

U.S. Court of International Trade: Background, Judgeships, and Caseload Statistics

July 17, 2025

Background of the Court

In 1980, with the passage of the [Customs Courts Act](#), Congress reorganized the [U.S. Customs Court](#) as the [U.S. Court of International Trade](#). The judges serving on the Customs Court were reassigned to the new court, “[the name of which signified its judicial functions and its expanded jurisdiction over cases related to trade.](#)” Former [Senator Dennis DeConcini](#), a sponsor of the 1980 act, [stated that](#) the “legislation will offer the international trade community, as well as domestic interests, consumer groups, labor organizations, and other concerned citizens, a vastly improved forum for judicial review of administrative actions of government agencies dealing with importations.”

The [subject matter jurisdiction](#) of the court is determined [by the Constitution and specific laws](#) enacted by Congress. Cases heard before the court include disputes over import procedures, customs regulations, tariffs, and the application of trade agreements. More specifically, [examples of the types of cases](#) heard by the court include those related to [antidumping and countervailing duties](#) (which can involve foreign companies selling goods at prices below “normal value”), [the classification and valuation of imported merchandise](#), and actions to recover unpaid customs duties and civil penalties.

The geographic jurisdiction of the court is national in scope, with judges of the court assigned by the chief judge, as needed, to preside at trials at any location within the United States (the court also is authorized to hold hearings in foreign countries). Most cases are assigned to a single judge, [but when](#) “a case involves the constitutionality of an act of Congress, a Presidential proclamation, or an Executive order, or otherwise has broad and significant implications, the chief judge may assign the case to a three-judge panel.” A three-judge panel of the court, for example, recently issued a ruling [in a case](#) related to tariffs imposed by the President under the [International Emergency Economic Powers Act](#). The ruling has been appealed to the [U.S. Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit](#), which hears appeals from the Court of International Trade.

Congressional Research Service

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IN12586

Judgeships

There are nine judgeships authorized for the Court of International Trade, with appointees serving as [Article III judges](#) who have life tenure during good behavior and protection against diminution of salary.

Apart from the initial group of judges reassigned in 1980 from the Customs Court, there have been a total of [23 judges](#) appointed to the court (with the first nominee, [Gregory W. Carman](#), confirmed in 1983). The number of nominees confirmed to the court, by presidency, include six nominees confirmed during the Reagan presidency, one during the George H. W. Bush presidency, five during the Clinton presidency, two during the George W. Bush presidency, four during the Obama presidency, three during the first Trump presidency, and two during the Biden presidency. As of this writing, there is one vacancy on the court.

Of the 23 nominees confirmed to the court, 19 (83%) were confirmed by voice vote or unanimous consent. The first nominee confirmed by roll call vote was [Leo M. Gordon](#), nominated by President George W. Bush, who was confirmed by a vote of 82-0 in 2006. Additionally, the three most recent nominees to the court were each confirmed by roll call vote (including both of President Biden's nominees).

Of the nine most recent judges to serve on the court, four served in the executive branch immediately prior to being appointed to the court (specifically with the [U.S. Department of Commerce](#), [Office of the U.S. Trade Representative](#), or [U.S. Department of Agriculture](#)). Additionally, three judges served in the private sector or were engaged in private practice immediately prior to being appointed, while one served as a state judge and one was a law professor.

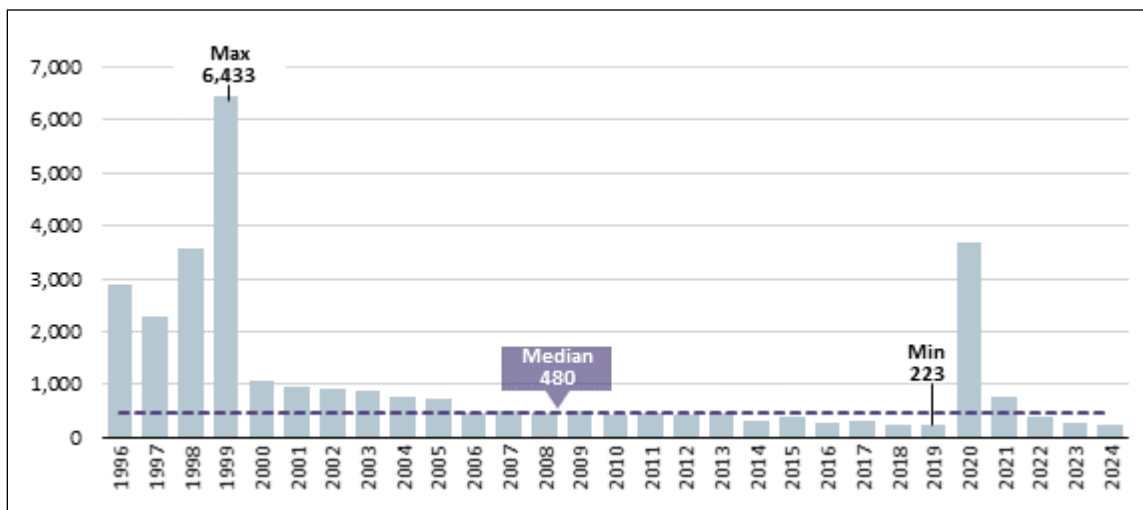
Selected Caseload Statistics

Figure 1 shows the number of case filings for the Court of International Trade for each 12-month period ending September 30 from 1996 to 2024 (i.e., for FY1996 to FY2024). During this period, the minimum number of filings was 223 (for FY2019), while the maximum number of filings was 6,433 (for FY1999). Overall, the median number of filings per fiscal year during this period was 480.

The increase in filings in 1998 and 1999 was in response to a [Supreme Court decision](#) which declared the harbor maintenance tax as unconstitutional under the [Export Clause](#). Additionally, the spike in filings for FY2020 was [due to](#) the “large number of cases that challenged additional duties imposed pursuant to [28 U.S.C. §1581\(i\)](#) on imports from the People’s Republic of China.”

For FY2024, the court [reported](#) a total of 252 case filings (representing a decline of 8% from 273 filings during FY2023). Of the new filings, 128 (53%) were filed under [28 U.S.C. §1581\(c\)](#) to contest final determinations issued under antidumping and countervailing duty laws; 94 (39%) were filed under [28 U.S.C. §1581\(a\)](#) to contest the denial of protests involving entries of merchandise; and 20 (8%) were brought under [28 U.S.C. §1581\(i\)](#), “which were actions brought against the United States that mainly addressed tariff laws and the administration and enforcement of those laws.”

The number of filings during a given fiscal year is not indicative of the number of pending cases during that same year (e.g., cases filed during a given fiscal year are not necessarily terminated during that same year). Pending and terminated cases are not included in **Figure 1**. In FY2024 and FY2023, there were 4,621 and 4,628 cases pending, respectively, before the court. The median number of cases pending before the court per fiscal year from FY1996 to FY2024 was 4,271.

Figure I. Number of Filings for FY1996 to FY2024

Source: CRS analysis of publicly available data from the Administrative Office of U.S. Courts.

The number of cases terminated by the court during this period ranged from a low of 259 during FY2024 to a high of 9,446 during FY2006. The median number of cases terminated by the court per fiscal year from FY1996 to FY2024 was 482.

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