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## Council News Release

**SUBJECT:** Mayor, City Attorney and Councilmembers support Municipal Court reduction

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**  
4/29/2010 2:19:00 PM

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### Mayor, City Attorney and Councilmembers support Municipal Court reduction

**Seattle** – On Tuesday, the Budget and Finance Committee voted in favor of the elimination of one department of the Seattle Municipal Court, a cost-saving action supported by Mayor Mike McGinn and City Attorney Peter S. Holmes.

"The City of Seattle faces a potential \$56 million General Fund budget shortfall in 2011," stated Councilmember Jean Godden, Budget and Finance Committee chair. "We must identify operational savings while still maintaining critical services for our residents. The elimination of one judicial position will do just that."

"We are going to have to make many difficult decisions to close the budget gap next year," said McGinn. "Public safety is my top priority. I will continue to work with the Council to make sustainable budget decisions to protect the health and safety of Seattle residents."

The legislation was voted out of committee with five councilmembers in favor and one voting in abstention. Councilmembers Godden, Conlin, Burgess, Harrell, and O'Brien voted in favor while Councilmember Licata abstained.

City Attorney Peter S. Holmes said, "We all have to pull together in these tough economic times, and our office will work closely with the City Council and Mayor to streamline the Municipal Court and achieve as many efficiencies as we can."


The legislation now before the Council would reduce the number of judges by one, beginning in 2011, and is being considered now to inform judges preparing to file for office in June.




The full Council vote is expected on Monday, May 3 at 2 p.m.

"I have nothing but respect for our Municipal Court Judges. Having tried cases in the court, I speak from experience when I say they bring tremendous value to our city. We will continue to monitor the number of cases filed, dispositions reached and use of creative alternatives such as community court to ensure that our public receives efficient judicial services," said Councilmember Bruce Harrell.


This ordinance will take effect 30 days after its approval by the Mayor, prior to the June's candidate filing period.

The Seattle Municipal Court handles misdemeanor and gross misdemeanor crimes, traffic infractions and civil violations. The terms of judges are four years and all expire the same year. The Seattle Municipal Court has been recognized nationally for finding alternatives to

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traditional criminal justice models to more effectively address Seattle's misdemeanor population.

In 1988, the Seattle Municipal Court went from six judges to 10 judges for most years between 1991 and 2002. In 2003, the City cut two departments, leaving eight. Monday's action would leave seven judicial departments remaining. The terms are four years and all expire the same year.

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