

**FY 2021 JOINT FINANCE  
COMMITTEE HEARING  
JUDICIAL BRANCH**

**FEBRUARY 19, 2020**



**Delaware**  
C o u r t s

# FY 2021 Operating Budget

- To the Governor, Budget Director, and the General Assembly, the Judicial Branch is grateful for continued support in the FY 2021 Governor's Recommended Budget.
- The Judicial Branch continues to invest in technology and mission-critical employees to support one of the finest court systems in the nation.



# Current Initiatives

## Downstate Family Court Facilities

- The Court Modernization Review Committee – evaluated financing options for two new Family Court courthouses in Kent and Sussex County and the renovation and expansion of the Leonard L. Williams Justice Center in New Castle County. Current Kent and Sussex courthouses are unsafe and undignified.
- Committee’s December 12, 2019 report - <https://legis.delaware.gov/TaskForces>. Public Private Partnership has merit.
- Governor’s preference – although there are benefits to the Public-Private Partnership approach, the Judicial Branch appreciates the Governor’s preference to construct new Kent and Sussex courthouses with traditional financing. The Governor’s Recommended Bond and Capital Improvements Act included \$17.5 million for ongoing design and FY 21 start of construction.

# Current Initiatives

## E-Filing

- E-Filing, Case Management and Document Management
  - ✓ Evaluating new programs to modernize our E-Filing across all courts and case types and unify case management and document management.
  - ✓ 3-5 year project. Proposals received and being evaluated.
  
- Court operations are still largely paper driven. In critical areas like criminal and family law, cases continue to be filed manually.
  
- Benefits of Modernizing E-Filing, Case Management and Document Management:
  - ✓ Consistent data capture from beginning to end.
  - ✓ Data sharing among courts, partner agencies, and the public.
  - ✓ Data security and redundancy.
  - ✓ Standards-based software to avoid the cost of customizations and benefit from regular upgrades.
  - ✓ No more paper to be manually filed or lost.

# General Fund Budget Overview

FY 2020 Operating Budget: \$100,680,500

FY 2021 Personnel Contingency: \$1,376,700

FY 2021 Enhancements: \$1,224,600

FY 2021 One-Time Funds: \$25,000

FY 2021 GRB Operating Budget: \$103,281,800

\*One-Time Funds not included in FY 2021 GRB Operating Budget. Funds are included in FY 2021 One-Time Supplemental Appropriation Bill.

# FY 2021 Governor's Recommended Budget

## ➤ \$850,000 for Technology Maintenance

- ✓ Supports the courts' IT infrastructure, hardware and software replacement plans, and emerging technologies.

## ➤ \$70,000 and 1.0 FTE for the Judicial Information Center to provide information security

- ✓ Will focus on information security threats and potential ransomware attacks. JIC currently does not have anyone dedicated to these duties.

# FY 2021 Governor's Recommended Budget

## ➤ \$229,600 and 3.0 FTEs to convert three Interpreter contracts to full-time employees

- ✓ There are only 7 certified Spanish interpreters in Delaware, and 3 hold long-term contracts with the Judiciary.
- ✓ These 3 long-term contractual employees are essentially working full-time schedules.
- ✓ Interpreting is a specialized skill and State certification requires exhaustive and costly preparation.

## ➤ \$63,600 ASF and 3.0 ASF FTEs to convert three remaining casual/seasonal JP Court Security Officers to full-time employees

- ✓ There are only 3 remaining casual/seasonal JP Court Security Officers
- ✓ 6 casual/seasonal officers were converted to FTEs in FY19, and 3 were converted to FTEs in FY20.

# FY 2021 Governor's Recommended Budget

## ➤ 2.0 ASF FTEs to convert two retiring county employees to state employees in the Court of Chancery

- ✓ These positions are retiring county employees established by HB 303 of the 141<sup>st</sup> General Assembly, transitioning the statewide Register in Chancery offices from their respective counties to the State. As county employees leave their Register's Office positions, the positions are to be replaced by state positions.

## ➤ \$75,000 transferred from the Department of Services for Children, Youth and Their Families to the Office of the Child Advocate for the Ivy Davis Scholarship Fund

- ✓ Funds are used to address financial needs of children who have been in foster care and offers them the opportunity for higher education.

## ➤ \$25,000 in one-time funding for Superior Court's Board of Canvass

- ✓ Funds for the Board of Canvass to certify general election results.

# Remaining Priorities

## Still In Need Of Support

### ➤ \$330,000 and 4.0 FTEs for an additional Court of Common Pleas Commissioner and Support Staff

- ✓ CCP currently has one Commissioner assigned to both Kent and Sussex Counties, which is inefficient and ineffective.
- ✓ Sussex County is experiencing caseload growth at an unparalleled rate. From FY13 – FY18, the number of DUI cases brought in the Court increased by 54 percent.
- ✓ The Department of Justice and Office of Defense Services are both supportive of this request.

### ➤ \$108,300 and 2.0 FTEs for two additional Court Security Officers for Superior Court

- ✓ There are currently 17 Court Security Officers, 1 Court Security Supervisor and 1 Chief Court Security Officer in New Castle County.
- ✓ Many criminal calendars require more than one Court Security Officer to maintain public safety.
- ✓ The already lean staff faces the additional strain of increased calendars for problem-solving courts and new courtrooms on the 7<sup>th</sup> floor.
- ✓ The current staffing equates to less than one Court Security Officer per Judicial Officer for assignment to the Courtrooms.

# Remaining Priorities

## Still In Need Of Support

### ➤ \$210,000 for Civil Indigent Services (held in OMB)

- ✓ These funds support Community Legal Aid Society, Inc. (CLASI), Delaware Volunteer Legal Services (DVLS), and Legal Services Corporation of Delaware (LSCD)
- ✓ This increase would bring annual funding up to \$750,000, which would result in approximately 260 additional Delaware families receiving free legal services.
- ✓ About 2/3 of their cases involve keeping people housed and free from domestic violence.

### ➤ \$48,300 ASF and 1.0 ASF FTE for a CCP Court Security Officer

- ✓ Court Security in Sussex County due to increased caseload and increased jurisdiction.
- ✓ From FY13 – FY18, the number of DUI cases brought in the court increased by 54 percent, from 1,970 to 3,032.

# Remaining Priorities

## Still In Need Of Support

### ➤ **Judicial Information Center Salaries**

- ✓ The Judiciary proposed epilogue language requesting to work collaboratively on a compensation plan that would be comparable and equitable to the Department of Technology and Information.
- ✓ Judicial Information Center employees are tasked with similar responsibilities and proportionate workloads to DTI employees in similar classifications but are making as much as \$20,000 less.
- ✓ The Judicial Branch is at considerable risk of losing talented and dedicated IT professionals seeking more pay. Compounding effect – vacancies are difficult to fill at current salary ranges.
- ✓ Epilogue language and salary plan would allow the Judicial Information Center to recruit and retain qualified information technology professionals for essential court functions.

Thank you.



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