



**State of Minnesota
Department of Finance**

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January 25, 2005

The Minnesota Legislature
State Capitol
St. Paul, Minnesota

To the 2005 Legislature:

I respectfully submit for your consideration the Governor's FY 2006-07 budget proposal for the judicial branch agencies, including the Supreme Court, the Court of Appeals, the Trial Courts, the Legal Profession Boards, and the Board of Public Defense. The Governor respects the separation of powers and the desire of constitutional officers and officials in the judicial and legislative branches to independently present their budget requests directly to the legislature without specific recommendations from the Governor. However, since the Governor is required by law to submit a balanced budget to the legislature, it is necessary to identify funding for those offices as part of preparing a complete budget.

For the judicial branch, the Governor recommends an increase of \$20 million to recognize current caseload increases and other cost pressures in the criminal justice area. The funding recommendation has been pro-rated among the judicial branch agencies supported by the general fund. The Legal Profession Boards are fully funded by fees collected under court rules.

The Governor recommends funding for significant changes in the sentencing of sex and methamphetamine offenders. His budget includes \$22.2 million for additional trial and other court-related costs anticipated for the Trial Courts and the Board of Public Defense as a result of these sentencing changes.

The Governor recommends \$15.4 million for the Board of Public Defense relating to the funding deficiency in the agency's FY 2005 budget as a result of the determination that the public defender co-pay statute is unconstitutional. He has separately recommended funding of the current year deficiency in legislation that he has requested the legislature pass early in the current session.

Finally, the Governor recommends a \$10 increase in the criminal/traffic surcharge the state currently collects, raising it from \$60 to \$70. This increase is expected to raise \$11.4 million for the general fund in the FY 2006-07 biennium, which will help fund public safety and criminal justice initiatives in his budget.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Peggy S. Ingison".

Peggy Ingison
Commissioner

Dollars in Thousands

	Current		Governor Recomm.		Biennium
	FY2004	FY2005	FY2006	FY2007	2006-07
<u>Direct Appropriations by Fund</u>					
General					
Current Appropriation	175,287	196,633	196,633	196,633	393,266
Recommended	175,287	196,633	230,712	234,342	465,054
Change		0	34,079	37,709	71,788
% Biennial Change from 2004-05					25%
<u>Expenditures by Fund</u>					
Direct Appropriations					
General	165,502	206,439	230,712	234,342	465,054
Statutory Appropriations					
General	459	419	428	442	870
Federal	463	463	205	205	410
Miscellaneous Agency	717	1,452	17	18	35
Total	167,141	208,773	231,362	235,007	466,369
<u>Expenditures by Category</u>					
Total Compensation	139,790	164,870	184,941	184,978	369,919
Other Operating Expenses	26,430	42,444	46,421	50,029	96,450
Local Assistance	221	24	0	0	0
Other Financial Transactions	700	1,435	0	0	0
Total	167,141	208,773	231,362	235,007	466,369
<u>Expenditures by Program</u>					
Trial Courts	167,141	208,773	231,362	235,007	466,369
Total	167,141	208,773	231,362	235,007	466,369
Full-Time Equivalent (FTE)	2,028.4	2,330.6	2,661.9	2,661.9	

TRIAL COURTS

Change Summary

<i>Dollars in Thousands</i>				
	FY2005	Governor's Recomm.		Biennium
		FY2006	FY2007	2006-07
Fund: GENERAL				
FY 2005 Appropriations	196,633	196,633	196,633	393,266
Technical Adjustments				
Current Law Base Change		23,558	23,588	47,146
Subtotal - Forecast Base	196,633	220,191	220,221	440,412
Change Items				
Caseload Increase	0	6,921	6,921	13,842
Sex and Meth Offender Sentencing Changes	0	3,600	7,200	10,800
Total Governor's Recommendations	196,633	230,712	234,342	465,054
Fund: GENERAL				
Planned Statutory Spending	419	428	442	870
Total Governor's Recommendations	419	428	442	870
Fund: FEDERAL				
Planned Statutory Spending	463	205	205	410
Total Governor's Recommendations	463	205	205	410
Fund: MISCELLANEOUS AGENCY				
Planned Statutory Spending	1,452	17	18	35
Total Governor's Recommendations	1,452	17	18	35

TRIAL COURTS

Change Item: Caseload Increase

Fiscal Impact (\$000s)	FY 2006	FY 2007	FY 2008	FY 2009
General Fund				
Expenditures	\$6,921	\$6,921	\$6,921	\$6,921
Revenues	0	0	0	0
Other Fund				
Expenditures	0	0	0	0
Revenues	0	0	0	0
Net Fiscal Impact	\$6,921	\$6,921	\$6,921	\$6,921

Recommendation

The Governor recommends \$20 million in additional funding for the judicial branch in the FY 2006-07 biennium to recognize current caseload increases and other cost pressures in the criminal justice area. The funding recommendation amount has been pro-rated among the Supreme Court, Court of Appeals, Trial Courts, and Board of Public Defense. The Governor makes no specific recommendations on judicial branch agency change requests.

Background

The Governor respects the separation of powers and the desire of officials in the judicial and legislative branches and other constitutional officers to independently present their requests directly to the legislature without specific recommendations from the Governor. However, since the Governor is required by law to submit a balanced budget to the legislature, it is necessary to identify funding for those offices as part of preparing a complete and balanced budget.

The Governor's recommendation for the judicial branch recognizes that caseload increases and other cost pressures provide constant challenges for officials to administer justice in a fair and timely manner.

Relationship to Base Budget

Base funding for the judicial branch agencies in the FY 2006-07 biennium is \$621 million. For purposes of calculating the distribution of this funding, ongoing costs for a deficiency request by the Board of Public Defense were added to the underlying base amount. With that adjustment, the funding increase recommended is about 3.14% for judicial branch agencies.

TRIAL COURTS

Change Item: Sex and Meth Offender Sentencing Changes

Fiscal Impact (\$000s)	FY 2006	FY 2007	FY 2008	FY 2009
General Fund				
Expenditures	\$3,600	\$7,200	\$7,200	\$7,200
Revenues	0	0	0	0
Other Fund				
Expenditures	0	0	0	0
Revenues	0	0	0	0
Net Fiscal Impact	\$3,600	\$7,200	\$7,200	\$7,200

Recommendation

The Governor recommends significant changes in the sentencing of sex and methamphetamine offenders as part of his plan to make Minnesotans safer.

Background

Recent events have heightened concerns about ensuring that dangerous sex offenders are kept locked up, in some cases for the rest of their lives. The Governor will set out new sentencing policies and practices for sex offenders. The proposal will include life sentences for the worst offenders and increased sentences for most other sex offenders. The Governor is also proposing changes in methamphetamine sentencing, including longer sentences for using precursor substances to manufacture this very dangerous drug. This funding initiative will provide the judicial resources to cover these sentencing changes.

Cost estimates presented in this budget for the Trial Courts, Board of Public Defense, and Department of Corrections are preliminary and subject to change based on the details of the plan.

Relationship to Base Budget

The Trial Courts and the Board of Public Defense will incur costs for additional cases and lengthier trials. The Department of Corrections will incur costs for additional prison beds.

Key Measures

Dangerous sex and methamphetamine offenders will receive longer sentences. Minnesotans will be safer when these offenders are off the street.

Statutory Change: To be available at a later date.



THE SUPREME COURT OF MINNESOTA
MINNESOTA JUDICIAL CENTER
25 REV. DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. BLVD.
SAINT PAUL, MINNESOTA 55155

CHAMBERS OF
KATHLEEN A. BLATZ
CHIEF JUSTICE

(651) 296-3380

January 18, 2005

The 2005 Minnesota Legislature:

On behalf of the hundreds of thousands of litigants, 298 judges, and approximately 2900 employees of the judicial branch of the State of Minnesota, I transmit the FY 06-07 budget request for the judicial branch.

In addition to the FY 06-07 base budget for the Supreme Court, the Court of Appeals, and the Trial Courts, I am transmitting five change requests highlighting additional needs of the judicial branch for the next biennium. Those requests are:

- \$31,853,000 in projected salary and insurance increases to Maintain Core Justice Operations by funding current staffing levels
- \$ 1,776,000 for caseload growth in mandated services of interpreters and psychological services
- \$ 470,000 for Expedited Child Support adjudication
- \$ 176,000 for Court of Appeals to restore retired judge funding
- \$ 7,000,000 for Civil Legal Services for the Poor

The Minnesota judiciary is in a period of transition on a number of legislatively authorized, mission-critical initiatives including the completion of the Minnesota Court Information System (a key component of CriMNet); transfer of Districts 6 and 10 to state funding; and aggressive efforts to meet federal and state mandates regarding protection of children in cases of abuse and neglect and the establishment and modification of child support. At the same time the judiciary is undertaking these major initiatives, enormous caseload pressures continue, including the pervasive impact of methamphetamines on nearly every case type. The judiciary recognizes that in a time of budgetary restraint there is a need for a shared solution. However, we believe the Minnesota judicial branch is different and unique as compared to many Executive Branch agencies and other state funded programs.

Constitutional Promise to Minnesota Citizens

The Minnesota Constitution dictates the manner and boundaries under which the Judiciary must operate. Article I, Section 8 provides:

“Every person is entitled to a certain remedy in the laws for all injuries or wrongs which he may receive to his person, property or character and to obtain justice freely and without purchase, completely and without denial, promptly and without delay, conformable to the laws.”

Other provisions of the Minnesota Constitution promise citizens a right to a speedy and public trial by an impartial jury. It is imperative that the judicial branch carries out its constitutional and legal mandates to protect the rights and safety of our citizens. In order to meet these requirements, we must provide court services “promptly and without delay.” To do so, courts must be staffed sufficiently to ensure prompt service because justice delayed is justice denied. The judicial branch is also required by law to ensure that courts, even those in rural areas, remain open for those residents who need to seek justice. Inadequate funding of the court’s budget will threaten the ability of the judiciary to meet these constitutional and statutory imperatives.

The budget that we have proposed provides timely adjudication of the more than 2 million cases presented to the courts for disposition each year. It protects public safety by the fair, but swift disposition of criminal cases and the enforcement of court sanctions, including collection of fines, in those cases. It protects the most vulnerable of our citizens -- children -- through guardians ad litem who advocate for their best interests and through additional child support collection efforts. By providing sufficient resources to maintain our current staffing levels and meet justice mandates, this budget protects the rights of each citizen to due process, to well reasoned decisions, and to the fair and impartial administration of justice.

No Control Over Workload

The Minnesota judiciary is an open door for justice in the state. Our workload is dictated by the will of prosecutors enforcing state and local laws, the desires of citizens and businesses for redress, and the needs of children and other vulnerable citizens for protection. The judiciary is unable to turn away those who enter the courthouse and has an impact on the lives of citizens from birth to death. Unlike other agencies, we do not run programs and have no discretionary budget to cut. All resources of the court system support the adjudication of matters brought to us by other entities.

Resources to fund current staffing levels; growth in mandated services for interpreters, psychological services, and expedited child support; and increases for civil legal services and for Court of Appeals retired judge use are needed to meet the fundamental constitutional and statutory mandates of the judicial branch. I am therefore presenting to the Legislature for its consideration a FY 06-07 budget request, which funds these core services.

Very truly yours,



Kathleen A. Blatz
Chief Justice

Trial Courts

	FY06	FY07	Total
Adjusted Base Budget	\$ 220,191	\$ 220,221	\$ 440,412
<i>Change Requests:</i>			
Maintain Core Justice Operations	9,723	18,543	28,266
Interpreter and Psychological Services Mandates	676	1,100	1,776
Total Request	\$ 230,590	\$ 239,864	\$ 470,454

More than 2,000,000 cases are disposed of annually by 275 trial court judges and their support staff. Caseloads have increased significantly in the last decade and the time to process each case has dropped dramatically in many critical areas.

The trial courts are implementing legislatively authorized mission-critical initiatives including MNCIS/CriMNet, the Children's Justice Initiative, and the transfer to state funding of all trial court operation costs. The transfer to state funding exchanges state aid (Homestead and Agriculture Credit Aid) dollars and revenue paid to counties for a general fund appropriation to the courts. Court administration offices in the twelve counties in the Sixth and Tenth Judicial Districts will be transferred to state funding July 2005, which will complete this 15-year initiative.

Total base funding for the Trial Courts for FY06-07 is \$440,412,000. If the change level requests were granted, the FY06-07 total base funding would be 6.8% more than the FY06-07 adjusted base budget.

The District Courts are requesting additional funding to retain current staffing levels as follows:

- **Maintain Core Justice Initiatives** to fund employee compensation costs subject to collective bargaining and projected insurance cost increases to be negotiated by the Department of Employee Relations.
- **Interpreter and Psychological Services Mandates** to meet state and federal mandates by providing services to the additional citizens that do not speak English and to fund the additional psychological evaluations required.

TRIAL COURTS

Agency Change Item: Maintain Core Justice Operations

Fiscal Impact (\$000s)	FY 2006	FY 2007	FY 2008	FY 2009
General Fund				
Expenditures	\$9,723	\$18,543	\$18,543	\$18,543
Revenues	0	0	0	0
Other Fund				
Expenditures	0	0	0	0
Revenues	0	0	0	0
Net Fiscal Impact	\$9,723	\$18,543	\$18,543	\$18,543

Recommendation

Agency Request: Submitted for Reference Only

Background

The Supreme Court is responsible for pay plans for the approximately 2,850 court employees at all levels within the judicial branch and is responsible for administering the payroll for judges at the appellate and trial court levels. In addition to the eight judicial districts that are currently state funded, the state will be transitioning the remaining two districts to state funding in FY 2006. This will increase the number of employees that are state funded by approximately 350. Employees will be integrated into the state pay plan during the first year of the biennium. Salary and benefit costs will be incurred as employees are transferred from the disparate county pay and benefit programs.

The judicial branch non-judicial pay plan consists of the same three basic components as the executive branch: across the board adjustments to the salary range, merit or step increases, and the insurance benefit program negotiated by the Department of Employee Relations for all state employees.

During the FY 2006-07 biennium the judicial branch has estimated that additional salary funding will be necessary to implement a pay plan commensurate with other negotiated state and local agreements and to provide a salary increase for judges in FY 2006 and FY 2007. Especially problematic is the expected double digit cost increase for insurance costs.

Relationship to Base Budget

This request represents a 6.4% increase to the Trial Court operations biennial base budget.

Key Measures

Failure to fund negotiated pay plans and mandated employee health insurance will result in layoffs. These will significantly impact the ability of the courts to accomplish their constitutional role of adjudicating disputes.

Alternatives Considered

Because human resources costs are greater than 85% of the judicial branch, the effective alternatives available to fund salary increases are few. A reduction in the workforce is the most likely and least desirable.

TRIAL COURTS

Agency Change Item: Interpreter

Fiscal Impact (\$000s)	FY 2006	FY 2007	FY 2008	FY 2009
General Fund				
Expenditures	\$300	\$600	\$600	\$600
Revenues	0	0	0	0
Other Fund				
Expenditures	0	0	0	0
Revenues	0	0	0	0
Net Fiscal Impact	\$300	\$600	\$600	\$600

Recommendation

Agency Request. Submitted for Reference Only

Background

Both federal and state law mandate that courts provide interpreter services for individuals who are "handicapped in communication" (M.S. 611.31 (2002)). This includes both deaf/hard of hearing and non-English speaking persons.

The past decade has seen a dramatic, even exponential increase in the demand for court interpreter services in Minnesota. The 1993 Minnesota Race Bias Task Force Report identified provision of adequate court interpreter services as a critical need in assuring equal access to justice for all Minnesota citizens. The dramatic increase in demand for interpreter services is reflected in the nearly tenfold increase in annual interpreter expenses in the period from 1992 (approx. \$300,000) to 2004 (approx. \$2.7 million).

The increase in interpreter need has paralleled the increase in the number of non-English speaking persons in Minnesota during this same period, most notably the influx of substantial numbers of Hmong- and Somali-speaking immigrants. Currently, the Minnesota Court Interpreter Program maintains a roster of nearly 900 interpreters in over 100 languages. The languages for which interpreters are currently in highest demand are Spanish, Hmong, Somali and American Sign Language (ASL), respectively.

The need for interpreter services (both current and projected) is not confined solely to the Twin Cities metropolitan area. Substantial communities of non-English speaking and deaf and hard of hearing persons currently exist (or are developing) throughout the state, including, for example, a substantial Somali-speaking community in Olmsted County, a Laotian-speaking community in Roseau County, an Anuak-speaking community in Nobles County, and Spanish-speaking communities throughout greater Minnesota.

The Court Interpreter Program became state-funded on 7-1-01. In order to bring greater consistency and predictability to interpreter costs, the Supreme Court implemented a statewide Interpreter Payment Policy in November 2001. The policy sets maximum and minimum rates for payment of interpreters that vary depending on the interpreter's qualification and skill level. The rates set by the policy have remained unchanged since 2001. In the several years preceding implementation of the payment policy, annual statewide interpreter expenses were generally increasing at a rate of approximately 21% per year (averaged out over the five years from 1996-2001). In the years since the payment policy was implemented, annual statewide interpreter expenses have been generally increasing at a rate of approximately 11% per year (averaged over the period from 2001-2004).

The demand for court interpreter services is expected to continue increasing with the influx of new immigrants and other non-English speaking persons into the state, including the current group of Hmong refugees relocating to Minnesota from the Wat Tham Krabok camp in Thailand. A report published by the Minnesota State Demographic Center in June 2004 anticipates continued growth in non-English speaking populations.

Virtually all of the current appropriation is expended to pay the people who actually interpret in court and a very small number of court administrative staff (4.0 FTE statewide) who coordinate and schedule interpreter services. There is no overhead that can be reallocated to meet this need. The program makes extensive use of interpreters on a freelance basis. This creates a flexible and efficient workforce for this program.

Relationship to Base Budget

Federal law, Minnesota statutes and constitutional due process requirements mandate the provision of interpreter services for non-English speaking and deaf and hard of hearing persons. Based on historical increases and demographic projections, a 16.7% increase is requested for the Interpreter biennial base budget.

Key Measures

The key measure for this change request will be the number of deaf and hard of hearing and non-English speaking persons for whom interpreter services are provided. This will be reflected primarily in the total statewide number of requests for court interpreter services.

These performance measures are directly related to two of the Minnesota Judiciary's four Strategic Focus Areas – namely, Access to Justice, and Public Trust and Confidence. As noted in the 1993 Race Bias Task Force Report, timely and adequate court interpreter services are critical to insuring access to justice for non-English speaking citizens. Such services are also critical to maintaining public trust and confidence in the state's courts.

Alternatives Considered

Data on interpreter requests and interpreter utilization are continually being monitored and analyzed in order to identify program efficiencies and cost-saving strategies. To date, the primary cost-saving strategy has been the hiring of staff interpreters in judicial districts where the demand among particular languages (most notably, Spanish, Hmong or Somali) has been sufficient to make this option feasible and cost-effective. Other strategies that are currently either being contemplated or utilized include:

- ⇒ Reassignment of interpreters whose primary assignment has either been cancelled, or completed well before the time allotted. For assignments of longer duration, this can also include reassignment across district lines.
- ⇒ Sharing of staff interpreters across district lines, where feasible.
- ⇒ Use of telephone interpreting where feasible and appropriate (i.e., for proceedings of limited scope, complexity and/or duration). This can help to reduce expenses for interpreter travel, especially in non-metro counties and districts.

In 2003 "best practice recommendations" were developed and disseminated to court staff around the state in an effort to maximize efficiency in the use of interpreter services; e.g.:

- ⇒ Schedule interpreter cases on the same day of the week when possible.
- ⇒ Schedule cases on the calendar so that minimal "waiting time" has to be paid to the interpreter.
- ⇒ Recruit interpreters (including staff interpreters, where cost effective) in languages/regions/localities where the need is significant and the supply is scarce (in order to reduce the amount of travel time paid to interpreters to travel from other parts of the state).
- ⇒ Consolidate assignments with same language interpreters in the same and/or nearby counties in order to maximize utilization and minimize billed travel time.

No additional significant reductions or efficiencies are possible without risking violation of federal (Americans with Disabilities Act for deaf and hard of hearing persons; Federal Department of Justice regulations for Limited English Proficiency persons), state or constitutional due process requirements.

TRIAL COURTS

Agency Change Item: Psychological Services

Fiscal Impact (\$000s)	FY 2006	FY 2007	FY 2008	FY 2009
General Fund				
Expenditures	\$376	\$500	\$500	\$500
Revenues	0	0	0	0
Other Fund				
Expenditures	0	0	0	0
Revenues	0	0	0	0
Net Fiscal Impact	\$376	\$500	\$500	\$500

Recommendation

Agency Request: Submitted for Reference Only

Background

M.S. 480.182 provides that the courts will pay the court related costs of examinations under Rule 20 of the Criminal Rules of Procedure and under M.S. Chapter 253B, the civil commitments, including commitments of persons who are mentally ill and dangerous, persons with sexual psychopathic personalities and sexually dangerous persons. Each court in counties throughout the state contract with licensed psychologists, licensed psychiatrists, and licensed medical doctors for these services. In some instances the services of the State Security Hospitals are used. In those instances a daily rate for the examination costs is charged for commitment examinations and a flat fee for Rule 20 examinations is charged. The Department of Human Services usually sets service rates for the next year in June.

Court costs are increasing for several reasons:

- ⇒ Increased commitment petitions under the sexual psychopath or sexually dangerous persons statute is anticipated. Since 2003 the Department of Corrections (DOC) has increased the number of sex offender referrals to county attorneys for civil commitment evaluation. In FY 2004 exclusive of the December 2003 DOC referrals, DOC referred 114 cases. The highest number of referrals in a single year in the previous decade had been 58. The average number of monthly referrals from 2001 through November 2003 was 12. The DOC estimated annual referral rate for FY 2006 and FY 2007 is 80 cases. The examination costs for completed cases generally ranges from \$5-10,000 with an average of approximately \$7,000.
- ⇒ The availability of qualified service providers is limited in parts of the state and for certain types of examinations. In the past two years some hourly rates have increased in a range from 2.5% to 25%. Additional increases are anticipated.
- ⇒ Commitment examinations were provided by a hospital in one county under its charter free of charge until the state became responsible for the trial court costs.

Relationship to Base Budget

Before the changes noted above occurred, the actual expenditures in FY 2002 for psychological examinations were \$2.483 million and in FY 2003 \$2.834 million. In FY 2004 a total of \$3.109 million was spent for mandated psychological examinations. Cost increases in the FY 2004-05 biennium were met by cutting other program areas. Those cuts are not sustainable.

This request represents approximately a 14% increase over the base biennial budget.

Key Measures

Funding for Rule 20 and commitment psychiatric examinations is required by due process considerations.

- ⇒ Increased sexual psychopath and sexually dangerous persons petitions. An estimated 50% of the 68 additional referred petitions (80 estimated referrals less 12 average annual 2001-2003 referrals) are estimated to seek commitment examinations at an average cost of \$7,000 per petition. An annual cost of \$238,000 is estimated.
- ⇒ Escalating examination rate costs (\$93,000 in FY 2006 assuming a 3% increase and \$217,000 assuming a 7% increase in FY 2007).

TRIAL COURTS

Agency Change Item: Psychological Services

⇒ Replacement of free examination services to the county at \$45,000 each year.

<u>Summary</u>	<u>FY 2006</u>	<u>FY 2007</u>
Increased Number of Sexually Dangerous Commitment Petitions	\$238,000	\$238,000
Exam Rate Increase	\$93,000	\$217,000
Replacement of Formerly Free Services	<u>\$45,000</u>	<u>\$45,000</u>
Total Estimated Increase	\$376,000	\$500,000

Alternatives Considered

The courts have developed standardized court orders to clarify the scope and focus Criminal Rule 20 psychiatric examinations with the expectation of reducing costs. In addition a list of frequently used vendors and their rates has been made available with the expectation of allowing courts to reduce costs.

Agency Purpose

The Minnesota's trial courts resolve citizens' criminal cases and civil disputes.

- ⇒ **Mission** – To provide justice through a system that assures equal access for the fair, competent, and timely resolution of cases and controversies.
- ⇒ **Vision** – The general public and those who use the court system will refer to it as accessible, fair, consistent, responsive, free of discrimination, independent, and well managed.

Core Functions

The trial court has original statewide jurisdiction in all civil and criminal actions within district boundaries. There are 10 judicial districts, and 275 district court judges. A family court division, juvenile court division, probate division, conciliation court division, and a traffic and ordinance violations bureau exist in the district court.

In support of these core functions, the trial courts are implementing the following service strategies:

- ⇒ Set case processing and case management standards, and institute monitoring programs for exceptions to ensure timely disposition of cases.
- ⇒ Develop programs to allow litigants meaningful access to the court process, e.g., court interpreter programs, free legal services for the poor, and self-help programs for persons who choose to guide their own litigation.
- ⇒ Explore ways to use technology to improve and expedite the work of the courts, including making justice more consumer oriented.
- ⇒ Develop programs and technologies to provide judges the critical information needed to make timely and sound case and policy decisions.
- ⇒ Delegate legal research and where possible draft decision writing to law clerks, freeing judges to spend more time hearing cases or directing the case dispositional activities.
- ⇒ Review and evaluate court practices and policies to identify the need for systemic improvement through the Conference of Chief Judges and committees established by the Supreme Court.
- ⇒ Explore greater integration and coordination with other justice and social service agencies.
- ⇒ Develop an adequate and stable funding base, and transfer funding responsibilities from the counties to the state to ensure the uniform implementation of state mandates and policies.

Operations

With more than two million cases filed each year, the work of the trial courts has a substantial impact on Minnesotans.

Judges are assisted in their adjudicative work by law clerks (who perform legal research) and court reporters (who record trial proceedings). Court administration staff at the county and district level manage scheduling, case flow, finance, personnel, and juries.

At A Glance

- ◆ Each year, there are more than two million cases filed in Minnesota's trial courts.
- ◆ Trial court judges in Minnesota are among the hardest working in the country. They handle an average of 49% more cases each than do judges in states with comparable court systems.
- ◆ Caseloads continue to increase while time per case is being cut.
- ◆ The Legislative Auditor found that from FY 1996-01, filings of major cases statewide in trial courts increased twice as fast as expenditures on the judiciary.
- ◆ The judiciary is completing a massive transformation, moving from a county-funded to state-funded system. In FY 2006 all Trial Courts will be state funded.
- ◆ The trial courts are implementing its new Minnesota Court Information System (MNCIS) technology application in counties throughout the state.
- ◆ The judicial branch operates in a constantly changing environment.
 - ⇒ Laws, case types, and legal sanctions change annually.
 - ⇒ Caseload volume is determined by other branches and levels of government.
- ◆ The Minnesota courts regularly review their effectiveness by monitoring:
 - ⇒ case filing trends;
 - ⇒ case clearance rates; and
 - ⇒ elapsed case time from filing to disposition.

The Conference of Chief Judges (CCJ) is the elected, policy-making body of the trial courts, responsible for budgeting and overall governance of administrative matters. It is assisted by the judicial district administrators and the State Court Administrator's Office.

Budget

Of the funding for the Trial Courts, over 99% is from General Fund direct appropriations. Federal (and other) grants represent a very small, but growing source of funding. Another small source of funding which will increase over time is reimbursements assessed for Guardian ad Litem services.

Of the Trial Court Expenditures, 91% is for personnel costs. Of this amount, 23% is judge costs, and 58% is costs for non-judicial personnel. Mandated services (which include Guardian ad Litem, Interpreter, Psychological Exams, jury, and In Forma Pauperis) add up to 10% of the cost of the Trial Courts. This includes personnel costs for staff guardians ad litem and interpreters, as well as those paid on a contract basis.

The Trial Courts have 2,661.86 full-time equivalent employees.

Contact

Judge Dennis J. Murphy
 Chair, Conference of Chief Judges
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 Thief River Falls, Minnesota 56701
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 Home Page: <http://www.courts.state.mn.us>

Sue Dosal
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 Saint Paul, Minnesota 55155
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TRIAL COURTS

Agency Revenue Summary

Dollars in Thousands

	Actual FY2004	Budgeted FY2005	Governor's Recomm. FY2006 FY2007		Biennium 2006-07
<u>Non Dedicated Revenue:</u>					
Other Revenues:					
General	16,569	21,507	28,919	28,993	57,912
Total Non-Dedicated Receipts	16,569	21,507	28,919	28,993	57,912
<u>Dedicated Receipts:</u>					
Grants:					
Federal	408	460	200	200	400
Other Revenues:					
General	637	519	514	509	1,023
Federal	33	0	0	0	0
Miscellaneous Agency	700	1,435	0	0	0
Other Sources:					
Miscellaneous Agency	18	17	17	17	34
Total Dedicated Receipts	1,796	2,431	731	726	1,457
Agency Total Revenue	18,365	23,938	29,650	29,719	59,369