

**SUPREME COURT OF VERMONT
OFFICE OF THE COURT ADMINISTRATOR**

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TO: Sen. Andrew Perchlik, Chair of Senate Committee on Appropriations

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

DATE: January 14, 2026

RE: Judiciary FY26 Budget Adjustment Request

Thank you for the opportunity to present our FY26 Budget Adjustment Request to your Committee. The Judiciary experienced two unexpected increases in FY26, one regarding an increase in the sheriff rate of pay for courthouse security and the second regarding costs associated with a 16-week pilot docket in Burlington that Governor Scott proposed in October 2025. The two unexpected increases result in a total Budget Adjustment Request of \$687,282. The Judiciary also requests the conversion of 26 limited-service positions into permanent positions. This request has no budget impact because the 26 positions are already funded in our base appropriation.

Judicial Pressures:

Sheriff Contracts Increase	\$558,566
Pilot Docket Costs	\$128,716
Conversion of 26 LS Positions	\$0
Total	<u>\$687,282</u>

Governor's Recommended BAA

Please note that the Judicial BAA requests have been included in the Governor's Recommended BAA.

Sheriff Contract Rate Increase **\$558,566**

The Judiciary had budgeted a 4% increase in the hourly rate paid for a Sheriff's Deputy for courthouse security, raising the previous rate of \$51/hr to \$54/hr. However, when final contracts

were negotiated, the rate needed to maintain the current level of security in Vermont courthouses was \$57/hr. This represented an additional \$3/hr rate that equated to a 7.5% increase over the previous year for a total increase of \$558,566. This increase was an unexpected expense. Even with this higher rate, we experienced the loss of another county sheriff contract as they were not able to recruit after a retirement. The Judiciary now contracts with eleven of the fourteen county sheriffs. Two of those eleven county sheriffs continue to struggle to provide the number of deputies included in the contract for their county. We have been told to anticipate another large increase in the hourly rate as we approach the FY27 budget contract.

Pilot Court (Burlington) \$128,716

The Governor’s Office invited the Judiciary and others to a meeting in October 2025 to discuss a proposal for a “Pilot Docket” in Chittenden County that would focus resources on criminal defendants with five or more cases pending. The proposal involved setting up a separate courtroom dedicated to that particular category of cases for a three-month trial period. Setting up a separate courtroom necessitates additional judge, security officer and courtroom operator resources. The Judiciary was told that the cost of the additional resources for the three-month period would be covered. The pilot docket was implemented in early November 2025 and is projected to complete the pilot period at the end of the first week in February 2026. The cost for the Judiciary resources dedicated to the pilot docket for the timeline involved is \$128,716. This was an unexpected budget item.

Conversion of Limited-Service Positions to Permanent

In FY24, the Judiciary requested 26 positions in a variety of roles. The Legislature approved the positions and funded them in the base budget with General Funds. They termed the positions “limited-service” even though the positions were funded in our base budget. Unlike the pandemic funded limited-service positions anticipated for a temporary duration, the need for these positions is permanent.

The statute that approved the 26 positions also approved 9 Department of State’s Attorneys and Sheriffs positions and provides as follows:

Sec. E.100 POSITIONS

(c) The establishment of 35 exempt limited-service positions is authorized in fiscal year 2025 as follows:

- (1) Judiciary:
 - (A) one Database Administrator;
 - (B) two IT Help Desk Analysts;
 - (C) two Centralized Service Analysts;
 - (D) 10 Judicial Assistants; and
 - (E) 11 Judicial Officer II’s
- (2) Department of State’s Attorneys and Sheriffs:
 - (A) seven Deputy State’s Attorneys;

- (B) one Victim Advocate; and
- (C) one Legal Assistant.

Since that appropriation, last year the 9 limited-service positions at the Department of State's Attorneys and Sheriffs were converted to permanent positions. We would request the same treatment this year and request that the 26 positions be converted to permanent positions. This will not have a budget impact since the 26 positions are all already funded in our base appropriation.

Thank you for your consideration. We look forward to discussing these topics with you on Wednesday, January 14.

cc: Sen. Patrick Brennan, Vice Chair, Clerk, Senate Committee on Appropriations
Sen. Richard Westman, Senate Committee on Appropriations
Sen. Ginny Lyons, Senate Committee on Appropriations
Sen. Philip Baruth, Senate Committee on Appropriations
Sen. Anne Watson, Senate Committee on Appropriations
Sen. Robert Norris, Senate Committee on Appropriations
Amiee Pope, Associate, Joint Fiscal Office
Elle Oille-Stanford, Committee Assistant, Senate Committee on Appropriations

