



DISTRICT COURTS OF KENT COUNTY

63rd District Court-Kent County

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District Courts of Kent County Celebrate 50th Anniversary of Michigan's District Court System

"People's Court" began operations in 1969

KENT COUNTY, Mich. (Jan. 11, 2019) – The District Courts of Kent County gathered today at the 63rd District Court to celebrate the 50th anniversary of Michigan's district court system with past and current judges, community leaders and court employees. Kent County joined other district courts across Michigan in marking the milestone.

As required by the 1963 Constitution, legislation took effect on June 17, 1968, creating district courts and abolishing justices of the peace and circuit court commissioners. Today, the public has more contact with the district court than with any other court in the state and many people go to district court without an attorney.

"District court is known as the people's court because thousands of people interact with this court each year," said 63rd District Court Chief Judge Sara J. Smolenski. "Our court employees across the entire County are very proud of our service and we look forward to providing even better service in the years ahead."

The district court has exclusive jurisdiction over all civil claims for damages up to \$25,000, small claims (damages up to \$6,000), landlord-tenant disputes, land contract disputes, and civil infractions. The court may also conduct marriages in a civil ceremony. Additionally, it handles a wide range of criminal proceedings, including most misdemeanors, for which the maximum possible penalty does not exceed one year in jail. These offenses include driving under the influence of intoxicants or on a suspended license, simple assault and shoplifting. Lastly, district courts also conduct preliminary examinations in felony cases, after which, if the prosecutor provides sufficient proofs, the felony case is transferred to the circuit court for arraignment and trial.

"I am happy today to recognize the achievements of the district courts and district court judges who have worked for 50 years in dealing with criminal and civil matters fairly and justly," said Judge William G. Kelly (62-B Kentwood). "We look forward to the next 50 years."

Additional historical information can be found on the [Michigan District Judges Association 50th Anniversary page](#).

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