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Court of Appeals

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<https://www.mncourts.gov/>

AT A GLANCE

The 19 judges serving on the Court of Appeals hear cases in three-judge panels in courthouses throughout the state. In 2021, 1,558 cases were filed with the Court of Appeals.

Court of Appeals decisions are the final ruling in about 95 percent of the appeals filed each year. Only about five percent of the Court’s dispositions are accepted by the Minnesota Supreme Court for further review.

The Court of Appeals serves all Minnesota citizens.

PURPOSE

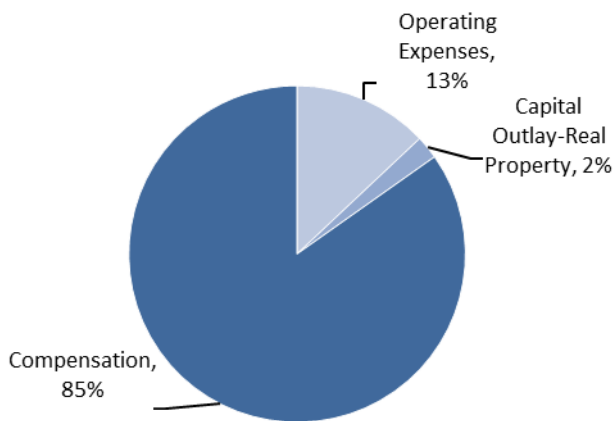
The mission of the Judicial Branch is to provide justice through a system that assures equal access for the fair and timely resolution of cases and controversies.

The Minnesota Court of Appeals provides the citizens of Minnesota with prompt and deliberate review of all final decisions of the trial courts, state agencies and local governments.

- The Court of Appeals has jurisdiction over all final decisions of the district courts, except first degree murder convictions, which are appealed directly to the Supreme Court. The Court of Appeals also has jurisdiction to review certain decisions of administrative agencies and local governments.

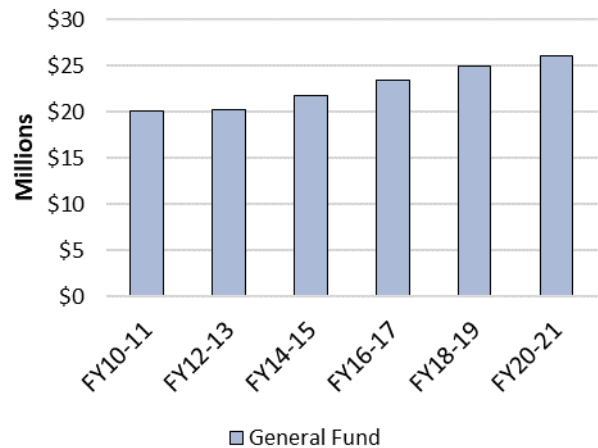
BUDGET

**Spending by Category
FY 2021 Actual**



Source: Budget Planning & Analysis System (BPAS)

Historical Spending



Source: Consolidated Fund Statement

The Court of Appeals’ fiscal year (FY) 2021 expenditures were \$13,383,000. The budget is funded 100% through the state general fund.

STRATEGIES

The mission of the Judicial Branch is *“To provide justice through a system that assures equal access for the fair and timely resolution of cases and controversies.”* The Court of Appeals conducts its functions in support of three strategic goals to deliver its mission:

1. Access to Justice - *A justice system that is open, affordable, understandable, and provides appropriate levels of service to all users.*

Ensuring access to justice for all is an enduring commitment for Minnesota's court system. It is also an increasingly challenging concern given changing court customer expectations, shifting demographics, and increased competition for scarce resources.

2. Effective Administration of Justice - *A justice system that adopts approaches and processes for the fair and just resolution of all cases.*

Over the last two decades, Minnesota courts have worked diligently to become increasingly efficient and effective. The Judicial Branch is focused on being a well-managed court system that seeks innovative ways to promote justice for individual litigants in individual cases.

3. Public Trust and Accountability - *A justice system that engenders public trust and confidence through impartial decision-making and accountability for the use of public resources.*

The Judicial Branch is accountable to the public. It is critical that the Branch maintain and continuously improve public trust and accountability, and it must meet this challenge by collaborating with court customers to eliminate disparities in the court system.

As part of the court's effort to expedite justice and to make access to the appellate system less burdensome and expensive, the court's 19 judges sit in three-judge panels and travel to locations throughout Minnesota to hear oral arguments.

By law, the Court must issue a decision within 90 days after oral arguments. This deadline is the shortest imposed on any appellate court in the nation. The Court expedites decisions on child protection cases, child custody cases, mental health commitments and other requested matters.

The Court of Appeals issues a published opinion, unpublished opinion, or order opinion on each case it considers on the merits.

RESULTS

It is the policy of the Minnesota Judicial Branch to establish core performance goals and to monitor key results that measure progress toward meeting these goals in order to ensure accountability of the Branch, improve overall operations of the court and enhance the public's trust and confidence in the Judiciary. Throughout the year the Court of Appeals reviews performance measure results. This review is shared with the Judicial Council (the Branch's governing body) twice a year.

The Court of Appeals has adopted the American Bar Association (ABA) standards for intermediate appellate courts, which measure cases from beginning (filing) to end (disposition). The goals are to have 75% of the cases disposed within 290 days of filing and 90% of cases disposed within 365 days of filing.

The COVID-19 pandemic had a dramatic impact on the Minnesota Judicial Branch and statewide court operations. In early March 2020, most in-person court proceedings were suspended, public access to court facilities was limited, and courthouse service windows were restricted to only telephone and email support. Currently all courthouses are open, and efforts are underway to address the significant challenges to the Judicial Branch's timeliness goals as a result of the pandemic.

Court of Appeals Cases Disposed Within 290 Days of Filing, 2019 - 2021

Court of Appeals Percentage of Cases Disposed Within 290 Days of Filing						
Goal = 75% of Cases						
	FY2019		FY2020		FY2021	
	# of cases	% of cases meeting objective	# of cases	% of cases meeting objective	# of cases	% of cases meeting objective
Civil	984	84%	957	92%	858	86%
Criminal	828	48%	892	52%	702	44%
Juvenile Protection	95	99%	87	99%	61	100%
Juvenile Delinquency	18	100%	15	100%	18	94%
Total Cases	1,912	69%	1,951	74%	1,639	68%

Percent of Court of Appeals Cases Disposed Within 365 Days of Filing

Court of Appeals Percentage of Cases Disposed Within 365 Days of Filing						
Goal = 90% of Cases						
	FY2019		FY2020		FY2021	
	# of cases	% of cases meeting objective	# of cases	% of cases meeting objective	# of cases	% of cases meeting objective
Civil	971	97%	957	99%	858	97%
Criminal	828	88%	892	88%	702	78%
Juvenile Protection	95	100%	87	100%	61	100%
Juvenile Delinquency	18	100%	15	100%	18	100%
Total Cases	1,912	93%	1,951	94%	1,639	89%

Data are from the *Judicial Branch 2021 Performance Measures – Key Results and Measures Annual Report*. The report can be found at www.mncourts.gov.

The Minnesota Constitution, Article VI, provides the legal authority for the Court of Appeals; https://www.revisor.mn.gov/constitution/#article_6. Minn. Stat. Chapter 480A; <https://www.revisor.mn.gov/statutes/cite/480A> provides the authority for Court of Appeals operations.

Court of Appeals

Agency Expenditure Overview

(Dollars in Thousands)

	Actual FY20	Actual FY21	Actual FY22	Estimate FY23	Forecast Base	
					FY24	FY25

Expenditures by Fund

1000 - General	12,617	13,383	12,938	14,126	13,574	13,574
Total	12,617	13,383	12,938	14,126	13,574	13,574
Biennial Change				1,064		84
Biennial % Change				4		0

Expenditures by Program

Court Of Appeals	12,617	13,383	12,938	14,126	13,574	13,574
Total	12,617	13,383	12,938	14,126	13,574	13,574

Expenditures by Category

Compensation	11,163	11,393	11,481	12,138	12,138	12,138
Operating Expenses	1,451	1,649	1,453	1,982	1,430	1,430
Grants, Aids and Subsidies			2			
Capital Outlay-Real Property		300				
Other Financial Transaction	3	41	3	6	6	6
Total	12,617	13,383	12,938	14,126	13,574	13,574

Full-Time Equivalent

	88.43	88.04	87.42	87.42	87.42	87.42
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(Dollars in Thousands)

	Actual FY20	Actual FY21	Actual FY22	Estimate FY23	Forecast Base	
					FY24	FY25
1000 - General						
Balance Forward In		220		552		
Direct Appropriation	12,831	13,163	13,490	13,574	13,574	13,574
Balance Forward Out	214		552			
Expenditures	12,617	13,383	12,938	14,126	13,574	13,574
Biennial Change in Expenditures				1,064		84
Biennial % Change in Expenditures				4		0
Full-Time Equivalents	88.43	88.04	87.42	87.42	87.42	87.42

(Dollars in Thousands)

	FY23	FY24	FY25	Biennium 2024-25
Direct				
Fund: 1000 - General				
FY2023 Appropriations	13,574	13,574	13,574	27,148
Forecast Base	13,574	13,574	13,574	27,148

Court of Appeals

FY 2024-25 Biennial Budget Change Item

Change Item Title: Maintain Core Justice Operations

Fiscal Impact (\$000s)	FY 2024	FY 2025	FY 2026	FY 2027
General Fund				
Expenditures	1,032	1,836	1,836	1,836
Revenues	0	0	0	0
Other Funds				
Expenditures	0	0	0	0
Revenues	0	0	0	0
Net Fiscal Impact = (Expenditures – Revenues)	1,032	1,836	1,836	1,836
FTEs	0	0	0	0

Request:

The Judicial Branch seeks \$2,868,000 in the FY2024-25 biennium to increase the compensation of Court of Appeals judges by 9% in FY2024 and 6% in FY2025, provide a 9% compensation pool for employees in FY2024 and 6% in FY2025, and to fund unavoidable health insurance premium increases in each year. The request represents a 10.56% increase in the Court of Appeals biennial base budget. The request maintains the current complement of employees.

Rationale/Background:

The budget request is focused on:

- Ensuring access, fairness and equity in the judicial system;
- Recognizing the vital role judges and employees have in ensuring access to justice; and
- Helping to maintain the quality and capacity of employees and judges necessary to effectively and efficiently address a growing caseload the long-term impacts from the pandemic.

In order to continue driving innovation in the state’s justice system, the Judicial Branch needs to retain and attract skilled employees and judges that can maintain and operate a modern, efficient, and technology-based court system.

Like many employers, the Judicial Branch faces significant issues with employee recruitment and retention. The share of employees who left employment with the Judicial Branch has increased by 42% since 2018, and the number of applicants for each open position with the Judicial Branch has fallen by 51% during that same time.

Minnesota also needs to ensure that judge salaries remain competitive with other public sector legal positions. Today, judges in some counties make less than the county attorneys who appear before them, and, in some cases, even less than the assistant county attorneys.

The Judicial Branch strives to ensure adequate compensation for its judges and staff. However, in recent years, the Judicial Branch compensation structure has fallen behind its public sector peers in both state and local governments.

Addressing this disparity within the public sector will ensure the Judicial Branch can continue to recruit and retain the skilled and experienced workforce it needs to continue driving innovation in the justice system and providing high-quality service to the people of Minnesota. This request will also recognize the incredible work judges and court staff have done throughout the pandemic to ensure access to justice in Minnesota.

Proposal:

The FY2024-25 biennial budget request maintains the current level of services provided by the Judicial Branch. The salary increases are meant to continue efforts to protect the rights of our citizens, ensure prompt services, and deliver efficient dispute resolution, through the Branch’s ability to retain and recruit qualified, skilled staff and judges.

Impact on Children and Families:

- The change level request does not directly impact children and families.
- There are no potential positive or negative impacts on children and families.
- The change level request will enable the Judicial Branch to continue efforts to attract and retain skilled and knowledgeable employees and judges who can maintain and operate a modern, efficient, and technology-based court system. In FY17, the Branch implemented a formal pay-for-performance structure for unrepresented staff and prioritized pay-for-performance in collective bargaining, ensuring that all employee increases are based on performance. These pay-for-performance structures recognize exemplary performance and serve as performance accountability mechanisms.

Equity and Inclusion:

- The change level request is not aimed at reducing or eliminating any disparities for Racial and Ethnic groups.
- There are no potential positive or negative impacts on the identified groups.
- The change level request will enable the Judicial Branch to continue efforts to attract and retain skilled and knowledgeable employees and judges who can maintain and operate a modern, efficient, and technology-based court system. In FY17, the Branch implemented a formal pay-for-performance structure for unrepresented staff and prioritized pay-for-performance in collective bargaining, ensuring that all employee increases are based on performance. These pay-for-performance structures recognize exemplary performance and serve as performance accountability mechanisms.

Tribal Consultation:

Does this proposal have a substantial direct effect on one or more of the Minnesota Tribal governments?

- Yes
- No

IT Costs

This is not an information technology proposal.

Results:

This proposal is intended to allow the Court of Appeals to continue to provide current levels of service and information to the public.

Statutory Change(s):

If the proposal will require statutory changes, include the statute number here.