



Pennsylvania  
**Office of Open Records**  
**2025 ANNUAL REPORT**



555 Walnut Street, Suite 605  
Harrisburg, PA 17101-1925

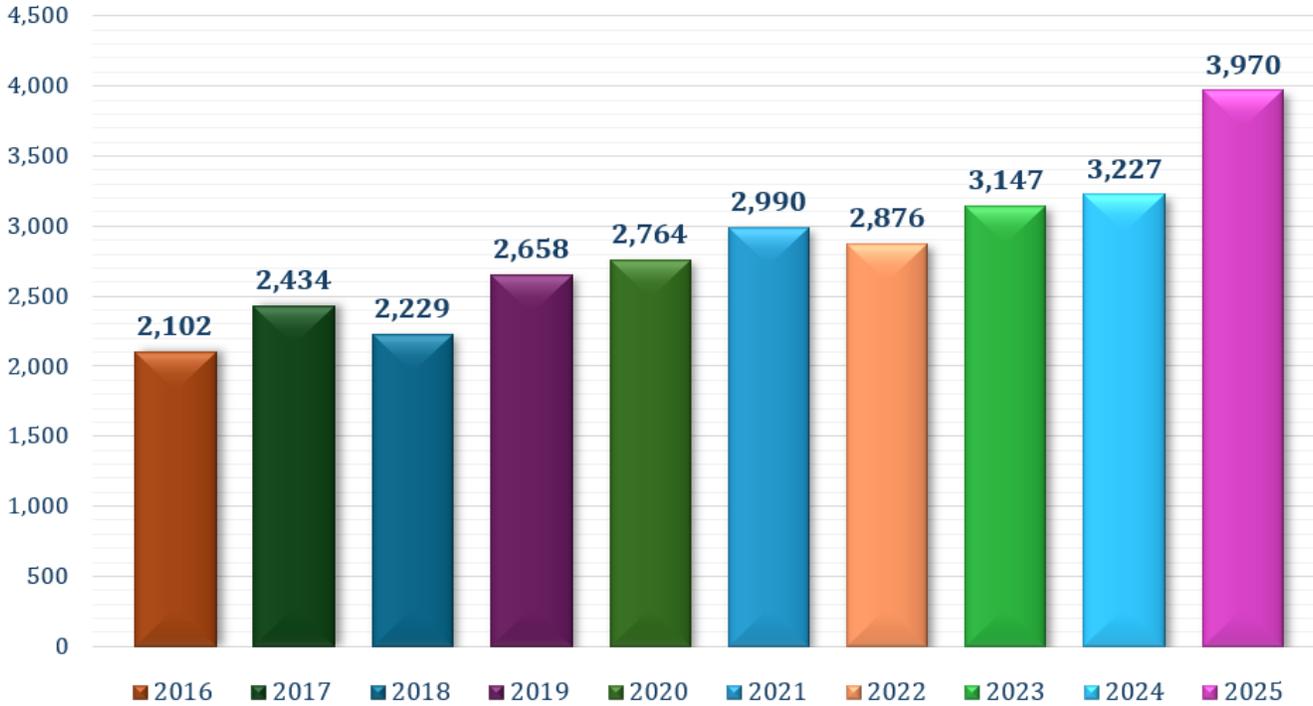


[www.openrecords.pa.gov](http://www.openrecords.pa.gov)  
[openrecords@pa.gov](mailto:openrecords@pa.gov)

# 3,970 Appeals Filed

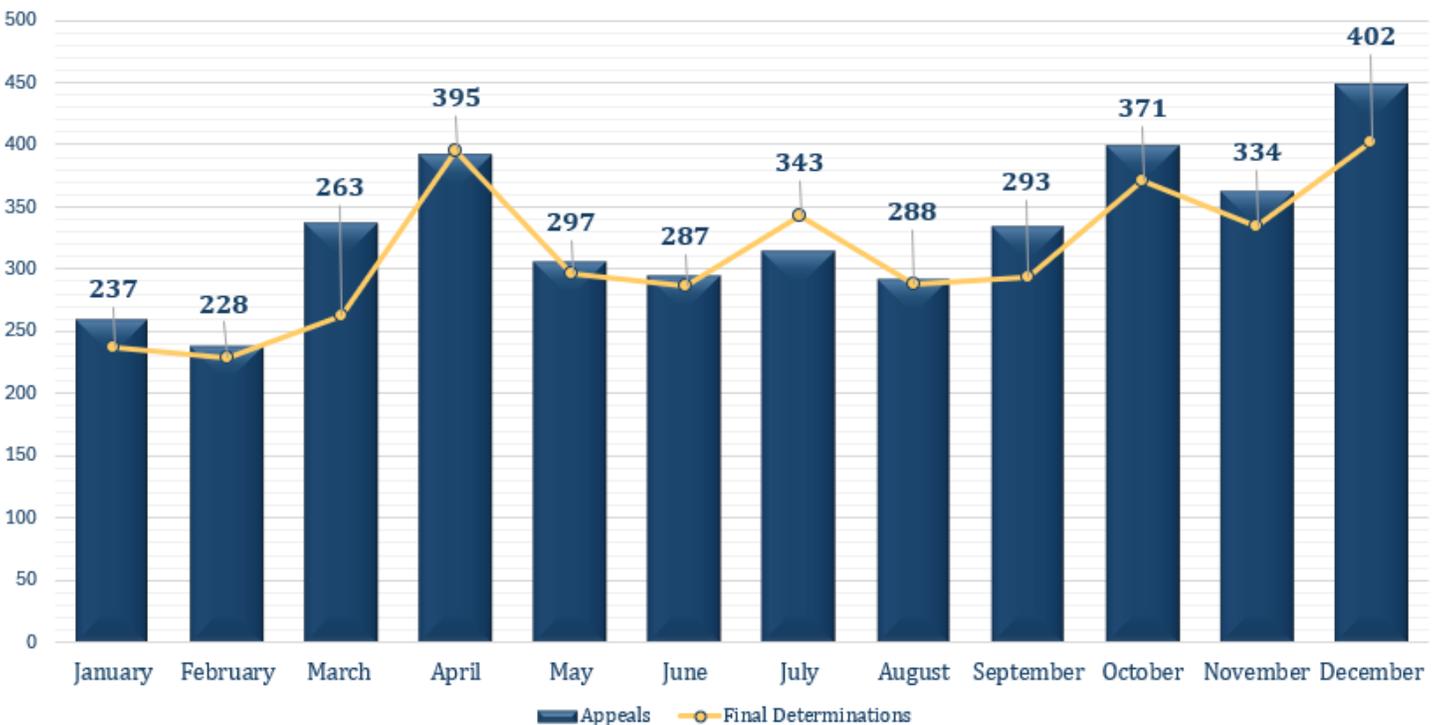
2025 ranks as the busiest year ever for the Office of Open Records. The current three-year average is 3,448 appeals; the current five-year average is 3,242.

For years 2009-2015, see Reports and Surveys at: <https://www.openrecords.pa.gov/AnnualReports.cfm>.



# 3,738 Decisions Issued

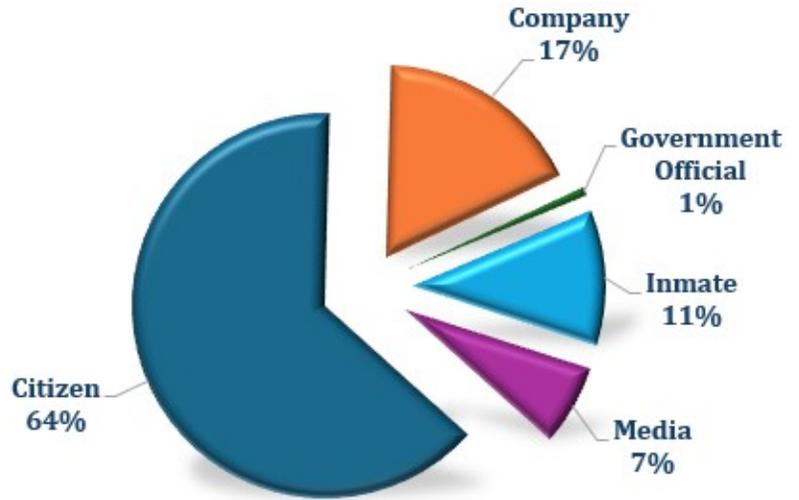
The issues to be decided on appeal continue to grow in both volume and complexity.



# 2,527 Citizen Appeals

Over half of the appeals docketed by the OOR in 2025 were filed by everyday citizens. They were followed by:

- Companies and Private Organizations, 697
- Inmates, 445
- Media, 267
- Government Officials and Lawmakers, 29

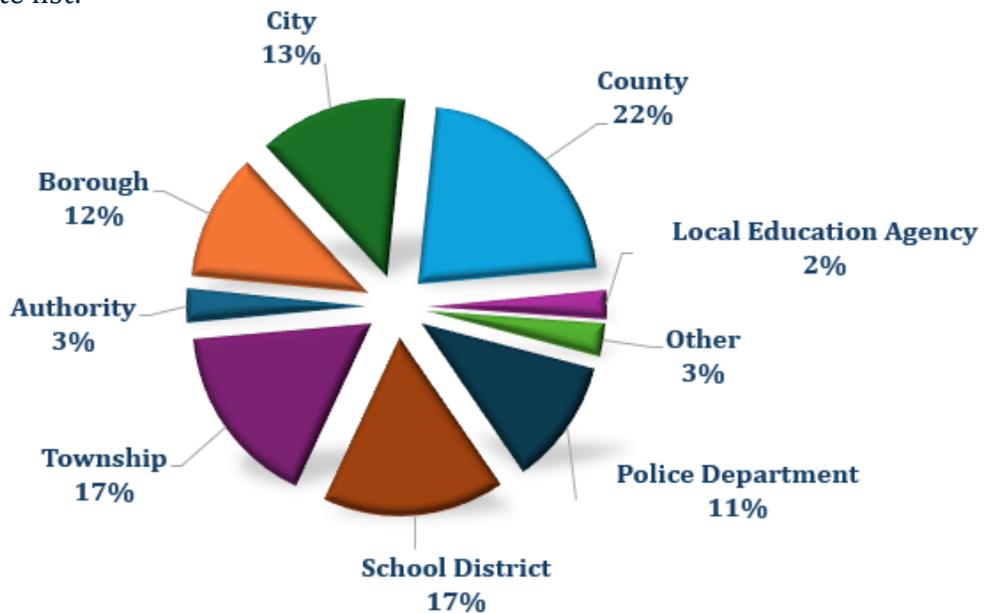


The total breakdown of all requester types (3,965) does not add up to the total number of appeals (3,970) listed on Page 2. The remaining 5 appeals were filed by Non-US Residents.

# 3,213 Appeals Involving Local Agencies

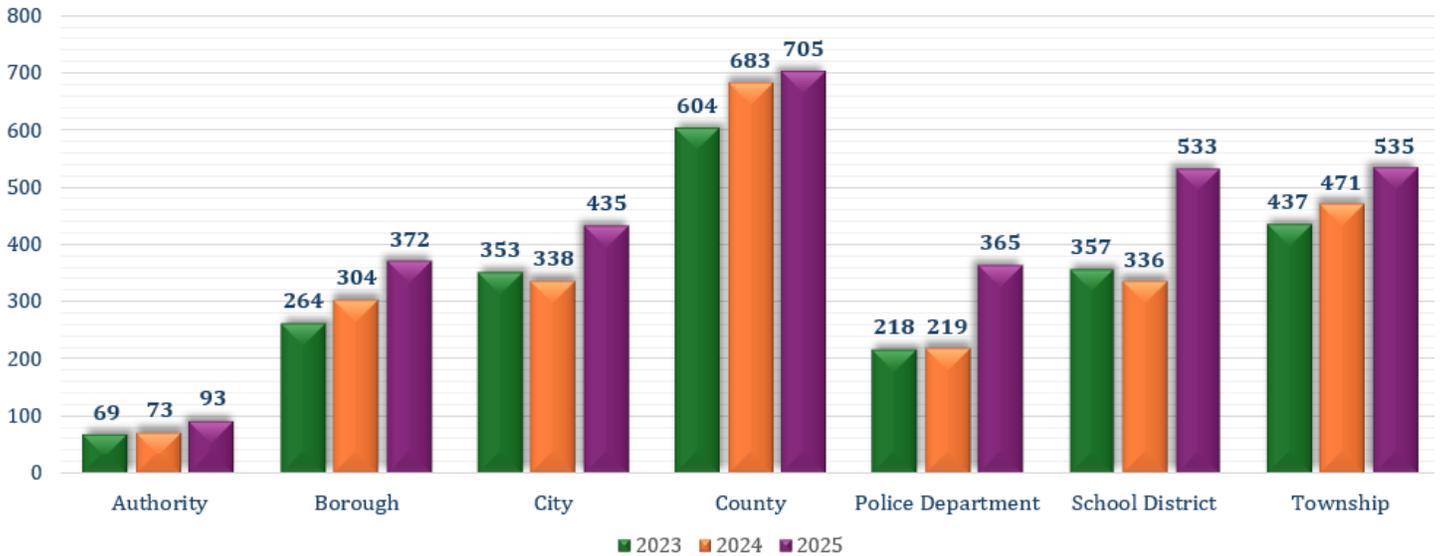
In 2025, municipalities (cities, boroughs, and townships) were involved in 42% of appeals filed against local agencies. Here's the complete list:

- Counties, 705
- Townships, 535
- School Districts, 533
- Cities, 435
- Boroughs, 372
- Police Departments, 364
- Authorities, 93
- Other, 95
- Local Education Agencies, 81



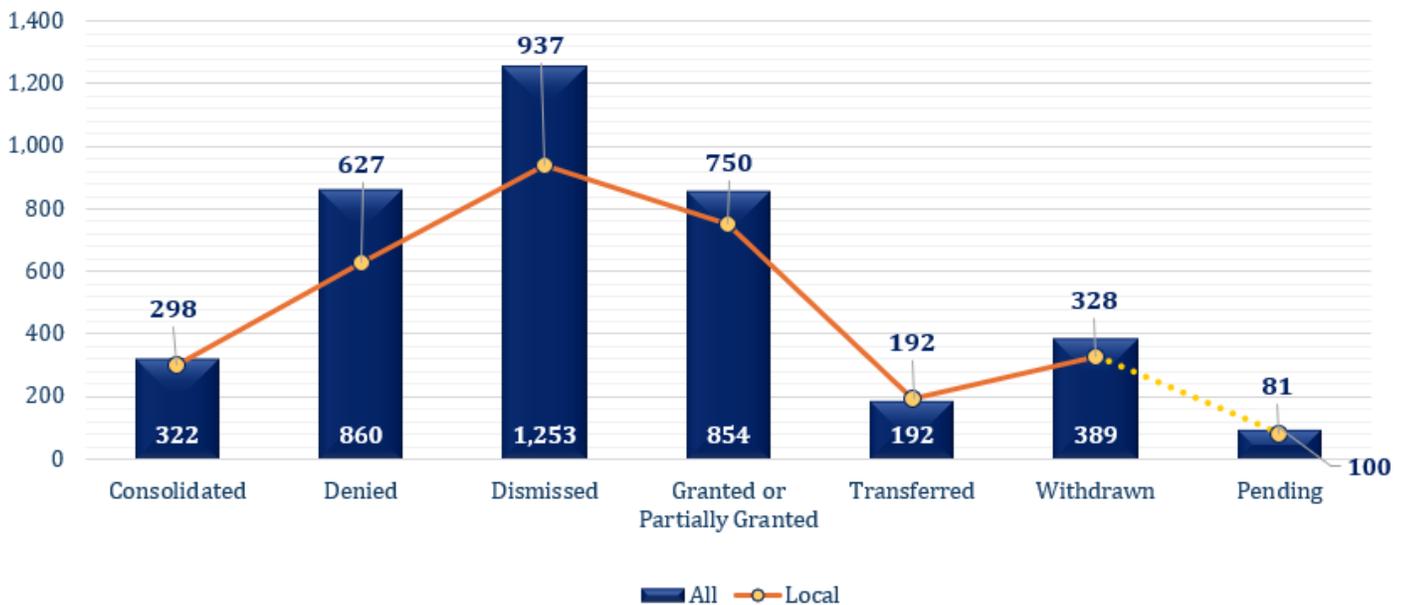
# Increase of Local Agencies

In 2025, all local agencies saw an increase in the number of appeals filed compared to 2023 and 2024.



# Breakdown of Local Agency Appeals

Requesters obtain access to records when appeals are granted or withdrawn (only the requester can withdraw an appeal). In 2025, 34% of appeals involving local agencies were granted, partially granted, or withdrawn while 20% were denied.

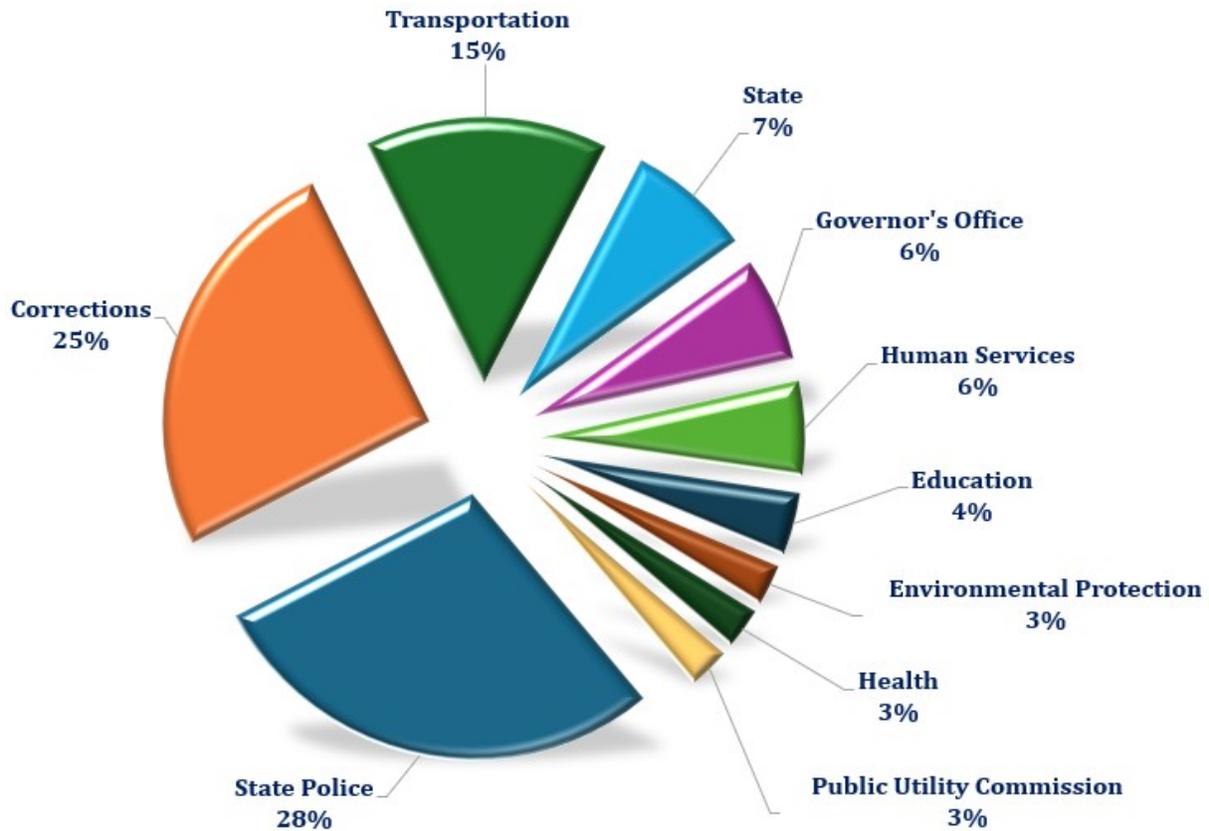


*Appeals are commonly dismissed for being filed too early, too late or incomplete (appeals must include a copy of the request and agency response, if a response was issued). Appeals filed too early can be refiled. Appeals are transferred when the OOR is not the proper appeals officer (i.e. judicial offices or statewide row offices).*

# 643 Appeals Involving State Agencies

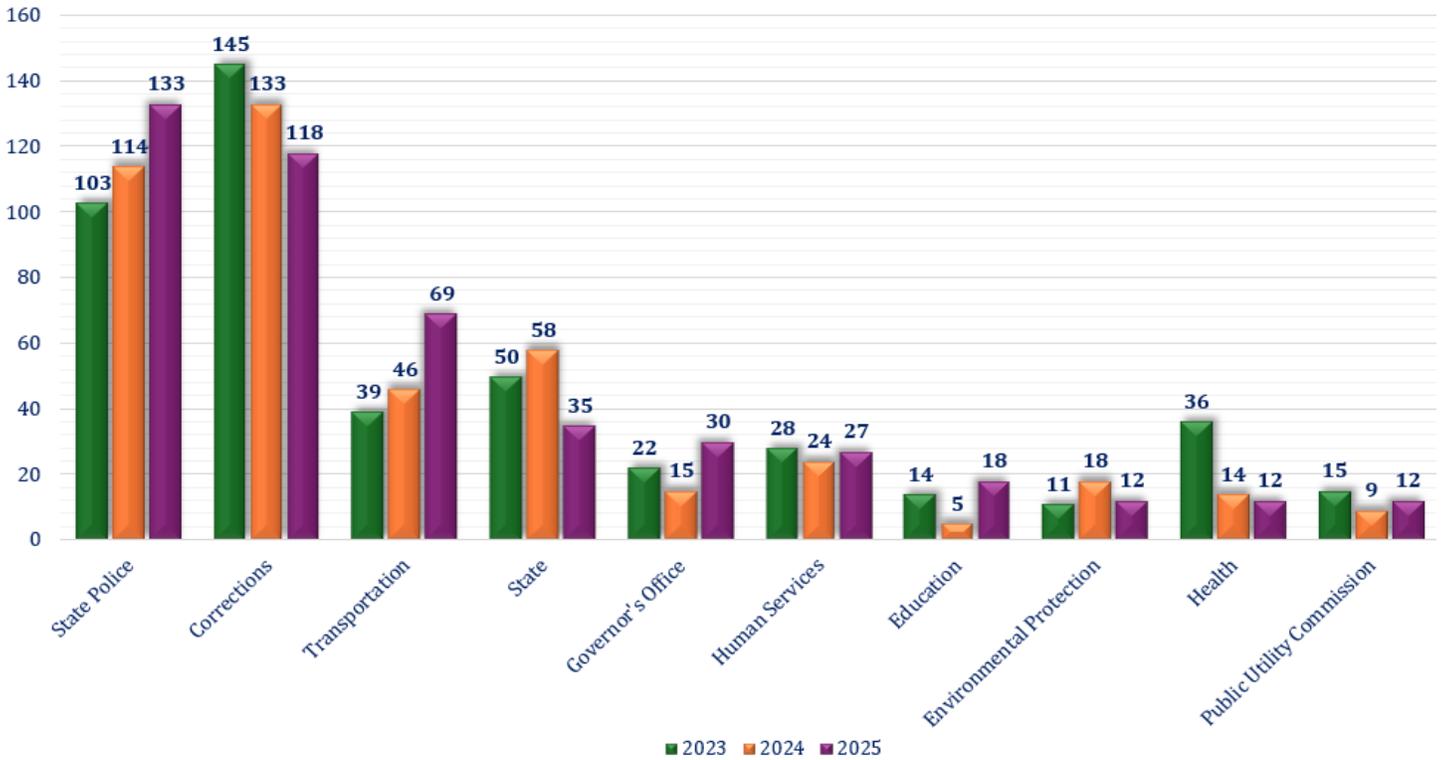
In 2025, the Pennsylvania State Police were involved in more appeals than any other Commonwealth agency. Here's the full list:

- State Police, 133
- Department of Corrections, 118
- Department of Transportation, 69
- Department of State, 35
- Office of the Governor, 30
- Department of Human Services, 27
- Department of Education, 18
- Department of Environmental Protection, 12
- Department of Health, 12
- Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission, 12
- Other, 177



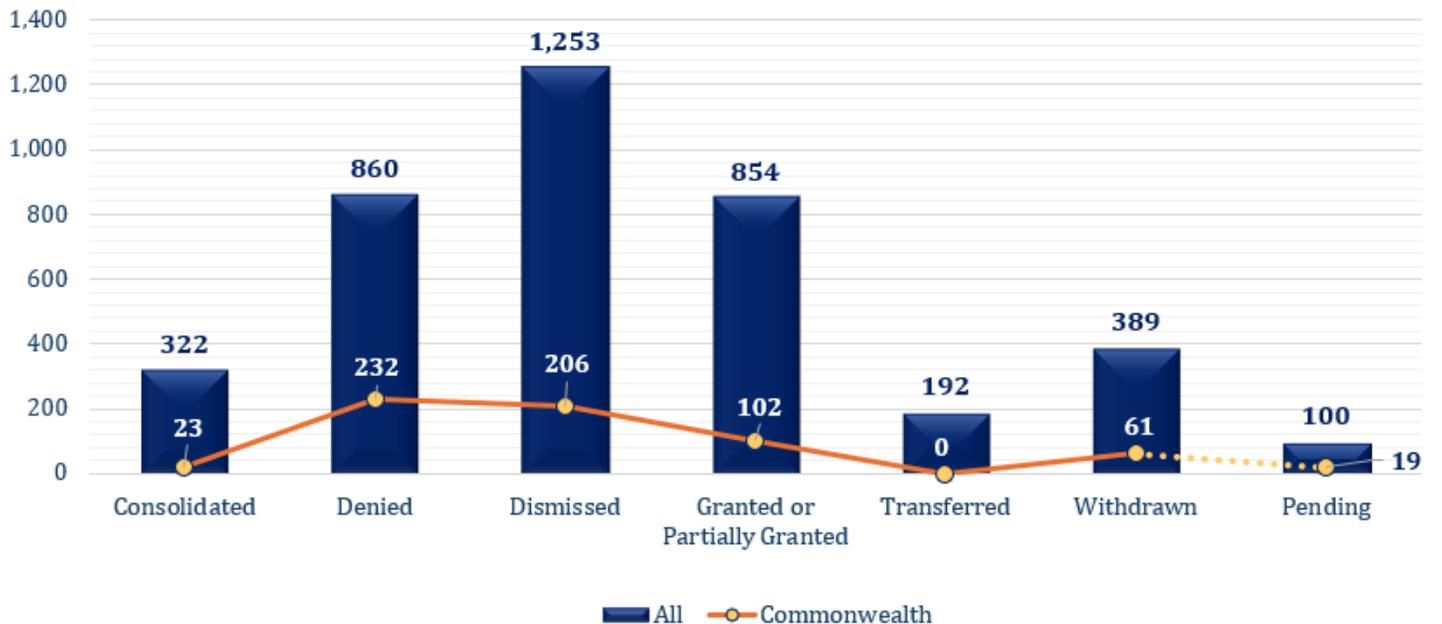
# Increase and Decrease of State Agencies

In 2025, a few Commonwealth agencies saw fluctuations in the number of appeals filed compared to 2023 and 2024.



# Breakdown of State Agency Appeals

Requesters obtain access to records when appeals are granted or withdrawn. In 2025, 25% of appeals involving Commonwealth agencies were granted, partially granted, or withdrawn while 36% were denied.



# 106 Mediations

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In 2025, 144 appeals entered the OOR's mediation program. Of the appeals where the mediation process was completed, 78 % were successfully resolved. The program continues to be a fantastic way to efficiently resolve disputes under the RTKL. Several of the OOR's Appeals Officers are trained mediators, and mediations take place via Microsoft Teams or, in some cases, may take place in person. When a mediation ends successfully, the appeal is withdrawn. That saves both sides the work and expense that goes into a formal appeal — and it prevents the case from moving to court. Either side can choose to end mediation at any time; if this happens, the traditional RTKL appeal process begins.

More about the OOR's mediation program can be found at:

[www.openrecords.pa.gov/Appeals/Mediation.cfm](http://www.openrecords.pa.gov/Appeals/Mediation.cfm).

## Issues Raised by Agencies During RTKL Appeals

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Since 2018, the OOR has tracked the specific issues raised by agencies and addressed by Appeals Officers in their Final Determinations. This data gives some insight into the reasons most commonly raised by agencies for denying access to records.

Of the 30 exemptions specifically enumerated in Section 708(b) of the RTKL, these 10 were raised most often in 2025:

- Noncriminal Investigative Records, (b)(17), 234
- Criminal Investigative Records, (b)(16), 208
- Internal, Predecisional Deliberations, (b)(10), 109
- Personal Identification Information, (b)(6), 88
- Agency Employee Information, (b)(7), 51
- Personal Security, (b)(1), 49
- Public Safety, (b)(2), 43
- 911 Records (b)(18), 32
- Individual Medical Records, (b)(5), 30
- Building, Infrastructure and Utility Safety, (b)(3), 26

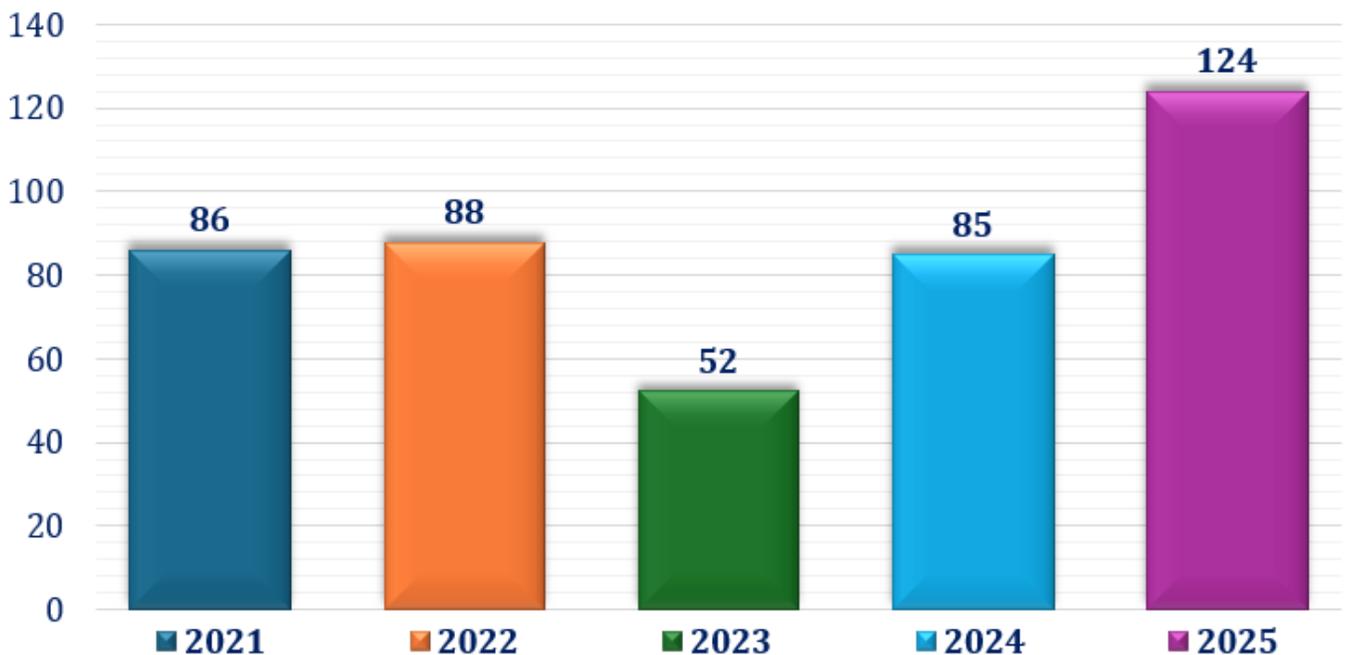
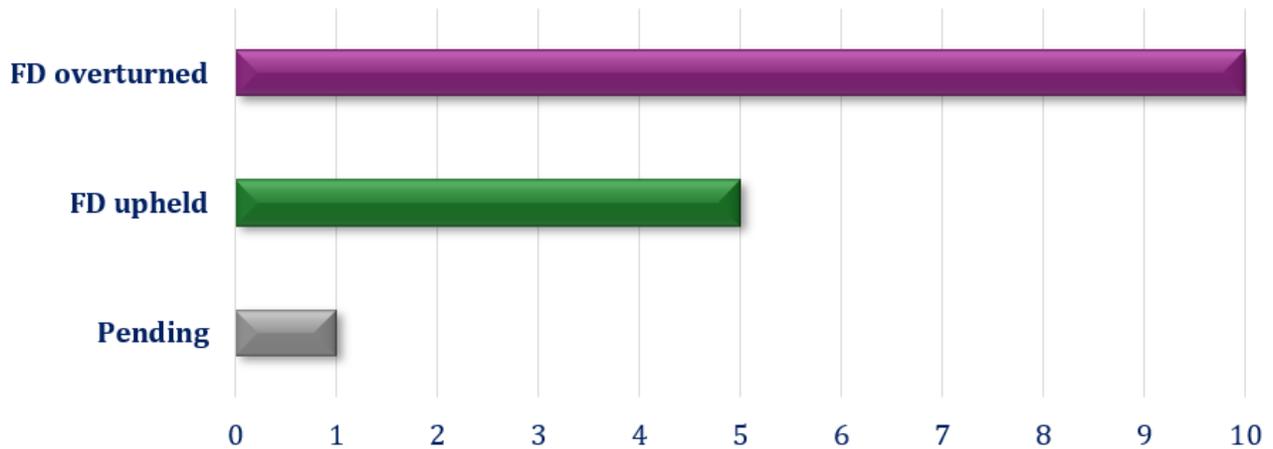
The OOR's Appeals Officers also heard hundreds of cases in which the agency asserted that the requested records weren't in possession, custody or control of the agency or were not records of the agency (839), the request was not specific or asked questions rather than seeking records (161), the records are privileged (113), the records are exempt under another State law (112), the records are exempt under Federal law (51), the requested records did not exist (36), or the records are exempt another section of the RTKL (232).

*Note: Many appeals before the OOR involve multiple exemptions and/or other reasons for denying access to records. Other sections of the RTKL may include, but are not limited to, protection of attorney-client privilege or the Pennsylvania Constitution's right to privacy.*

# 124 Petitions for Reconsideration

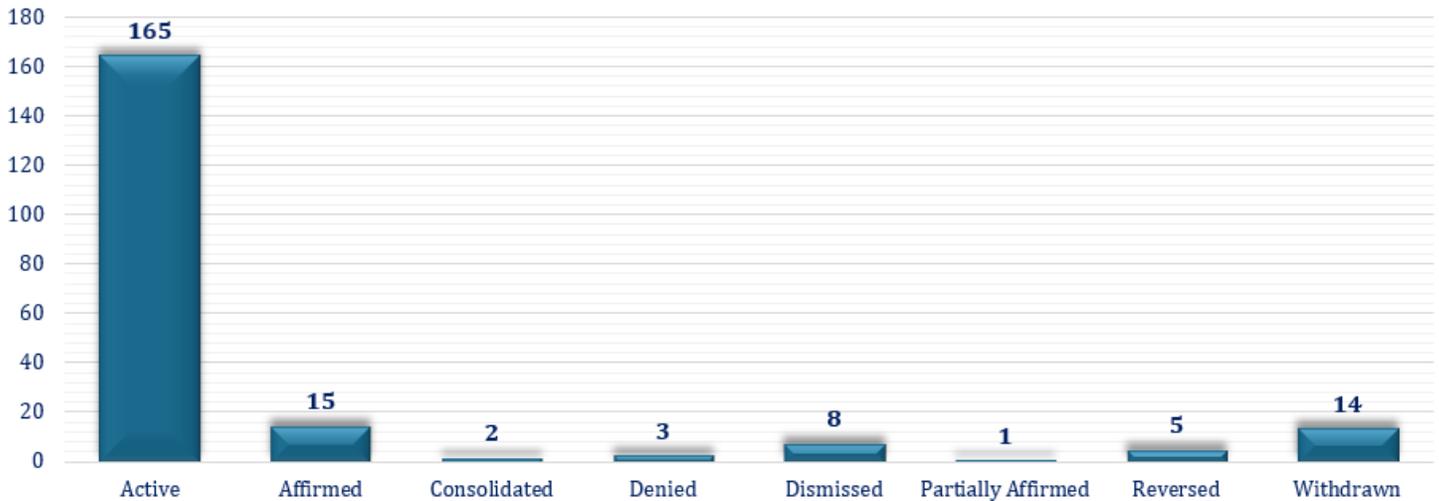
The OOR receives requests for the OOR to review final determinations for possible errors, known as a “petition for reconsideration.”

In 2025, the OOR received 124 requests for reconsideration concerning final determinations issued in 2025. This represents an increase from 2024. Of the 124 petitions for reconsideration, most (84 percent) were made by requesters, while less than a quarter (16 percent) were made by an agency. Just 12 percent of petitions for reconsideration were granted by the OOR, with more than half of those FDs being overturned.



## 213 Appellate Filings

Only five percent of OOR final determinations were appealed to a reviewing court in 2025. The OOR continues to monitor the 77% of those appeals pending before the Court of Common Pleas, Commonwealth Court, and Supreme Court. Below is a breakdown of the 23% that have already been decided.



## 24 Training Sessions

The OOR is statutorily required to provide training sessions about the RTKL and the Sunshine Act. In 2025, 24 training sessions, mostly virtual, were attended by over 2,000 public officials, lawmakers, judges, agency employees, solicitors, and requesters.

Our complete training schedule can be found at: [www.openrecords.pa.gov/RTKL/TrainingAbout.cfm](http://www.openrecords.pa.gov/RTKL/TrainingAbout.cfm).

## 472 Right-to-Know Requests

In 2025, just 52 RTKL requests filed with OOR were for OOR records, usually copies of case files, Agency Open Records Officer contact information, email exchanges, staff salary and contact information, staff financial interest statements, staff training manual, appeal procedures, OOR phone call logs and communication procedures, and OOR forms. As in previous years, the vast majority of requests (89%) were misdirected. In other words, they did not seek records of the OOR; instead, they sought records of other agencies but were mistakenly filed with the OOR.

More information on the RTK Requests for OOR records, including copies of the records provided, can be found at: <https://www.openrecords.pa.gov/RTKL/RequestSearch.cfm>.

# 10 Examples of Transparency Resulting from Public Access to Records in 2025

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The goal of the RTKL is to make government records available to the public. These records can then be used to hold public officials accountable for their actions.

Here are some of the records accessed via the RTKL in 2025:

1. A county coroner improperly transferred two mummified infant skulls to a public museum.
2. A former teacher received a \$75,000 settlement from a school district after it allegedly failed to prevent an encounter between the teacher and a student who had previously threatened the teacher with physical harm.
3. Data from 54 counties detailing the amount of Social Security benefits intended for foster children that was taken by counties for other costs.
4. Four school districts paid more than \$5 million in settlements to families after failing to provide adequate special education services.
5. A commonwealth-wide study revealed that lead was present in the water of more than 71 percent of the school districts evaluated.
6. A city paid more than \$15 million over four years to settle lawsuits involving preventable police-involved vehicle accidents.
7. A former municipal manager received a \$20,000 settlement after alleging that former employees violated his retirement agreement by making untruthful or derogatory statements about him.
8. The creation of a database documenting 25 years of Board of Pardons voting records.
9. A school district agreed to a \$999,000 settlement in a lawsuit filed by a former student alleging sexual abuse by a coach.
10. Discretionary release of 911 call transcripts from a fatal active shooter incident at a hospital.

# 2025 Accomplishments

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Here are some of OOR's accomplishments in 2025:

1. Docketed 3,970 appeals and issued 3,738 final determinations, the highest numbers in the Office's 17 years of existence.
2. Participated in or monitored nearly 500 RTKL cases in the Supreme Court, Commonwealth Court, and Courts of Common Pleas.
3. Executive Director spoke at the first Sunshine Fest, a national conference held during Sunshine Week for requesters and government agencies.
4. Executive Director testified before the Senate Intergovernmental Operations Committee regarding transparency and accountability of agencies use of messaging applications.
5. Conducted a Sunshine Act Training to the Penn State Board of Trustees and a Good Government Symposium with the Pennsylvania State Ethics Commission.
6. Hosted an Annual Training in November for 565 participants, discussing topics such as the Sunshine Act and legal updates, usage of artificial intelligence (AI), specificity, and other recent developments.
7. Relocated to a new building, [\*555 Walnut Street, Suite 605, Harrisburg, PA 17101\*](#), without any interruptions in docketing of appeals or submissions, correspondence, and other services.

## A Message from the Executive Director

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In 2025, the OOR reached unprecedented levels receiving the highest number of appeals in its history. Managing nearly 4,000 filings presented a significant operational challenge requiring extraordinary effort and coordination. The dedicated and determined team at the OOR met that challenge head-on, ensuring that each appeal was carefully processed, analyzed and decided.

Thank you to these public servants:

Kyle Applegate, Megan Burns, Nathan Byerly, Jordan Davis, Damian DeStefano, Dylan Devenyi, Angie Edris, Blake Eilers, Lyle Hartranft, Catherine Hecker, Faith Henry, Katie Higgins, Kelly Isenberg, Bandy Jarosz, Felecia Khorram, Michele Kusery-Grant, Joshua Macel, Daneen Miller-Smith, Tope Quadri, Erika Similo, Janelle Sostar, Ian Spiess, Joshua Young, Magdalene Zeppos-Brown and the 2025 summer interns, Kayla Bryan, Erika Mula, and Kaitlyn Ponessa.

