



State Court Administration

Iowa Judicial Branch Building
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To all judicial officers and judicial branch staff:

I would like to thank each of you for the service you provide to Iowans. The judicial branch cannot fulfill its constitutional duty to provide justice without you.

I share your concern that judicial branch salaries are not keeping pace with inflation or the pay increases that other public servants are receiving. That is why the branch requested an 8.7% salary increase for judicial officers and judicial branch staff. While Governor Reynolds and the legislature did not appropriate enough funding to implement that request, the branch is trying to find other measures to acknowledge the the invaluable contributions made by judicial officers and judicial branch staff.

The supreme court has approved the following measures to retain current judicial officers and staff and to attract new applicants for open positions.

1. Retention and inflation adjustment payment for all judicial branch employees

In June, judicial branch employees will receive a payment based on their years of service plus a flat inflation adjustment (see table below). This is a one-time payment to all of you who have borne the brunt of maintaining the current level of service for Iowans by covering the workload of vacant positions. In FY 23 the judicial branch is experiencing a 14% turnover in employees. There are now approximately 145 vacant positions, mainly court reporters and judicial specialists. Turnover is higher than normal due to the inability of the branch to keep the compensation we offer current with inflationary pressures. To encourage current employees to remain with the branch we will use the available funds resulting from the 14% turnover rate for the retention and inflation adjustment payment to judicial branch employees.

<u>Years of Service</u>	<u>Years of Service Amount</u>	<u>Flat Inflation Adjustment</u>	<u>Total</u>
0 - 6 months	\$ 250	\$1,500	\$1,750
6 months - 5 years	\$ 500	\$1,500	\$2,000
6 - 10	\$1,000	\$1,500	\$2,500
11 - 15	\$1,500	\$1,500	\$3,000
16 - 20	\$2,000	\$1,500	\$3,500
21 - 25	\$2,500	\$1,500	\$4,000
26 - 30	\$3,000	\$1,500	\$4,500
31 - 35	\$3,500	\$1,500	\$5,000
36 - 40	\$4,000	\$1,500	\$5,500
41 +	\$4,500	\$1,500	\$6,000

2. Increased vacation accrual for judges

Iowa law prohibits judges from receiving salary adjustments in addition to the salaries prescribed by the legislature. However, the supreme court looked for other ways to increase the benefits provided to judicial officers. Vacation time is one of those benefits and it has not been adjusted in more than 18 years. The supreme court is amending Iowa Court Rule 22.14 to increase the number of vacation days to 27 for those judges with fewer than 15 years of service and 32 for those judges with 15 years of service or more. The court is also increasing the number of vacation days that can be carried into the next calendar year from 27 to 32. This change will be retroactive to January 1, 2023.

The judicial branch will continue to advocate for a judicial salary increase from the governor and legislature, while exploring other options that will attract attorneys to apply to be judges.

3. FY 24 salary increases for judicial branch employees

Judicial branch employees will receive a 3% across the board increase and a 2% in grade increase. This small increase is the amount that the judicial branch can afford to provide to all contract and non-contract employees using the funds appropriated by the governor and legislature.

The chart below shows the amounts the judicial branch has requested for employee salary increases in each of the last five fiscal years versus the amounts that were appropriated by the governor and legislature.

<u>Fiscal Year</u>	<u>% ATB requested</u>	<u>% ATB received</u>	<u>% In Grade requested</u>	<u>% In Grade received</u>
24	3	3	5.7	2
23	1.1	1.1	3	2
22	1.3	1.1	3	1
21	2.1	2.1	1	1
20	2.1	2.1	0	0

As you can see across the board (ATB) raises for contract and non-contract employees are usually linked to the negotiated contracts. An ATB increase raises the minimum and maximum of each pay grade for all employees. Requested increases for in-grade raises (also known as “steps”) are not contract linked. Employees who are not at the top of the pay range are eligible for the in-grade increases.

4. FY 24 judicial officer salaries

Unfortunately, the governor and legislature did not authorize a judicial officer salary increase in FY 24. The chart below shows the history of judicial officer salary requests.

<u>Fiscal Year</u>	<u>Amount Requested</u>	<u>Amount Received</u>
10	Unknown	0
11	Unknown	0
12	No formal request	0
13	No formal request	0
14	9%	4.5%
15	4.5%	0
16	4.5%	0
17	5%	0

18	5%	2.5%
19	2.5%	0
20	4%	2%
21	2.1%	0
22	3%	3%
23	5.9%	2%
24	8.7%	0

5. Conclusion

It is with the sincerest appreciation of the work you do and the justice you provide to your neighbors and communities every day that the judicial branch is providing the retention and inflation adjustment payment and increased vacation days. It is an opportunity to acknowledge our employees for both quality work and years of service. While the governor and legislature have limited the branch in what we can pay our judicial officers and employees, please know the branch will continue to request and advocate for fair compensation for judicial officers and judicial branch employees.

Sincerely,



Robert Gast