



King County

Department of Judicial Administration
Barbara Miner
Director and Superior Court Clerk
(206) 296-9300 (206) 296-0100 TTY/TDD

June 4, 2010

Dwight Dively, Director
Office of Management and Budget
Seattle, WA 98104

RE: 2011 Proposed Budget – Transmittal Narrative

Dear Mr. Dively:

Enclosed you will find the Department of Judicial Administration's (DJA) budget submittal. We have carefully reviewed our programs and services and their impact to the community. The services identified on the following pages are critical services. DJA is closely linked to the King County Superior Court and acts as the customer service arm of the Court and manages the official Superior Court records and the trust fund. We worked closely with the Court to identify services and programs that were not mandated. We also identified specific fees that could be implemented or raised in recognition of the extreme budget situation King County faces at this time. We have identified over 2% in efficiency cuts/revenues and the remaining 10% reductions as you requested. Consistent with the Superior Court's message, we believe cuts of this degree violate the required funding standards identified in In re Juvenile Director.

Many of these proposed reductions will have a direct impact on the customers we serve. This budget proposal includes reducing office hours, phone services, and in-person customer assistance. These proposals are severe and would dramatically impact customers' access and ability to obtain information about the court records and court process. DJA receives hundreds of calls per day from people needing information about the court system. Without the ability to get their questions answered they will be forced to come into the courthouse or call other county numbers to get the information. If they simply give up on obtaining the information they may miss hearings or critical deadlines causing continuances and inefficient use of court resources. Of course should they choose to come in the office they will experience long lines because we have proposed reduced service availability, limiting the hours and limiting the staff available to provide assistance. If people try to complete transactions with DJA during their lunch period they will have to wait until the office opens after the lunch hour. Domestic violence victims may not be successful in obtaining the protection orders they need because of delays in the assistance they need to navigate the process. We know from history, that this may mean they don't pursue obtaining a protection order, putting them at additional risk. All lines and response times will be longer and customers will be frustrated.

Seattle:
516 Third Avenue Room E609
Seattle, WA 98104-2386

Regional Justice Center:
401 Fourth Avenue North Room 2C
Kent, WA 98032-4429

Juvenile Division:
1211 East Alder Room 307
Seattle, WA 98122-5598

DJA operates a single non-mandatory program that is funded by the General Fund. The Step Up program is the only domestic violence program of its kind in King County and one of very few across the country. This program serves families struggling with youth abusing their parents. This is a nationally recognized program that brings families back together and helps keep youth out of detention.

As you review the information attached you will find suggested cuts that may appear less severe than the cuts to customer service and the elimination of the Step Up program. Services like records preservation, case auditing, and court docketing do not have the same initial public facing impact as the other services suggested. These cuts in service will in fact impact customers. By law we will still have to preserve records; in this budget climate, it will simply be done less efficiently. Without auditing certain cases for compliance with court orders, we will leave our most vulnerable population without a safety net. Providing less information on the court docket means that the Court, the Bar and others who use ECR will spend more time looking for the document they need.

We have identified cuts in the number of courtroom clerks we have. Court proceedings cannot happen without a court clerk in the courtroom. Without enough clerks to cover the court, there may be delays in getting court matters heard.

DJA has carefully reviewed and participated in the development of the countywide strategic plan and we have also actively supported the Superior Court's strategic plan. Both of these plans serve to guide the development of the budget proposals, though neither plan anticipated cuts of this magnitude and the elimination of so many services. Both the countywide plan and the Court's plan have goals around access to the justice system and customer service. DJA has done significant work in this area but the cuts to customer service necessitated by across-the-board 12% reductions will impact both the perception of and actual access to the justice system.

Included in this proposal is a request for the replacement of the Core Electronic Court Records (ECR) system. ECR is an award winning program that has saved this county millions of dollars. DJA has eliminated more than 20 FTE's because of the implementation of ECR. ECR was developed in 1999 and had an original life expectancy of 10 years. We are now beyond that 10 year period and ECR is running on outdated and unsupported software. ECR is an essential enterprise system that supports the operations of the King County Justice System. It is also a public facing reflection of King County as it provides public access to Superior Court Records. There has been increasing frequency in system failures that necessitate system replacement at this time. DJA has completed a business case and sees this as a very high risk area if we do not take action now.

These are tough times and tough choices will need to be made. This examination of programs and services is an important step in making well informed choices and we welcome your review and consideration of the programs and services outlined in the attached pages. We look forward to working with you and your staff in the coming weeks and months to prepare a budget submittal that works for King County, the Superior Court, and DJA.

Dwight Dively
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If you have any questions about the attached information please contact me at 296-2910 or Teresa Bailey, Deputy Director at 296-7868.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Barbara Miner". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Barbara Miner
Director and Superior Court Clerk

cc: Judge Bruce Hilyer, Presiding Judge, Superior Court
Paul L. Sherfey, Chief Administrative Officer