

Annual Report 2025



Wyoming Judicial Council

A Message from the Chair

Dear friends,

As I look back on 2025, I cannot help but reflect on the tremendous progress we made and the roadmap we have set for the future of the Wyoming Judicial Branch.

Our work this year has focused on continuing to build public trust and accountability, and on ensuring accessible justice for all. From expanding resources for self-represented litigants to implementing responsible technology practices and enhancing community outreach, each initiative reflects our dedication to continuous improvement and responsive service. We have listened to stakeholders across Wyoming, including law enforcement, attorneys, legislators, and community members, and their input continues to guide our priorities and actions.

As we look ahead, we remain committed to building a judicial system that meets the evolving needs of our state while honoring the timeless principles of justice and fairness. The achievements detailed in this report would not be possible without the collaboration of our Branch members, justice system partners, and the communities we serve.

It is my honor to present the Wyoming Judicial Council's annual report, which reflects our ongoing commitment to serving the people of Wyoming through fair, timely, and impartial justice. This past year, the 52 trial court judges, five Supreme Court Justices, and approximately 290 dedicated employees of our Judicial Branch have worked tirelessly to uphold the rule of law and ensure that every person who enters our courtrooms is treated with dignity and respect. Together, we have made meaningful progress in strengthening Wyoming's courts and will continue to ensure that the Wyoming Judicial Branch remains a source of stability, integrity, and hope for all who seek justice.

Sincerely,

Chief Justice Lynne Boomgaarden
Chairperson, Wyoming Judicial Council



Membership of the Wyoming Judicial Council

Supreme Court

Hon. Lynne Boomgaarden*
Chair
Hon. Kari Gray
Hon. Robert C. Jarosh

District Courts

Hon. Dawnessa Snyder*
Hon. Scott Peasley
Hon. Joseph B. Bluemel

Circuit Courts

Hon. Sean Chambers*
Hon. Susan Stipe
Hon. John Prokos

**Indicates member of the Executive Committee*

as of Dec. 31, 2025



The Wyoming Judicial Council approved the 2025-2027 Strategic Plan, establishing a comprehensive roadmap that will guide the Branch's efforts to strengthen Wyoming's justice system over the next two years. This plan reflects our commitment to excellence, accessibility, and public service. Built on four strategic pillars, the plan identifies specific goals and actionable tasks to ensure Wyoming's courts continue to provide timely, fair, and impartial resolution of legal disputes.

Pillar 1: Judicial Branch Excellence and Innovation

The Wyoming Judicial Branch is committed to building a stronger, more capable organization through enhanced leadership development, improved internal communication, and the adoption of innovative technologies.

Modernizing Court Technology

The Wyoming Judicial Branch has undertaken a comprehensive technology modernization initiative designed to enhance access to justice, improve court operations, and protect sensitive court information across all 23 counties. These interconnected technology projects reflect the Branch's strategic commitment to leveraging modern tools to serve Wyoming's geographically dispersed population better while maintaining the highest standards of security and accessibility.

Recognizing that Wyoming's vast geography creates significant barriers to courthouse access, the Branch has invested in enhancing videoconferencing capabilities in courtrooms across the state. These upgrades enable remote participation by parties, witnesses, and attorneys who would otherwise have to travel for hours to attend court proceedings. Defendants in custody facilities can appear before judges without transportation costs and security risks, while victims of domestic violence can testify without safety concerns associated with traveling to courthouses. For attorneys practicing across multiple counties, remote appearances for routine matters reduce travel time and client costs. The technology also supports judicial efficiency by enabling judges to conduct hearings in distant counties without extensive travel, ensuring that justice is not delayed.

The Branch has modernized the opinion management system used by the Wyoming Supreme Court and Chancery Court to enhance public accessibility to judicial decisions. This upgraded system ensures that court opinions and orders are published quickly, formatted consistently, and made readily accessible through the Wyoming Judicial Branch website and legal research databases. For attorneys and legal researchers, improved opinion management means faster access to decisions. For the general public, the enhanced system makes Wyoming court decisions more transparent.

eFiling Implementation Project

The Wyoming Judicial Branch has embarked on a comprehensive transformation of how legal documents are filed and managed across the state's court system.

With the Supreme Court, district courts, and the chancery court fully using electronic filing (eFiling) software, circuit courts are now transitioning to eFiling as well. eFiling eliminates the need to mail or, in some cases, email document submissions to the court, making the process more efficient for attorneys. Under the direction of the eFiling Committee, circuit courts in Goshen, Johnson,



Natrona, Niobrara, Platte, and Sheridan counties transitioned to eFiling in 2025.

Circuit courts handle substantially higher volumes of cases than district courts—in fiscal year 2025, Wyoming’s circuit courts processed around 106,000 cases compared to approximately 13,000 in district courts. This dramatic difference in volume creates unique challenges for eFiling implementation. Circuit court cases also involve a higher percentage of self-represented litigants, particularly in small claims, protection order, and misdemeanor criminal cases.

With the pilot phase complete, the remaining Wyoming circuit courts are scheduled to implement eFiling throughout 2026 and into early 2027.

Exploring Remote Public Access to Court Records

While completing ongoing technology projects, the Branch is exploring the implementation of remote public access to trial court records in accordance with the 2025-2027 Strategic Plan. This initiative recognizes that Wyoming’s constitutional principle of open courts has limited practical value for citizens who cannot travel to distant courthouses. Remote public access would allow journalists, researchers, civic organizations, and interested citizens to access court records from anywhere, dramatically expanding the public’s ability to hold courts accountable.

However, implementing reliable remote public access poses complex challenges that require careful attention. Several critical steps are necessary for successful implementation. Infrastructure requirements include the complete implementation of electronic filing across all courts, ample cloud storage for records, and an accessible user interface for record access. The Branch’s experience with suspending audio livestreams in 2025 due to technical issues demonstrates the importance of building sustainable infrastructure before expanding public access commitments.

As the Branch completes its current technological initiatives, it will be better positioned to pursue remote public access with the reliability and sustainability that such an important transparency measure demands. By building the technological and procedural foundation necessary for successful implementation, the Branch ensures that, when deployed, remote public access will enhance the administration of justice in Wyoming.

Pillar 2: Public Trust and Accountability

Building and maintaining public confidence in our justice system remains a cornerstone of our mission, achieved through transparency, accessibility, and community engagement.

Judicial Performance Evaluation

Building on the commitment to transparency and continuous improvement, in 2026, the Wyoming Judicial Council established the Judicial Performance Evaluation Committee to explore methods of measuring and communicating judicial performance to the public. This initiative recognizes that public trust in our courts depends not only on the quality of Wyoming's judges but also on the transparency of judicial performance and accountability mechanisms.

The committee's work will involve researching best practices from other jurisdictions, consulting with national experts in judicial evaluation, and developing appropriate metrics for assessing judicial performance in Wyoming's unique legal landscape. The goal is to create meaningful evaluation tools that provide judges with valuable feedback for professional development while also giving Wyoming citizens useful information about judicial performance when making retention election decisions.

Strategic Communications Plan

The Wyoming Judicial Council adopted a strategic communications plan to align with the 2025-2027 Strategic Plan. The plan responds to the Branch's desire to enhance public trust and improve internal and external communication. It emphasizes developing communication infrastructure and building relationships with the media and external stakeholders.

The communications plan represents a fundamental shift from reactive to proactive engagement, acknowledging that public understanding of and confidence in the courts cannot be taken for granted. In an era when misinformation can spread rapidly on social media and traditional journalism has evolved dramatically, courts face the challenge of ensuring that the public has access to accurate, complete, and timely information about judicial processes. This challenge is particularly acute because judges are constrained by ethical rules in their ability to participate in public discourse, making it essential that the Branch itself develop a robust communication infrastructure and strategies.

Judicial Transparency

Transparency in judicial operations is fundamental to maintaining public trust in Wyoming's courts. The Branch recognizes that open courts are not merely a tradition but a constitutional principle essential to democratic governance. When citizens can observe and understand how their courts operate, they gain confidence that justice is administered fairly, impartially, and according to law rather than arbitrary or hidden considerations. The Wyoming Judicial Branch has undertaken significant initiatives to enhance transparency and accessibility of trial court decisions, data, and proceedings, recognizing that modern technology creates both opportunities and obligations

to expand public access beyond what was possible when courthouses were the sole venue for observing justice.

The Branch maintains a public access system as a public service, allowing anyone to search for case information across Wyoming's courts, free of charge, at terminals in each courthouse. This system enables citizens, journalists, researchers, attorneys, and other interested parties to locate cases, review docket entries, and understand the procedural history of litigation. While the Branch charges fees for physical and electronic copies, the cost of simply viewing court records is free, ensuring that financial barriers do not prevent public access to information about how courts operate.

The Wyoming Supreme Court and the chancery court also publish their opinions online, making decisions readily accessible to the public and establishing a transparent record of how Wyoming law develops through judicial interpretation.

Under the Wyoming Rules Governing Access to Case Records, all case records are presumed to be fully accessible to the public unless specifically restricted or limited by rule or court order.

The Judicial Nominating Commission (JNC) is a constitutionally created body that evaluates judicial applicants and selects three qualified individuals for the governor to consider for judicial vacancies. To emphasize the importance of public involvement and to gather valuable feedback from prospective judicial applicants, in 2025, the JNC surveyed members of the Wyoming State Bar about the merit selection process. This information helps the Commission understand why qualified individuals do or do not apply for judicial vacancies and how the Commission might improve transparency in the process without reducing the number or quality of judicial applicants. The survey results are available on the [Wyoming Judicial Branch website](#).



Pillar 3: Predictable and Secure Funding to Uphold Judicial Integrity and Efficiency

Adequate and stable funding is essential for the Judicial Branch to fulfill its constitutional role and provide reliable court services to Wyoming's citizens.

Sustaining the JSA Fund

Technology has become essential to allow courts to operate in the modern world. While demands for enhanced technology in the courts have increased exponentially, funding to support it has not kept pace. The Wyoming Judicial Branch finances technology in two ways: through a general fund appropriation and through the Judicial Systems Automation (JSA) fund, which is funded through filing fees.

The JSA fund is a statutorily created account that was originally intended to provide the Branch with a source of revenue to pay for court automation systems, such as case management and eFiling. The Legislature then amended the statute to expand the scope of the JSA fund to finance courtroom technology across the state.

Over time, the general fund appropriation has become inadequate to finance the increasing costs related to the Branch's technology infrastructure, not intended to be covered by the JSA fund – cybersecurity, operating systems, internet, salaries and benefits of technology staff, etc. As a result, the JSA fund has become a "spillover account" that pays for personnel and infrastructure costs beyond its original statutory purpose. This fund supports critical court functions, including cloud services, case management and e-filing systems, and courtroom audio-visual equipment that enable remote appearances and public access to court proceedings. Current projections indicate that the JSA fund will be depleted by FY2029. The viability of the JSA fund is a critical funding concern for the Branch, as it should be for all who enjoy the convenience and transparency that technology brings to our courts.

The Branch has identified the need for sustainable funding to maintain and upgrade courtroom technology across Wyoming's geographically dispersed court system. Modern courtroom technology is no longer a luxury; it is essential infrastructure that enables victims and witnesses to testify remotely, allows parties in rural areas to participate in proceedings without traveling hundreds of miles, and ensures that court proceedings can be properly recorded and preserved. These technologies are particularly vital in Wyoming, where vast distances can create significant barriers to court access.

Without stable funding for courtroom technology, the Branch risks equipment failures that could temporarily eliminate remote appearance capabilities, compromise security measures, and reduce public access to court proceedings.

Pillar 4: Accessible Justice

Equal access to justice for all Wyoming citizens, regardless of their circumstances or location, is fundamental to our democratic system.

Court Navigator Program

The Wyoming Judicial Branch launched a Court Navigator Program to assist self-represented litigants who opt to handle their legal issues without an attorney. Currently in its pilot stage, the program offers remote services in Natrona, Uinta, and Lincoln County District and Circuit Courts, and in-person services in Natrona County, with plans to expand as the program demonstrates its value.

Court navigators assist with cases involving protection orders (related to domestic violence, stalking, and sexual assault), forcible entry and detainer (eviction), and domestic relations matters, including divorce, custody, and support. The navigators are trained volunteers who help people understand court processes and procedures, complete legal forms, and connect with additional legal and community resources, all while avoiding providing legal advice or engaging in unauthorized practice of law.

Navigator services are offered five days a week, with individuals able to meet with navigators in person (in Natrona County) or virtually via Microsoft Teams. This flexibility is particularly important in Wyoming, where geographic distances can make in-person court access challenging for many citizens. The virtual option allows individuals in rural areas to receive assistance without traveling long distances, reducing barriers to justice.

The program addresses a nationwide trend of increasing numbers of self-represented litigants in civil cases. By helping people navigate the legal system, the program aims to mitigate delays, procedural errors, and inefficiencies inherent in the process when people navigate it on their own. This benefits not only the individuals receiving assistance but also improves court efficiency by reducing the burden on clerks and judges who must deal with incorrectly filed paperwork and confused litigants.

Diversion Courts

Wyoming's treatment courts and diversion program provide alternatives to traditional criminal justice processes, addressing the root causes of criminal behavior while reducing recidivism and promoting healthier communities. In 2024, the transfer of treatment courts to the Judicial Branch created an opportunity to improve their effectiveness statewide, with updated Wyoming Treatment Court Standards adopted on July 1, 2024.

Wyoming's behavioral health diversion program offers non-violent individuals with serious mental illnesses a pathway to treatment and recovery instead of incarceration. The Campbell County Mental Health Diversion Program serves as a pilot initiative, with participants screened through



multiple referral points, clinical evaluations, and risk assessments. Those accepted into the program receive treatment and monitoring while their charges are held in abeyance during compliance.

In 2025, two new diversion programs were launched in Laramie and Natrona counties.

Civil Legal Needs Assessment

Understanding the civil legal needs of Wyoming's residents is essential to developing effective access to justice initiatives. The Branch, in collaboration with the Equal Justice Wyoming Foundation and Legal Aid of Wyoming, has undertaken a comprehensive civil legal needs assessment to identify underserved communities, assess available services and service gaps, and guide long-term improvements in Wyoming's civil legal ecosystem.

This assessment will examine the types and prevalence of civil legal issues facing low-income Wyoming residents, identify geographic and demographic patterns in legal needs, and analyze how well existing services meet those needs.

A 2020 assessment, commissioned by Legal Aid of Wyoming and the Equal Justice Wyoming Foundation, found that family law issues are among the most common civil legal problems, with divorce, legal separation, custody, and domestic violence cases frequently reported. The new assessment will build on this foundation to provide current data that can inform resource allocation, policy decisions, and program development across Wyoming's civil legal services community.

The assessment will also examine Wyoming Judicial Branch civil case data to better understand how the court system can reach potential clients and support low-income residents who choose to represent themselves. This data-driven approach ensures that access to justice initiatives are targeted where they can have the most significant impact and are responsive to the actual needs of Wyoming citizens.

Court Security

Ensuring the safety of everyone who enters Wyoming's courthouses—judges, staff, attorneys, jurors, litigants, witnesses, and members of the public—is a fundamental responsibility of the Judicial Branch in coordination with county governments. The Wyoming Court Security Commission—comprised of legislators, county commissioners, sheriffs, and judicial officers—establishes standards to protect life, property, and the judicial process in the Wyoming court system, and recommends appropriate levels of court security to each county.

In 2024 and 2025, the Wyoming Judicial Branch contracted with the National Center for State Courts to conduct court security assessments in 11 counties, identifying opportunities for improvement and working with county partners to recognize security gaps. These assessments examined physical security features, security protocols, emergency response plans, and coordination between courts and local law enforcement. The estimated amount to complete all recommended security improvements across the 11 courthouses is \$3.65 million.



Final Thoughts

The Wyoming Judicial Branch enters 2026 with a clear purpose, strong momentum, and a shared commitment to the principles that define Wyoming's justice system. The 2025-2027 Strategic Plan has given the Branch a unified direction—one grounded in innovation, accountability, financial sustainability, and equal access to justice for every Wyoming citizen. Whether through the quiet work of a court navigator helping a self-represented litigant complete a protection order form, the careful deliberations of the chancery court judge resolving a complex business dispute, or the ongoing effort to ensure that technology serves rather than hinders access to justice, the work of Wyoming's courts reflects the enduring promise that our system makes to every person who seeks its protection. The judges, justices, and staff of the Wyoming Judicial Branch remain deeply grateful for the trust the people of Wyoming place in their courts, and they remain equally devoted to honoring that trust—every day, in every courtroom, across every corner of this great state.