



Tax Appeals



ANNUAL REPORT

FISCAL YEAR 2015-2016

ANDREW M. CUOMO, GOVERNOR

ROBERTA MOSELEY NERO, PRESIDENT AND COMMISSIONER

JAMES H. TULLY, JR. COMMISSIONER

CHARLES H. NESBITT, COMMISSIONER



Tax Appeals

Roberta Moseley Nero

President and Commissioner

New York State Tax Appeals Tribunal

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October 18, 2016

The Honorable Andrew M. Cuomo
Governor of the State of New York

The Honorable John J. Flanagan
Temporary President of the Senate

The Honorable Carl E. Heastie
Speaker of the Assembly

Dear Governor Cuomo, Senator Flanagan and Speaker Heastie:

Pursuant to Tax Law Section 2006 (13), I am pleased to submit the Annual Report of the Tax Appeals Tribunal/Division of Tax Appeals ("Tax Appeals") for the fiscal year 2015-2016. Together with the statutorily required statistics regarding operations, the report contains general information regarding Tax Appeals, including its mission, functions and operations.

Tax Law Section 2000 imposes upon Tax Appeals the responsibility of "providing the public with a just system of resolving controversies with [the Division of Taxation of the] department of taxation and finance and to ensure that the elements of due process are present with regard to such resolution." We take great pride in striving to meet that goal by providing a fair, efficient and productive process.

I hope that you will find the report informative and useful. I am always available to respond to any questions or observations you may have concerning the Annual Report or the operations of Tax Appeals in general.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Roberta Moseley Nero".

Roberta Moseley Nero
President and Commissioner

ENCLOSURE

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MISSION

It is the mission of the New York State Tax Appeals Tribunal (Tribunal)/Division of Tax Appeals (collectively Tax Appeals) “to provide the public with a clear, uniform, rapid, inexpensive and just system of resolving controversies with the Division of Taxation of the New York State Department of Taxation and Finance” (20 NYCRR 3000.0) (Taxation). In accomplishing our mission, we continuously strive to provide the procedural framework “necessary to facilitate the rapid resolution of controversies while at the same time avoiding undue formality and complexity” (20 NYCRR 3000.0).

ORGANIZATION

HISTORY

The establishment of Tax Appeals on September 1, 1987 separated the administration of taxes from the adjudication of disputes between taxpayers and Taxation. Under prior law, disputes between taxpayers and Taxation were resolved by a three-member Tax Commission, the President of which was also the Commissioner of the Department of Taxation and Finance (at the time, the equivalent of Taxation). As Taxation was always one of the parties before the Tax Commission, critics of the system noted that there was, at the least, a perception of bias.

In addition, the regulations that were at issue in many of the cases were promulgated by the Tax Commission itself. Again, the criticism was that the body that had adopted the regulations at issue could not fairly and objectively review their validity or application in an adjudicatory proceeding. Finally, under the former system, the hearing function was performed by a hearing officer who heard the case and recommended a decision to the Tax Commission, which then rendered the decision. Critics argued that the person who had the opportunity to weigh the evidence and evaluate the credibility of the witnesses

at the hearing should be the person to make the decision.

Under the current system, the Commissioner of the Department of Taxation and Finance is not a member of the Tribunal, and the members of the Tribunal and the Division of Tax Appeals are fully independent from Taxation. The Tribunal can review the validity and application of the regulations of Taxation at issue in the cases before it. However, the Tribunal only has authority to adopt rules and regulations relating to the exercise of its duties, including rules of practice and procedure, and the duties of the Administrative Law Judges to hear and determine the cases before them.

THE TRIBUNAL

The Division of Tax Appeals is headed by the Tribunal, which consists of three commissioners nominated by the Governor and confirmed by the New York State Senate. The commissioners are appointed for nine-year terms. One of these commissioners is designated as the President of the Tribunal by the Governor and is solely responsible for the administration of Tax Appeals as a whole.

At least two of the commissioners must be attorneys admitted to practice in New York State for a period of at least ten years and be knowledgeable on the subject of taxation and one member need not be an attorney, but must also be knowledgeable on the subject of taxation (Tax Law § 2004).

During fiscal year 2015-2016, the Tribunal consisted of President and Commissioner Roberta Moseley Nero, and Commissioners James H. Tully, Jr. and Charles H. Nesbitt. (Note: Commissioner Nesbitt retired in May of 2016. In June 2016, Dierdre K. Scozzafava was appointed Commissioner.)

The Tribunal is responsible for the administration of Tax Appeals and the appellate portion of the process of resolving controversies. It is assisted in its duties by

the offices of the Secretary to the Tribunal and the Counsel to the Tribunal.

The Secretary to the Tribunal assists the President in administering the judicial functions of the Division and handles all procedural matters with regard to the cases before the Tribunal.

The Counsel to the Tribunal assists the Tribunal in the preparation of decisions on cases before it, as well as preparing the agency's regulatory and legislative proposals, and advises the Tribunal on legal issues as they arise.

THE DIVISION OF TAX APPEALS

The Supervising Administrative Law Judge is responsible for the hearing, or trial, level of the process of resolving controversies. This includes the day-to-day administration of both formal hearings before Administrative Law Judges and small claims hearings before Presiding Officers. During fiscal year 2015-2016, the hearing staff of the Division of Tax Appeals was comprised of nine Administrative Law Judges and one Presiding Officer.

The remaining principal staff operations are handled by the Hearing Operations Unit, consisting of the Petition Intake and Reception Section, the Pre-Hearing Support, Calendaring and Scheduling Section, and the Word Processing and Determination Publishing Section.

ADJUDICATORY PROCESS

INTRODUCTION

A taxpayer can protest any written notice issued by Taxation that has advised the taxpayer of a tax deficiency, a determination of tax due, a denial of a refund or credit application; a denial, cancellation, revocation or suspension of a license, permit or

legislation; or any other notice that gives a person the right to a hearing in the Division of Tax Appeals by filing a petition for a hearing (Tax Law § 2008). Unless protested by the taxpayer affected by such action, the action asserted by Taxation will stand.

Of the cases filed with Tax Appeals, 75% involve the assertion by Taxation that the taxpayer owes additional taxes. The remaining cases involve situations where taxpayers claim refunds of taxes paid (15.6%) and controversies involving various licenses and registrations (9.4%).

FORMAL HEARINGS

Formal hearings are held before an Administrative Law Judge. Hearings are currently held in Albany, New York City and Rochester. The Administrative Law Judge hears the testimony, evaluates the evidence and prepares and issues a written determination within six months after the completion of the hearing or submission of briefs of the parties, whichever is later (Tax Law § 2010 [3]). The determination of the Administrative Law Judge sets forth the issues in the case, the relevant facts established by the parties, the necessary legal analysis and the conclusions of law relevant to the issues. The determination is binding on both the taxpayer and Taxation unless one or both of the parties request a review of the determination by the Tribunal by filing an exception with the Secretary to the Tribunal within 30 days of the issuance of the determination (Tax Law §§ 2006 [7], 2010 [4]).

SMALL CLAIMS HEARINGS

As an alternative to a formal hearing, taxpayers have the right to elect a small claims proceeding if the amount in dispute is within certain dollar limits as prescribed by regulations adopted by the Tribunal (Tax Law § 2012). Currently, the limits are \$20,000 (not including penalty and interest) for any

12-month period for personal income and corporate franchise tax and \$40,000 for sales and compensating use taxes (20 NYCRR 3000.13(b)). Small claims hearings are held in Albany, New York City, Rochester, Buffalo, Syracuse, Utica and Binghamton. A small claims hearing is conducted informally by a Presiding Officer, whose determination is final for both parties. However, at any time before the conclusion of the small claims hearing, a taxpayer may discontinue the proceeding and request that a formal hearing be held before an Administrative Law Judge (Tax Law § 2012).

TRIBUNAL REVIEW OF ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE DETERMINATIONS

After reviewing the record of the hearing and any arguments, oral or by brief, the Tribunal issues a written decision affirming, reversing or modifying the determination of the Administrative Law Judge, or remanding the case for additional proceedings before such Administrative Law Judge (Tax Law § 2006 [7]). Each decision of the Tribunal sets forth the issues in the case, the relevant facts established by the parties in the record at hearing and the Tribunal's opinion, which applies applicable law to such facts. Each decision must be rendered within six months from the date of notice to the Tribunal that exception is being taken to the determination of the Administrative Law Judge. This period is extended if oral or written argument is made before the Tribunal (Tax Law § 2006 [7]). In cases where oral arguments have been requested and granted, such proceedings are currently held in Albany and New York City.

Decisions rendered by the Tribunal are final and binding on Taxation; i.e., there is no right of appeal. However, taxpayers who are not satisfied with the decision of the Tribunal have the right to appeal the Tribunal's decision by instituting a proceeding pursuant to Article 78 of the Civil Practice Law and Rules with the Appellate Division, Third

Department of the State Supreme Court. An Article 78 proceeding must be initiated within four months of the issuance of the Tribunal decision (Tax Law § 2016).

PUBLICATION OF TRIBUNAL DECISIONS AND ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE DETERMINATIONS

Tax Law § 2006 (9) requires the Tribunal to publish and make available to the public all determinations rendered by Administrative Law Judges and all decisions rendered by the Tribunal. The Tribunal may charge a reasonable fee for a copy of such determinations or decisions.

The Tribunal provides copies of individual decisions and determinations upon request. In addition, decisions and determinations are available on the agency's website at www.dta.ny.gov. All Tribunal decisions and Administrative Law Judge determinations are carried on Westlaw and Lexis and are commercially published by William S. Hein Company, Buffalo, New York. Also, Commerce Clearing House publishes selected determinations and decisions. The Tribunal provides a monthly docket, also published by the Hein Company, which indicates Administrative Law Judge determinations and Tribunal decisions issued for the month, as well as exceptions to Administrative Law Judge determinations and Article 78 proceedings instituted by taxpayers to review Tribunal decisions. All above-referenced materials are also available on the agency's website.

DISPOSITION OF CASES

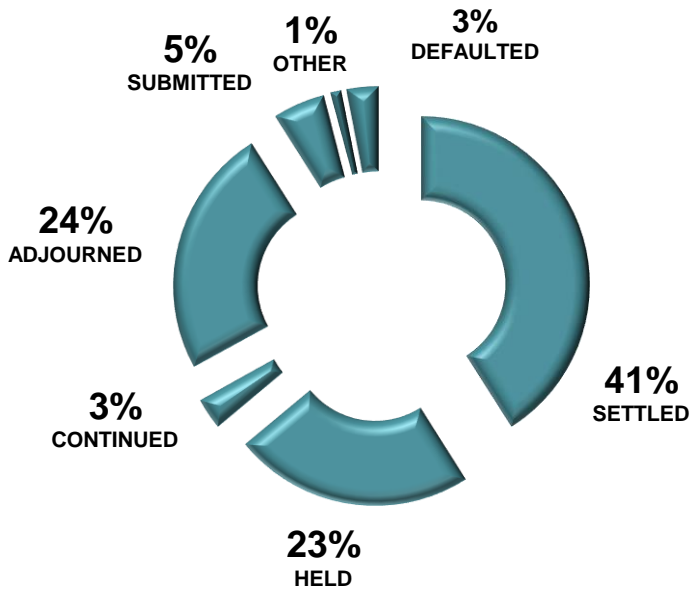
The following tables and charts show the inventory of cases before Tax Appeals and the disposition of cases by Administrative Law Judges, the Small Claims Presiding Officer and the Tribunal for fiscal year 2015-2016.

FORMAL HEARINGS

2015-2016 INVENTORY (NET CASES):	
BEGINNING INVENTORY	474
Add (+)	
Cases Received	443
Default Vacated	0
Subtotal	443
TOTAL CASES FOR HEARINGS	917
Deduct (-)	
Petitions Withdrawn	50
Closing Orders Issued	200
Defaults	10
Determinations Issued	131
Petitions Dismissed	23
Referred to BCMS	16
Bankruptcy	2
Subtotal	432
ENDING INVENTORY	485

ANALYSIS OF CASE SCHEDULING

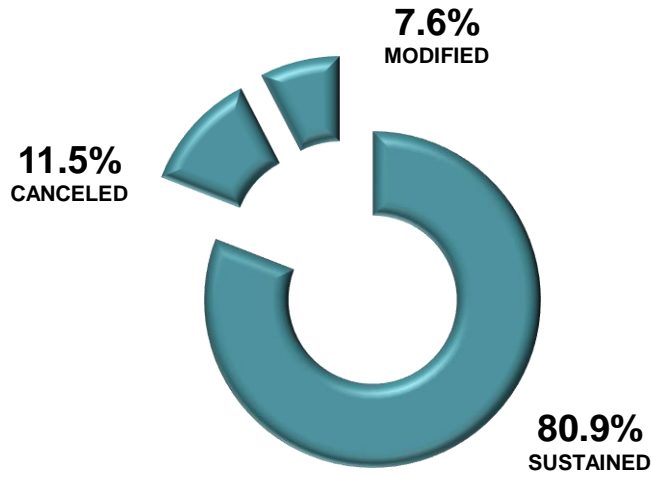
During the fiscal year 2015-2016, **262** cases were scheduled for a formal hearing before Administrative Law Judges. Of that total:



CASE SCHEDULING		NUMBER	PERCENT
SETTLED by parties before hearing		107	41%
HELD and completed		59	23%
CONTINUED for completion		9	3%
ADJOURNED before hearing		62	24%
SUBMITTED on papers without hearing		14	5%
DEFAULTED due to failure of one of the parties to appear		8	3%
Handled by OTHER means		3	1%

ANALYSIS OF DETERMINATIONS

Case Disposition: During the fiscal year 2015-2016, the Administrative Law Judges issued **131** determinations. Of that total:



DETERMINATIONS	NUMBER	PERCENT
SUSTAINED the deficiency or other action	106	80.9%
CANCELED the deficiency or other action	15	11.5%
MODIFIED the deficiency or other action	10	7.6%

BREAKDOWN OF DETERMINATIONS BY TAX

TAX	NUMBER	PERCENT
INCOME	59	44%
SALES	43	32%
CORP. FRANCHISE	7	5%
MISCELLANEOUS	26	19%
TOTAL *(Some cases involved more than one type of tax.)	135*	100%

AVERAGE ELAPSED TIME

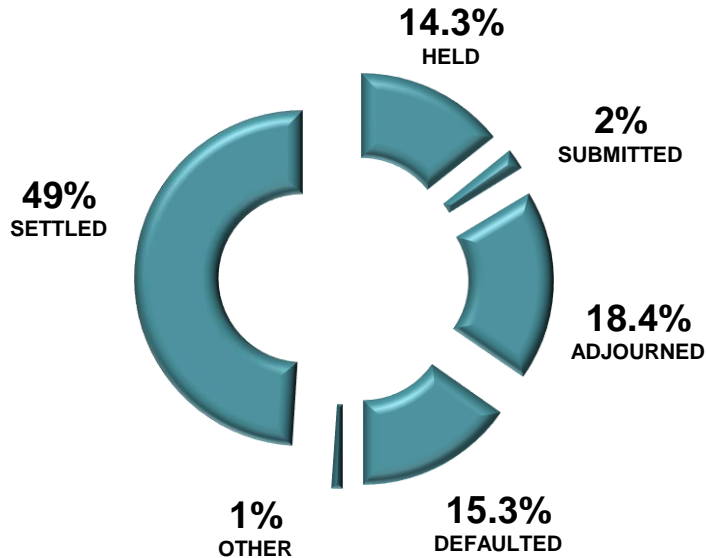
The average elapsed time between the later of the hearing date or the last brief date and the issuance of the determination was: Mean **4.18** months and Median **3** months.

SMALL CLAIMS HEARINGS

2015-2016 INVENTORY (NET CASES):	
BEGINNING INVENTORY	81
Add (+)	
Cases Received	75
Default Vacated	0
Subtotal	75
TOTAL CASES FOR HEARINGS	156
Deduct (-)	
Petitions Withdrawn	21
Closing Orders Issued	49
Defaults	16
Determinations Issued	17
Subtotal	103
ENDING INVENTORY	53

ANALYSIS OF CASE SCHEDULING

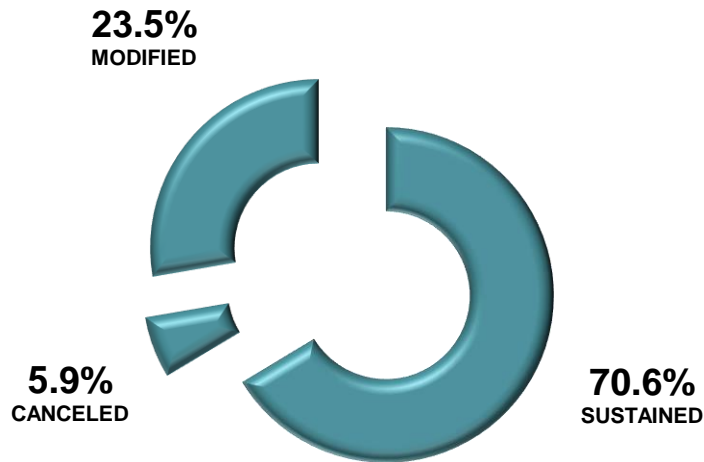
During the fiscal year 2015-2016, **98** cases were scheduled for a small claims hearing before Presiding Officer. Of that total:



CASE SCHEDULING	NUMBER	PERCENT
SETTLED by parties before hearing	48	49%
HELD and completed	14	14.3%
ADJOURNED before hearing	18	18.4%
SUBMITTED on papers without hearing	2	2%
DEFAULTED due to failure of one of the parties to appear	15	15.3%
Handled by OTHER means	1	1%

ANALYSIS OF DETERMINATIONS

Case Disposition: During the fiscal year 2015-2016, the Presiding Officer issued 17 small claims determinations. Of that total:



DETERMINATIONS	NUMBER	PERCENT
SUSTAINED the deficiency or other action	12	70.6%
CANCELED the deficiency or other action	1	5.9%
MODIFIED the deficiency or other action	4	23.5%

BREAKDOWN OF DETERMINATIONS BY TAX

TAX	NUMBER	PERCENT
INCOME	11	65%
SALES	5	29%
MISCELLANEOUS	1	6%
TOTAL	17	100%

AVERAGE TIME ELAPSED

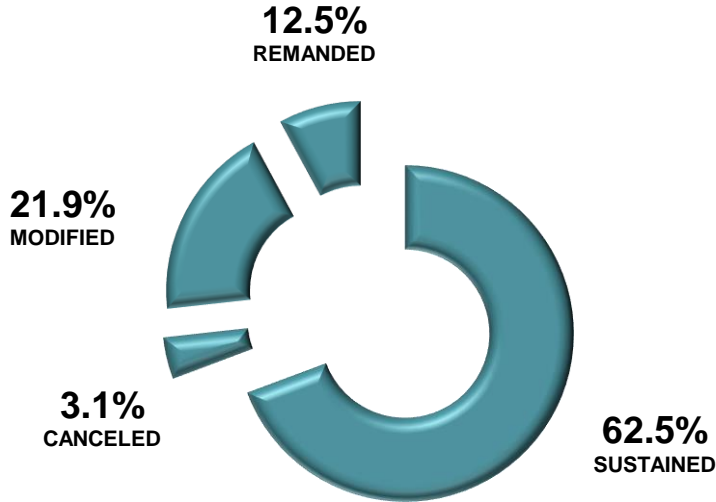
The average elapsed time between the later of the hearing date or the last brief date and the issuance of the determination was: Mean **2.65** months and Median **3** months.

TAX APPEALS TRIBUNAL

2015-2016 INVENTORY (NET CASES):		
BEGINNING INVENTORY		93
Add (+)		
	Cases Received	60
	Subtotal	60
TOTAL CASES		153
Deduct (-)		
	Decisions Issued	64
	Settled	5
	Subtotal	69
ENDING INVENTORY		84

ANALYSIS OF DECISIONS

Case Disposition: During the fiscal year 2015-2016, the Tax Appeals Tribunal issued **64** decisions. Of that total:



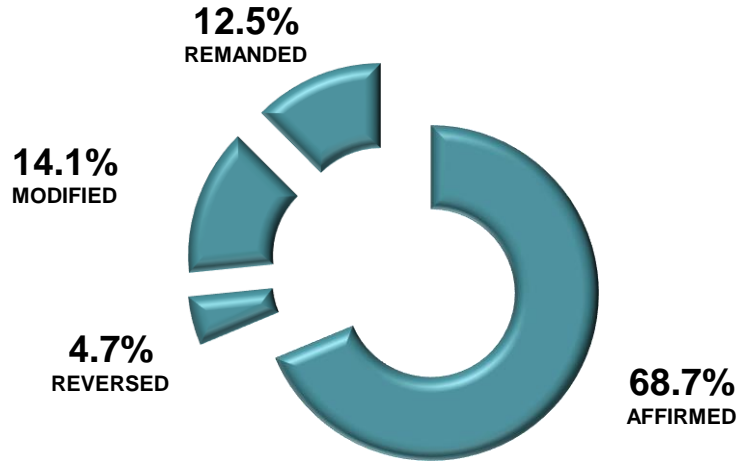
DECISIONS	NUMBER	PERCENT
SUSTAINED the deficiency or other action	40	62.5%
CANCELED the deficiency or another action	2	3.1%
MODIFIED the deficiency or other action	14	21.9%
REMANDED the matter to the ALJ	8	12.5%

BREAKDOWN OF DECISIONS BY TAX

TAX	NUMBER	PERCENT
SALES	28	43.7%
INCOME	22	34.3%
CORPORATION TAX	8	12.5%
DMV LICENSES	4	6.3%
MISCELLANEOUS	2	3.2%
TOTAL	64	100%

TRIBUNAL DISPOSITION OF ALJ DETERMINATIONS

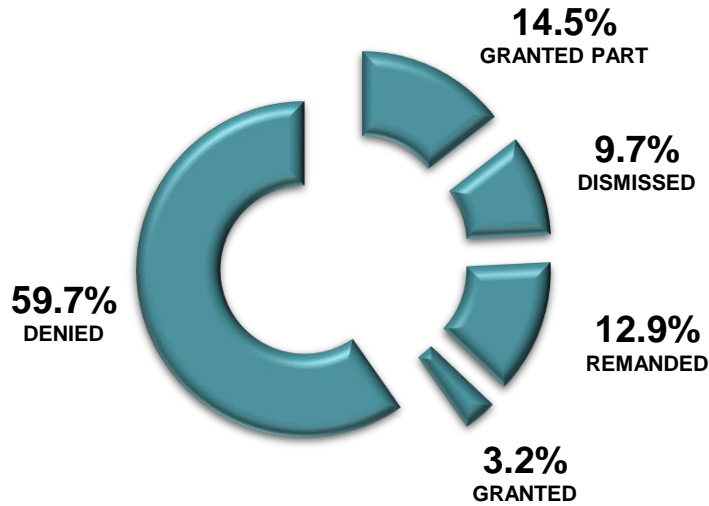
During the fiscal year 2015-2016, the Tribunal issued **64** decisions reviewing determinations of Administrative Law Judges. Of that total:



DECISIONS	NUMBER	PERCENT
AFFIRMED the ALJ determination	44	68.7%
REVERSED the ALJ determination	3	4.7%
MODIFIED the ALJ determination	9	14.1%
REMANDED the matter to ALJ	8	12.5%

TRIBUNAL DISPOSITION OF PETITIONER EXCEPTIONS

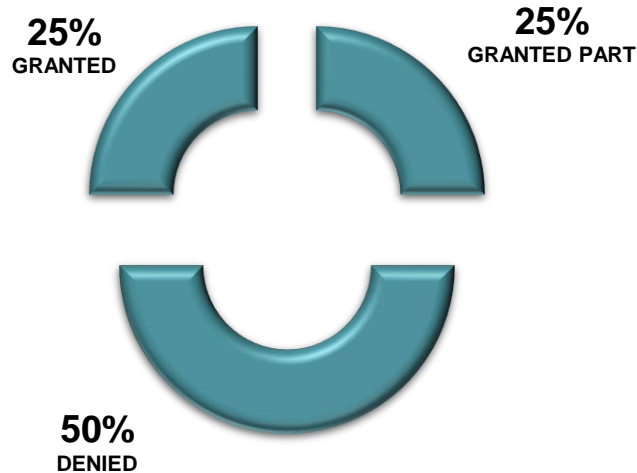
During the fiscal year 2015-2016, the Tribunal rendered **62** decisions with respect to exceptions filed by Petitioners. Two of these decisions involved matters in which both parties filed exceptions. Of that total:



DECISIONS	NUMBER	PERCENT
GRANTED Petitioner's exception	2	3.2%
DENIED Petitioner's exception	37	59.7%
GRANTED PART of Petitioner's exception	9	14.5%
DISMISSED Petitioner's exception	6	9.7%
REMANDED the matter to ALJ	8	12.9%

TRIBUNAL DISPOSITION OF DIVISION EXCEPTIONS

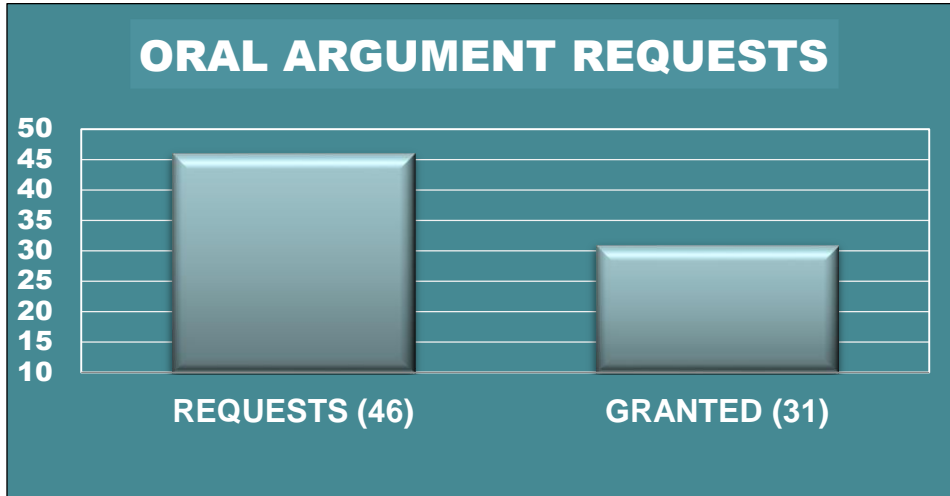
During the fiscal year 2015-2016, the Tribunal rendered 4 decisions with respect to exceptions filed by the Division of Taxation. Two of these decisions involved matters in which both parties filed exceptions. Of that total:



DECISIONS	NUMBER	PERCENT
GRANTED Division's exception	1	25%
DENIED Division's exception	2	50%
GRANTED PART of Division's exception	1	25%

ORAL ARGUMENT REQUESTS

During the fiscal year 2015-2016 oral argument was requested in **72%** of the cases. The Tribunal granted oral argument in **67%** of the cases in which it was requested.



AVERAGE ELAPSED TIME

The average elapsed time between the later of the oral argument date or the last brief date and the issuance of the decision was: Mean **5.9** months and Median **5.9** months.

JUDICIAL REVIEW

During the fiscal year 2015-2016, **5** Tribunal decisions were subject to judicial review as provided in Article 78 of New York’s Civil Practice Law and Rules.