

**Agency Purpose**

**M**innesota’s Supreme Court is the state’s court of last resort, serving as the final guardian of the state constitution and interpreting/applying the United States Constitution. The court is responsible for overseeing the machinery of justice in the state, for regulating the practice of law, and making recommendations for improvement of the judicial system.

- ⇒ The mission of the judicial branch is to provide justice through a system that assures equal access for the fair, competent, and timely resolution of cases and controversies.
- ⇒ The judicial branch vision is that the general public and those who use the court system will refer to it as accessible, fair, consistent, responsive, free of discrimination, independent, and well managed.

**Core Functions**

The Supreme Court has original jurisdiction in remedial cases as prescribed by law, appellate jurisdiction over all cases and supervisory jurisdiction over all courts in the state. The Supreme Court’s supervisory jurisdiction includes the authority to prescribe, amend, and modify the rules of practice in all courts; the rules governing the examination and admission of attorneys to the state bar; and the rules governing judicial and attorney professional conduct.

The Chief Justice is responsible for supervising the administrative operations of the state court system, including the financial affairs of the court system and the assignment of judges to serve in courts needing assistance.

The Supreme Court conducts its administrative functions in support of the following four strategic priority areas:

- ⇒ **Access to Justice** – Ensuring the justice system is open, affordable, effective, and accountable to the people it serves.
- ⇒ **Children’s Justice** – Working across branches of government and with other stakeholders to improve outcomes for and the delivery of services to Minnesota’s children.
- ⇒ **Technology** – Updating and integrating technology to improve and expedite the work of the courts, providing information throughout the criminal justice system.
- ⇒ **Public Trust and Confidence** – Through education, outreach to diverse communities, and a commitment to system-wide customer service, improving citizens’ understanding of and confidence in the Third Branch of government.

**Operations**

The adjudicative and supervisory functions of the Supreme Court have an impact on all Minnesota citizens.

**ADJUDICATIVE OPERATIONS**

In reviewing more than 800 cases each year, justices are assisted in their work by law clerks and the Supreme Court Commissioner’s Office.

**At A Glance**

- ◆ Supreme Court reviews more than 800 cases a year.
- ◆ Supreme Court oversees judicial system of 298 judges, 3,000 employees, and 23,000 attorneys.
- ◆ The judicial branch operates in a constantly changing environment.
  - ⇒ Laws, case types, and legal sanctions change annually.
  - ⇒ Caseload volume is determined by other branches and levels of government, and by private citizens and business entities who bring disputes for resolution.
- ◆ The courts are mid-way through a major financial transition from county-based funding to state funding.
  - ⇒ 3,000 county employees will be transferred to state payrolls by FY 2006.
  - ⇒ Collective bargaining is now conducted for state funded judicial districts.
- ◆ Redesign of core court technology is underway.
  - ⇒ Implementation of the Minnesota Court Information System (MNCIS), has begun.
- ◆ The Minnesota Courts regularly review their effectiveness by monitoring
  - ⇒ case filing trends;
  - ⇒ case clearance rates; and
  - ⇒ elapsed case time from filing to disposition.

**SUPERVISORY OPERATIONS**

In the Chief Justice's general supervisory role over the courts, she is assisted by the State Court Administrator's Office, which provides the administrative infrastructure for the judicial branch.

Working at the direction of the Chief Justice and with the Conference of Chief Judges, the State Court Administrator is responsible for providing judicial branch finance, human resources, technology, training, communications, research/evaluation, caseload management, and cross-district judicial assignment services.

**Budget**

Of the funding for the Supreme Court, 88% is from General Fund direct appropriations. Federal grants represent 9% of the funding for the court. The balance of the funding is from Special Revenue Funds and other grants and gifts, representing 3% of the courts funding.

Of the Supreme Court expenditures, 39% is used for technology (including the MNCIS project, which supports judicial branch operations for all three levels of court and in each county in the state.) Court operations represents 34%, which includes the cost of the Justices, their staff, and the State Court Administrator's Office staff. Civil Legal Services funds are 21%, and the remaining 6% supports the State Law Library.

The Supreme Court has 253.81 full-time equivalent employees. This excludes the Legal Profession Boards.

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Dollars in Thousands

	Current		Forecast Base		Biennium 2006-07
	FY2004	FY2005	FY2006	FY2007	
<b><u>Direct Appropriations by Fund</u></b>					
<b>General</b>					
Current Appropriation	38,806	36,084	36,084	36,084	72,168
<b>Forecast Base</b>	<b>38,806</b>	<b>36,084</b>	<b>36,084</b>	<b>36,084</b>	<b>72,168</b>
Change		0	0	0	0
% Biennial Change from 2004-05					-3.6%
 <b><u>Expenditures by Fund</u></b>					
<b>Direct Appropriations</b>					
General	35,333	39,557	36,084	36,084	72,168
<b>Statutory Appropriations</b>					
General	369	253	0	0	0
Special Revenue	1,230	1,222	1,225	1,223	2,448
Federal	3,699	3,664	3,510	3,451	6,961
Miscellaneous Agency	509	1	1	1	2
Gift	53	46	46	46	92
<b>Total</b>	<b>41,193</b>	<b>44,743</b>	<b>40,866</b>	<b>40,805</b>	<b>81,671</b>
 <b><u>Expenditures by Category</u></b>					
Total Compensation	17,570	19,315	20,074	20,048	40,122
Other Operating Expenses	14,746	16,441	12,330	12,295	24,625
Local Assistance	8,700	8,633	8,462	8,462	16,924
Other Financial Transactions	177	354	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>41,193</b>	<b>44,743</b>	<b>40,866</b>	<b>40,805</b>	<b>81,671</b>
 <b><u>Expenditures by Program</u></b>					
Supreme Court Operations	32,786	36,383	32,509	32,448	64,957
Civil Legal Services	8,407	8,360	8,357	8,357	16,714
<b>Total</b>	<b>41,193</b>	<b>44,743</b>	<b>40,866</b>	<b>40,805</b>	<b>81,671</b>
 <b>Full-Time Equivalents (FTE)</b>	 <b>256.3</b>	 <b>253.8</b>	 <b>253.8</b>	 <b>253.8</b>	

**Program Description**

Minnesota's Supreme Court is the state's court of last resort, serving as the final guardian of the state constitution and interpreting/applying the United States Constitution. The court is responsible for overseeing the machinery of justice in the state, for regulating the practice of law, and making recommendations for improvement of the judicial system.

**Program at a Glance**

- ◆ Supreme Court decides approximately 800 cases a year
- ◆ Supreme Court oversees judicial system of 298 judges, 3,000 employees, and 23,000 attorneys

**Population Served**

The adjudicative and supervisory functions of the Supreme Court have an impact on all Minnesota citizens.

**Services Provided**

The Minnesota Supreme Court considers appeals from judgments of the Court of Appeals, the Workers Compensation Court of Appeals, and the Tax Court. It hears special term matters, motions, and petitions for extraordinary relief. The volume of petitions for review was 638 cases in 2003. The volume of filings is expected to remain at this level through the next biennium. The Supreme Court also hears mandatory cases. This includes first-degree murder, tax court and workers' compensation court of appeals, as well as attorney discipline. In 2003 119 mandatory cases were heard.

In addition to this appellate function, the Supreme Court supervises admission to the practice of law in the state and regulates legal practice. The court also promulgates rules governing practice and procedure in the courts throughout the state, a function which involves special advisory committees and requires numerous public hearings.

The Chief Justice has general supervisory responsibility for all courts in the state. She exercises this authority through standing and ad hoc conferences, committees and commissions, and through the Office of the State Court Administrator, which provides central administrative and technology support for all appellate and trial courts in the state and for the legal regulatory boards.

**Key Measures**

The Supreme Court seeks to maintain or improve the dispositional time while maintaining the high quality of legal analysis and clarity of its decisions.

The Supreme Court seeks to use its personnel:

- ◆ to manage its workload so that each case receives adequate attention as its importance demands;
- ◆ to decide petitions for review within 60 days;
- ◆ to maintain an orderly and uniform legal process and procedure throughout the state through the promulgation of uniform rules;
- ◆ to regulate the admission to and practice of law in Minnesota so that each citizen seeking legal counsel is assured of competent representation;
- ◆ to ensure the financial integrity of the court system in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles and to ensure correct payment of invoices within the statutorily required 30 days; and
- ◆ to ensure the effective operation of the state court system in a way that provides access to all citizens.

**Program Funding**

The Supreme Court Operations budget is primarily funded by the General Fund. A small amount of support from the Special Revenue Fund is received for the State Law Library, the Court Interpreter Program, and the Attorney Registration Program. Some Federal Funds are received and directed towards children's initiatives.

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# SUPREME COURT

## Program: SUPREME COURT OPERATIONS

## Program Summary

<i>Dollars in Thousands</i>					
	<b>Current</b>		<b>Forecast Base</b>		<b>Biennium</b>
	<b>FY2004</b>	<b>FY2005</b>	<b>FY2006</b>	<b>FY2007</b>	<b>2006-07</b>
<b><u>Direct Appropriations by Fund</u></b>					
<b>General</b>					
Current Appropriation	31,470	28,764	28,764	28,764	57,528
<b>Forecast Base</b>	<b>31,470</b>	<b>28,764</b>	<b>28,764</b>	<b>28,764</b>	<b>57,528</b>
<b><u>Expenditures by Fund</u></b>					
<b>Direct Appropriations</b>					
General	28,000	32,234	28,764	28,764	57,528
<b>Statutory Appropriations</b>					
General	369	253	0	0	0
Special Revenue	156	185	188	186	374
Federal	3,699	3,664	3,510	3,451	6,961
Miscellaneous Agency	509	1	1	1	2
Gift	53	46	46	46	92
<b>Total</b>	<b>32,786</b>	<b>36,383</b>	<b>32,509</b>	<b>32,448</b>	<b>64,957</b>
<b><u>Expenditures by Category</u></b>					
Total Compensation	17,570	19,315	20,074	20,048	40,122
Other Operating Expenses	14,744	16,439	12,328	12,293	24,621
Local Assistance	295	275	107	107	214
Other Financial Transactions	177	354	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>32,786</b>	<b>36,383</b>	<b>32,509</b>	<b>32,448</b>	<b>64,957</b>
<b><u>Expenditures by Activity</u></b>					
Supreme Court Operations	4,663	5,139	4,912	4,913	9,825
State Court Administration	26,328	29,054	25,601	25,539	51,140
Law Library Operations	1,795	2,190	1,996	1,996	3,992
<b>Total</b>	<b>32,786</b>	<b>36,383</b>	<b>32,509</b>	<b>32,448</b>	<b>64,957</b>
<b>Full-Time Equivalent (FTE)</b>	<b>256.3</b>	<b>253.8</b>	<b>253.8</b>	<b>253.8</b>	

**Program Description**

Appointed by the Supreme Court, the Legal Services Advisory Committee distributes funds to civil legal services programs to provide legal assistance to low-income persons meeting statutory income eligibility guidelines. By statute, 85% of the funding is granted to six regional legal services programs (Coalition Programs) with 38 offices or projects throughout the state, which had demonstrated an ability as of 7-1-82 to provide legal services with funds provided by the federal Legal Services Corporation.

<u><b>Program at a Glance</b></u>	
◆	Number of grant programs - 28
◆	Number of people served - 36,000 +

The remaining 15% of the funding is awarded annually on a competitive basis to nonprofit organizations providing legal or alternative dispute resolution services. In FY 2003, 22 programs received grants to provide or support legal services to the poor.

**Population Served**

An estimated 432,000 or approximately 9% of Minnesota’s population, with incomes below the federal poverty level could qualify for civil legal services under the statutory guidelines of this program. (M.S. 480.24-480.244). A 1994 American Bar Association (ABA) Study, “Legal Needs and Civil Justice, A Survey of Americans,” estimated that 47% of low-income households or 120,000 Minnesota households experience at least one legal problem a year. Legal services programs turn away more than 20,000 requests for service each year.

Seventy percent of persons served by the Legal Services Coalition are women and their children. Fifteen percent are age 60 or over and over; 33% are persons of color. A significant number of persons with physical or mental disabilities are also served by this program.

**Services Provided**

Through representation, negotiation, conciliation, and enforcement of legal rights, lawyers in these programs constructively resolve the legal problems of low-income applicants for program services. Most of the legal problems handled by these programs directly and significantly affect the day-to-day lives of needy people: their homes, family, health and support for their children, and personal safety.

**Historical Perspective**

Since the early 1980’s Legal Services Coalition programs have experienced a 60% increase in requests for services.

Funding for civil legal services in Minnesota is a combination of state, federal, foundation, and private funding. State funding for legal aid is leveraged by over \$10 million in local, private, foundation, United Way, law firm, and corporate funding.

**Key Measures**

Reductions in client services are expected into the next biennium. Interest on Lawyer Trust Account (IOLTA) support is reduced due to low interest rates. Also, due to the poor economy, other federal, state, local, and private foundation funding has declined.

**Program Funding**

Program grants are funded by a General Fund appropriation and dedicated revenue from a licensed attorney assessment.

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**SUPREME COURT**

Program: CIVIL LEGAL SERVICES

Program Summary

*Dollars in Thousands*

	Current		Forecast Base		Biennium
	FY2004	FY2005	FY2006	FY2007	2006-07
<b><u>Direct Appropriations by Fund</u></b>					
<b>General</b>					
Current Appropriation	7,336	7,320	7,320	7,320	14,640
<b>Forecast Base</b>	<b>7,336</b>	<b>7,320</b>	<b>7,320</b>	<b>7,320</b>	<b>14,640</b>
<b><u>Expenditures by Fund</u></b>					
<b>Direct Appropriations</b>					
General	7,333	7,323	7,320	7,320	14,640
<b>Statutory Appropriations</b>					
Special Revenue	1,074	1,037	1,037	1,037	2,074
<b>Total</b>	<b>8,407</b>	<b>8,360</b>	<b>8,357</b>	<b>8,357</b>	<b>16,714</b>
<b><u>Expenditures by Category</u></b>					
Other Operating Expenses	2	2	2	2	4
Local Assistance	8,405	8,358	8,355	8,355	16,710
<b>Total</b>	<b>8,407</b>	<b>8,360</b>	<b>8,357</b>	<b>8,357</b>	<b>16,714</b>
<b><u>Expenditures by Activity</u></b>					
Legal Services	8,407	8,360	8,357	8,357	16,714
<b>Total</b>	<b>8,407</b>	<b>8,360</b>	<b>8,357</b>	<b>8,357</b>	<b>16,714</b>