

Unified Judicial System of Pennsylvania
Senate & House 2014 Appropriations Committee Hearings

Mr. Chairman, I am pleased to join with colleagues and staff today to appear before you and members of the committee to discuss the judiciary's funding request for the coming fiscal year.

The judiciary's core mission, as you know, is the delivery of fair, timely and accessible justice to Pennsylvanians. We believe we are meeting those goals effectively, but we also recognize the need for continuous improvement and being here provides a healthy assessment of others' views.

Funding to fulfill the judiciary's mission derives in its entirety from the annual appropriations process in which the judiciary submits budgets three times, first to the Executive Branch and later to the House and Senate. Thereafter, as we do today at your invitation, we participate in these hearings and then largely await the outcome of deliberations between our sister branches.

Every dollar expended by the judiciary, whether for salaries, grants to counties, computer operations, or programs, is appropriated by the General Assembly, subject to the Governor's concurrence. An insert to our handout today graphically illustrates this fact.

The judiciary's budget is driven primarily by constitutionally required personnel costs. Our discretionary spending is minimal, thus making the judiciary's annual budget somewhat unique within the overall appropriations process and, perhaps, uniquely difficult for you to resolve each year. Consequently, collaboration among the three branches is essential, regardless of other issues, to ensure that fair, timely and accessible justice is possible.

As an example, recent years have seen strong collaboration between Governor Corbett and Senate leaders in avoiding appointments to vacant judicial seats, resulting in cumulative savings of \$14.1 million. Savings of \$4.5 million have also resulted from the judiciary's examination of the need for each of the more than 500 magisterial district court judgeships. Eighteen courts have been closed; another 10 will close by 2018. A similar evaluative process is being developed for review of the Common Pleas Court complement, currently at 451, and should be available for collaborative use later this year.

Overall in the past six years, the judiciary has saved about \$45.8 million through various means.

On the revenue side of the budgetary equation, the Judicial Computer System has been effectively used to facilitate collection of fines, fees, costs and restitution. **PAePay**, a process developed in-house as part of the Judicial Computer System, allows online, credit and debit card payments for assessments including bail. With \$63 million collected in 2013, **PAePay** shows considerable promise.

Effective collection of fines, fees, costs and restitution is, of course, not just about dollars, but also significantly about justice fulfilled and lives restored. It is also true though that annual collections by the judiciary (\$468.6 million in 2012) exceed the branch's overall budget request.

Two legislative initiatives with budgetary implications are proposed for fiscal year 2014-2015: a phased plan contained in SB 1215 to transition county clerks of courts and prothonotaries and their key deputies to state judicial employment, and a requested \$1.5 million appropriation request to support court interpreter services in counties.

By abandoning a 19th century operating structure, the first initiative will fully integrate the functions of these offices into the Unified Judicial System, similar to the transfer to state service 14

years ago of district court administrators. Increased efficiencies and long-term cost savings are anticipated.

Endorsed as a priority by the County Commissioners Association of Pennsylvania, the proposal is mostly funded by shifting part of counties' annual state-funded court operating grants for this purpose. A majority of Pennsylvania Association of Prothonotaries and Clerks of Courts members support the proposal.

The \$1.5 million grant request reflects state and federal law mandating interpreters' availability while acknowledging that counties can be faced with unexpected and large interpreter expenses for protracted and complex litigation or when an interpreter is not locally available.

Under the Supreme Court's guidance, the judiciary continues to implement ways to cope with the management challenges inherent in a large court system. Five highlights are:

- During 2014-15 the judiciary will expand the rollout of a series of publicly accessible "dashboards," most of which will use Judicial Computer System data to help local courts determine areas of effectiveness or needed improvement in case management.
- Also aimed at ensuring timely and accessible justice, the chief justice has directed local courts to develop plans this year to reduce civil case inventories that analysts have identified in some counties.
- With the assistance of legislative leaders, reforms to Philadelphia's traffic court continue, as do other systemic reforms throughout Pennsylvania's First Judicial District.
- The Office of Children and Families in the Courts' measurable progress to curb the dissolution of families continues, with 7,200 fewer children in the dependency system since 2006 and an annual savings of \$117 million estimated last year by the state Department of Public Welfare.
- Veterans and those suffering substance abuse or mental health problems continue to benefit from nearly 100 problem-solving courts statewide. Cost savings and lower recidivism rates are additional benefits. The effectiveness of these courts will begin to be tested this year with a newly developed data-gathering system.

In addition to the judiciary's extensive budget submission itself and this statement, part of the judiciary's presentation includes a handout that describes the diverse activities of Pennsylvania's court system. We hope that it will further convey the serious work and significant contributions of judges and staff to foster a fair, timely and accessible court system for all of the Commonwealth's citizens.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Judicial Computer System

Funding

The Administrative Office of Pennsylvania Court's (AOPC) Judicial Computer System receives dedicated funding through Act 64 of 1987 (increases in court collections over a base year) and Act 122 of 2002 (fee attached to court filings). A budget is submitted to the Governor's office and General Assembly each year and JCS spending is limited to an annual appropriation. Funds not used in a fiscal year are kept in a reserve account for future projects. Future projects planned are completion of civil, family, orphans' court Common Pleas modules, as well as expansion of E-Filing, document management and imaging into all statewide case management systems. The reserve funds are also necessary for casualty loss in the event of a potential disaster at our data center per recommendations from Gartner, an international information technology consulting and research group.

Case Management Systems

System Name	System Description	Benefits to Public, Legal Community and Government Agencies
Pennsylvania Appellate Court Case Management System (PACMS)	Integrated case management system for Pennsylvania's three appellate courts. Includes document management and imaging for filing offices and chambers. Users include judges, chambers staff, administrative staff and filing office employees. Approx. 500 users.	Online docket sheets available to the public at no cost at www.pacourts.us
Common Pleas Criminal Case Management System (CPCMS), Dependency Case Management	Comprehensive criminal and dependency case and financial management system for the Courts of Common Pleas. Includes case management, accounting and forms generation and reporting functions. Main users are judges and chambers staff, court administration and clerks of courts. Approximately 12,000 users. Delinquency case management will be added to CPCMS this year.	Online docket sheets, court summaries and court calendars for criminal cases available to the public at no cost at www.pacourts.us , E-Filing of criminal complaints in some counties. Secure docket sheets available to law enforcement and other criminal justice entities and court offices at http://ujportal.pacourts.us/ and through JNET. District Attorneys can electronically file Bills of Information using the AOPC's web-based DALink system or through a CPCMS-PMS interface.

Magisterial District Justice System (MDJS)	Case and financial management systems serving all 527 magisterial district courts and Pittsburgh Municipal Court. System includes case management, accounting and forms and report production. Approximately 3500 users.	Online docket sheets, court summaries and court calendars for criminal, non-traffic, traffic, civil and landlord tenant cases available to the public at no costs at www.pacourts.us , E-Filing of traffic cases by Pa. State Police. Secure docket sheets available to law enforcement and other criminal justice entities and court offices at http://ujportal.pacourts.us/ and through JNET.
Administrative Support Application Program (ASAP)	System supporting the activities of AOPC's finance, human resources and payroll departments. Also used by the appellate courts, and First Judicial District's purchasing unit for administrative functions.	Information on judicial expenditures, contracts, salaries and compensation is provided to the public at www.pacourts.us .
Bar Exam Application Repository and Cyber (Application) Under BEAR (BEAR & CUB)	Bar examination tracking system and web-based bar applicant system developed for the Pennsylvania Board of Law Examiners.	Bar applicants can apply for and track the status of their bar admission application online, as well as pay required fees online.
PAePay	Online credit and debit card payment	Provides online payment for fines, costs, restitution and fees for MDJS and CPCMS cases. Bail can be paid through PAePay in four counties. It is also used for paying filings fees in PACFILE.
Disciplinary Board Online Registration system		Allows for online registration and payment of fees for annual attorney registration at http://ujportal.pacourts.us . Implemented for 2011 filing period.
PACFILE	E-filing	Provides for web-based filing of court documents in the Supreme and Commonwealth Courts. Will be expanded to Superior Court and Common Pleas Delinquency in 2014. It will also be expanded to work with other areas of the CPCMS and the MDJS in the future.

Data Exchange and Public Access

AOPC provides data files to counties, municipal and state government agencies:

- All 67 counties receive various recurring data files from the CPCMS and MDJS, including case information, jury list candidates, court case event messages, collection agency files, confinement information and Bills of Information;
- Routine data files are provided to municipal agencies such as police and parking authorities include CPCMS and MDJS data related to electronic filing, case initiations and dispositions, case assessments and defendant balance;
- Routine data files are provided to 31 state and government agencies including the Attorney General, Auditor General, Pa. Commission on Crime and Delinquency, Dept. of Corrections, Dept. of Transportation, Dept. of Revenue, Dept. of Public Welfare, the Game Commission and the State Police. Examples of files provided are Megan's Law/Walsh Act Convictions, Business & Financial Information from Court Offices, Fingerprint Statistics, Court Case Event Messages, Bulk Check information, Summaries of Collections, and Driver's License Suspensions/Restorations.
- Statewide warrant information from the MDJS and CPCMS is provided to update the State Police CLEAN system and the FBI's NCIC system. This information is used by law enforcement agencies to identify outstanding warrants during a police incident. Court warrant information is also provided to JNET for its warrant search application which is used by law enforcement to support their investigative processes and to create watch lists.
- AOPC publishes 23 recurring files (weekly and monthly) from the CPCMS and MDJS for bulk data purchasers which include law firms, trade associations and the media. Information is available on MDJS traffic, non-traffic, criminal, civil and landlord tenant cases. Information from the CPCMS includes criminal, traffic, non-traffic and Philadelphia Municipal Court cases.
- The AOPC fulfills non-recurring data requests from courts, government entities, media and private citizens. Over 500 requests are processed annually. During the last two years, the AOPC processed 231 requests specifically for other state agencies, including various legislators, as well as providing monthly, quarterly and semi-annual reports to eight agencies. This data aids the agencies in responding to inquiries, developing policy and with determining the impact of proposed legislation.

Future Projects

The AOPC maintains a five-year plan for future projects. Major future projects planned are listed below. The estimated timeframes in the table are dependent on continued adequate funding and Supreme Court priorities. The AOPC develops and maintains most of its case management systems in-house, allowing us to quickly adjust our software applications to changing laws and court rules.

Extension of PACFILE to Superior Court	2014
Extension of PACFILE to CPCMS Delinquency/Dependency	2014
Document Management and Imaging for CPCMS	2014-2015
Extension of PACFILE to Other CPCMS Case Types	2015
Development/Implementation of CPCMS Orphans Court Module	2015 - 2017
Extension of PACFILE to MDJS Court	2016
Document Management and Imaging for MDJS	2016-2017
Development/Implementation of CPCMS Family and Civil Module	2018-2022



ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE of PENNSYLVANIA COURTS

How the Judiciary Impacts Pennsylvanians

The impact of Pennsylvania's courts is felt in ways that few know. Here are four of them:

Pennsylvania State Trooper Adam Reed describes how the Judicial Computer System helps police do their jobs *safely*, just one of the values that court-developed computerization has created in the justice system over the past two decades.

Mindy Arnold talks about her life, including addictions and the prospect of serious jail time. Her story demonstrates a success in one of Pennsylvania's nearly 100 problem-solving courts.

Venango County's Bill Cisek tells from the inside how the collaboration of judges and court staff with the state Department of Public Welfare has made a dramatic difference in securing permanent, loving homes for thousands of children.

And why would someone want to be a judge? Sheila Woods-Skipper, Philadelphia president judge, describes what "making a difference" means to her. Her words could echo from any judge in any courtroom across Pennsylvania.

In their fundamental mission to deliver fair, timely and accessible justice for all, Pennsylvania's courts positively impact Pennsylvanians' lives every day.

Visit our website at
www.pacourts.us

Helping the Trooper

It may not occur to people that Pennsylvania's courts play a role in helping Pennsylvania's finest – troopers of the Pennsylvania State Police (PSP) – as well as other police officers across the state, be safer and save tax dollars.

Meet **Trooper Adam Reed**, a western Pennsylvania native, who, after graduating from the University of Pittsburgh, graduated from the PSP training academy, was assigned to the Carlisle barracks, and now serves as a PSP headquarters public information officer.



Trooper Reed knows firsthand the value of the data that is at an officer's fingertips through the laptop computer found in all PSP vehicles – data that comes from the Judicial Computer System.

"The computer system is our lifeline of information. It could be a traffic stop or responding to a domestic violence incident – we use the computer to get information about the people we're dealing with.

"On numerous occasions, more than I can count, I would stop a vehicle for something seemingly innocent only to find that the vehicle was stolen or the person had an active arrest warrant out of another county or even another state.

"The information we get off the computer can literally be a lifesaver for police officers performing their duties. If we

Continued inside.

Helping the Trooper, *continued.*

stop somebody for speeding, for example, we would like to know if that person has some sort of a warrant, perhaps even for homicide, before we approach the vehicle. That information will completely change how we go about performing that stop. We know information that will change the way the suspect will approach their interaction with us." In addition to being a lifesaver, Trooper Reed notes that the Judicial Computer System offers the PSP efficiencies which save time and money.

"Prior to the new technology, we would hand write all our traffic citations, they would be collected and a trooper would hand deliver them to the magisterial district judges' offices. Now with everything being electronic, it saves us some time. Roadside, we can compose a traffic citation, issue it to the motorist and electronically transmit it to the judges' offices. Saving time and saving money gives us more time to do our job – to get out and get the bad guys and make arrests.

"Information provided by the courts is crucial for performance of our duties as police officers. The timeliness and the availability of that information certainly saves lives. And is certainly important to what we do everyday."

Saving the Defendant

Mindy Arnold holds a degree in microbiology from Penn State, is a certified medical technologist, currently works two jobs and is the loving mother of two children. She is also a recovering alcoholic and says that those who oversee Union County's drug court, "saved my life."

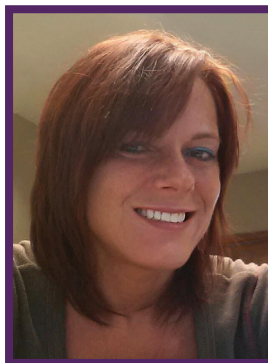
"I was offered the option of drug court...It is very strict, very strenuous, a very structured program."

Arnold is a proud graduate of drug treatment court. She is so passionate about the work of drug courts that she regularly speaks at program graduations, with county officials and the general public about the importance and difference drug court can make in a person's life. And she knows.

"I had two DUIs, was a very heavy alcoholic, really couldn't get clean on my own. I was looking at 2½ to five in state prison, plus I had other charges," Arnold says in a deep, soft and sincere voice.

"I was offered the option of drug court. With children and a family, I opted for the program. It didn't start out very easy. It is very strict, very strenuous, a very structured program.

"When you're just getting clean, your mind isn't working the right way yet. I bucked the system as much as I could. At one point I relapsed on another substance."



At that point those involved sent her to an inpatient rehabilitation facility. She completed the program and has been clean ever since.

"I was committed; I had to be. I knew I was dying, and it was either keep going the way I was or change. I opted for change."

Arnold said drug court included three, four-month segments.

During the first she was under house arrest and continually monitored for alcohol and drug use, attended five self-help meetings a week, underwent intensive outpatient treatment and was required to report to probation twice a week. It was a challenge – she had no driver's license, lived miles from the courthouse and her brain wasn't yet functioning normally. But she did it.

In each phase she was required to go before the drug court judge: weekly in phase one, bi-weekly in phase two, and monthly in phase three. In phase two she was taken off of house arrest while continuing the other requirements of the program. In phase three the drug monitor was removed and her counseling and probation contacts were decreased.

Finally, with a clean record, she graduated. How did she feel? "Awesome. I finally made it. A relief. But it's never over. It was tough getting to this point, but it was worth it. I'm not there yet. Progress, not perfection."

Arnold said the tax dollars spent on drug court are "definitely, 100 percent, no doubt" worth it.

Where would she be today without drug court?

"I would have gone away to prison. I'm not sure how much time I would have done. I guarantee you, I wouldn't be sitting here today, with a full-time job, a part-time job, visitation with my kids, clean, sober, a member of society. I can guarantee it."

To see *video clips* from all of these interviews, visit www.pacourts.us and go to the *budget* page.

Protecting the Child

In late 2006 the Pennsylvania Supreme Court created within the Administrative Office of Pennsylvania Courts the Office of Children and Families in the Courts (OCFC) to achieve better outcomes for foster children. The OCFC goal, working with partners in local courts and the Department of Public Welfare, is to minimize the time abused or neglected children spend in temporary living situations and maximize their opportunity to be in permanent, loving homes.

“We bring the family together to ferret out their issues and come up with a plan to meet the concerns. And that’s what it’s all about.”

The results tell the story. In 2007 more than 21,000 abused and neglected children were living temporarily in foster care homes. By 2013 the OCFC and its partners had reduced that number to 14,000 – a 34 percent reduction, saving an estimated \$117 million tax dollars each year. Better yet is that the lives of children are improved by being reunited with caring family members whenever possible.



Bill Cisek knows the value of the work of the OCFC and its partners. He has lived in Venango County most of his life and as solicitor to the county’s Children and Youth Services Agency has seen the value of changes in the way Pennsylvania approaches issues of child dependency.

“They’ve made a huge impact. Prior to OCFC, on a scale of one to 10, we were probably operating

at a one. Now, children and youth agencies are operating between eight and 10 – it’s that much of a difference. And if you’re a child that has been positively impacted by this, it means the world.

“Who better than family to raise a child? A child should be where their roots come from, not with someone else, unless warranted.

“Prior to the work of OCFC, the agency in our county was known as the Evil Empire – the agency that went and snatched babies and didn’t work with people. It was the dark agency that did what they thought was right and didn’t seek input from anyone else.

“Today, there’s a night-and-day difference. We bring the family together to ferret out their issues and come up with a plan to meet the concerns. And that’s what it’s all about. A family who comes up with their own plan is more likely to follow that plan, to become successful and to do it on their own.”

Being a Judge

Historically, judges have been regarded as respected members of communities, committed to the law and its equal application to everyone who comes before them in their courtrooms.

Why does a person want to become a judge? What is it like to be one and how do judges view their role and the role of the judiciary in our society?

Philadelphia Common Pleas Court **President Judge Sheila Woods-Skipper** was first appointed, then elected to the bench. She has heard criminal cases including those in mental health court. She says being a judge “is the best job I’ve ever had, a wonderful experience, and I would not trade it for the world.



“As a judge, I have the ability to make a difference. To show that everyone has the right to have access to justice, to know that there is an even playing field and that you will have the opportunity to have someone listen and give you your day in court. It doesn’t matter whether it is civil, criminal or family court; everyone has the right to be heard.”

President Judge Woods-Skipper says that one challenge of being a jurist is the isolation that comes as one takes on an entirely different role among colleagues and that sometimes even friends look at you a little differently.

“As a judge, I have the ability to make a difference. To show that everyone has the right to have access to justice, to know that there is an even playing field...”

“I remember being in the deli line in the supermarket and someone turned around and said, ‘Judge, what are you doing here?’ And I laughed and I said, ‘I have to eat, just like you do.’”

Continued on back.

Being a Judge, continued.

She said that people often think judges only sit and hear cases and render decisions, but in actuality they do so much more by overseeing programs to help people who come before the courts.

President Judge Woods-Skipper talks with pride and passion about presiding over Philadelphia's mental health court – one of the judiciary's many problem-solving courts – and the satisfaction in providing support that allows participants to achieve goals ranging from reconnecting with family to learning how to take medications, to finding jobs or volunteer opportunities.

"We need resources to be current and relevant. For example, on the criminal side, most of the individuals we sentence are not spending a lifetime in prison. If we want them to be successful and not repeat offenders, there need to be resources available to make sure they are getting things they need – education, training, housing – so as judges we need to be sure there is re-entry planning. You need funding to do that.

"I would like the public to recognize the importance that judges place on the administration of justice and that they are really committed and dedicated to doing that. We pride ourselves on knowing the law, applying the law equally and providing access to justice. We just need to make sure we have the appropriate resources to do that."

Sincere thanks to:

Trooper Adam Reed

Ms. Mindy Arnold

Mr. Bill Cisek

The Honorable Sheila Woods-Skipper

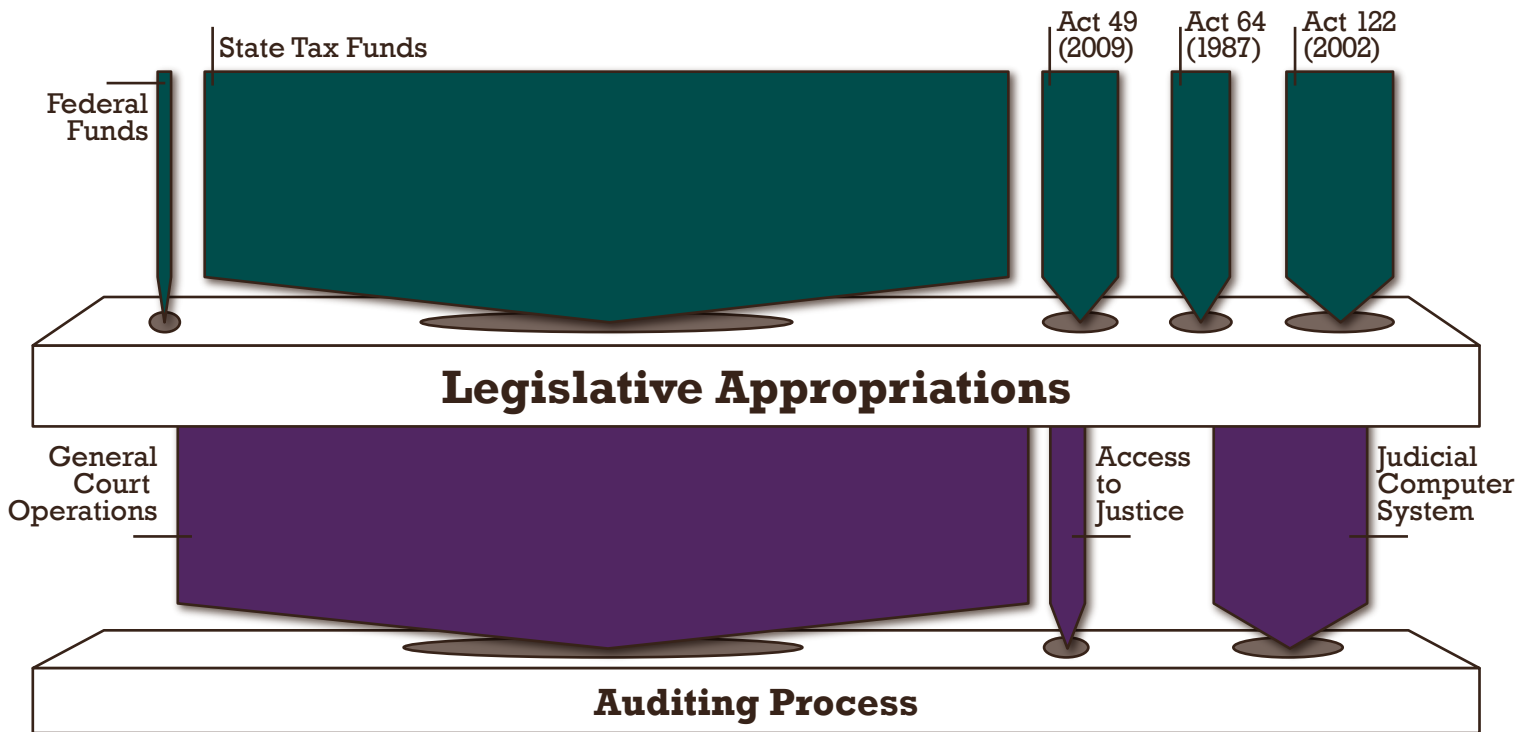


AOPC

ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE
of PENNSYLVANIA COURTS

How Pennsylvania's Courts Are Funded

Pennsylvania's courts are funded by multiple revenue streams, all of which are subject to appropriation and audit.



Revenues Expenditures

General court operations are primarily funded by state tax revenues, although since 2009 a temporary fee surcharge has supplemented operations' funding.

The judiciary's Judicial Computer System (JCS) is entirely funded by fines, court costs and fees, and those funds are also annually appropriated.

A small portion of fee revenues provides partial funding for Access to Justice – civil legal aid services – as well as county district attorney salaries, a non court function.

Annually, the judiciary submits budget requests to the governor, House and Senate, and judiciary representatives appear before the Senate and House Appropriations committees.

The judiciary's finances are annually audited by a national public accounting firm.

Judiciary FY 2014-15 budget request by funding source:

- State tax funds - \$343 million for general court operations
- Act 49 fees - \$33.5 million temporary surcharge for general court operations (sunsets 12/31/14)
- Fines, court costs, etc., (Act 64) and fees (Act 122) - \$57 million for JCS operations
- Federal funds - \$1.4 million support AOPC/Office of Children and Families in the Courts and specific projects

Judicial Fiscal Fast Facts

In 2013 Pennsylvania's courts processed 3.8 million cases.

How Does the Judiciary Spend Its Budget?



Fixed Assets - 0.1% Operating Costs - 4.3% County Grants - 9.2% Personnel - 86.4%

Judicial Belt-Tightening Initiatives

Like its sister branches, the judiciary continues to save! Over the last six years, it has **saved about \$45.8 million**, including:

\$14.1 million has been saved by using senior and "on loan from other jurisdictions" judges instead of filling judicial vacancies before the next election.

Reviewing, revising and renegotiating contracts and leases has **saved \$5 million.**

\$4.5 million has been saved to date by eliminating 18 MDJ seats of 28 total to be "right-sized."

Cost-sharing by judges and staff for health insurance has **saved \$6 million.**

\$2 million has been saved by not filling staff vacancies.

Collections

In the last seven years since MDJ and Common Pleas courts have been automated, court staff have collected a staggering \$3.1 BILLION in fines, costs and restitution, an average of nearly \$460 million per year. That means the judiciary collects far more than its state appropriation.



PAePay allows defendants to pay court fines, costs and restitution with credit and debit cards via the Internet. PAePay makes paying court financial obligations more convenient for the defendant and less time-consuming for court staff to process and improves court collections. A record \$63 million in court fines, fees and costs was collected through PAePay in 2013.