

Recommendations of the Trial Court Budget Commission FY 2014-15 Supplemental Legislative Budget Request

At the December 13, 2013 meeting, the Trial Court Budget Commission (TCBC) considered issues for inclusion in the FY 2014-15 Supplemental Legislative Budget Request. The following is a summary of their recommendations.

Issue A: Due Process Technology

1. Remote Court Interpreting

At the August 3, 2013 meeting, the TCBC voted to further develop options for consideration of filing a FY 2014-15 Supplemental LBR, based on recommendations from the Due Process Technology Workgroup.

Funding Methodology Committee Recommendation:

- 1) Submit a supplemental LBR issue in the amount of \$39,162 to support continuation of the remote interpreting regional pilot into the next fiscal year. This will include providing redundancy backup for the statewide call manager (\$11,322 non-recurring), additional bandwidth for the statewide network (\$15,526 recurring), and ongoing maintenance support for the pilot once the initial 1 year warranty expires (\$12,314 recurring).
- 2) Approve the 3rd and 7th Circuits' requests in the amount of \$42,266 to allow them to participate in the regional pilot. This will provide funding to support the 3rd Circuit's request to include 2 courtrooms in the regional pilot (\$24,984 non-recurring); and the 7th Circuit's request to include an additional 1 courtroom and 1 interpreter office in the regional pilot (\$17,282 non-recurring). If this funding request is approved, it is anticipated recurring maintenance funding will be needed in FY 2015-16 in the amount of \$5,494.

Trial Court Budget Commission Recommendation:

File issue as recommended.

2. Maintenance/Refresh of Existing Equipment and Expansion of Due Process Equipment and Maintenance

At the August 3, 2013 meeting, the TCBC approved an LBR issue for court reporting maintenance and refresh of existing equipment, and expansion of equipment and maintenance to 124 courtrooms and 62 hearing rooms. The TCBC directed the Office of the State Courts Administrator (OSCA) in consultation with the circuits to further study this issue for potential alternatives to funding these issues.

Option One – Modify the LBR to reduce the overall funding request by \$332,238 in recurring maintenance contractual. Allocate the approved requested funding amounts at the beginning of FY 14-15 using due process contractual funds, as available.

Option Two – Do not modify the LBR.

Funding Methodology Committee Recommendation:

Reduce the LBR by \$332,238 in contractual based on Option One.

Trial Court Budget Commission Recommendation:

Option Two - Do not modify the LBR; based on additional information received after the Funding Methodology Committee made their recommendation, the TCBC determined the full request was needed to fund the issue.

Issue B: Conflict Counsel Cases Over the Flat Fee

During the August 3, 2013, meeting, the TCBC approved filing an issue in the amount of \$1,211,877 based on existing data and current estimated expenditures (\$5,861,877). The TCBC directed OSCA staff to analyze additional information on pending cases and update the issue, as necessary, during the supplemental LBR submission.

Option One – Maintain current request of \$1,211,877.

Option Two – File a supplemental LBR in the amount of \$2,081,103 based on adjusted FY 2013-14 annualized expenditures.

Funding Methodology Committee Recommendation:

Approve Option Two.

Trial Court Budget Commission Recommendation:

Option Two – File a supplemental LBR in the amount of \$2,081,103 based on adjusted FY 2013-14 annualized expenditures.

Issue C: Additional Compensation for County Judges

The Conference of County Court Judges requested the TCBC consider including in the FY 2014-15 LBR an issue for additional compensation for county judges performing circuit court duties.

At the June 18, 2013 TCBC meeting, the commission created an ad hoc subcommittee to examine the issue of additional compensation for county judges performing circuit court work pursuant to s. 26.57, F.S. The subcommittee proposed the following recommendations:

- 1) Do not request funds for additional compensation to county judges until expenditures in this area exceed the current appropriation of \$75,000. Once the appropriation has been exhausted, it would be appropriate to revisit the need for additional funds.
- 2) Maintain the current funding formula to determine initial distributions to the circuits; however, allow circuits who have exhausted their allotments to seek reimbursement from any remaining statewide unspent funds as part of a year-end process. Circuits will no longer be required to submit reports of uncompensated hours performed by county judges.

Funding Methodology Committee Recommendation:

Approve the subcommittee's recommendations.

Trial Court Budget Commission Recommendation:

Approve the subcommittee's recommendations and do not file issue.

Issue D: Courthouse Furnishings

At the June 18, 2013 meeting, the TCBC approved, as part of the FY 2014-15 Trial Court LBR strategies, circuits to submit requests for non-recurring costs for furnishings of non-public spaces in all courthouses and courthouse facilities.

At the August 3, 2013 meeting, the TCBC approved to file an issue for those requests for furnishings of non-public spaces for new or expansion courthouse facilities, including an issue for the First, Fourth and Fourteenth Judicial Circuits.

Seventeenth Judicial Circuit Request – \$837,392

The Seventeenth Judicial Circuit requests \$837,392 (\$544,670 in Expenses and \$292,722 in Operating Capital Outlay) in non-recurring funding to furnish non-public areas in a new 20-story main courthouse being constructed in Broward County. The areas to be furnished include 77 judicial chambers and 85 staff offices within the new building. The estimated occupancy date is May 2015.

Option One – File issue as requested.

Option Two – Do not file issue.

Trial Court Budget Commission Recommendation:

Option One - File issue as requested.

Issue E: Veterans, Substance Abuse, and Mental Health Court Training

The Task Force on Substance Abuse and Mental Health Issues in the Courts requested consideration of a supplemental LBR issue. The task force requested \$100,000 in non-recurring funding to address education and training needs of judges and court staff who handle cases involving veterans and litigants with mental health and/or substance abuse issues. The funding would provide for 150 judges and court staff to attend the Florida Partners in Crisis annual conference and Justice Institute scheduled June 30-July 2, 2014, in Orlando.

Option One – File issue as requested.

Option Two – Do not file issue.

Trial Court Budget Commission Recommendation:

Option One - File issue as requested.