

**Judicial Branch
Budget No. 180
Senate Bill No. 2002**

	FTE Positions	General Fund	Other Funds	Total
2025-27 legislative appropriation	394.00	\$147,252,753 ¹	\$5,647,758	\$152,900,511
2023-25 legislative appropriation	<u>384.00</u>	<u>129,410,704</u>	<u>1,828,428</u>	<u>131,239,132</u>
2025-27 appropriation increase (decrease) to 2023-25 appropriation	10.00	\$17,842,049	\$3,819,330	\$21,661,379

¹This amount includes \$1,740,316 of one-time funding. Excluding this amount, the agency's ongoing General Fund appropriation is \$145,512,437.

Item Description

Full-time equivalent changes - The Legislative Assembly approved 394 FTE positions for the judicial branch for the 2025-27 biennium, an increase of 10 FTE positions from the 2023-25 biennium authorized amount of 384 FTE positions. The Legislative Assembly added 10 FTE positions as follows:

- 1.50 FTE juvenile court administrative assistant positions;
- 1 FTE district court administrative assistant position;
- 1 FTE district court deputy court administrator position;
- 2 FTE district court programmer analyst positions;
- 2 FTE district court network analyst positions;
- 1 FTE district court technology coordinator position;
- 1 FTE Supreme Court staff attorney position; and
- 0.50 FTE Supreme Court part-time administrative assistant position increase to full-time.

In addition, the Legislative Assembly, in Section 8 of Senate Bill No. 2029 (2025), provided for the transfer of 2 FTE positions from the Supreme Court to a newly created Office of Guardianship and Conservatorship (OGC). This transfer of FTE positions will be reflected in the base budgets of the judicial branch and the OGC.

New and vacant FTE pool - The Legislative Assembly transferred \$7,972,973 for the new and vacant FTE pool line item for the judicial branch for 10 new FTE positions (\$1,793,982) and estimated savings from vacant positions (\$6,178,991).

Status/Result

The judicial branch reported 9 of the new FTE positions appropriated by the 2025 Legislative Assembly have been filled. The 1 FTE juvenile court administrative assistant position was only funded for the 2nd year of the biennium.

The 2 FTE positions transferred from the Supreme Court to the OGC became legal director and case manager FTE positions at the newly created OGC, both of which were filled by OGC in April 2026.

Through February 2026, the judicial branch has not transferred any funding from the new and vacant FTE pool line item. The judicial branch anticipates transferring the entire balance in the line item for salaries and wages by the end of the biennium. The judicial branch has had estimated vacant FTE position savings of \$734,583. The judicial branch used \$205,956 of the savings for accrued leave payouts, overtime, step system increases, position reclassifications, and other expenses. The number of vacancies in the judicial branch has ranged from 9 to 14 with an average monthly vacancy rate of 12.13 FTE positions.

One-time funding - The Legislative Assembly provided \$6 million of one-time funding, including \$1.7 million from the General Fund and \$4.3 million from the Strategic Investment and Improvements Fund for the judicial branch as follows:

	General Fund	Strategic Investment and Improvement Fund	Total
Information technology equipment lease	\$874,216		\$874,216
Cloud-based storage fees	866,100		866,100
Case management system migration to cloud-based computing		\$758,000	758,000
Clerk filing software		1,250,000	1,250,000
Court records access system		960,000	960,000
Courtroom audio and video systems		1,200,000	1,200,000
Cass County courtroom equipment		100,000	100,000
Total	\$1,740,316	\$4,268,000	\$6,008,316

The following is a summary of the status of the judicial branch's one-time funding as of March 31, 2026:

Information technology equipment lease	The judicial branch has expended \$328,224 for the final year of a 5-year lease agreement for server equipment. The judicial branch reported a new lease agreement has been entered into which will provide for annual lease payments of \$689,039.
Cloud-based storage fees	This is the subscription fee for hosting of the Supreme Court's case management system and the records within it. The judicial branch reported actual expenditures of \$422,433 and anticipates spending the entire \$866,100 by the end of the biennium.
Case management system migration to cloud-based computing	The judicial branch reported a contract will be entered into this summer for the district courts case management system and the anticipated start date for this project is late 2026 or early 2027. There have been no expenditures for this project to date and expenditures for the biennium are anticipated to be within the \$758,000 appropriation.
Clerk filing software	The judicial branch reported the system is currently being implemented on a trial basis in 4 counties. Actual expenditures to date are \$135,000 and total expenditures for the biennium are anticipated to be \$1.25 million.
Court records access system	The judicial branch reported the new system will be implemented in May 2026. No expenditures have been incurred to date and the total project cost is anticipated to be within budget.
Courtroom audio and video systems	The funding is to upgrade and replace courtroom equipment, including cameras, audio mixers, network switches, and interpreter equipment. The judicial branch reported the first phase of the project includes the replacement of cameras and audio mixers and is ongoing statewide at a total cost estimate of around \$820,000. Total expenditures for the biennium are anticipated to be \$1.2 million.
Cass County courtroom equipment	The judicial branch reported expenditures to equip the new courtroom in Cass County have totaled \$78,190. The funding is also budgeted for the replacement of two media cameras in Cass County, which the judicial branch anticipates completing by the end of the biennium.

Office of Guardianship and Conservatorship - The Legislative Assembly, in Senate Bill No. 2002, appropriated \$355,000 from the General Fund to the newly created OGC for the purpose of providing salaries, wages, and operations funding for an attorney position to be transferred from the Supreme Court to OGC on July 1, 2025, pursuant to Senate Bill No. 2029. The remaining guardianship and conservatorship funding (\$375,478) and FTE position in the judicial branch budget were transferred to an OGC line item under the Supreme Court. The FTE position remaining after July 1, 2025, and any unspent funding in the line item are to be transferred to the newly created OGC by April 1, 2026.

Credit card and bank fees - The Legislative Assembly, in Section 10 of Senate Bill No. 2002, authorized the judicial branch to charge a fee as a service charge for the acceptance of a payment made by a credit or debit card.

The OGC reported \$375,478 of General Fund appropriation authority was transferred from the Supreme Court to OGC on April 1, 2026. This amount was in addition to the \$355,000 appropriated directly to OGC in Senate Bill No. 2002, the sum of which was intended for the salaries and wages and related operating expenses of the 2 FTE positions transferred from the Supreme Court.

The judicial branch reported software upgrades to the case management system were required prior to implement a credit card processing fee. The judicial branch reported the fees will be collected starting in May 2026. A 2.95 percent consumer fee with a minimum \$1 charge per transaction will be implemented on credit card payments made through the defendant access system.