



MINNESOTA
JUDICIAL
BRANCH

MINNESOTA JUDICIAL BRANCH FY2022-23 BUDGET REQUEST

OVERVIEW

Over the past decade, the Minnesota Judicial Branch has embarked on an ambitious redesign agenda aimed at improving the efficiency and effectiveness of Minnesota's justice system.

This includes the eCourtMN transformation, Minnesota's historic transition to an electronic case record. The eCourtMN initiative has made it easier for Minnesotans to interact with and access their court system, and enhanced information sharing between the courts and justice partners.

We have also overseen a significant expansion of drug courts and other treatment court programs in the state. These programs have been proven to reduce recidivism among offenders facing chemical and mental health issues, and reduce costs in the justice system.

The Judicial Branch FY2022-23 budget request is focused on positioning the Judicial Branch to continue building on this decade of innovation, and on continuing efforts to meet the challenges posed by the pandemic and the Branch's ability to fulfill the Constitutional responsibility to provide justice freely, promptly and without delay.

Budget Request Items	FY22-23 Request
Judge/Staff Benefit Costs	\$8.876
Judge/Staff Compensation Costs	\$8.850M
Total Request	\$17.726 M

The Judicial Branch is seeking an increase of 2.24% over the Branch's biennial base budget in FY2022-23.

ADDRESSING THE JUDICIAL BRANCH WORKFORCE CHALLENGES

The biennial budget request reflects the difficult fiscal challenges the Governor and lawmakers will confront in the next legislative session. At the same time, it recognizes the incredible work of judges and staff during the current crisis, as well as the vital role judges and staff will play in addressing the long-term impact of the pandemic on the state's courts.

To that end, the Judicial Branch seeks a two-part budget request:

- In FY22, the Judicial Branch asks the Governor and Legislature to **hold Minnesota's courts harmless** while the state wrestles with the projected budget shortfall. The only new funding the Judicial Branch seeks for FY22 is money to cover the employer share of unavoidable health care cost increases. Anticipated insurance increases: 4.32% (FY21); 5.32% (FY22); 5.35% (FY23)
- In the second year of the biennium, FY23, the Judicial Branch seeks funding for a **3% compensation increase pool for Judicial Branch employees and a 3% salary increase for judges**, in addition to funding to offset employer health care cost increases. The Judicial Council is hopeful that the state will be on more solid financial footing by FY23, thereby allowing for this needed investment in the state's courts.

This request does not address every funding need facing the courts. It does prioritize our most important asset: our people. It also reflects the Judicial Branch's ongoing commitment to being good stewards of public resources and responsible partners with the other two branches of state government.

Request : \$17.7million (2.4%)

The Judicial Branch FY2022-23 budget request seeks funding to:

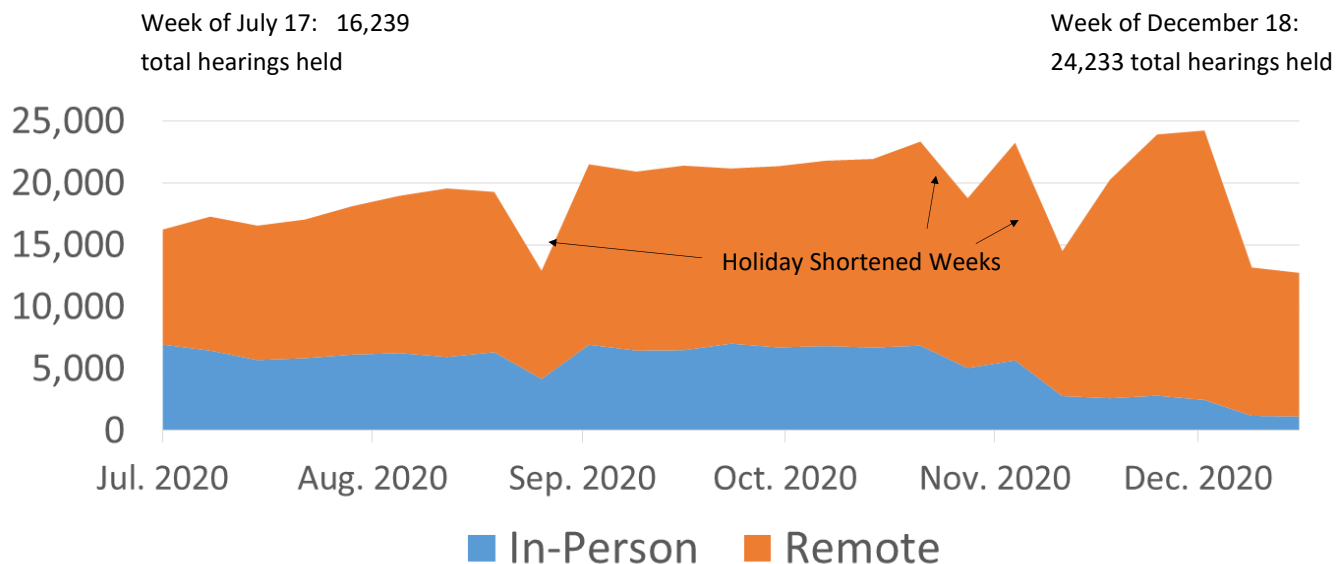
- Increase judge compensation by 3%/year
- Provide a 3% compensation pool each year for court employees
- Fund the employer share of unavoidable health insurance

JUDICIAL BRANCH PANDEMIC RESPONSE

Over the past ten months, the Minnesota Judicial Branch has been actively responding to the changing dynamics of the COVID-19 pandemic. The focus has always been on determining how the courts can provide access to justice in a manner that prioritizes the health and safety of court users, judges, and staff.

Judges and staff have undertaken incredible efforts to maintain court operations during this time of crisis. In mid-July district courts held approximately 16,000 hearings per week, about 60% of which were being held with remote hearing technology. For reference, prior to the pandemic, district courts were holding more than 26,000 hearings per week. The week ending December 18, district courts held more than 24,000 hearings, more than 90% of our pre-pandemic normal. Since courts suspended most in-person court activity at the end of November, more than 90% of all hearings have been conducted remotely.

District Court Hearings Held July 17, 2020—January 1, 2021



MOVING FORWARD

The Judicial Branch looks forward to expanding on lessons learned and on continuing to provide court services in a manner that is focused on court user convenience and access; and that ensures the public trust and confidence in the Judicial Branch through efficient and effective court operations.

This pandemic has made clear the importance of the remote hearing and online services courts already offer, and the appetite attorneys and the public have for doing more of their business with the courts online.

The Judicial Branch is exploring expansion of online services going forward. The Branch is working to develop a web-based services expansion plan to increase online and remote services options for litigants. This expansion plan will represent a positive step forward and hopefully spur a long-term conversation about expanding the online services available to court users. There are so many incredible opportunities for the courts to explore, from online chat or video conferencing, to online dispute resolution, to mobile apps, to so much more. If the Branch is going to meet customer's expectations both now and in the future, the Branch needs to bring more and more court business online.