

**UNITED STATES BANKRUPTCY COURT
NORTHERN DISTRICT OF ILLINOIS**



Records Management

Customer Satisfaction

Human Resource Management

Financial Management

2007 Annual Report

**THE HONORABLE CAROL A. DOYLE
CHIEF JUDGE**

**KENNETH S. GARDNER
CLERK OF COURT**



Mission Statement

COURT'S MISSION

The mission of the United States Bankruptcy Court is the efficient disposition of bankruptcy cases in accordance with the rights of interested entities, in order to achieve:

- the fair distribution of estate assets to creditors and others,
- a fresh start or debt adjustment for individual debtors, the reorganization of qualified business associations, and
- maintaining the integrity of the bankruptcy system.

CLERK'S OFFICE MISSION

The Clerk's Office has further refined their mission to support the overall mission of the court. This mission is:

- To maintain and provide access to accurate bankruptcy records and provide quality service to our customers.

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Message from Chief Judge

2007 has been a year of transitions. One transition occurred on July 1, 2007, when I became Chief Judge after Judge Eugene Wedoff completed his 5-year term. Under the outstanding leadership of Judge Wedoff and Clerk of Court Ken Gardner, the court responded to two major upheavals: the transition to mandatory electronic filing and the transition to BAPCPA. Both were completed as smoothly as possible in 2007 because of the hard work and dedication of Judge Wedoff, Ken Gardner and every member of the Clerk's Office team and chambers staff.

Case filings dropped significantly after BAPCPA became effective in October 2005, but our case load has been steadily increasing since then, reaching approximately 28,000 cases filed in 2007. Although the number of new cases decreased after BAPCPA, the amount of work required of the Clerk's Office, chambers staff and judges increased significantly. The temporary drop in filings gave our staff the opportunity to implement the many changes BAPCPA required. We are now ready to handle efficiently the expected increase in case filings.

Customer service was also an important focus of the court in 2007. The Clerk's Office performed a Customer Service Survey, the first survey of this nature conducted in a federal court. Approximately 500 "customers" were interviewed in September 2007. The responses were overwhelmingly positive, but we have identified several areas for improvement and are working to implement changes based on the survey responses.

We have also expanded significantly the services available to *pro se* parties. The court, working with the *Pro Bono* Subcommittee of the Chicago Bar Association Bankruptcy and Reorganization Committee, created a Volunteer Attorney Panel consisting of lawyers willing to represent *pro se* debtors and creditors in adversary proceedings and contested matters. In addition, the hours that an attorney is available at the Bankruptcy Assistance Desk on the 6th floor increased dramatically from one morning per week to 5 days per week. This expansion, made possible by the Legal Assistance Foundation and the Chicago Bar Foundation, has provided badly needed help to an increasing number of *pro se* parties. The Clerk's Office also provides many important materials to *pro se* debtors, including a recently revised Guide for Individuals Filing a Bankruptcy Case Without an Attorney created for this district.

Thanks go to Ken Gardner, each employee of the Clerk's Office, and our chambers staff for their continuing commitment to providing a high level of service and for their important contributions to our efforts to administer justice fairly and efficiently.

Carol A. Doyle
Chief Judge

JUDICIAL MILESTONES

In 2007, Judge Wedoff celebrated 20 years on the bench. He was appointed on September 16, 1987.

JUDGES' RECEPTION

Northern District of Illinois bankruptcy judges took time out of their busy schedules to host a reception for the court family. The judges provided and served home-made desserts to the court staff in appreciation of their continued hard work.




SERVING THE PUBLIC

The United States Bankruptcy Court for the Northern District of Illinois is doing its part to assist *pro se* debtors and creditors in the bankruptcy process by implementing the Bankruptcy Assistance Program and the Volunteer Attorney Panel Program. These programs are designed to help individuals who cannot afford attorney representation.

The Bankruptcy Assistance Desk

In 2001, three percent of our cases were filed by *pro se* debtors. The Court implemented a *Pro Bono* program in the Northern District of Illinois. The program, sponsored by the *Pro Bono* Bankruptcy Subcommittee of the Chicago Bar Association Bankruptcy and Reorganization Committee, was designed to help give *pro se* debtors information and assistance on the bankruptcy process. A help desk was staffed with one attorney who provided assistance to *pro se* debtors on a first come first serve basis every Friday from 9:30 to 12:30.

In July 2007, the program was revamped. Instead of having an attorney available only on Fridays, we started offering attorney assistance on a daily basis. The attorney is now available at the courthouse from Monday through Friday from 9:30 to 12:30. This was made possible because the Chicago Bar Foundation earmarked money to pay the salary of an attorney from the Legal Assistance Foundation to staff the help desk. A waiting area was created for the *pro se* filers and was equipped with two limited internet access computers and stocked with all of the bankruptcy forms. The debtors also have access to housing and IRS information.



"We appreciate your courthouse providing a help desk which is now available M-F. When it was only available on Fridays it was difficult to be seen."

Customer Service Survey Response

The Volunteer Attorney Panel Program

In the summer of 2007, the Northern District of Illinois created a volunteer attorney panel to represent indigent parties on a *pro bono* basis in discrete adversary proceedings and contested matters. Judge A. Benjamin Goldgar spearheaded the development of this program and worked with a group of attorneys to create the panel. It is administered by the Bankruptcy Court under the court's procedures with support and assistance from the Bench Bar Liaison Committee and the Chicago Bar Association Bankruptcy and Reorganization Committee.

Judges of the court identify matters in which a *pro se* party (generally a debtor, but occasionally a creditor) appears to qualify and would benefit from representation. When a suitable matter is identified, the judge will notify the Clerk of Court. The Clerk contacts a panel member to obtain representation for the party in need.

The program is limited strictly to representation in adversary proceedings and contested matters - matters that demand the kind of litigation skill that *pro se* parties lack. No panel member is expected to file a bankruptcy case, complete schedules and similar forms, or attend a meeting of creditors. The program is entirely voluntary and today we have 74 attorneys on the panel. Volunteer attorneys appeared in seven matters in 2007.



Strategic Initiatives

The Clerk's Office developed a strategic plan that serves as the road map to a Balanced Scorecard. A "Balanced Scorecard" is a strategic management system developed by Robert S. Kaplan and David P. Norton that allows us to align our strategic initiatives with the vision and mission. Further, it allows the court to manage and evaluate business strategy, monitor operation efficiency, track improvements, build organization capacity, and communicate progress to all employees.

The plan is "to create and foster a customer focused, results oriented organization using the talents and strengths of our employees." Strategic initiatives and goals outlined for 2007 were aligned with the vision and mission of the court to help guide the future direction of the Clerk's Office. The court has established goals in four organizational perspectives that we will use to measure the court's performance. These are:

- Records Management
- Customer Satisfaction
- Human Resource Management
- Financial Management

The court has accomplished short term goals and objectives in these areas. The progress and accomplishments are reported on pages 6 through 11.

Records Management

Defined as: Accurate, timely and accessible records.

Goals:

- To have a median disposition time of 115.4 days in chapter 7 cases, 26 months in chapter 13 cases, 4.5 months in dischargeability adversary cases , and 7.2 months in other adversary cases.
- To have the average age of our active pending cases no more than 6 months in chapter 7 cases, 19 months in chapter 13 cases, and 27.9 months in chapter 11 cases
- To have 100% accuracy when the docket is closed.

These are continuing goals, and we have been working to gather the data to measure our progress. All necessary reports have been created to track progress and the data collection process has started.

The following is a sample of the balance scorecard reporting tool.

The screenshot shows a web-based scorecard interface with a navigation menu at the top including 'My Contents', 'Scorecards', and 'Actions'. The main content area displays a list of metrics for 'Records Management' as of February 08. Each row includes a metric name, a current value, and a target value with a color-coded indicator (yellow, green, or red) and an arrow showing the direction of the gap.

Metric	Current Value	Target Value
Records Management	Feb 08 5.00 pts.	5.00 pts.
Time to Disposition - Chapter 7	Feb 08 105.0 days	105.0 days
Time to Disposition - Chapter13	Feb 08 32.0 Month	26.0 Month
Time to Disposition - Adv-Discharge	Feb 08 4.0 Month	3.0 Month
Time to Disposition - Adv-Discharge (Case Administration -V)	Feb 08 4.0 Month	3.0 Month
Time to Disposition - Adv-Other	Feb 08 36.0 Month	17.0 Month
Time to Disposition - Adv-Other (Case Administration -V)	Feb 08 36.0 Month	17.0 Month
Age of Active Pending-Chapter 7	Feb 08 11.0 Month	10.0 Month
Age of Active Pending-Chapter 13	Feb 08 20.0 Month	20.0 Month
Age of Active Pending-Chapter 11	Feb 08 38.0 Month	38.0 Month
Reliability and Integrity of a case file		

Customer Satisfaction

Defined as: Consistently providing our customers with excellent service.

Goal: To get feedback from our customers and achieve an 80% or higher overall score and at least an average of a 4.0 on each question on our survey.

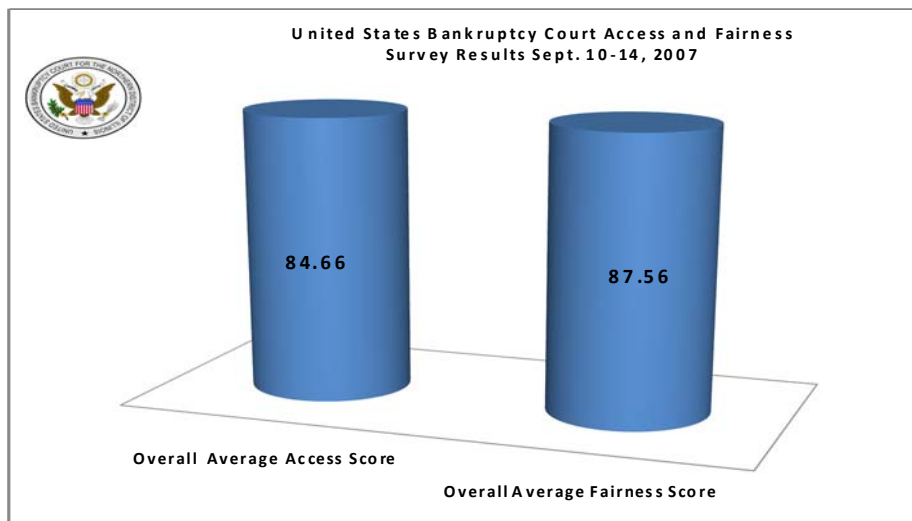


2007 Survey Team

The Clerk’s Office conducted a face-to-face survey of our customers in 2007. We utilized the National Center for State Court’s (NCSC) survey tool, which outlined specific questions regarding access and fairness.

The customer satisfaction survey was conducted for one week in September 2007 in the Dirksen Courthouse, the outlying counties and Rockford. All customers receiving service in the courtrooms or intake area were invited to respond. The survey asked 15 questions. Ten were about access, and five were about fairness. The rating was done on a five-point scale: one indicating that you strongly disagree with the question, and five indicating that you strongly agree with the question. We collected 460 survey responses.

We received a rating of 4.0 or better in all questions under access and fairness categories. Using a 100-point scale, we received an 84.66 index score in Access and an 87.56 index score in Fairness.



Human Resource Management

Defined as: Investing in and utilizing our employees to their greatest potential.

Goal: To have policies and programs in place and to increase staff usage of the programs annually.

Significant efforts have been made to provide opportunities for the staff to develop. We strive to have policies and programs in place to help in this journey. The following outlines some of these initiatives.

Tuition Reimbursement Program

The court continues to offer tuition reimbursement to employees pursuing work-related educational goals. In 2007, 11 employees received over \$43,000 under this program, compared to 2006 when 10 employees received just over \$30,000.

Lincoln on Leadership

In April 2007, the court held a seminar for staff in Springfield, Illinois on the Foundation of Leadership Principles from Lincoln. The seminar was designed to increase awareness of leadership dilemmas. Each employee read the book *Lincoln on Leadership*. Staff discussed the issues that President Lincoln faced as a leader and the methods he used to accomplish goals he set for his administration.



Lincoln's Principles
“Never forget that our organization does not depend on the life of any one individual. The greatest credit should be given to those in your organization who render the hardest work.”

Customer Service Celebration

The Northern District of Illinois celebrated its 1st Annual Customer Service Celebration. The training team developed a program for the Clerk's Office designed to increase the awareness and importance of customer service. A week long celebration was held with the theme ROYAL Treatment. Each day a principle was introduced with tips on how to use the principle. ROYAL Treatment is defined as:

Recognize and Acknowledge

Offer Assistance

Yes, I can Attitude

Agree on a Solution

Leave Them in Awe

Each day of the week a letter representing one principle was addressed along with action items to achieve it. Different activities were scheduled, such as seminars, raffles, and a team building competition to reinforce these concepts. The week ended with a contest for "Creative Expression." This was a lunchtime open microphone contest to challenge the participants to come up with a creative way to define customer service. Debbie Riddick, Team Leader for Team B, won the contest with the following poem:

C-is for caring about others needs.

U-is for understanding that we all want to succeed.

S- is for saying "can I help you?"

T-is for taking time to show virtue.

O- is for offering assistance, even if your time is short.

M-is for making sure they have support.

E- is for the engaging way our court serves.

R- is for respect, because that's what a customer deserves.

Annual Retreat

The Clerk's Office held its 6th annual retreat for leaders, team trainers, managers, and other court personnel at the Illinois Beach State Park in Zion, Illinois. Our focus was on the principles found in the book, *Leadership and Self Deception*. The principles focus on problems that typically prevent superior performance in an organization, including "self- deception." The Arbinger Institute, a nonprofit organization, conducted a one-day seminar on this topic.

Gallup StrengthsFinder Assessment

As part of our continued effort to build a “strengths-based” organization, all Clerk’s Office staff completed the Gallup StrengthsFinder assessment and on-line training to identify their 34 signature themes. We supplemented this with the “Summer of Development,” following the book by Marcus Buckingham titled *Go Put your Strengths to Work*.

Performance Management

Introductory training sessions of SuccessFactors, an automated performance management system, were offered to all staff to provide a general overview of the system. Seminars on how to prepare, deliver and receive performance reviews were conducted by Dick Grote, an expert and author of the book, *The Performance Appraisal*. In August, SuccessFactors Product Training began, which offered employees “hands-on” practice in utilizing the product in a simulated environment. In November, we started our first round of annual performance evaluations using the automated system.

Dress for Success

During 2007, we offered two seminars sponsored by Macy’s Department Store on dressing for success. As indicated by the title, staff was reminded of the proper attire for the office. The seminars offered tips on how to make the best impression in the selection of clothing. It addressed the do’s and don’ts of color, jewelry, hair, cologne, and wearing apparel. The training team coordinated the efforts and solicited volunteers to “model” in the second seminar.



Financial Management

Defined as: Accurately accounting for taxpayers' money and handling public resources efficiently, economically and effectively.

Goal: To spend no more than 95% of the budget allocated in the fiscal year.

Financial Summary

Revenue

Fees collected \$11,123,391
 (includes all statutory bankruptcy filing fees and miscellaneous fees prescribed by the Judicial Conference)

Paid Out

Fees paid to chapter 7 trustees \$1,006,458
 Payments made to claimants from unclaimed funds held by the court \$682,033
Total **\$1,688,491**

FY07 Budget

Salary allotment \$8,462,579
 Contract Court Reporters \$260,366
 Cyclical Maintenance Allotment \$44,780
 Non-automation Allotment \$644,430
 Automation Allotment \$551,670
Total **\$9,963,825**

FY07 Expenses

Salary \$7,624,177
 Court Reporter fees \$319,635
 Cyclical Maintenance/Tenant Alterations/Repairs \$140,402
 Non-automation operating expenses \$675,479
 Automation expenses \$524,709
Total **\$9,286,402**

Returned allotment \$500,000
 Unobligated balance \$177,422

Space and Facilities

As in previous years, various improvement projects were completed with the help of committees, and the systems and procurement departments. Some of these improvements included:

Employee Lounge

The Clerk's Office formed a committee to redesign the employee lounge. The original space was reconfigured in order to provide additional seating, an Internet corner, and counter space. The new lounge provides staff with a convenient facility in which to eat lunch, hold meetings and team building pot-lucks. A ribbon-cutting ceremony and light refreshments were served to mark the official re-opening of the employee lounge.



Mail Room Relocated

With the reduction in paper, the court gained additional space in the files room. The mail room was relocated in Room 713 to provide additional work space.



Waiting area for *pro se* filers

The Clerk's Office created a waiting room with bankruptcy forms, Internet access to the courts website, and a comfortable work area for the *pro se* filers while waiting to see the Bankruptcy Assistance Attorney.

**Replaced Carpeting**

The carpeting was replaced in the 6th floor witness rooms, 6th and 7th floor hallways, the training area, and the managers' offices on the 11th floor.

Training Room Renovation

The training conference room was enlarged. In addition to holding larger training events, this area will be utilized for the Clerk's Office monthly Town Meetings.

Team Accomplishments

Operations

Our efforts in 2007 focused on two key areas: increasing the accuracy of our docketing and review of e-filers, and implementing several customer service initiatives to improve the service we provide to our external customers.

To improve the accuracy of docketing and review of e-filers, the operations team accomplished the following:

- Edited over 200 internal procedures.
- Conducted monthly quizzes and discussion sessions to reinforce the written procedures.
- Revised the format of our e-mails to e-filers to include a better explanation and more precise directions .
- Operations Analyst and CM/ECF Analysts performed monthly QC checks on key operational and statistical data.
- Reviewed and edited various reports to improve accuracy and timeliness.

Our Customer Service initiatives included:

- Sending periodic List Service messages to advise or clarify procedures for e-filers.
- Adding Official Form-23 to the Reminder Notice for Chapter 7 Discharges. In 2007, we issued 9,677 Reminder Notices. This process continues to be highly successful, as only 778 cases were closed without discharge.
- Adding the Case Administrator's name, phone number and e-mail address to the Reminder Notice, so *pro se* debtors and attorneys would have direct access to a clerk who could address their concerns or questions.

- Implementing a cross-check of cases ready for discharge in September 2007. This cross-check resulted in clarifying procedures and processes for the Case Administrators and improving the accuracy rate of the discharges we issued.

We continued to close cases timely throughout the year, closing a total of 24,380 Bankruptcy cases and 2,355 Adversary complaints in the Eastern Division. Several large cases came to a successful conclusion; including 91-6449 Midway Airlines, 02-8209 Florsheim Group, 02-29020 Dade Behring, and 03-15299 Eagle Foods.

Training Team

The Training Team provided a total of 155 classes for 659 employees and attorneys in the following areas.

Information Exchange Forum:

- 341 Meeting and the Trustee's Duties
- Identity Theft
- Employee Assistance Program Overview
- Duties of the Clerk of the Court
- Ups and Downs of the Holiday Season
- Dress for Success
- How to Get Your Kid Into College
- Employee Rewards and Recognition Program
- Judicial Online University Overview

Seminars:

- Summer of Development
- Book Reading & Teleconference - *Go Put Your Strengths to Work*
By: Marcus Buckingham
- Communication - As Others See Us
- Communication - The Power of Words
- Communication - Effective Communication
- Customer Service - The Royal Treatment

Training Classes:

- Lotus Notes
- 100 - Create a Message
- 110 - Send a Message
- 120 - Receive a Message
- 130 - Managing Messages
- 200 - Welcome Page
- 300 - Calendar
- Wordperfect 100, 110, 120
- SuccessFactors
 - Introduction
 - Product Training

Outside Vendor Training:

- Making Performance Management Work - Dick Grote
- Performance Appraisals
- Retirement Seminar for:
 - CSRS Retirement
 - FERS 10 Years or Less
 - FERS 10 Years or More
- Flexible Spending Plan
- The Arbinger Institute - "Leadership and Self-Deception- Getting Out of the Box" (Vision Group)

Human Resources

- HR staff were trained and began the use of the Administrative Office's Remote Data Entry (RDE) tool in late spring 2007 to expedite personnel action requests (i.e., promotions, change of address, leave without pay, etc.).
- Compressed Work Schedule Policy written and Pilot Program started October 2007.
- Implementation of Performance Appraisal System - SuccessFactors - November 2007.

Public Service Team

- Completed the review of several thousand B21 Statement of Social Security forms.
- Cleaned up missing Social Security numbers from bankruptcy cases
- Consistently received a 98% rating or better for accuracy in releasing 341 notices and cashiering duties.
- Completed training on new procedures.
- Published on-line procedure manual for the public service clerks.

Courtroom Services

- Promoted Velda Williams to the position of Team Leader/Trainer for Courtroom Services.
- Hired Peter Castaneda as Courtroom Deputy for Judge Wedoff.
- Promoted Josephine Green to Courtroom Deputy for Judge Schwartz.

Western Division (Rockford)

- Promoted Jody Clark to Case Administrator/Relief Courtroom Deputy.

Systems Department

- The Court's Primary Lotus Notes file server was upgraded with zero downtime experienced by our Lotus Notes users. Our staff manages the Lotus Notes server for our entire district, which includes the District Court, Probation, Pretrial, and the Bankruptcy Court.
- Systems staff also worked with the Administrative Office to implement a remote, redundant Lotus Notes Server. This will allow us to maintain e-mail, contact and calendaring functions for our users despite events that make our computer system unavailable.
- The court's use of "VMWare," a product that provides a means of filer server resource and energy optimization and redundancy, was significantly expanded.
- Loaded and configured the QPR software that will serve as the court's Balanced Scorecard reporting resource.
- Acquired, installed and configured a redundant CM/ECF file server in Rockford.
- Completed Phase 1 of Electronic Order Processing in CCI. This phase provides the ability to process orders that have a "Denied", "Moot", "Stricken", or "Withdrawn" disposition. Much work was performed on Phase 2, the processing of orders that do have an associated document. Completion of Phase 2 should be in the first quarter of 2008.
- 2 CM/ECF Upgrades were successfully completed requiring minimal downtime to our users.
- Conversion from Netware to Novell Open Enterprise Server. In addition to many Network administration benefits, this upgrade provides remote court users the ability to access their court files via the Internet and web browser software.
- Approval was sought and granted to extend the Dirksen Building Public Wireless Access network to the Bankruptcy Court Public Users. Most of the engineering for this project is complete and access will be made available in the first quarter of 2008.

- Processed 3,561 work order requests.
- Upgraded and patched all computers, servers, smart telephones and other electronic devices to comply with the Daylight Savings Time legislative changes.
- The 12 computers used in our Computer Training Lab were upgraded to "all-in-one" computers that are now wireless. As part of this project, much of the cable snarl normally found in such rooms has been eliminated. These changes and the addition of new carpeting and decorating has created an up-to-date, "clean" look.
- 120 new computers were installed in Chicago, allowing us to retire Windows 2000.
- All Windows based computers are now running Windows XP.
- The 7 laptops installed in the Rockford, training lab have been replaced with new computers.
- 20 new computers were installed in Rockford, allowing us to retire Windows 2000 in the Western Division.
- The courtrooms of Judge Schmetterer and Judge Wedoff were configured for Electronic Evidence Presentation.
- Installation and configuration of Smartboard technology in six conference rooms.
- Installation of Room Wizards and adaptation of Lotus Notes to integrate conference room scheduling.

Charitable Contributions

In 2007, court employees contributed \$6,627.62 to a variety of charities: \$2,857.25 to Breast Cancer Awareness, \$2,044.92 to the American Heart Association, \$898.25 to Pacific Garden Mission, and the Western Division contributed \$375 to the Salvation Army. In addition to monetary support, the court donated hundreds of toys to “Toys for Tots.”



Funds Raised in Support of Y-Me (Cancer Awareness)

The Clerk’s Office raised over \$11,000.00 and won the Silver Award for the Y-Me race in 2007, which is \$1,400 more than in 2006 when the court raised \$9,600 and won the Bronze Award. For the second year, court employees participated in the Y-Me race. This annual event increases awareness of those who have lost love ones, survived or are battling cancer. The court’s annual participation started with one individual walking for the cause. Several employees joined the effort, who then formed a team. The team designed a T-shirt and took 1st place for the T-shirt design in 2007.



EMPLOYEE RECOGNITION PROGRAM



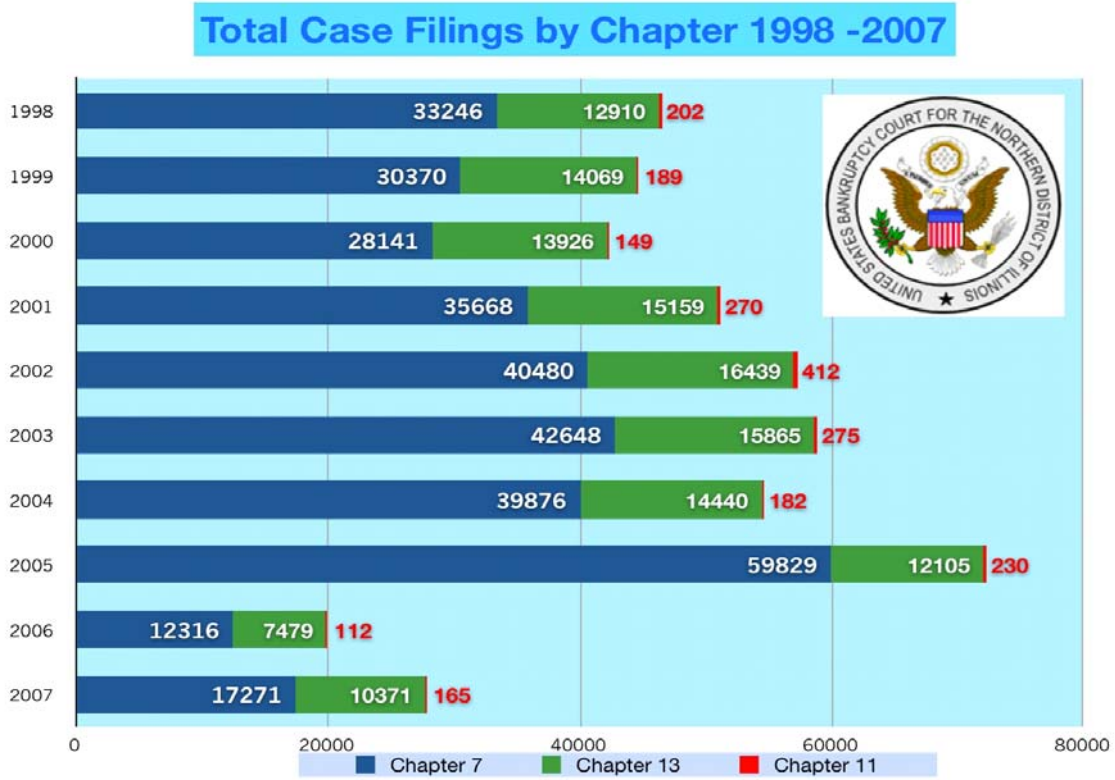
ANNUAL AWARD CEREMONIES

The court held its 25th annual Award Ceremony on February 21, 2007. Continuing a tradition of recognizing Clerk's Office employees for their talents and strengths, ceremonies were held in Chicago and Rockford to honor staff. Kenneth S. Gardner, Clerk of Court, welcomed those in attendance and then Chief Judge Eugene R. Wedoff thanked the staff in Chicago for their continued hard work in 2006. Judge Manual Barbosa thanked the staff in Rockford. Criteria for the 2006 awards were:

- Bright Idea - Valuable ideas or innovation that have improved efficiency, productivity, and quality of work and or service
- Special Recognition - to recognize performance of a one time act or contribution that is over and above what is expected of an individual employee or group of employees.
- Academic Excellence - to recognize an employee who has achieved Associate's, Bachelor's, or Master's degree during the calendar year.
- Recognition is also given for participating on committees, length of service, and honorable mention for completing or conducting special training programs.

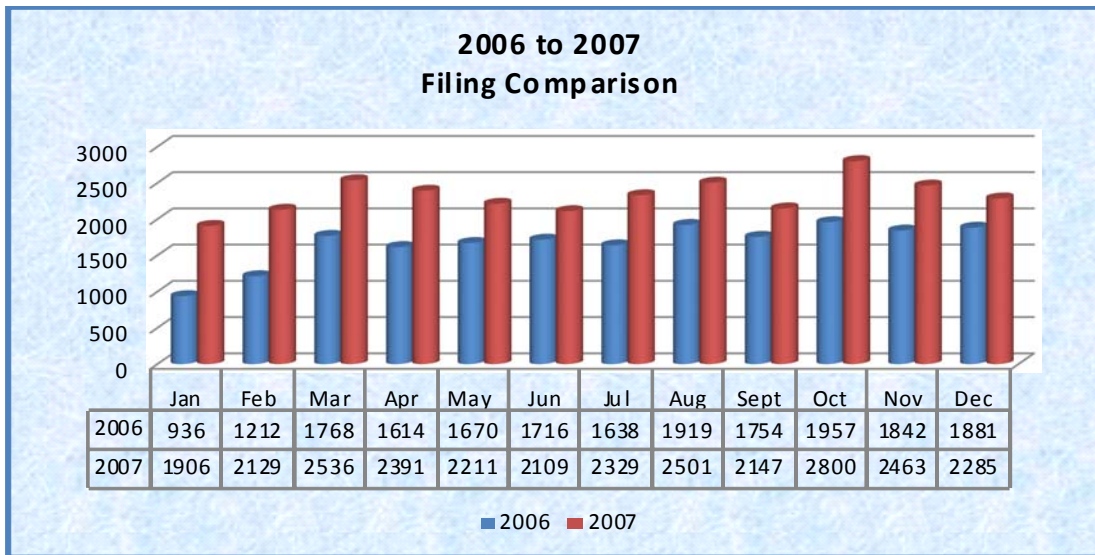
Filing Statistic

The following chart illustrates bankruptcy case filing statistics from 1998 through 2007.

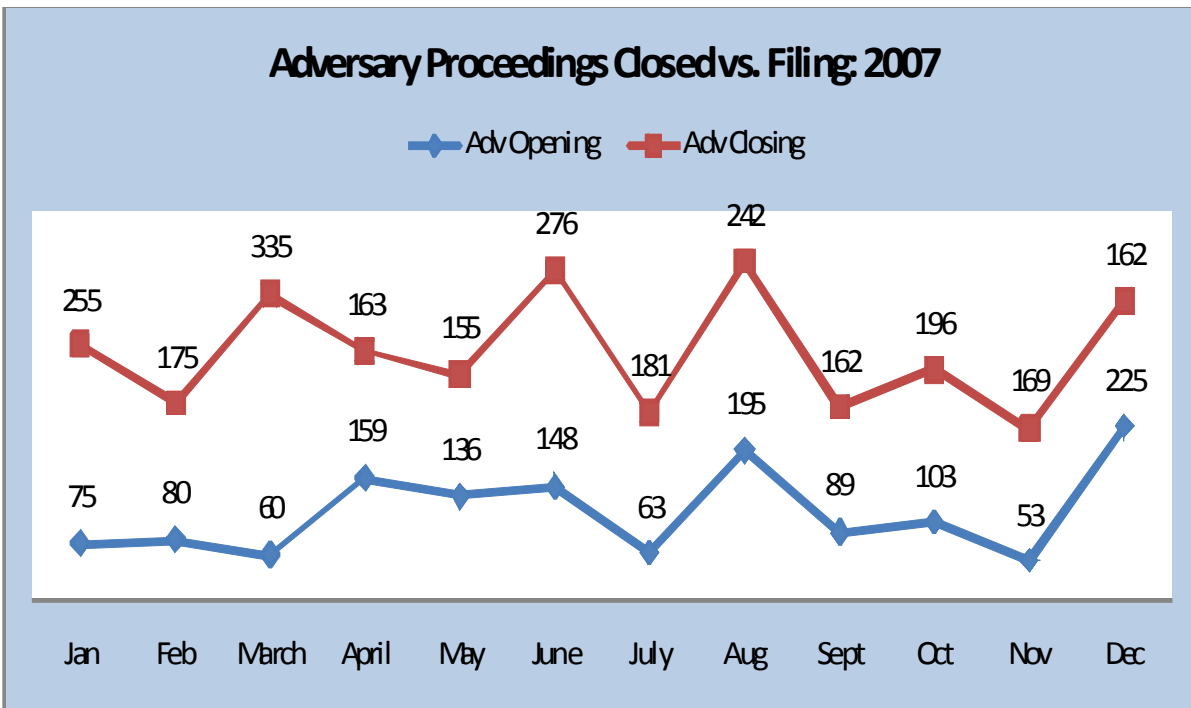
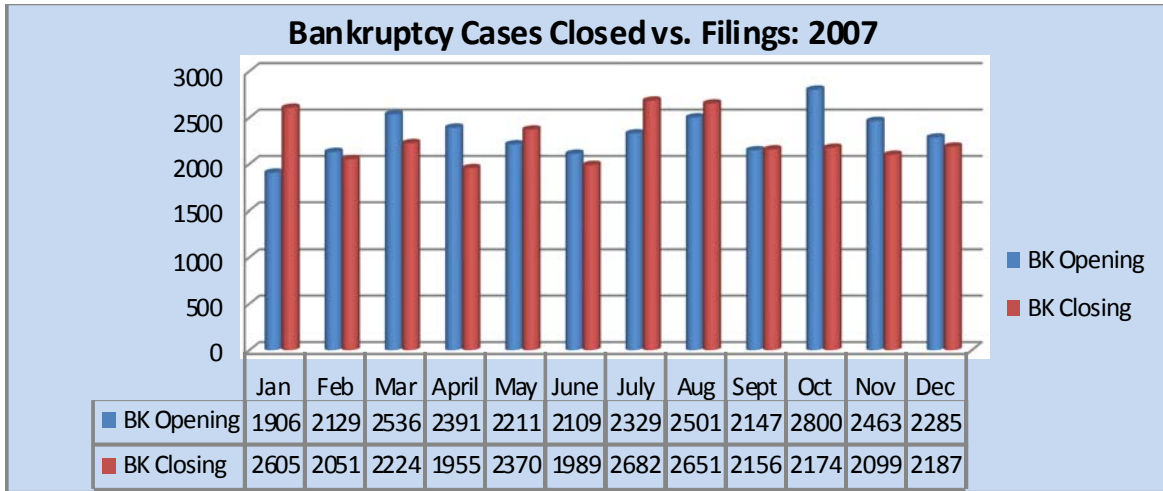


Annual Filings

Recovering from the effects of BAPCPA, which caused filings to decrease by 72% in 2006 from record levels in 2005, the court experienced an increase in bankruptcy filings. A total of 27,807 bankruptcy cases were filed in the Northern District of Illinois during 2007. This represents a 40% increase from the 19,907 filed in 2006.

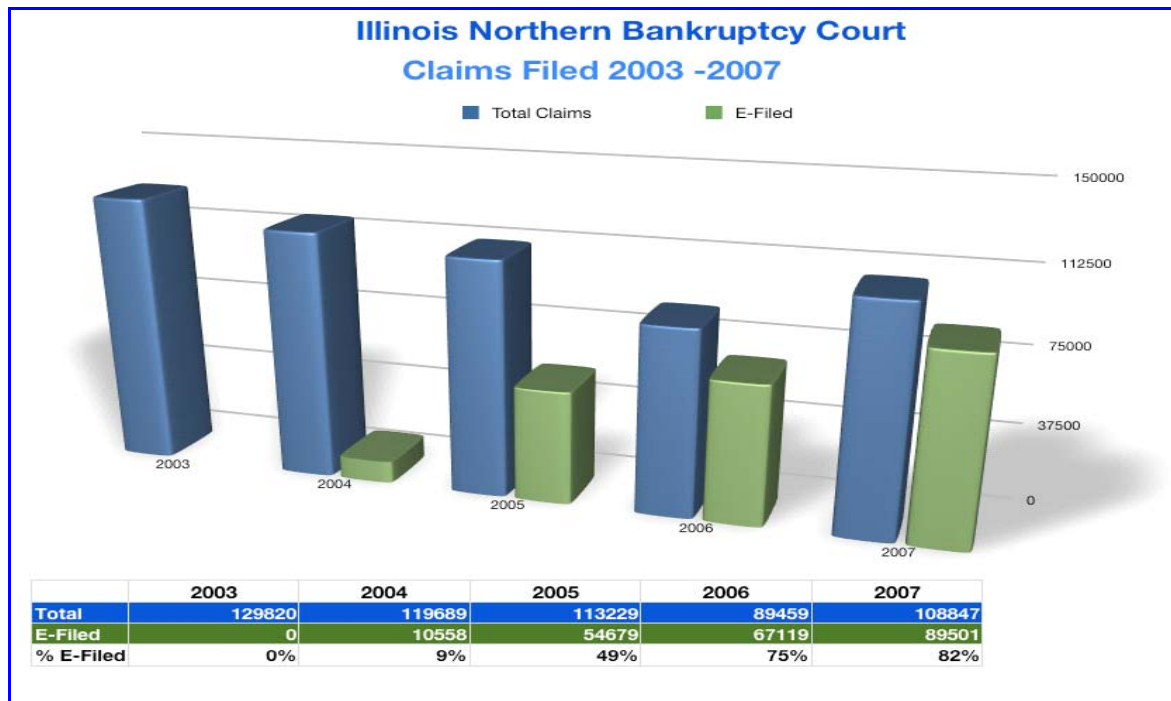
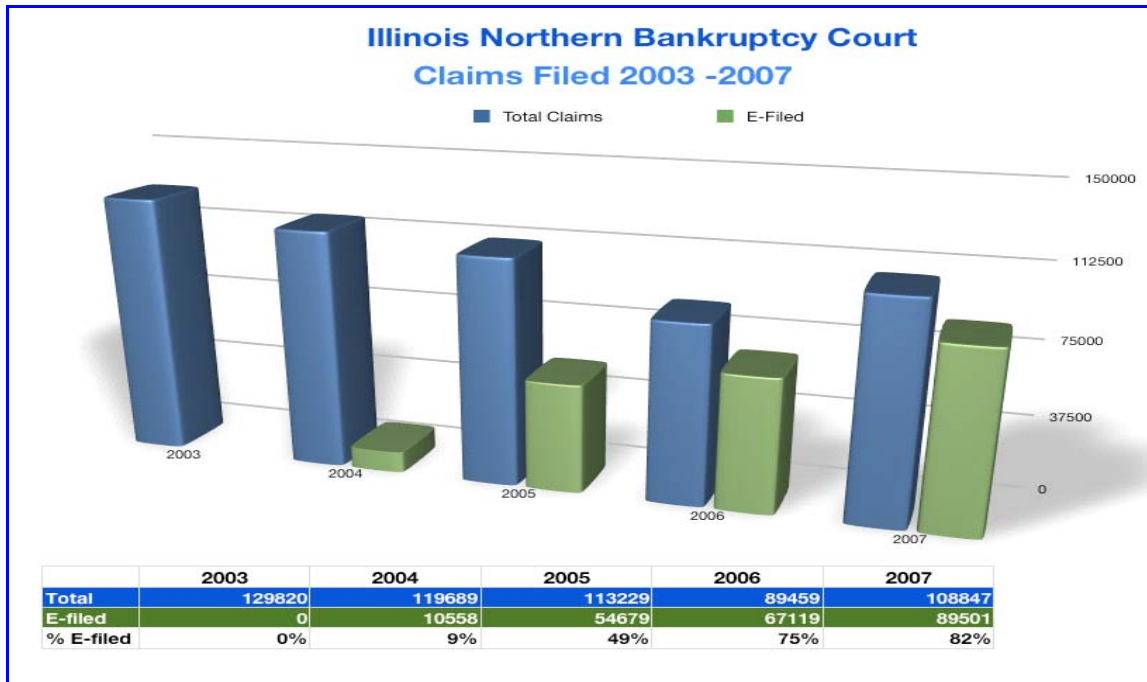


During 2007, the court closed 27, 143 cases, which is only 664 less than the number of bankruptcy cases opened during the year. A total of 2, 471 adversary proceedings were closed, 1,085 more than the 1,386 adversary proceedings that were opened.




Electronic Case filings

The Court mandated electronic case filing in July of 2005. In 2007, 95% of the documents and 82% of the claims were filed electronically.



VISION



“To create a productive, learning organization built on trust and respect. We will focus on developing the talent and strengths of each employee, in a caring environment continually providing opportunity for excellence for ourselves and our customers.”