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Updated salary study shows judicial branch employee pay still below market

TOPEKA—The Kansas judicial branch today released an [updated study](#) showing that pay for nearly every job classification within the branch continues to be [below market levels](#), some by as much as 18.6 percent.

"When I gave my [State of the Judiciary](#) address Wednesday, I noted that pay for Kansas trial judges [ranks dead last](#) among our 50 states and the District of Columbia," said Lawton Nuss, chief justice of the Kansas Supreme Court. "This salary study shows that our employees also continue to be paid below market rates, and some to a significant degree."

In 2016, the judicial branch obtained a grant from the State Justice Institute to contract with the National Center for State Courts to study the branch's job classifications and rates of compensation for both employees and district magistrate judges.

Since then, the Legislature has appropriated funds to the judicial branch to allow modest pay increases for both judges and employees. The newest study, however, shows that employee pay continues to fall short of market rates.

The judicial branch used preliminary data from this latest update to prepare its budget request submitted in September 2018. The request included \$20.1 million in fiscal year 2020 and \$20.3 million in fiscal year 2021 beyond the branch's base operating budget. In both fiscal years, \$10.3 million would be to pay for increases for employees, and \$7.8 million in fiscal year 2020 and \$7.9 million in fiscal year 2021 would for pay increases for judges. The remaining money would be used to fill vacant positions and add judges and accompanying staff.

Specifically, requested additional funding will allow for:

- increasing pay for employees from 2.4 percent up to 18.6 percent, based on job classification;
- bringing pay for district judges to an average of the surrounding states of Colorado, Missouri, Nebraska, and Oklahoma, and giving the same percentage increase to salaries for appellate judges and district magistrate judges;
- filling vacant positions, and adding seven judges and support staff according to needs verified by a weighted caseload study.

"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 people we serve. Being able to offer pay appropriate to the market is essential to achieve that purpose."

The updated study, as well as fact sheets about judicial branch salaries, its budget, and its operations are available online at http://www.kscourts.org/Court-Administration/Compensation_Study/index.html.

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