

Washington State Judicial Branch

2023-25 Biennial Budget

Merge Law Library into Supreme Court

Agency: Washington State Law Library

Decision Package Code/Title: AB – Merge Law Library into Sup Court

Agency Recommendation Summary Text:

The Washington State Law Library (Library) and Washington State Supreme Court (Court) jointly request that the merger of the Library into the Court begun in 1959, be finally completed by transferring the remaining expenditure authority on an ongoing basis from the Library to the Court. When the Library was merged into the Court in 1959, the transfer of finances was deemed to be a one-time event, which doesn't seem to match the intent of the bill. This request completes the merger intended by the 1959 Legislature. (General Fund-State)

Fiscal Summary:

	FY 2024	FY 2025	Biennial	FY 2026	FY 2027	Biennial
Staffing						
FTEs	(13.80)	(13.80)	(13.80)	0.00	0.00	0.00
Operating Expenditures						
Fund 001-1	(\$2,046,900)	(\$2,035,300)	(\$4,082,200)	(\$99,500)	(\$99,500)	\$(199,000)
Total Expenditures						
	(\$2,046,900)	(\$2,035,300)	(\$4,082,200)	(\$99,500)	(\$99,500)	\$(199,000)

Package Description:

In the 1959 Legislative Session, the state legislature passed House Bill 191 which merged the State Law Library into the Supreme Court. Section 4 of the bill consolidated the appropriations and finances into the Court. Due to the phrasing of Section 4 of the bill, when the bill was codified by the Code Reviser, Section 4 was labeled as “temporary”, which had the effect of keeping the State Law Library as a separate agency with separate appropriations even though House Bill 191 fully merged the library into the Court. See text below:

Appropriation consolidated.

SEC. 4. The unencumbered balances of the current biennium appropriations for the state law library and the state law librarian's salary are hereby consolidated into salaries, wages and operations and shall be administered and expended as directed by the court.

“Sec. 4. The unencumbered balances of **the current biennium appropriations** for the state law library and the state law librarian's salary are hereby consolidated into salaries, wages and operations and shall be administered and expended as directed by the court.”

The emphasized language referring to “current biennium appropriations” indicated to the existing Code Reviser that the financial consolidation was a one-time event. The finances were consolidated from the Library to the Court for the 1959-61 biennium and then split back out into separate agencies in the next 1961-63 biennial budget.

It is unknown why this particular language was used, but after 63 years, it's time to complete the merge. RCW 27.20.030 notes that when the law library split from the State Library in 1959, it fell “under the exclusive jurisdiction and control of the Supreme Court.” Consequently, the State Law Librarian is already functionally a department head within the Supreme Court hierarchy. The continued existence of the Library as a separate agency just adds unnecessary complexity and unproductive agency-level tasks. Librarian time is better spent focused on meeting patron needs and maintaining a great collection.

The consolidation of resources benefits both the Library and the Court. As a department of the Court, rather than a separate agency, unallocated budget surpluses could more easily be used to support both the print collection and other Court needs. In leaner times, the impact of reductions can be lessened by spreading them over the larger Court budget instead of depleting the Library’s core mission and collections. Establishing the print and database collection budget and library training and travel funds as separate funds within the Court’s budget would provide a sufficient level of separation to ensure the Library’s mission.

As a technical mechanism, this requires nothing more than a change to the annual appropriations act and an update to the statewide chart of accounts. There is no discernable impact to staff or appropriation levels resulting from this move.

Fully describe and quantify expected impacts on state residents and specific populations served:

This is a technical request and is not expected to have any impacts other than improving the efficiency of back-office functions within the Library and the Administrative Office of the Courts, which manages the finances of both the Court and the Library.

Explain what alternatives were explored by the agency and why they were rejected as solutions:

Not applicable.

What are the consequences of not funding this request?

If this request is not funded, the inefficiencies in the Library’s back-office functions will persist, with internal resources continuing to redirect to support these inefficiencies.

Is this an expansion or alteration of a current program or service?

No.

Decision Package expenditure, FTE and revenue assumptions:

This request would shift all appropriations from the Library to the Court.

	<u>FY 2024</u>	<u>FY 2025</u>	<u>FY 2026</u>	<u>FY 2027</u>	<u>FY 2028</u>	<u>FY 2029</u>	
Expenditures by Object							
All Objects	(2,046,900)	(2,035,300)	(99,500)	(99,500)	(99,500)	(99,500)	
Total Objects	(2,046,900)	(2,035,300)	(99,500)	(99,500)	(99,500)	(99,500)	
Staffing							
Job Class	Salary	<u>FY 2024</u>	<u>FY 2025</u>	<u>FY 2026</u>	<u>FY 2027</u>	<u>FY 2028</u>	<u>FY 2029</u>
ALL JOB CLASSES		(13.80)	(13.80)				
Total FTEs		(13.80)	(13.80)				

How does the package relate to the Judicial Branch principal policy objectives?

This request supports the objective of Efficient Court Management, providing efficiencies to the back-office function of both the Court and Library as supported by the Administrative Office of the Courts.

Are there impacts to other governmental entities?

No.

Stakeholder response:

There is no impact to external stakeholders of either the Court or the Library.

Are there legal or administrative mandates that require this package to be funded?

No.

Does current law need to be changed to successfully implement this package?

No.

Are there impacts to state facilities?

No.

Are there other supporting materials that strengthen the case for this request?

Not applicable.

Are there information technology impacts?

No.

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