

CIRCUIT COURTS

GOVERNOR'S BUDGET RECOMMENDATIONS

Source of Funds	FY23 Adjusted Base	FY24 Recommended	% Change Over FY23	FY25 Recommended	% Change Over FY24
GPR	115,738,600	117,848,400	1.8	116,974,600	-0.7
PR-S	232,700	232,700	0.0	232,700	0.0
TOTAL	115,971,300	118,081,100	1.8	117,207,300	-0.7

FULL-TIME EQUIVALENT POSITION SUMMARY

Source of Funds	FY23 Adjusted Base	FY24 Recommended	FTE Change Over FY23	FY25 Recommended	FTE Change Over FY24
GPR	543.00	551.00	8.00	551.00	0.00
TOTAL	543.00	551.00	8.00	551.00	0.00

AGENCY DESCRIPTION

The Circuit Courts are Wisconsin's courts of general jurisdiction and consist of 257 judicial positions in 69 judicial circuits. The creation of up to 12 additional circuit court branches by August 2023 was authorized by 2019 Wisconsin Act 184. As of August 1, 2021, there were 253 judicial positions, and as of August 1, 2022, there were 257 judicial positions. During the 2023-25 biennium, the last four circuit court branches could be created by August 1, 2023, increasing the number of judicial positions to 261.

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, 41 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.

CIRCUIT COURTS

GOVERNOR'S BUDGET RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Additional Circuit Court Branches under 2019 Wisconsin Act 184
2. Circuit Court Cost Payments
3. Digital Audio Recording Devices
4. Pretrial Risk Assessments
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. Certificates of Qualification for Employment
12. Standard Budget Adjustments

Circuit Courts

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

	ACTUAL FY22	ADJUSTED BASE FY23	AGENCY REQUEST FY24	FY25	GOVERNOR'S RECOMMENDATION FY24	FY25
GENERAL PURPOSE REVENUE	\$106,303.5	\$115,738.6	\$117,021.8	\$117,000.1	\$117,848.4	\$116,974.6
State Operations	78,886.4	87,784.4	88,628.9	88,607.2	88,492.1	88,581.7
Local Assistance	27,417.2	27,954.2	28,392.9	28,392.9	29,356.3	28,392.9
PROGRAM REVENUE (2)	\$232.7	\$232.7	\$232.7	\$232.7	\$232.7	\$232.7
Local Assistance	232.7	232.7	232.7	232.7	232.7	232.7
TOTALS - ANNUAL	\$106,536.2	\$115,971.3	\$117,254.5	\$117,232.8	\$118,081.1	\$117,207.3
State Operations	78,886.4	87,784.4	88,628.9	88,607.2	88,492.1	88,581.7
Local Assistance	27,649.9	28,186.9	28,625.6	28,625.6	29,589.0	28,625.6

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

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

	ADJUSTED BASE FY23	AGENCY REQUEST FY24	FY25	GOVERNOR'S RECOMMENDATION FY24	FY25
GENERAL PURPOSE REVENUE	543.00	551.00	551.00	551.00	551.00
State Operations	543.00	551.00	551.00	551.00	551.00
TOTALS - ANNUAL	543.00	551.00	551.00	551.00	551.00
State Operations	543.00	551.00	551.00	551.00	551.00

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

	ACTUAL FY22	ADJUSTED BASE FY23	AGENCY REQUEST FY24	AGENCY REQUEST FY25	GOVERNOR'S RECOMMENDATION FY24	GOVERNOR'S RECOMMENDATION FY25
1. Court operations	\$106,536.2	\$115,971.3	\$117,254.5	\$117,232.8	\$118,081.1	\$117,207.3
TOTALS	\$106,536.2	\$115,971.3	\$117,254.5	\$117,232.8	\$118,081.1	\$117,207.3

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

	ADJUSTED BASE FY23	AGENCY REQUEST FY24	AGENCY REQUEST FY25	GOVERNOR'S RECOMMENDATION FY24	GOVERNOR'S RECOMMENDATION FY25
1. Court operations	543.00	551.00	551.00	551.00	551.00
TOTALS	543.00	551.00	551.00	551.00	551.00

Circuit Courts

1. Additional Circuit Court Branches under 2019 Wisconsin Act 184

Source of Funds	Agency Request				Governor's Recommendations			
	FY24 Dollars	FY24 Positions	FY25 Dollars	FY25 Positions	FY24 Dollars	FY24 Positions	FY25 Dollars	FY25 Positions
GPR	1,246,100	8.00	1,223,300	8.00	1,107,000	8.00	1,196,600	8.00
TOTAL	1,246,100	8.00	1,223,300	8.00	1,107,000	8.00	1,196,600	8.00

The Governor recommends providing expenditure and position authority to support the creation of four circuit court branches for terms beginning on August 1, 2023, consistent with 2019 Wisconsin Act 184. The Governor also recommends modifying statutory language to conform the statutes to account for circuit court branches added under Act 184. See Supreme Court, Item #2.

2. Circuit Court Cost Payments

Source of Funds	Agency Request				Governor's Recommendations			
	FY24 Dollars	FY24 Positions	FY25 Dollars	FY25 Positions	FY24 Dollars	FY24 Positions	FY25 Dollars	FY25 Positions
GPR	438,700	0.00	438,700	0.00	402,100	0.00	438,700	0.00
TOTAL	438,700	0.00	438,700	0.00	402,100	0.00	438,700	0.00

The Governor recommends increasing funding to counties for circuit court costs to support the four additional branches that would begin operating on August 1, 2023, under 2019 Wisconsin Act 184.

3. Digital Audio Recording Devices

Source of Funds	Agency Request				Governor's Recommendations			
	FY24 Dollars	FY24 Positions	FY25 Dollars	FY25 Positions	FY24 Dollars	FY24 Positions	FY25 Dollars	FY25 Positions
GPR	790,000	0.00	790,000	0.00	790,000	0.00	790,000	0.00
TOTAL	790,000	0.00	790,000	0.00	790,000	0.00	790,000	0.00

The Governor recommends providing one-time funding to support the installation of digital audio recording devices for court reporting.

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4. Pretrial Risk Assessments

Source of Funds	Agency Request				Governor's Recommendations			
	FY24 Dollars	FY24 Positions	FY25 Dollars	FY25 Positions	FY24 Dollars	FY24 Positions	FY25 Dollars	FY25 Positions
GPR	0	0.00	0	0.00	1,000,000	0.00	0	0.00
TOTAL	0	0.00	0	0.00	1,000,000	0.00	0	0.00

The Governor recommends creating a new biennial appropriation, and providing one-time funding, to reimburse counties for circuit court costs associated with implementing the use of pretrial risk assessments.

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. The Governor also recommends allowing a sentencing court to reduce the term of a person's extended supervision if certain conditions apply. See Department of Corrections, Item #5.

6. Expungement

The Governor recommends expanding the conditions under which an individual may have his or her 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 #28; Department of Revenue, Item #8; and Public Defender Board, Item #3.

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 #30; and Department of Corrections, Item #21.

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 he or she is substantially likely to injure himself or herself 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 #21.

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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. See Department of Transportation, Item #51.

11. Certificates of Qualification for Employment

The Governor recommends making statutory language changes to help with administering certificates of qualification for employment.

12. Standard Budget Adjustments

Source of Funds	Agency Request				Governor's Recommendations			
	FY24 Dollars	Positions	FY25 Dollars	Positions	FY24 Dollars	Positions	FY25 Dollars	Positions
GPR	-1,191,600	0.00	-1,190,500	0.00	-1,189,300	0.00	-1,189,300	0.00
TOTAL	-1,191,600	0.00	-1,190,500	0.00	-1,189,300	0.00	-1,189,300	0.00

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