

The Supreme Court of Montana
Office of Court Administrator

Beth McLaughlin
Court Administrator
e-mail: bmclaughlin@mt.gov



301 South Park Avenue, Room 328
PO Box 203005
Helena, Montana 59620-3005
Phone: (406) 841-2966

September 15, 2017

Mr. Dan Villa
Budget Director
Capitol Building
Helena, MT 59601

Dear Mr. Villa:

At the Executive's request, the Judicial Branch has examined the budget and is offering the attached adjustments. It is difficult to make significant adjustments because much of the court system's already modest budget is driven by the constitutional obligation to adjudicate cases in a timely manner. In addition, specific statutes dictate expenses in our operations' budget.

Attached is the list of budget adjustments the court system will make in both FY2018 and FY2019. Removing the twenty percent of the budget that is constitutionally protected (i.e. elected official salaries), the reductions and funding switches are close to five percent.

We have opted to not move forward with the WINGS program created by HB70. The funding was added to the base budget but we don't believe it's prudent to start a new program in this fiscal climate. After discussions with legislators involved in the Sentencing Commission bills, we have opted to continue the funding (\$1.4 million over the biennium) and work on the pretrial services program created by SB59. They view it as lynchpin for managing jail and corrections populations long-term so we remain committed to launching the program in this biennium. It is not a traditional court function but we feel obligated to move forward with it.

Finally, we are prepared to come forward to the 2019 session with statutory changes, which would reduce the state's obligation to pay certain court costs should this fiscal situation continue.

If you have any questions regarding the budget, please let me know.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Beth McLaughlin".

Beth McLaughlin
Court Administrator

c: Chief Justice Mike McGrath
Cathy Pennie, Finance Director

Summary of FY18/FY19 Proposed Voluntary Reductions

	FY 2018	FY 2019
Legislative Appropriations (1):		
Supreme Court Operations	18,118,370	18,184,906
Law Library (includes HB70 WINGS pgm)	897,564	1,028,583
District Court Operations	28,358,843	29,427,127
Water Court	2,323,042	2,331,768
Clerk of Supreme Court	559,349	560,145
Total Judicial Branch HB2 Appropriations:	50,257,168	51,532,529
Reductions to implement immediately		
Pretrial Supervision Program - 10% reduction each year	(80,000)	(80,000)
HB70 WINGS program - total reduction each year	(40,000)	(160,000)
JDIP Administration - 5% reduction each year	(200,000)	(200,000)
Drug Treatment Courts - reductions each year	(85,000)	(85,000)
Total reductions to implement immediately	(405,000)	(525,000)
Reductions to implement at FYE each year		
Deposit SSRF parental contributions to general fund	(100,000)	(100,000)
HB695 CASA general fund switch	(900,000)	(900,000)
Deposit carry-forward to the general fund	(400,000)	(360,000)
Total Reductions to implement at FYE	(1,400,000)	(1,360,000)
Total of all planned reductions	(1,805,000)	(1,885,000)
Adjusted total Judicial Branch HB2 Appropriation	\$ 48,452,168	\$ 49,647,529

(1) Legislative appropriation is the HB2 appropriation adjusted for SB261 reductions and adjustments related to the pay plan adjustment provided for in SB294.