



**MINNESOTA
JUDICIAL
BRANCH**

First Judicial District

Mission: To provide justice through a system that assures equal access for the fair and timely resolution of cases and controversies.

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The First Judicial District has 36 judges and more than 250 staff that handle over 120,000 cases annually in the counties of Carver, Dakota, Goodhue, Le Sueur, McLeod, Scott and Sibley.

The First Edition

A Newsletter about the First Judicial District of the State of Minnesota

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Access and Fairness: Statewide District Court Surveys Begin

The Minnesota Judicial Branch has launched a four-month effort to survey court participants and stakeholders in each of the state’s district courthouses. In addition to the in-courthouse surveys, the Judicial Branch will also survey Court Payment Center users, both over the phone and online, and visitors to the Judicial Branch website. The goal of this effort – called the Access and Fairness Survey – is to ensure accountability of the Judicial Branch, improve overall operations of the court, and enhance the public’s trust and confidence in the judiciary.

“The Access and Fairness Survey is an opportunity for court participants at all levels to tell the Judicial Branch about their personal experiences in our courthouses, using our public website, and accessing the Court Payment Center. We need to hear from Minnesotans about their experiences so we know what is working and how to better meet court users’ needs,” said Chief Justice Lorie S. Gildea. “Court user participation in the Access and Fairness Survey is critical to the administration of justice in a fair, equitable, open,

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*Access and Fairness Survey
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and accessible manner. I encourage all who have the opportunity to take the Survey to do so.”

Access to Justice, Excellence, and Fairness and Equality are three of the [Minnesota Judicial Branch strategic goals](#). Results from the Access and Fairness Surveys are used to measure the Branch’s success in meeting these goals. The Minnesota Judicial Branch last conducted this Survey in 2008 and 2013. The Survey asks participants to review the court system, not individual judges or court administration staff. Survey participants will

rate the court’s accessibility and its treatment of them in terms of fairness, equality, and respect. Those surveyed are expected to include participants in legal matters and their friends and family, victims, witnesses, attorneys, service counter users, jurors or potential jurors, and all other users of the court system.

Surveys will be held on a rolling basis throughout Minnesota’s courthouses anytime between December and March 2019. State Court Administration staff are working with local court administration in all 87 counties to

implement the Survey during this time. Survey duration will vary by jurisdiction based on response rates.

Courthouse surveys are generally done on paper by in-courthouse visitors, though customers have the option of completing an online version of the courthouse survey after they leave the courthouse. During the Survey period, courthouses will feature tables with paper surveys, a survey return box, and Minnesota Judicial Branch branded pens. Courthouse signage and staff interactions will encourage visitors to complete the Survey.

New Program will Increase Audit Frequency for Conservator-Managed Accounts

The Minnesota Judicial Branch is implementing another reengineering initiative to expand on the [nationally-recognized success](#) of the Conservator Account Auditing Program (CAAP) through the development of the Conservator Account Review Program (CARP). The complimentary programs will ensure that all conservator-managed financial accounts in the state are reviewed by trained financial experts and that district court judges have more tools

and information when hearing conservatorship cases. This announcement follows the recent release of the interactive, online conservator and guardianship [training](#).
“The Conservator Account Review Program and Conservator Account Auditing Program will work in concert to review accounts and offer greater protections to Minnesotans who require the services of conservator,” said Minnesotans Minnesota Supreme Court

Chief Justice Lorie S. Gildea.
“Additional oversight of conservator-managed financial accounts means we will be able to better protect our seniors and vulnerable Minnesotans. More routine auditing ensures that conservators are reporting and documenting financial transactions properly. With the addition of the Conservator Account Review Program we will be better positioned to monitor for inappropriate spending or loss between

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Conservator Managed Accounts
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audit years,” said Audit Manager Jamie Majerus.

CAAP – Conservator Account Auditing Program

In 2012 the Minnesota Judicial Branch launched CAAP as an effort to improve statewide oversight of court-appointed conservators and protect the assets of elderly and vulnerable Minnesotans. The program previously audited all accounts with bondable asset balances of more than \$3,000 after one year, accounts referred by the court, and larger accounts every four years. With the addition of CARP, the CAAP auditors will now audit all conservator-managed accounts after each account’s first year. These more frequent reviews will allow auditors to more quickly identify any issues or concerns with an account. After the first-year review, the CAAP unit will audit all accounts with assets over \$10,000 every four years. In addition, CAAP will audit any account referred to auditors by the reviewers working in CARP.

CARP – Conservator Account Review Program

The newly-launched CARP will provide regular review of accounts not subject to CAAP audits and provide public hearing preparation documents to district courts.

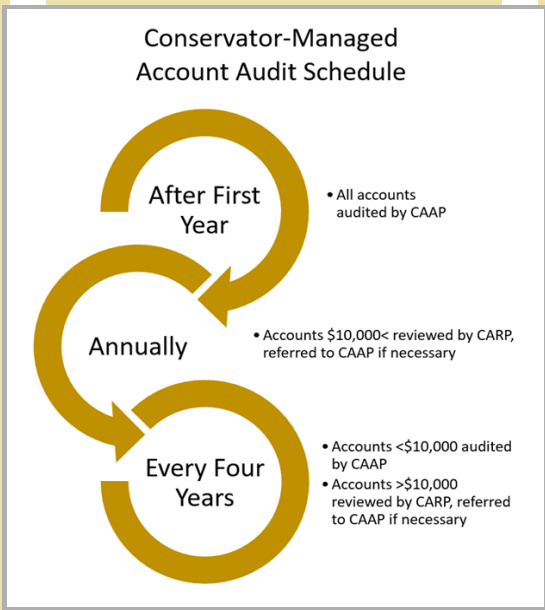
CARP will review accounts under \$10,000 and older than one year, and larger conservator accounts in-between those accounts’ fourth-year audits that are conducted by CAAP. Reviewers will follow a standard practices guide to ensure that conservator accounts are uniformly monitored.

Account Review Report

CAAP and CARP findings are presented to the parties and district judge for review. CARP audits will include a new, public Account Review Report summarizing the findings of an audit. One of the primary goals of this reengineering effort – in addition to providing greater oversight of

conservator-managed accounts – is to provide district court judges more information and insight to assist in their decision-making process. Since the program’s inception, CAAP auditors have filed formal audit reports with the court. These public documents detail the auditor’s findings and recommendations, and are used by judges to make informed decisions on conservatorship cases.

With the creation of CARP, judges will now also receive an Account Review Report for conservatorship accounts not subject to a full audit through CAAP. The report provides a summary of the reviewer’s findings and recommendations. In addition to the Account Review Report, and starting in April 2019, CARP reviewers will also begin submitting a hearing preparation document into the Minnesota Court Information System (MNCIS) before each hearing in a conservatorship case. Like CAAP Audit Reports, Account Review Reports and the hearing preparation document will be public documents. The hearing preparation document will provide a summary of the annual accounts reviewed/audited and detail issues or findings identified by the reviewer or auditor.





Minnesota Judicial Branch FY2020-21 Budget Request

OVERVIEW

Over the past decade, the Minnesota Judicial Branch has embarked on an ambitious redesign agenda aimed at improving the efficiency and effectiveness of Minnesota’s justice system.

This includes the eCourtMN transformation, Minnesota’s historic transition to an electronic case record. The eCourtMN initiative has made it easier for Minnesotans to interact with and access their court system, and enhanced information sharing between the courts and justice partners.

We have also overseen a significant expansion of drug courts and other treatment court programs in the state. These programs have been proven to reduce recidivism among offenders facing chemical and mental health issues, and reduce costs in the justice system.

The Judicial Branch FY2020-21 budget request is focused on positioning the Judicial Branch to continue building on this decade of innovation, while also addressing some of the growing challenges facing the state’s courts: a retirement wave among judges and employees, rising trial court caseloads, increasing costs of providing psychological services, and the growing threat of cybercrime to our public institutions.

Budget Request Items	FY20-21
Judge/Staff Compensation & Benefit Costs	\$35.251 M
Two Additional Trial Court Judge Units	\$1.758 M
Treatment Court Funding Stabilization	\$0.612 M
Mandated Psychological Exams	\$2.140 M
Cybersecurity Enhancements	\$5.000 M
Total Request	\$44.761 M

The Judicial Branch is seeking an increase of 6.38% over the Branch’s biennial base budget in FY2020-21.

increasing costs of providing psychological services, and the growing threat of cybercrime to our public institutions.

ADDRESSING THE JUDICIAL BRANCH WORKFORCE CHALLENGES

In order to continue driving innovation in the state’s justice system, the Judicial Branch needs to retain and attract skilled employees and judges that can maintain and operate a modern, efficient, and technology-based court system.

However, the Judicial Branch is facing a significant retirement wave among judges and staff. **By 2020, at least 40% of all judges that were on the Bench in 2015 will have either retired or will have turned 65 years old. One-third of current Judicial Branch staff reach retirement age in the next 10 years.**

To prepare for this retirement wave, the Judicial Branch—with the support of the Governor and Legislature—has made concerted efforts to improve the competitiveness of the Judicial Branch salary structure, following a multi-year salary freeze in the late-2000s. To ensure the salary structure supports a highly-skilled workforce, the Judicial Branch must continue to keep pace with public-sector market competitors.

Minnesota also needs to ensure that judge salaries remain competitive with other public sector legal positions. **Today, judges in some counties make less than the county attorneys who appear before them, and, in some cases, even less than the assistant county attorneys.**

Request: \$35.251 M

The Judicial Branch FY2020-21 budget request seeks funding to:

- Increase judge compensation by 3.5%/year
- Provide a 3.5% compensation pool each year for court employees
- Fund the employer share of unavoidable health insurance premium increases

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Minnesota Judicial Branch Budget Request
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NEW JUDGESHIPS TO HELP MANAGE A RISING CASELOAD

Since FY2014, the Judicial Branch has seen an increase in the number of complex cases brought to the trial courts.

- **Children in need of protection or services (CHIPS) cases increased by 42% and permanency cases increased by 69%.**
- **Felony and gross misdemeanor drug possession case filings increased by 36%;**
- **Felony domestic assault filings increased by 24% ; and**
- **Gross misdemeanor DWI cases increased by 23%.**

The Minnesota Judicial Weighted Caseload Analysis, used since 1980 to assess judge need, indicates a need for two additional trial court judges to continue processing cases in an efficient and effective manner.

Request: \$1.758 M

The Judicial Branch FY2020-21 budget request seeks funding to add two new trial court judge units.

A judge unit consists of a judge and two staff. This would increase the number of trial court judgeships in the state from 294 to 296.

SUSTAINING MINNESOTA'S TREATMENT COURT PROGRAMS

The number of drug courts, DWI courts, veterans courts, and other treatment court programs in Minnesota has grown tremendously in recent years, as has the number of Minnesotans served by these programs. **Minnesota now has 61 operational treatment courts, including 11 multi-county programs, providing services in over 70% of Minnesota's counties.**

While this expansion has served to combat recidivism, improve public safety, and save costs throughout the justice system, many of these programs are relying on short-term and uncertain funding sources to remain operational.

Request: \$0.612 M

The Judicial Branch FY2020-21 budget request seeks funding for five existing treatment courts that were launched with federal grant funding. This new funding will allow the Judicial Branch to add those five courts to the statewide treatment court funding formula, ensuring their continued operation after the expiration of their federal grants. The five affected treatment courts are: Anoka County Drug Court, Anoka County Veterans Court, Olmsted County Drug Court, Scott County Drug Court, and Wright County Drug Court.

ADDRESSING THE RISING COST OF PROVIDING MANDATED SERVICES

The Judicial Branch is experiencing significant increases in the **court-related cost of providing psychological examinations in criminal and civil commitment cases. These costs grew by 48% from FY14 to FY18.**

The increase is due primarily to the increase in examinations ordered in criminal cases. From FY17 to FY18, Criminal Rule 20 examinations increased by 11.5%.

Request: \$2.14 M

The Judicial Branch FY2020-21 budget request seeks funding to provide the court-related costs of examinations under Rule 20 of the Criminal Rules of Procedure and under Minnesota Statutes Chapter 253B, civil commitments, including commitments of persons who are mentally ill and dangerous, persons with sexual psychopathic personalities, and sexually dangerous persons.

IMPROVING THE CYBERSECURITY OF MINNESOTA'S COURTS

The Judicial Branch launched its cyber security program in FY17. As the Judicial Branch operates in an electronic record environment, the strength and security of the court's electronic tools, technology infrastructure, and private data is critically important. The Judicial Branch is working to expand its efforts to mitigate the risk of data breaches, data corruption, system outages, document/data loss, and cyber-attacks.

Request: \$5 M

The Judicial Branch FY2020-21 budget request seeks funding to enhance its information security and risk management program. The request addresses necessary staff, training, hardware, and software needs for this effort.



Dakota County “Warrant Resolution Day”



On Saturday, November 17, 2018 Dakota County District Court, the Dakota County

Sheriff’s Department, Social Services, Probation, County Attorney, city prosecutors, the American Civil Liberties Union, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, and La Asamblea de Derecho Civiles (Civil Rights Assembly) hosted a “Warrant Resolution” event at Crossroads Church in Eagan. The event offered anyone with an outstanding Dakota County arrest warrant an opportunity to meet with justice system officials and take steps to resolve their case.

Visitors to the event were able to speak with consulting attorneys and prosecuting

attorneys, and arrange to pay any outstanding fines. Representatives from the Driver and Vehicle Services Division of the Minnesota Department of Public Safety were also present to assist attendees. Both Spanish and Somali interpreters were available at the event.

Many defendants who were able to clear their warrants indicated the event was worth their time. Other key elements to the event’s success included the timing of holding it on a weekend, highlighting that defendants could resolve warrants without having to serve jail time, the event location being close to public transportation, and the publicity of the event contributed to a successful effort. Arriving defendants first checked in and met with a public defender. The public defender worked out a resolution to the charge or probation violation with the

appropriate prosecutor and probation officer and then appeared before the judge to put the agreement on the record. Defendants left with a copy of the Order resolving their outstanding warrant. Many were vocally appreciative and relieved that their warrant was quashed and case resolved.

There were 10 court administration staff, three Judges, two Court Reporters, and three supervisor/Event Planners, including a Judge and court staff from Ramsey County to handle warrants from that county. In total, 80 outstanding warrants were handled. This included 8 from Washington and Hennepin counties, 15 from Ramsey County, and 57 from Dakota County.

A lot of hard work was put into making this event so positive and productive. All in all, it was a tremendous success.

New Criminal Expungement Video Released to Guide Minnesotans through Process

Minnesotans who are petitioning for a criminal record expungement have a new [video](#) to assist them through the updated

filing process. The Minnesota Judicial Branch has released a step-by-step video that explains how to complete the necessary

forms, and what Minnesotans should expect during the process of petitioning for a

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*New Criminal Expungement Video
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criminal record expungement. In order to make the informational video easier to navigate, it is broken into 16 short chapters, totaling approximately one hour of video explanation in plain language. Each chapter is between one and seven minutes long.

“The criminal record expungement video is an example of how the Minnesota Judicial Branch is working to create new and innovative tools to assist self-represented litigants. We are committed to helping Minnesotans understand court processes so they can move efficiently through the courts,”

said State Court Administrator Jeff Shorba. The National Center for Access to Justice has ranked Minnesota among the top states in the nation, according to the “Justice Index” tool, for providing access to justice for people who cannot afford an attorney, those with disabilities, and those with limited-English proficiency. The criminal record expungement video is the latest tool released this year by the Minnesota Judicial Branch aimed at assisting self-represented litigants. Earlier this year, the Minnesota Judicial Branch released the new [Guide & File online](#)

[tool and fillable smart court forms](#), which help self-represented litigants complete court forms.

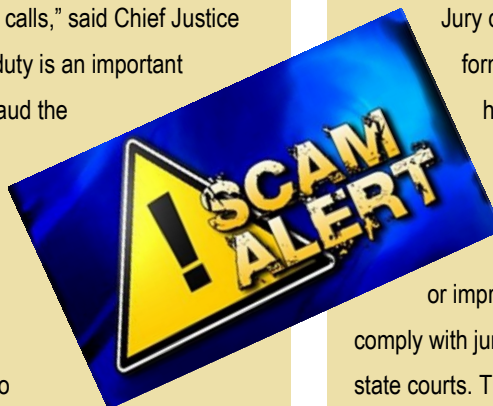
People who are interested in learning more about how to petition the court to expunge their criminal record can find the new video and more information on the [Minnesota Judicial Branch website](#). Last year, the Minnesota Judicial Branch’s statewide virtual Self-Help Center, which assists self-represented litigants, handled nearly 23,000 phone calls and answered nearly 4,000 emails.

Chief Justice Gildea Urges Awareness of Jury Duty Scams

Minnesota Supreme Court Chief Justice Lorie S. Gildea urges Minnesotans to be vigilant of jury duty scams. The Minnesota Judicial Branch has posted information about jury duty scams on its website at www.mncourts.gov/jury. A copy of an informational poster, previously distributed by the Judicial Branch, can be found [here](#).

“Counties and district courts are hearing, once again, that scammers are preying on Minnesotans with fake jury duty

summons and calls,” said Chief Justice Gildea. “Jury duty is an important civic honor. I laud the dedication of citizens who report for jury service, and urge Minnesotans to learn about and protect themselves from the potentially devastating consequences of these scams.”



Jury duty scams can take many forms. Recent scammers have used fraudulent phone calls and e-mails threatening a citizen with fines, prosecution, or imprisonment for failure to comply with jury service in federal or state courts. The scammers demand a citizen to provide payment or to divulge private information that the scammer can use for identity theft purposes.

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Jury Duty Scam
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Chief Justice Gildea reminds all Minnesotans that if they are summoned for state jury duty, initial contact will always be made by U.S. Mail in the form of a juror summons from a Minnesota district court. Minnesota courts will never contact a person by phone or e-mail and seek payment of fines, Social Security numbers, credit card information, or any other sensitive information in response to missed jury duty.

Any person receiving a suspicious call or e-mail seeking financial or private data related to missed jury duty is urged to contact their local county sheriff's office. Any person with questions about their jury duty should contact their local district court. Contact information can be found at www.mncourts.gov/jury by clicking on the "County Jury Info" tab.

More information about jury duty in Minnesota

The right to a trial by jury is one of the core protections of individual freedom in American society. The Constitutions of the United States and the State of Minnesota guarantee defendants in criminal cases and litigants in civil cases the right to a trial by jury.

Each year, the Minnesota Judicial Branch obtains names from driver's license, state ID card, and voter registration lists and compiles that information into a composite source list. From that list, individuals are randomly selected by computer and mailed a summons to appear for jury duty. From an eligible population of 3.7 million people, approximately 180,000 Minnesota citizens are summoned to

serve as jurors in the state courts every year.

A prospective juror must be a United States citizen, a resident of the county in which they are summoned, at least 18 years old, able to communicate in English, physically and mentally capable of serving, a person who has had their civil rights restored if they have been convicted of a felony, and a person who has not served as a state or federal juror in the past four years.

Persons summoned for jury duty can complete the required qualification questionnaire through the Judicial Branch website (www.mncourts.gov). The online form gives citizens the option of delivering their summons response to the court at any time of day, and it saves the cost of mailing the response.



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