



MICHIGAN COURTS NEWS RELEASE

John Nevin, COMMUNICATIONS DIRECTOR

CONTACT (517) 373-0129 TWITTER @CourtInfo

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Judicial Budget Targets Efficiency, Technology and Performance

LANSING, MI, March 13, 2014 – Michigan Supreme Court Chief Justice Robert Young, Jr. presented the judicial branch’s FY 2015 budget request to the Michigan Legislature. The [presentation](#) highlighted recent accomplishments in downsizing the judiciary, implementing technology and measuring performance. Looking forward, the Chief Justice targeted needed steps to implement further improvements especially to facilitate the transition from a mainframe-based case management system to a web-based model.

“We have cut our spending, increased efficiency, reduced our size, focused on outcomes, and improved service to the public,” said the Chief Justice. “Michigan’s courts are working smarter for a better Michigan.”

Chief Justice Young explained that Michigan’s judiciary is implementing the most dramatic downsizing in the nation. Already, 11 trial court judgeships have been eliminated—saving \$1.7 million each year—and when cuts are complete, taxpayers will be saving \$6.4 million annually. In addition, over the past five years, the judiciary has more than doubled the number of courts that have consolidated operations. Now, 64 counties either have consolidation plans or are developing them so that circuit, probate and district courts could share workloads, cuts costs and eliminate redundant administration.

“Saving money is good, but what’s even more important is that service to the public is improved as courts streamline and focus on more efficient operations,” said the Chief Justice.

With respect to technology, the Chief Justice noted that funding was needed to roll out a web-based case management system to 251 court locations, representing 80 percent of the state’s caseload. This technology initiative supplements the expansion of applications that improve public service, such as mobile apps, online payment of traffic tickets and e-filing.

He also hailed the implementation of videoconferencing that allows courts to hold hearings without the cost, loss of time and security risk involved in transporting defendants. For example, four years ago, two percent of prisoner hearings involving the Michigan Department of Corrections were handled by videoconference. Now, 27 percent are handled using the technology, saving about \$2 million annually.

The Chief Justice emphasized the use of performance measures, including case clearance rates, child support collections and recidivism for problem-solving courts. The goal is for performance metrics to encourage greater innovation by the courts to improve outcomes and better serve the public. Finally, increases in funding are recommended for mental health courts because analysis reveals that participants were 300 percent less likely to re-offend.