Judicial Information System Committee Meeting May 19, 2010

AOC Statewide Service Level to Courts: A Centralized or Decentralized Model?

I. Background

On March 5, 2010, the JISC approved the Final IT Governance Framework reflecting input from the court community and industry best practices. The JISC is being asked to provide guidance to inform the user community and AOC in moving IT requests through the governance process. That policy direction should include a set of criteria to guide decisions on which court business functions should be provided statewide (centralized) and which should be local (decentralized).

II. History

In 1973, in response to the need to make court business processes more efficient and improved access to case information, the Supreme Court created the predecessor to the JISC, the Superior Courts Management Information System (SCOMIS) Committee to study the use of automation in the judicial branch. The committee received a grant from the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration (LEAA) in 1976 to begin the development of the Judicial Information System (JIS). Projects were begin in 1976 and 1977 to establish a superior court system (SCOMIS), an appellate court system (ACORDS), a juvenile system (JUVIS) and a system for courts of limited jurisdiction (DISCIS). The projects received a number of subsequent grants, and funding from the legislature beginning in 1977.

In the 1977-1979 biennium, the legislature appropriated $684,000 from the General Fund for the development of the JIS. In the 1979-1981 biennium, the legislature did not make a JIS-specific appropriation, but increased the AOC appropriation by $4.4 million over the prior biennium. That year the legislature required the AOC and JIS users to develop a feasible plan for funding the JIS with user fees, and report to the legislature. The resulting Permanent Funding Plan (attached, August 1980) recommended JIS funding through a portion of the Supreme Court and appeals court clerks' fees, as well as new fees on filings, judgments, forfeitures, penalties, costs, and traffic fines.

In 1980, a bill that increased superior court clerks' filing and other fees also allocated $2 of each filing fee for JIS costs. The bill created a judicial information system account within the general fund and restricted spending from that fund to JIS costs only (2SSB 2381, Chapter 70, Laws of 1980).

In 1981, the legislature passed House Bill 590 (Chapter 330, Laws of 1981), which increased filing and other fees for superior court clerks, juvenile courts, and courts of

limited jurisdiction as well as for traffic infractions. That bill removed the JIS account from the general fund, and removed the clause that restricted spending to JIS costs only. The bill also made a one-time appropriation of $8.6 million from the general fund for the JIS, and appropriated $100,000 for the Legislative Budget Committee to conduct a study on the JIS.

The JIS continued to be funded through the general fund until 1984, when the legislature passed the Court Improvement Act of 1984. The Act set up the Public Safety and Education Account (PSEA), funded by a number of court fees and fines, and dedicated the fund to support specific activities, including the JIS.

In 1988, the legislature specifically appropriated $2.2 million from the PSEA for enhancements to the JIS, including the development of an information center, implementation of a data administration model, provision of personal computers and support services in courts not served by the mainframe system, and planning activities.

In 1989, the legislature passed SHB 1414 (Chapter 364, Laws of 1989, RCW Chapter 2.68), creating a separate JIS account, maintained by the AOC. The bill also directed the JISC to develop a schedule of user fees for non-court users of the JIS that would generate sufficient revenue to cover JIS costs.

In 1994, based on the report that the JIS was operating at 100% capacity during most working hours and required more capacity, the legislature passed SSB 6006 (Chapter 8, Laws of 1994). Now RCW 2.68.040, the bill provided for additional funding to the JIS Account by enabling the Supreme Court to adopt rules to assess a $10 penalty for CLJ infractions, a $10 appearance cost on all defendants, and a $10 fee for each traffic infraction account for which a person requests a time payment schedule. The court was also asked to adjust these assessments for inflation.