

Ninth Judicial Circuit Solicitor Scarlett A. Wilson

The Solicitor, a state constitutional officer, directs the operation of the office in a designated judicial circuit. The Solicitor ensures prosecutions are processed by organizing an efficient flow of cases, assigning cases to attorneys, advising attorneys on cases assigned, monitoring status of pending cases and supervising staff personnel. Charleston and Berkeley counties make up South Carolina's Ninth Judicial Circuit. The Solicitor is elected for a four-year term and has offices provided by each county.

General Sessions Court

Criminal cases are heard in the Court of General Sessions. The principal parties in these cases are the solicitor, the defendant, the defendant's attorney, and the Circuit judge. The nature of the case also may require the participation of law enforcement officers, grand jury, victims, witnesses, and/or a jury.

Cases begin with the issuance of an arrest warrant followed by a hearing to set the bond. The defendant is either released on bond, on his/her own recognizance, or the bond is refused and the defendant remains in jail. The arrest warrant and bond are filed with the Clerk of Court who forwards the information to the solicitor who then reviews the case and decides whether or not to prosecute the charge. If a case is to be prosecuted it is presented to the grand jury for indictment. If True Billed, the indictment is sent to the solicitor for plea or trial.

In FY09 the Charleston County Solicitor's Office disposed 12,617 criminal cases and led the State with the highest total number of trials, guilty verdicts at trial, guilty pleas, overall convictions, and cases resolved at Preliminary Hearing Court.

Family Court

The Family Court generally has exclusive jurisdiction over minors under the age of seventeen alleged to have violated any state law or municipal ordinance. Each juvenile delinquency case involves only one charge or "status offense." A "status offense" is a violation of the law by a minor which would not be criminal if committed by an adult (e.g. truancy or runaway). In FY09 the Charleston county Solicitor's Office disposed 3,696 cases, or nearly fourteen percent of the entire state caseload. In addition, this office handled more violent and serious offenses committed by juveniles than any other Solicitor's Office.

The Juvenile Arbitration Program is available to first time juvenile offenders as an opportunity to make amends and clear their records by completing requirements determined by a volunteer arbitrator as well as reduce recidivism among juveniles.

Pre-Trial Intervention

PTI is a self supporting Diversionary Program designed for first-time adult offenders of non-violent crimes allowing the defendant to be diverted from court and enter into a program consisting of counseling and guidance, community service work, and restitution. Offenders may participate in this program only one time. The goal of this program is to give first-time offenders a second chance as well as reduce recidivism through cooperation of Judicial, Law Enforcement, and Community Service Agencies.

Victim Witness Program

The Victim Witness Program assists those involved in the criminal justice system as victims of crime or witnesses. This program helps ensure that fair and compassionate treatment is provided, to explain the criminal justice process, and to furnish information for services and resources. We offer assistance to over 15,000 victims and witnesses each year who may suffer from physical, emotional and/or financial difficulties long after the crime has occurred. Victim and witness participation is vital to pursuing any criminal matter and is essential in bringing criminals to justice. With a cooperative effort from the victim and witnesses, the Solicitor's Office is able to more effectively prosecute those who have violated the law and provide valuable services to those who have been adversely affected by crime.

Worthless Check Unit

The Worthless Check Unit provides for the collection and distribution of restitution to the victims of worthless checks thereby reducing the burden to the victim regarding collections. Participation is optional but free of charge to the victim as the administrative fees are passed on to the check writer.