



## Supreme Court of Appeals State of West Virginia

# News

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### **Judiciary to cut \$2 million out of current budget** **For immediate release Wednesday, January 06, 2010**

CHARLESTON, W. Va. – Chief Justice Robin Jean Davis announced today that the Supreme Court of Appeals of West Virginia has voted to cut an additional \$2 million out of the current fiscal year’s budget to help reduce state expenditures in light of recent revenue projections.

The Court previously reduced its FY2010 appropriation request by \$2 million (from \$119.9 million to \$117.9 million). That reduction was announced last year by then-Chief Justice Brent Benjamin during his budget presentations to the House and Senate Finance Committees. The reduction announced today brings the total current-year budget reduction for the Judicial Branch to \$4 million.

“This year the Court has submitted an appropriation request for FY 2011 for the same amount as FY2010, \$117.9 million, containing no increase whatsoever. The budget appropriation for the entire court system of West Virginia, including our magistrates, family courts, circuit courts, probation officers, the Supreme Court and our administrative staff, represents less than three percent of the state’s general revenue budget,” said Chief Justice Davis.

“The Court takes its responsibility to manage taxpayer dollars seriously,” Chief Justice Davis said. “We always have a tight budget. It was not easy to come up with this mid-year budget cut, but we were able to do so without reducing services or making any personnel cuts.”

Most of the money is being cut from the Court’s technology budget, which means plans to install the statewide Unified Judicial Application computer system will have to progress more slowly, but will not stop.

“The public should know that these cuts will not affect the court system’s various services to West Virginians,” said Supreme Court Administrative Director Steve Canterbury. “Whether it’s access to the courts, the domestic violence registry, probation services, or the myriad other work done by the courts and their administration, people will still get the excellent service they’ve come to expect from the judicial branch.”

**Letter from Chief Justice Davis to Governor Joe Manchin III attached.**

##

January 6, 2010

*Via Hand Delivery*

Honorable Joe Manchin, III  
Office of the Governor  
State of West Virginia  
Charleston, West Virginia 25305

Dear Governor Manchin:

As we discussed a few weeks ago, the Court is committed to doing its part to help reduce state expenditures in light of the recent revenue projections. Following our telephone calls, I requested that Court Administrator Steve Canterbury present options for returning funds to the General Revenue account at yesterday's January 5, 2010, Administrative Conference. He did so, and the Court has agreed to return an additional \$2 million to help defray the projected shortfall in this year's budget.

I say "additional" because last year during his presentation to the House and Senate Finance Committees, 2009 Chief Justice Brent Benjamin announced that the Court had voted to reduce its FY 2010 appropriation request by \$2 million (from \$119.9 to \$117.9). This year, the Court – anticipating continued fiscal challenges – submitted an appropriation request for FY 2011 for that same amount, \$117.9, with no increase whatsoever. The appropriation for the Court represents less than three percent of the total amount of general revenue dollars.

The Court is able to return \$2 million additionally during the middle of this current fiscal year without reducing services or making any personnel cuts. It does mean, however, that some of our plans for the continued development of the unified computerized information system will be somewhat slowed, although by no means stopped.

While the Court's appropriation for the entire Judicial Branch this year is \$117.9, the discretionary part of the Court's budget is far smaller – some \$48 million. The majority of the Court's budget is nondiscretionary – entirely set by the Legislature and it allows no room for reductions. I bring this to your attention because the amount that the Court is returning this year represents approximately four percent of the amount that is discretionary. Obviously, when added to the \$2 million that was removed from the FY 2010 budget during last year's legislative session, the percentage doubles to eight percent.

We realize that we are all in the same predicament, however, so we are pleased to be able to cooperate with your initiative, to do our part to keep West Virginia fiscally sound.

Respectfully,

Robin Jean Davis,  
Chief Justice