

CIRCUIT COURTS

GOVERNOR'S BUDGET RECOMMENDATIONS

Source of Funds	FY25 Adjusted Base	FY26 Recommended	% Change Over FY25	FY27 Recommended	% Change Over FY26
GPR	125,922,300	146,374,500	16.2	192,581,100	31.6
PR-S	232,700	232,700	0.0	232,700	0.0
TOTAL	126,155,000	146,607,200	16.2	192,813,800	31.5

FULL-TIME EQUIVALENT POSITION SUMMARY

Source of Funds	FY25 Adjusted Base	FY26 Recommended	FTE Change Over FY25	FY27 Recommended	FTE Change Over FY26
GPR	551.00	551.00	0.00	555.00	4.00
TOTAL	551.00	551.00	0.00	555.00	4.00

AGENCY DESCRIPTION

The Circuit Courts are Wisconsin's courts of general jurisdiction and consist of 261 judicial positions in 69 judicial circuits.

Each county in the state is a circuit, with the exception of Pepin and Buffalo, Menominee and Shawano, and Forest and Florence, which are paired to form three circuits. A circuit may consist of more than one branch (judge) where the volume of litigation warrants. Currently, of the 69 circuits, 48 contain multiple branches.

The Circuit Courts have original jurisdiction in all criminal, civil, juvenile, family and probate cases unless exclusive jurisdiction has been given to another court. The courts have appellate jurisdiction over orders and judgments of the municipal courts and the responsibility to review decisions and orders of state administrative agencies.

For purposes of management, the Circuit Courts are divided into nine administrative districts. Each district has a chief judge appointed by the Supreme Court and a district court administrator, who administers the business of the judicial branch in that district in cooperation with the director of state courts at the direction of the chief justice.

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RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Circuit Court Cost Payments and Treatment Alternatives and Diversion Programs
2. Circuit Court Payment Support Position
3. Additional Circuit Court Branches
4. Crime Victim Services Surcharge
5. Extended Supervision and Earned Release
6. Expungement
7. Charging and Sentencing Alternatives
8. Juvenile Court Jurisdiction
9. Extreme Risk Protection Injunction
10. Ignition Interlock Devices
11. Court Interpreter Program Support Position
12. Standard Budget Adjustments

Circuit Courts

**Table 1
Department Budget Summary by Funding Source (in thousands of dollars)**

	ACTUAL FY24	ADJUSTED BASE FY25	AGENCY REQUEST FY26	AGENCY REQUEST FY27	GOVERNOR'S RECOMMENDATION FY26	GOVERNOR'S RECOMMENDATION FY27
GENERAL PURPOSE REVENUE	\$120,560.2	\$125,922.3	\$121,777.6	\$121,777.6	\$146,374.5	\$192,581.1
State Operations	92,205.9	97,529.4	93,384.7	93,384.7	93,385.5	93,968.8
Local Assistance	28,354.3	28,392.9	28,392.9	28,392.9	52,989.0	98,612.3
PROGRAM REVENUE (2)	\$232.7	\$232.7	\$337.3	\$369.8	\$232.7	\$232.7
State Operations	0.0	0.0	104.6	137.1	0.0	0.0
Local Assistance	232.7	232.7	232.7	232.7	232.7	232.7
TOTALS - ANNUAL	\$120,792.9	\$126,155.0	\$122,114.9	\$122,147.4	\$146,607.2	\$192,813.8
State Operations	92,205.9	97,529.4	93,489.3	93,521.8	93,385.5	93,968.8
Local Assistance	28,587.0	28,625.6	28,625.6	28,625.6	53,221.7	98,845.0

(2) Includes Program Revenue-Service and Program Revenue-Other

**Table 2
Department Position Summary by Funding Source (in FTE positions)**

	ADJUSTED BASE FY25	AGENCY REQUEST FY26	AGENCY REQUEST FY27	GOVERNOR'S RECOMMENDATION FY26	GOVERNOR'S RECOMMENDATION FY27
GENERAL PURPOSE REVENUE	551.00	551.00	551.00	551.00	555.00
State Operations	551.00	551.00	551.00	551.00	555.00
PROGRAM REVENUE (2)	0.00	1.75	1.75	0.00	0.00
State Operations	0.00	1.75	1.75	0.00	0.00
TOTALS - ANNUAL	551.00	552.75	552.75	551.00	555.00
State Operations	551.00	552.75	552.75	551.00	555.00

(2) Includes Program Revenue-Service and Program Revenue-Other

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**Table 3
Department Budget Summary by Program (in thousands of dollars)**

	ACTUAL FY24	ADJUSTED BASE FY25	AGENCY REQUEST		GOVERNOR'S RECOMMENDATION	
			FY26	FY27	FY26	FY27
1. Court operations	\$120,792.9	\$126,155.0	\$122,114.9	\$122,147.4	\$146,607.2	\$192,813.8
TOTALS	\$120,792.9	\$126,155.0	\$122,114.9	\$122,147.4	\$146,607.2	\$192,813.8

**Table 4
Department Position Summary by Program (in FTE positions)**

	ADJUSTED BASE FY25	AGENCY REQUEST		GOVERNOR'S RECOMMENDATION	
		FY26	FY27	FY26	FY27
1. Court operations	551.00	552.75	552.75	551.00	555.00
TOTALS	551.00	552.75	552.75	551.00	555.00

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1. Circuit Court Cost Payments and Treatment Alternatives and Diversion Programs

Source of Funds	Agency Request				Governor's Recommendations			
	FY26		FY27		FY26		FY27	
	Dollars	Positions	Dollars	Positions	Dollars	Positions	Dollars	Positions
GPR	0	0.00	0	0.00	24,596,100	0.00	70,000,000	0.00
TOTAL	0	0.00	0	0.00	24,596,100	0.00	70,000,000	0.00

The Governor recommends providing additional payments to counties for operating circuit courts. The Governor also recommends requiring that counties operate treatment alternatives and diversion (TAD) programs. As part of this proposal, the Governor further recommends converting the current grant program for TAD programs administered by the Department of Justice to make receipt of certain enhanced circuit court cost payments contingent on operating a TAD program. Finally, the Governor recommends transferring positions that administer the TAD program to the Supreme Court to support the administration of the enhanced circuit court cost payments and creating a grant program at the Department of Administration for tribes to establish TAD programs. See Department of Administration, Item #52; Department of Justice, Item #1; and Supreme Court, Item #2.

2. Circuit Court Payment Support Position

Source of Funds	Agency Request				Governor's Recommendations			
	FY26		FY27		FY26		FY27	
	Dollars	Positions	Dollars	Positions	Dollars	Positions	Dollars	Positions
PR-O	69,300	1.00	91,300	1.00	0	0.00	0	0.00
TOTAL	69,300	1.00	91,300	1.00	0	0.00	0	0.00

The Governor recommends providing expenditure and position authority at the Supreme Court to provide a financial auditor for the circuit court support payment program. See Supreme Court, Item #3.

3. Additional Circuit Court Branches

Source of Funds	Agency Request				Governor's Recommendations			
	FY26		FY27		FY26		FY27	
	Dollars	Positions	Dollars	Positions	Dollars	Positions	Dollars	Positions
GPR	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	802,700	4.00
TOTAL	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	802,700	4.00

The Governor recommends providing expenditure and position authority to support the creation of two circuit court branches in Brown County for terms beginning on August 1, 2026. The Governor also recommends a technical modification to the statutes to remove a defunct provision created in 2019 Wisconsin Act 184. See Supreme Court, Item #4.

Circuit Courts

4. Crime Victim Services Surcharge

The Governor recommends creating a new crime victim services surcharge, which will fund grants to crime victim service organizations as a supplement to declining federal funding available under the Victims of Crime Act (VOCA). See Department of Administration, Item #2; and Department of Justice, Item #2.

5. Extended Supervision and Earned Release

The Governor recommends expanding the earned release program to include educational, vocational, treatment or other qualifying training programs that are evidence-based to reduce recidivism. See Department of Corrections, Item #33.

6. Expungement

The Governor recommends expanding the conditions under which an individual may have their criminal record expunged of a conviction.

7. Charging and Sentencing Alternatives

The Governor recommends requiring a diversion and restitution alternative for certain misdemeanor offenses. The Governor also recommends legalizing marijuana. See Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection, Item #35; Department of Revenue, Item #13; and Public Defender Board, Item #7.

8. Juvenile Court Jurisdiction

The Governor recommends, subject to certain exceptions currently in the Juvenile Justice Code, raising the age that a circuit court or municipal court exercises adult court jurisdiction on individuals from 17 years of age to 18 years of age. See Department of Children and Families, Item #29; and Department of Corrections, Item #7.

9. Extreme Risk Protection Injunction

The Governor recommends creating an extreme risk protection injunction procedure where a court, after a hearing, may order an individual to refrain from possessing a firearm if it finds by clear and convincing evidence that they are substantially likely to injure themselves or another by possessing a firearm. As recommended, a court must hold an extreme risk protection injunction hearing after a petition is filed by a law enforcement officer, family member or household member. See Department of Justice, Item #5.

10. Ignition Interlock Devices

The Governor recommends expanding the requirement for when a court orders the use of an ignition interlock device to all offenses involving the use of alcohol and operating a motor vehicle while intoxicated.

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11. Court Interpreter Program Support Position

Source of Funds	Agency Request				Governor's Recommendations			
	FY26 Dollars	FY26 Positions	FY27 Dollars	FY27 Positions	FY26 Dollars	FY26 Positions	FY27 Dollars	FY27 Positions
PR-O	35,300	0.75	45,800	0.75	0	0.00	0	0.00
TOTAL	35,300	0.75	45,800	0.75	0	0.00	0	0.00

The Governor recommends providing expenditure and position authority at the Supreme Court to support the circuit court interpreter program. See Supreme Court, Item #7.

12. Standard Budget Adjustments

Source of Funds	Agency Request				Governor's Recommendations			
	FY26 Dollars	FY26 Positions	FY27 Dollars	FY27 Positions	FY26 Dollars	FY26 Positions	FY27 Dollars	FY27 Positions
GPR	-4,144,700	0.00	-4,144,700	0.00	-4,143,900	0.00	-4,143,900	0.00
TOTAL	-4,144,700	0.00	-4,144,700	0.00	-4,143,900	0.00	-4,143,900	0.00

The Governor recommends adjusting the agency's base budget for full funding of continuing position salaries and fringe benefits.

