

Suggestions for Expense Reduction and Efficiency Measures From Court Personnel

(posted March 4, 2009)

General Personnel Costs

- Temporary layoffs (aka furloughs)
- Voluntary furloughs for employees, judges and magistrates
- Pool court reporters and reduce number of court reporters
- Eliminate overtime
- Hiring freeze
- Hold law clerk positions open
- Freeze salaries
- Reduce all fulltime employee positions to 37.5 hours/week
- Hold open judicial and magistrate vacancies
- Require employee contribution for single coverage for health insurance
- Layoff various court personnel
- Restructure and downsize district finance and personnel
- Offer early retirement incentives
- Stop or reduce deferred compensation match
- Reduce senior judge benefits or eliminate senior judge program
- Hold open all non-essential positions
- Take our State Holidays, but take them without pay
- Work four-ten hour days
- Consolidate offices and reduce staff
- Centralize certain functions

Travel Costs

- Cancel all education conferences
- No meal reimbursement for conferences
- Eliminate unnecessary travel, including judges
- Reduce magistrate school to one day, start at 10 am, no overnights allowed
- Change trial rotation to reduce travel
- Eliminate Judicial Branch Awards statewide ceremony
- Limit travel of judges, court reporters, clerks and court administration
- Try cases in counties where there are resident judges
- Require court reporter domicile to be same as their judges' domicile
- Authorize electronic signature for travel claims so they can be emailed
- Cancel ICIS user group travel

Juvenile Court Services

- Reduce mileage for JCO client visits; limit face to face contact once every 60 days rather than the current 45 days
- Require clients travel to office
- Authorize one JCO to see other JCO's children at the same facility
- Have Local JCOs make visits to local placements for JCOs who live in other districts
- Children at home under some type of probation or supervision could be seen once a month rather than twice a month. Other contacts could be done by phone or e-mail.
- Contact with parents by JCO could be done by phone or email, rather than face to face.
- Use web conferencing, ICN, or a local JCO for monthly visits to children being held and/or treated in locations out of district
- Use resident judges for juvenile court instead of bringing in the juvenile judge twice a week
- JCS intakes on first offense simple misdemeanors could be handled by a simple one page form if we did not have to follow the IDA protocol. This would save on paper and toner. The vast majority of our children who come in on first offense simple misdemeanor never come back for a second offense; therefore, they do not provide any outcomes to measure.

Clerks' Offices

- Allow clerk to accept more fax documents for filing.
- Require attorneys to either pick up their mail at clerks or provide SASE to send their mail out.
- Discontinue practice of clerk staff sitting in on Magistrate Court
- Clerk Financial: Much time is spent double-checking financial records (examples: zeroed transaction report, case delete history report, month balancing, etc.) When the State Auditor comes up with double and triple checking ideas maybe we need to say no, we don't have the staff for that.
- Probate Delinquency Notices: At a minimum reduce to once per year (code change required). Add some type of financial penalty so it deters attorneys from simply allowing the delinquency process to serve as their reminder system.
- CSRU: CSRU sends a lot of pay record requests to the Clerks. If they don't need it to be certified, why can't they print it from EPA rather than having us take the time to look it up, make copies and mail to them?
- Consolidate certain tasks within clerks' office between counties, examples: bookkeeping, jury coordinator tasks, etc.
- Create a central processing office for non-contested traffic violations
- Fax or email orders instead of mailing
- Have court reporters help out in Clerks offices
- Eliminate/restrict the option of filing city parking violations with the Clerk

Court Generated Revenue Enhancements

- Increase court reporter fees, these fees have not changed in 20 years
- If a panel of jurors is brought in and the case settles (civil or criminal) someone should have to pay the fees associated with bringing in a jury (?)
- Allow civil cases to be paid on-line
- Charge state agencies for data courts provide
- Tax the actual cost of jury fees to the parties in a case
- Late settlement fees for criminal cases
- Domestic Abuse cases – costs need to be assessed, too many are dismissed with no costs
- More vigorous use of wage assignments at time of sentencing
- Raise filing fees to match Illinois fees: civil \$255, dissolution \$255, small claims \$175
- Raise fees for online access subscriptions and charge a fee for all online access
- Assess and earmark a surcharge for courts
- Charge market value prices for data and customized data reports
- Require fees for probate matters to be paid early in process before they can proceed
- Charge a fee for deposit of wills
- Raise fees for certified copies and regular copies
- Charge a fee for SR150
- Charge a fee for mental health and CINA cases
- Increase all filing fees, including fees for mechanic liens, name change, executions, adoptions
- Charge a fee for last minute (immediately before trial) guilty pleas
- Charge for delinquent probate inventories and reports
- Change charge for small estates
- Raise the price of the pro se forms
- Charge for subpoenas
- Require that dissolution fees be paid before a decree is signed and entered

Supplies, Books, Equipment, Communications, Postage, etc.

- Eliminate the purchase of Legal Directories
- CAPP: this is a huge waste of money and staff time
- Share office equipment with other judicial offices when equipment breaks, copiers, fax.
- Let's eliminate all Micro-Soft office products for every judicial employee (all of state government for that matter). We (as others do in the private sector) can use the Open Office Products. It needs to be an all or nothing proposition. There will be training costs up front but the payoff will be real dollars.
- Open Office: What happened to moving away from the Micro-soft products?
- Cut back on Blackberries
- Cancel subscriptions to books, periodicals, updates, including the Iowa Code, NW Reporter, etc.

- Send all notices and copies of orders, etc. by email rather than regular mail.
- Cut back on employees with Internet access
- More shared printers
- Restrict access to email groups, including access to all court personnel, judges' groups and employee groups

Jury

- Modify jury program so bulk emails can be sent to jury panels if juror has indicated they would like to receive information via email instead of snail mail
- Change jury scheduling and/or term of service for jurors
- Increase the length of jury service to save on postage and clerk time

Miscellaneous

- Utilize digital audio recording technology in lieu of court reporters when necessary to make the court record
- Consolidate the Court Reporter Certificate and Court Reporter Memorandum into one form
- Single space orders and rulings
- Put all forms into templates and email or fax
- Too many judicial voter guides
- Eliminate small claims mediation. It results in at least twice the amount of mailing, paper handling and docketing in the Clerk's office. It also results in delays of getting cases resolved.