



MINNESOTA JUDICIAL BRANCH

The Minnesota Judicial Branch is proud to have maintained an open door to justice in Minnesota throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. By leveraging remote court hearings and nation-leading safety protocols, the Judicial Branch has ensured Minnesotans have always had a place to turn to seek justice, protect their rights, and peacefully resolve their disputes.

As Minnesota emerges from this time of crisis, the Judicial Branch is using the lessons and experiences of the pandemic to modernize and improve how the judiciary serves the people of Minnesota. The FY24-25 budget request will ensure that Minnesota’s courts can continue to deliver timely and effective access to justice, eliminate the pandemic backlog, and expand access to justice through remote hearings and other technological innovation.

Total FY24-25 Budget Request

FY24	FY25	FY24-25
\$47.963 m.	\$55.576 m.	\$103.539 m.

This is an 11.22% permanent increase over base budget.

Addressing Judicial Branch Workforce Challenges

The single biggest challenge facing the Minnesota Judicial Branch is retaining and attracting a skilled workforce.

Judicial Branch compensation has fallen significantly behind other public sector employers in Minnesota. Meanwhile, Minnesota judges and court staff have seen their salaries remain flat at a time of historically high inflation and wage growth.

Without a competitive compensation structure, Minnesota’s courts are struggling to find and keep qualified judges and staff to maintain the state’s justice system. Court staff departure rates increased by 52% from FY19 to FY22. Meanwhile, the number of applicants for each open position with the courts fell by 73%.

This funding request will help the Judicial Branch offer compensation competitive with other public sector employers and help offset the impact of inflation on current Judicial Branch employees. Most importantly, this request will ensure Minnesota’s courts have the workforce needed to continue providing timely and effective access to justice. This request also includes funding for the employer share of health insurance cost increases.

FY24	FY25	FY24-25
\$29.542 m.	\$52.958 m.	\$82.482 m.

- Increase judge compensation by 9% in FY24 and 6% in FY25.
- Provide a 9% compensation pool for employees in FY24 and 6% in FY25.
- Fund health insurance premium increases in each year.

Tackling the Pandemic Criminal Case Backlog

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Minnesota’s courts were forced to take unprecedented steps to limit in-person courthouse activity. While remote hearings allowed the Judicial Branch to address much of the incoming caseload during the pandemic, limited in-person courthouse activity resulted in a significant increase in pending felony and gross misdemeanor cases in Minnesota’s district courts.

FY24	FY25	FY24-25
\$8.421 m.	-	\$8.421 m.

Use senior judges and temporary staff to help reduce the pandemic backlog of felony and gross misdemeanor cases.

Since November 2021, the Minnesota Judicial Branch has leveraged federal pandemic relief funding to use senior (retired) judges and temporary staff to help reduce the pandemic backlog. By November 2022, the Judicial Branch had reduced the pandemic backlog by 45%. With that federal funding soon to expire, the Judicial Branch is seeking state funding to continue using senior judges and temporary staff to help eliminate the remainder of the pandemic backlog during the FY24-25 biennium. This is a one-time funding request for FY24.

Remote Hearings and Other Courtroom Technology

During the pandemic, remote (online) court hearings played a vital role in ensuring access to justice for Minnesotans. Through surveys and focus groups, court users have reported that remote hearings have expanded access to justice and made attending court hearings more convenient and less costly. As a result, the Minnesota Judicial Branch has made a long-term commitment to using remote hearings for many case types into the future.

FY24	FY25	FY24-25
\$7.400 m.	-	\$7.400 m.
<i>Modernize courtroom technology to support remote hearings, upgrade interpreter equipment, and implement other needed enhancements.</i>		

This funding request will allow the Judicial Branch to continue modernizing courtroom technology to support remote and hybrid court hearings, upgrade interpreter equipment and capabilities, and implement other needed enhancements. This is a one-time funding request for FY24.

Other Funding Priorities

The Judicial Branch FY24-25 budget request also includes funding for the following priorities:

- **Addressing the Rising Cost of Providing Mandated Services:** The Judicial Branch is experiencing significant increases in the court-related cost of providing psychological examinations in criminal and civil commitment cases, due primarily to the increase in both criminal and civil commitment examinations. From FY2019 to FY2022, criminal examinations increased by 28% and civil commitment examinations increased by 48%. The overall cost of providing these services grew by 58%. This funding request will offset the increased cost of providing these statutorily mandated services.
- **Sustaining Newly Established Treatment Courts:** There are currently four treatment courts across the state that were established through federal grants that will soon lose their federal funding. This funding request will allow the Judicial Branch to add these successful programs to the state’s treatment court funding formula and enable these treatment courts to continue serving their communities.
- **Maintaining Current Contract Court Interpreter Payment Rate:** The Legislature provided a one-time appropriation during the FY22-23 biennium to increase the payment rates for contract court interpreters. As a result, the Judicial Branch increased payment rates for all contract court interpreters by 8%. Without permanent funding, these payment rate increases will expire at the end of FY23.

Funding Priority	FY24	FY25	FY24-25
Address Mandated Services Deficit	\$1.996 m.	\$1.996 m.	\$3.992 m.
Maintain Four Treatment Courts	\$0.422 m.	\$0.422 m.	\$0.844 m.
Sustain Court Interpreter Payment Rate	\$0.200 m.	\$0.200 m.	\$0.400 m.