

# Ottawa County Clerk Annual Report 2012

Daniel C. Krueger, County Clerk

## Highlights from 2012

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We are certainly glad 2012 is behind us, and we can take a deep breath and begin to focus on other things rather than elections. It should be no surprise that the past year was consumed with elections and election related matters. We had one of the most contentious election years in recent history because of various legislative proposals and the nature of a Presidential election itself.

We were kept on our toes during 2012 with various legislative proposals dealing with citizenship. There were concerns with when and how the new bills would take affect. The issue was first raised in the Presidential Preference Primary in February and was also an issue in the School election in May. The bill passed, but was later vetoed causing a great deal of anguish regarding the determination of what was to be done and how it was to be done.

As may be surmised, a number of political groups and organizations decided this was a subject worth pursuing, so there were issues that arose during each of the elections. Additionally, providing identification at the polls became

a point of controversy. During 2012, the Clerk's job of determining what the law required and what was being contended began to be even more involved. We also had some issues with equipment during the elections and that was something we had not experienced to the degree we did in 2012. The equipment has been aging and the efforts to keep the equipment in working order has become a primary goal in all the elections and will continue to be an issue in the future elections.

On the positive side of the election issues, we were able to save some monies by putting together supply kits for local units ourselves. We estimate a saving of around \$3500 for each of the three major elections we had in 2012. We enhanced our reporting process on the web and had most of the unofficial reports in before midnight on election night.

We were also directed to change the method of utilizing absentee counting boards at the local level. As we have more absentee voters, we have more requests for the implementation of absentee counting boards. This speeds

up, to some degree, the counting and reporting process, but also demands more time and training as it adds workers to the process. We continue to make strides, although slowly, in our TruFiling program in Circuit Court and constantly look for new and innovative ways to use technology to enhance our service to the court and the public.

Our TruCertfy program has been expanded to all phases of records we certify such that we provide over the counter certification through that process reducing the need to use security paper for documents other than birth records.

Along with those issues, we did spend the latter part of 2012 in discussions and planning for the merger of the Register of Deeds office which began on January 1, of this year. That is a work in progress and will take the rest of this year to implement.

Sincerely,

Daniel C. Krueger, CCO/MCCO  
County Clerk

## Additional Highlights

It seems like every year gets busier and busier with new technology and activities in the Clerk's Office and 2012 was true to that description.

With the November Presidential Election behind us, we now move our focus on the merger of the Clerk and Register of Deeds offices into one. In August, supervision from both offices began meeting to evaluate issues/practices and plan for

our success. As of today, we are well on our way!

The Clerk's staff has done an outstanding job learning the new financial system, MUNIS/Tyler. I'm also happy to report Circuit Court Records collected and receipted over \$1 million dollars in criminal Fines/Costs and Restitution this year which is a first.

As always, I would like to thank our staff for all they do. Without them, we would not be able to implement new ideas and focus on quality service to our customers and the citizens of Ottawa County.

Sherri Sayles, CMC/CCM  
Chief Deputy Clerk

*The Ottawa County Clerk's Office is the keeper of Vital Records, including Birth, Death & Marriage records.*



### Vital Records

We are available to the public so they may have access to birth, marriage, and death records, to name the preponderance of records available. The procedures listed below require great attention to detail, precision, and knowledge of the legislative initiatives and pending statutes.

The majority of certified copies requested from our office consist of birth, marriage, and death records. In 2012, the Clerk's Office processed 6,498 birth, 12,845 death and 733 marriage certified copies.

There are many genealogists who use our office to search through birth, death, and marriage records hoping to find records relative to their family.

Passports empower citizens to travel outside of the borders of our country. We process and transmit to the passport agency, applications and fees for passports. There are many strict guidelines and rules that must be

followed when accepting these applications.

We also control, administer, and oversee business registrations for all of Ottawa County. If a business opens in the County it must register with our office unless it is a corporation or a limited liability company.

Almost all legal papers must be notarized. Therefore, Notary Publics are an important part of society and we administer this service, file, and manage the surety bonds.

We also file discharge papers, DD 214, for veterans as a complementary gesture. Where as, should they ever need a copy they can obtain a certified one through our office.

We offer Clerk's Certificates for important papers traveling outside of Michigan. This is a statement acknowledging that the Notary Public who witnessed the signature is a current and duly commissioned Notary. We distributed

125 certificates in 2012, compared to 70 in 2011.

Concealed weapons applications are accepted, managed, processed, and eventually stored here. A concealed weapons permit is only granted after an extensive background check is performed and the applicant has met all of the necessary requirements. 1,221 applicants appeared before the CCW Board in 2012.

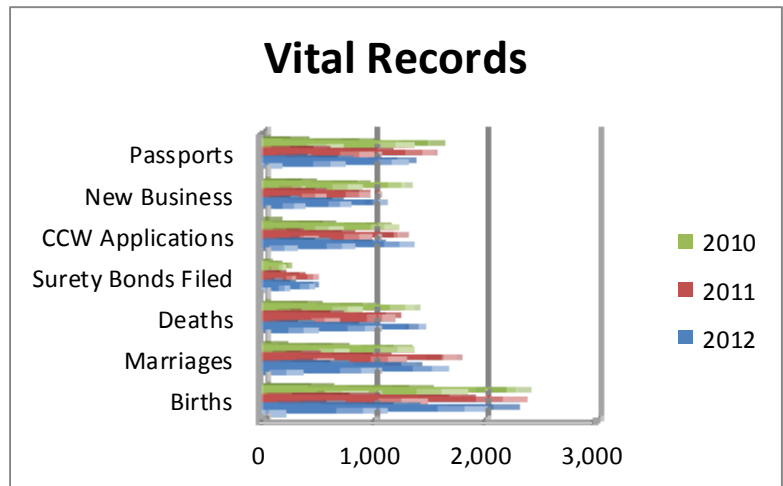
An Oath of Office is for those individuals who must be sworn in to their respective offices. Oaths of Office are prepared and filed in our office.

We also file and disperse appeals to the Sanitary Appeals Board. These are filed when an individual wants to request a hearing with the Sanitary Appeals Board.

Traffic Control Orders are received from the Road Commission or Department of Transportation. Orders are for traffic signs at specific locations. We filed 5 orders in 2012.

### Statistics for Vital Records

	<u>2010</u>	<u>2011</u>	<u>2012</u>
New Births	2,563	2,584	2,633
Marriages	1,620	1,865	1,875
Deaths	1,463	1,471	1,562
Surety Bonds Filed	279	523	568
CCW Apps	1,435	1,381	1,491
DBA's	1,411	1,165	1,160
Passports	1,812	1,653	1,611



### Election Overview

The 2012 election year was a busy one for the Elections Division of the County Clerk’s Office. The Division administered four county wide elections during the 2012 cycle: the February Presidential Preference Primary, a May school district millage election for nearly all school districts county wide, the August State Primary and the November Presidential Election.

In the Clerk’s role as chief election official for the County, the Elections Division of the office is relied upon for the administration of the elections process at the county level in a variety of ways. Responsibilities include the programming and printing of all ballots, maintenance and testing of all elections equipment, and the training of nearly all of Ottawa County’s 1,000 election workers. The Elections Division also works closely with state and local candidates who file in our office, and maintains the Campaign Finance records of a number of those candidates county wide. We are in constant communication with our 23 local city and township clerks to ensure the accuracy and efficiency of the elections process in Ottawa County.

The Elections Division is also responsible with keeping updated with any key legislative or administrative changes at the State and Federal level with regard to elections, and for disseminating this information to all local clerks and election officials.

### Ottawa County Voters

As of the November 2012 General Election, Ottawa County voters numbered 185,721 – and the Elections Division processed just under 13,000 total new voter registration records in 2012. These registrations include name and address changes passed to our office from the Michigan Secretary of State, as well as hundreds of mail in voter registrations. Ottawa County’s local clerks processed just under 500 voter registrations from members of the military and/or overseas voters in 2012 alone.

Ottawa County voter participation continues to lead the State of Michigan and we are proud to serve a community that values its right to vote! Over 133,000 citizens participated in the November Presidential Election, just under 72% of total eligible voters. As with each of our elections, a smooth running process of this size could not be possible without the nearly 1,000 dedicated election workers who assist the County and our local jurisdiction clerks in conducting an efficient and secure election.

### Campaign Finance

All candidates, political action committees and ballot question committees at the county level or below are required to report the income and expenditures of their campaign by filing campaign finance reporting with the office of the County Clerk. These documents are kept on file with the Elections Division, and help to maintain the accuracy, integrity and openness of the elections process. Elections Staff processed over 350 separate campaign finance filings in 2012.

### Election Commission

The Ottawa County Election Commission is comprised of three members: the Judge of the Probate Court, the County Clerk and the County Treasurer. The Commission is responsible for certifying candidates for each school and county election, and approving ballots for all county wide elections held within Ottawa County. They have the discretion to determine the consolidation of precincts in local and school elections. The Election Commission is also responsible for holding clarity hearings in relation to recall petitions within Ottawa County.

They may also be called upon to appoint temporary township, city or county officials if a sufficient number of board members are recalled, so as to prevent a quorum from being met. These appointments are in effect until the next election can be held to fill the vacancies.

The Ottawa County Election Commission met four times during the 2012 election cycle, for the purpose of approving ballots for the February, May, August and November elections.

### Serving Out Citizens Through Better Technology

The Elections Division of the Clerk’s office made great strides in 2012 in providing better customer service through technology. We expanded the list of available services on our website to include more detailed information for candidates and voters alike; and with the assistance of the Ottawa County GIS Department, we rolled out a new and much improved system for delivering Election Night results on the County’s website. The new results page is more user friendly and allows voters, candidates and the media to more quickly find the election results they are looking for on Election Night - and after. We were also excited to roll out an online filing process for candidate committees filing their campaign finance documents.

### Board of Canvassers

The Canvassing Board consists of four appointed members, two from each of the two political parties casting the greatest number of votes for Secretary of State at the preceding General November Election. Each member is appointed by the Board of Commissioners from three nominations which are provided by the county political parties. The members serve four year terms, which are staggered, meaning two terms expire every odd numbered year.

The County Canvassing Board meets after each election to certify and canvass the results of the election. All election results are considered unofficial until the Canvassing Board has completed certifying all election returns and results. The Canvassing Board conducts all recounts within the county.

The Ottawa County Board of Canvassers met four times in 2012 to certify the February, May, August and November elections.

## Circuit Court Records



Lady Justice

The Circuit Court Records Division of the Clerk's Office is responsible for maintaining all civil, criminal and Family Division records pertaining to court events which occur within the jurisdiction of the 20<sup>th</sup> Judicial Circuit Court. This involves processing documents necessary to initiate new cases filed with the Court, receiving, reviewing and processing all documents pertaining to pending matters before the Court, pulling court records for scheduled hearings and clerking in the courtroom. Our staff also assists the public, attorneys and other County Departments by providing various legal forms, providing access to public court records and answering questions regarding the status of pending matters via telephone, email and the public service counter.

To the right is a general list of the types of cases filed with and maintained by Circuit Court Records:

- Civil: Civil Appeals, Administrative Reviews and Extraordinary Writs  
General Civil Matters involving Real Estate, Contracts and Tort
- Criminal: Capital Felonies  
Non-Capital Felonies  
Criminal Appeals
- Domestic: Divorce  
Custody  
Non-Support  
Paternity  
Personal Protection Orders  
Uniform Reciprocal Enforcement of Support Act  
Uniform Interstate Family Support Act  
\* Adoption  
\* Name Changes  
\* Abuse and Neglect  
\* Juvenile  
\* Emancipation  
\* Parental Waiver

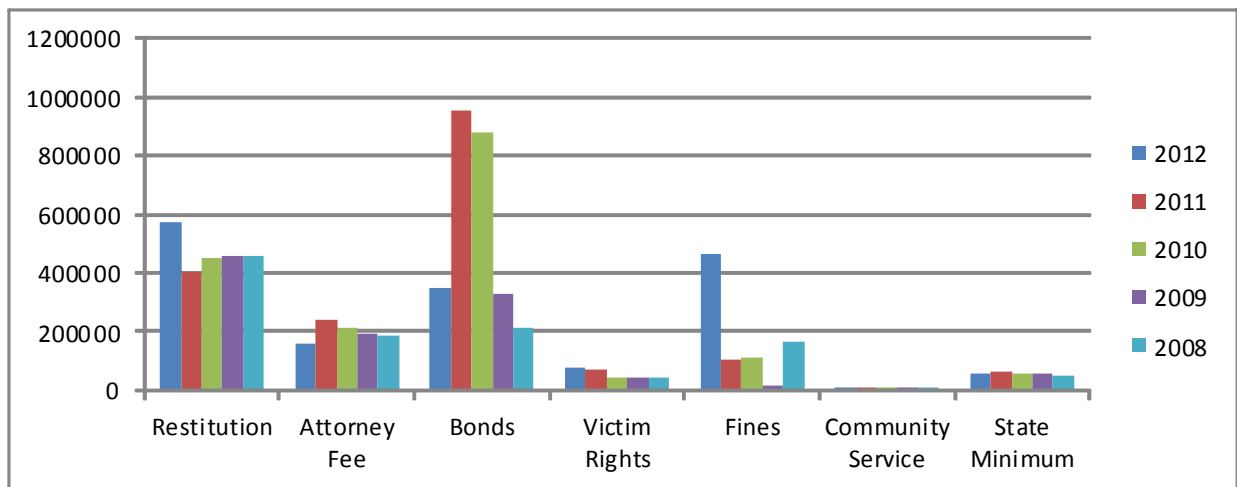
\* These records are maintained by the Family Division of the 20<sup>th</sup> Circuit Court located in West Olive, Michigan.

*The Circuit Court Records Division is responsible for maintaining all civil, criminal and family division records.*

## Accounting

The Clerk's Office receipts for all payments made and bonds posted in conjunction with any civil or domestic relations case pending before the Circuit Court. This includes collection of all fees mandated by court rule or statute applicable to the filing of court documents or maintenance of court actions such as filing fees, jury fees and motion fees.

In addition, the Clerk's Office receipts for bonds and receives payments on criminal files for restitution, fines and costs. Circuit Court Records works closely with the Circuit Court Collections Officer and the Probation Department in order to maximize collection efforts and to insure proper application of payments received on criminal files.



### Statistics for Circuit Court Records

	<u>2010</u>	<u>2011</u>	<u>2012</u>
Criminal Cases	1,007	918	928
Criminal Appeals	3	7	5
Civil Cases	524	423	443
Civil Appeals	46	44	51
Divorce Cases	1,003	1,101	1,080
Divorces Granted	1,067	866	985
Cases to Appellate & Supreme Courts	25	23	24
Paternity	159	130	145
Support	265	239	275
Personal Protection Orders	727	808	747
Other Domestic Relations	34	36	36
UIFSA	12	18	20
Adoptions	147	142	120
Neglect & Abuse	93	83	78

### Additional Collections

	<u>2011</u>	<u>2012</u>
Filing Fees	\$240,010	\$232,465
Order Fees	\$ 78,900	\$ 80,840
Motion Fees	\$ 24,232	\$ 49,005
Jury Trial Fees	\$ 10,370	\$ 11,645
Garnishments	\$ 11,325	\$ 9,135



### Reporting to State Agencies

Circuit Court Records prepares a Judgment of Sentence for each individual convicted of a felony, high court misdemeanor or probation violation and is responsible for reporting these issues to the appropriate governmental agencies such as Michigan Secretary of State, Michigan State Police and Michigan Department of Corrections. The Clerk’s Office must also send a state abstract to the Secretary of State for all cases involving a motor vehicle. In addition, Circuit Court Records prepares and submits the Record of Divorce or Annulment to the Michigan Department of Community Health in conjunction with divorce cases filed with the Court.

### Friend of the Court

Circuit Court Records provides many services to the Friend of the Court office, including providing attested copies of orders in cases involving issues of parenting time, custody or support, facilitating the issuance and processing of Bench Warrants and providing assistance in the courtroom during

### Annual Report

All cases filed with the Court must be reported to the State Court Administrator’s Office annually. Several portions of this report are prepared and submitted by the Circuit Court Records Division of the Clerk’s Office. This report contains important statistical information regarding caseload data such as the number of new cases filed each year. This report also tracks the age of each case in order to monitor the number of days that the Court spends on each case from the date of filing to the date of final disposition. This information is used by the State Court Administrative Office to assist in the preparation of the Michigan Supreme Court Annual Report as well as for other important reporting purposes.

### Jury

The Clerk’s Office also administers and maintains the jury by working in conjunction with the Jury Board to process jury questionnaires, process requests for excusal from jury service, process payroll for jury service and provide correspondence to jurors verifying jury service. The Clerk’s Office also plays an integral role in the juror selection process by summoning the jury to court when a jury trial is scheduled and assisting with the selection, swearing in and sequestration of the jury during a trial.

*All cases filed with the Court must be reported to the State and in certain cases they must be reported to other governmental agencies.*



**Locations/Hours**

**Vital & Circuit Court Records:**

**Health Services Building**  
 12251 James Street  
 Holland, MI 49424  
 Monday through Friday  
 8:00 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. &  
 12:30 p.m. to 5 p.m.  
 (616) 494-5566

**Hudsonville District Court**  
 3100 Port Sheldon Road  
 Hudsonville, MI 49426  
 Tuesdays, 8 a.m. to 12 p.m.  
 (616) 662-6085

**Fillmore Complex**  
 12220 Fillmore, Room 130  
 West Olive, MI 49460  
 Monday through Friday  
 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.  
 (616) 994-4531

**Ottawa County Building**  
 414 Washington Avenue  
 Room 320  
 Grand Haven, MI 49417  
**Vital Records:**

Monday through Friday,  
 8:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. &  
 1:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.  
 (616) 846-8310

**Family Division only:**  
 12120 Fillmore Street  
 West Olive, MI 49460  
 Monday through Friday  
 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.  
 (616) 738-4108

**Circuit Court Records:**  
 Monday through Thursday,  
 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.  
 Friday, 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.  
 (616) 846-8315

**Clerk of the Board of Commissioners**

The County Clerk serves as the Secretary to the Board of Commissioners, and the keeper of all official Board records. Though we do not print or distribute the agendas, we are required to attend and post all Board and Committee meetings. We also handle correspondence for the Commissioners. The permanent Board minutes are kept on record in our office and are available, either through hardcover book or CD, for public perusal.

**County Directory**

The Clerk's Office is responsible for updating the County Directory. There is a great deal of staff hours that go into collecting information and gathering data for this directory. The directory is available on-line, under the County Clerk's portion of the website and under "Quick Links" on the homepage.

**Posting Vacancies**

The Clerk also oversees vacancies on any board, commission or advisory committee for the County. These postings are available on-line at "MiOttawa.org". A new database was designed in 2010 which allows for an on-line application process along with maintaining and archiving of past and present committee information. The system was developed to modernize and streamline the application process. Letters are now generated automatically to inform applicants of our receipt of their application as well as notify them of appointment when approved by the Board of

**Plat Board**

The Plat Board is a statutory committee consisting of the County Register of Deeds, County Treasurer, and County Clerk. The Board's responsibility is to review all preliminary plats to determine the viability of the subdivision name and to review all plats to determine the accuracy of the description in relation to the corresponding plat. In 2011, the Board met 3 times. In 2012, the Plat Board met 8 times, approving 6 preliminary plats.

