

115 STATE STREET
MONTPELIER, VT 05633
TEL: (802) 828-2228
FAX: (802) 828-2424



STATE OF VERMONT
GENERAL ASSEMBLY
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY

REP. MAXINE GRAD, CHAIR
REP. WILLEM JEWETT, VICE CHAIR
REP. THOMAS BURDITT, RANKING MEMBER
REP. VICKI STRONG, CLERK
REP. CHARLES CONQUEST
REP. WILLIAM FRANK
REP. MARTIN LALONDE
REP. MARCIA MARTEL
REP. BETTY A. NUOVO
REP. BARBARA RACHELSON
REP. GARY VIENS

MEMORANDUM

To: Mitzi Johnson, Chair, House Appropriations Committee
From: House Judiciary Committee
Date: March 13, 2015
Subject: Judiciary Budget Ideas

Madam Chair:

The following is a list of proposals the House Judiciary Committee asks you to consider:

1. The Judiciary Branch's proposal of on the record appeals moves 150 cases that would now be heard in the trial courts to the Supreme Court. It frees up judge and staff time to do other cases. (We are hearing that CHINS dockets are up. Testimony is that trial courts are stressed, but the Supreme Court isn't and the Supreme court can do these appeals.)

No dollar amount provided for savings.

2. Environmental on the record appeals proposal. (Testimony we heard is that removing an intermediate level of appeal frees up resources and is consistent with how the court operates elsewhere.)

No dollar amount provided for savings.

3. Prisoner transport. Suggest looking closely at this \$2.2 million line item. Consider use of fleet cars or a uniform system of coordinated/centralized transport.

4. Court security. There are 14 separate contracts with pay disparities of \$10/hr. Consider requiring this to be a single court-system wide contract with targeted savings.

5. Sheriffs are state employees (as are 2 deputies/county – for transport) who get statutory salaries-look into that use of state funds and possible readjustment of salary.
6. See Lightening the Load on the FY 16 Judiciary Possible Budget Savings Chart: change who does service of process — \$87,000 savings for Judicial Branch (shifts costs).
7. Improve collections of fines and fees, possibly by using restitution unit to do collections. Presently we have a 90% collection rate. Increasing that by 1% might result in \$200,000 in new revenue. Also, have all forms of payments available in all courts. Have judges or clerk ask how will person pay when fine is set or at time of decision.
8. Require some nominal payment for *in forma pauperis* filing.
9. Look at increases statutory and exempt salaries and possibly decrease percentage.
10. Increase filing fees—court proposes 20-45% increase—Judiciary Committee has concerns with this as the fee isn't up this year.
11. Regional venue.
12. Video arraignments.
13. Study of administrative law and changes to APA.
14. Stake holders getting together.
15. Alternative types of bonding for the case management system.
16. Mileage for judges: Do they get first mile from home when not assigned to home court? Require use of fleet cars when mileage claims are over 11,000 miles, and if they are not using a fleet car, do not reimburse for over 11,000 miles.
17. Long term structural changes to sentencing and probation practices for non-violent offenders.

In addition, the committee would like to express its strong support of the Judicial Branch's request for an electronic case management system. We believe this would provide support for restructuring of Judicial Branch processes in a way that would yield long term savings among other important benefits.

attachments:

Judiciary savings chart

Judiciary bill

Environmental bill and summary.

Thank you for your consideration.