

THE UNIFIED JUDICIAL SYSTEM OF PENNSYLVANIA

FY 2026-2027 APPROPRIATION DESCRIPTIONS

Supreme Court

This appropriation funds the salaries and benefits of the seven commissioned Justices and staff, annuitant benefits, operating expenses, and fixed assets necessary for judicial and administrative operations.

Justices' Expenses

This appropriation funds the vouchered business expenses of the Chief Justice and Justices of the Supreme Court to enable them to fulfill their constitutionally-mandated responsibilities to administer the Unified Judicial System.

Judicial Council

This appropriation funds the requirements of the Judicial Council of PA, which serves at the Chief Justice's discretion as an advisory body to assist the Court in managing the Commonwealth's Unified Judicial System.

Rules Committees

This appropriation funds the staff personnel and operating costs (including committee meetings) for eight standing Supreme Court rules committees comprised of Criminal Procedural Rules, Civil Procedural Rules, Domestic Relations Procedural Rules, Juvenile Court Procedural Rules, Appellate Court Rules, Orphans Court Rules, Committee on Rules of Evidence, and Minor Court Rules. The rules committees assist the Supreme Court in fulfilling its constitutional responsibility to prescribe general rules governing court proceedings. Committee members serve pro bono.

Superior Court

This appropriation funds the salaries and benefits of 15 commissioned Superior Court judges and staff, a senior judge program, annuitant benefits, operating expenses, and fixed assets necessary for judicial and administrative operations.

Judges' Expenses

This appropriation funds the vouchered business expenses of 15 commissioned Superior Court judges.

Commonwealth Court

This appropriation funds the salaries and benefits of nine commissioned Commonwealth Court judges and staff, a senior judge program, annuitant benefits, operating costs, and fixed assets necessary for judicial and administrative operations.

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Judges' Expenses

This appropriation funds the vouchered business expenses of nine commissioned Commonwealth Court judges.

Court Administrator

This appropriation funds the Administrative Office of Pennsylvania Courts (AOPC), including salaries, benefits, operating costs, and fixed assets. Headed by the Court Administrator of Pennsylvania, the AOPC is charged with implementing the Supreme Court's programs and initiatives, as well as conducting the UJS' day-to-day operations, including the functions of accounting, payroll, budgeting, research and statistics, human resources, legal services, judicial security, judicial education, judicial district operations and programs, and communications.

Court Improvement Program

Funding for this appropriation is provided by federal grants under Title IV-B and IV-E of the Social Security Act from the Department of Human Services, Administration on Children, Youth and Families.

This appropriation funds staff salaries and benefits, operating costs, and fixed assets for the program conducted by the Office for Children and Families in the Court, a department within the AOPC, dedicated to improving outcomes for dependent children in the justice system. The program develops and implements measures to expedite the placement of children in foster care into permanent family settings.

STOP Violence Against Women

Federal funding for this appropriation is provided by a subgrant from the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency.

This appropriation provides training and resources for Pennsylvania's judges and court personnel on topics related to domestic violence, sexual assault, stalking, dating violence, and human trafficking. Additionally, this appropriation supports costs associated with program outreach which builds and creates public awareness surrounding these topics and provides information to the general public on the resources available through the courts.

Judicial Center Operations

This appropriation funds salaries, benefits, operating costs, and fixed assets for the centralized operation of the Pennsylvania Judicial Center in the capitol complex.

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District Court Administrators

This appropriation funds the salaries, benefits, and personnel related operating expenses of the district court administrative positions within Pennsylvania's 60 judicial districts (67 counties).

Office of Elder Justice in the Courts

This appropriation funds the staff salaries and benefits, and operating costs of the Office of Elder Justice in the Courts (OEJC). The OEJC was created within AOPC by the Supreme Court in 2014 to address access to justice issues affecting older Pennsylvanians and is one of the recommendations developed by the Elder Law Task Force. The OEJC is responsible for implementing other relevant recommendations identified by the Elder Law Task Force.

Court Management Education

This appropriation funds the continuing education and training program provided to district court administrators and other judicial branch staff.

Judicial Education

This appropriation funds staff salaries and benefits, and operating costs for the program of professional continuing education in support of the continuing judicial education requirements adopted by the Supreme Court in January 2017 for all judges who do not fall under the statutory provisions and Court Rules applicable to magisterial district judges. This program presents a state-of-the art curriculum through conferences and symposia in both statewide and regional settings. These education forums are supplemented by electronic reference libraries that contain reference materials and handbooks from recent conferences and provide access to up-to-date reference material, resources, and information.

Treatment Courts

This appropriation provides funds to assist counties in managing their treatment courts in accordance with nationally-recognized standards for best practices. Such assistance can take the form of staff training, monitoring program performance, and county grants to help reimburse costs to implement new treatment courts.

Unified Judicial System Security

This appropriation funds grants to counties, staff salaries and benefits, and operating costs for the UJS' ongoing efforts to make every court facility a safe place for the general public, litigants and their families, jurors, witnesses, and victims of crime to conduct their business. These efforts work to enhance physical security for magisterial and common pleas courts and enable them to respond to and recover from emergencies that threaten the performance of essential functions.

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Statewide Judicial Computer System

Funding for this appropriation is provided from restricted revenues, not state tax dollars. The restricted revenues are generated by Act 64 of 1987, Act 59 of 1990 as amended by Act 122 of 2002, Act 49 of 2009, and Act 42 of 2018. ***The appropriation represents an authorization to spend these restricted revenues up to the appropriated amount.***

This appropriation funds the staff salaries and benefits, operating costs, and fixed assets necessary to seamlessly facilitate case management and revenue collections at all court levels, providing a platform for data-sharing throughout the entire criminal justice system. It includes funding for the statewide automated case management systems serving the Magisterial District courts, Common Pleas Criminal courts, the appellate courts (Supreme, Superior and Commonwealth Courts), and the statewide Guardianship Tracking System.

Integrated Criminal Justice System (JNET)

This appropriation funds staff salaries and benefits, and operating costs for portions of the UJS' activities in support of the Integrated Criminal Justice Information System (JNET). This technology system, an initiative of the executive branch, provides for the timely sharing of accurate justice information among state and local agencies while avoiding the duplication of effort in providing such information.

UJS Cybersecurity and Disaster Recovery

This appropriation funds salaries and benefits for one full-time Security Specialist, and operating costs to support the UJS' efforts in the areas of cyber security and disaster recovery which protect systems and mitigate risks to ensure business continuity for court operations statewide.

Courts of Common Pleas

This appropriation funds salaries, benefits, and operating costs (legal fees, travel and liability insurance) for the authorized complement of 468 Common Pleas judges.

Common Pleas Senior Judges

This appropriation funds the compensation paid to senior judges in the form of statutorily-provided per diems and operating costs (liability insurance and travel) for Common Pleas senior judges while on assignment. The senior judge program provides an alternative resource when there is a shortage of active Common Pleas judges due to vacancies, recusals, or increases in caseloads. The senior jurists are available for service throughout the Commonwealth.

Magisterial District Judges

This appropriation funds the magisterial district judge (MDJ) salaries, benefits and operating costs (including liability insurance), a senior MDJ program, and per diems for traveling active MDJs. It also provides funding for printing costs of the "Magisterial District Judge Journal."

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Magisterial District Judge Education

This appropriation funds staff salaries and benefits, and operating costs for the education program for the minor judiciary as mandated by law and Supreme Court Rule. The program consists of certifying and continuing education courses for the magisterial district judges, senior magisterial district judges, and Philadelphia Municipal Court arraignment court magistrates, hearing officers, and senior judges. Costs paid largely consists of travel expenses of jurists mandated to attend the courses and the costs of presenters.

Philadelphia Municipal Court

This appropriation funds salaries, benefits and operating costs (including liability insurance) for 27 Philadelphia Municipal Court (PMC) judges, six arraignment court magistrates, and four hearing officers. Funded costs also provide for continuing education conferences for PMC judges.

County Court Reimbursement

This appropriation funds a statutorily-mandated grant to reimburse counties for expenses they incur in the administration and operation of the Courts of Common Pleas. The grant is based on \$70,000 per authorized Common Pleas Court judge, but it may not exceed a county's actual direct costs, excluding capital outlays, for Common Pleas Court operations. Act 37 of 2007 requires that the county grants be proportionally reduced in the event the amount appropriated by the General Assembly is insufficient to pay the grant at the statutory rate.

Rule 701 - Senior Judge Support Reimbursement

This appropriation funds a statutorily-mandated grant to partially reimburse counties for expenses they incur to provide support - facilities and staff services - to assigned Common Pleas court senior judges in accordance with PA Rule of Judicial Administration 701. Facilities include the use of judicial chambers, office equipment and supplies; staff services include the services of law clerks and secretaries. Grant payments up to the appropriation total are made in accordance with statute.

Juror Cost Reimbursement

This appropriation funds a statutory grant to reimburse counties for 80% of the amounts they expend for compensation (\$25 per day) and travel allowances (\$0.17 per mile) to jurors participating in a trial or grand jury proceeding after the first three days of service.

Court Interpreter Services

This appropriation funds the partial reimbursement to counties for the costs of court interpreters and other language access services they provide for both sign language and foreign languages for litigants and other participants in court cases.

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Judicial Ethics Advisory Board

This appropriation funds the staff salaries and benefits, and operating costs for the Judicial Ethics Advisory Board. The Supreme Court designated this Board as the official body authorized to advise judges subject to the Code of Judicial Conduct or the Rules Governing Standards of Conduct of Magisterial District Judges (“Judicial Codes”). As such, the Board handles requests from judges and judicial candidates for opinions on the propriety of various actions. Following investigation and research of the issues raised, the members of the Board issue written opinions; a judge who requests and complies with Board advice may raise that compliance as a factor in the event of subsequent disciplinary investigation or proceedings.

Pennsylvania Commission for Fairness and Justice

This appropriation funds the staff personnel and operating costs (including committee meetings) for the Pennsylvania Commission for Fairness and Justice (PCFJ). The Commission was established in January 2005 in a collaborative effort among the three branches of state government. Funded by the legislature through the judiciary but not a part of Pennsylvania’s Unified Judicial System, the Commission was established to suggest possible means for implementation of recommendations from the *2003 Report of the Pennsylvania Supreme Court Committee on Racial and Gender Bias in the Justice System*. The stated goals of its component committees continue to pursue that objective while the commission has broadened its mission beyond that goal.

Judicial Conduct Board

This appropriation funds staff salaries and benefits, operating costs (including expenses of the appointed board members to attend meetings), and fixed assets for the independent state agency vested with statewide jurisdiction to receive, review, investigate and, where merited, prosecute complaints of judicial misconduct committed by Pennsylvania judges. The Judicial Conduct Board was created by amendment to the Pennsylvania Constitution adopted on May 18, 1993. The Conduct Board is the first of two tiers in the judicial disciplinary system; the Court of Judicial Discipline is the second tier. It is comprised of 12 members, half of whom are appointed by the governor and half by the Supreme Court.

Court of Judicial Discipline

This appropriation funds staff salaries and benefits, operating costs (including expenses for eight judges--half of whom are appointed by the governor and half by the Supreme Court), and fixed assets for the independent state agency which serves as the second tier in Pennsylvania's two-tiered judicial disciplinary system. It was created by the 1993 amendment to the Pennsylvania Constitution. The Court of Judicial Discipline hears and decides cases involving allegations of judicial misconduct prosecuted by the Judicial Conduct Board.