

# MICHIGAN SUPREME COURT



## *Office of Public Information*

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### **Recommendations to cut, add judgeships detailed in judicial resources report**

LANSING, MI, June 27, 2013 – A report by the State Court Administrative Office proposes cutting a total of eight judgeships from some Michigan courts – but also recommends adding an equal number to other courts that show “judicial need” based on workload.

SCAO’s Judicial Resources Recommendations report finds that Wayne County Circuit Court has four more judges than the court needs to keep up with its workload. The report also calls for Berrien, Delta, and Saginaw counties, and the 12<sup>th</sup> Judicial Circuit (Baraga, Houghton, and Keweenaw counties) to each cut one district court judgeship.

All reductions would be by attrition, when a judge leaves office or dies.

The report also finds that the Macomb County Circuit Court needs four additional judges, based on that court’s workload. Oakland County Circuit Court would receive two more judges, according to the SCAO recommendation; Kent County would receive a circuit judge and a district judge.

SCAO issues its Judicial Resources Recommendations every two years. Only the Legislature has the authority to create or eliminate judgeships.

State Court Administrator Chad C. Schmucker said that the 2013 report contrasts with the 2011 report’s more sweeping recommendations. “Two years ago, we were recommending the elimination by attrition of 45 trial-level judgeships and no additional judgeships, although some courts had a need for more judges at that time,” he explained. “Given Michigan’s economy then, we did not feel we could recommend adding any new judgeships.”

In 2011 and 2012, the state legislature passed bills to eliminate 36 trial-level judgeships, “so we are now significantly closer to having the number of judges each court needs for its workload,” Schmucker noted. “But there is still some imbalance, which we are trying to address in these recommendations.”

Schmucker said that, in addition to recommending some cuts and additions, the SCAO report also recommends various court reconfigurations. “In some areas, the best solution for balancing the workload may be to combine courts,” he explained.

Proposed consolidations would include combining Flint’s 68<sup>th</sup> District Court with Genesee County’s 67<sup>th</sup> District Court. The report states that judicial need in the county-funded

courts could be offset by the Flint court, which the report finds has one more judicial position than needed.

The report proposed other changes for the legislature's consideration:

- Combine Branch and Hillsdale counties into a single judicial circuit. The report finds that each county, with three judges, has one more judgeship than justified by the courts' workload. The legislature could later eliminate one judgeship from the combined circuit, the report suggests.
- Consolidate Westland's 18<sup>th</sup> District Court – which needs an additional judge – with another nearby district court with a judicial excess. The report mentions district courts in Dearborn Heights, Plymouth, Redford, and Wayne City as possible candidates for consolidation with Westland's court.
- Consolidate the 33<sup>rd</sup> District Court in Woodhaven with the 28<sup>th</sup> District Court in Southgate.
- Convert municipal courts in Grosse Pointe City, Grosse Pointe Farms, Grosse Pointe Park, and Grosse Pointe Woods to a single district court for the Grosse Pointes, or consolidate the courts with Harper Woods' 32A District Court.

For the complete report, including detailed analyses of each court's workload, see <http://courts.mi.gov/Administration/SCAO/Resources/Documents/Publications/Reports/Judicial-Resources/2013JRR.pdf>.

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