



Supreme Court of Pennsylvania  
ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE OF PENNSYLVANIA COURTS  
Pennsylvania Judicial Center  
Post Office Box 61260  
Harrisburg, PA 17106-1260  
(717) 231-3326

THOMAS B. DARR  
COURT ADMINISTRATOR  
OF PENNSYLVANIA

February 24, 2017

The Honorable Seth Grove  
B-8 Main Capitol Building  
P.O. Box 202196  
Harrisburg, PA 17120-2196

Dear Representative Grove:

I am writing to acknowledge receipt of your January 24<sup>th</sup> letter conveying a request for information related to the Judiciary's budgets. As you no doubt know, these weeks leading to submission of the annual budget request to the Legislature and the attendant budget hearings are busy ones for all involved, and we have begun working to provide an expeditious response to your inquiries. While a complete response will require more of the timeline anticipated in your request, I include in this letter those responses which we have completed at this time. For easy reference, the heading for each response refers to the numbering sequence used for inquiries in your letter. Wherever we already have provided the requested material to the appropriations committees as a matter of routine or as part of the annual budget submission, I refer to such material in the committee's possession rather than burdening your office with additional copies of the same material.

***1. Program Performance.***

***Key Performance Indicators (KPI):***

While operations of the courts typically do not fit well into a KPI analysis, there are areas that are analogous, such as the analyses that precede realignment of magisterial districts, a task assigned to the Supreme Court by the constitution and statute which determines the total number and regional deployment of magisterial districts. A primary factor in the analysis is caseload, but other factors such as population and population density, as well as other pertinent factors such as geography, are also considered. One of the goals of realignment is equalization of caseload. Another key factor over nearly a decade has been the Supreme Court's intent to reduce the absolute number of magisterial districts as a cost-saving measure. Beginning with the start of the most-recent realignment in 2010 through to the present time, the Court has

eliminated a net 29 offices, producing cumulative state savings of \$15.7 million. Annual state savings when all 32 districts are eliminated by January 2018 are estimated at more than \$5 million, based on current costs. Because counties under the shared state / local responsibility for funding courts bear the cost of the offices (rent and provisions) and support staff, they realize local savings from the elimination of districts in addition to the figures cited here. In contrast, the Judiciary has no role in determining the number and deployment of common pleas judges, which is a legislative prerogative.

**Primary Cost Drivers:**

Because roughly 86% of the Judiciary's budget are personnel costs, the cost drivers tend to be personnel related. For example, pension contributions have been a primary cost driver in our budgets in recent years reflecting the annual hikes in pension contribution rates, and in this year's budget request pension contributions drive nearly 20% of the total budget increase, followed by medical benefits at 17.6%, statutory annual COLAs for judges at 10%, and filling judge vacancies (2017 is an election year for judges) at nearly 6%. But the single largest driver in this year's budget is \$12 million to fund the county court reimbursement grant at the statutory rate, which drives 39% of the overall budget increase.

**2. New Programs / Initiatives.**

Operating costs typically represent a small portion of the Judiciary's budget, and in this budget they represent approximately 4% of the overall state-funded portion of the budget. The budget request contains two modest "program initiatives":

Judicial Education: \$113,000 increase to support mandated continuing judicial education requirements established for all appellate and trial court judges.

Court Interpreter Services: \$250,000 increase to provide for statewide language access services (translation of forms used statewide by counties, translation of the UJS Web site, pilot project for a video remote translation project) to assist counties in meeting obligations under federal and state law and judiciary policy.

Additional information about these requests may be found in the budget material we submitted to the appropriations committees on the 16<sup>th</sup> of this month.

**5. Federal Funds.**

The Judiciary receives very little federal funding. In the current fiscal year, there are only four appropriations (only three have associated funding) of federal funds totaling \$1.725 million. In the budget request year, there are

federal funds requests of \$1.784 million. Please see the Requests for Appropriation of Federal Funds (RAFF) forms provided to the committees for each of the Judiciary's federal appropriations.

**6. Contract and Contract Amendments.**

For the requested information, please see the contract listing the Judiciary provides annually, in both printed and electronic format, as requested by the appropriations committees.

**8. Regulations.**

The Judiciary does not promulgate regulations of the type described in your inquiry. The Judiciary promulgates court rules pursuant to Article V Section 10 of the Constitution.

**10. Fines / Settlements / Litigation.**

This is not applicable to the Judiciary.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jim Koval", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Cc: Andrea Tuominen, Esq.  
Jim Koval