

ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE OF THE COURTS
SUPREME COURT OF ARKANSAS

MARTY SULLIVAN, DIRECTOR



*"Supporting Courts,
Ensuring Justice"*

JUSTICE BUILDING
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Honorable Larry Teague, Co-Chair
Honorable Lane Jean, Co-Chair
Joint Budget Committee
Arkansas General Assembly
One Capitol Mall
Little Rock, AR. 72201

Dear Senator Teague and Representative Jean:

Earlier this week, the Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) submitted its biennial budget request to the Department of Finance and Administration. I wanted to share with you some details about our request.

Fiscal responsibility and sound financial management are cornerstones of the AOC. The Arkansas Judiciary plays a critical role in maintaining civil society by providing fair and impartial courts to ensure justice, enforce the rule of law, and administer forums for citizens to settle legal disputes peacefully. Our courts fulfill these essential obligations at low cost to the taxpayer by accounting for less than one percent of the State budget.

With this mindset and continued commitment to fiscal responsibility, the AOC requests a few modest adjustments to the 2019 biennial budget. These requests are financially prudent, avoid creating any new positions, and lead to a more efficient administration of justice.

1. Security is foundational to the ability of courts to administer justice. The Chief Justice of the Arkansas Supreme Court has emphasized this need in his annual State of the Judiciary Address. In 2018, the Governor authorized a one-time allocation of \$300,000 from the Rainy Day Release Fund for much-needed enhanced court security. The Chief Justice has requested increasing the funds allocated to the Court Security Grant Program from \$250,000 to \$500,000. This increase will go a long way in helping Arkansas counties to protect Arkansans who use the courts.
2. With more than a million cases filed every year in Arkansas courts, our current technological capacity is overwhelmed. The AOC has developed a plan to modernize our court management systems. An updated platform will result in greater efficiency, reduce paper costs, and provide long-term savings. We save the taxpayer by using existing staff supplemented with ten private sector contractors. The AOC will utilize source code that we already own, further driving down costs. With a \$1.2 million appropriation to fund these contractors, Arkansans will experience courts that operate efficiently and effectively using modernized digital platforms. This project will allow for greater transparency, increased data sharing, and improved fiscal control measures, which will lead to additional revenue for the State.