



Court System Education Funding Task Force 2020 Talking Points

- 1) The Washington Judiciary is requesting \$207,000 in 2020 and approximately \$550,000 in the next Biennium to ensure new judicial officers and court personnel get timely access to the training needed to effectively serve the public. Funding will ensure equal access for small and rural courts that struggle to afford sending judges and court staff to training opportunities.

Funds will be used to develop and implement a statewide online training system which can provide immediate and sustainable training opportunities to all courts. This system will reduce learning and development expenditures, ensure access to up-to-date information, target diverse learning audiences, and increase opportunities for required trainings.

- 2) The training needs of the judicial branch have increased due to a myriad of factors including new legislation, constant changes in the existing law, and the high turnover of judicial officers, county clerks, administrators, and staff. A recent survey revealed that almost 50% of judicial officers and 63% of new administrators received no training during their first six months on the job.
- 3) New judges are typically highly experienced legal professionals in specialty practice areas. Judges are required to be proficient in all areas of the law. They need knowledge and training to preside over continuous changes in law, policy, and technology.
- 4) Well-trained judicial officers and court staff foster confidence in the judicial process. Better outcomes for the public means greater trust in state and local government. Research has shown that people tend to comply with court orders and the law if they perceive that court proceedings and the laws are fair.
- 5) Proper training is essential to making sure the intent of the legislature is carried out in the cases that come through the courts. Last year alone the Legislature passed more than 130 bills that impacted the court system, including protection orders, family law and parentage, guardianship, mental health, public records, and juvenile justice. That was a significant increase from the 150 bills that were passed 2016–2018 that impacted the court system.
- 6) The “age wave” is here and is creating huge turnover on the bench and among court staff. Nearly a third of the district and municipal court and superior court bench were replaced in the last few years. Court of Appeals judges are retiring in similar numbers. We need additional dollars to train these new judges.
- 7) Timely training is critical to informed and effective responses to increasing numbers of self-represented litigants and mental health, domestic violence, and drug addiction cases swamping the courts.