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

AT A GLANCE

- In 2023, 981,257 cases were filed in district court
- District court proceedings are held in 104 locations throughout all 87 Minnesota counties
- District courts are organized into ten judicial districts for administrative purposes
- There are 296 district court judges
- District courts serve all Minnesota citizens

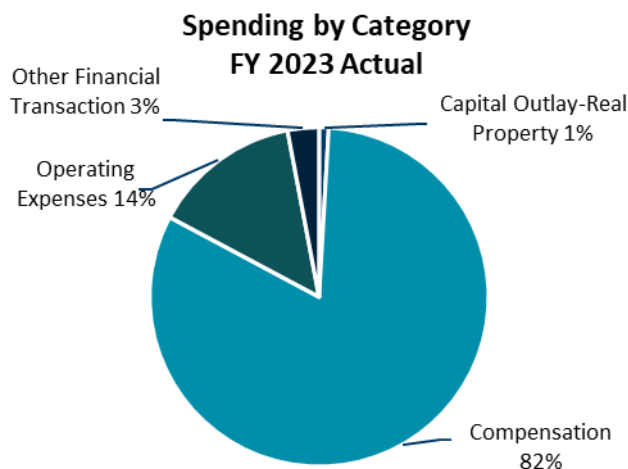
PURPOSE

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.

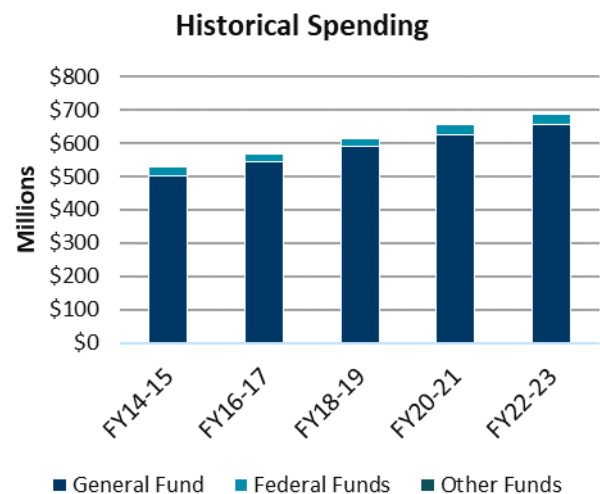
District courts are the backbone of the state's court system. District courts provide access to the justice system across the state, with courthouses located in all 87 counties. For administrative purposes, district courts are divided among ten judicial districts. A chief judge serves as the administrative head in each judicial district. Judicial District Administrators assist the Chief Judge in carrying out their responsibilities. Court administration staff at the county level manage scheduling, case flow, finance, personnel, and juries.

District court judges hear everything from traffic tickets, civil and family conflicts, and first-degree murder trials. Some district courts may have separate divisions, such as criminal, civil, probate, family, and juvenile courts.

BUDGET



Source: Budget Planning & Analysis System (BPAS)



Source: Consolidated Fund Statement

District courts spent \$366 million in fiscal year (FY) 2023. Of this amount, \$349 million (95 percent) was from state general fund appropriations, while the remaining \$17 million (five percent) of funding was received from various other sources, such as federal and local government grants and donations from foundations.

STRATEGIES

The District Court conducts its 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.

Over the past 12 years, the Minnesota Judicial Branch has engaged in a reform agenda to modernize and re-engineer the work of Minnesota's district courts. These efforts, outlined below, have made Minnesota's 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 district courts from paper-based court files to electronic case records. This transformation has made the work of Minnesota's district 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 records 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."
- To maintain access to justice during the COVID-19 pandemic, Minnesota district 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 district courts are directed to review performance measure results. This review is shared with the Minnesota Judicial Council (the Judicial Branch's governing body) twice a year.

An important goal is ensuring district courts resolve cases in a timely manner, and the Minnesota Judicial Branch is pleased to report that Minnesota district courts have eliminated the pandemic backlog of felony and gross misdemeanor cases.

Given the public health precautions in place during the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic, the number of pending felony and gross misdemeanor cases had grown by nearly 40 percent. In response, the Minnesota Judicial Council adopted an aggressive backlog reduction goal and secured federal and state legislative funding to utilize senior judges, expand criminal case calendars, and organize special case resolution events to reduce this backlog of Major Criminal cases. By May 2024, Minnesota district courts had officially reduced the pending Major Criminal caseload to pre-pandemic levels, helping ensure timely access to justice and a high-functioning court system in Minnesota.

Below is a look at some other key performance measures for Minnesota’s district courts.

Measure name	Measure type	Measure data source	Historical trend	Most recent data
Statewide clearance rate – The clearance rate measures whether courts are disposing of as many cases as are filed in the same year. A clearance rate of 100 percent means as many cases were disposed in a year as were newly filed.	Result	Annual disposal and filing of court cases.	101 percent was unchanged from 2022 to 2023.	101 percent in 2023
Statewide time to disposition - time to disposition assesses the length of time it takes a court to process cases. The goal is to dispose 99 percent of cases within Judicial Branch time objectives.	Result	The disposal of cases within the Judicial Branch time objectives.	The percent increased from 90 percent in 2022 to 91 percent in 2023.	91 percent in 2023
Statewide age of pending cases - Assesses the percentage of cases that are pending beyond Judicial Branch time objectives for all cases at the end of the fiscal year (excluding minor criminal). The goal is one percent or lower.	Result	Cases that are pending beyond Judicial Branch time objectives for all cases at the end of the fiscal year (excluding minor criminal).	The percent decreased from 17 percent in 2022 to 13 percent in 2023 of cases pending beyond Judicial Branch time objectives.	13 percent in 2023

Data are from the Judicial Branch 2022 and 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 authority for the District Court. Minn. Stat Chapters 484, 485, 486, 491, 491A, 492, and 493; https://www.revisor.mn.gov/statutes/part/JUDICIARY_, provide the legal authority for district court operations.

District Courts

Agency Expenditure Overview

(Dollars in Thousands)

	Actual	Actual	Actual	Estimate	Forecast Base	
	FY22	FY23	FY24	FY25	FY26	FY27
<u>Expenditures by Fund</u>						
1000 - General	306,179	349,318	354,454	431,381	384,090	384,090
2000 - Restrict Misc Special Revenue	1,704	1,558	1,689	3,819	1,754	1,754
2001 - Other Misc Special Revenue	27	33	24	29		
2403 - Gift	135	83	113	487	13	13
3000 - Federal	12,606	7,892	13,613	16,160	10,266	10,266
3015 - ARP-State Fiscal Recovery	5,154	4,807				
6000 - Miscellaneous Agency	2,563	2,271	3,421	7,729	7,728	7,728
Total	328,366	365,962	373,314	459,605	403,851	403,851
Biennial Change			138,590		(25,217)	
Biennial % Change			20		(3)	

Expenditures by Program

District Courts	328,366	365,962	373,314	459,605	403,851	403,851
Total	328,366	365,962	373,314	459,605	403,851	403,851

Expenditures by Category

Compensation	283,131	300,256	315,652	327,542	327,505	327,505
Operating Expenses	39,100	52,099	47,738	109,742	58,299	58,299
Grants, Aids and Subsidies	1,262	1,282	1,428	2,873	4,119	4,119
Capital Outlay-Real Property	116	3,323	19	3,090	3,268	3,268
Other Financial Transaction	4,757	9,001	8,477	16,358	10,660	10,660
Total	328,366	365,962	373,314	459,605	403,851	403,851

Full-Time Equivalents

2,707.73	2,899.55	2,791.97	2,792.21	2,744.17	2,744.17
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District Courts

Agency Financing by Fund

(Dollars in Thousands)

	Actual	Actual	Actual	Estimate	Forecast Base	
	FY22	FY23	FY24	FY25	FY26	FY27
1000 - General						
Balance Forward In		20,926		24,606		
Direct Appropriation	326,372	329,146	379,062	406,775	384,090	384,090
Transfers In	3,998	5,932	4,181			
Transfers Out	3,998	6,686	4,181			
Cancellations		0				
Balance Forward Out	20,193		24,608			
Expenditures	306,179	349,318	354,454	431,381	384,090	384,090
Biennial Change in Expenditures				130,338		(17,655)
Biennial % Change in Expenditures				20		(2)
Full-Time Equivalents	2,608.14	2,801.66	2,737.78	2,737.72	2,689.81	2,689.81

2000 - Restrict Misc Special Revenue

Balance Forward In	2,237	2,240	2,130	2,093		
Receipts	1,649	1,615	1,600	1,674	1,702	1,702
Transfers In	51	58	50	52	52	52
Balance Forward Out	2,234	2,354	2,091			
Expenditures	1,704	1,558	1,689	3,819	1,754	1,754
Biennial Change in Expenditures				2,246		(2,000)
Biennial % Change in Expenditures				69		(36)
Full-Time Equivalents	7.29	6.86	6.70	6.70	6.70	6.70

2001 - Other Misc Special Revenue

Balance Forward In	5	5	5	5		
Receipts	27	33	23	24		
Balance Forward Out	5	5	4			
Expenditures	27	33	24	29		
Biennial Change in Expenditures				(6)		(53)
Biennial % Change in Expenditures				(11)		(100)

2403 - Gift

Balance Forward In	234	243	390	381		
Receipts	144	230	104	106	13	13
Balance Forward Out	243	390	381			

District Courts

Agency Financing by Fund

(Dollars in Thousands)

	Actual FY22	Actual FY23	Actual FY24	Estimate FY25	Forecast Base	
					FY26	FY27
Expenditures	135	83	113	487	13	13
Biennial Change in Expenditures				382		(574)
Biennial % Change in Expenditures				175		(96)
Full-Time Equivalents	0.79	0.07	0.13	0.13		

3000 - Federal

Balance Forward In	9,195	7,740	10,007	5,894		
Receipts	10,327	10,370	9,499	10,266	10,266	10,266
Balance Forward Out	6,917	10,217	5,893			
Expenditures	12,606	7,892	13,613	16,160	10,266	10,266
Biennial Change in Expenditures				9,275		(9,241)
Biennial % Change in Expenditures				45		(31)
Full-Time Equivalents	44.71	43.16	46.12	47.66	47.66	47.66

3015 - ARP-State Fiscal Recovery

Balance Forward In		4,807				
Direct Appropriation	9,961					
Balance Forward Out	4,807					
Expenditures	5,154	4,807				
Biennial Change in Expenditures				(9,961)		0
Biennial % Change in Expenditures				(100)		
Full-Time Equivalents	46.80	47.80	1.24			

6000 - Miscellaneous Agency

Balance Forward In	37,216	31,553	30,100	28,354	3,573	2,680
Receipts	(2,769)	865	1,671	(17,052)	6,835	6,835
Balance Forward Out	31,884	30,147	28,351	3,573	2,680	1,787
Expenditures	2,563	2,271	3,421	7,729	7,728	7,728
Biennial Change in Expenditures				6,316		4,306
Biennial % Change in Expenditures				131		39

District Courts

Agency Change Summary

(Dollars in Thousands)

	FY25	FY26	FY27	Biennium 2026-27
Direct				
Fund: 1000 - General				
FY2025 Appropriations	406,775	406,775	406,775	813,550
Base Adjustments				
All Other One-Time Appropriations		(23,685)	(23,685)	(47,370)
Current Law Base Change		1,000	1,000	2,000
Approved Transfer Between Appropriation				
Forecast Base	406,775	384,090	384,090	768,180
Dedicated				
Fund: 2000 - Restrict Misc Special Revenue				
Planned Spending	3,819	1,754	1,754	3,508
Forecast Base	3,819	1,754	1,754	3,508
Fund: 2001 - Other Misc Special Revenue				
Planned Spending	29			
Forecast Base	29			
Fund: 2403 - Gift				
Planned Spending	487	13	13	26
Forecast Base	487	13	13	26
Fund: 3000 - Federal				
Planned Spending	16,160	10,266	10,266	20,532
Forecast Base	16,160	10,266	10,266	20,532
Fund: 6000 - Miscellaneous Agency				
Planned Spending	7,729	7,728	7,728	15,456
Forecast Base	7,729	7,728	7,728	15,456
Revenue Change Summary				
Dedicated				
Fund: 2000 - Restrict Misc Special Revenue				
Forecast Revenues	1,674	1,702	1,702	3,404
Fund: 2001 - Other Misc Special Revenue				
Forecast Revenues	24			

District Courts

Agency Change Summary

(Dollars in Thousands)

	FY25	FY26	FY27	Biennium 2026-27
Fund: 2403 - Gift				
Forecast Revenues	106	13	13	26
Fund: 3000 - Federal				
Forecast Revenues	10,266	10,266	10,266	20,532
Fund: 6000 - Miscellaneous Agency				
Forecast Revenues	(17,052)	6,835	6,835	13,670
<i>Non-Dedicated</i>				
Fund: 1000 - General				
Forecast Revenues	19,107	18,865	18,865	37,730

District Courts

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	21,182	44,178	44,178	44,178
Revenues	0	0	0	0
Other Funds				
Expenditures	0	0	0	0
Revenues	0	0	0	0
Net Fiscal Impact = (Expenditures – Revenues)	21,182	44,178	44,178	44,178
FTEs	0	0	0	0

Request:

The Judicial Branch seeks \$65,360,000 in the FY 2026-27 biennium to increase the compensation of District Court judges 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, and fund the employer-share of unavoidable health insurance premium increases in each year. The request represents an 8.51% increase in the District Courts 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 District Courts also request 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.

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.

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 District Courts 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.

District Courts

FY 2026-27 Biennial Budget Change Item

Change Item Title: Forensic Examiner Rate Increase

Fiscal Impact (\$000s)	FY 2026	FY 2027	FY 2028	FY 2029
General Fund				
Expenditures	3,611	3,611	3,611	3,611
Revenues	0	0	0	0
Other Funds				
Expenditures	0	0	0	0
Revenues	0	0	0	0
Net Fiscal Impact = (Expenditures – Revenues)	3,611	3,611	3,611	3,611
FTEs	0	0	0	0

Request:

The Judicial Branch is requesting \$7,222,000 in FY 2026-27 to increase the hourly rate paid to contracted forensic examiners from \$136 per hour to \$175 per hour. This request represents a 0.94% increase to the District Courts biennial base budget.

Rationale/Background:

The Judicial Branch is responsible for the cost of providing psychological examinations for civil commitments and related proceedings under Chapter 253B, and for examinations under chapter 611 or Rule 20 of the Rules of Criminal Procedure.

There is currently a shortage of qualified examiners on the Judicial Branch's Examiner Roster to meet the increased demand for forensic examinations. Between FY 2020 and FY 2023, the need for psychological examinations in both criminal and civil case types increased by 143%. Judges and court staff have reported difficulty finding qualified examiners to conduct exams which is delaying the administration of justice and could potentially impact civil liberties.

Contract examiners have indicated the current level of pay offered by the Judicial Branch is not equitable to other areas of practice. The 2024 legislature appropriated \$1,070,000 in FY 2025 to increase examiner pay rate from \$125 per hour to \$136 per hour. However, prior to this rate increase, examiner rates had not been increased since 2009, and the Judicial Branch's current payment rate remains behind many other competitor and peer organizations. It is vital that the Judicial Branch is able to offer competitive compensation in order to attract and retain qualified examiners. Increasing the hourly payment rate to \$175 per hour would make the Judicial Branch's hourly payment rate more competitive with the current market for these services.

Proposal:

The Judicial Branch seeks to increase examiner rates from \$136 per hour to \$175 hour to align with industry standards.

Impact on Children and Families:

This proposal will benefit all Minnesotans who interact with the Trial Courts and need mandated psychological examiner services.

Equity and Inclusion:

This proposal will benefit all Minnesotans who interact with the Trial Courts and need mandated psychological examiner services.

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:

Higher compensation will increase the availability of qualified examiners and promote the administration of justice.

Statutory Change(s):

This budget request does not require a statutory change.

District Courts

FY 2026-27 Biennial Budget Change Item

Change Item Title: Mandated Psychological Services Budget Deficit

Fiscal Impact (\$000s)	FY 2026	FY 2027	FY 2028	FY 2029
General Fund				
Expenditures	0	0	5,317	5,317
Revenues	0	0	0	0
Other Funds				
Expenditures	0	0	0	0
Revenues	0	0	0	0
Net Fiscal Impact = (Expenditures – Revenues)	0	0	5,317	5,317
FTEs	0	0	0	0

Request:

The Judicial Branch is requesting \$10,634,000 in FY 2028-29 to provide permanent funding for statutorily mandated psychological exams. This request represents a 1.38% increase to the District Courts biennial base budget in FY 2028-29.

Rationale/Background:

Minnesota Statute 480.182 provides that the Judicial Branch will pay the court-related examination costs for civil commitments and related proceedings under Chapter 253B, and for examinations under chapter 611 or Rule 20 of the Rules of Criminal Procedure.

The Psychological/Psychiatric Examiner Services Program within the Minnesota Judicial Branch provides the courts with skilled and qualified examiners for civil commitment, criminal competency, and criminal responsibility evaluations. Since the inception of the program in 2008, the volume of exams has steadily increased with a dramatic increase in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic. The need for psychological evaluations in both civil and criminal case increased by 143% from FY 2020 to FY 2023.

In the 2023-2024 legislative sessions, the legislature appropriated \$6,817,000 in FY 2024 and \$17,451,000 in FY 2025 to temporarily address the budget deficit in the Psychological/Psychiatric Examiner Services Program due to the increased in volume and costs of providing exams. The legislature provided carryforward authority that will assist the Branch with the deficit in FY 2026 and FY 2027. However, the Judicial Branch still needs permanent funding to address these ongoing costs and to ensure the Judicial Branch can continue to meet its statutory and court rule mandates to provide psychological services to individuals who interact with the Judicial Branch on a daily basis. This funding request will address this critical operating need by providing permanent funding to address the increased cost of delivering these services.

Proposal:

The Judicial Branch seeks permanent funding for the Psychological/Psychiatric Examiner Services Program to address the increased cost of delivering these mandated services. The funding will address the budget deficit in the Mandated Psychological Services budget and aid the Branch in meeting the statutory and court rule mandates to provide psychological services to individuals in need.

Impact on Children and Families:

This proposal will benefit all Minnesotans who interact with the District Courts and need mandated psychological services.

Equity and Inclusion:

This proposal will benefit all Minnesotans who interact with the District Courts and need mandated psychological services.

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:

This request is sought to comply with the requirement in Minnesota State Statute 480.182 that the Judicial Branch will pay the court-related examination costs for civil commitments and related proceedings under Chapter 253B, and for examinations under chapter 611 or Rule 20 of the Rules of Criminal Procedure.

Statutory Change(s):

This budget request does not require a statutory change.

District Courts

FY 2026-27 Biennial Budget Change Item

Change Item Title: Jury Per Diem and Mileage

Fiscal Impact (\$000s)	FY 2026	FY 2027	FY 2028	FY 2029
General Fund				
Expenditures	9,224	9,224	9,224	9,224
Revenues	0	0	0	0
Other Funds				
Expenditures	0	0	0	0
Revenues	0	0	0	0
Net Fiscal Impact = (Expenditures – Revenues)	9,224	9,224	9,224	9,224
FTEs	0	0	0	0

Request:

The Minnesota Judicial Branch is requesting \$18,448,000 in FY 2026-27 to increase jury per diem from \$20 per day to \$100 per day and to increase the jury mileage reimbursement rate from \$0.54 to \$0.67. This request represents a 2.40% increase to the District Courts biennial base budget.

Rationale/Background:

Minnesota has a strong jury program that meets the best practice recommendations from the National Center for State Courts. However, there is still room to improve the overall juror experience. The requested funding aims to alleviate financial hardship associated with jury duty resulting in increased reporting rates and improved jury diversity.

Currently, jurors in Minnesota district courts are paid \$20 per day for their service, a rate which was last raised in 2016. This low payment rate does not reflect the potential costs jurors incur when participating in jury duty, including transportation costs, parking costs, paying for lunch and/or refreshments, finding childcare, and missing work. Potential jurors often mention the low per diem rate when discussing the barriers they face in participating in jury duty.

The low per diem rate also disproportionately impacts lower income potential jurors, which may impact the overall representativeness of juries in Minnesota. On May 7, 2022, San Francisco launched the Be the Jury Pilot Program to help make juries more representative by addressing financial barriers that often prevent individuals from serving. Initial findings show that racial diversity among Be the Jury participants is nearly identical to the racial diversity of San Francisco's population and the program removed financial barriers and enabled low-income citizens to serve as jurors.

Increasing the per diem paid to jurors will help address the economic hardship associated with jury service and may help ensure a diverse and representative jury pool in Minnesota. Increasing jury per diem to \$100 per day better aligns with the statewide average of the minimum wage paid for an eight-hour workday (\$122 for eight hours in Minneapolis, \$120 in St. Paul, and \$87 in the rest of the state). It would also better align Minnesota's juror per diem with its geographic neighbors. The 2023 North Dakota Legislature increased juror per diem from \$25 to \$50 for first half day and \$50 to \$100 for each full day of jury service.

Proposal:

This proposal would increase the current per diem and mileage rates paid to jurors in Minnesota district courts. The Judicial Branch proposes increasing juror per diem to \$100 per day, to align with a statewide average of the minimum wage paid for an eight-hour workday (\$122 for eight hours in Minneapolis, \$120 in St. Paul, and \$87 in the rest of the state). Mileage reimbursement would be increased to match the federal mileage rate.

Impact on Children and Families:

The right to a jury trial is a fundamental right provided in the U.S. Constitution. The Minnesota Constitution, Article I, Section 4 guarantees a jury trial in the state court system. The right of the defendant to fair legal process includes having his or her fate determined by “a jury of peers,” meaning representative members of the community. However, this right is dependent on those citizens who participate in the process. This funding will help reduce barriers to jury service, and ensure all Minnesotans have their right to a fair and impartial trial before a jury of peers upheld.

Equity and Inclusion:

The Minnesota Judicial Branch believes that reducing barriers to jury service will increase not only overall participation in the jury system, but also the overall demographic representativeness of the state’s jury pool. Increasing the representativeness of the state’s jury pool will help ensure that all Minnesotans have their cases decided by a jury representative of the community in which their case is being heard.

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 informational technology proposal.

Results:

The Minnesota Judicial Branch utilizes approximately 50,000 jurors per fiscal year and estimates a similar number of jurors in FY2026 and FY2027.

	FY19 Actual	FY20 Actual	FY21 Actual	FY22 Actual	FY23 Actual	FY24 Actual	FY25 Estimate
Total Jurors	47,736	34,474	23,124	46,275	50,997	50,508	50,000

The Minnesota Jury Source List is created annually. The state court administrator’s office and the jury commissioners review data derived from the jury source list every year for its inclusiveness and the jury pool for its representativeness of the adult population in each county. The state court administrator’s office reports the results of the review annually to Judicial Council.

Additionally, the Minnesota Judicial Branch measures and reports annually on key performance measures. This information includes analysis of jury pool representativeness. Historical data is used to reflect major trends in annual performance measures. The table below is an example of information included in the annual performance measures report (<https://mncourts.gov/mncourtsgov/media/CIOMediaLibrary/Documents/Annual-Report-2024-Performance-Measures.pdf>).

Statutory Change(s):

This budget request does not require any statutory changes.

District Courts

FY 2026-27 Biennial Budget Change Item

Change Item Title: Mandated Services Interpreter Budget Deficit

Fiscal Impact (\$000s)	FY 2026	FY 2027	FY 2028	FY 2029
General Fund				
Expenditures	0	0	1,290	1,290
Revenues	0	0	0	0
Other Funds				
Expenditures	0	0	0	0
Revenues	0	0	0	0
Net Fiscal Impact = (Expenditures – Revenues)	0	0	1,290	1,290
FTEs	0	0	0	0

Request:

The Minnesota Judicial Branch is requesting \$2,580,000 in FY 2028-29 to provide permanent funding for the increasing need for contract interpreters in court proceedings. This request represents a .34% increase to the District Courts biennial base budget in FY 2028-29.

Rationale/Background:

Minnesota Statute 480.182 requires the Judicial Branch to pay for court interpreter program costs, including the costs of hiring court interpreters. The Interpreter Program within the Minnesota Judicial Branch provides the courts with skilled and qualified interpreters for parties and participants in all hearing types. The demographics of Minnesota have changed significantly in recent years, requiring a higher number of interpreters in court proceedings. Between FY 2019 and FY 2024, the number of interpreter events per year in Minnesota District Courts have nearly doubled. It is anticipated that this trend will continue, and the Judicial Branch will require additional funding to sustain these essential services.

Interpreter Events by Fiscal Year					
FY19	FY20	FY21	FY22	FY23	FY24
24,566	27,296	28,654	35,885	43,074	48,472

The 2024 legislature appropriated \$1,290,000 in FY 2024 and \$3,870,000 in FY 2025 to fund court interpreter costs. The legislature provided carryforward authority that will assist the Branch with ongoing costs in FY 2026 and FY 2027. This proposal will provide permanent funding to address this critical operating need and ensure the Minnesota Judicial Branch can continue meeting the increased demand for court interpreter services. This funding will help protect the constitutional rights of those who require an interpreter to fully participate in court proceedings and ensure equal access to justice for this population in Minnesota.

Proposal:

The Judicial Branch seeks permanent funding for the Interpreter Program to cover existing program costs. Securing ongoing funding will prevent the program from developing a deficit.

Impact on Children and Families:

The requested funding will enable the Judicial Branch to continue to provide quality interpreter services in response to constitutional, statutory, and court rule requirements that benefits all Minnesotans

Equity and Inclusion:

The Judicial Branch is mandated to provide accurate interpretation of court proceedings so that participants with limited English proficiency and those who are deaf or hard of hearing are afforded equal access to justice and be placed on equal footing with English speakers. This funding will allow the Judicial Branch to meet the increased demand for these services.

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 comply with the requirement in Minnesota State Statute 480.182 that the Judicial Branch fund court-related court interpreter program costs, including the costs of hiring court interpreters.

Statutory Change(s):

The proposal does not require statutory changes.

District Courts

FY 2026-27 Biennial Budget Change Item

Change Item Title: Mandated Services Jury Budget Deficit

Fiscal Impact (\$000s)	FY 2026	FY 2027	FY 2028	FY 2029
General Fund				
Expenditures	0	0	788	788
Revenues	0	0	0	0
Other Funds				
Expenditures	0	0	0	0
Revenues	0	0	0	0
Net Fiscal Impact = (Expenditures – Revenues)	0	0	788	788
FTEs	0	0	0	0

Request:

The Judicial Branch is requesting \$1,576,000 in FY 2028-29 to provide permanent funding for costs associated with administering the state jury program. This request represents a .21% increase to the District Courts biennial base budget in FY 2028-29.

Rationale/Background:

The Eighth Amendment of the United States Constitution and Article 1, Section 4, of the Minnesota Constitution provide a right for a trial by jury. Minnesota Statute 480.182 requires the court to pay for certain mandated services, including jury costs.

The main form of communication for jury is through mailings. The rising cost of printing and postage for those mailings has created a deficit in the state jury program budget. Postage costs have increased six times since 2021, significantly outpacing inflation.

The 2024 legislature appropriated onetime funding of \$20,000 in FY 2024 and \$2,364,000 in FY 2025 to address the budget deficit in the State Jury Program due to increased costs with administering jury service. The legislature provided carryforward authority that will assist the Branch with the deficit in FY 2026 and FY 2027. However, these are ongoing costs that address a critical operating need to ensure the Judicial Branch can continue to meet Minnesotans' Constitutional right to a jury trial in a timely and efficient manner. This funding request would permanently address that ongoing deficit beyond FY2027.

Proposal:

The Judicial Branch seeks permanent funding to cover existing costs in the State Jury Program. This funding is critical to prevent the program from developing a budget deficit.

Impact on Children and Families:

The right to a jury trial is a fundamental right provided in the U.S. Constitution. The Minnesota Constitution, Article I, Section 4 guarantees a jury trial in the state court system. The right of the defendant to fair legal process includes having his or her fate determined by "a jury of peers," meaning representative members of the community. However, this right is dependent on those citizens who participate in the process. This funding will help reduce barriers to jury service, and ensure all Minnesotans have their right to a fair and impartial trial before a jury of peers upheld.

Equity and Inclusion:

The Minnesota Judicial Branch believes that reducing barriers to jury service will increase not only overall participation in the jury system, but also the overall demographic representativeness of the state's jury pool. Increasing the representativeness of the state's jury pool will help ensure that all Minnesotans have their cases decided by a jury representative of the community in which their case is being heard.

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:

This request is sought to comply with the requirement in Minnesota State Statute 480.182 that the Judicial Branch fund court-related jury program costs.

Statutory Change(s):

This budget request does not require a statutory change.