



STATE COURT ADMINISTRATION

Iowa Judicial Branch Building
1111 East Court Avenue
Des Moines, IA 50319

TODD NUCCIO
State Court Administrator

June 1, 2018

Today, Governor Reynolds signed into law the Judicial Branch Appropriations Bill (HF 2495). For the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2018, the legislature appropriated and the governor approved \$177,574,797. This amount is \$3.5 million more than the FY 18 judicial branch appropriation after the \$1.6 million de-appropriation. Put another way, the FY 19 judicial branch's operating budget is \$1.9 million more than the original FY 18 appropriation. For FY 19, an additional \$3.1 million was authorized for the jury and witness fund; this amount is consistent with the allocation provided in past years. Other language in the bill includes a provision that the judicial branch operate clerk of court offices in all 99 counties and be accessible to the public as much as reasonably possible. As in past years, there is also language directing us to focus on the collection of delinquent fines and fees.

With regard to one-time allocations for capital projects in the Infrastructure Appropriations Bill (SF2414), the judicial branch received \$1,464,705 for furniture and equipment related to the last phase of the Polk County Justice Center and \$3,000,000 for judicial branch technology projects, which will allow us to begin improving our capabilities related to redundancy, recoverability and cyber security.

Concerning juvenile related matters, in the Health and Human Services Appropriations Bill (SF2418) DECAT funding and court ordered services remained steady at \$1,717,753 and \$3,290,000 respectively. The allocation for juvenile delinquent graduated sanctions came in at \$12,253,227, also no change from the previous fiscal year.

Under the Justice Systems Appropriations Bill (HF2492) regarding justice system policy matters, the judicial branch and DOC, in cooperation with CJJP, DHS and the CBCs, are directed to study the effectiveness and recidivism rates of persons assigned to specialty courts. The study will be in addition to the research project we currently have ongoing with the National Center for State Courts (NCSC) to develop performance measures and establish data collection standards for these courts. It is also in addition to the contract just signed to have the NCSC conduct a process evaluation of our specialty courts to ensure we uniformly and consistently follow evidence-based practices across the state. Another policy provisions found in HF2492 increases the small claims cap to \$6,500 for cases commenced on or after July 1, 2018.

As you know, there are three steps in the budgeting process: The legislature passes an appropriation's bill; the governor signs it into law; and the supreme court decides how to allocate

those dollars subject to specific provisions in the law. In making its budget decisions, the supreme court reaffirmed its commitment to the *six priorities of the judicial branch. The court prioritized keeping court services available to Iowans in all 99 counties, as well as protecting children and public safety through the efforts of juvenile court services.

Given the funding available, the judicial branch will be able to fill approximately 75 of the 135 currently-held vacancies in FY 19. We will also reduce the time district court judge positions are held open from the current 12-month average to two months. The moratorium on the establishment of new specialty courts, however, will continue.

The supreme court has also decided to increase employee salaries by 1% across the board and provide a 2% step increase for all non-contract and AFSCME contract covered employees (that are not at the top of their pay grade). Steps for PPME contract covered employees (that are not at the top of their pay grade) will be 1.75%. The court recognizes the impact that ongoing vacancies have on the workload of existing personnel. While somewhat modest, these increases represent the best that can be accomplished under present circumstances and convey a deep appreciation for the hard-working and dedicated employees throughout the organization. Unfortunately, judges and magistrates will not receive any salary increase this year as the legislature did not authorize a salary increase or allow the judicial branch to increase judicial officer salaries. We will continue to stress the need for appropriate judicial compensation as 21 (11%) of the 116 district court and 75 district associate court judges have left the bench thus far in FY 18.

In closing, I hope you find this information helpful in understanding the current landscape and beneficial in your planning for FY 19. Please do not hesitate to contact me if there are any questions or if I can be of further service. Additional budget information is publicly available on the judicial branch website at <https://www.iowacourts.gov/iowa-courts/fy-2019-budget/>. Thank you.

***What Are the Six Priorities of the Iowa Judicial Branch?**

The six priorities for the judicial branch shaped from what Iowans have said they expect and need from their courts.

1. **Protect Iowa's Children.** If the judicial branch is going to accomplish any lasting good in Iowan's lives, the branch must begin by bringing lasting good to the lives of our children in need.
2. **Provide Full-Time Access to Justice.** Whether it is children in need, an Iowan, an Iowa Business, or a friends and neighbors who must at some time count on access to court services, it is clear that Iowans expect their government to operate a full-time, full-service, and efficient court system.
3. **Operate an Efficient, Full-Service Court System.** The Iowa Judicial Branch must continuously work to improve access to the courts and make operations more efficient by taking advantage of all innovative and effective processes available.
4. **Provide Faster and Less Costly Resolution of Legal Disputes.** Iowans expect and deserve timely resolution of their legal disputes. The old axiom "justice delayed is justice denied" is more and more true in this increasingly fast-paced world.

5. **Be Open and Transparent.** The strength of democracy requires well-informed citizens. The strength and effectiveness of our court system depends on public confidence in the courts.
6. **Provide Fair and Impartial Justice for All.** Iowa judges make decisions based on the facts of a case and the rule of law, not on their personal beliefs or popular opinion. Allegiance to the law is the very core of the judicial system, embodied in the oath as judges and the rules of ethics, and it is a pledge to all Iowans.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Todd Nuccio". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the beginning.

Todd Nuccio