

North Carolina Judicial Branch Facts

- The Judicial Branch budget is \$464 million. Approximately 93% of that is personnel.
- The operating budget is at the lowest point in the last decade, having been reduced by 41.4% when compared to fiscal year 2008.
- The Judicial Branch’s percentage of the state budget is lower now than at the height of the recession.
- More than 55% of the courts’ budget is covered by imposed court fees, which go to the State General Fund for legislators to allocate. **Essentially, only 1 penny out of every tax dollar is being spent to support our court system.**
- Over the last six years, over ten percent of the workforce has been eliminated. We continue to maintain a high rate of vacant positions. Money generated from vacant positions (lapsed salary) is being used for underfunded areas such as jury payments, witnesses, interpreters, transcripts, and expert witnesses. **We are faced with a choice of being able to hire prosecutors and other needed court staff or pay jurors.**
- Budget cuts have brought a halt to innovation. Efficiencies to be gained from initiatives like E-Filing, Online Scheduling, Document Imaging, Evidence Display Systems cannot proceed due to the lack of steady and reliable funding.
- From 2012-2014 the attrition rate for court reporters is the highest of any group within the judicial branch and more than double the state average. We cannot effectively fill vacancies despite active recruitment. The average number of days vacant for those positions is now 258 days. Court sessions are being delayed due to a lack of court reporters.

ACCESS TO JUSTICE IS BEING COMPROMISED

THE AGE OF THE PENDING CASELOAD HAS STEADILY INCREASED SINCE BUDGET CUTS BEGAN IN 2008

Jurisdiction	Median Ages (in days)		Increase from 2008-2009 to 2013-2014
	2008-2009	2013-2014	
<i>DISTRICT</i>			
Civil District	124	216	74%
URES/UFSA	130	903	595%
Child Support (IV-D)	148	448	203%
Other Domestic Relations	131	178	36%
General Civil	106	119	12%
Magistrate Appeal/Transfer	118	150	27%
<i>SUPERIOR</i>			
Civil Cases	160	222	39%
Contract	145	206	42%
Collect on Accounts	99	160	61%
Motor Vehicle Negligence	173	192	11%
Other Negligence	217	262	21%
Real Property	256	343	34%
Administrative Appeal	132	203	54%
Other	146	210	44%

National Comparison

- North Carolina ranks third to last in the number of judges per capita at 1.2FTE per 100,000 population. The median for unified courts like NC is 6.8 FTE per 100,000 population
- North Carolina ranks 39th in salaries for judicial officials at the Highest Court Level; 31st in salaries for judges at the Appellate Court Level; and, 40th in salaries for judicial officials at the Trial Court Level.
- NC ranks 46th in the percentage of justice system funding spent on courts at \$77.84 per person; Alaska spends \$313 per person; The mean for all states \$138.
- According to the National Center for State Courts, most state court systems received small increases in their appropriations in FY12-13. North Carolina was one of only a handful that experienced a decrease during this period.

Requests

\$15.9 Million to Return Operating Budget to Actual

This restores funding for costs such as jurors, witnesses, interpreters, expert witnesses for prosecutors, maintenance for equipment, hardware and software.

\$7.8 Million for Court Electronic Filing

Technology enhancements will eliminate paper filing requirements and provide wireless access technology in our county civil courtrooms and business courts. Funding supports phase one technology development, hardware and software requirements, implementation and user training. This initial phase establishes North Carolina's commitment toward a multi-year comprehensive electronic court technology platform.

\$13 Million Investment in Judicial Branch Employees

Our request fulfills a commitment to recognize their services by requesting a 3% increase for court employees' compensation and continuation of pay plan step increases for assistant clerks, deputy clerks, and magistrates.

\$40.6 Million for Personnel Based on Workload Formulas

To meet workload needs, the courts require additional courthouse personnel to be designated in the following areas: trial courts 67 FTE, clerks of superior court offices 183 FTE, district attorney offices 154 FTE, magistrates 78 FTE, Guardian ad Litem 54 FTE.

Court Reporter Compensation

Restoration of \$2.50 per page rate

Why Should We Care?

Essential to Economic Prosperity

—Businesses need stability and predictability. Delays in the timely resolution of civil litigation create uncertainty, increase legal expenses, and detract attention away from execution of business plans. Backlogs hurt small business owners, stifling job creation. According to *Microeconomics, Inc.* from 2009 through 2013 delays in dispute resolution cost the U.S. \$52.2 billion in lost economic output.

— According to Market Strategies, LegalWise North America, and Harris Interactive, employees spent an average of 7 days away from work per year, plus 9 hours on the job equating to \$1,625 of annual cost to the employer based on a mean salary of \$50,000 to deal with Legal Life Events. 7 out of 8 employees surveyed experienced at least one Legal Life Event during the course of the year. The longer it takes to resolve legal issues through our courts the longer employee productivity suffers.

Essential to Well Being of Communities

*Integral to Public Safety *Protector of our fundamental rights and liberties