

WASHINGTON STATE JUDICIAL BRANCH
2013-2015 BIENNIAL BUDGET REQUEST
Detailed Decision Package

Agency: Washington State Court of Appeals
Decision Package Title: Maintain Case Resolution Productivity
Budget Period: 2013-2015 Biennial Budget Request
Budget Level: Policy Level

Recommendation Summary Text

Funding is requested for an additional court commissioner. The position is necessary to ensure that case processing remains sufficient to prevent a backlog.

Fiscal Detail

Operating Expenditures		<u>FY 2014</u>		<u>FY 2015</u>		<u>Total</u>
001-1 State General Fund		\$ 144,100		\$ 144,100		\$ 288,200
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Staffing		<u>FY 2014</u>		<u>FY 2015</u>		<u>Total</u>
FTEs		1.0		1.0		1.0

Package Description:

The Court of Appeals is a non-discretionary court, meaning that all case must be decided. Annual case filings have averaged over 4,200 for the last eleven years. Since 2009 the Court of Appeals budget has been reduced by 17%. Because the Court of Appeals' budget is solely dedicated to staff for case processing each reduction implemented by the legislature has resulted in the elimination of staff.

On an annual basis each Commissioner is responsible for deciding approximately:

- 50 Discretionary Reviews
- 25 Dependency/Terminations
- 25 Motions on the Merits
- 250 Rulings Terminating Review

In addition, Court Commissioners are responsible for cost bills, attorney fee rulings, and court's motion hearings.

Narrative Justification and Impact Statement:

- **This package contributes to the Judicial Branch Principle Policy Objectives as noted below.**

Fair and Effective Administration of Justice in All Civil and Criminal Cases.

Washington courts will openly, fairly, efficiently and effectively administer justice in all criminal and civil cases, consistent with constitutional mandates and the judiciary's duty to maintain the highest level of public trust and confidence in the courts.

Delays in case processing and decision making, caused by inadequate resource levels, adversely impact all parties involved, including children, business owners and the public.

Measure detail

- **Impact on clients and services**

Delays in case processing and decision making adversely impact children in dependency cases, the public and business in civil cases and those seeking court review of criminal cases.

- **Impact on other state programs**

If the position is not funded, other state agencies may be impacted due to delays in the decision making process.

- **Relationship to Capital Budget**

None.

- **Required changes to existing Court Rule, Court Order, RCW, WAC, contract, or plan**

None.

- **Alternatives explored**

The Court of Appeals Division One has implemented a number of efficiencies in its case processing procedures as a result of previous budget reductions. The efficiencies, however, are not sufficient enough to keep pace with filings.

- **Distinction between one-time and ongoing costs and budget impacts in future biennia**

These costs are ongoing.

- **Effects of non-funding**

A case backlog will develop causing delays in case resolution.

- **Expenditure calculations and assumptions and FTE assumptions**

Costs represent the salaries and benefits of a Washington State Court of Appeals Court Commissioner.

Expenditure Calculations and Assumptions

<u>Object Detail</u>	<u>FY2014</u>	<u>FY2015</u>	<u>Total</u>
Staff Costs	\$144,100	\$144,100	\$288,200
Non-Staff Costs	\$ -0-	\$ -0-	\$ -0-
Total Objects	\$144,100	\$144,100	\$288,200