



Justice... Professionalism... Service... Since 1886

May 23, 2013

The Honorable Ross Hunter
Chairman, House Appropriations Committee
Washington State Legislature
Olympia, WA 98504

Dear Representative Hunter:

I am writing to urge the legislature to avoid further cuts to the judicial branch in the State's 2013-2015 operating budget.

Founded in 1886, the King County Bar Association represents over 14,400 attorneys, judges, law professors and law students in King County. Our mission is to support our diverse membership by promoting a just, collegial, and accessible legal system and profession; to work with the judiciary to achieve excellence in the administration of justice; and to serve our local community through organized pro bono legal services.

The proposed budget cuts to the judicial branch that are under consideration will have a detrimental impact on how Washington courts administer justice at all levels -- from local municipal courts, to county superior courts, to the Court of Appeals, and to the Supreme Court itself. An April 18 Seattle Times editorial noted that one chamber's proposal calls for a 42% cumulative cut to the Administrative Office of the Courts. Services at risk include access to interpreters, protections for abused children, and critically needed upgrades to the court system's 1980s-based technology infrastructure.

Given that funding for the entire judicial branch of our state government accounts for less than 1% of the overall operating budget, and Washington State spends the least amount on its judicial branch than any other state in our nation, such cuts are devastating to the administration of justice.

The KCBA appreciates that difficult budget choices must be made, that revenues are limited, and expense obligations are even greater given the Supreme Court's recent decision in the *McCleary* case. And we understand that the judicial branch must shoulder its justifiable share of budget cuts. However, an effective 42% cut to a co-equal branch of government is neither justifiable nor fair. KCBA calls on legislators to protect this core function of government and limit any cuts to the judicial branch budget.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Richard E. Mitchell", enclosed within a circular scribble.

Richard E. Mitchell
KCBA President, 2012-2013

cc:

The Honorable Gary Alexander, Ranking Member

The Honorable Reuven Carlyle

The Honorable Eileen Cody

The Honorable Zach Hudgins

The Honorable Ruth Kagi

The Honorable Marcie Maxwell

The Honorable Jamie Pedersen

The Honorable Eric Pettigrew

The Honorable Larry Seaquist

The Honorable Larry Springer

The Honorable Pat Sullivan

The Honorable Frank Chopp, House Speaker

The Honorable Dan Kristiansen, House Minority Leader

Ted Sturdevant, Governor's Executive Director for Legislative Affairs & Policy

Nicholas Brown, Governor's General Counsel