



SJC Raises Jurisdictional Threshold for Actions in Superior Court

Civil litigators in Massachusetts are familiar with the rule that civil cases for money damages filed in Superior Court must involve an amount in controversy of at least \$25,000. On January 1, 2020, that rule will change for the first time in over thirty years.

Starting on January 1, the minimum procedural amount for civil actions in Superior Court will increase to \$50,000. The maximum procedural amount for civil actions in the District Courts and Boston Municipal Court will correspondingly increase to \$50,000. The Supreme Judicial Court's Order raising the procedural amounts will apply to all civil actions for money damages commenced on or after January 1.

The effect of this Order will likely be to increase the number of civil cases that are heard in District Court. It remains to be seen how the District Court will administratively handle this influx of new cases. A press release posted on Mass.gov announcing the SJC's Order states that, in recent years, the District Courts "have taken measures aimed at reducing the delay historically associated with the disposition of civil cases," including by appointing civil liaisons in each District Court to serve as a point of contact regarding pending civil matters.

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