

Washington State Judicial Branch 2025-27 Biennial Budget Retain and Recruit Staff with Competitive Salaries

Agency: Supreme Court

Decision Package Code/Title: 1P – Retain and Recruit Staff

Agency Recommendation Summary Text:

The Supreme Court requests \$1.09 million to implement salary adjustments to court staff, as identified in the recent 2024 Comprehensive Judicial Branch Salary Survey. The increase will make judicial branch agencies a competitive employer of choice in a job market titled heavily in favor of job seekers. (General Fund-State)

Fiscal Summary:

	FY 2026	FY 2027	Biennial	FY 2028	FY 2029	Biennial
Staffing						
FTEs	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Operating Expenditures						
Fund 001-1	\$545,000	\$545,000	\$1,090,000	\$545,000	\$545,000	\$1,090,000
Total Expenditures						
	\$545,000	\$545,000	\$1,090,000	\$545,000	\$545,000	\$1,090,000

Package Description:

A salary survey recently commissioned by the Administrative Office of the Courts determined that there are a large number of judicial branch staff, including staff at the Court, who are paid at salaries far below the public sector market rate. The Supreme Court requests \$545,000 per year to bring staff salaries closer to parity with the salaries of comparable positions in the public sector. Doing so will ensure that the hardworking staff that serve the judicial branch are paid fairly and equitably. The fair and equitable administration of justice begins with the Court's commitment to its staff.

Background

There is a significant market disparity between salaries at the Court and comparable positions in both the private and public sectors. A comprehensive salary survey completed in the summer of 2024 by the Segal Group confirmed these disparities, finding that the salaries of Court staff lagged behind market averages by 5 percent to 20 percent in aggregate, particularly at the midpoint and high points of the ranges (when staff have more experience). Prior studies in 2021 and 2014 showed similar disparities. The Supreme Court is asking for adequate funding to close these gaps.

Fully describe and quantify expected impacts on state residents.

Competitive salaries lead to lower turnover which results in more steady services to Washington's courts and ultimately more steady services to the users of those courts.

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

The Court has no capacity in its existing budget to solve these salary issues, and could not identify any effective alternatives or options apart from the proposed package. There is no more effective means of improving staff morale, retention, and recruiting.

What are the consequences of not funding this request?

While we have a staff deeply committed to our work, we know that staff have left for higher paid positions in other courts, as well as private and other public sector work. If we fail to remedy salary disparity, we will struggle to attract applications who can bring the high level of professionalism and commitment to justice we require.

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

No

Decision Package expenditure, FTE and revenue assumptions:

Based on recommendations by the Segal Group, the table below displays the amounts requested by the Supreme Court position benchmark and staff FTE.

		Fiscal Year (Object A&B average increases by year)			
Position Benchmark	FTE	FY 2026	FY 2027	FY 2028	FY 2029
STAFF SERVICES CLERK	1	\$19,226	\$19,226	\$19,226	\$19,226
LEGAL SECRETARY	2	\$8,370	\$8,370	\$8,370	\$8,370
JUDICIAL ADMINISTRATIVE ASST	16	\$3,495	\$3,495	\$3,495	\$3,495
LAW LIBRARIAN 2	5	\$28,470	\$28,470	\$28,470	\$28,470
SENIOR CASE MANAGER	5	\$21,047	\$21,047	\$21,047	\$21,047
EDITOR	3	\$17,483	\$17,483	\$17,483	\$17,483
SENIOR STAFF ATTORNEY	3	\$8,491	\$8,491	\$8,491	\$8,491
STAFF ATTORNEY	2	\$13,811	\$13,811	\$13,811	\$13,811

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

This package directly relates to the Sufficient Staffing and Support policy objective. Having sufficient staff with the required skills and professional commitment is essential. The 2021 and 2014 salary surveys identified major discrepancies in Court staff salaries when compared with similar positions in both the public and private sectors. That situation has continued with detrimental effects on staff morale, retention, and recruiting. This request will directly address this situation.

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

Describe the disproportional impacts of this proposal.

Not applicable

Are there impacts to other governmental entities?

It will improve the judicial branch's service to other agencies

Stakeholder response:

Not applicable

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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?

2024 Comprehensive Salary Survey by the Segal Group

Are there information technology impacts?

None

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