

## **Judicial Branch Courtroom Safety and Security Budget Proposal – FY2024/2025**

### Funding Detail:

1. \$300,000<sup>1</sup> for an in-depth statewide security and safety review of courthouses:
  - a. 56 District Court courthouses in Montana
  - b. Assumes an average cost of \$5,000 per courthouse for a comprehensive review, which would include specific recommendations for personnel and equipment.
  - c. Each security assessment must include the county sheriff, the county disaster and emergency coordinator, and judges or designees.
  
2. \$200,000 to purchase equipment or fund building/parking lot modifications as outlined by the professional security review. (It is likely additional resources would be needed in future sessions.) Purchasing equipment without a security review will result in equipment that doesn't make sense, is not a long-term solution, or doesn't address the greatest need. This assumes shared responsibility with counties.

Total (OTO): \$500,000 over the biennium

### Project Timeline:

The Judicial Branch anticipates this request to be a 2-year project.

### Project Description:

The Judicial Branch, after hearing concerns from judges, staff, and attorneys, created a security task force with representation from the state, local and private sectors. This is the second statewide review of courthouse and courtroom security. The original work in 2006 resulted in a set of implemented recommendations and one-time-only funding upgrades.

A 2021 judicial survey demonstrated in sharp focus a significant need for improved equipment and vigilance in court security. Respondents unanimously believed improvements were needed for both the protection of the public and court staff and officials. Similar results were captured in a survey of attorneys conducted by the State Bar.

The committee received advice from a protective security advisor with Homeland Security. The assessments helped to conceptualize a path forward. Many outstanding issues exist in courthouses throughout Montana including a need for extensive emergency planning, training, and appropriate equipment.

The budget proposal is based on the final committee report and options provided via the Homeland Security reviews. This proposal is necessary to make Montana's courts a safe place for the public and court employees. Courts, law enforcement and county officials are also being asked to implement immediately the no-cost recommendations. In 2007, the Legislature provided funding for security and equipment for county courthouses. The funding provided necessary infrastructure, but this proposal suggests a different approach to ensure more long-term solutions to an increasingly complex problem.

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<sup>1</sup> Funding remaining from this item would rollover into item 2 – courthouse security purchases.