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NEWS RELEASE

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**Kansas judicial branch releases studies showing  
employee pay below market by up to 22 percent**

TOPEKA—The Kansas judicial branch today released two studies showing that pay for every single job classification within the branch is below market levels by at least 4.6 percent and as much as 22.2 percent.

"It's well documented by the National Center for State Courts that pay for Kansas district judges ranks a dismal 50th in the nation and 45th when adjusted for cost of living," said Lawton Nuss, chief justice of the Supreme Court. "What had not been studied was the pay earned by court employees and district magistrate judges."

To remedy that, the judicial branch used a grant from the State Justice Institute to contract with the National Center for State Courts to study its job classifications and rates of compensation for both employees and district magistrate judges.

The first report, *Appellate and District Court Classification and Compensation Study*, found that:

- More than a one-quarter of judicial branch employee positions have starting salaries below the federal poverty level for a family of four.
- Nearly one-third of judicial branch employees work more than one job, a rate 24 percent higher than the Kansas state average reported in a 2014 USA TODAY article, *States Where the Most People Work Two Jobs*.
- Trial court clerk II and court services officer I classifications, entry-level jobs representing approximately 700 current employees, are paid 17.8 percent under the market rate.

"It's been about eight years since court employees received a pay increase, with the exception of a 2 percent cost of living adjustment a couple of years ago that was quickly eaten up by increased employee contributions to benefits," Nuss said. "Because pay is not keeping pace with the market, Kansas courts are experiencing higher rates of employee turnover and are finding it more difficult to recruit new employees."

The second report, *Magistrate Classification and Compensation Study*, found that:

- Over 22 percent is needed to raise district magistrate judge salaries to market, when taking into consideration variables like docket type, education and experience, and election and retention status.
- Approximately 26 percent of magistrates who responded to the compensation study survey said they are seeking employment outside the judicial branch and gave compensation as the number one reason.

The judicial branch used data from these studies to prepare a budget request that includes funding for market increases for all judicial branch employees and judges.

The request included \$20.3 million beyond the branch's base operating budget in fiscal year 2018 and \$20.4 million in fiscal year 2019 to allow for making much needed market adjustments.

The funding will allow for:

- increasing pay for employees from 4.6 percent up to 22.2 percent, based on job classification;
- increasing magistrate judge pay by just over 22 percent;
- bringing pay for district judges up to an average of the neighboring states of Colorado, Iowa, Missouri, Nebraska and Oklahoma.

"As chief administrative officer of the Kansas judicial branch, my concern is efficient, effective management of our state courts," Nuss said. "That includes making sure we are staffed to meet the needs of the communities we serve. Being able to offer pay appropriate to the market is essential to achieve that purpose."

The studies, as well as fact sheets about judicial branch salaries, its budget and its operations, are available online at [www.kscourts.org/Court-Administration/Compensation\\_Study/index.html](http://www.kscourts.org/Court-Administration/Compensation_Study/index.html).