

Washington State Judicial Branch 2015-2017 BIENNIAL BUDGET REQUEST

Decision Package

Agency	Court of Appeals
Decision Package Title	Reinstatement of Merit Increments
Budget Period	2015-2017 Biennial Budget
Budget Level	Maintenance Level

Agency Recommendation Summary Text

The Court of Appeals requests funding to reinstate salary step increases for eligible employees. Staff salaries were frozen in 2009 as part of the austerity measures necessitated by severe budget reductions. Employees did not advance to the next salary step within their salary ranges, as is customary for state employees.

Fiscal Detail

Operating Expenditures	FY 2016	FY 2017	Total
001-1 General Fund State	\$ 310,000	\$ 310,000	\$ 620,000
Staffing	FY 2016	FY 2017	Total
FTEs (number of staff requested)	0	0	0

Package Description

In order to achieve reductions over the past six years, the Court of Appeals implemented austerity measures which included elimination of salary step increases for current employees.

There are approximately 140 employees in the three divisions of the Court of Appeals, including staff attorneys, judicial assistants, and court clerks. While exempt from RCW 43.88 an agreement has been reached whereby OFM has recognized that the Court of Appeals functions as three autonomous courts each with fewer than 100 FTEs and can therefore include the cost of salary increments in the maintenance level request. Employees who are at the top of their salary ranges are not eligible for further step increases. This request seeks to

provide step increases for those employees who are not yet at the top of their salary ranges and who are eligible for step increases, but who did not receive increases due to the budget reductions implemented by the Court of Appeals.

Allowing each of these eligible employees to receive a step increase on their next Periodic Increment Date (PID) would begin the process of bringing them to the salary they should be receiving based on their tenure in the job class.

Restoring step increases would assist in the retention of these skilled employees.

Narrative Justification and Impact Statement

This package contributes to the Judicial Branch Principle Policy Objectives as identified below.

Appropriate Staffing and Support. *Washington courts will be appropriately staffed and effectively managed, and court personnel, court managers and court systems will be effectively supported.*

Court of Appeals staff salaries were frozen in 2009 to enable the Court to operate on a severely reduced budget. The affected employees have continued to carry out their duties despite the fact that they did not receive step increases as they were earned. Restoring the Court's ability to provide step increases to eligible employees will ensure that court personnel are effectively supported.

Measure Detail

Impact on clients and service

None

Impact on other state services

None

Relationship to Capital Budget

None

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

None

Alternatives explored

Court of Appeals staff cannot be expected to serve indefinitely without receiving the merit increments they have earned.

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

These are ongoing costs.

Effects of non-funding

It will be difficult to recruit and retain qualified employees if merit increments cannot be provided.

Expenditure calculations and assumptions and FTE assumptions

Object Detail	FY 2016	FY 2017	Total
Staff Costs	\$ 310,000	\$ 310,000	\$ 620,000
Non-Staff Costs	\$ 0	\$ 0	\$ 0
Total Objects	\$ 310,000	\$ 310,000	\$ 620,000