



Supreme Court of Wisconsin

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Court security, new judgeships lead Wisconsin Court System's 2027-29 budget request

Madison, Wisconsin (October 6, 2026) – The Wisconsin Supreme Court is seeking funding to support access to justice by making courthouses safer for the people who use and work in them, adding judges where workloads are greatest, investing in judicial and staff workforce, and maintaining the technology courts rely on. Its 2027-29 budget request calls for eight new circuit court branches, an additional District III Court of Appeals judgeship, and a new security grant program.

“Courthouses must be safe for the people who come to seeking justice, serve as jurors, and do the work of the courts,” Chief Justice Jill J. Karofsky said. “Every single person who walks into a courthouse deserves to be free from fear of intimidation or harm. Counties cannot address every security need alone. Our proposal would add state support where it can make a practical difference.”

Circuit court judges reported 129 security threats in 2025. The court system is seeking about \$3 million over the biennium for court security, including \$1.5 million for a Court Security Improvement grant program. Funding would be made available to counties to purchase security equipment and improve court facilities.

The security request would also continue funding four statewide positions in the Wisconsin State Capitol Police Court Protection Unit. Working with the Office of the Supreme Court Marshal and local law enforcement, the unit helps courts evaluate and respond to threats across Wisconsin and conducts courthouse security assessments. Additional staff in the Marshal's Office expands the ability to conduct these security assessments throughout the state. Together, these security requests aim to protect access to justice for people coming to court and judicial independence for the judges deciding their cases.

The request for eight new circuit court branches follows the [2025 Wisconsin Judicial Needs Assessment Study](#), conducted with the National Center for State Courts. The study found that the time required to handle a case has increased across nearly all case types, impeding access to justice.

The court system is seeking about \$1.9 million over the biennium to establish four branches in fiscal year 2028 and four in fiscal year 2029. The proposal identifies two branches in Brown County and one each in Kenosha, La Crosse, Pierce, Trempealeau, and Washington counties, plus one in the Shawano/Menominee circuit.

“The study measured the time judges need to review evidence, conduct hearings, and make decisions,” Director of State Courts Audrey K. Skwierawski said. “Adding branches in counties with the greatest need would give those courts more capacity to hear cases without unnecessary delay.”

The request also calls for an additional Court of Appeals judgeship in District III, based in Wausau and serving 35 northern counties. District III had the highest average filings per judge among the four appellate districts in 2025, according to the court’s [annual report](#). The new judge and supporting staff would help the district handle appeals, while two additional staff attorneys would assist with appellate cases across all four districts.

In addition, the request proposes judicial salary adjustments to ensure judicial independence by keeping Wisconsin’s pay competitive. For nonjudicial staff, it seeks merit, equity, and retention pay provisions similar to those available in the executive branch.

The submission asks for 10 additional positions in the Consolidated Court Automation Programs (CCAP). These staff would support cybersecurity, digital evidence management, technology modernization, access to court data, and the availability of systems used by courts and justice partners statewide.

The request also includes a statewide behavioral health coordinator to provide technical guidance to courts and justice partners in addressing cases involving mental health and substance use disorders.

The Wisconsin Supreme Court prepares and submits the judicial branch’s budget request to the governor. The governor is expected to introduce a proposed state budget in early 2027. The Legislature will then review and act on the budget bill. Wisconsin’s 2027-29 budget period begins July 1, 2027.

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