



## Bureau of Justice Statistics

# State Court Organization 1998

**Courts and judges**  
**Judicial selection and service**  
**Judicial branch**  
**Appellate courts**  
**Trial courts**  
**The jury**  
**The sentencing context**  
**Court structure**

## PART VIII: Court structure charts

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The court structure charts summarize in a one-page diagram the key features of each state's court organization. The format meets two objectives: (1) it is comprehensive, indicating all court systems in the state and their interrelationships, and (2) it describes the jurisdiction of the court systems, using a standard set of terminology and symbols. The court structure charts employ the common terminology developed by the National Center for State Court's Court Statistics Project for reporting caseload statistics.

The first chart is a prototype. It represents a state court organization in which there is one of each of the four court system levels recognized by the Court Statistics Project: courts of last resort, intermediate appellate courts, general jurisdiction trial courts, and limited jurisdiction trial courts. Routes of appeal from one court to another are indicated by lines, with an arrow showing which court receives the appeal or petition.

The charts also provide basic descriptive information, such as the number of authorized justices, judges, and magistrates (or other judicial officers). Each court system's subject matter jurisdiction is indicated using the Court Statistics Project case types. Information is also provided on the use of districts, circuits, or divisions in organizing the courts within the system and the number of courts.

The case types, which define a court system's subject matter jurisdiction, require the most explanation.

### ***Appellate Courts***

The rectangle representing each appellate court contains information on the number of authorized justices; the number of geographic divisions, if any; whether court decisions are made en banc, in panels, or both; and the Court Statistics Project case types that are heard by the court. The case types are shown separately for mandatory and discretionary cases. The case types themselves are defined in other Court Statistics Project publications, especially 1984 State Appellate Court Jurisdiction Guide for Statistical Reporting and State Court Model Statistical Dictionary: 1989 Edition.

An appellate court can have both mandatory and discretionary jurisdiction over the same Court Statistics Project case type. This arises, in part, because the Court Statistics Project case types are defined broadly in order to be applicable to every state's courts. There are, for example, only two appellate Court Statistics Project case types for criminal appeals: capital and noncapital. A court may have mandatory jurisdiction over felony cases, but discretionary jurisdiction over misdemeanors. The list of case types would include "criminal" for both mandatory and discretionary jurisdiction. The duplication

of a case type under both headings can also occur if appeals from one lower court for that case type are mandatory, while appeals from another lower court are discretionary. Also, statutory provisions or court rules in some states automatically convert a mandatory appeal into a discretionary petition—for example, when an appeal is not filed within a specified time limit. A more comprehensive description of each appellate court's subject matter jurisdiction can be found in the 1984 State Appellate Court Jurisdiction Guide for Statistical Reporting.

### ***Trial Courts***

The rectangle representing each trial court also lists the applicable Court Statistics Project case types. These include civil, criminal, traffic/other violation, and juvenile. Where a case type is simply listed, it means that the court system shares jurisdiction over it with other courts. The presence of exclusive jurisdiction is always explicitly stated.

The absence of a case type from a list means that the court does not have that subject matter jurisdiction. The dollar amount jurisdiction is shown where there is an upper or a lower limit to the cases that can be filed in a court. A dollar limit is not listed if a court does not have a minimum or maximum dollar amount jurisdiction for general civil cases. In criminal cases, jurisdiction is distinguished between "felony," where the court can try a felony case to verdict and sentencing, and "preliminary hearings," which applies to those limited jurisdiction courts that can conduct preliminary hearings that bind a defendant over for trial in a higher court.

Trial courts can have what is termed incidental appellate jurisdiction. The presence of such jurisdiction over the decisions of other courts is noted in the list of case types as either "civil appeals," "criminal appeals," or "administrative agency appeals." A trial court that hears appeals directly from an administrative agency has an "A" in the upper right corner of the rectangle.

For each trial court, the chart states the authorized number of judges and whether the court can impanel a jury. The rectangle representing the court also indicates the number of districts, divisions, or circuits into which the court system is divided. These subdivisions are stated using the court system's own terminology. The descriptions, therefore, are not standardized across states or court systems.

Some trial courts are totally funded from local sources and some receive some form of state funds. Locally funded court systems are drawn with broken lines. A solid line indicates some or all of the funding is derived from state funds.

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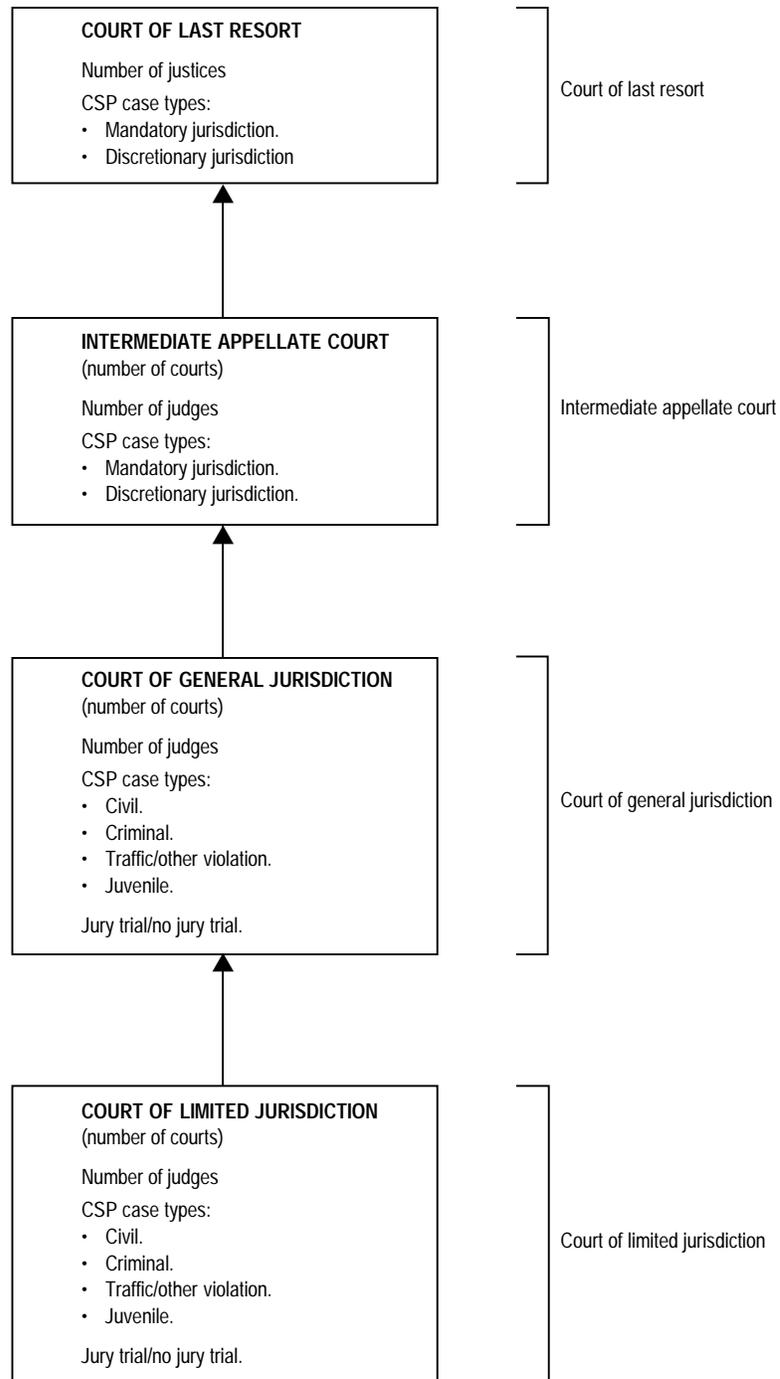
## ***Symbols and Abbreviations***

An “A” in the upper right corner of a rectangle, representing either an appellate or a trial court, indicates that the court receives appeals directly from the decisions of an administrative agency. Where “administrative agency appeals” is listed as a case type, it indicates that the court hears appeals from decisions of another court on an administrative agency’s actions. It is possible for a court to have both an “A” designation and to have “administrative agency appeals” listed as a case type. Such a court hears appeals directly from an administrative agency (“A”) and has appellate jurisdiction over the decisions of a lower court that has already reviewed the decision of the administrative agency.

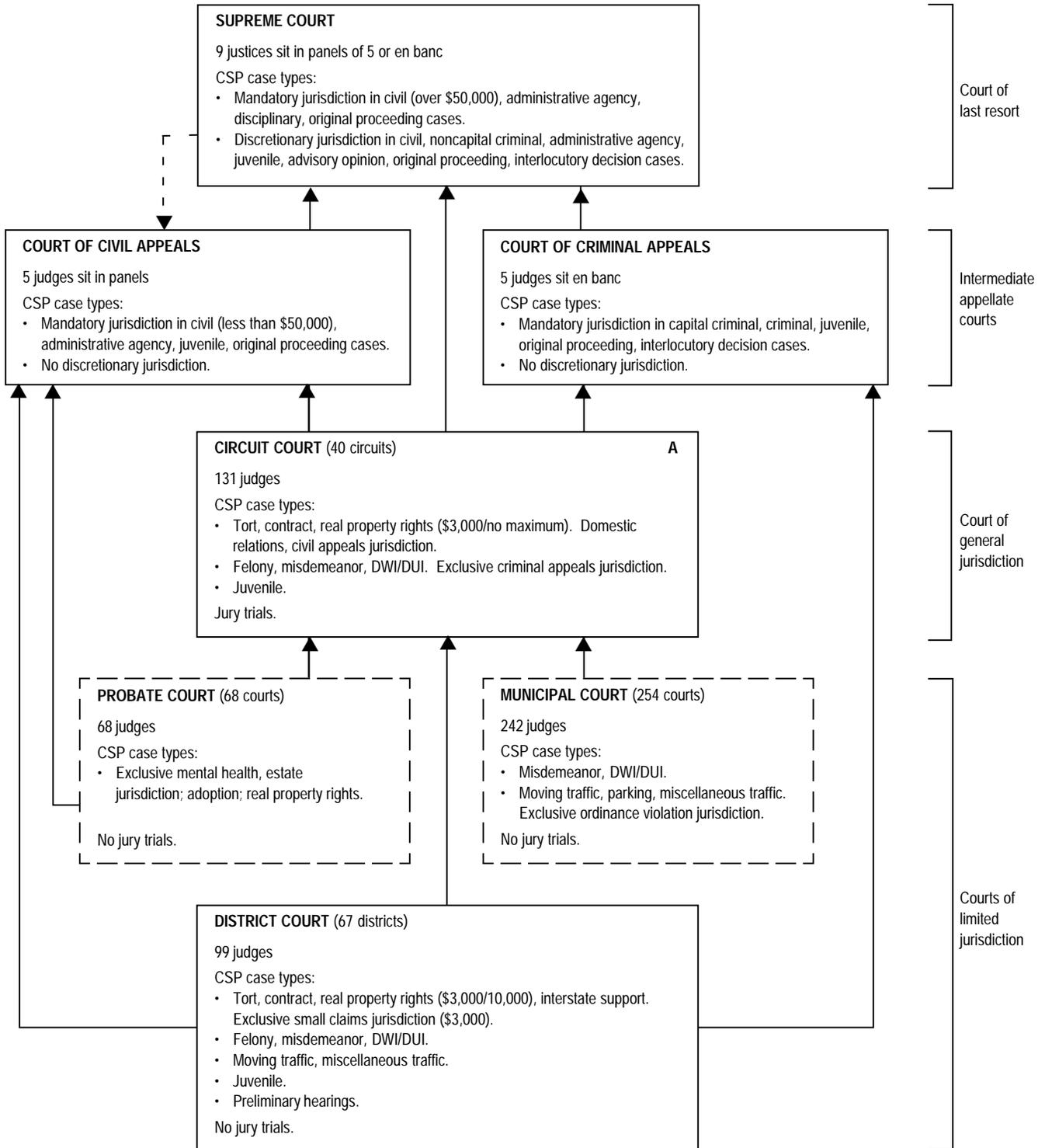
The number of justices or judges is sometimes stated as “FTE.” This represents “full-time equivalent” authorized judicial positions. “DWI/DUI” stands for “driving while intoxicated/driving under the influence.” The “SC” abbreviation stands for “small claims.” The dollar amount jurisdiction for civil cases is indicated in parentheses with a dollar sign. Where the small claims dollar amount jurisdiction is different, it is noted.

The court structure charts are convenient summaries. They do not substitute for the detailed descriptive material contained in the 50 tables of *State Court Organization, 1998*. Moreover, they are based on the Court Statistics Project’s terminology and categories. This means that a state may have established courts that are not included in these charts. Some states have courts of special jurisdiction to receive complaints on matters that are more typically directed to administrative boards and agencies. Since these courts adjudicate matters that do not fall within the Court Statistics Project case types, they are not included in the charts. The existence of such courts, however, is recognized in a footnote to the state’s court structure chart.

## STATE COURT STRUCTURE PROTOTYPE, 1998

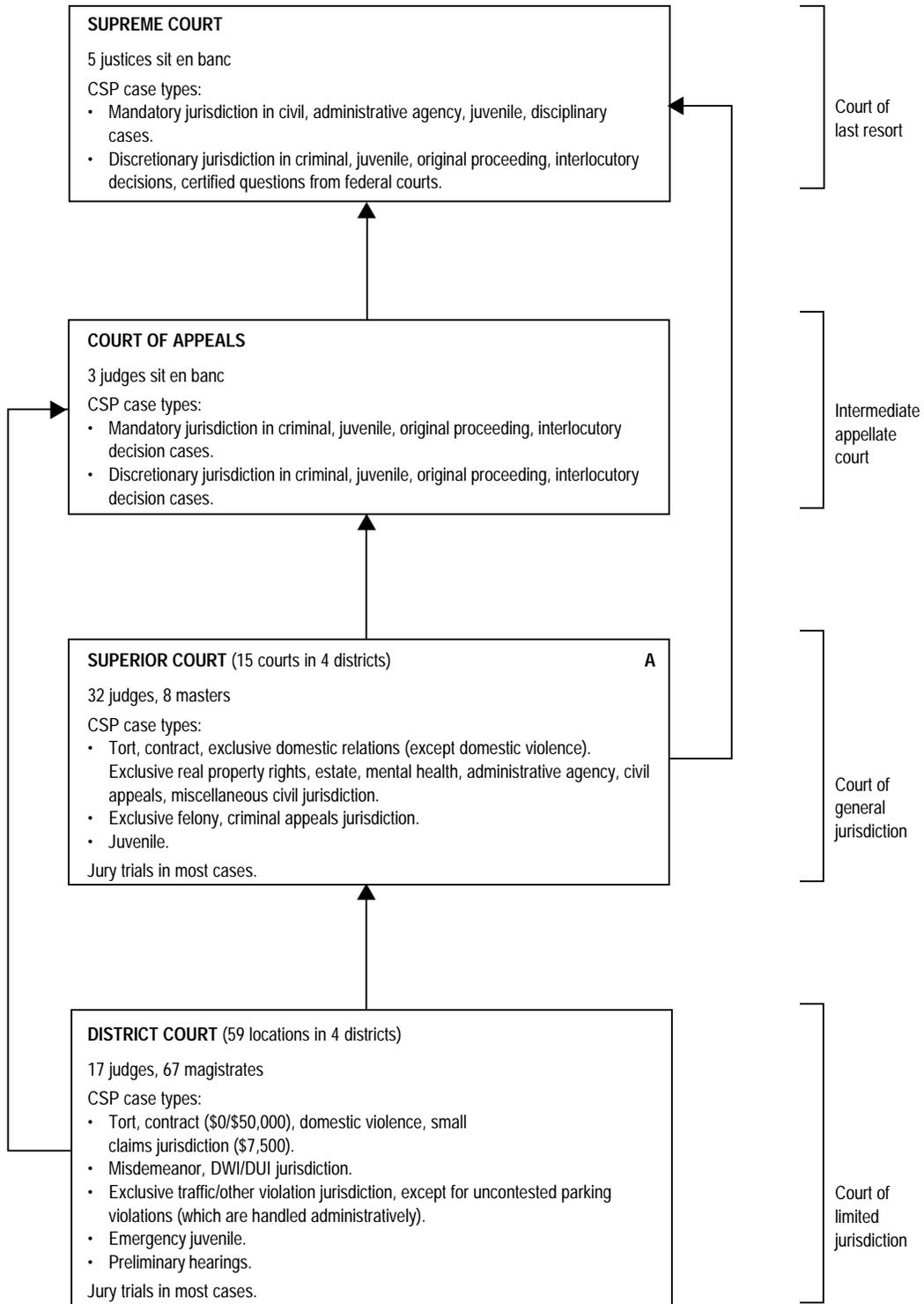


## ALABAMA COURT STRUCTURE, 1998

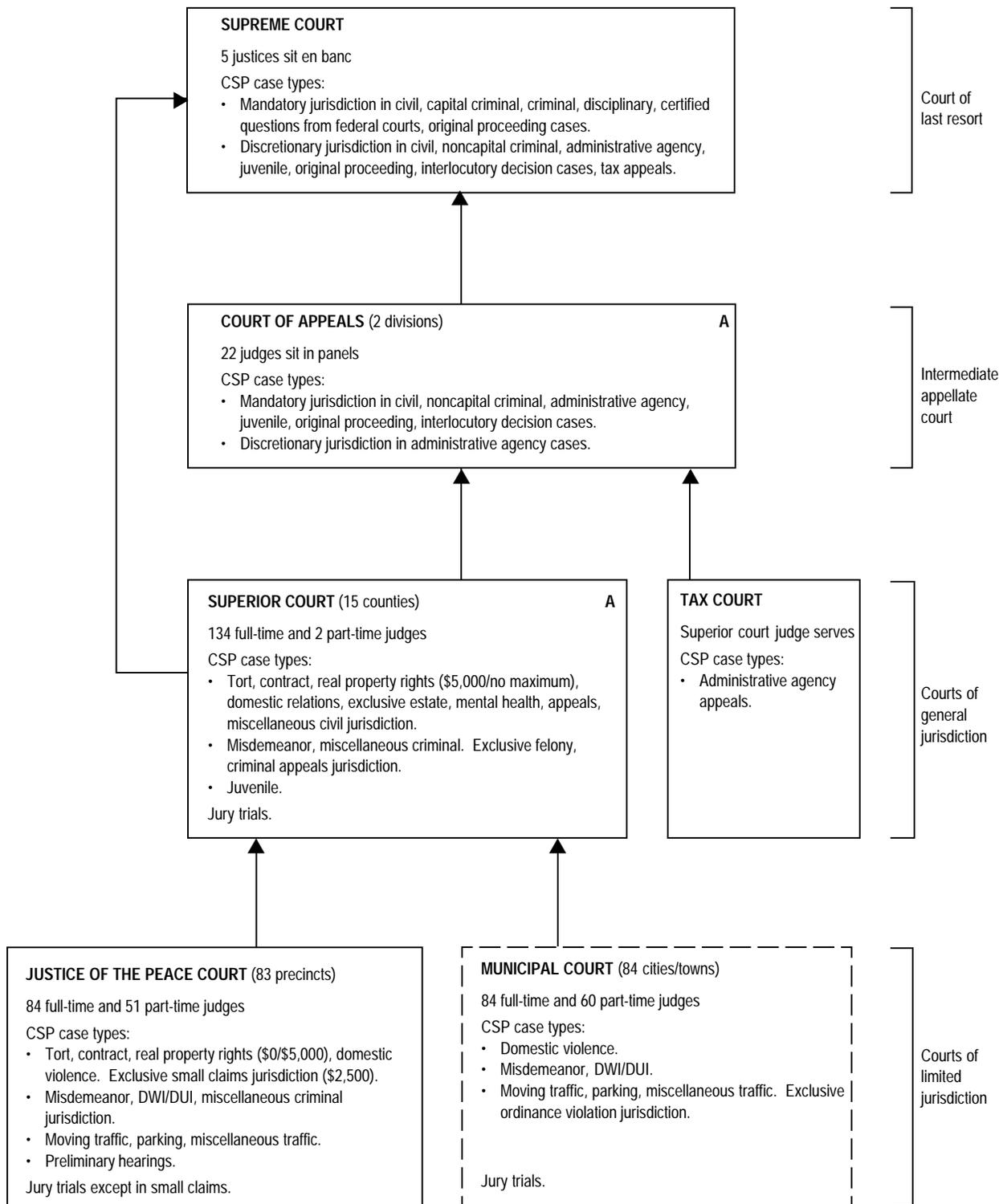


- - - Indicates assignment of cases.

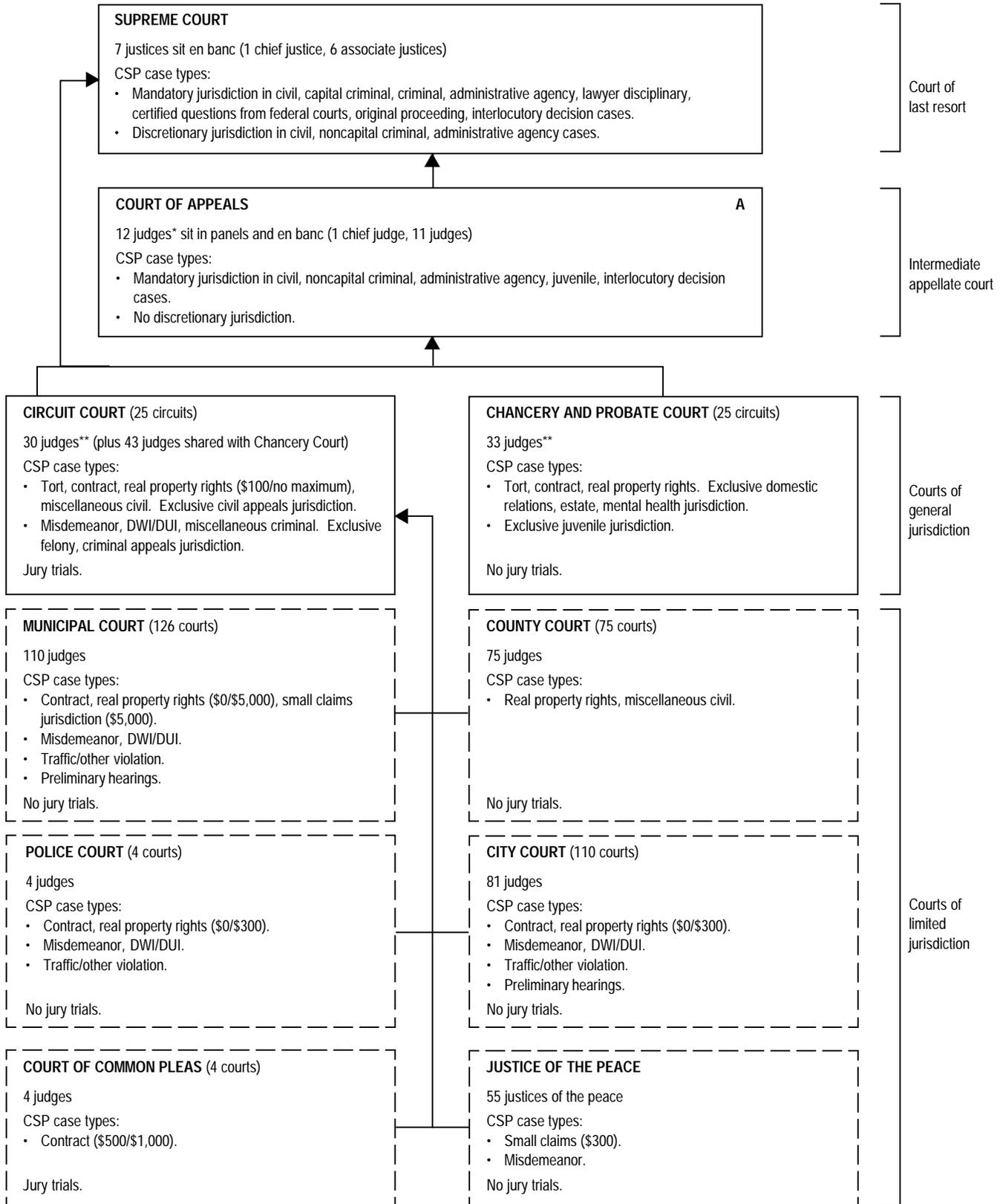
## ALASKA COURT STRUCTURE, 1998



## ARIZONA COURT STRUCTURE, 1998



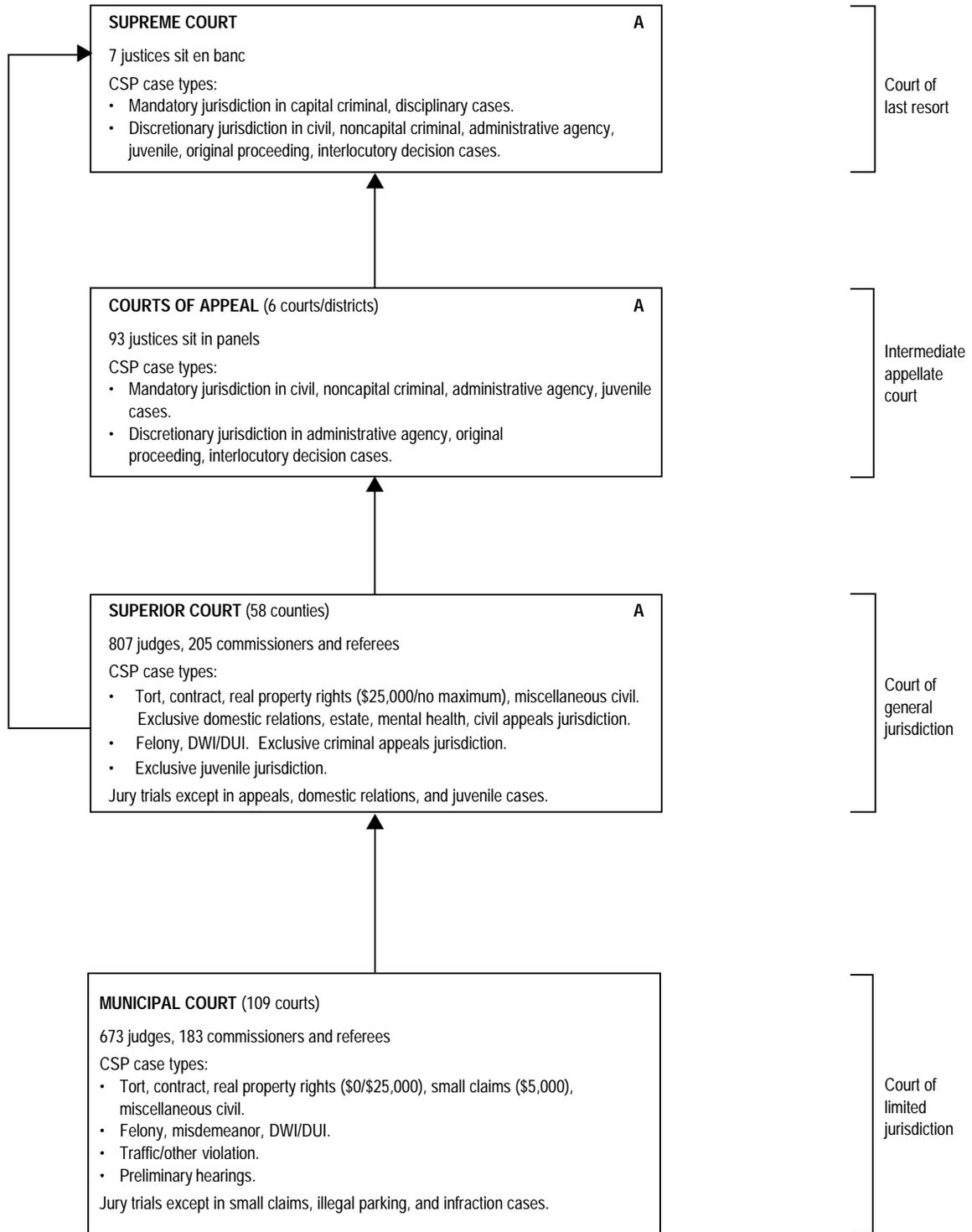
## ARKANSAS COURT STRUCTURE, 1998



\* Court of Appeals judges increased to 12 effective January 1, 1997.

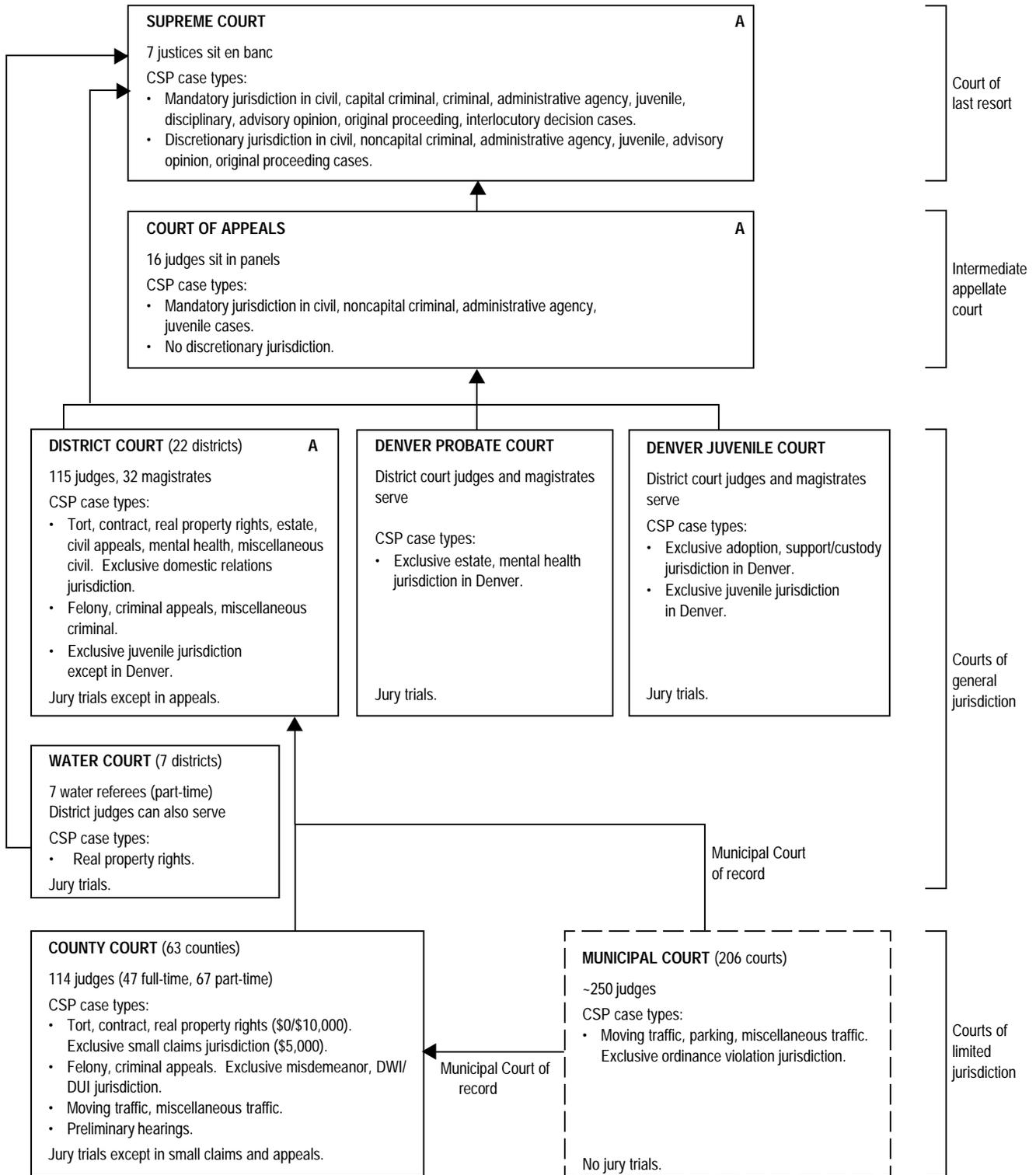
\*\* Forty-three additional judges serve both circuit and chancery courts.

## CALIFORNIA COURT STRUCTURE, 1998

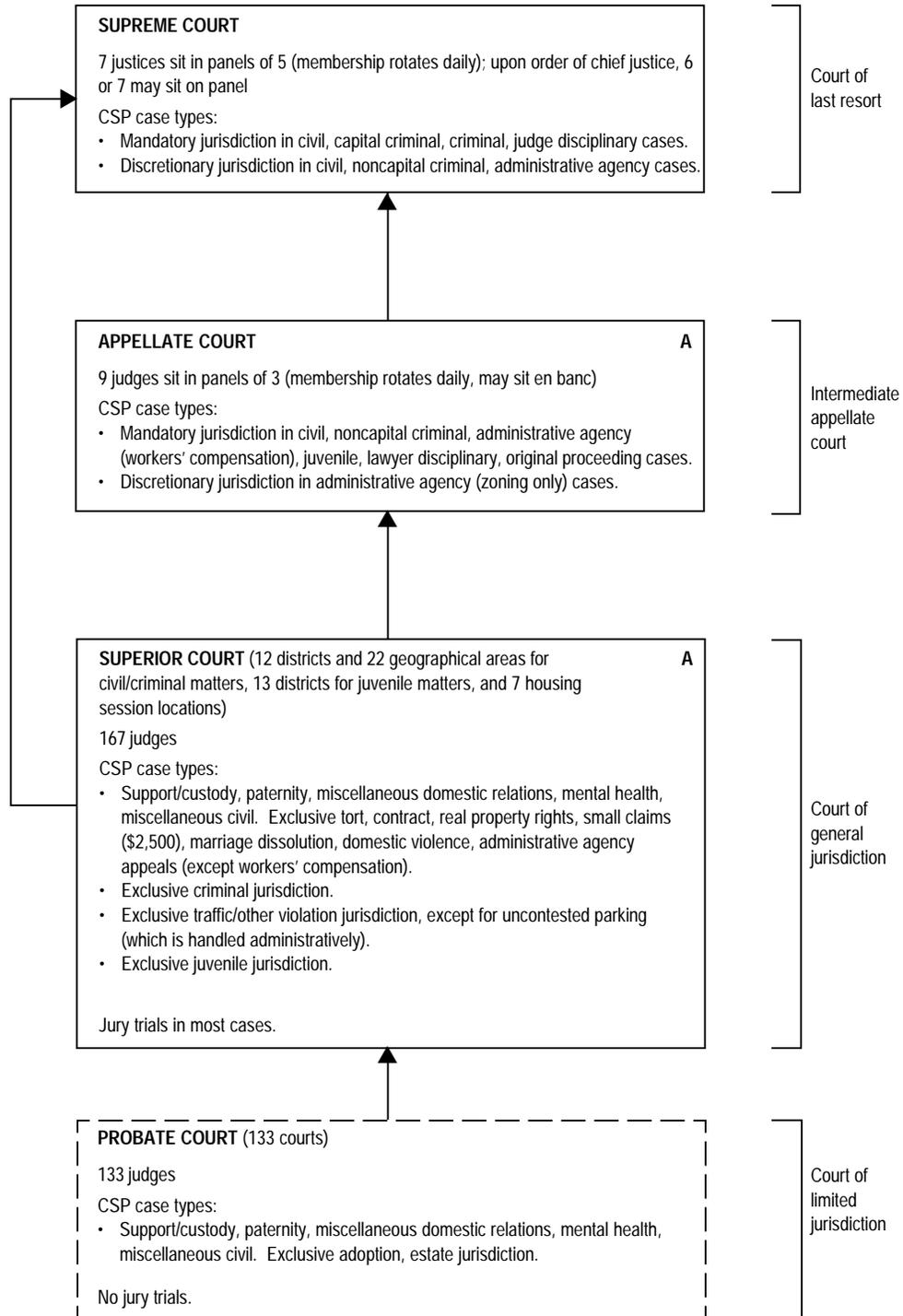


Note: In 1998 Proposition 220 amended the state Constitution by providing for the voluntary unification of the superior (courts of general jurisdiction) and municipal (courts of limited jurisdiction) courts of a county into one countywide superior court. Originating as Senate Constitutional Amendment 4, the measure was passed by the Legislature in June, 1996, appeared as Proposition 220 on a statewide ballot during a primary election on June 2, 1998, and was approved by 64% of the voters. Proposition 220 became effective June 3, 1998.

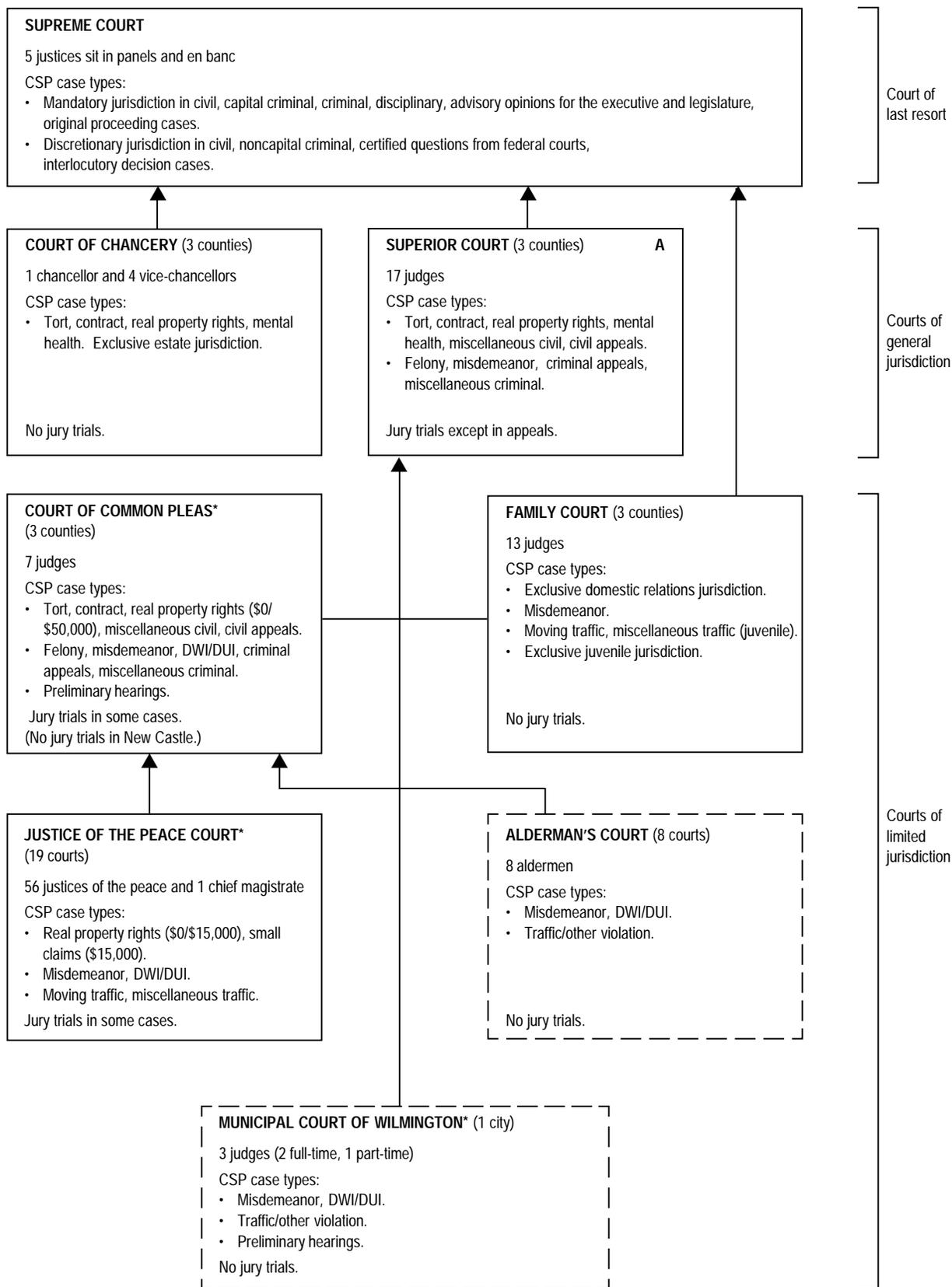
## COLORADO COURT STRUCTURE, 1998



## CONNECTICUT COURT STRUCTURE, 1998

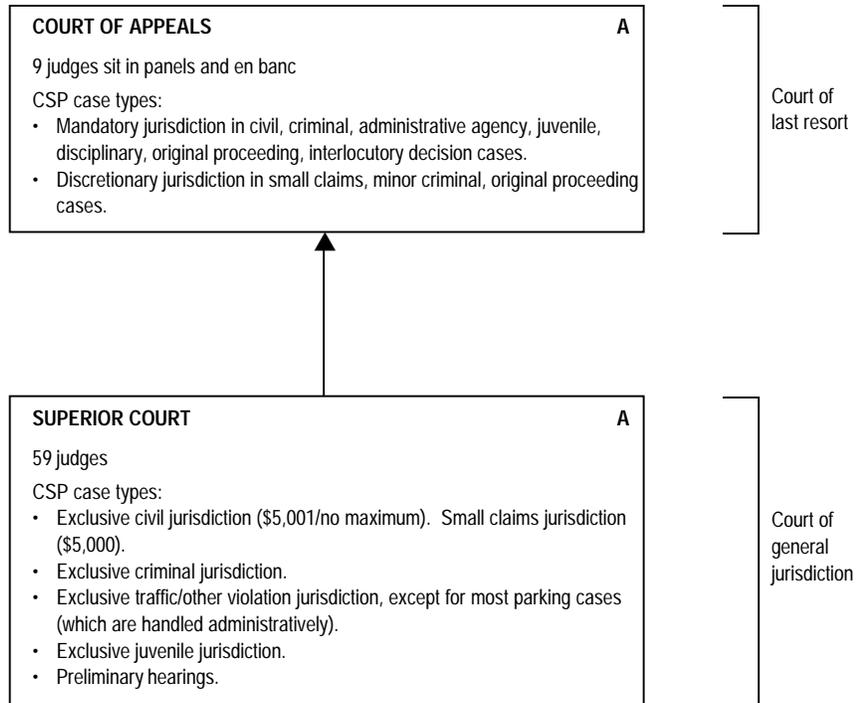


## DELAWARE COURT STRUCTURE, 1998



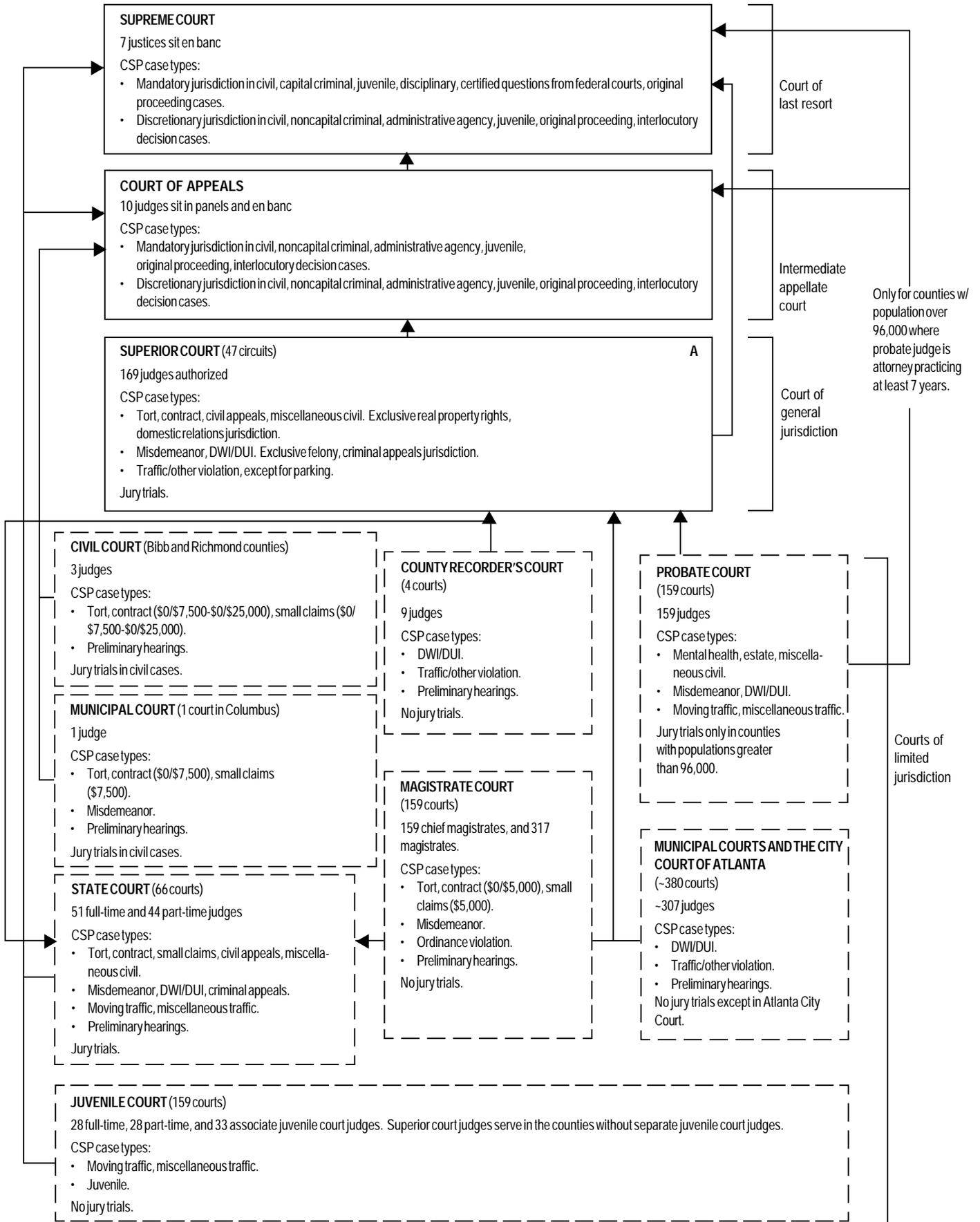
\* The Municipal Court of Wilmington was eliminated effective May 1, 1998, and most of its caseload was absorbed by the Court of Common Pleas and entry-level misdemeanor and simple traffic caseload absorbed by the Justice of the Peace Court. A new Justice of the Peace Court was created in Wilmington effective May 1, 1998.

## DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA COURT STRUCTURE, 1998

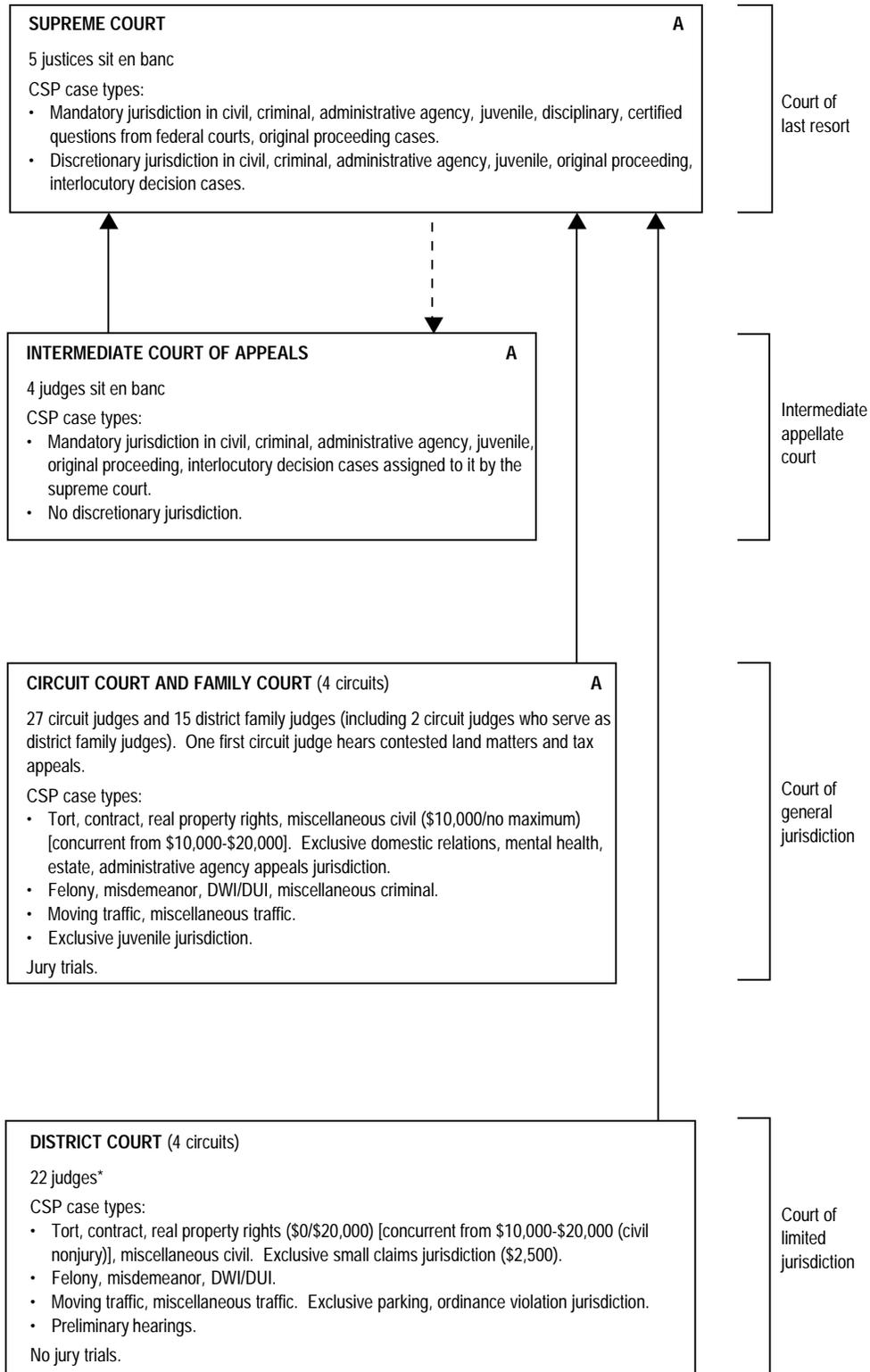




## GEORGIA COURT STRUCTURE, 1998



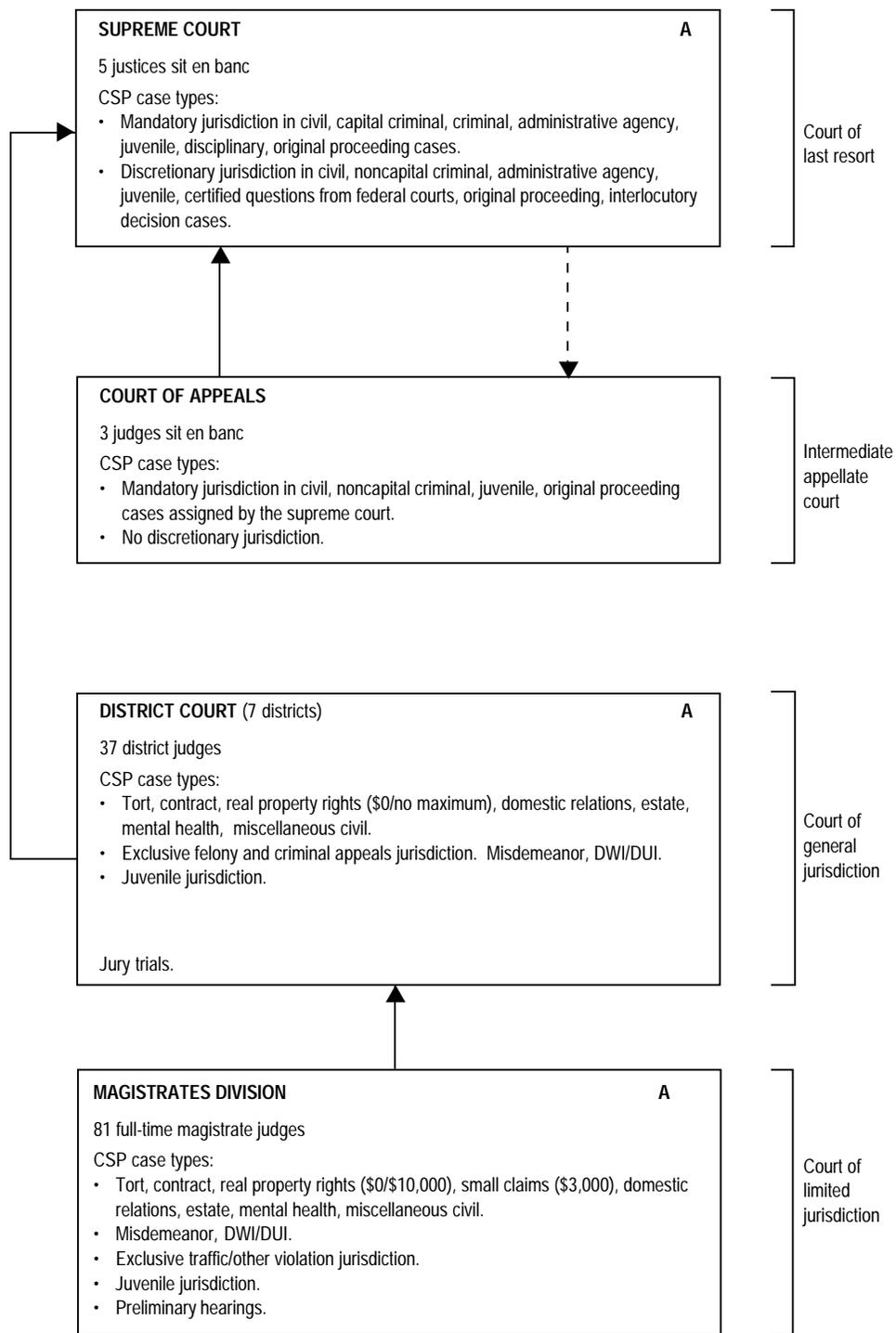
## HAWAII COURT STRUCTURE, 1998



\* Excludes per diem judges.

— — Indicates assignment of cases.

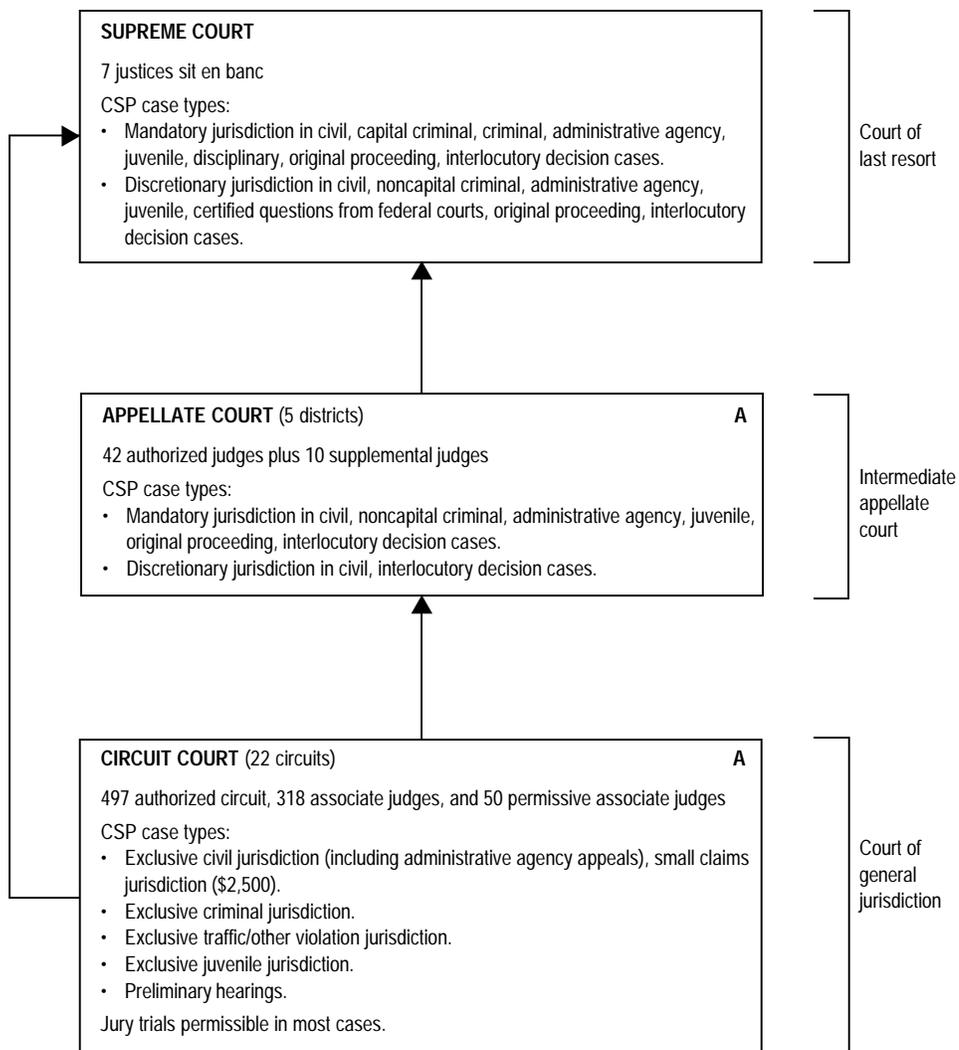
## IDAHO COURT STRUCTURE, 1998



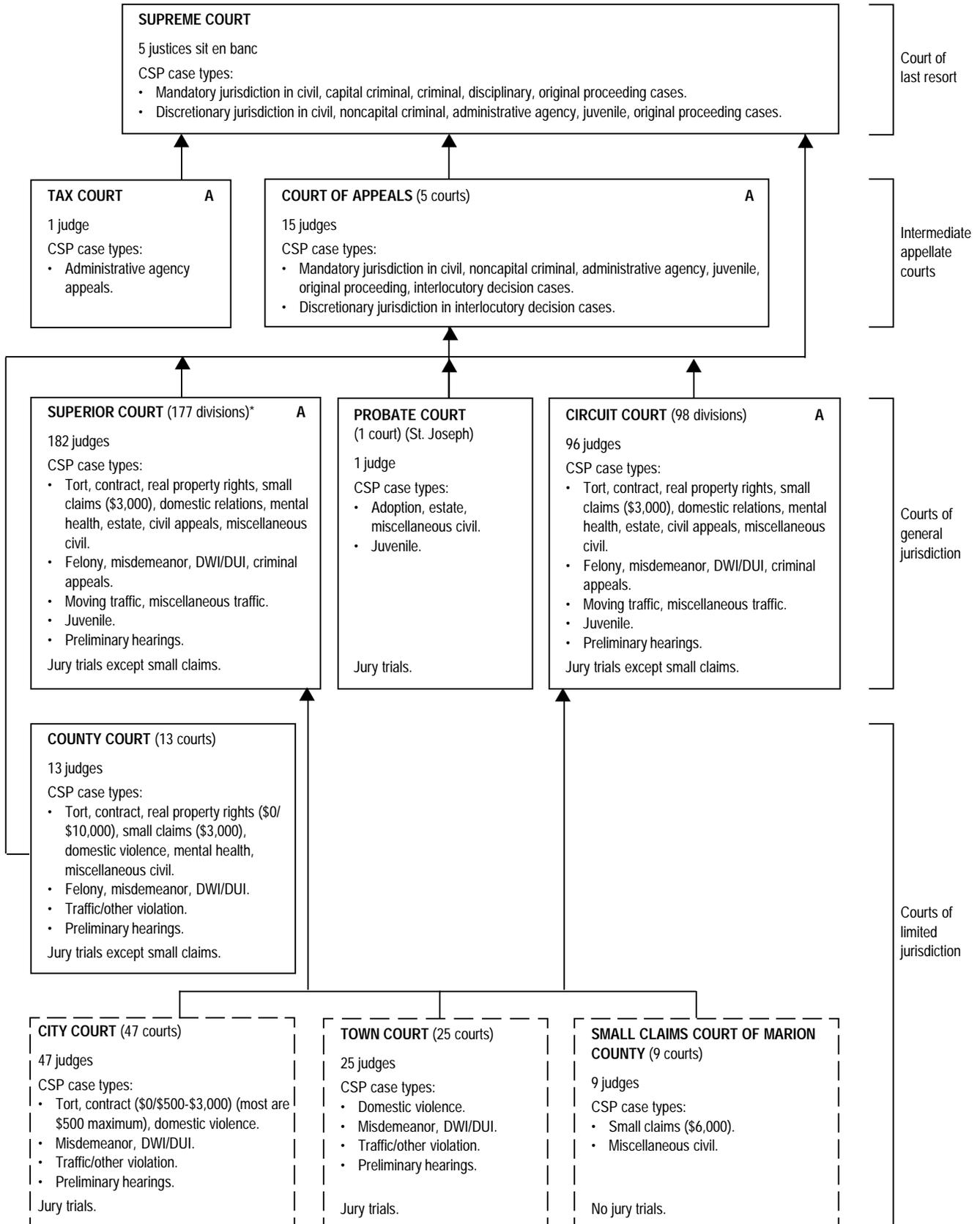
— — Indicates assignment of cases.

Note: The Magistrates Division of the District Court functions as a limited jurisdiction court.

## ILLINOIS COURT STRUCTURE, 1998

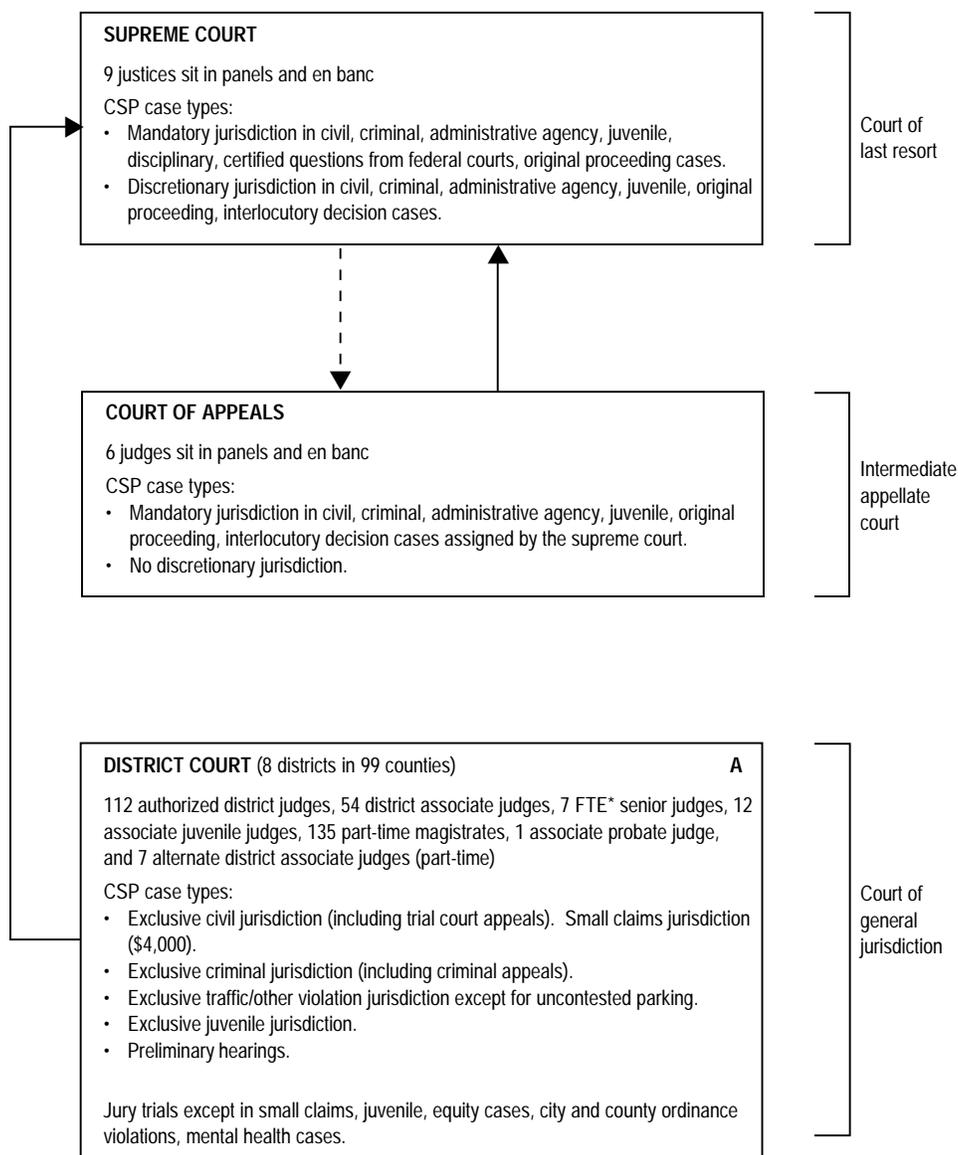


## INDIANA COURT STRUCTURE, 1998



\* Effective January 1, 1996, all Municipal Courts became Superior Courts.

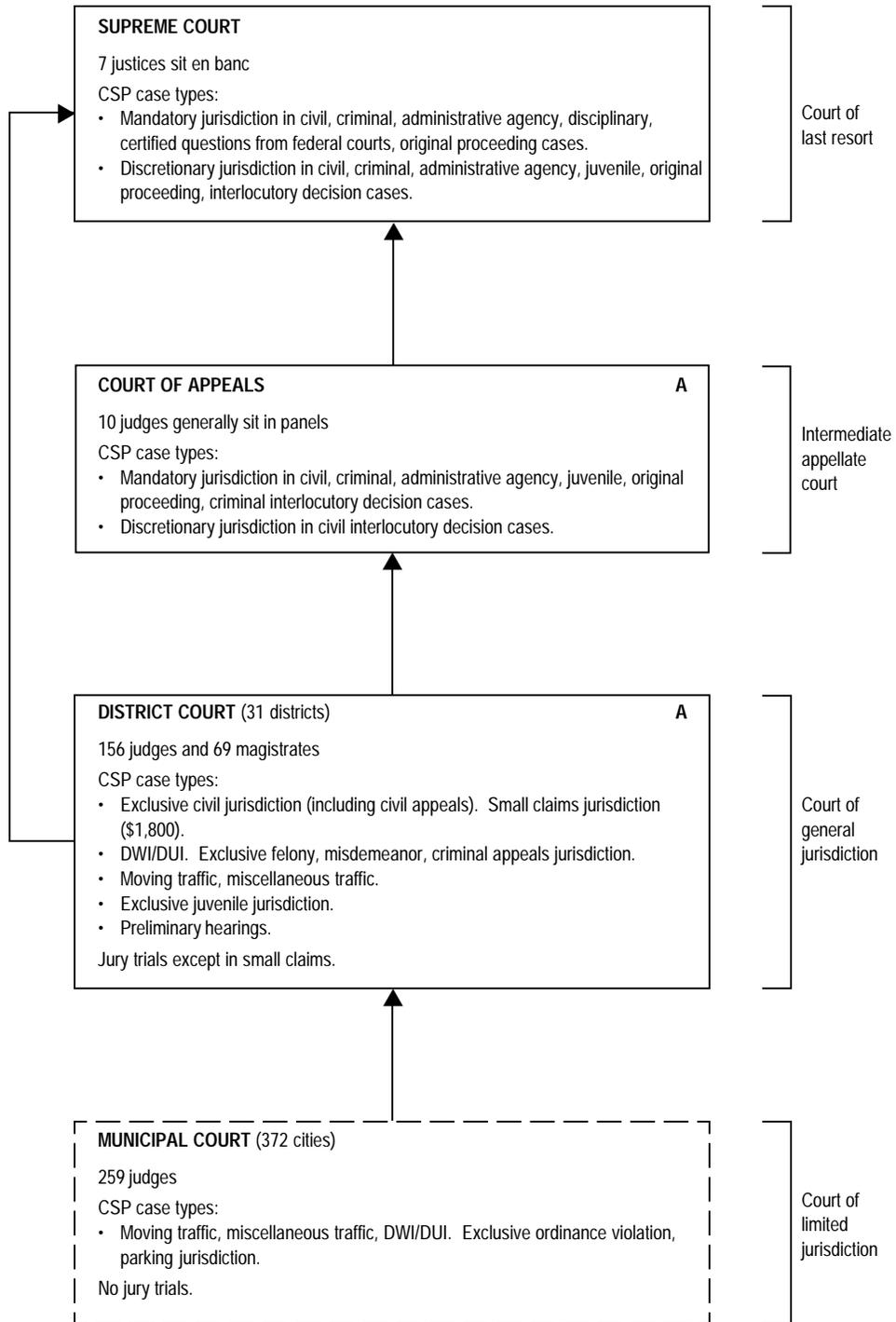
## IOWA COURT STRUCTURE, 1998



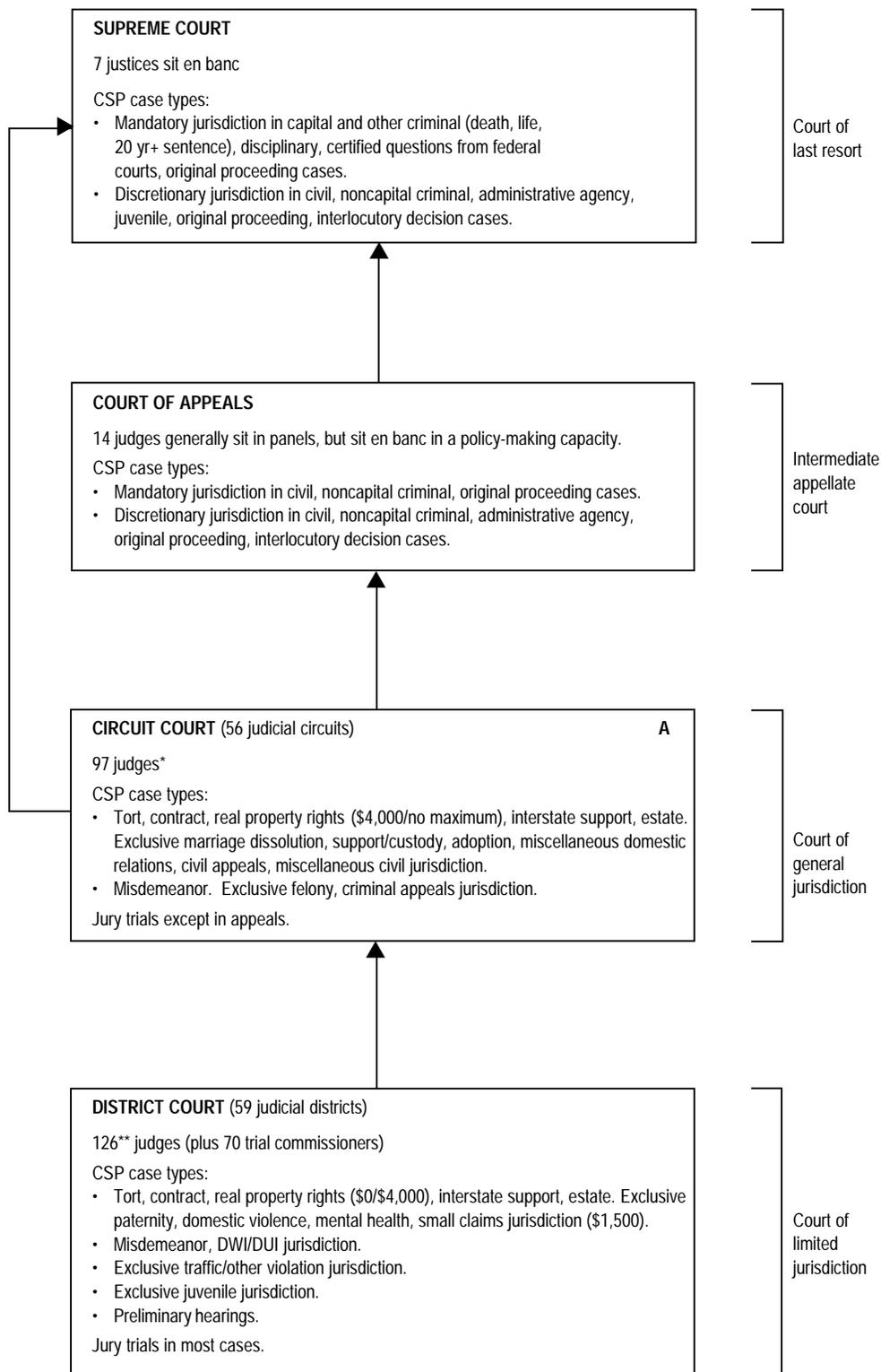
\* Includes 28 senior judges who work 1/4 time. (No more than 13 weeks/year)

— — Indicates assignment of cases.

## KANSAS COURT STRUCTURE, 1998



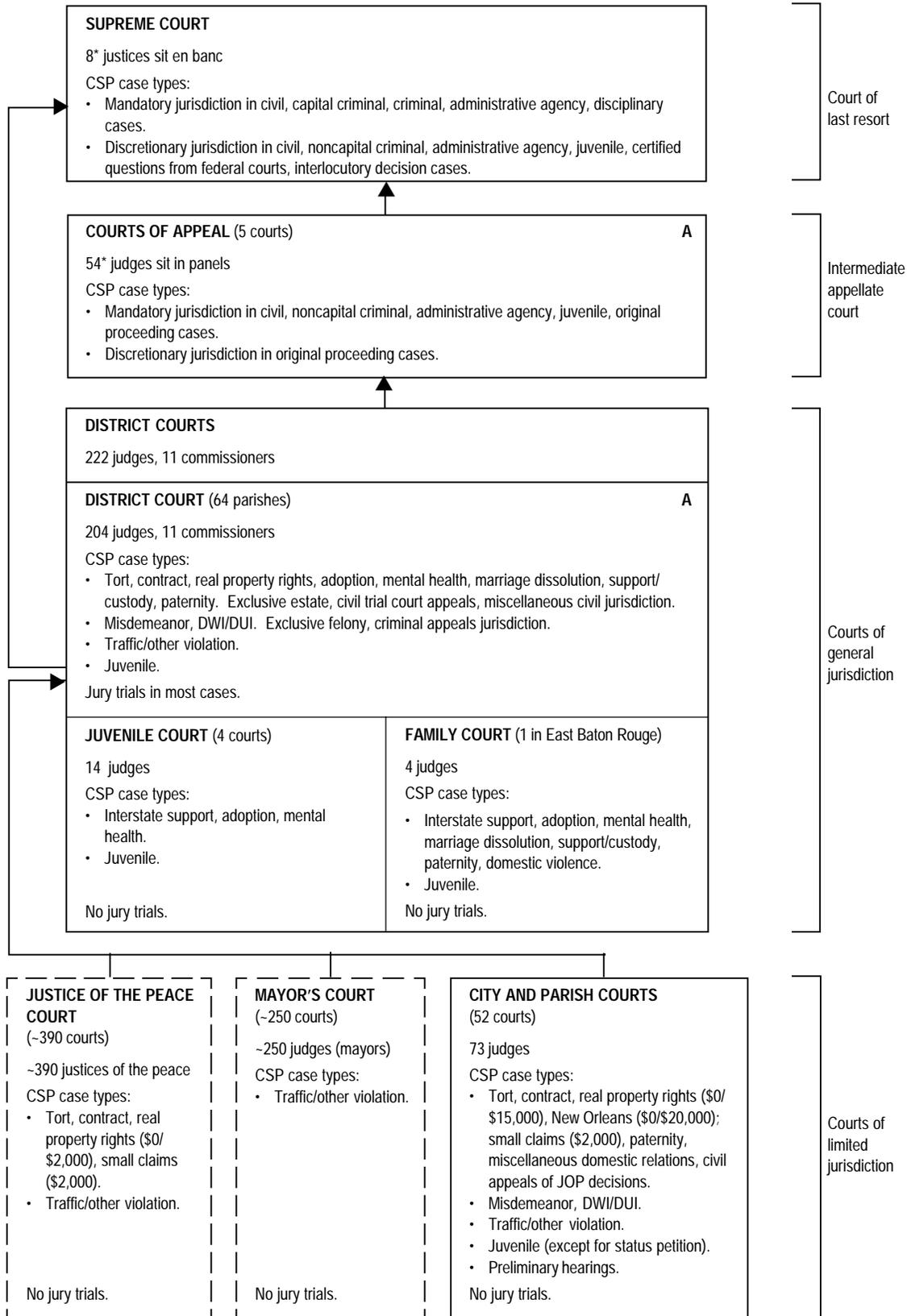
## KENTUCKY COURT STRUCTURE, 1998



\* Increased to 103 effective 7/1/98, 104 for FY 98/99, and 108 effective 9/1/99.

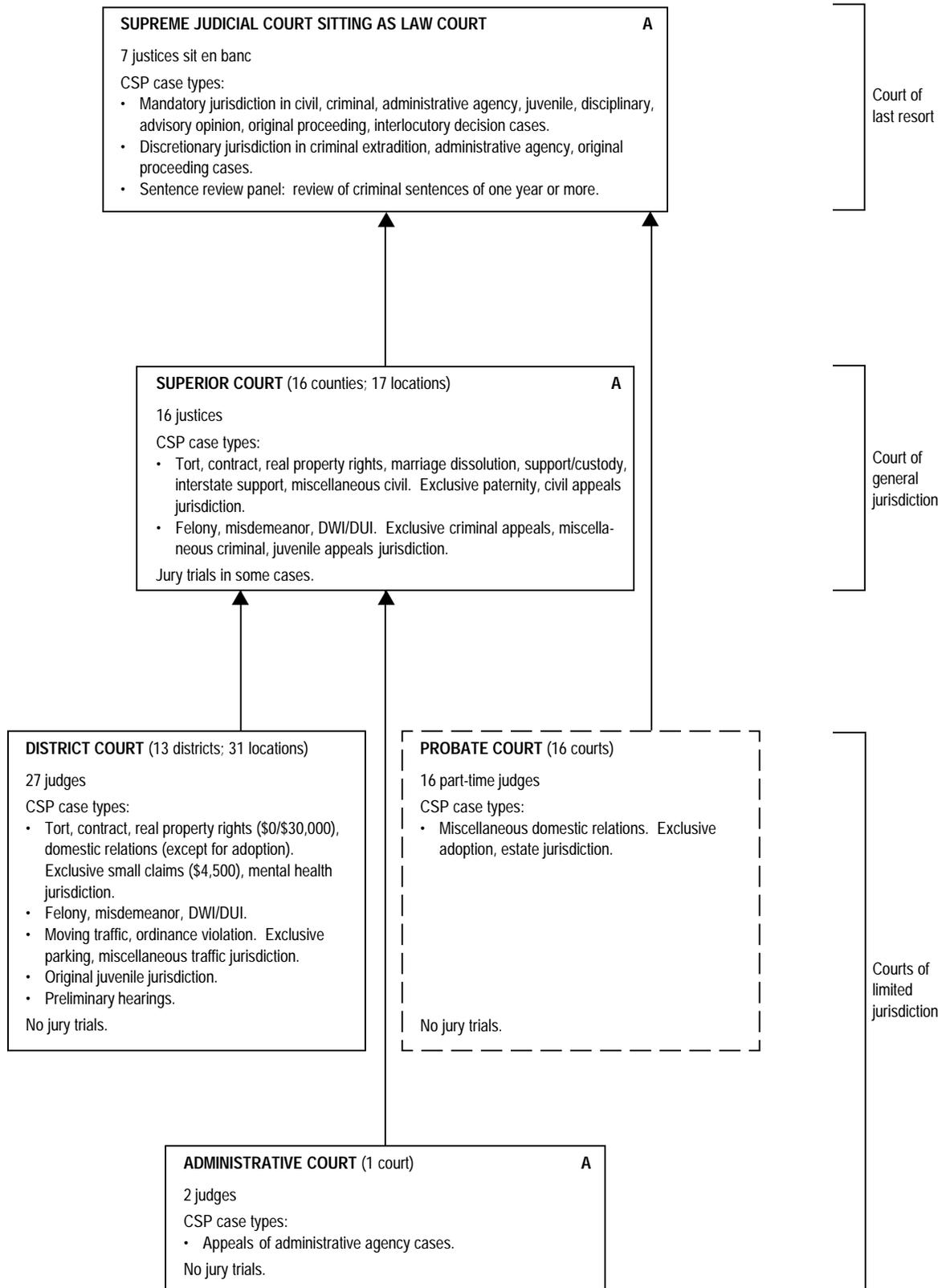
\*\* Increased to 127 effective 7/1/98 and 128 effective 9/1/99

## LOUISIANA COURT STRUCTURE, 1998

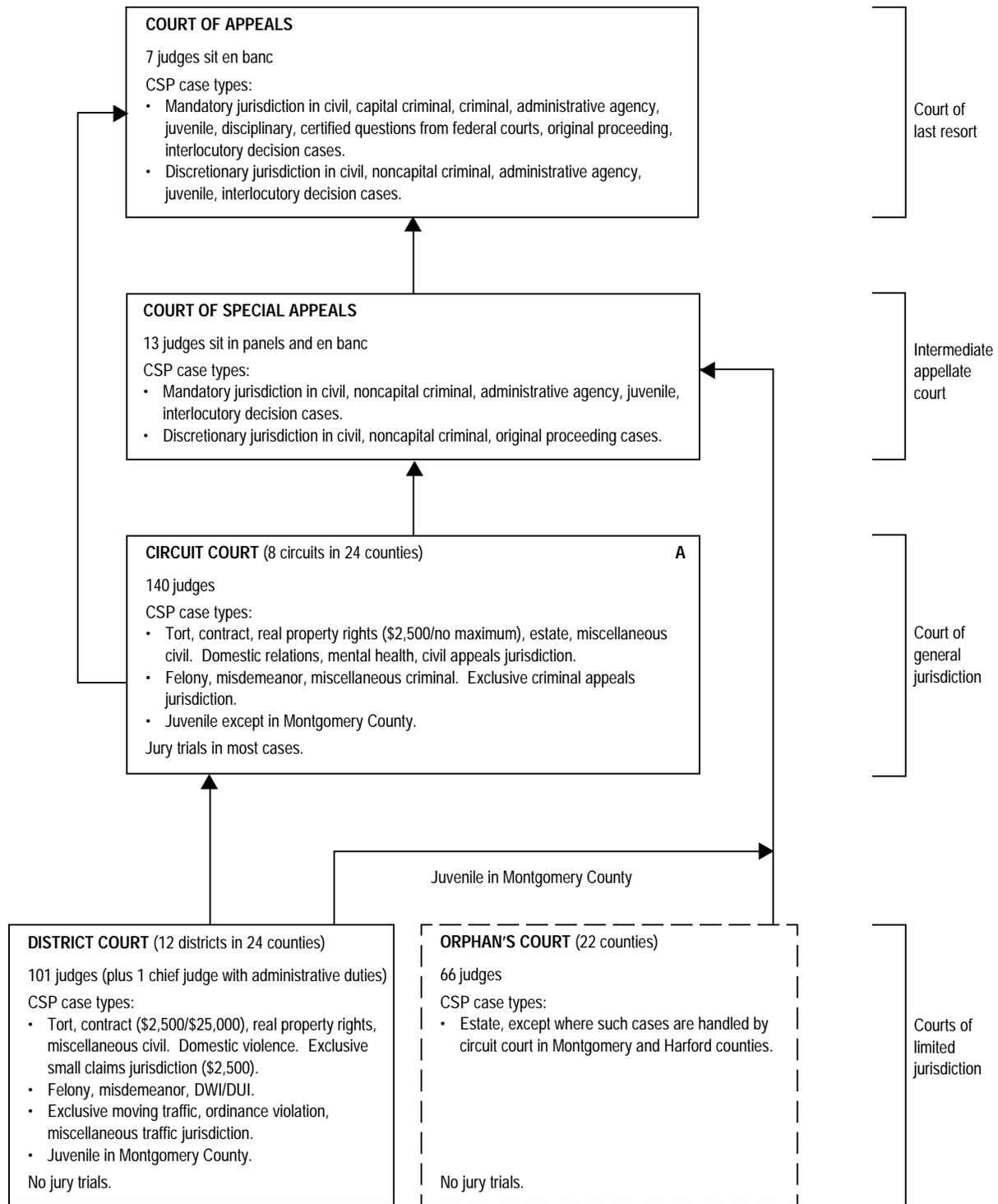


\* Supreme court has 7 elected justices and 1 justice assigned from the courts of appeal. The assigned judge would bring the number of courts of appeal judges to 55. (This assignment is by state statute.)

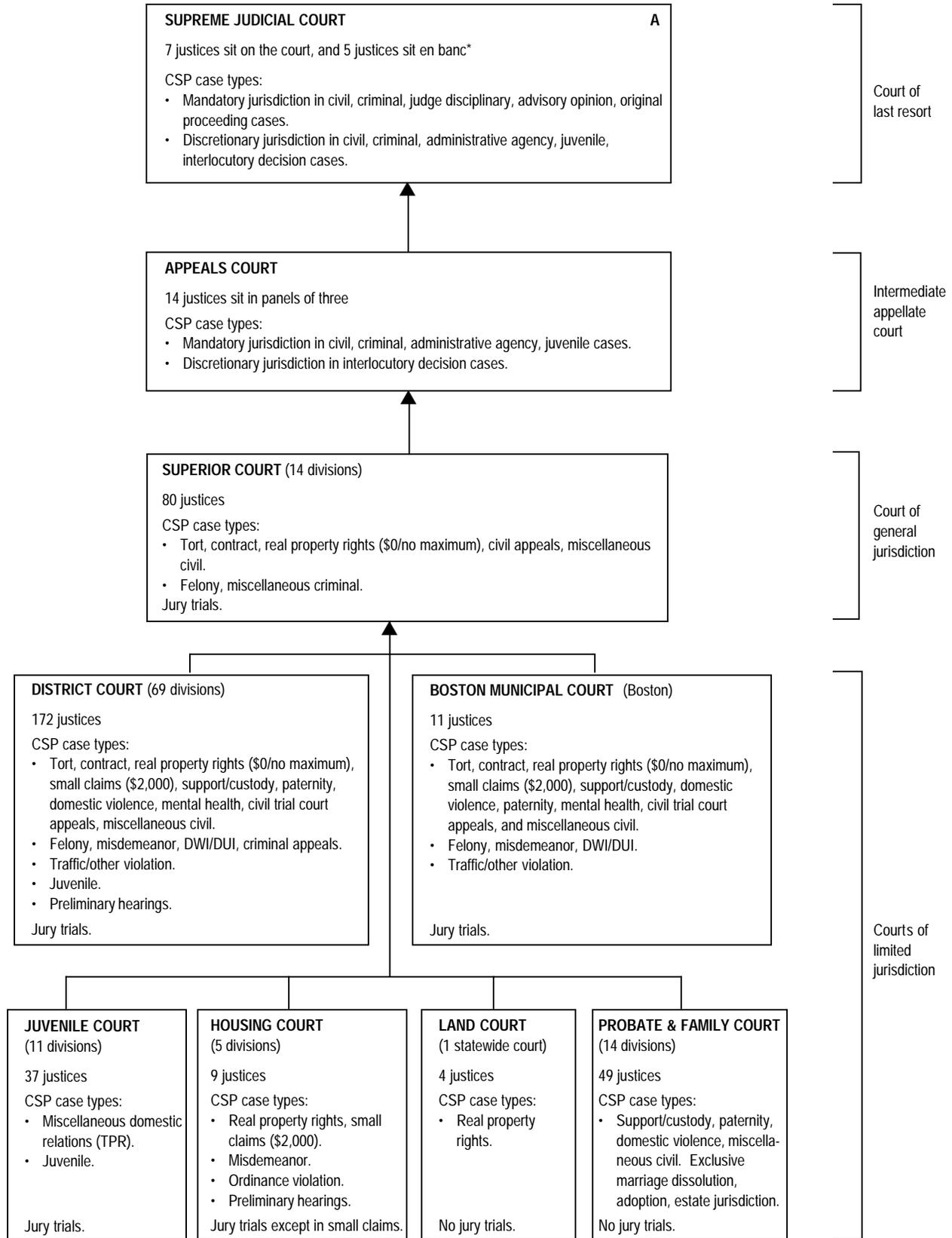
## MAINE COURT STRUCTURE, 1998



## MARYLAND COURT STRUCTURE, 1998

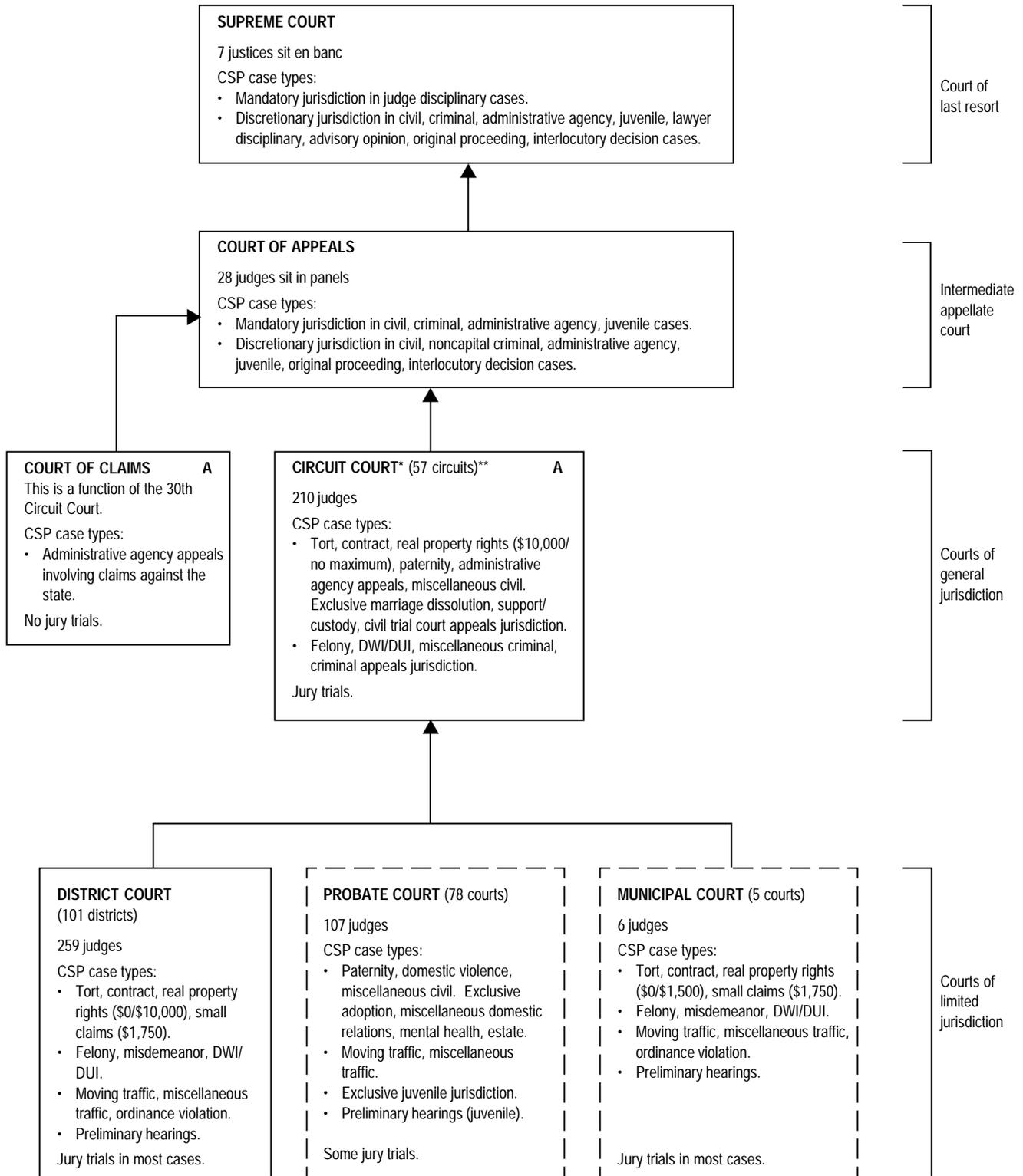


## MASSACHUSETTS COURT STRUCTURE, 1998



\* The justices also sit individually in the "single justice" side of the court, on a rotating basis.

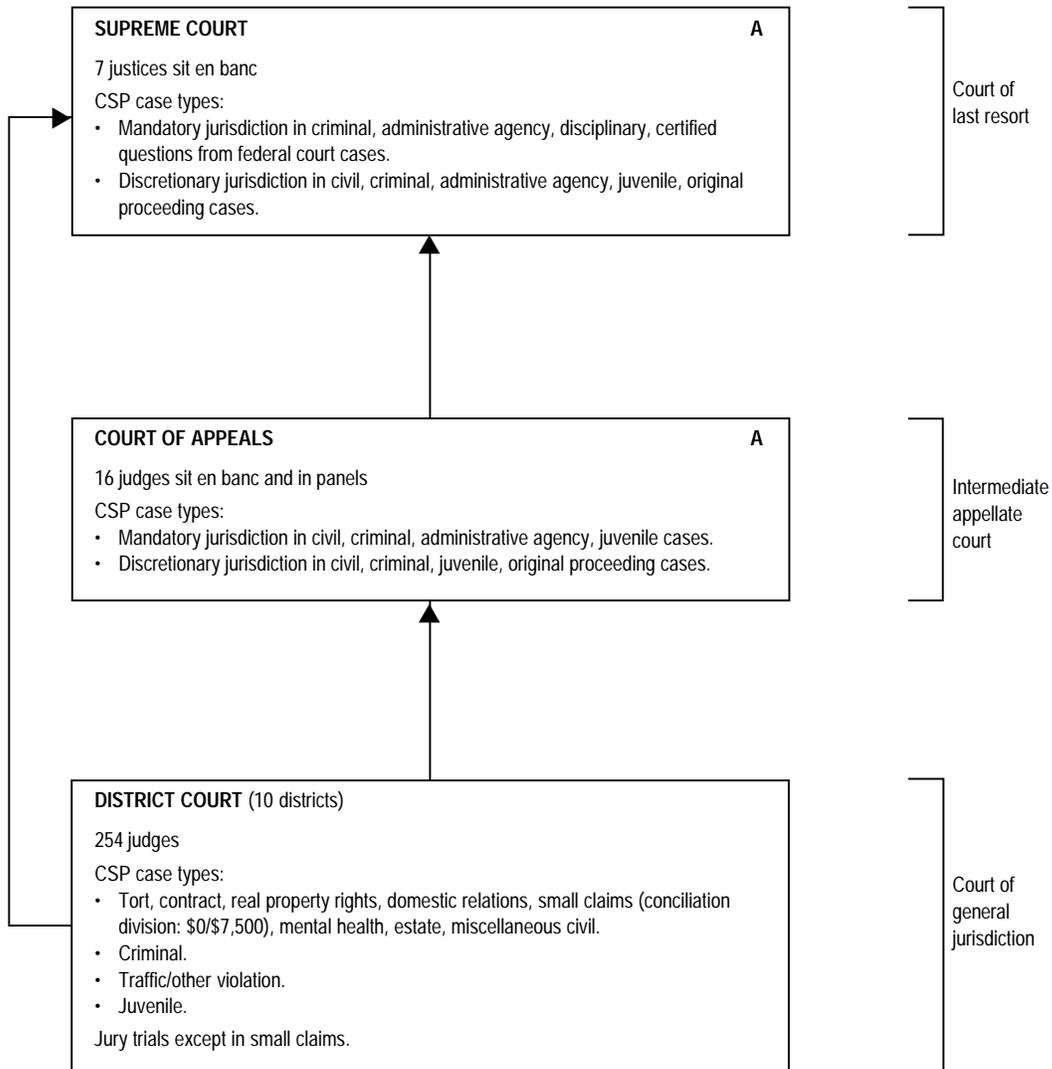
## MICHIGAN COURT STRUCTURE, 1998



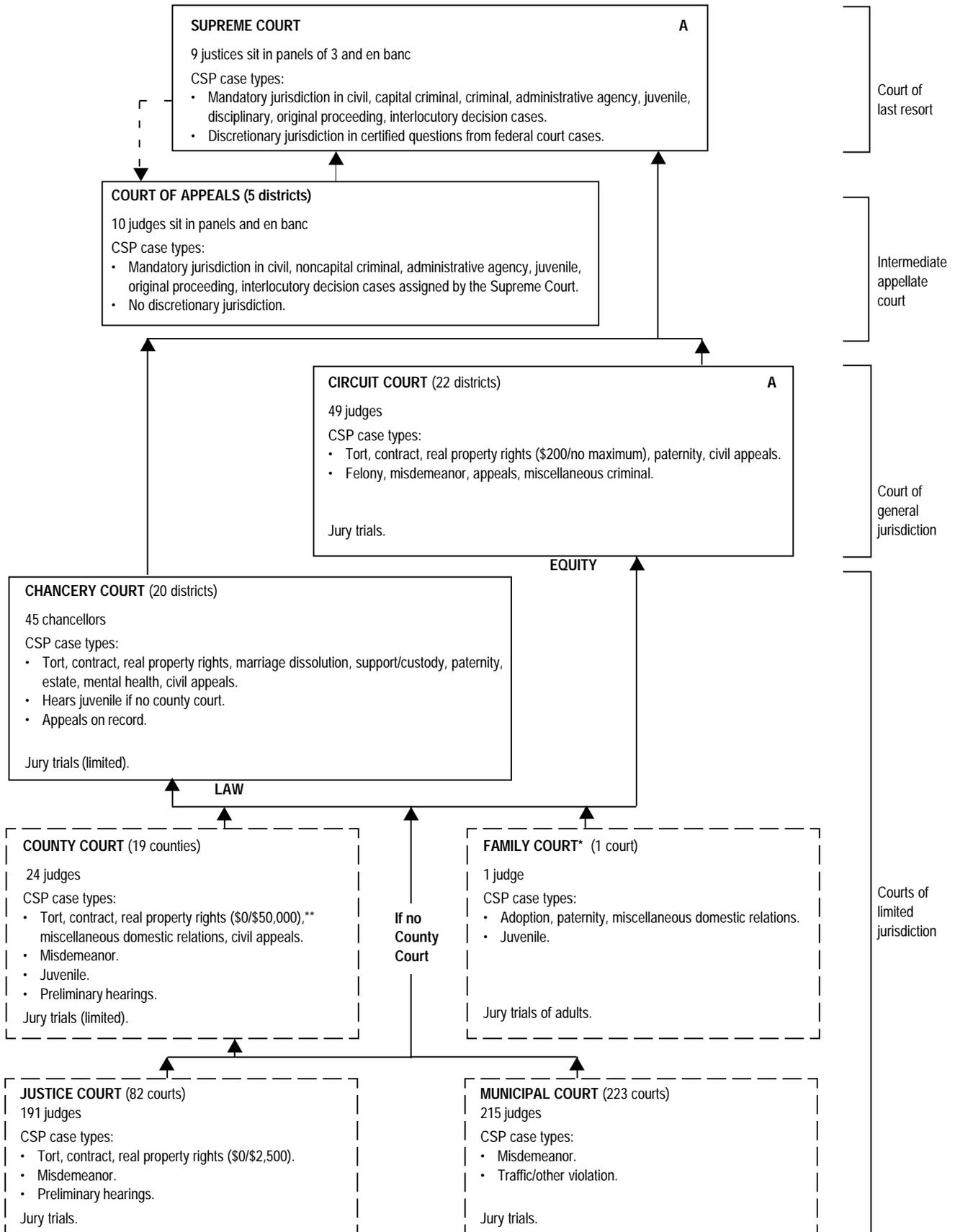
\* The Recorder's Court of Detroit merged with the Circuit Court effective October 1, 1997.

\*\* A Family Division of Circuit Court became operational on January 1, 1998.

## MINNESOTA COURT STRUCTURE, 1998



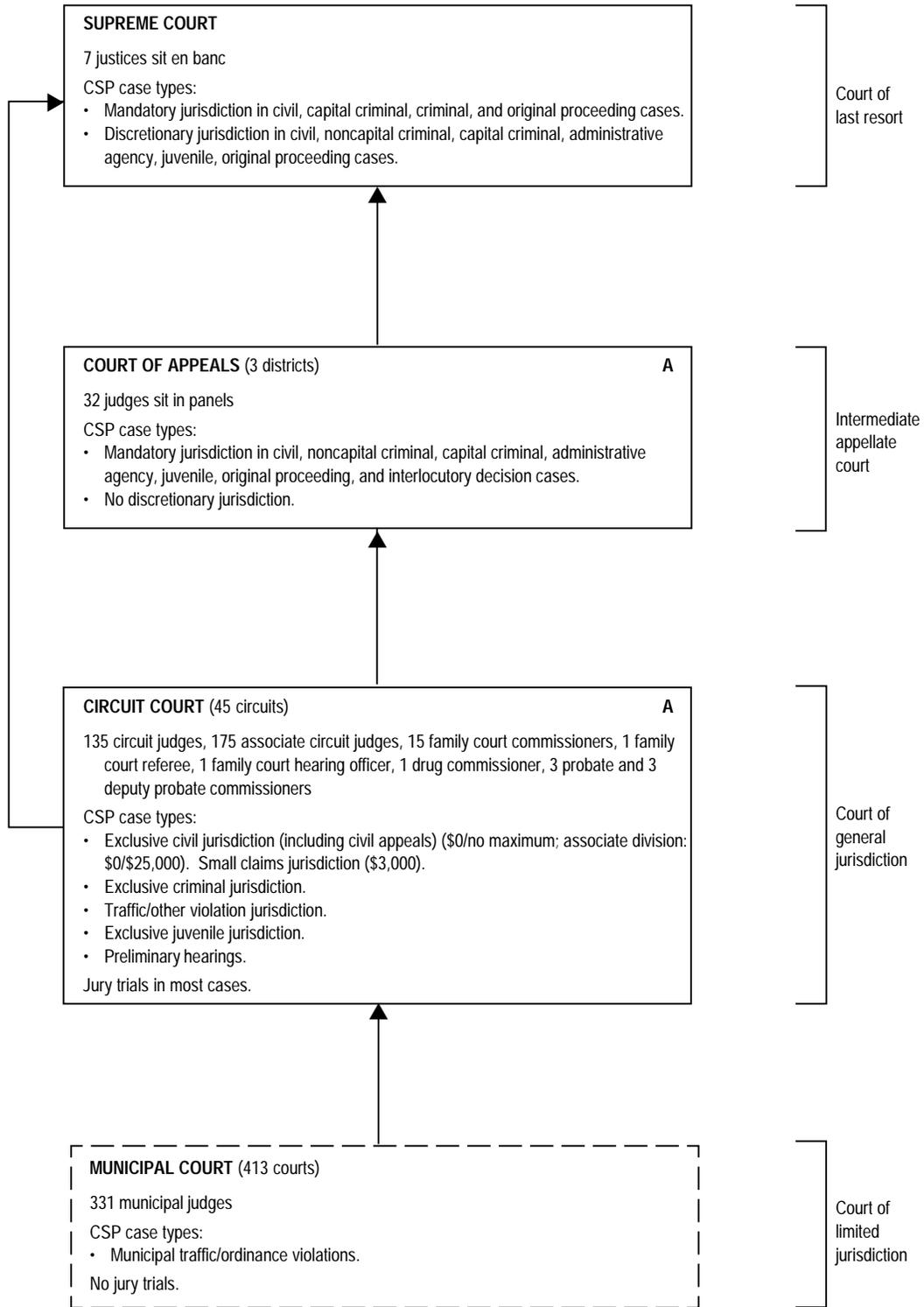
## MISSISSIPPI COURT STRUCTURE, 1998



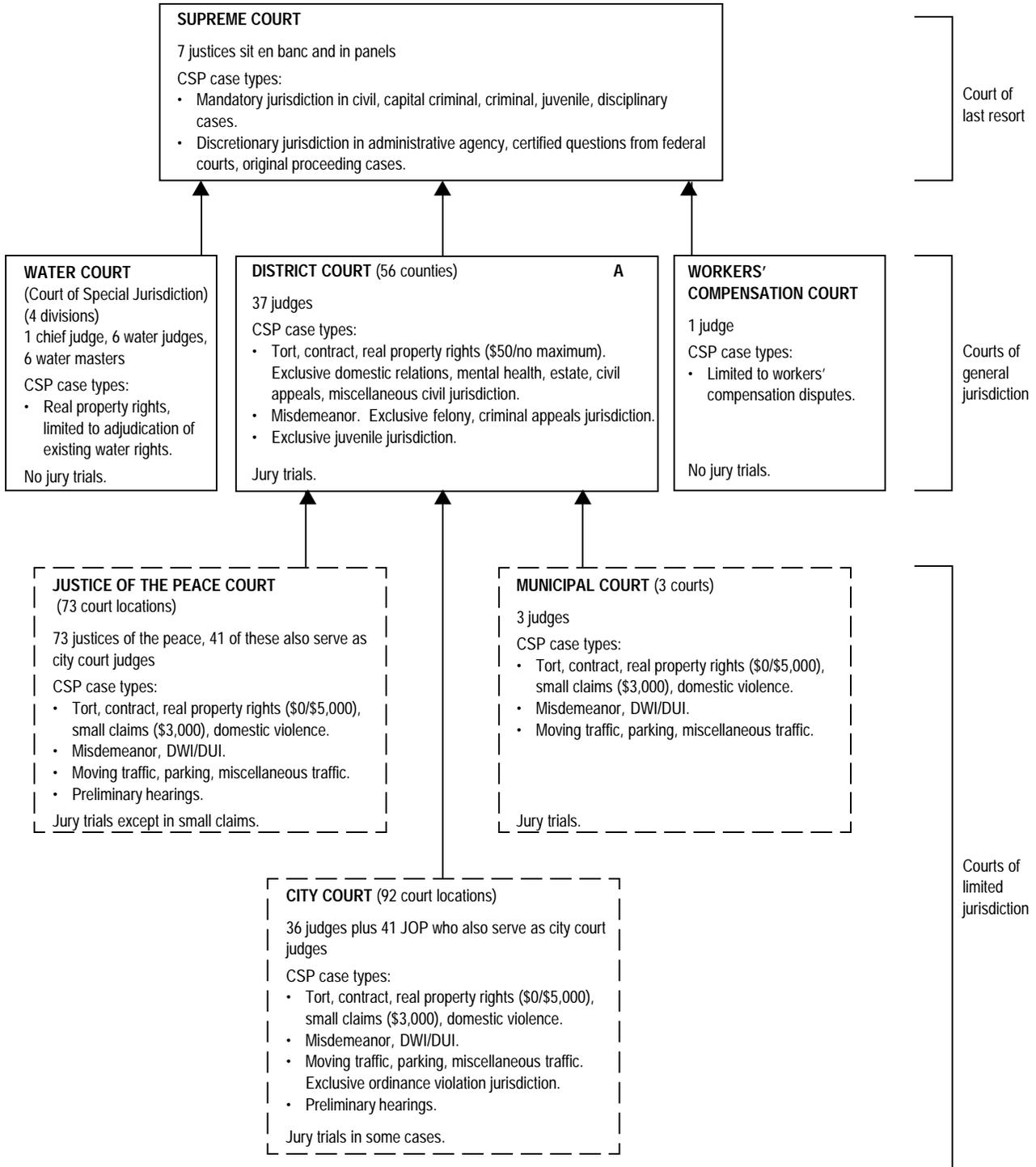
\* The Family Court will be abolished July 1, 1999 and merge into County Court.  
 \*\* Increases to \$75,000 effective July 1998.

- - Indicates assignment of cases.

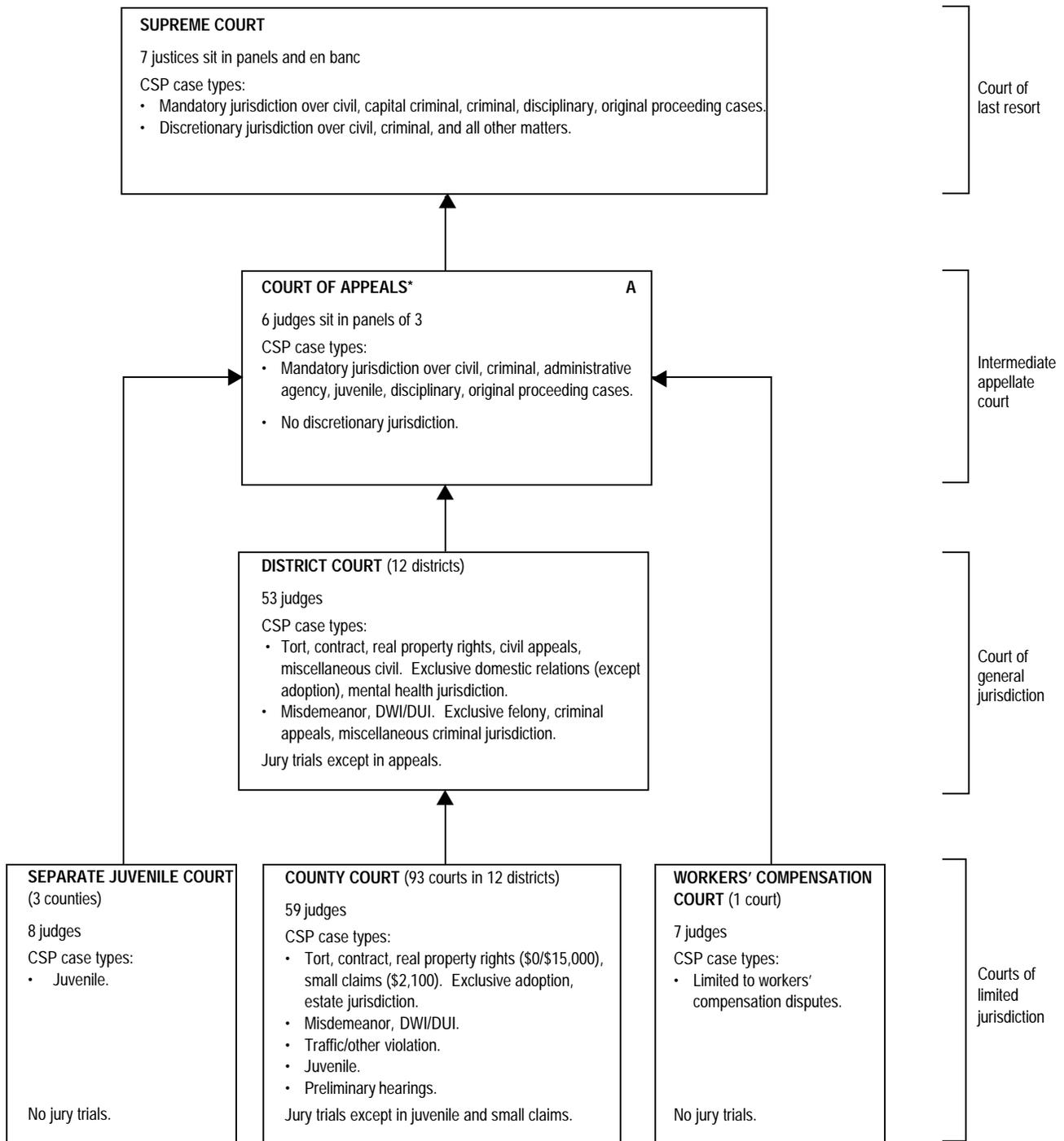
## MISSOURI COURT STRUCTURE, 1998



## MONTANA COURT STRUCTURE, 1998

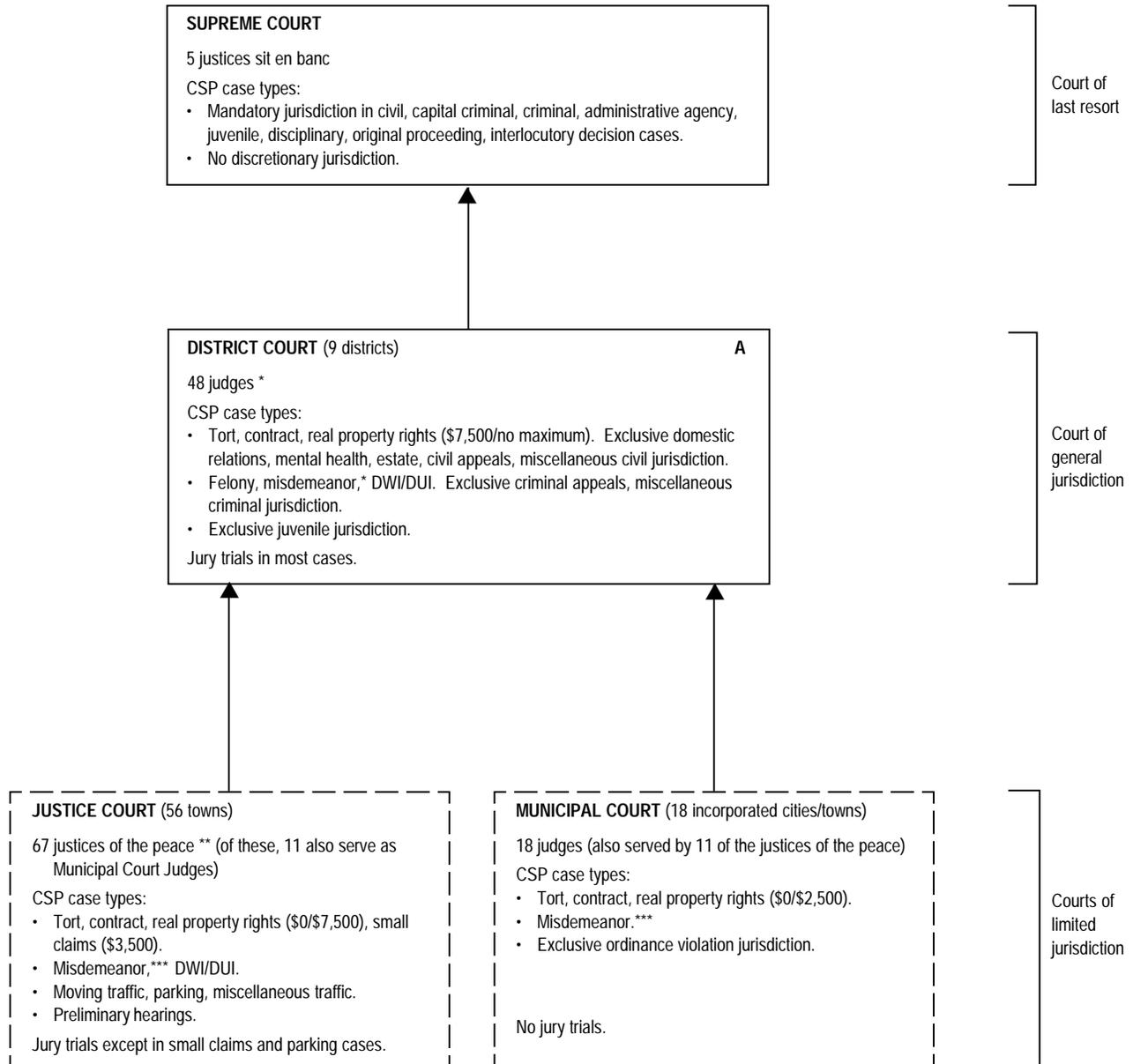


## NEBRASKA COURT STRUCTURE, 1998



\* The Nebraska Court of Appeals was established September 6, 1991.

## NEVADA COURT STRUCTURE, 1998

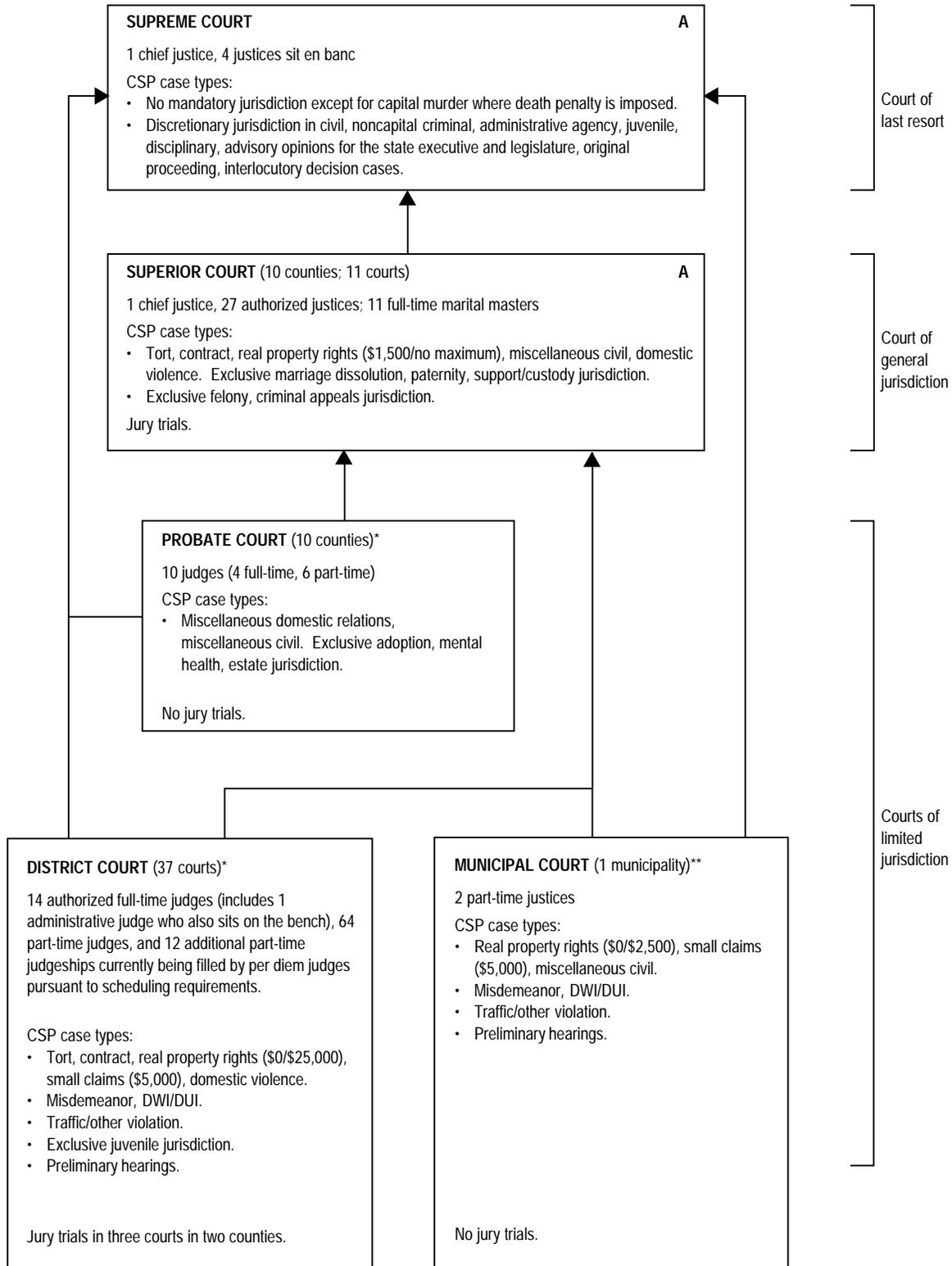


\* Increases to 51 as of 1/1/99.

\*\* Increases to 69 as of 1/1/99.

\*\*\* District Court hears gross misdemeanor cases; Justice & Municipal Courts hear misdemeanors with fines under \$1,000 and/or sentence of less than six months.

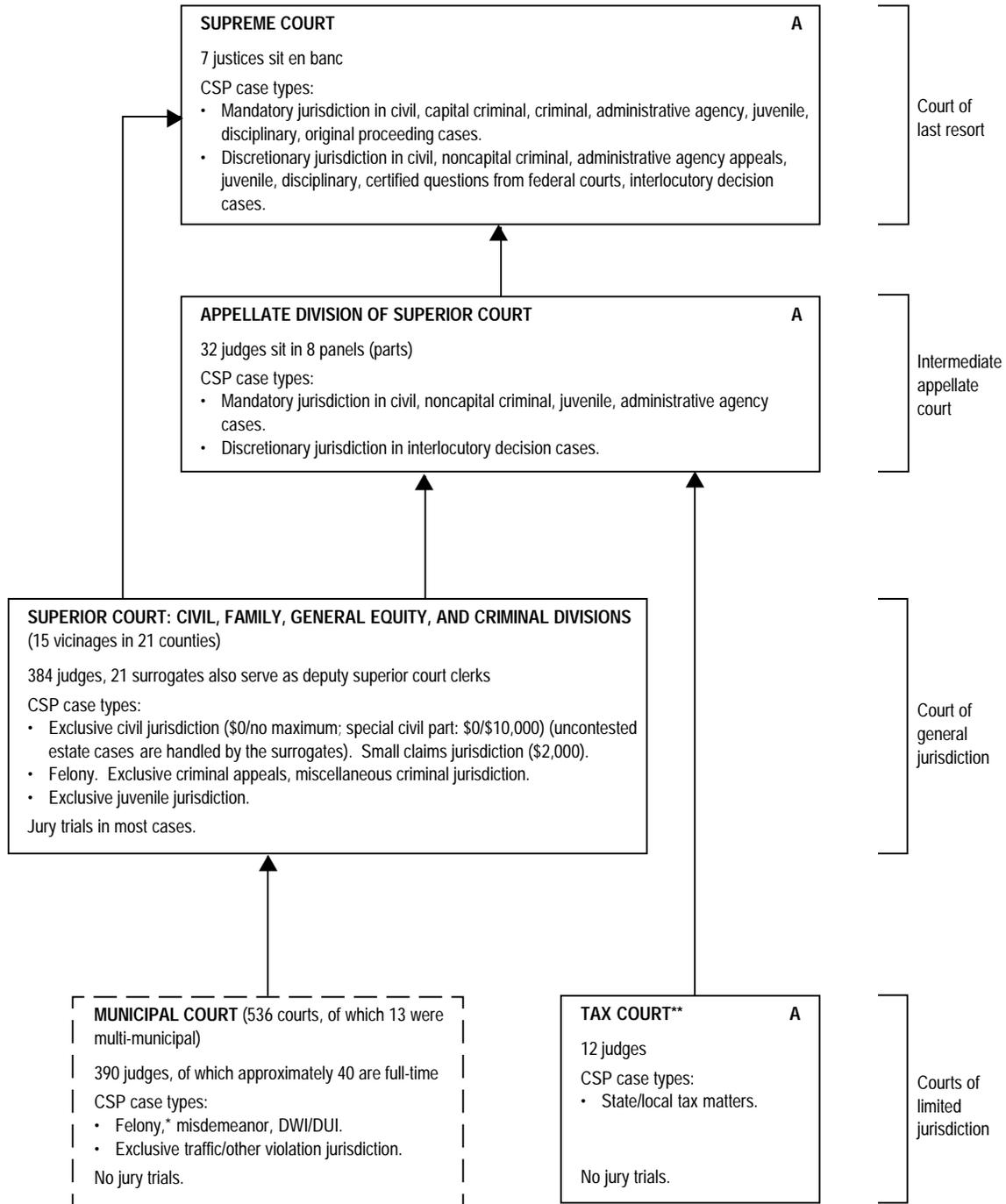
## NEW HAMPSHIRE COURT STRUCTURE, 1998



\* A Family Division Pilot Program was created by the Legislature in 1995 and operates in six district courts and two probate courts.

\*\* The municipal court is being phased out (by statute) upon retirement and/or resignation of sitting justices.

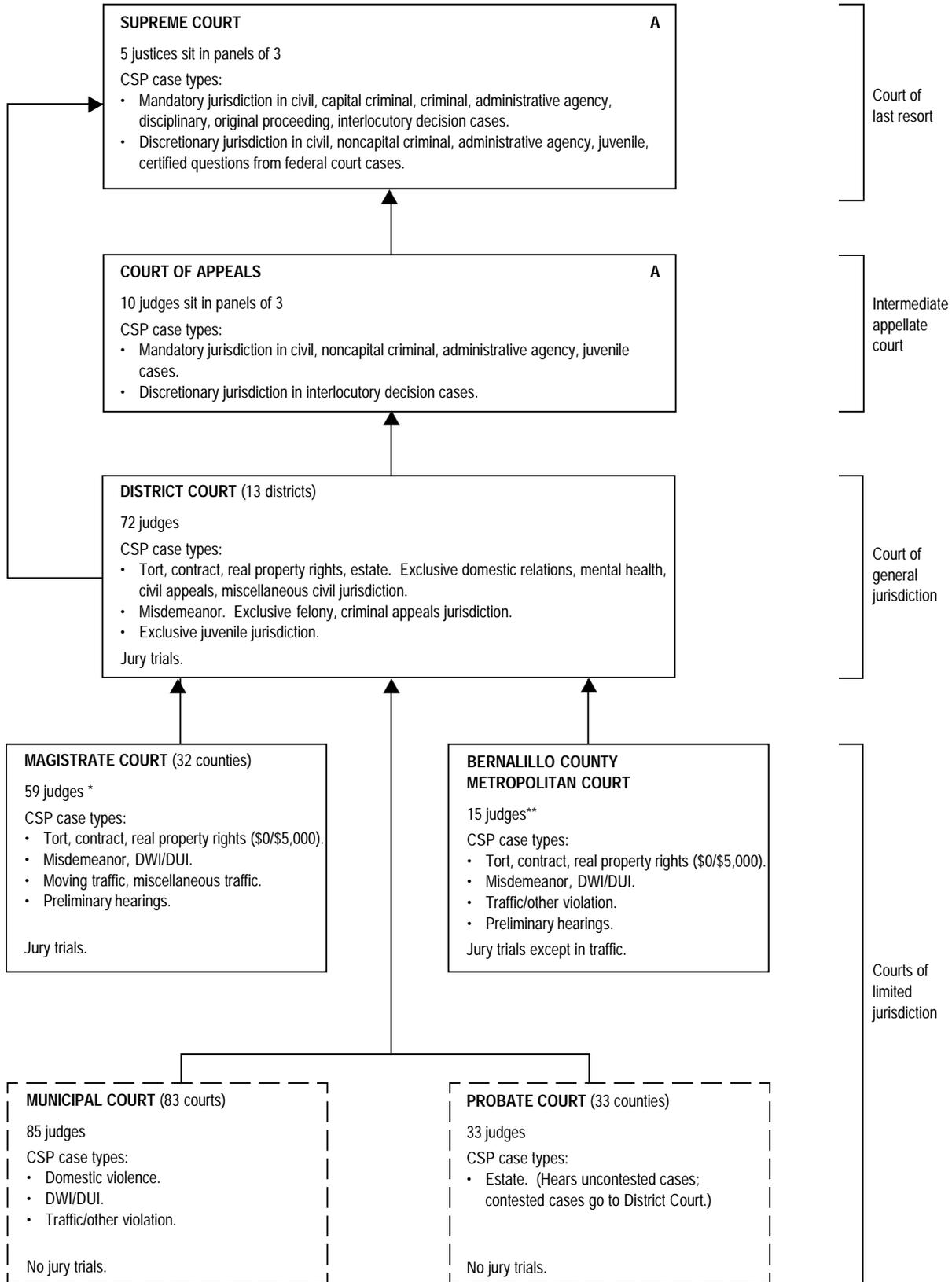
## NEW JERSEY COURT STRUCTURE, 1998



\* Felony cases are handled on first appearance in the Municipal Courts and then are transferred through the county Prosecutor's office to the Superior Court.

\*\* Tax court is considered a limited jurisdiction court because of its specialized subject matter. Nevertheless, it receives appeals from administrative bodies and its cases are appealed to the intermediate appellate court. Tax court judges have the same general qualifications and terms of service as superior court judges and can be cross assigned.

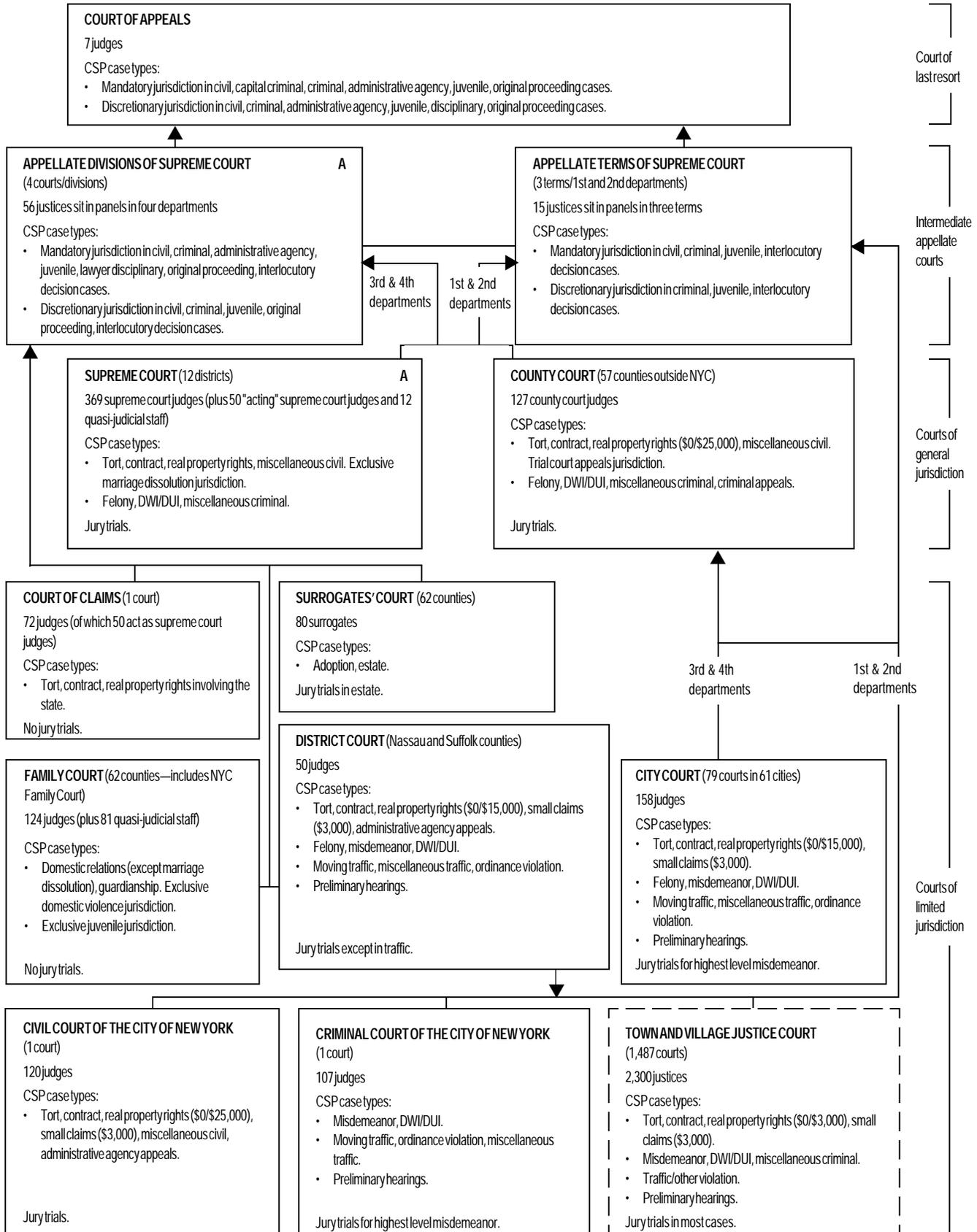
## NEW MEXICO COURT STRUCTURE, 1998



\* Increases to 61 judges as of 7/1/99.

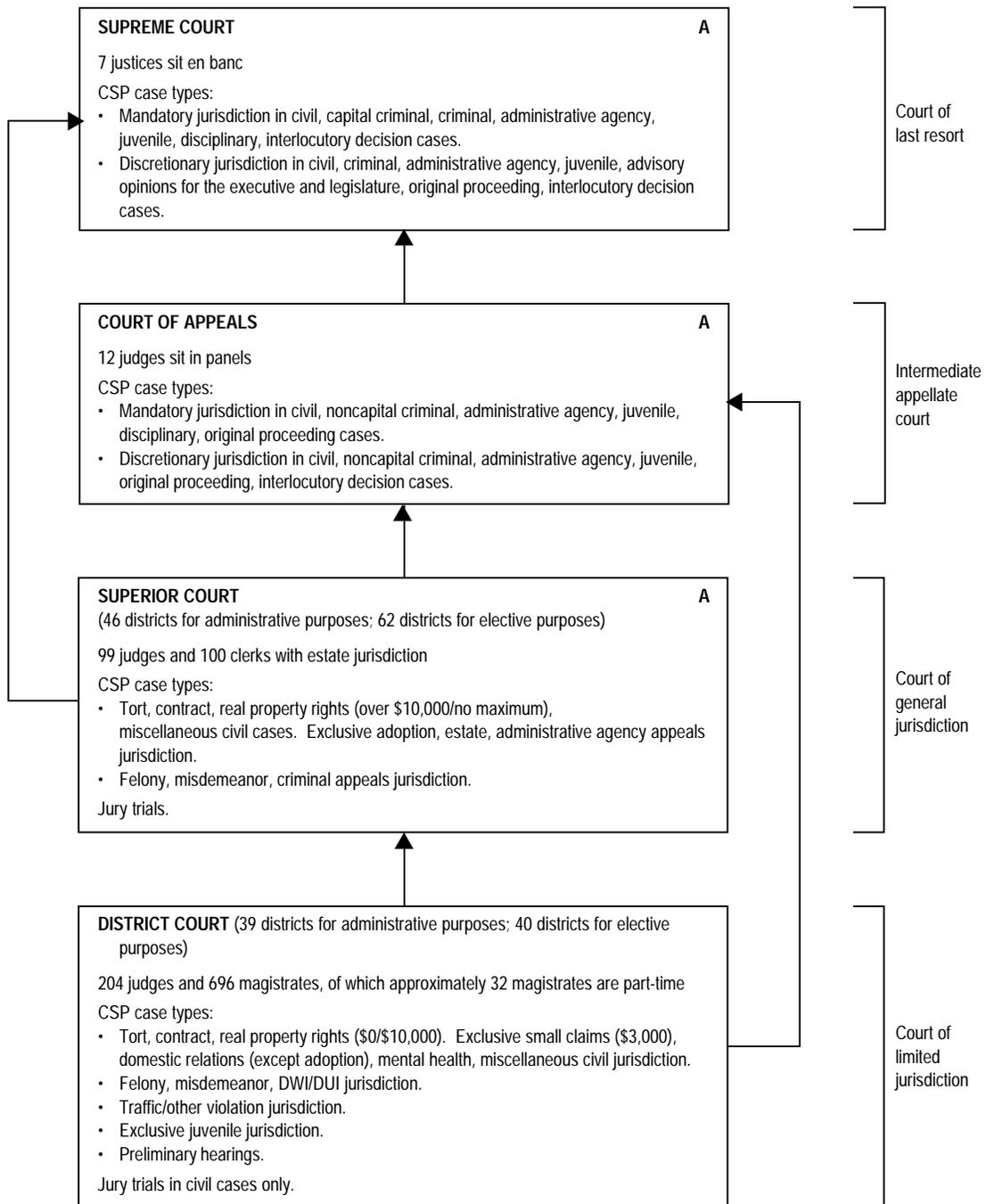
\*\* Increases to 16 judges as of 7/1/99.

## NEW YORK COURT STRUCTURE, 1998\*

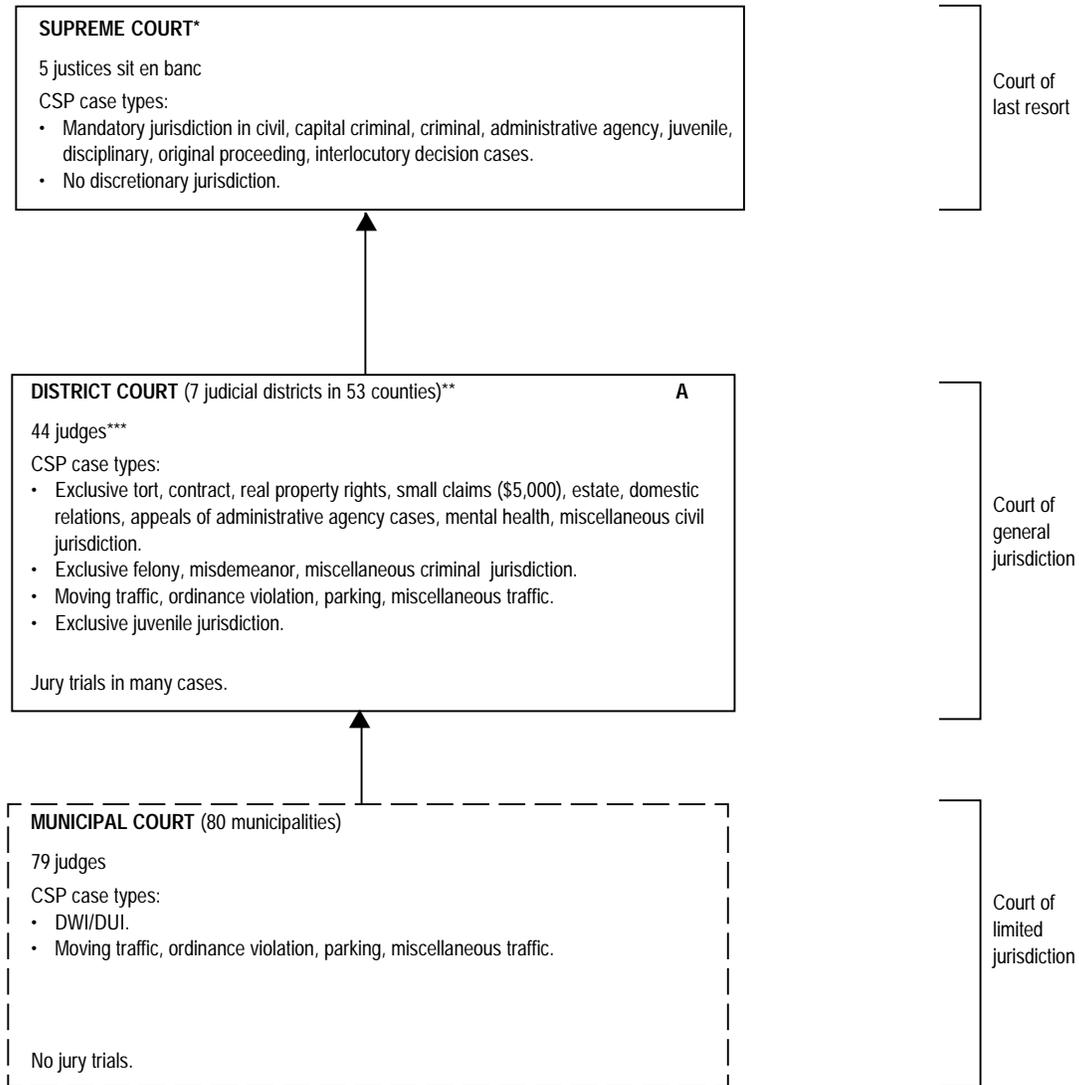


\* Unless otherwise noted, numbers reflect statutory authorization. Many judges sit in more than one court so the number of judgeships indicated in this chart does not reflect the actual number of judges in the system.

## NORTH CAROLINA COURT STRUCTURE, 1998



## NORTH DAKOTA COURT STRUCTURE, 1998

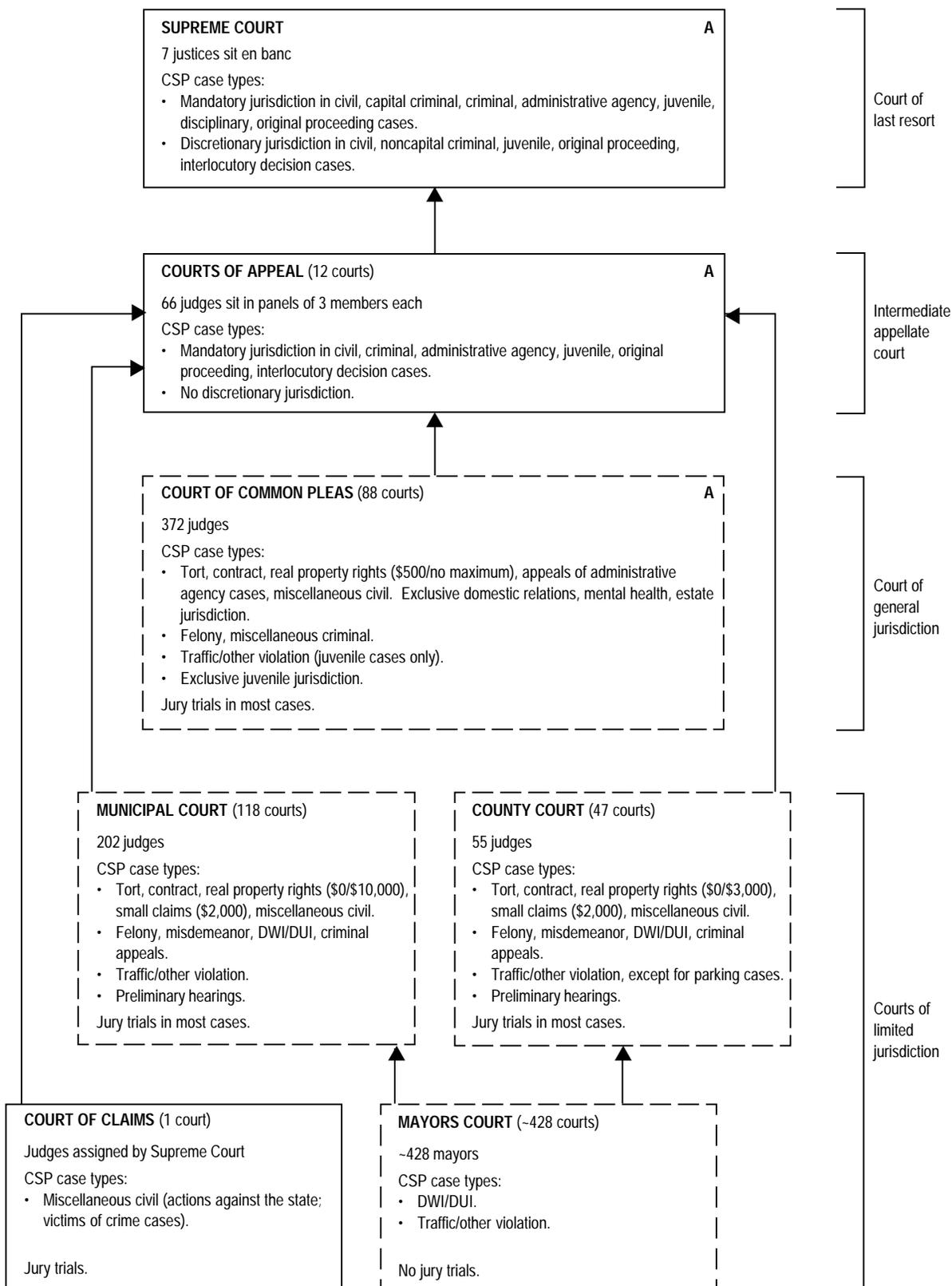


\* A temporary court of appeals was established July 1, 1987, to exercise appellate and original jurisdiction as delegated by the supreme court. This court does not sit, has no assigned judges, and has heard no appeals. It is currently unfunded.

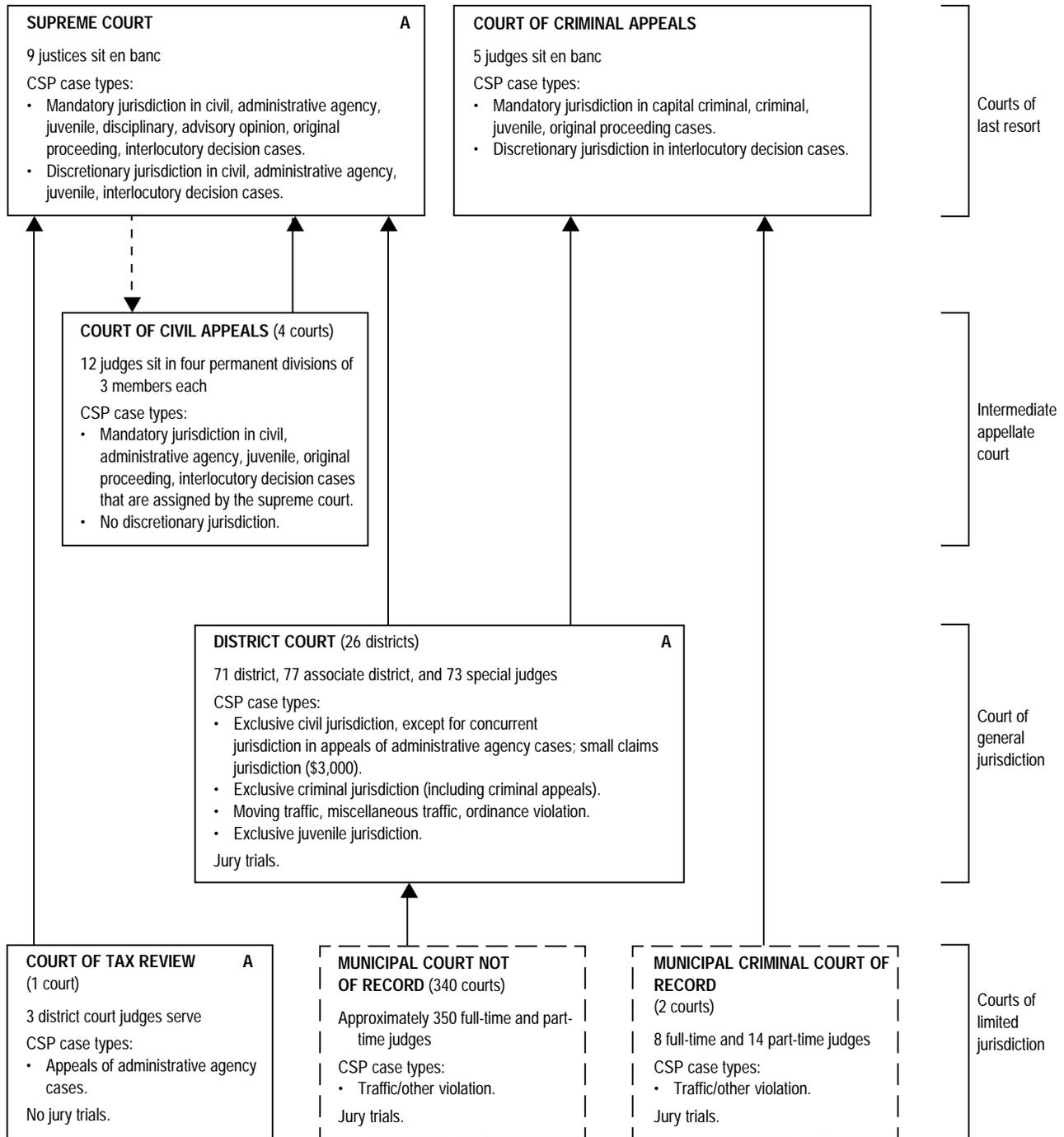
\*\* County Courts were abolished January 1, 1995, with the workload and positions absorbed into the District Court structure.

\*\*\* Number of authorized judges drops to 43 effective 1/1/99, and must be reduced to 42 by the year 2001.

## OHIO COURT STRUCTURE, 1998



## OKLAHOMA COURT STRUCTURE, 1998

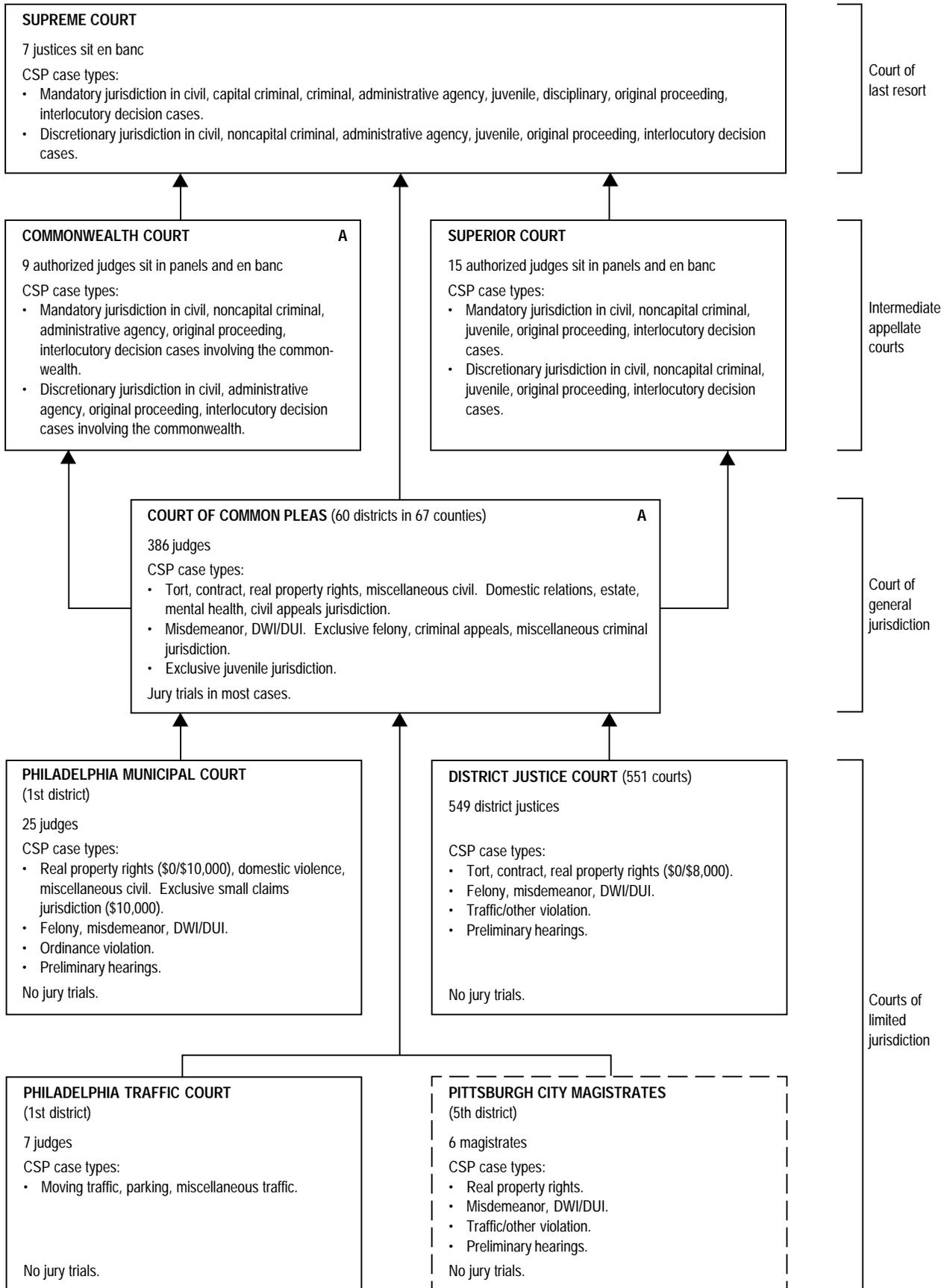


- - Indicates assignment of cases.

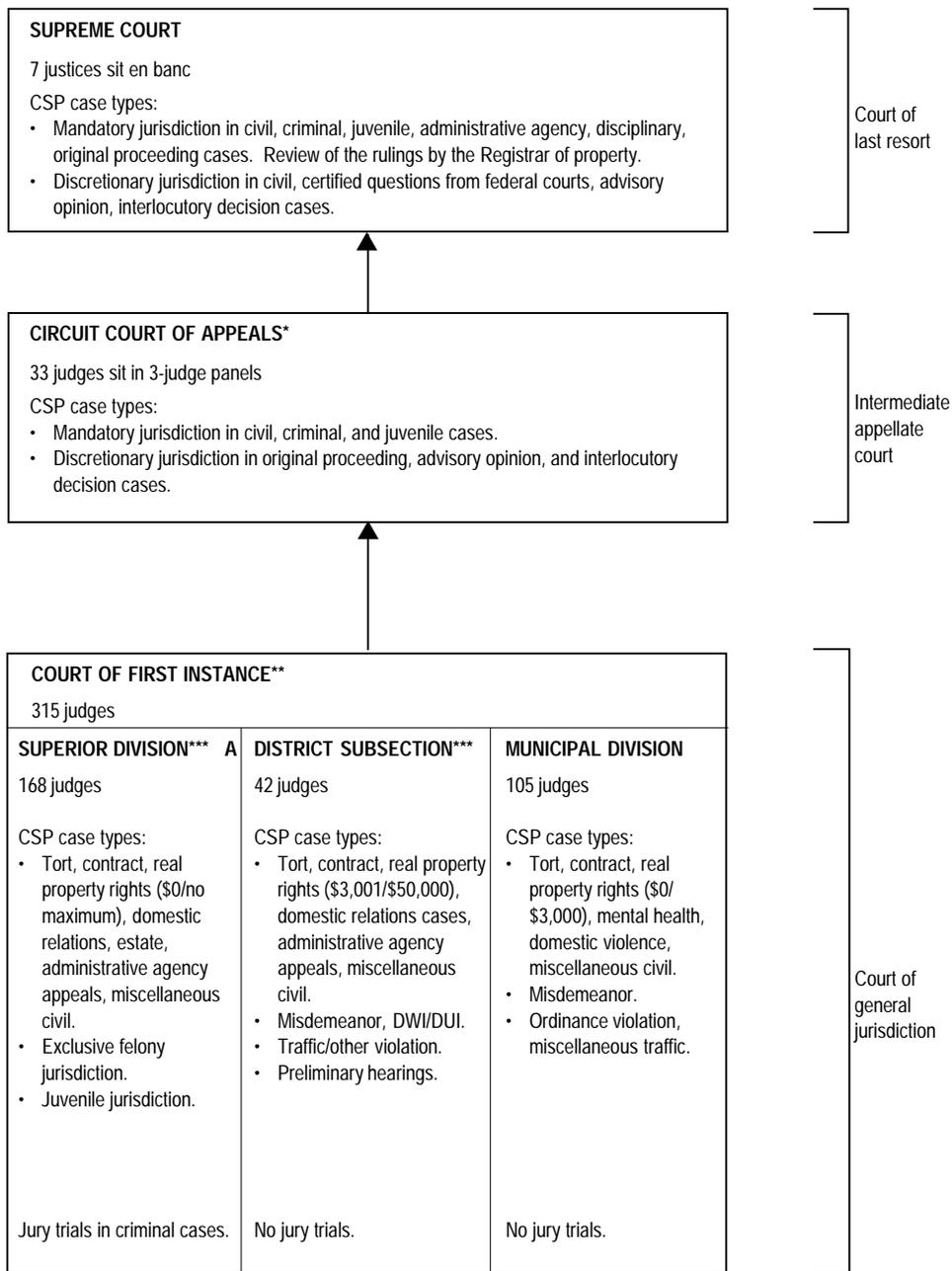
Note: Oklahoma has a workers' compensation court, which hears complaints that are handled exclusively by administrative agencies in other states.



## PENNSYLVANIA COURT STRUCTURE, 1998



## PUERTO RICO COURT STRUCTURE, 1998

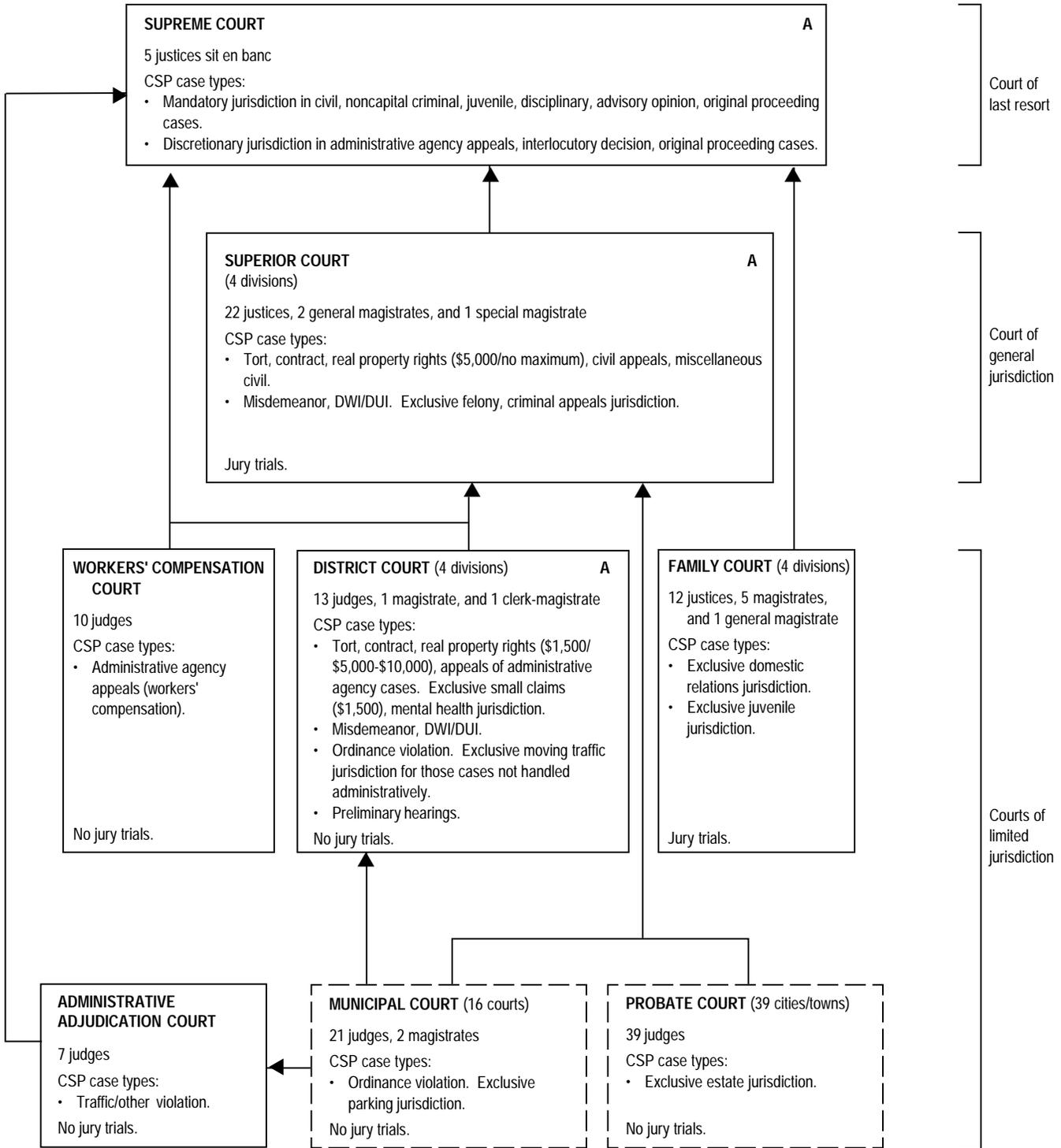


\*Created July 28, 1994; operational January 1, 1995.

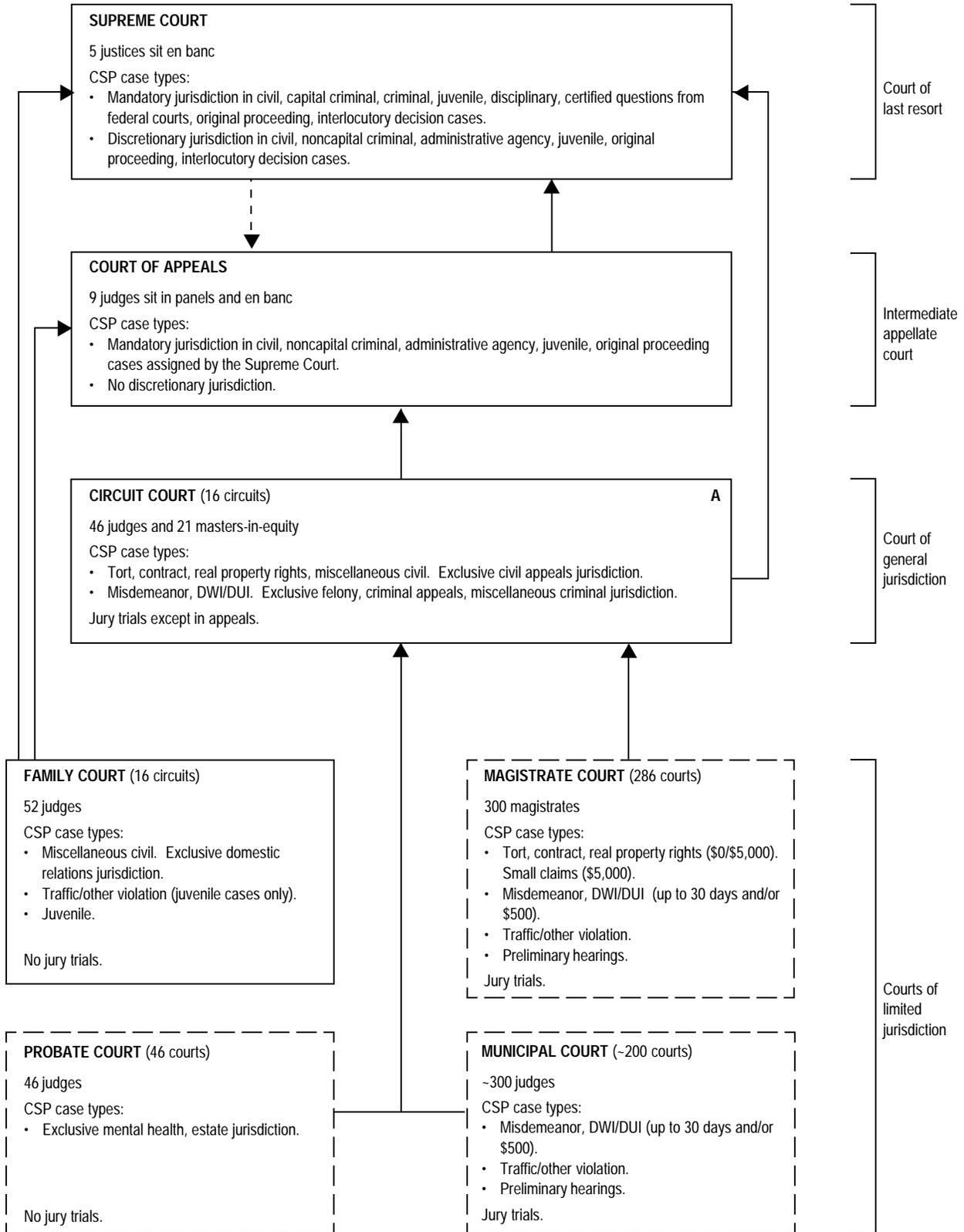
\*\*Created in 1994; operational in 1995.

\*\*\*The Judicial Reform Act of 1994 establishes the eventual abolition of the District Subsection. The Superior Division has concurrent jurisdiction with the District Subsection during the process of its abolition.

## RHODE ISLAND COURT STRUCTURE, 1998

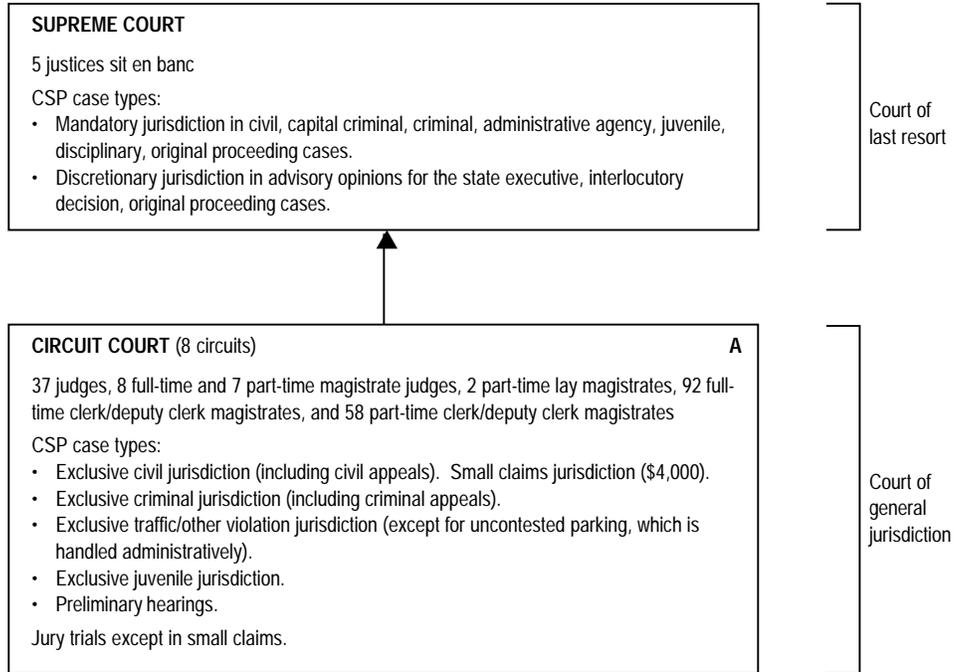


## SOUTH CAROLINA COURT STRUCTURE, 1998

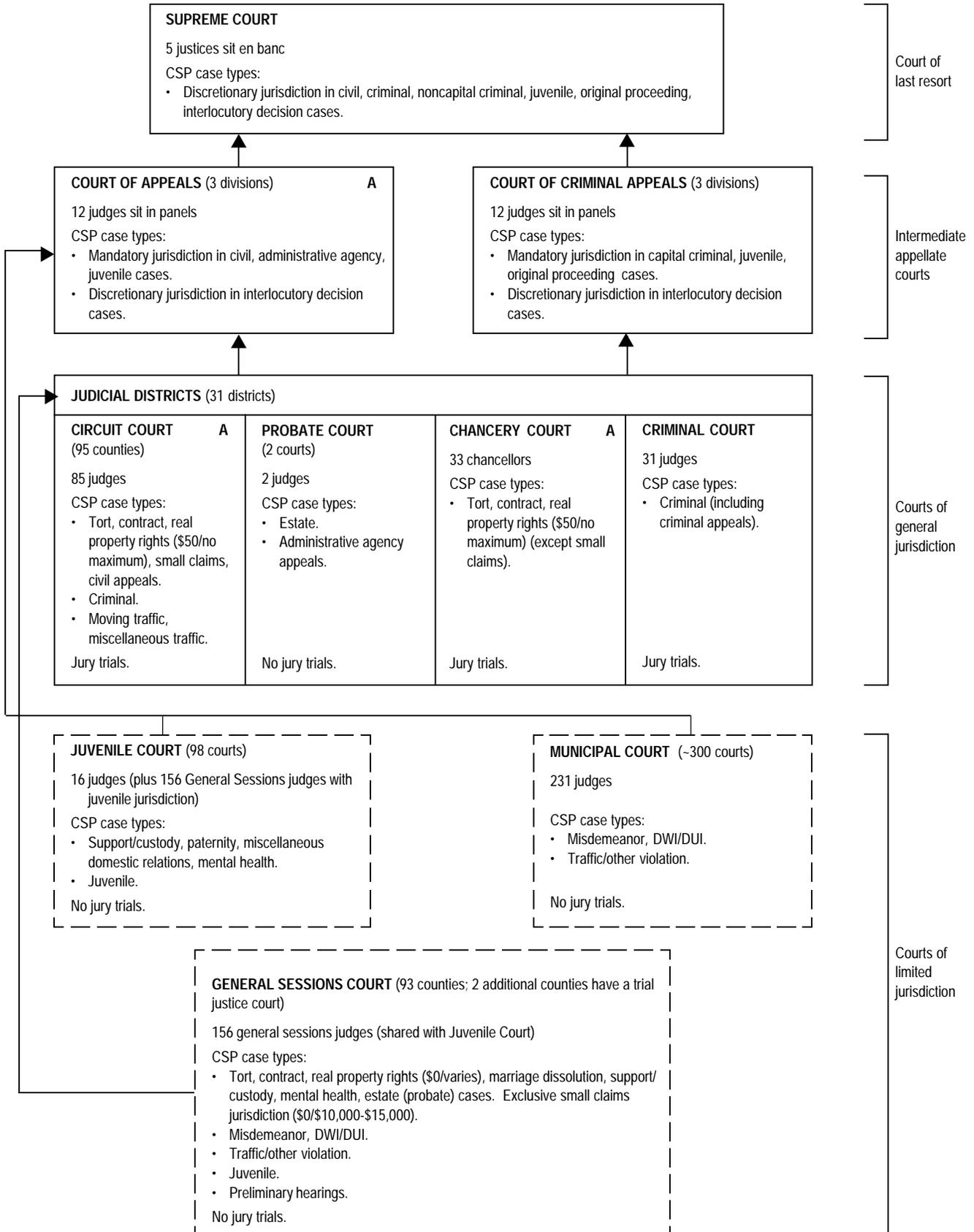


— — Indicates assignment of cases.

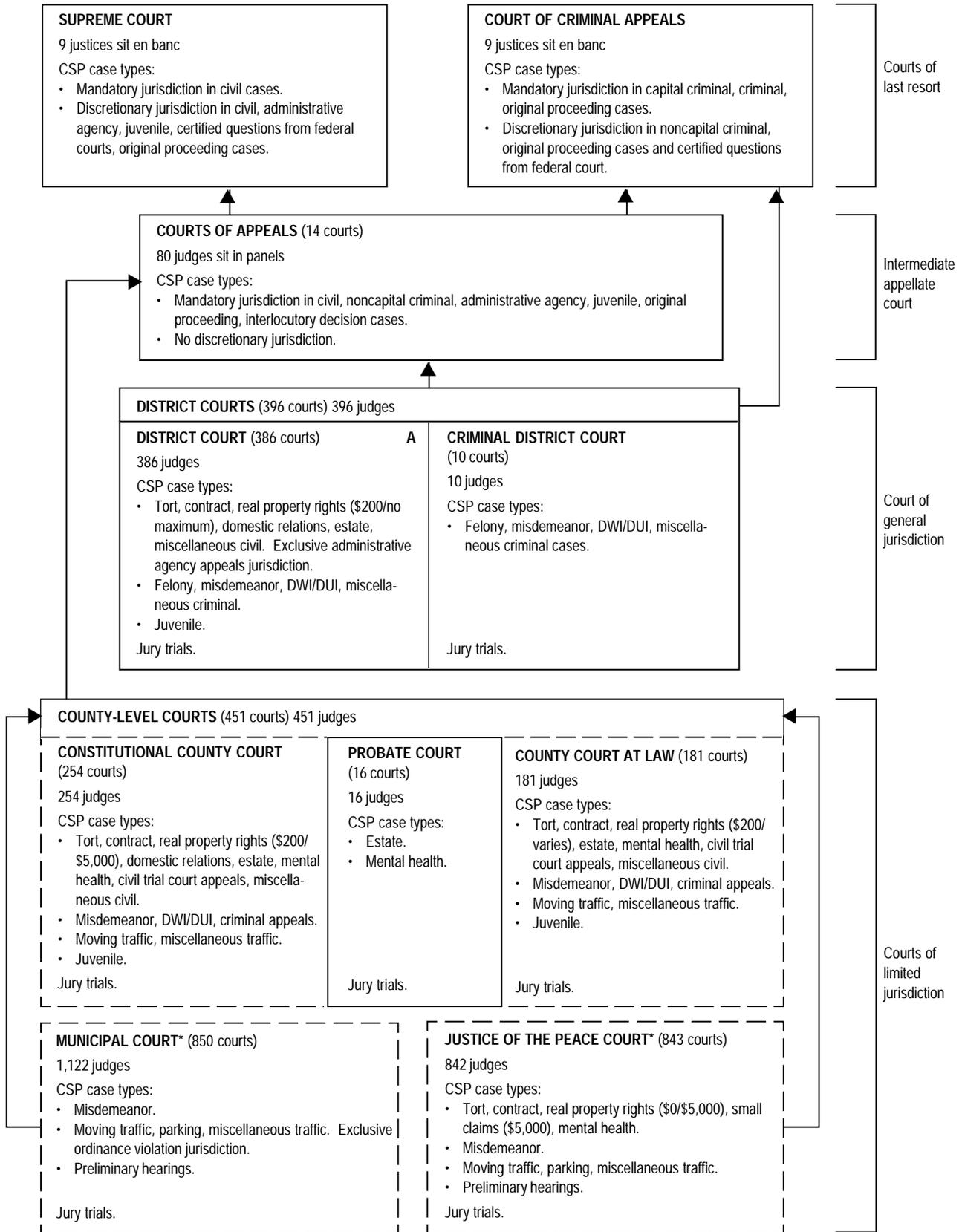
## SOUTH DAKOTA COURT STRUCTURE, 1998



## TENNESSEE COURT STRUCTURE, 1998

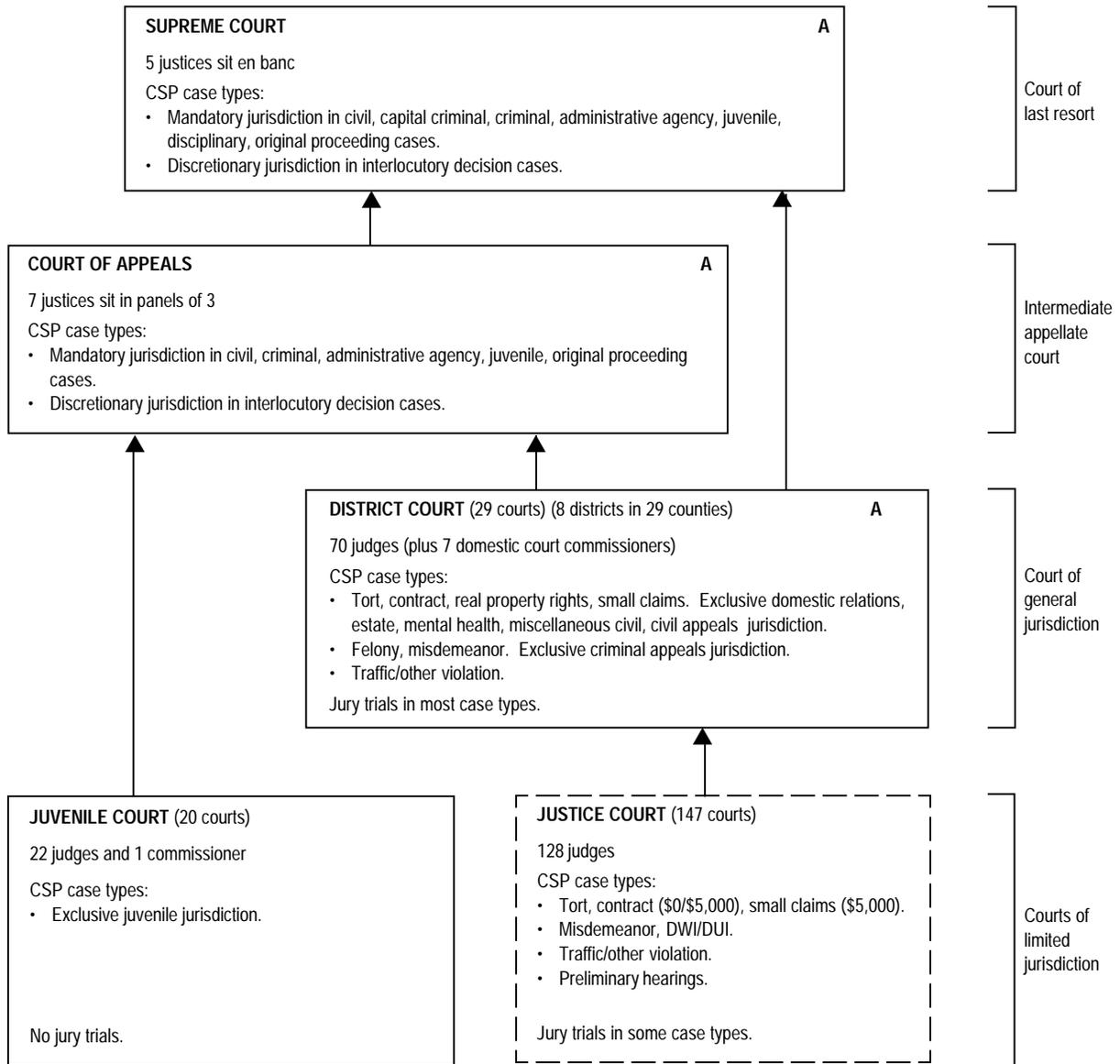


## TEXAS COURT STRUCTURE, 1998

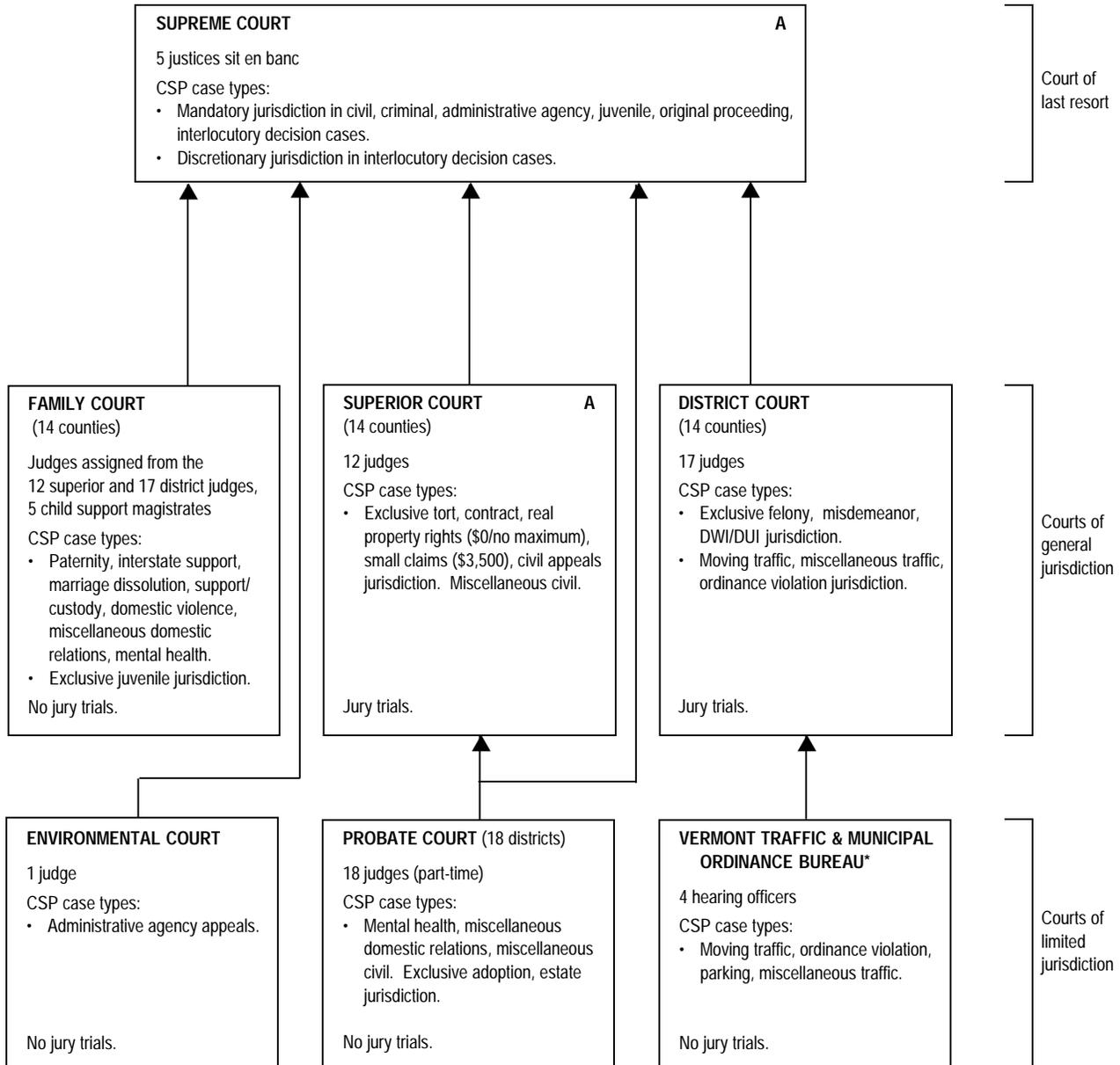


\* Some municipal and justice of the peace courts may appeal to the district court.

## UTAH COURT STRUCTURE, 1998



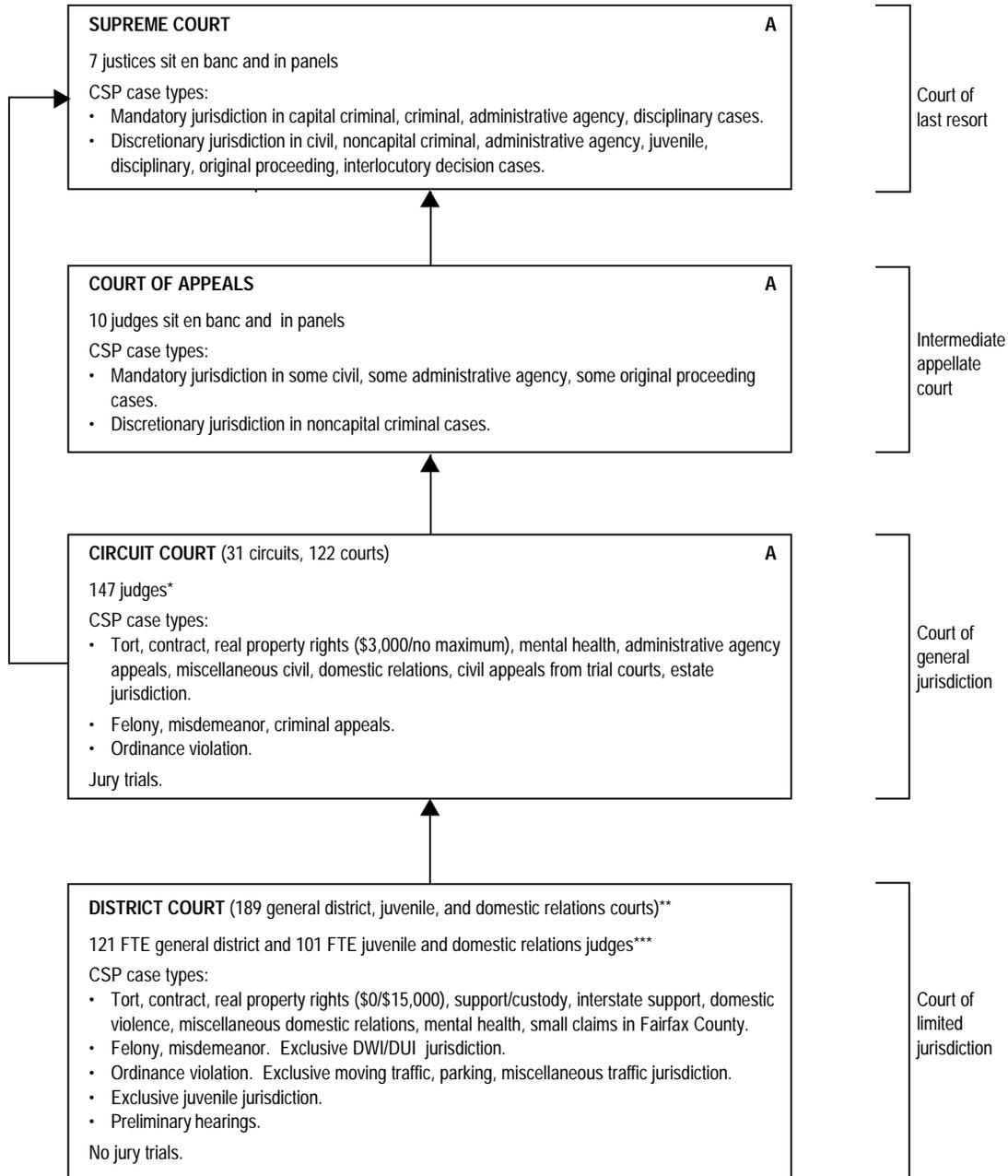
## VERMONT COURT STRUCTURE, 1998



\* Renamed VERMONT JUDICIAL BUREAU as of 7/1/98.

Note: An additional 28 assistant judges participate in findings of fact in Superior and Family Court cases. Some assistant judges, after special training, may hear small claims cases and traffic complaints, conduct criminal arraignments, and decide child support, parentage, and uncontested divorce proceedings. These assistant judges (who need not be attorneys) are elected to four-year terms by voters in Vermont's 14 counties.

## VIRGINIA COURT STRUCTURE, 1998

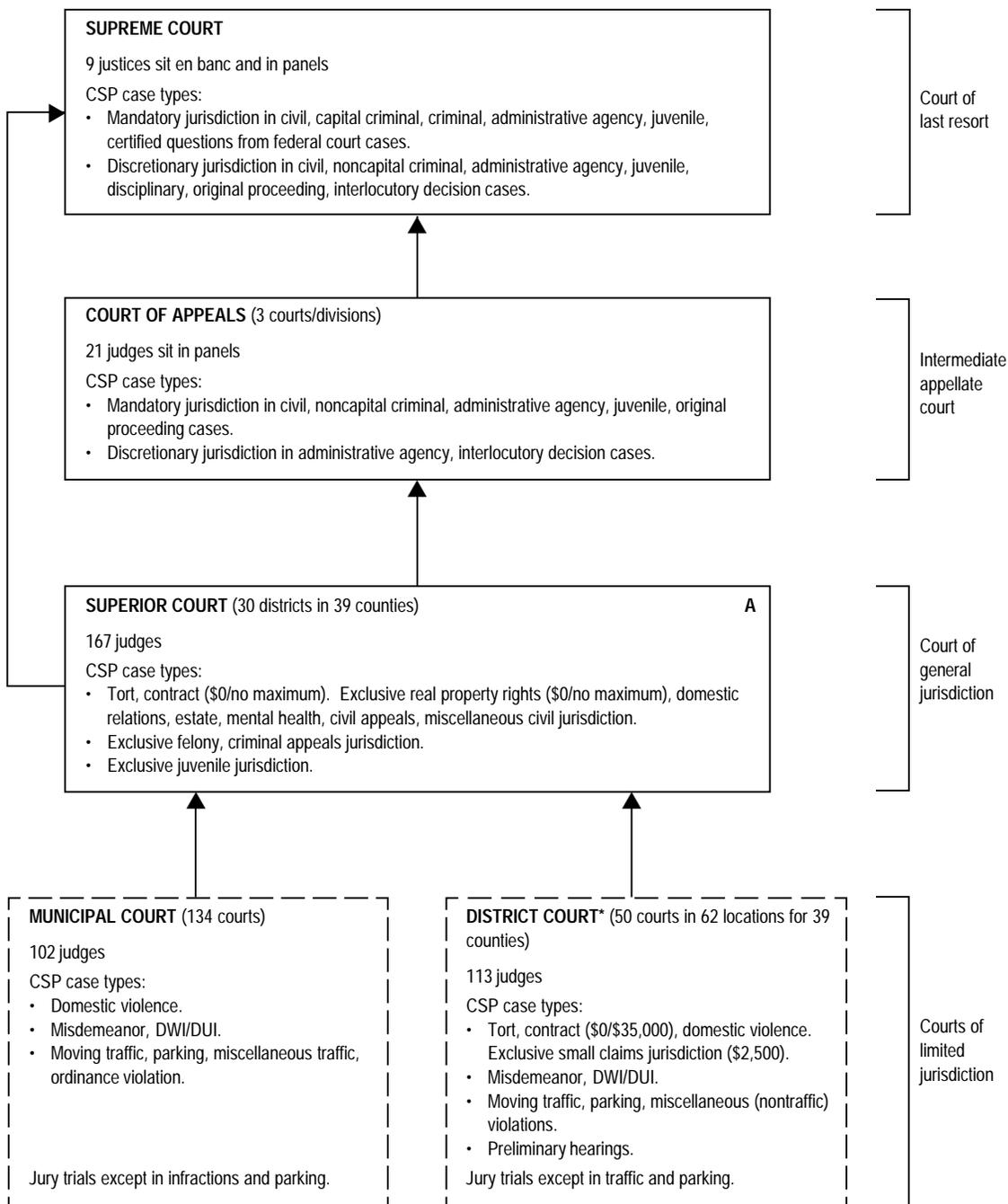


\* Increases to 148 effective July 1, 1999.

\*\* The district court is referred to as the juvenile and domestic relations court when hearing juvenile and domestic relations cases and as the general district court for the balance of the cases.

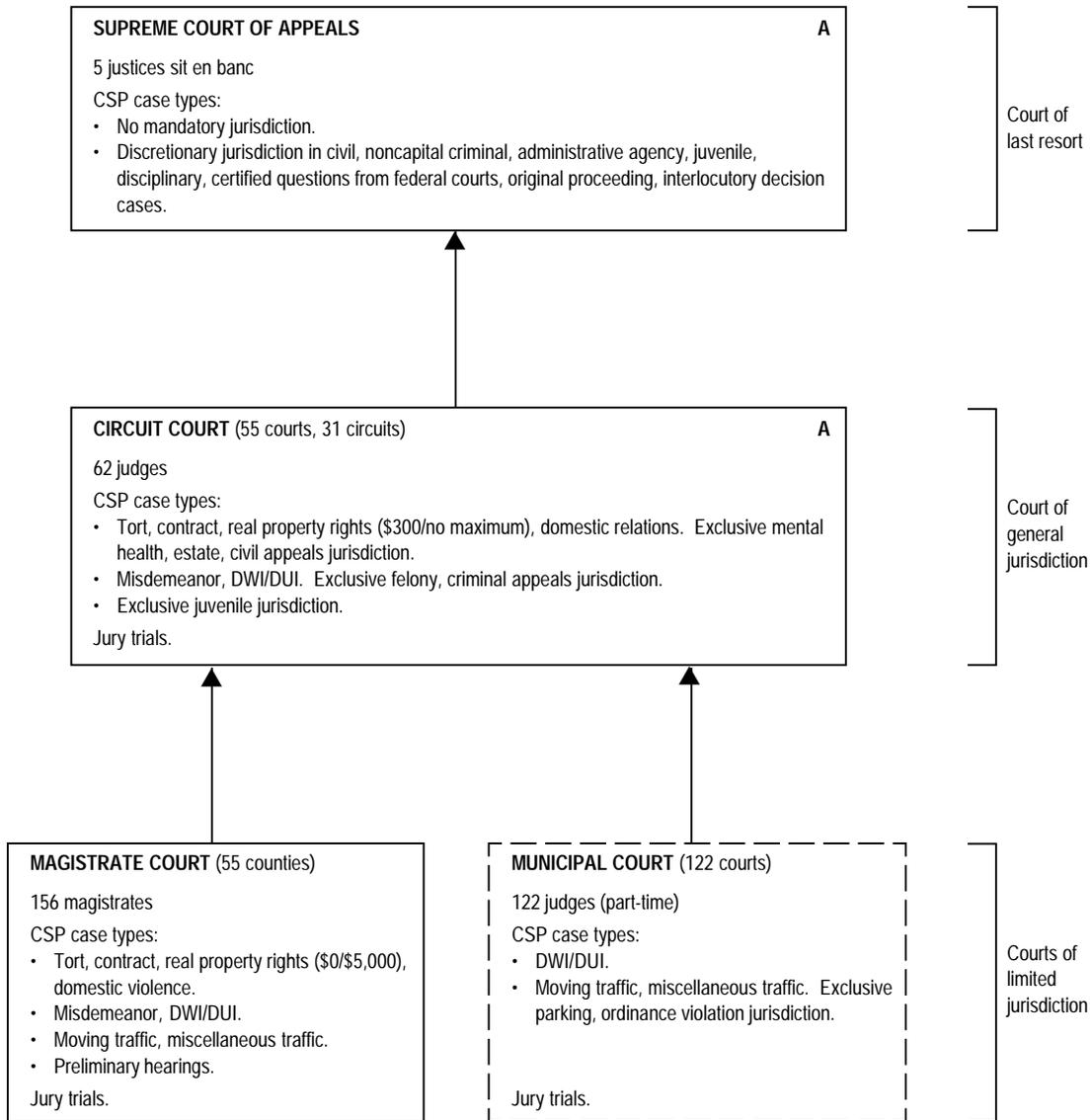
\*\*\* Increases to 122 general district and 107 juvenile and domestic relations judges effective July 1, 1999.

## WASHINGTON COURT STRUCTURE, 1998

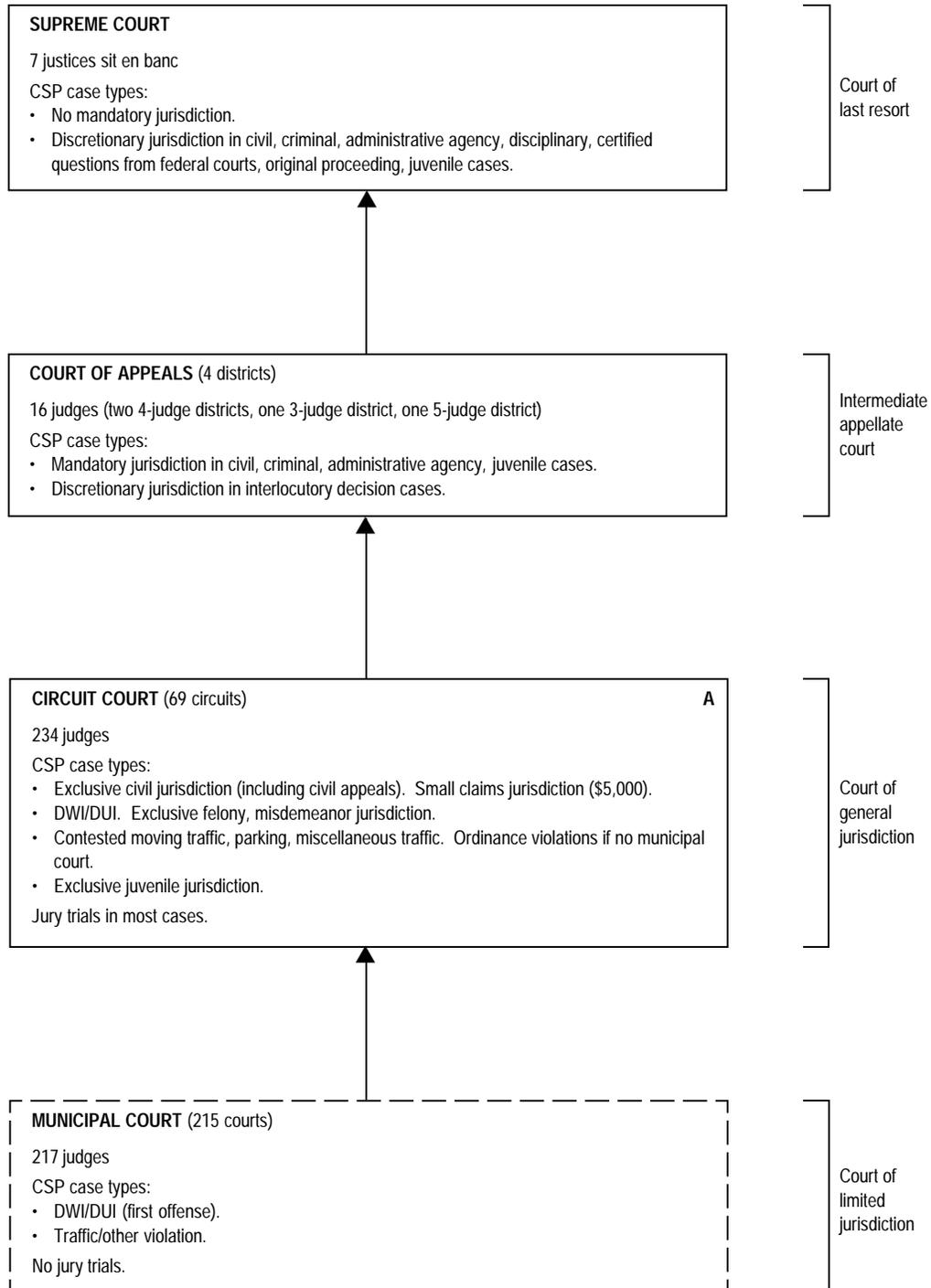


\* District court provides services to municipalities that do not have a municipal court.

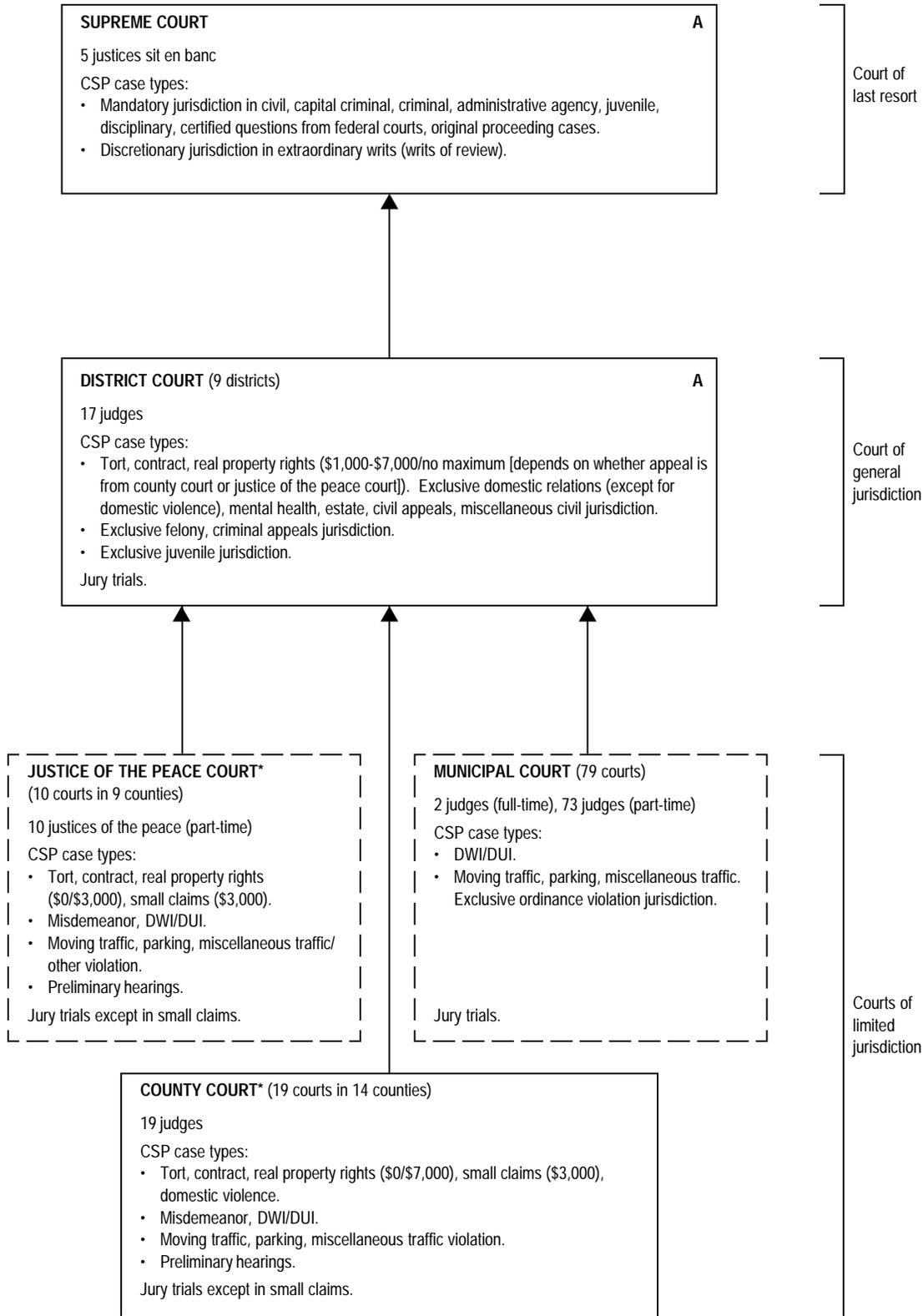
## WEST VIRGINIA COURT STRUCTURE, 1998



## WISCONSIN COURT STRUCTURE, 1998



## WYOMING COURT STRUCTURE, 1998



\* Effective 1/1/99, two of the Justice of the Peace Courts will become County Courts.

