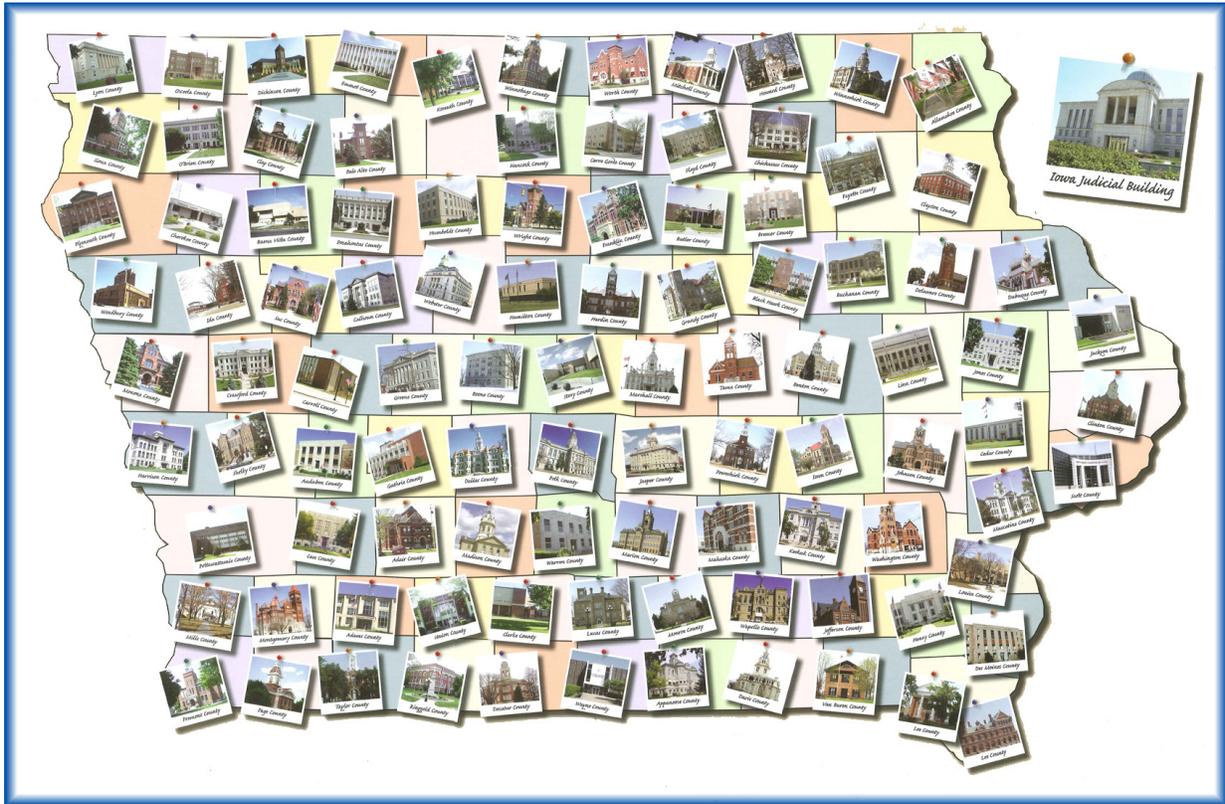


The Iowa Judicial Branch Fiscal Year 2017 Budget

(July 1, 2016 - June 30, 2017)



Your Community-Based Court System

“Justice is the core value that inspired our founders when we became a nation, and it remains today our common bond as Iowans.”

**Chief Justice Mark Cady
2016 Condition of the Judiciary**



Iowans helping Iowans resolve their disputes

The Iowa Judicial Branch has a vital constitutional mission: to administer justice according to law equally to all people.

Iowa courts are accessible to all, including your friends and neighbors, to provide fair and impartial solutions to everyday problems. The district court in your county courthouse is where parties bring their disputes, prosecutors file criminal charges, trials take place, attorneys offer evidence, witnesses testify, juries deliberate, and judges enter judgments. Iowa's district courts handle nearly 750,000 cases a year.

Magistrates and Judges

Magistrates and judges serve the public by using their legal expertise and knowledge to apply laws impartially. ***In Iowa, we have:***

- **146 Magistrates** who preside over simple misdemeanors, including traffic violations, county and municipal infractions, and small claims, and they issue search warrants, conduct preliminary hearings, and hear certain involuntary hospitalization matters.
- **6 Associate juvenile judges** who hear juvenile court matters including juvenile delinquency, child in need of assistance, termination of parental rights, and adoptions.
- **68 District associate judges** who have the jurisdiction of magistrates plus authority to hear serious and aggravated misdemeanor cases, certain civil suits, and juvenile cases when the judge is sitting as a juvenile judge.
- **116 District judges** who have the authority to hear any type of case within the district court including felony criminal cases, dissolutions of marriage, personal injury cases, and business disputes.
- **37 Senior judges** who have and may exercise all of the authority of the judicial officer position to which the judge is assigned.
- **9 Court of appeals judges** who resolve more than 1,000 appeals from the district court every year.
- **7 Supreme court justices** whose decisions set binding legal precedent that lower courts must follow. The justices also regulate the practice of law in Iowa, approve rules of procedure and practice used throughout the state courts in Iowa, and have supervisory control over the judicial branch and over all judicial officers and court employees.

Court Staff

To accomplish the judicial branch mission, judges, magistrates, and court employees work to provide a broad range of court-related services. ***In Iowa, we have:***

- **62 Clerks of court** who oversee the operations of the clerk's offices in each of Iowa's county courthouses. Across the 99 counties there are **662 clerk's office staff** who perform a wide variety of tasks including: processing and maintaining all documents filed with the court; collecting and processing fines, fees and restitution; assisting citizens with electronic filing of documents; and sharing court information with all appropriate agencies.
- **127 judicial specialists** who conduct scheduling conferences, prepare scheduling and other orders, and assist with jurors and jury trials and other court proceedings.
- **201 Juvenile court officers** who protect the public by working directly with delinquent youths and their families to develop the skills needed to address negative behaviors.
- **174 Court reporters** who keep the official record of hearings and court proceedings.
- **57 Information technology professionals** who provide the ongoing maintenance and support of the Electronic Document Management System, online fine payment, and Iowa Courts Online access.
- **15 professionals in court administration** who manage human resources, accounting, and purchasing.



Iowa courts work for all Iowans

Most cases filed in Iowa courts do not make headlines, but each case is critically important to the Iowans involved. In addition to the occasional high profile criminal cases and civil legal disputes, there are cases filed daily involving families in crisis, victims seeking protection, abused and neglected children, and troubled youths, all turning to the courts for help during desperate times of need.

Working with troubled youth

Juvenile courts work to prevent and address juvenile delinquency. Each year, juvenile court services assist thousands of troubled children and teens to ensure community safety, accountability, and changes in negative behavior.

Juvenile court services address community safety by focusing on the underlying issues that bring young persons to the courts' attention. Juvenile court officers provide services in collaboration with community agencies, schools, and law enforcement.

More than 17 million documents have been filed and stored electronically

The statewide implementation of electronic filing in Iowa's courts was completed last summer. Iowans with a case in the courts can now file documents using the Internet and view the court docket and court documents for their case online from an office or home computer 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Iowa is a national leader and a model of efficiency with the first mandatory electronic filing system in the nation. To date, more than 130,000 people are registered to file electronically and the system processes an average of 12,800 filings every day.

There are 55 specialty courts in Iowa

Specialty courts, such as treatment courts, are a partnership between courts and communities, and are proven to be an effective way to address the core problems responsible for many crimes and broken families. These courts work intensively with community professionals to empower Iowa adults and juveniles to break free from the grip of substance abuse and mental health issues. Treatment teams include judges, substance abuse treatment professionals, attorneys (county attorneys and parents' or defense attorneys), and private agency providers.

2015 Filings in Iowa District Courts

Domestic cases, including divorce, custody, civil domestic abuse, child support, and modification of decree	38,231
Civil cases, including personal injury, medical and dental malpractice, debt collection, and mortgage foreclosure	22,205
Forcible entry and detainers (actions that a landlord, or new property owner can take if an existing occupant refuses to leave after appropriate notice)	14,245
Small claims cases and civil infractions ..	52,651
Simple misdemeanor cases	490,655
Criminal cases, including OWI, serious and aggravated misdemeanors, and felonies	83,156
Probate cases, including adult mental health commitment petitions	26,316
Juvenile cases, including delinquency, child in need of assistance, parental rights, and mental health commitment petitions	12,514
TOTAL 2015 FILINGS.....	739,973

Setting the Fiscal Year 2017 Judicial Branch Budget

	<u>FY 2016</u>	<u>FY 2017</u>
Base Operating Budget	\$178,686,612	\$178,686,612

For the 2017 fiscal year, beginning July 1, 2016, the legislature appropriated the same amount of funding as the judicial branch received last year, well below the amount needed to maintain the current level of service to Iowans. Unfortunately, this has caused the Iowa Supreme Court to make some very difficult decisions. The court considered all options to balance the budget including, but not limited to, layoffs, court closure days, reduction in hours, and the reduction or elimination of specialty courts and other recently developed programs. In making budget decisions, the justices considered the following:

Constitutional mandates, statutory mandates, and core responsibilities. Upholding the constitution is the most important function of courts. The Iowa Constitution mandates a judicial branch and the Constitution and many Iowa statutes assign important responsibilities to the judicial branch.

In January 2013, the supreme court established six priorities for the judicial branch shaped from what Iowans told the justices they expect and need from their courts.

- Protect Iowa's children
- Provide faster and less costly resolution of legal disputes
- Provide full-time access to justice
- Operate in an open and transparent way
- Operate an efficient full-service court system
- Provide fair and impartial justice for all

Input from Judicial Branch employees. State Court Administrator David Boyd encouraged all court employees "to submit suggestions for cost-cutting and efficiency measures to tackle this budget challenge." He created a special email address for the submittals and promised to review and consider every suggestion.

Input from stakeholders in the Iowa court system. State Court Administrator David Boyd and Chief Justice Mark Cady met with representatives from juvenile court services, The Iowa State Bar Association, court reporters, judges, corporate counsel, defense counsel, clerks, trial attorneys, county attorneys, and magistrates to solicit their suggestions and concerns regarding the fiscal year 2017 budget.

Recommendations from the Iowa Judicial Council. The judicial council (which includes the chief judges and district court administrators from the eight judicial districts, the chief judge of the court of appeals, and the chief justice) advises the supreme court with respect to the supervision and administration of the judicial branch. The council met several times and considered all the information gathered before making its final budget recommendations to the supreme court.

For Fiscal Year 2017 the Iowa Supreme Court decided to:

- Establish a **hiring freeze** for all vacancies in the judicial branch. There will be a very few, limited exceptions to the hiring freeze.
- Hold open **judicial vacancies** for an average of six months.
- **Reduce judicial branch travel** expenses by 10%.
- Reduce furniture and non-IT equipment expenses by 50%.
- Shift some funding for IT operations to the Court Technology Fund.
- Institute a **moratorium on the expansion** of specialty courts.
- Require supreme court approval to discontinue any specialty courts.

Even with these budget decisions, there may be the need for further budget adjustments at some point in the fiscal year.