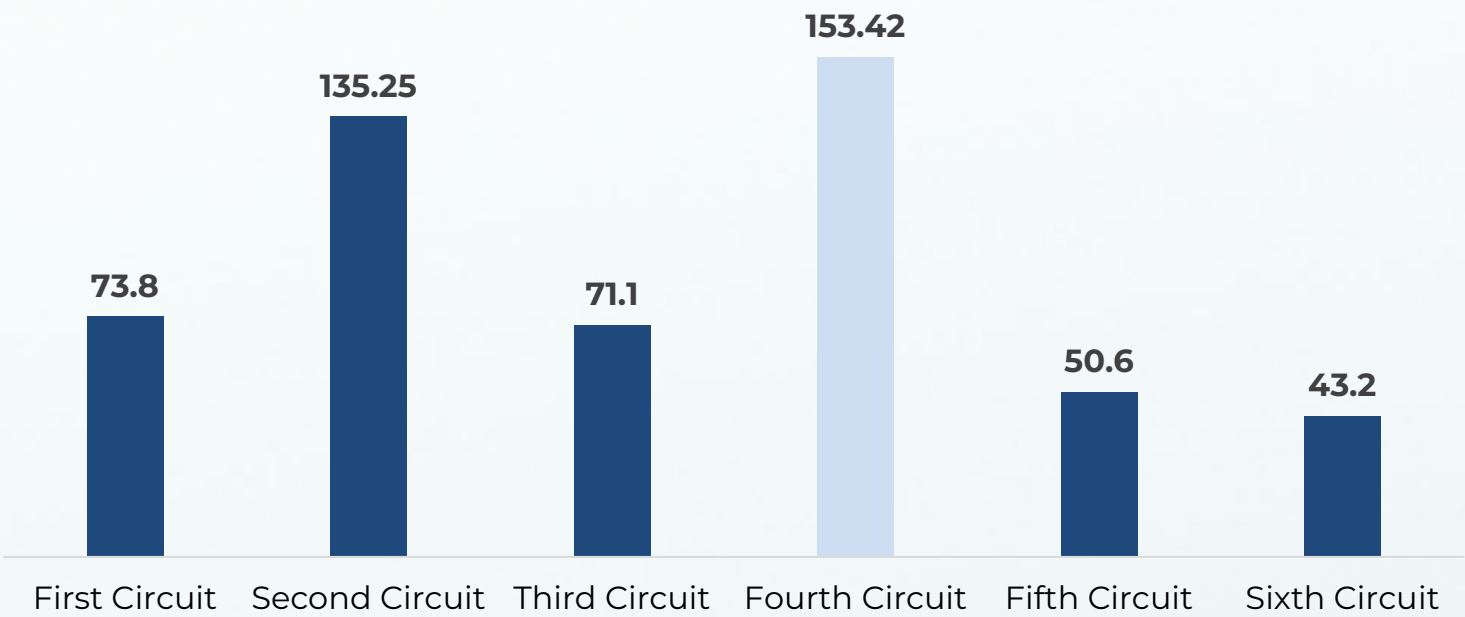


FTE DISTRIBUTION BY CIRCUIT

Current FTE Distribution



Proposed FTE Distribution



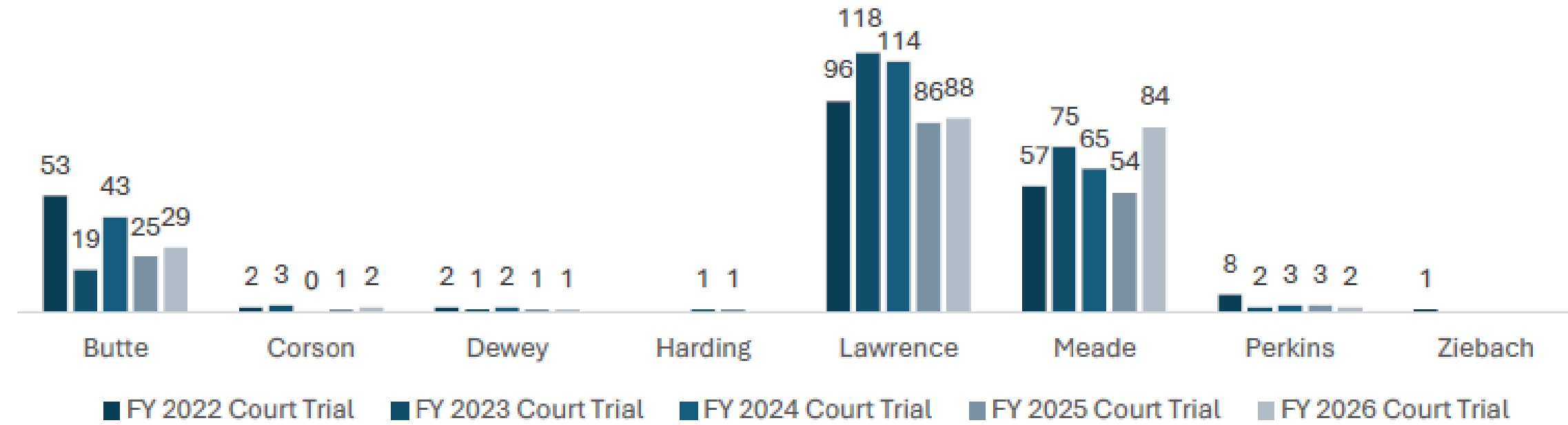
CLERKS WORKLOAD DISTRIBUTION FY25

County	FTE Allocated	FTE Surplus/Deficit
Butte (Fourth Circuit)	2.3	-.25
Corson (Fourth Circuit)	.62	+.08
Dewey (Fourth Circuit)	.58	+.29
Harding (Fourth Circuit)	.87	+.64
Lawrence (Fourth Circuit)	6.0	-.60
Meade (Fourth Circuit)	5.83	-.67
Perkins (Fourth Circuit)	.88	+.36
Ziebach (Fourth Circuit)	.50	+.34
Custer (Seventh Circuit)	2.0	+.58
Fall River/Oglala Lakota (Seventh Circuit)	3.0	+1.09
Pennington (Seventh Circuit)	27.0	-3.0

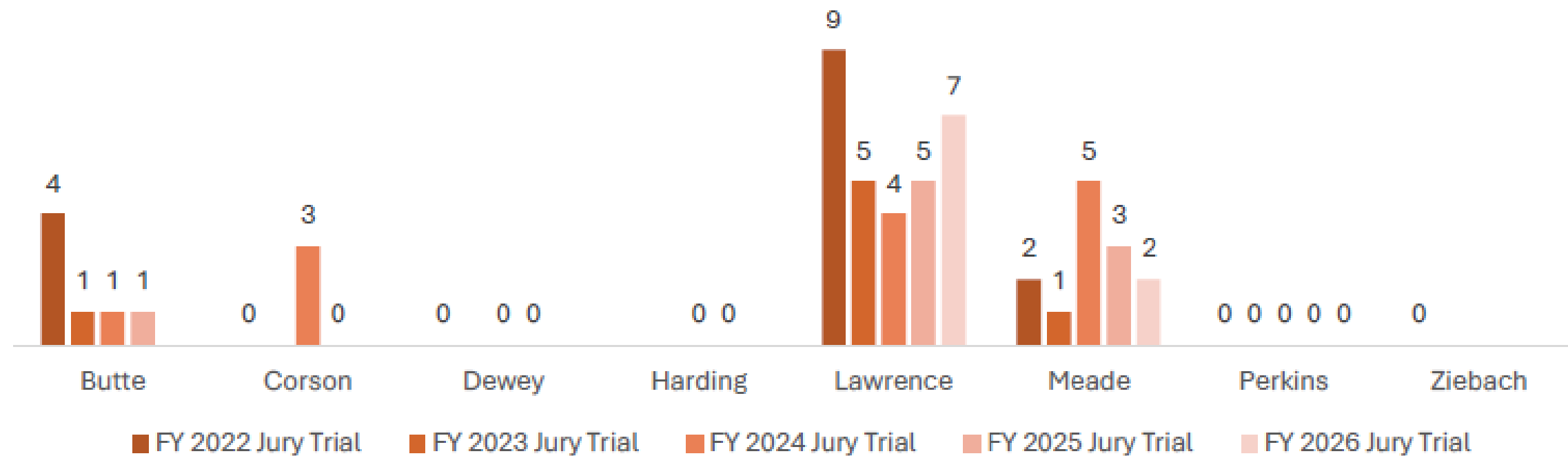


FOURTH CIRCUIT TRIALS

Court Trials:

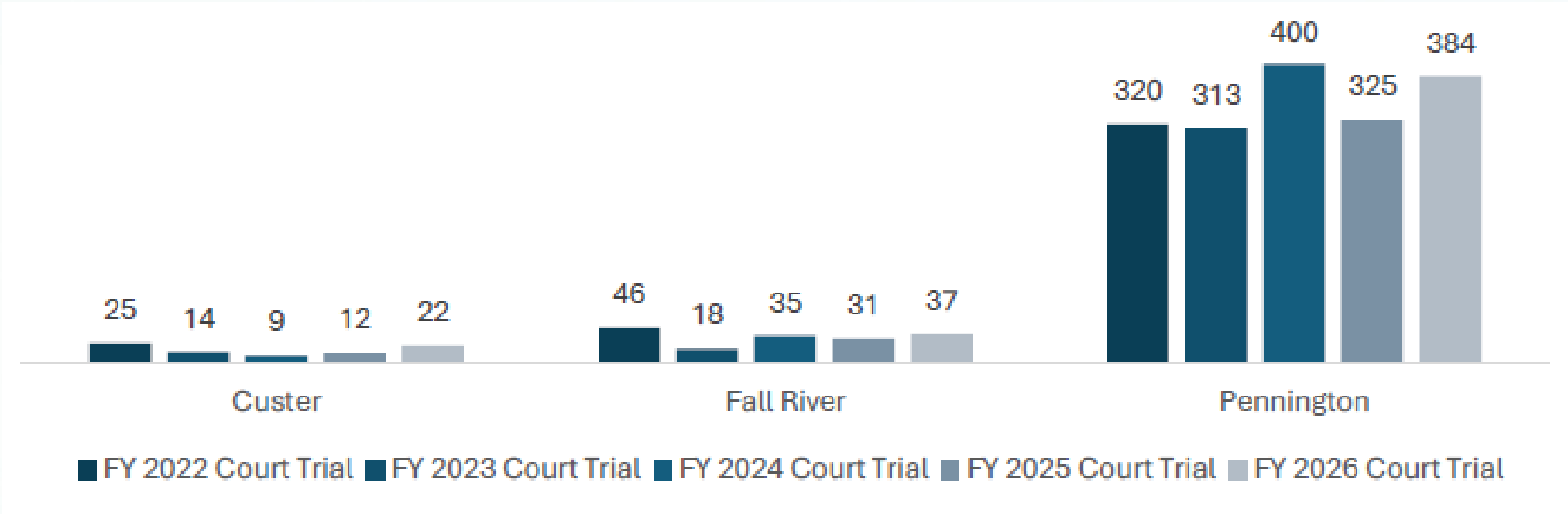


Jury Trials:

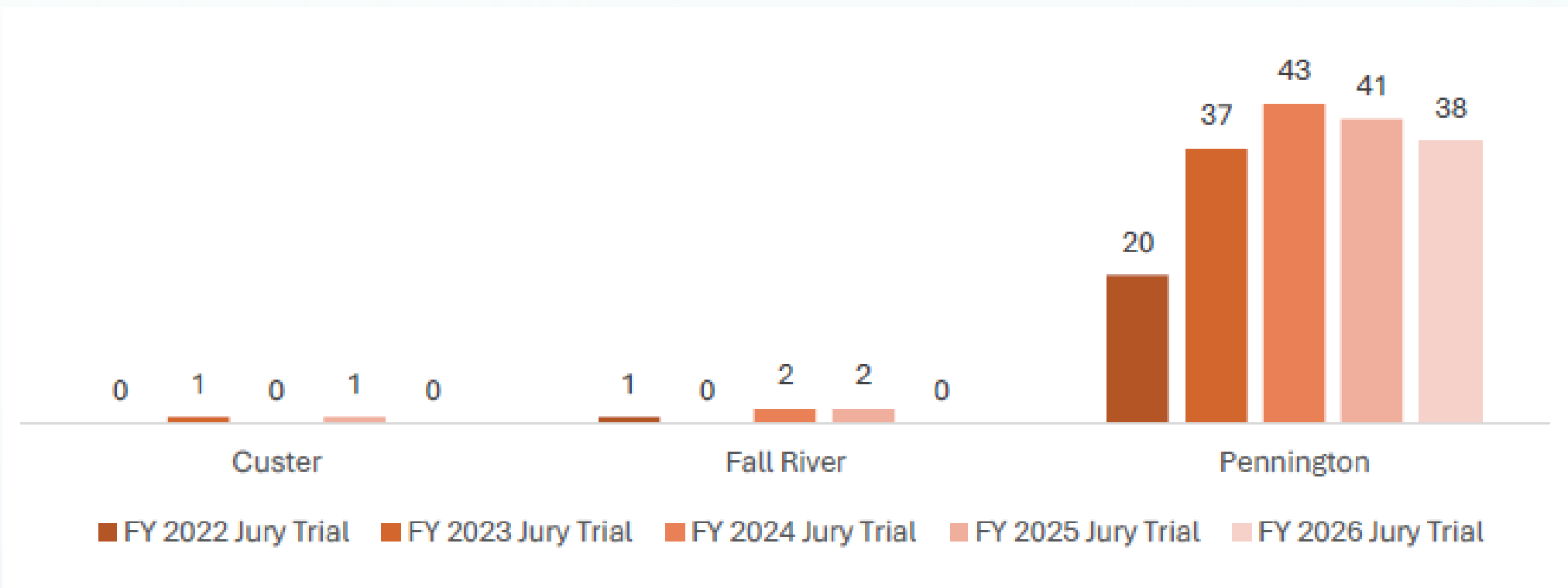


SEVENTH CIRCUIT TRIALS

Court Trials:



Jury Trials:



JUDGE DISTRIBUTION

	Circuit Judges	Magistrate Judges	Percent of Judges
First Circuit	6	2	13%
Second Circuit	14	5	30%
Third Circuit	6	2	13%
Fourth Circuit	4	2	10%
Fifth Circuit	4	1	8%
Sixth Circuit	4	1	8%
Seventh Circuit	8	4	19%
Totals	46	17	63

Proposal

	Circuit Judges	Magistrate Judges	Percent of Judges
First Circuit	6	2	13%
Second Circuit	14	5	30%
Third Circuit	6	2	13%
Fourth Circuit	12	6	29%
Fifth Circuit	4	1	8%
Sixth Circuit	4	1	8%
Totals	46	17	63



PROBATION SNAPSHOT BY CIRCUIT

Fourth Circuit	Adults Currently Being Supervised
Butte County	96
Corson County	11
Dewey County	11
Harding County	1
Lawrence County	199
Meade County	147
Perkins County	5
Ziebach County	4
Fourth Circuit Total	474

Seventh Circuit	Adults Currently Being Supervised
Custer County	16
Fall River County	24
Oglala Lakota County	4
Pennington County	996
Seventh Circuit Total	1,040

*55 cases with probation supervision in both Fourth Circuit and Seventh Circuit active in last fiscal year.



PROBATION WORKLOAD DISTRIBUTION FY25

Circuit	FY25 Allocated FTE	FY25 FTE Surplus/Deficit
Fourth Circuit	11.0 FTE	+2.73
Seventh Circuit	27.0 FTE	+6.18



MERGER IMMEDIATE IMPACT

With the merger, there would be one each of the following positions:

- Presiding Judge
- Circuit Administrator
- Chief Court Services Officer
- Deputy Chief Court Services Officer

Presiding Judge located in Rapid City.

Three current positions restructured, and one new position created.

- Use one vacant position to create Chief Clerk of Courts for new Fourth Circuit.
- Two vacant positions transferred outside of circuit.
- Internally redistribute court services and clerks support weighted workloads before asking for additional resources.

Savings are primarily in reduced need to ask for positions from the Legislature.

UJS employee positions would be hired after an internal competitive process.



MERGER LONG-TERM BENEFITS

Develop clerk work-sharing to redistribute work to utilize smaller counties and support larger counties.

- Under direction of new Chief Clerk of Courts
(Position requested over the last decade.)

- Better utilize probation resources to support needs of transient population.
- **Utilize judicial resources as efficiently as possible with flexibility of having in one circuit.**
- **Effort to avoid UJS services consolidation/reduction at county level.**

Reduce need for additional budget asks from the Legislature.

- Need to look at UJS as a whole and redistribute workload across circuits or counties.
- Historically viewed circuit resource needs individually.



RULE CHANGE PROCESS



Formal notice of proposed rule modifying §16-5-1.2, which establishes the counties for each circuit.



Written public comment period on proposal to Supreme Court.



Supreme Court rules hearing to take testimony on the proposal.
(Anticipated November 2026.)



Supreme Court adopts, rejects or modifies proposal and determines effective date.
(Recommended January 1, 2027.)



WRITTEN INPUT/COMMENTS

Deadline to submit written input/comments is October 1, 2026. *(This comment period is not related to any comment period for proposed Supreme Court rule.)*



Email: State Court Administrator's Office
comment@ujs.state.sd.us



Mail:
State Court Administrator's Office
Attention: Judicial Circuit Merger Proposal
500 E. Capitol Ave.
Pierre, SD 57501

