


JUDICIARY BUDGET 2019-2020 BUDGET REQUEST INTRODUCTION

Pursuant to Article VII, Section 1 of the State Constitution, the Judiciary respectfully submits the following itemized estimate of its financial needs for Fiscal Year 2019-2020.

This request seeks \$2.28 billion for the State Operations portion of the Judiciary budget, which represents an increase of \$44.7 million, or two percent, over current-year cash funding. The request seeks the funds that will enable the courts to fulfill their mission to deliver justice in a manner that reflects the full measure of New York's commitment to a just society under the rule of law.

The delivery of justice by the New York State Unified Court System (UCS) has many diverse facets. It entails the operation of twelve separate trial and appellate courts, in more than three hundred locations in sixty-two counties throughout the State—as well as oversight over an additional 1,250 town and village courts. It employs the energies of more than sixteen thousand judges, officers and employees around the State, who handle more than three million new case filings annually. It includes a vast array of ancillary programs designed to facilitate access to justice – including programs providing for substantial funding of criminal and civil legal services for indigent persons. It features the operation of specialized courts addressing, among other things, matters involving domestic violence, youth, veterans, and drug offenses. It necessitates the ongoing provision of cutting edge technology in all aspects of court operations, including electronic filing, remote access to court proceedings, and an ever-expanding list of operational demands. It contemplates the planning – for the immediate and longer term – of construction, renovation and maintenance of scores of court facilities throughout the State. It includes responsibility for the oversight of the legal profession – the admission and discipline of attorneys—as well as matters of judicial ethics and conduct. These duties, among many others, are the critical components of the operation of the Judiciary that underlie this budget request.

The Excellence Initiative



At her investiture in February 2016, Chief Judge Janet DiFiore announced, as her highest priority, the Excellence Initiative – a comprehensive and critical evaluation of court operations and administration at every level, toward the goal of “operational and decisional excellence in everything that we do.” The Excellence Initiative reflects the Court System's primary ongoing focus on the core mission of the Judiciary – to fairly and promptly adjudicate each of the millions of cases filed in the New York State courts every year. Since its inception, the Initiative has had several principal components: the elimination of delay and backlog in court operations; the continued heightened awareness and responsiveness to problematic issues reflected in the court system's docket (such as the needs of veterans or victims of the opioid crisis); and the unswerving commitment to