

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

Agency: Supreme Court
Decision Package Title: Operational Funding
Budget Period: 2013-2015 Biennial Budget Request
Budget Level: Policy Level

Recommendation Summary Text

Since 2009, the Washington Supreme Court (Supreme Court) has sustained a 17% reduction to its operating budget. In order to achieve those reductions the Supreme Court has frozen staff salaries, reduced department head salaries, eliminated costs resulting from holding court in areas other than Olympia, virtually eliminated funding for Access-to-Justice programs, and reduced other operating expenditures by fifty percent.

Funding is requested to support the constitutionally mandated operations of the Supreme Court.

Fiscal Detail

Operating Expenditures	<u>FY 2014</u>	<u>FY 2015</u>	<u>Total</u>
001-1 General Fund State	\$ 25,000	\$ 25,000	\$ 50,000
Staffing			
	<u>FY 2014</u>	<u>FY 2015</u>	<u>Total</u>
FTEs	-0-	-0-	-0-

Package Description:

Since 2009, the Washington Supreme Court (Supreme Court) has sustained a 17% reduction to its operating budget. In order to achieve those reductions the Supreme Court has frozen staff salaries, reduced department head salaries, eliminated costs resulting from holding court in areas other than Olympia, virtually eliminated funding for Access-to-Justice programs, and reduced other operating expenditures by fifty percent.

Over eighty six percent (86%) of the non-staff budget is redistributed to central service agencies. These services and the associated costs are established by the central service agencies, and as such are beyond the control of the Supreme Court; they cannot be managed in a manner that would allow for service reductions leading to cost reductions. The remaining fourteen percent (14%) of the non-staff budget is dedicated

to ensuring that the Supreme Court can operate. This category includes the costs of telephones, document reproduction, postage and other necessary costs.

As noted, the Supreme Court has implemented budget austerity initiatives that allow it to function within the confines of its legislative appropriations. However, the Supreme Court is finding it extremely difficult to focus on and carry out its core mission due to the extreme budget situation it currently faces. As an example, normal operating supply purchases have been cancelled due to increased Attorney General litigation costs.

Narrative Justification and Impact Statement:

- **Describe the way in which way this package contributes to the Judicial Branch Principle Policy Objectives 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.

The Supreme Court must have adequate base funding in order to carry out its constitutional mandate. The Supreme Court budget has been reduced to a level that impedes its ability to effectively operate; almost one hundred percent of the Court's non-staff funding is dedicated to non-controllable costs such as rent, Attorney General services, statewide information technology service costs, etc.

Measure detail

- **Impact on clients and services**
Funding is being requested for costs associated with the most basic operating expenses. Without adequate funding for supplies, copies and telephones, the Supreme Court cannot adequately provide the services that the public has a right to receive.
- **Relationship to Capital Budget**
None.
- **Required changes to existing Court Rule, Court Order, RCW, WAC, contract, or plan**
None.
- **Alternatives explored**
The Supreme Court has implemented a number of cost reduction initiatives (see above). However the budget has been reduced to a point that does not allow for efficient and effective operation.
- **Distinction between one-time and ongoing costs and budget impacts in future biennia**
This is a request for ongoing funds.

- **Effects of non-funding**

If additional funding is not provided certain costs may not be paid.

Expenditure Calculations and Assumptions

<u>Object Detail</u>	<u>FY2014</u>	<u>FY2015</u>	<u>Total</u>
Staff Costs	\$ -0-	\$ -0-	\$ -0-
Non-Staff Costs	\$ 25,000	\$ 25,000	\$50,000
Total Objects	\$ 25,000	\$ 25,000	\$50,000

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