

SUPREME COURT OF VERMONT
OFFICE OF THE COURT ADMINISTRATOR



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TO: Representative Mike McCarthy, Chair, House Committee on Government Operations and Military Affairs

FROM: Gregg Mousley *GM*
Chief, Finance and Administration

DATE: April 12, 2023

RE: Review of S.17 Impact on Judiciary

The Judiciary operates 23 courthouses across the state. Security is a necessity in each courthouse in order to provide safe access to justice for everyone within the courthouse. As such, the Judiciary contracts with county sheriff departments to provide the necessary security. The Judiciary also currently employs 23 security officers and contracts with a private security firm to supplement the sheriffs. The breakdown of all security costs is below:

Judiciary Security Expenses FY23

	FTE	Cost	Comments
Sheriff Contracted	39.98	\$ 3,742,128	
Private Security Contracted	10.415	\$ 779,875	
Contracted Subtotal	50.40	\$ 4,522,003	
Permanent Employees	17	\$ 1,397,104	GF base budget
Limited-Service Employees	6	\$ 405,467	Pandemic one-time funds
Employee Subtotal	23	\$ 1,802,571	
Equipment (radios, x-ray machines, wands, walk through metal detectors, etc.)		\$ 40,000	
Total Security	73.40	\$ 6,364,574	

H.494 – FY 24 Budget Bill

Each year, the Judiciary advocates in the budget process for a cost-of-living increase for the sheriffs providing courthouse security. The Governor’s Recommended budget for FY24 included an increase of \$400,000 for the security contracts, which would allow an approximate \$2.50 increase (from \$45/hour to \$47.50/hour).

The House increased the funding another \$300,000, bringing the total increase to \$700,000. This amount of funding would achieve a \$51/hour rate across all sheriff contracts.

	Current	Gov. Rec.	Sheriff Request
Hourly Rate	\$ 45.00	\$ 47.50	\$ 51.00
Annual Cost	\$4,522,003	\$4,929,452	\$5,220,506
Funding Increase Required	\$0	\$ 407,449	\$ 698,503

S.17 Impact

As currently written, S.17 would have a small financial impact on the Judiciary.

Section 5 establishes a single, statewide contracted rate of sheriff pay for all counties. Last year, the Judiciary achieved a single rate of sheriff pay across all counties for the first time. The language in Section 5 would ensure that a single rate of pay would continue and eliminate county specific bargaining. This language would have no financial impact on the Judiciary.

Section 7 requires the sheriff to provide at least one certified sheriff deputy per courthouse within their county. Currently, there are only three courthouses that do not have a sheriff’s deputy and that use a private security guard. Because private security guards are not certified law enforcement officers, the cost is less. In FY24, with the current funding in H. 494, the increased cost for certified sheriff deputies at the three courthouses would be \$81,120.

While the language in Section 7 would result in a slight increase to the total security cost, it is the goal of the Judiciary to have at least one certified sheriff deputy in every courthouse. The Judiciary has utilized private security guards solely to supplement sheriff deputies when necessary due to sheriff workforce challenges.

Section 10 creates a Sheriff’s Department Oversight Task Force to consider issues relating to oversight of sheriff’s departments, including the compensation structure and duties of sheriffs as related to law enforcement. Given the direct impact such issues have on Judiciary courthouse security, the Judiciary respectfully requests that a member of the Judiciary be added to the Task Force membership list in Section 10.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on S.17.

Cc: Rep. Matthew Birong, Vice Chair
Rep. Mark Higley, Ranking Member
Rep. Lucy Boyden, Clerk
Rep. Lisa Hango
Rep. Philip Jay Hooper
Rep. Robert Hooper
Rep. Michael Morgan
Rep. Michael Mrowicki
Rep. Kate Nugent
Rep. Chea Waters Evans