

# Medical Lake court stats show fewer filings in 2008, despite increase in non-traffic cases

By CARA LORELLO  
Staff Reporter for Cheney Free Press

Medical Lake Municipal Court filings were down last year from where they were in 2007, according to statistics prepared by staff and presented by presiding judge Richard Kayne to Medical Lake City Council on March 17.

Statistics on filings are presented once a year to look at some of the trends in filings and cases the court handles. In 2008 the city handled a total of 501 municipal court cases, the lowest in four years, according to statistics.

In addition to a drop in total filings, Kayne said criminal non-traffic cases have gone up between 10 and 15 percent. These include cases for domestic violence.

"That's pretty significant. We handle many domestic violence cases in court each week," Kayne said.

The city's free domestic violence advocacy program, adopted in 2006 through a rural outreach service through the Spokane YWCA, was dropped late last year after budget cuts forced cutbacks in staff. The court liaison that helped connect victims of domestic violence with support resources through YWCA, Kayne said, is temporarily unavailable, but the city hopes to get another advocate back soon, if possible.

Domestic violence cases have the highest frequency of non-traffic criminal offenses in Medical Lake.

City attorney Cindy McMullen said grant funds are available through other sources that could be used to obtain a court liaison to help with these types of cases, but that money may be harder to come by.

"It's common to see these cases increase during tough times, so there's way more demand for [grants]," McMullen said, adding it is something the city plans to pursue if YWCA's program gets cut indefinitely.

Also up in 2008 were non-traffic and parking infractions, while filings for traffic infractions, driving under the influence, and criminal traffic filings were down from the previous year.

The court continues to see success with its currently offered driver re-licensing program, started last year, which provides incentives to drivers to get their licenses reinstated. The number of third-degree driving while license suspended cases also continues to go up, as Kayne said they've done annually since 2006, when state law made it a criminal offense.

The program is based on a program used by courts for city of Spokane.

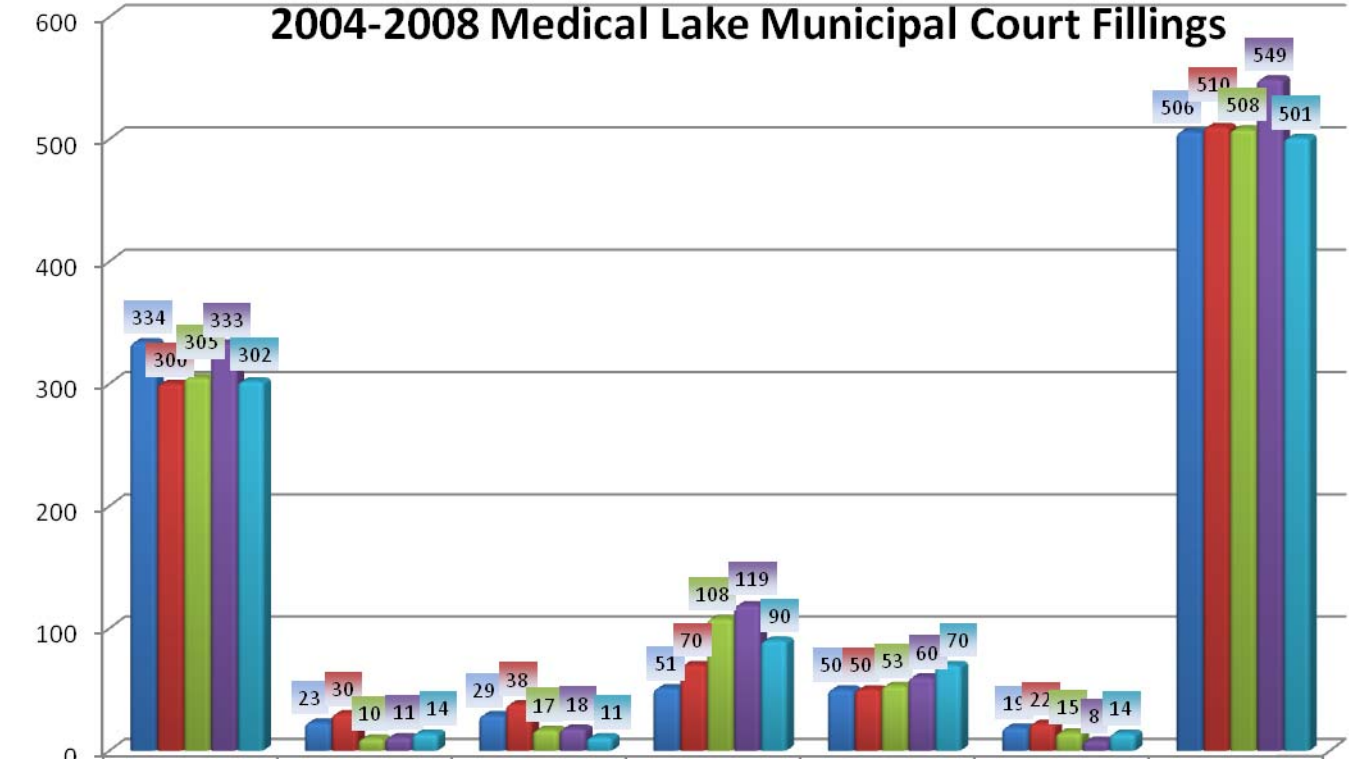
Last year, Medical Lake passed a series of ordinances that allowed its court to qualify to receive court improvement funds through the Office of Public Defense. The fund helps provide clients with legal representation in conflict of interest cases.

The court is also using these funds to pay for evaluations for clients facing substance abuse, mental illness or domestic violence issues. Kayne said proceedings operate under a "drug-court" model structure, which makes undergoing intensive treatment a condition of a client's sentence. Treatments are tailored to fit individual client needs.

So far, "the program has been valuable," Kayne said. "The ultimate goal is to point them in the right direction and get their lives on track."

It's typical for some of these issues to co-occur for some clients, who end up having repeat visits to court when they fail to get the proper support for their condition. Putting at-risk clients in touch with the right available resources will hopefully aid in keeping the court's recidivism rate down, Kayne said.

## 2004-2008 Medical Lake Municipal Court Filings



	Traffic	Non-Traffic	DUI	Criminal	Criminal	Parking	Total Filings
	Infractions	Infractions		Traffic	Non-Traffic		
2004	334	23	29	51	50	19	506
2005	300	30	38	70	50	22	510
2006	305	10	17	108	53	15	508
2007	333	11	18	119	60	8	549
2008	302	14	11	90	70	14	501