

Table of Contents

Supreme Court

<i>Agency Profile</i>	1
Agency Expenditure Overview	5
Agency Financing by Fund	6
Agency Change Summary	8
<u>Additional Documents</u>	10
<i>Change Item Request - Maintain Core Justice Operations</i>	10
<i>Change Item Request - Cyber Security Ongoing Funding</i>	12
<i>Change Item Request - Justice Partner Public Access</i>	14
<i>Change Item Request - Digital Accessibility</i>	16

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AT A GLANCE

- The Supreme Court, consisting of seven members, is the highest court in Minnesota, serving as the final guardian of the Minnesota Constitution and interpreting and applying the United States Constitution.
- In 2023, 83 direct appeals and 560 petitions for further review were filed with the Supreme Court.
- The Chief Justice is the administrative head of the Judicial Branch, which includes 322 justices and judges and 2,500 employees.
- The Supreme Court serves all Minnesota citizens.

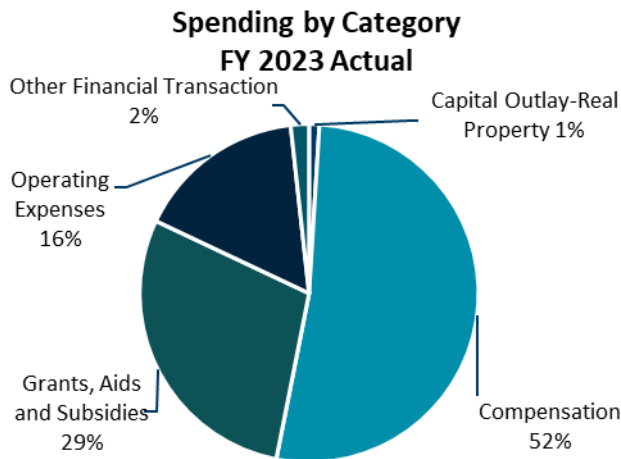
PURPOSE

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.

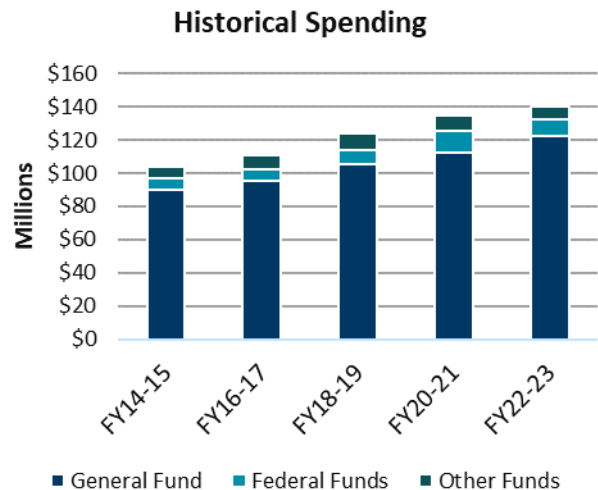
The Minnesota Supreme Court has original jurisdiction in remedial cases as prescribed by law, appellate jurisdiction over all cases, and supervisory jurisdiction over all courts in the state. Election contests and appeals for first-degree murder cases are automatically appealed to the Supreme Court. The Minnesota Supreme Court is solely responsible for the regulation of the practice of law and for judicial and lawyer discipline. The Court also promulgates rules of practice and procedure for the legal system in the state.

The Chief Justice is responsible for supervising administrative operations of the state court system.

BUDGET



Source: Budget Planning & Analysis System (BPAS)



Source: Consolidated Fund Statement

The Supreme Court spent \$74 million in fiscal year (FY) 2023. Of this amount, \$65 million (88 percent) was from general fund appropriations. The remaining \$9 million (12 percent) was funded through various sources, such as federal and local government grants, interest on lawyers’ trust accounts, and fees. Due to legislative action, the Board of Civil Legal Aid will become a new, independent agency on July 1, 2025 (beginning of FY 2026). Currently part of the Supreme Court, those Civil Legal Services expenditures are included in the historical budget data charts.

STRATEGIES

As the state's highest court, the Supreme Court hears oral arguments in the State Capitol Courtroom and the Minnesota Judicial Center. The Supreme Court reviews matters on certiorari, meaning it reviews cases to set precedent, to clarify legal issues, to resolve statutory conflicts, and to answer constitutional questions. The Supreme Court considers appeals from judgments from the Court of Appeals, the Workers Compensation Court of Appeals, and the Tax Court. It hears special term matters, motions, and petitions for extraordinary relief. The Supreme Court also hears mandatory cases, including first degree murder convictions and election contests. The Court promulgates rules of practice and procedure for the legal system in the state.

In addition to hearing appeals, the Supreme Court is responsible for regulating the practice of law and making recommendations for improvement of the judicial system.

The Chief Justice is responsible for supervising administrative operations of the state court system. The Chief Justice is assisted by the State Court Administrator's Office, which provides the administrative infrastructure for the Judicial Branch, including providing finance, human resources, technology, education, communications, research and evaluation, caseload management and cross-district judicial assignments. The Chief Justice serves as chair of the Judicial Council, the policy-making entity for the Judicial Branch.

The Supreme Court conducts its administrative functions in support of three strategic goals to deliver its mission:

- 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.
- 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.
- 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 Judicial 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.

The Judicial Council conducts a rigorous strategic planning process that guides the work of the State Court Administrator's Office in support of the Judicial Branch's three strategic goals. The strategic plan is reviewed and updated biennially.

In recent years, as part of the Judicial Council's strategic planning, the Minnesota Judicial Branch has engaged in a reform agenda to modernize and re-engineer the work of Minnesota's courts. These efforts have made Minnesota's court system more efficient and more convenient for court users, while increasing access to court records for customers and the public.

- Between 2012 and 2016, the eCourtMN Initiative transitioned Minnesota from paper-based court files to electronic case records. This transformation has made the work of Minnesota's courts more efficient, increased convenience for court users, enhanced information sharing between the state's justice partners, and greatly expanded access to court records and information.

- Following the successful eCourtMN Initiative, the Minnesota Judicial Branch worked to leverage the electronic case record to streamline and enhance court administration processes, and adopted the oneCourtMN Vision to deliver “high-quality, consistent, and convenient court administration services anywhere in the state.”
- In order to maintain access to justice during the COVID-19 pandemic, Minnesota courts transitioned the vast majority of court hearings to online courtrooms. While this transition was borne out of necessity, it quickly became clear that attorneys, litigants, and other court users often preferred the ease and convenience of conducting their official court business online.
- In 2022, the Minnesota Judicial Branch became one of the first court systems in the nation to commit to the long-term use of remote (online) district court hearings. The Minnesota Judicial Council adopted the oneCourtMN Hearings Initiative Policy, which set a temporary framework for how district courts would use both in-person and remote hearings to deliver timely and efficient access to justice.
- In 2024, the Minnesota Judicial Council adopted a new, permanent hearing framework for how district courts will use both in-person and remote hearings going forward. This new framework will take effect in February 2025.

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 Judicial Branch, improve overall operations of the court and enhance the public’s trust and confidence in the Judiciary. Throughout the year, the Supreme Court reviews performance measure results. This review is shared with the Judicial Council (the Judicial Branch’s governing body) twice a year.

The Supreme Court timing objectives identify the Court’s performance based on the case type: mandatory/original cases (e.g., First Degree Murder cases and election contests); discretionary cases (e.g., appeals from judgments from the Court of Appeals, the Workers Compensation Court of Appeals, and the Tax Court); and expedited cases (appeals in termination of parental rights and adoption cases).

Measure name	Measure type	Measure data source	Historical trend	Most recent data
Mandatory/Original Cases Ninety five percent of the cases will be disposed of within 180 days of submission to the Supreme Court.	Result	The number of cases that met the timing objective.	81 percent of 58 cases in 2022 and 81 percent of 57 cases in 2023 met the timing objective.	81 percent in 2023
Discretionary Cases Ninety five percent of petitions for further review should be disposed of within sixty days of the filing of the request for review.	Result	The number of cases that met the timing objective.	There was a decrease from 83 percent of 373 cases in 2022 to 56 percent of 285 cases that met the timing objective.	56 percent in 2023

Measure name	Measure type	Measure data source	Historical trend	Most recent data
<p>Expedited Cases</p> <p>Ninety five percent of expedited appeals (termination of parental rights, adoptions) should be disposed of within 25 days of filing the appeal.</p>	<p>Result</p>	<p>The number of cases that met the timing objective.</p>	<p>There was an increase from 94 percent of 15 cases in 2022 to 100 percent of 15 cases that met the timing objective.</p>	<p>100 percent in 2023</p>

Data are from the Judicial Branch 2022 & 2023 Performance Measures – Key Results and Measures Annual Reports (<https://mncourts.gov/mncourtsgov/media/CIOMediaLibrary/Documents/Annual-Report-2022-Performance-Measures.pdf> and <https://mncourts.gov/mncourtsgov/media/CIOMediaLibrary/Documents/Annual-Report-2023-Performance-Measures.pdf>).

The Minnesota Constitution, Article VI, https://www.revisor.mn.gov/constitution/#article_6, provides the legal authority for the Supreme Court. M.S. 2.724 provides legal authority for the chief justice’s administrative responsibilities: <https://www.revisor.mn.gov/statutes/cite/2.724>. M.S. 480.05 provides legal authority for the Supreme Court’s rule making authority: <https://www.revisor.mn.gov/statutes/cite/480.05>. M.S. 480.13-17 provide legal authority for the position and duties of the state court administrator: <https://www.revisor.mn.gov/statutes/cite/480.13>, <https://www.revisor.mn.gov/statutes/cite/480.14>, <https://www.revisor.mn.gov/statutes/cite/480.15>, <https://www.revisor.mn.gov/statutes/cite/480.16>, <https://www.revisor.mn.gov/statutes/cite/480.17>.

Supreme Court

Agency Expenditure Overview

(Dollars in Thousands)

	Actual FY22	Actual FY23	Actual FY24	Estimate FY25	Forecast Base	
					FY26	FY27
<u>Expenditures by Fund</u>						
1000 - General	57,751	64,660	78,855	92,217	49,064	49,064
2000 - Restrict Misc Special Revenue	3,189	3,859	3,111	4,929	395	395
2001 - Other Misc Special Revenue	5			1		
2403 - Gift	251		64	72	25	25
3000 - Federal	4,826	5,506	5,923	9,347	7,869	7,869
4925 - Family and Medical Benefit Ins				30		
Total	66,022	74,025	87,954	106,596	57,353	57,353
Biennial Change				54,502		(79,844)
Biennial % Change				39		(41)

Expenditures by Program

Supreme Court Operations	47,137	53,489	53,494	70,732	57,353	57,353
Civil and Family Legal Services	18,885	20,536	34,459	35,864		
Total	66,022	74,025	87,954	106,596	57,353	57,353

Expenditures by Category

Compensation	36,269	38,596	41,671	46,609	44,962	44,962
Operating Expenses	8,870	12,017	9,799	21,179	11,620	11,620
Grants, Aids and Subsidies	20,256	21,398	35,740	38,064	100	100
Capital Outlay-Real Property	3	724				
Other Financial Transaction	624	1,290	743	744	671	671
Total	66,022	74,025	87,954	106,596	57,353	57,353

Full-Time Equivalent

	274.82	293.14	292.27	295.17	288.78	288.78
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Supreme Court

Agency Financing by Fund

(Dollars in Thousands)

	Actual FY22	Actual FY23	Actual FY24	Estimate FY25	Forecast Base	
					FY26	FY27
1000 - General						
Balance Forward In		3,110	11	1,840		
Direct Appropriation	60,517	61,582	80,686	90,377	49,064	49,064
Transfers In	175	849	95	216	216	216
Transfers Out	175	849	95	216	216	216
Cancellations		31	0			
Balance Forward Out	2,766		1,842			
Expenditures	57,751	64,660	78,855	92,217	49,064	49,064
Biennial Change in Expenditures				48,661		(72,944)
Biennial % Change in Expenditures				40		(43)
Full-Time Equivalents	241.47	254.33	255.07	257.97	253.58	253.58

2000 - Restrict Misc Special Revenue

Balance Forward In	2,261	2,762	4,041	8,919	11,768	24
Receipts	3,566	5,072	7,988	7,778	2,729	2,729
Transfers In		0				
Transfers Out					14,078	2,342
Balance Forward Out	2,639	3,975	8,917	11,768	24	16
Expenditures	3,189	3,859	3,111	4,929	395	395
Biennial Change in Expenditures				993		(7,250)
Biennial % Change in Expenditures				14		(90)
Full-Time Equivalents	5.38	5.32	5.32	5.32	3.32	3.32

2001 - Other Misc Special Revenue

Balance Forward In	0	1	1	1		
Receipts	6	0				
Balance Forward Out	1	1	1			
Expenditures	5			1		
Biennial Change in Expenditures				(4)		(1)
Biennial % Change in Expenditures						

2403 - Gift

Balance Forward In	307	98	101	59	10	7
Receipts	1	3	23	23	22	22

Supreme Court

Agency Financing by Fund

(Dollars in Thousands)

	Actual FY22	Actual FY23	Actual FY24	Estimate FY25	Forecast Base	
					FY26	FY27
Balance Forward Out	56	101	60	10	7	4
Expenditures	251		64	72	25	25
Biennial Change in Expenditures				(115)		(86)
Biennial % Change in Expenditures						(63)

3000 - Federal

Balance Forward In	1,047	867	1,298	1,478		
Receipts	4,639	5,935	6,104	7,869	7,869	7,869
Balance Forward Out	860	1,295	1,478			
Expenditures	4,826	5,506	5,923	9,347	7,869	7,869
Biennial Change in Expenditures				4,938		468
Biennial % Change in Expenditures				48		3
Full-Time Equivalents	27.97	33.49	31.88	31.88	31.88	31.88

4925 - Family and Medical Benefit Ins

Balance Forward In				15		
Direct Appropriation			15	15	0	0
Balance Forward Out			15			
Expenditures				30		
Biennial Change in Expenditures				30		(30)
Biennial % Change in Expenditures						

(Dollars in Thousands)

	FY25	FY26	FY27	Biennium 2026-27
Direct				
Fund: 1000 - General				
FY2025 Appropriations	90,377	90,377	90,377	180,754
Base Adjustments				
All Other One-Time Appropriations		(2,590)	(2,590)	(5,180)
One-Time IT Appropriations		(5,163)	(5,163)	(10,326)
Programs Moving to New Agencies		(33,560)	(33,560)	(67,120)
Forecast Base	90,377	49,064	49,064	98,128
Fund: 4925 - Family and Medical Benefit Ins				
FY2025 Appropriations	15	15	15	30
Base Adjustments				
All Other One-Time Appropriations		(15)	(15)	(30)
Forecast Base	15			
Dedicated				
Fund: 2000 - Restrict Misc Special Revenue				
Planned Spending	4,929	395	395	790
Forecast Base	4,929	395	395	790
Fund: 2001 - Other Misc Special Revenue				
Planned Spending	1			
Forecast Base	1			
Fund: 2403 - Gift				
Planned Spending	72	25	25	50
Forecast Base	72	25	25	50
Fund: 3000 - Federal				
Planned Spending	9,347	7,869	7,869	15,738
Forecast Base	9,347	7,869	7,869	15,738
Revenue Change Summary				
Dedicated				
Fund: 2000 - Restrict Misc Special Revenue				
Forecast Revenues	7,778	2,729	2,729	5,458
Fund: 2403 - Gift				

(Dollars in Thousands)

	FY25	FY26	FY27	Biennium 2026-27
Forecast Revenues	23	22	22	44
Fund: 3000 - Federal				
Forecast Revenues	7,869	7,869	7,869	15,738
Non-Dedicated				
Fund: 1000 - General				
Forecast Revenues	524	537	557	1,094

Supreme Court

FY 2026-27 Biennial Budget Change Item

Change Item Title: Maintain Core Justice Operations

Fiscal Impact (\$000s)	FY 2026	FY 2027	FY 2028	FY 2029
General Fund				
Expenditures	3,019	6,168	6,168	6,168
Revenues	0	0	0	0
Other Funds				
Expenditures	0	0	0	0
Revenues	0	0	0	0
Net Fiscal Impact = (Expenditures – Revenues)	3,019	6,168	6,168	6,168
FTEs	0	0	0	0

Request:

The Judicial Branch is requesting \$9,187,000 in the FY 2026-27 biennium to increase the compensation of Supreme Court justices by 6% in FY 2026 and 6% in FY 2027, provide a 6% compensation pool increase for employees in FY 2026 and 6% in FY 2027, fund unavoidable health insurance premium increases, and Department of Administration lease cost increases in each year. The request represents an 9.36% increase in the Supreme Court biennial base budget. The request maintains the current complement of employees.

Rationale/Background:

In order for the Judicial Branch to continue driving innovation in the state’s court system and improve services to Minnesotans, the Judicial Branch needs to retain and attract skilled and knowledgeable employees and judges who can maintain and operate a modern, efficient, and technology-based court system. However, the Judicial Branch faces two significant challenges:

- Despite significant compensation increases last biennium, the Minnesota Judicial Branch compensation structure remains behind its public-sector comparators by 6%. Adequate funding is necessary to retain and motivate a qualified workforce relative to local competitors and to not fall below the broader job market in the future. 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.
- The Minnesota Judicial Branch continues to face challenges with recruitment and retention. Since 2020, the Judicial Branch’s employee turnover rate has increased by 15%. The top reason departing employees provide for leaving the Judicial Branch is wage/salary. During the same period, the number of applicants for each open position within the Judicial Branch has fallen by 27%.

The Supreme Court also requests funding for the employer share of unavoidable health insurance increases. Health insurance premiums are estimated to increase by 7.26% in 2026 and 7.27% in 2027. The Judicial Branch does not negotiate its own insurance agreements – it participates in the general plan negotiated by Minnesota Management and Budget. The Judicial Branch cannot absorb the increased employer insurance contribution costs and would need to divert funding from court functions to pay for this increase without additional funding.

The Supreme Court also requests funding for the increased cost of leasing office space in the Minnesota Judicial Center. The Judicial Branch cannot absorb the increased lease costs and would need to divert funding from court functions to pay for this increase without additional funding.

Proposal:

The FY2026-27 biennial budget request maintains the current level of services provided by the Minnesota 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. In addition, the request for funding unavoidable health insurance increases will hold court services harmless from rising insurance costs for Judicial Branch judges and employees. Lastly, the Supreme Court is seeking \$490,000 in FY2026-27 to cover the increases in lease costs administered by the Department of Administration.

Impact on Children and Families:

A fully staffed Minnesota Judicial Branch benefits all Minnesotans by providing equitable and timely access to justice.

Equity and Inclusion:

A fully staffed Minnesota Judicial Branch benefits all Minnesotans by providing equitable and timely access to justice.

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 request is sought to support the core mission and services of the Supreme and to allow the Courts to continue to undertake initiatives designed to increase efficiency, reduce costs, and improve public services.

In FY 2017, 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.

Minnesotans bring their most important and complex matters to the courts for resolution. Judges and staff work every day to help the people resolve these disputes. At the same time staff and judges are driving major innovation within the court system. Their innovations are improving service to the public and creating new efficiencies throughout the justice system. It is critically important that the Judicial Branch continue to retain and attract a workforce that builds on this innovation.

Statutory Change(s):

This proposal does not require statutory changes.

Supreme Court

FY 2026-27 Biennial Budget Change Item

Change Item Title: Cyber Security Ongoing Funding

Fiscal Impact (\$000s)	FY 2026	FY 2027	FY 2028	FY 2029
General Fund				
Expenditures	0	0	1,750	1,750
Revenues	0	0	0	0
Other Funds				
Expenditures	0	0	0	0
Revenues	0	0	0	0
Net Fiscal Impact = (Expenditures – Revenues)	0	0	1,750	1,750
FTEs	0	0	0	0

Request:

The Minnesota Judicial Branch is requesting \$3,500,000 in FY 2028-29 to provide permanent funding for ongoing costs associated with the Judicial Branch Cyber Security Program. This request represents a 3.57% increase to the Supreme Court biennial base budget in FY 2028-29.

Rationale/Background:

The Judicial Branch is responsible for and committed to maintaining the security of the public, private, and sealed data regarding Minnesotans involved in the judicial system. The Cyber Security Program maintains and ensures the confidentiality, integrity, and availability of this data through a carefully coordinated suite of technology, process, and procedure, which provides the Judicial Branch the necessary flexibility to protect against increasingly sophisticated cyberattacks.

The 2024 Legislature appropriated onetime funding of \$5,163,000 in FY 2025 to enhance and further the Judicial Branch Cyber Security Program. The Legislature provided carryforward authority that will fund the program in FY 2026 and FY 2027; however, these are ongoing costs that are necessary to maintain the strength and security of the Judicial Branch’s technology infrastructure. Cybercrime is becoming increasingly organized, and cybercriminals are continually modifying their attacks. In response, cybersecurity needs to constantly evolve to defend against and respond to those changing threats.

Proposal:

The Judicial Branch seeks permanent funding for the Cyber Security Program to cover existing costs. The Branch employs a dedicated cyber security team and has launched critical tools and policies to increase the Branch’s ability to secure sensitive data, identify vulnerabilities, and mitigate threats. Securing ongoing funding will prevent the program from developing a deficit.

Impact on Children and Families:

All Minnesotans are impacted by the proposed change item. Data breaches, data corruption, system outages, document/data loss, and cyberattacks have a direct impact on the ability of Minnesotans to access the judicial system. Protection of Judicial Branch data and technology infrastructures is critical to the public trust and confidence placed in the Judicial Branch.

Equity and Inclusion:

All Minnesotans are impacted by the proposed change item. Data breaches, data corruption, system outages, document/data loss, and cyberattacks have a direct impact on the ability of Minnesotans to access the judicial

system. Protection of Judicial Branch data and technology infrastructures is critical to the public trust and confidence placed in the Judicial Branch.

Tribal Consultation:

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

- Yes
- No

IT Costs:

This request is not an information technology proposal.

Results:

The Judicial Branch has promulgated policies and procedures to measure specific program performance measures as part of the Cyber Security Program implementation, including the following:

- **Quantity:** Have adequate policies and procedures been developed and are court staff and judicial officers sufficiently trained?
- **Quality:** Are all technology systems adequately secure?
- **Result:** The risk of data breaches, data corruption, system outages, document/data loss, and cyber-attacks is greatly reduced.

Periodic reports are provided to the Judicial Council. Internal policies and procedures are monitored for compliance. Periodic self-assessments are conducted.

Statutory Change(s):

This proposal does not require statutory changes.

Supreme Court

FY 2026-27 Biennial Budget Change Item

Change Item Title: Justice Partner Public Access

Fiscal Impact (\$000s)	FY 2026	FY 2027	FY 2028	FY 2029
General Fund				
Expenditures	2,000	2,000	400	400
Revenues	0	0	0	0
Other Funds				
Expenditures	0	0	0	0
Revenues	0	0	0	0
Net Fiscal Impact = (Expenditures – Revenues)	2,000	2,000	400	400
FTEs	14	14	0	0

Request:

The Minnesota Judicial Branch is requesting \$4,000,000 in FY 2026-27 to improve systems, processes and procedures necessary to provide access to court information for justice partners. This request represents \$1,600,000 in new, onetime funding and \$400,000 of permanent funding in each year of the biennium, which results in a 4.08% increase in FY 2026-27 and a .82% increase in FY 2028-29 to the Supreme Court base budget.

Rationale/Background:

Since 2003, the Minnesota Judicial Branch has provided electronic access to court documents and other case records for statewide justice partner agencies through a small number of discrete, legacy applications.

Over the last two years, vendor support for several of these aging applications was discontinued due to cyber security and ongoing maintenance concerns. As a result, the Minnesota Judicial Branch has had to adapt and provide alternative means for justice partners to access the necessary court documents required to fulfill their duties.

In 2024, the Minnesota Judicial Branch established the Justice Partner Access User Group in collaboration with statewide justice partner agencies. The group's purpose was to discuss best practices and provide feedback on accessing court records and information using Branch-provided tools. Through the Justice Partner Access User Group, the Judicial Branch held a series of 19 feedback sessions which involved more than 100 individuals representing justice partner agencies, advocacy groups, and private attorneys.

Through those sessions, the group identified many improvement opportunities including:

- The ability to view a full list of a party's cases in search results.
- The ability to better identify when a party or case has an active warrant.
- Application performance and reliability improvements.

The requested funding would allow the Judicial Branch to implement those recommended improvements by creating a new solution for justice partner access. This will enable justice partners to more easily and effectively work with the courts.

Proposal:

The Judicial Branch seeks funding to improve justice partner access tools. The desired improvements would make access to court information and documents more accessible for justice partners and provide a more comprehensive solution that better meets the partners’ needs.

Onetime funding of \$1,290,000 is needed to hire 14 temporary or contract staff to develop and implement a new solution for justice partner access to court records. The temporary staff would include project management, business analysis, IT engineering, and software quality assurance for application development. Additional onetime funding of \$310,000 is needed for new software licenses and computer hardware to support the new system.

Ongoing funding as part of the proposal would be used for hardware and software licensing, software development and configuration, and end-user training and education. Upon successful completion of this effort, justice partners will have the tools necessary to effectively fulfill their duties in support of all Minnesotans.

Improvements to justice partner access tools will be made in accordance with the current Rules of Public Access to the Records of the Judicial Branch.

Impact on Children and Families:

All Minnesotans are impacted by this proposal. Justice partners’ timely and effective access to court information and documents improves access to justice for all Minnesotans.

Equity and Inclusion:

All Minnesotans are impacted by this proposal. Justice partners’ timely and effective access to court information and documents improves access to justice for all Minnesotans.

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:

The overall goal is to replace multiple end-of-life applications with single, accessible application for our justice partners. This application would also help streamline access to assist justice partners to be better prepared for court proceedings. The State Court Administrator has convened the Statewide Justice Partner Access User Group that will regularly meet and provide feedback on the new applications performance and usability. The Branch will use its communication with the Statewide Justice Partner Access User Group and quality surveys and feedback sessions with users to assess success.

Statutory Change(s):

This budget request does not require a statutory change.

Supreme Court

FY 2026-27 Biennial Budget Change Item

Change Item Title: Digital Accessibility

Fiscal Impact (\$000s)	FY 2026	FY 2027	FY 2028	FY 2029
General Fund				
Expenditures	2,550	2,550	882	882
Revenues	0	0	0	0
Other Funds				
Expenditures	0	0	0	0
Revenues	0	0	0	0
Net Fiscal Impact = (Expenditures – Revenues)	2,550	2,550	882	882
FTEs	16	16	5	5

Request:

The Judicial Branch is requesting \$5,100,000 in FY 2026-27 to further the Minnesota Judicial Branch’s efforts in providing equal access to justice by ensuring its digital content is accessible to all, including those with disabilities. This request represents \$1,668,000 in new, onetime funding and \$882,000 of permanent funding in each year of the biennium, which results in a 5.20% increase in FY 2026-27 and a 1.80% increase in FY 2028-29 to the Supreme Court base budget.

Rationale/Background:

The Minnesota Judicial Branch has provided accommodations to those with disabilities for decades. In February 2022, the Branch issued an Administrative Order Establishing Digital Accessibility Standards. In April 2024, the Department of Justice issued a Rule that amended the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) to establish specific requirements that state and local governments must comply with to make accessible the services, programs, and activities they offer. The Rule specifies that digital content must meet the technical standards for digital accessibility - called the Web Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) version 2.1 - and gives a compliance deadline of April 24, 2026.

The Minnesota Judicial Branch has begun a significant project to examine existing processes, systems, and application accessibility and to determine what it will take to further achieve compliance with WCAG 2.1. The desired improvements would make access to court information and documents comply with digital accessibility standards under the WCAG 2.1 rules for all Minnesotans.

Proposal:

The Judicial Branch seeks \$1,668,000 in new, onetime funding and \$882,000 of permanent funding in each year of the biennium to comply with Department of Justice technical standards for digital accessibility. This project is a significant undertaking for the Judicial Branch, and will require remediation of over a million web and case-related documents, revisions to over 1,800 web and Minnesota Court Information System (MNCIS) templates, and updates to approximately 22 information technology applications.

The onetime funding in this request will be used to purchase training software and hire 16 temporary employees to remediate existing documents, templates, and internally developed applications. Ongoing funding will be utilized to retain five FTEs and fund accessibility software costs to maintain compliance with WCAG 2.1 and any subsequent updates.

Upon successful completion of this effort, Minnesotans will have access to court websites, documents, and applications in compliance with WCAG 2.1. The proposed efforts would be made available with a target date to match adherence with WCAG 2.1. (April 2026) and ongoing compliance.

Impact on Children and Families:

Ensuring that all Judicial Branch websites, documents, and applications are digitally accessible benefits all Minnesotans.

Equity and Inclusion:

Ensuring that all Judicial Branch websites, documents, and applications are digitally accessible benefits all Minnesotans, in those with disabilities.

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:

The funding will help the Judicial Branch meet the digital accessibility requirements outlined in WCAG 2.1 by April 24, 2026, and maintain compliance. The Branch will also use industry standard Digital Accessibility tools to measure compliance and implement best practices.

Statutory Change(s):

This budget proposal does not require statutory changes.