

Updated Public Records Law

By the Numbers

The updates to the Massachusetts Public Records Law (Law) have now been in effect for a little over three years. Changes to the Law include: specified time periods for the Supervisor of Records (Supervisor) to issue determinations on public records appeals, limits on fees permitted to be charged by government Records Access Officers (RAOs) and requirements for state agencies to track and report public records request information. Take a look below at how the updated Law has had an impact in its first few years:

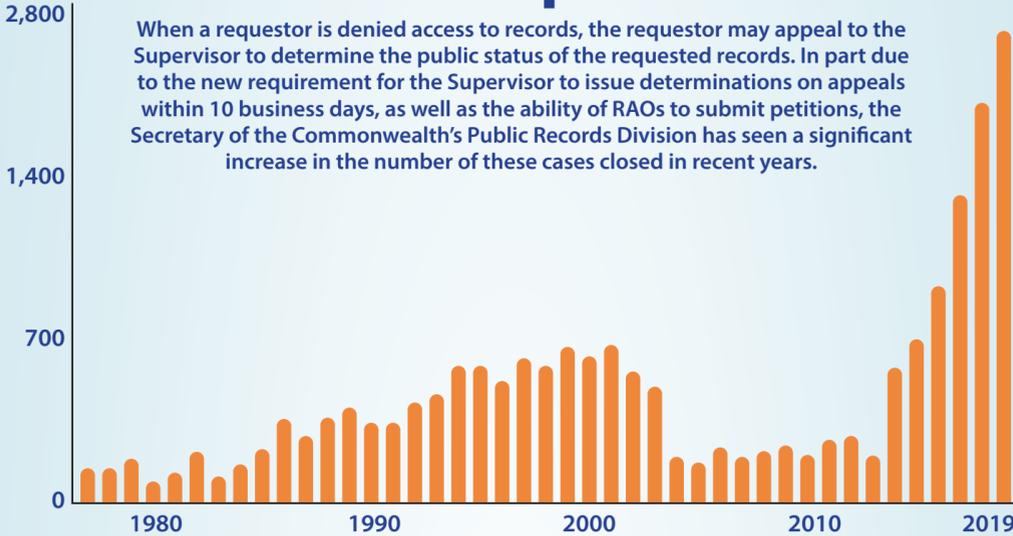


2019 Breakdown

2019 saw a record number of cases closed by the Public Records Division. These cases include 1) petitions from RAOs to charge additional fees, be granted extra time to respond to requests or be relieved of their obligation to respond; 2) requests for reconsideration of the Supervisor's orders; 3) *in camera* reviews of the requested records by the Supervisor; and 4) determinations by the Supervisor relating to appeals from requestors alleging certain violations of the Law.

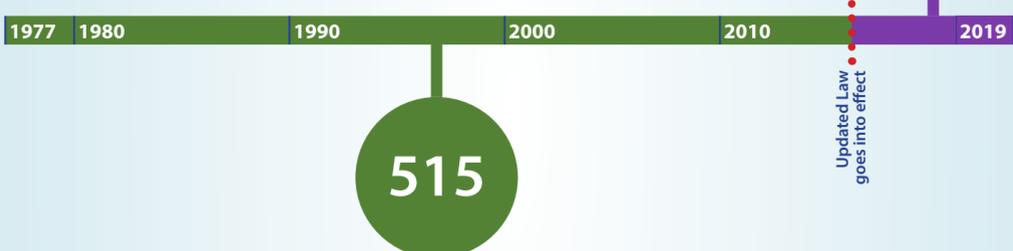


Cases Opened



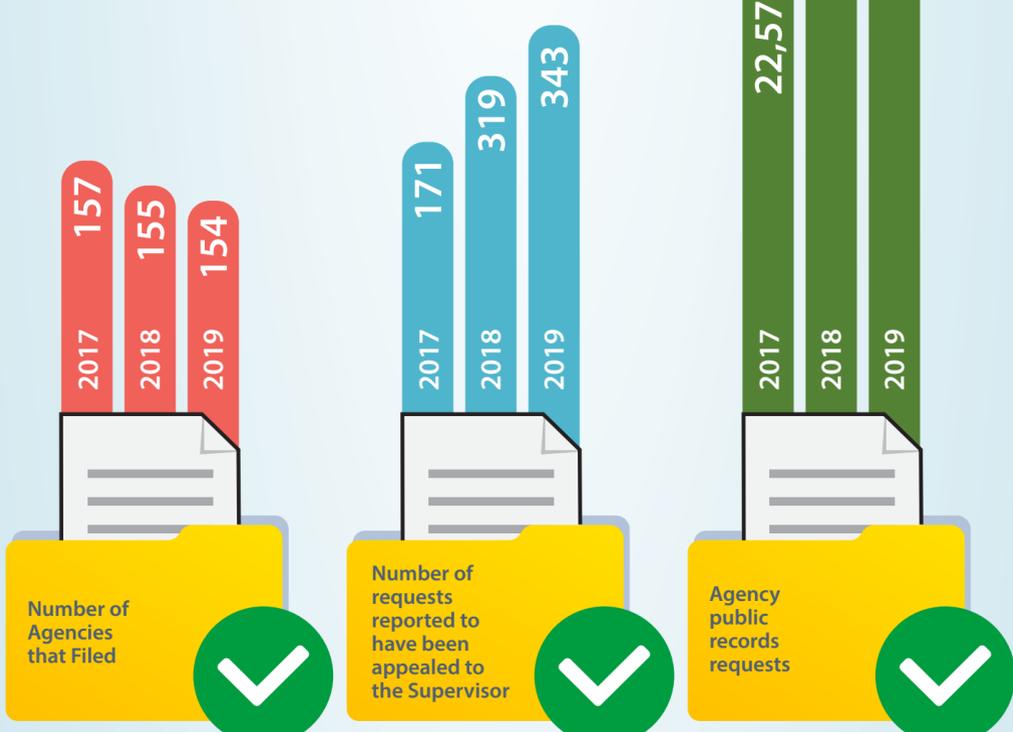
Average number of Cases Opened

After the updates to the Law went into effect in 2017, the Public Records Division has seen significant increases in caseload. In the thirty-nine years before the update to the Law, the Public Records Division opened an average of 515 cases per year. After the update, the average number of cases opened per year rose to 2,261.



Agency Info

2017 was the first year agencies were required to log the requests received for public records and submit them to the Secretary of the Commonwealth. There were 154 agencies that filed information relating to 29,803 requests that they received in 2019. Of those requests, agencies reported that 343 were appealed to the Supervisor.



Popular Words

The Public Records Division issued a record-breaking number of determinations in 2019. Here is a word cloud containing some of the most popular words used.



All of the determinations issued by the Supervisor are public and available on the Secretary of the Commonwealth's website at: www.sec.state.ma.us/pre.

For more information on the Public Records Law, please read the *Guide to the Massachusetts Public Records Law* available at:

www.sec.state.ma.us/pre/prepdf/guide.pdf.

For any questions about the Public Records Law, please contact the Secretary of the Commonwealth's Public Records Division at

617-727-2832 or pre@sec.state.ma.us.

