

Washington State Judicial Branch

2025-27 Biennial Budget

Continue Merit Increases

Agency: Court of Appeals

Decision Package Code/Title: 97 – Merit System Increments

Agency Recommendation Summary Text:

The Court of Appeals requests funding to continue providing merit increases for eligible employees. (General Fund-State)

Fiscal Summary:

	FY 2026	FY 2027	Biennial	FY 2028	FY 2029	Biennial
Staffing						
FTEs	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Operating Expenditures						
Fund 001-1	\$509,000	\$690,000	\$1,199,000	\$690,000	\$690,000	\$1,380,000
Total Expenditures						
	\$509,000	\$690,000	\$1,199,000	\$690,000	\$690,000	\$1,380,000

Package Description:

The Court's operating budget is not sufficient to support merit increases without the allocation of additional funding. There are approximately 140 employees in the three divisions of the Court of Appeals including staff attorneys, judicial assistants, and court clerks. An agreement was reached recognizing that the Court of Appeals functions as three autonomous courts each with fewer than 100 FTEs. This allows the agency to include the cost of salary increments in the maintenance level request. The Court has taken action to exclude temporary law clerk positions from increment eligibility thereby reinforcing the validity of treating the Court as an agency with fewer than 100 FTEs.

Fully describe and quantify expected impacts on state residents.

Funding the budget request will allow the Court to continue providing access to justice and appellate court services.

Explain what alternatives were explored by the agency and why this was the best option chosen.

There is no alternative. When necessary, the Court of Appeals staff served the people of Washington without receiving the merit increments they earned. Most employees of our state receive annual salary step increases, and it is appropriate for the Court of Appeals to provide periodic salary step increases for eligible staff.

What are the consequences of not funding this request?

Eligible employees would not receive merit increases. It will be difficult to recruit and retain qualified employees if merit increments cannot be provided.

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

No

Decision Package expenditure, FTE and revenue assumptions:

Expenditures by Object	<u>FY 2026</u>	<u>FY 2027</u>	<u>FY 2028</u>	<u>FY 2029</u>
A Salaries and Wages	434,000	588,000	588,000	588,000
B Employee Benefits	75,000	102,000	102,000	102,000
Total Objects	509,000	690,000	690,000	690,000

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

Providing merit increases to eligible employees demonstrates effective support for Court personnel. Continuing to support personnel will help the Court provide employees that oversee the fair and effective administration of justice, make sure customers have accessibility to the Court and its services, and ensure that Court can maintain sufficient staffing and support.

How does the package impact equity in the state?

Address any target populations or communities that will benefit from this proposal.

Not applicable.

Describe the how the agency conducted community outreach and engagement.

Not applicable.

Consider which target populations or communities would be disproportionately impacted by this proposal.

Explain why and how these equity impacts will be mitigated.

Not applicable.

Are there impacts to other governmental entities?

Not applicable.

Stakeholder response:

Not applicable.

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?

No

Are there information technology impacts?

No

Agency Contacts:

Lea Ennis (Division I), 206-464-5871, Lea.Ennis@courts.wa.gov

Derek Byrne (Division II), 253-552-2288, derek.byrne@courts.wa.gov

Tristen Worthen (Division III), 509-456-3082, Tristen.Worthen@courts.wa.gov