



STATE COURT ADMINISTRATION

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

TODD NUCCIO
State Court Administrator

November 30, 2018

David Roederer
Department of Management
State Capitol
LOCAL

Glen Dickinson
Legislative Services
State Capitol
LOCAL

Dear Mr. Roeder and Mr. Dickinson:

Pursuant to Iowa Code section 602.1301(2)(a), I hereby submit, on behalf of the Iowa Supreme Court, the FY2020 budget request for the Iowa Judicial Branch.

The Iowa Judicial Branch is being proactive in charting its future. We are examining every aspect of our operations to bring about greater efficiencies and, in the process, creating a culture of continuous improvement. In short, we are employing the methods and tools of business in a government setting. We are encouraged by the progress being made and seek a stronger partnership with the legislative and executive branches to continue these efforts.

We developed our FY20 budget with an eye toward providing better services for all Iowans. Throughout FY19, we scrutinized our structure, organization, and programs to identify opportunities for improvement. We identified more than 130 potential projects as part of this strategic plan. Discussions with the Judicial Council distilled these projects into a series of initiatives by bundling similar projects. Where capacity currently exists, work has already begun.

The six resulting FY20 budget initiatives align with the strategic plan and position the judicial branch to become the nimble, innovative, responsive, and relevant organization that Iowans seek from their government.

Rural Courts Initiative

The judicial branch seeks to strengthen its ties with rural communities and to offer a full complement of services on a full-time basis. In order to achieve this objective, we seek funding for Clerk of Court Offices at 100% of the workload formula and the flexibility through related code reforms to reposition personnel and improve the distribution of our workload.

Digital Opportunities Initiative

We are excited about the ongoing development and rollout of several technological enhancements. They include a new jury management application; video/audio systems for remote court reporting, interpreting, and defendant/litigant appearances; VOIP phone systems; electronic warrants; defendant text-reminder notifications; and several improvements in redundancy and recoverability made possible by the special and much appreciated \$3 MM appropriation from the legislature. Each of these enhancements, however, require ongoing maintenance and support costs.

The funding requests associated with the Digital Opportunities Initiative address the support staff, licensing, maintenance contracts, and equipment replacement costs that are part of all technology enterprises. Ongoing operational costs now consume 100% of our Court Technology and Modernization Fund and the Enhanced Court Collections Fund, which were originally established by the legislature to launch new technological innovation. Plus, operating expenses have outpaced even those additional dollars and are now eating into other court services. The request for this budget package essentially brings us out of the red and provides a foundation for incrementally (five-years) restoring operations funding, so that the Court Technology and Modernization Fund and the Enhanced Court Collections Fund can once again be used to innovate.

Access to Justice Initiative

The funding requests in this package are for the development of programs and services to address the increasing number of self-represented litigants and the language barriers confronting non-English speaking Iowans. Both initiatives seek to relieve clerk staff of these time-intensive demands and to deliver services in a more convenient, consistent, and cost-effective manner across the state.

Protect Iowa's Children Initiative

Through this package, we seek the resources to implement the recommendations from a Council for State Government study, which will lead to improved internal and external coordination of juvenile services, uniform policies that are consistently applied statewide, and data driven decision-making that will improve outcomes for all children. We also seek funding that will allow us to hire enough juvenile court officers to reach 95% of the workload formula, which is currently at 90%. In turn, juvenile officers will be able to have more frequent and quality contacts with the children they supervise.

Address Stagnant Judicial Salaries Initiative

The judicial branch requests a 4% salary increase for all judicial officers. The number of overall applicants for judicial vacancies and the number of private practice applicants is trending downward. Departures from the bench are also of concern. In FY18, 11% of our judges left the bench. The strength of our American system of government depends on public trust and confidence in the institutions that form it. A judiciary comprised of quality jurists is key to maintaining assuredness in the rule of law, which is the foundation upon which all other institutions rest.

Problem-Solving Courts Initiative

This initiative will improve the coordination and effectiveness of problem-solving courts throughout the state. The National Center for State Courts has been working with the Iowa Judicial Branch and is now wrapping up three studies in this area: establishing Data Standards and Performance Measures, a Process Evaluation to ensure fidelity to the model, and the Cost-Benefit Analysis requested by the legislature. To begin the execution of the various recommendations coming from these studies, we seek the funds needed to employ a state-wide director of problem solving courts.

All Iowans will benefit from these initiatives. The Iowa Judicial Branch stands ready to work with Governor Reynolds and the legislature to provide the services that all Iowans expect from their justice system.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Todd Nuccio".

Todd Nuccio
State Court Administrator