

# New Hampshire Judicial Branch Operating Budget Request FY2026/2027

February 21, 2025





# Our Mission:

To preserve the rule of law while protecting the rights and liberties guaranteed by the United States and New Hampshire Constitutions.

The courts provide accessible, prompt, and efficient forums for the fair and independent administration of justice, with respect for the dignity of all we serve.

# Today's Presentation



1. **Judicial Branch Budget Overview**
2. **Efficiency Budget Impact**
3. **Prioritized Needs**
4. **Requested Adjustments**



# FY26-27 Judicial Branch Budget Overview

## N.H. Rev. Stat. § 9:4-a

### Section 9:4-a - Judicial Branch Budget

The supreme court, in consultation with the judicial branch administrative council appointed pursuant to supreme court rule 54, shall prepare the judicial branch budget for review and processing by the legislature according to the same time schedule for budgetary review and analysis required of executive agencies. The judicial branch budget shall be prepared upon forms and according to procedures prescribed by the commissioner of administrative services. The budget request documents and such additional information as may be requested shall be submitted to the commissioner of administrative services to be included in the governor's budget in the amounts requested, and with such comments as the governor deems appropriate.

*RSA 9:4-a*

Amended by 2015, 102:1, eff. 1/1/2016.

*1969, 21:1. 1979, 403:2. 1983, 381:6. 1985, 399:3, I. 1995, 9:2, eff. June 11, 1995. 2015, 102:1, eff. Jan. 1, 2016.*

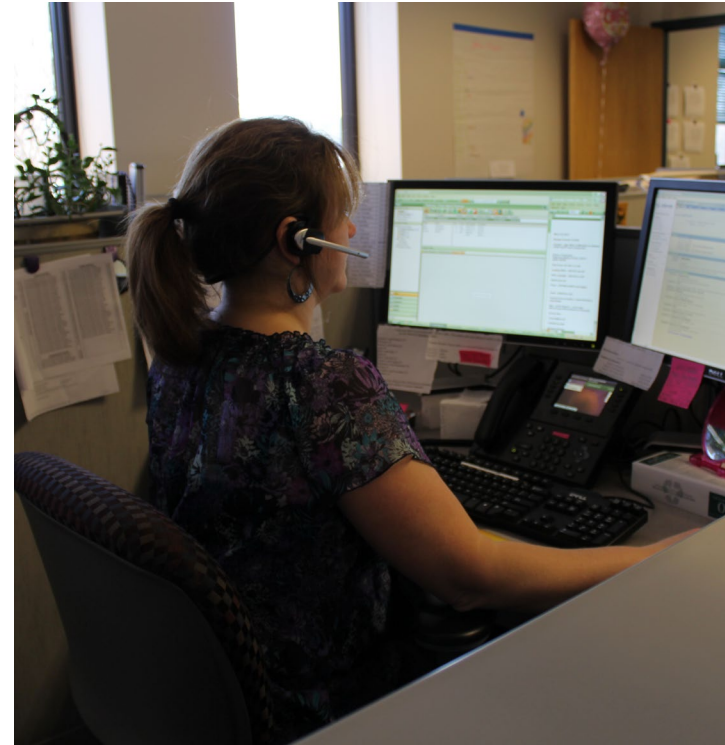


# Facts Governing the Judicial Branch Budget

- Personnel is 75% of the budget
  - *Costs are essentially fixed*
- Limited control over major non-personnel cost centers
  - *Transfer to Sheriffs*
  - *Transfer to Department of Administrative Services / Bureau of Court Facilities*
  - *Rent*
  - *Technology*
- Approximately 92% General Funds



# Judicial Branch: Serving the Public



- **More than 150,000 cases filed in NH Courts every year**
- **More than 400,000 inquiries on cases answered in Information Center**
- **Nearly 600 Frontline Staff Including:**
  - **Courthouse Staff**
  - **Info Center Representatives**
  - **Court Security Officers**



## FY 2026-27 Efficiency Budget

- **Reduces General Fund Appropriation from FY25 Adjusted Authorized Budget by 3.8% \***



*\* Excludes \$1,828,919 in FY26 and \$1,847,621 in FY27 requested appropriation to implement HB 318*

# Judicial Branch Efficiency Budget Submission FY26-27

	FY2026 Efficiency Budget	FY2027 Efficiency Budget
Total General Funds 9/16/24 Submission	\$118,186,514	\$120,583,870
HB318/Bail Reform General Funds included in above total	\$1,828,919	\$1,847,621
General Funds excluding Bail Reform GF	\$116,357,595	\$118,736,249
Governor GF Target	\$116,357,593	\$116,357,593
<b>Total Additional GF Reductions</b>	<b>-\$1,828,921</b>	<b>-\$1,847,621</b>

# FY26-27 Judicial Branch Efficiency Budget – Funding Sources

	<u>FY2024 Actual</u>	<u>FY2025 Adj Auth</u>	<u>FY2026 Efficiency Budget</u>	<u>FY2027 Efficiency Budget</u>
<b>Total</b>	\$114,068,309	\$130,536,743	\$128,245,976	\$130,572,483
<b>Breakout by Fund Source:</b>				
Federal Funds	\$431,404	\$964,150	\$310,000	\$310,000
Other Funds	\$6,900,104	\$6,603,803	\$7,749,462	\$7,678,613
Highway Funds	\$2,000,000	\$2,000,000	\$2,000,000	\$2,000,000
General Funds	\$104,736,802	\$120,968,790	\$118,186,514	\$120,583,870
<b>Total</b>	\$114,068,309	\$130,536,743	\$128,245,976	\$130,572,483
<b>General Funds as % of Total</b>	<b>91.8%</b>	<b>92.7%</b>	<b>92.2%</b>	<b>92.4%</b>

# FY26-27 Judicial Branch Efficiency Budget - Outlays

	<u>FY2024 Actual</u>	<u>FY2025 Adj Auth</u>	<u>FY2026 Efficiency Budget</u>	<u>FY2027 Efficiency Budget</u>
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$114,068,309</b>	<b>\$130,536,743</b>	<b>\$128,245,976</b>	<b>\$130,572,483</b>
<b>Breakout by Expense Type:</b>				
Salaries + Benefits (all funds)	\$83,520,610	\$96,413,339	\$95,430,108	\$97,597,199
DAS-BCF/EAP/PCI Audit (GF)	\$10,589,415	\$11,729,332	\$10,705,216	\$10,725,268
Drug Court (GF)	\$2,904,450	\$4,687,500	\$4,376,316	\$4,376,316
Sheriffs Reimbursements (GF)	\$4,482,296	\$4,258,600	\$4,232,261	\$4,232,261
IT Maint/Support (all funds)	\$3,925,325	\$3,966,827	\$4,159,231	\$4,170,091
Jury Fees (GF)	\$633,951	\$650,000	\$599,500	\$599,500
All Other (all funds)	\$8,012,262	\$8,831,145	\$8,743,345	\$8,871,849
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$114,068,309</b>	<b>\$130,536,743</b>	<b>\$128,245,976</b>	<b>\$130,572,483</b>
Personnel as % of Total	73.2%	73.9%	74.4%	74.7%
Other Fixed Costs as % of Total	19.8%	19.4%	18.8%	18.5%
All Other Costs as % of Total	7.0%	6.8%	6.8%	6.8%

# Efficiency Budget Impacts



# FY 2026-27 Efficiency Budget – Summary of Operational Impacts

- Close Two Circuit Courthouses (Goffstown/Hooksett).
- Eliminate Jury Trials in Superior Court for two months each Fiscal Year (July/December).
- Reduce the number of funded non-judge positions by 31 Full-Time Equivalents.
- Reduce appropriations for per diem courthouse security coverage in the Circuit Courts and for training for court security personnel.
- Reduce appropriations for reimbursement payments to county sheriffs for courthouse security in Superior Court.
- Defer implementation of the Veterans Treatment Court.
- Reduce appropriations for treatment providers for adult drug court participants and for adult drug court provider training.



**Supreme Court**



**Superior Court**



**Circuit Court**



**Administrative Office of the Courts**



# About the Judicial Branch

The Judicial Branch has two trial courts, one appellate court and an administrative office to support the courts.



# Circuit Court

Created in 2011 when the legislature combined the District Court, Probate Court, and Family Division into one unified court with centralized management.

The Circuit Court has jurisdiction to hear and decide cases across three divisions – the District Division, the Family Division, and the Probate Division.

# Circuit Court Facts

The State is divided into 10 Circuits, one for each county. Within those Circuits are 34 Circuit Courts serving local communities.

## Circuit Court Judges sitting as of January 1, 2025:

- 49 Full-Time Judges
- 3 Part-Time and Per Diem Judges
- 4 Senior Active Status Judges
- 16 Judicial Referees

\*RSA 490-F:7, “The number of judges and masters in the circuit court shall be not less than the number of authorized judicial and master positions in the former district court, probate court, and judicial branch family division ... on the effective date of this chapter.”

## Approximately 131,422 Annual Circuit Court Filings in 2024:

### District

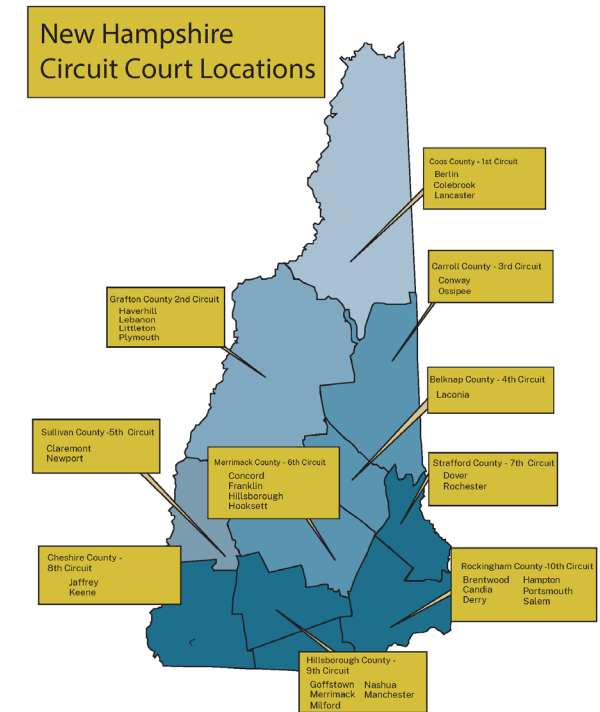
- Misdemeanor and violation level offenses
- Felony offenses (as of January 1, 2024)
- Motor vehicle
- Small claims and civil
- Landlord-tenant
- Stalking

### Family

- Divorce/parenting
- Domestic violence
- Guardianship of minors
- Abuse/neglect
- Termination of parental rights, surrender, adoption in abuse/neglect cases
- Juvenile delinquency/CHINS

### Probate

- Trusts and estates
- Guardianship of adults and involuntary commitments
- Adoptions and name changes



## 34 Circuit Court Locations

- 10 Probate Divisions
- 31 District Divisions
- 31 Family Divisions

# FY26-27 Efficiency Budget Impacts – Circuit Court

- Reduce the number of funded non-judge positions by 22 Full-Time Equivalents.
- Reduce paid work days for per diem judges, senior active status judges, and retired marital master.
- Reduce appropriations for per diem courthouse security coverage in the Circuit Courts and for training for court security personnel.
- Close Circuit Courthouses in Goffstown and Hooksett.



	FY26	FY27
• <i>Personnel Reductions</i>	-\$2,966,810	-\$3,230,786
• <i>Closure of Goffstown Courthouse</i>	-\$199,059	-\$201,627
• <i>Closure of Hooksett Courthouse</i>	-\$81,452	-\$81,720



# Superior Court

The Superior Court handles all types of civil and criminal trials except those exclusively subject to the jurisdiction of the Circuit Court.

The Superior Court hears the following types of cases:

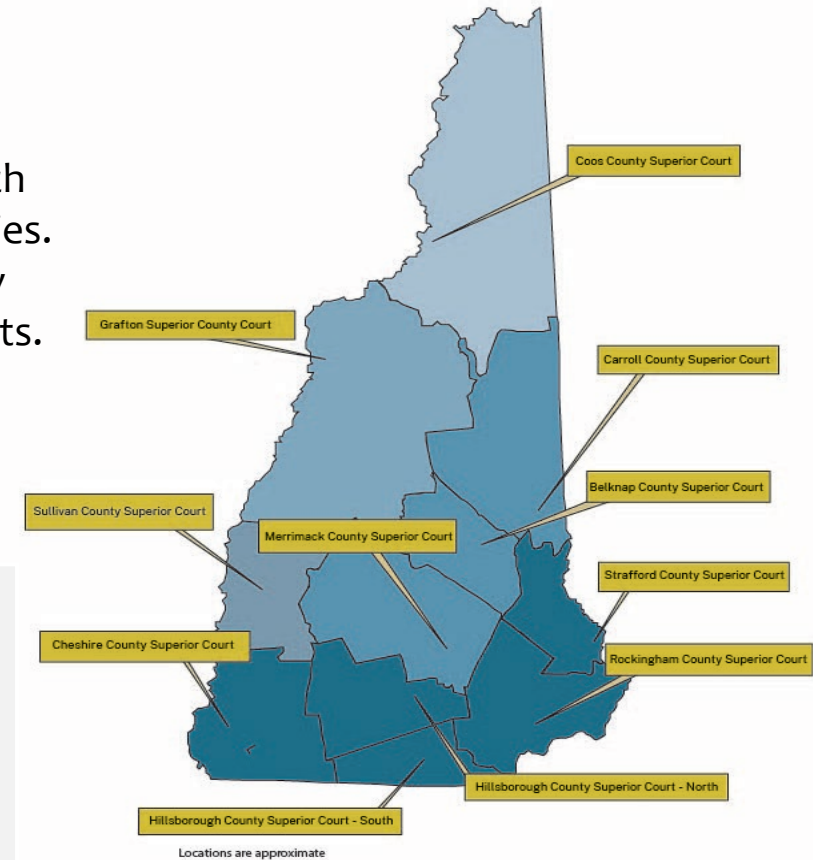
- Felonies (major crimes such as homicides; sexual assaults on children and adults; fentanyl, meth and other drug offenses, burglary, theft, and financial fraud and elder abuse). Criminal docket also includes class A misdemeanor appeals from the Circuit Court District Division.
- Civil cases, such negligence, contracts, and other matters with a minimum claim of \$1,500 in damages in which either party requests a trial by jury. Equity jurisdiction to determine property rights, injunctions and attachments.
- Land Use Appeals and Business and Commercial Disputes
- Treatment Courts, including Adult Drug Courts, Mental Health Courts, Veterans Court, and Young Adult Treatment Court

# Superior Court Facts

## More than 22,500 Superior Court Filings in 2024

- Felony level criminal offenses (Once bound over from Circuit Court)
- Civil cases
- Probation Violations
- Felony Search and Arrest Warrants
- 1,353 YDC Claims in Superior Court
  - 1,204 in Rockingham County
  - 149 in Merrimack County

There is a Superior Court in each of New Hampshire's ten counties. Hillsborough County is the only county with two Superior Courts.



### Superior Court Judges as of January 1, 2025\*:

- 23 Full-Time Judges
- 2 Senior Active Status Judges
- 4 Judicial Referees

\*RSA 491:1, "The superior court shall consist of a chief justice... and 22 associate justices."

# FY26-27 Efficiency Budget Impacts – Superior Court

- Reduce the number of funded non-judge positions by 6 Full-Time Equivalents.
- Eliminate Jury Trials in Superior Court for two months each year (July/December).
- Reduce funding for per diem Judicial referees and Senior Active Status Judges.
- Reduce appropriations for reimbursement payments to county sheriffs for courthouse security in Superior Court.
- Defer implementation of the Veterans Treatment Court.
- Reduce appropriations for treatment providers for adult drug court participants and for trainings for adult drug court providers.

	FY26	FY27
• <i>Personnel Reductions</i>	-\$643,511	-\$682,145
• <i>Elimination of Jury Trials (July/Dec)</i>	-\$90,000	-\$90,000
• <i>Defer Veterans Court</i>	-\$342,338	-\$344,347
• <i>Reduce Drug Court Appropriations</i>	-\$341,184	-\$341,184





# Administrative Office of the Courts

In 1983, the New Hampshire Supreme Court created the Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC).

The AOC provides operational support to New Hampshire's unified court system in its constitutional responsibility to provide for the administration of justice.

# Providing Administrative Support for Our Courts

The AOC is responsible for the Judicial Branch's statewide functions of:

- Operations and Audit
- Fiscal and Strategic Funding Initiatives
- Accounting & Payroll
- General Counsel and Government Relations
- Human Resources
- Communications
- Court Security
- Treatment Court Coordination
- Access and Community Engagement
- Justice Data & Statistics
- Mental Health & Wellness
- Information Technology
- Facilities and Buildings & Grounds
- Procurement and Purchasing

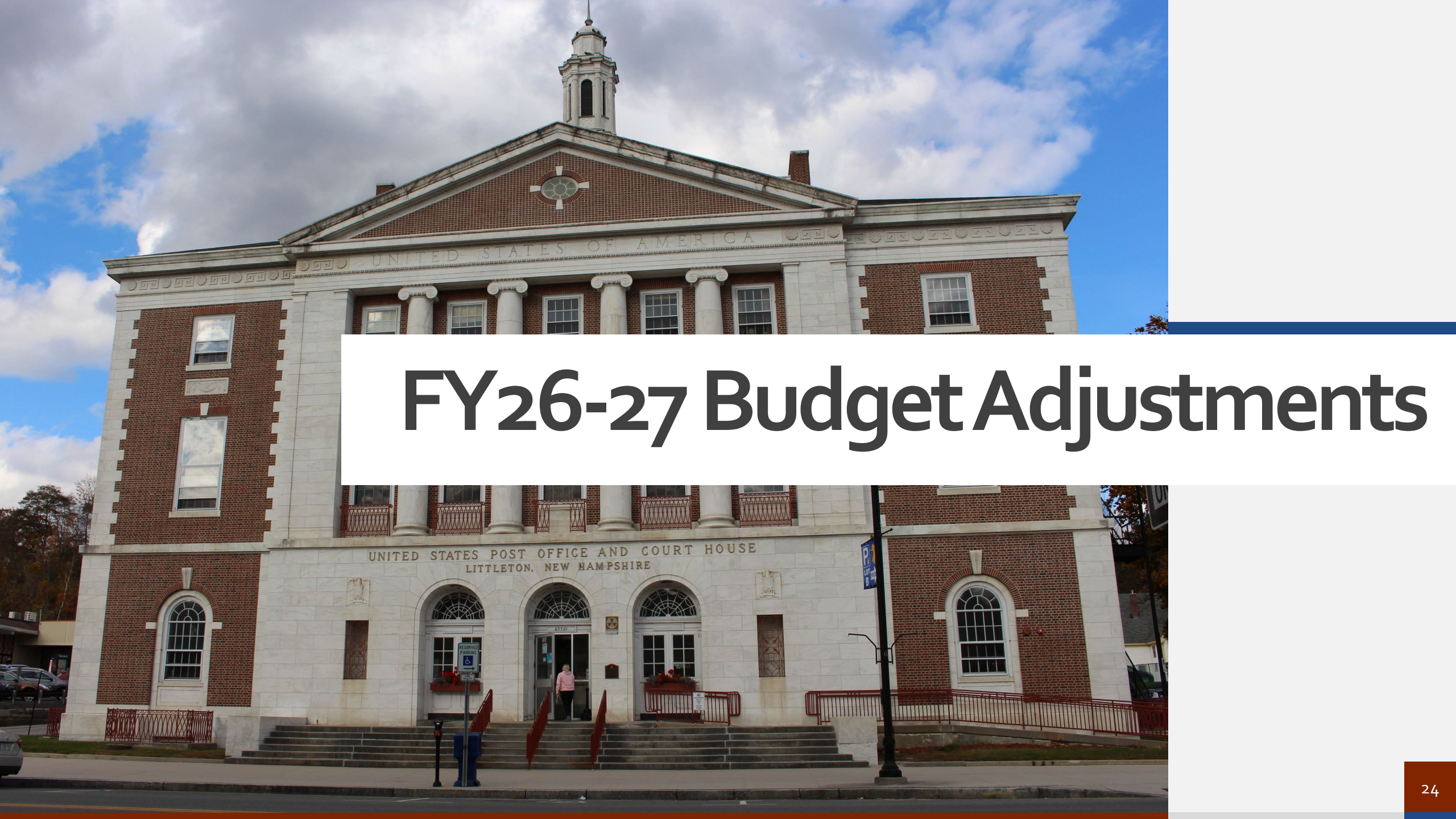


# FY26-27 Efficiency Budget Impacts – Administrative Office of the Courts

- Reduce the number of funded positions by 2.8 Full-Time Equivalents
- Reduce appropriations for per diem courthouse security coverage in the Circuit Courts and for training for court security personnel.
- Reduce appropriations for payments to county sheriffs for courthouse security in Superior Court.

	FY26	FY27
• <i>Personnel Reductions</i>	-\$355,836	-\$433,903
• <i>Reduce Per Diem Court Security</i>	-\$919,324	-\$919,324
• <i>Reduce Per Diem Sheriff Security</i>	-\$1,125,031	-\$1,125,031
• <i>Credit Card Fees</i>	-\$450,000	-\$450,000
• <i>Interpreter Costs</i>	-\$111,702	-\$111,702
• <i>Reduce Security Training</i>	-\$95,456	-\$95,456





# FY26-27 Budget Adjustments

# Summary of Judicial Branch Requested Budget Adjustments

## Requested Adjustments to FY26/27 Budget Submission

	FY26	FY27
<i>Salaries/Benefits</i>	-\$190,738	-\$134,192
<i>ARPA</i>	-\$505,751	-\$207,077
<i>Bureau of Court Facilities</i>	-\$162,601	-\$282,601
<i>IT Dedicated Fund</i>	-\$7,268	+\$7,112
<b>Total Adjustments FY26/27</b>	<b>-\$866,358</b>	<b>-\$616,758</b>

**Total FY26-27 Adjustment: -\$1,483,116**





# Prioritized Needs

# Prioritized Budget Needs as Submitted September 16, 2024

- **Additional Resources to Manage Impact of Youth Development Center (YDC) Cases**
    - FY 2026: \$438,946
    - FY 2027: \$438,561
  - **Court Security Officer Training**
    - FY 2026: \$95,456
    - FY 2027: \$95,456
  - **Court Security Per Diem Days**
    - FY 2026: \$919,324
    - FY 2027: \$919,324
  - **Restore Funding for Sheriffs' Reimbursement**
    - FY 2026: \$1,125,031
    - FY 2027: \$1,125,031
  - **Circuit Court Positions**
    - FY 2026: \$804,775
    - FY 2027: \$806,440
  - **Interpreter Costs**
    - FY 2026: \$111,702
    - FY 2027: \$111,702
  - **Drug Court**
    - FY 2026: \$341,184
    - FY 2027: \$341,184
  - **IT Position**
    - FY 2026: \$115,015
    - FY 2027: \$119,326
  - **Bail Reform (Judicial Training Coordinator)**
    - FY 2026: \$158,708
    - FY 2027: \$160,736
  - **Veterans Treatment Court**
    - FY 2026: \$342,338
    - FY 2027: \$344,347
  - **Create Full-Time Volunteer Coordinator Position**
    - FY 2026: \$67,960
    - FY 2027: \$119,899
  - **Additional Court Navigators**
    - FY 2026: \$236,260
    - FY 2027: \$244,897
  - **Restore Unfunded Positions**
    - FY 2026: \$3,581,717
    - FY 2027: \$3,733,410
  - **Restore DAS/BCF Personnel**
    - FY 2026: \$404,857
    - FY 2027: \$494,735
  - **Call Center Software Upgrade**
    - FY 2026: \$150,000
    - FY 2027: \$27,500
- **TOTAL Prioritized Needs**
    - FY 2026: \$8,893,271
    - FY 2027: \$9,082,548

# Note About HB2

26           Section 7 Judicial Branch; General Fund Appropriation. The judicial branch general  
27 fund appropriation shall not exceed [~~\$232,715,194~~] **\$235,093,848\*** for the biennium ending  
28 June 30, 2027. Any funds available at the end of June 30, 2026 shall not lapse until June  
29 30, 2027. The accounting unit 02-10-10-100010-1880, class 028,

## PROPOSED BUDGET SECTIONS

1 transfer to the department of administrative services for transfers to plant & property, shall  
2 not be reduced unless the reduction is agreed to by the commissioner of administrative  
3 services and the chief justice of the supreme court.

# Questions

- Chief Justice Gordon J. MacDonald
- Superior Court Chief Justice Mark E. Howard
- Circuit Court Administrative Judge Ellen V. Christo
- Circuit Court Deputy Administrative Judge Beth Kissinger
- Administrative Office of the Courts Director Dianne Martin, Esq.
- Administrative Office of the Courts Assistant Director, Safety and Security Sean Haggerty
- Judicial Branch Fiscal Manager Donna Raymond

