



CONFERENCE COMMITTEE REPORT

Judicial Branch Budget for FY 2016 SF 496

Status of Bill: House Calendar
 Committee: House Floor (56-43)
 Lead Democrats: Rep. T. Taylor
 Floor Manager: Rep. Worthan
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Conference Committee Summary

The Conference Committee Report for the FY 2016 appropriation to the Judicial Branch is at \$175 million, which is status quo compared to FY 2015. Earlier in session, the Senate proposed an increase of \$5.5 million and the House proposed a status quo budget.

It is anticipated that there will be language in the Standings Bill, SF 510, addressing changes to the court debt collection which will result in an increase to the Judicial Branch.

For FY 2015, the Legislature appropriated an increase to the Judicial Branch of just under \$7 million and adopted one new policy item, stating that “it is the intent of the General Assembly that the Judicial Branch emphasize the expansion of the family treatment courts on a statewide basis.” The courts have participation from the Department of Human Services because the participants are chosen due to the fact that they are at risk of having their children taken away from them in a CINA (Child In Need of Assistance) proceeding. In February of this year, the budget subcommittee heard from the Judicial Branch that there are currently 12 family treatment courts with two more in development. Prior to FY 2015, there were a total of 6 family treatment courts.

The Judicial Branch asked for a total appropriation of \$183 million, which included increases in judges and magistrates’ salaries. This bill does not contain any increased salaries for those individuals. The funding for FY 2017 is at 50% of the FY 2016 level, which is the second division of the bill. This division also contains all of the same policy language.

	Actual FY 14	Estimated FY 15	SF 496 FY 16	House Proposal FY 16	Conference Committee Report
Judicial Branch					
Operations	\$ 165,586,747	\$ 171,486,612	\$ 176,986,612	\$ 171,486,612	\$ 171,486,612
Jury & Witness Fee Revolving Fund	\$ 3,100,000	\$ 3,100,000	\$ 3,100,000	\$ 3,100,000	\$ 3,100,000
Total Judicial Branch	\$ 168,686,747	\$ 174,586,612	\$ 180,086,612	\$ 174,586,612	\$ 174,586,612

The bill also contains the following policy language, which is the same language that was in last year’s bill:

- Prohibits the Judicial Branch (JB) from duplicating current state payroll, budgeting, and accounting systems, except for the implementation of an internal accounting and recordkeeping system.

- Requires the JB to submit monthly financial statements to the fiscal division of the Legislative Services Agency (LSA) and the Department of Management. The statements must include a comparison of the dollars and percentage spent of budgeted versus actual revenues and expenditures on a cumulative basis for full-time equivalent positions and dollars.
- Requires the JB to focus efforts on collecting delinquent fines and fees.
- Specifies that it is the intent of the General Assembly that the JB operate clerk of court offices in all 99 counties and ensure that those offices are accessible to the public as much as reasonably possible.
- Requires the JB to notify the LSA prior to any intradepartmental transfer and the notice must include the rationale for the transfer.
- The JB must provide a semiannual report to the LSA specifying the amount of fines, surcharges, and court costs that have been collected using the Iowa court information system (ICIS). The JB is required to continue to share vital information with government agencies and state agencies through ICIS.
- By January 1, 2016, the JB is required to report to the General Assembly and the LSA the revenues and expenditures of the enhanced court collections fund and the court technology and modernization fund for FY 2015 as well as the planned expenditures for FY 2016.
- It is intent of the General Assembly that the JB emphasize the expansion of family treatment courts on a statewide basis.
- Allows for a civil trial to take place in a contiguous county, even if it crosses a judicial district, as long as parties agree.
- Judicial officers may waive travel reimbursement for any travel outside the county of residence of that judicial officer.
- Authorizes the Supreme Court to order judicial officers to take unpaid leave in the same manner as non-contract employees.
- States that it is the intent of the General Assembly that the Judicial Branch utilize the Iowa Communications Network or another secure electronic communications method instead of travel.