OCTOBER 21, 2026

New Judgeships, Trial Court Judges' Salaries, and Court Facility Projects

PRESENTED TO:

Senate Budget and Fiscal Review Subcommittee No. 5
On Corrections, Public Safety, Judiciary, Labor, and Transportation
Hon. Laura Richardson, Chair



LEGISLATIVE ANALYST'S OFFICE

New Judgeships

Funding Provided for New Judgeships, Support Staff, and Facilities

- The 2026-27 budget provides resources to support the creation of 13 new judgeships over a five-year period. Specifically, three judgeships will be added in the last quarter of each year in 2026-27 through 2029-30. The final judgeship will be added in the last quarter of 2030-31. The funding also supports:
  - A trial court staff compliment for each judge (including clerks and interpreters).
  - Bailiffs (from county sheriff's departments) for court security.
  - Courtroom facility projects.

Budget Provided Funding for 13 New Judgeships and Facilities
(Dollars in Millions)

	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29	2029-30	2030-31	2031-32 (and Ongoing)
Judgeships	$1.50	$7.60	$13.70	$19.70	$24.80	$26.30
Bailiffs	0.10	0.50	$0.90	1.40	1.70	1.80
Facilities	98.40	35.90	29.40	22.90	17.50	15.90
Total Funding	**$100.00**	**$44.00**	**$44.00**	**$44.00**	**$44.00**	**$44.00**
Full-Time Equivalent Judgeships	0.75	3.75	6.75	9.75	12.25	13.00

New Judgeships

(Continued)

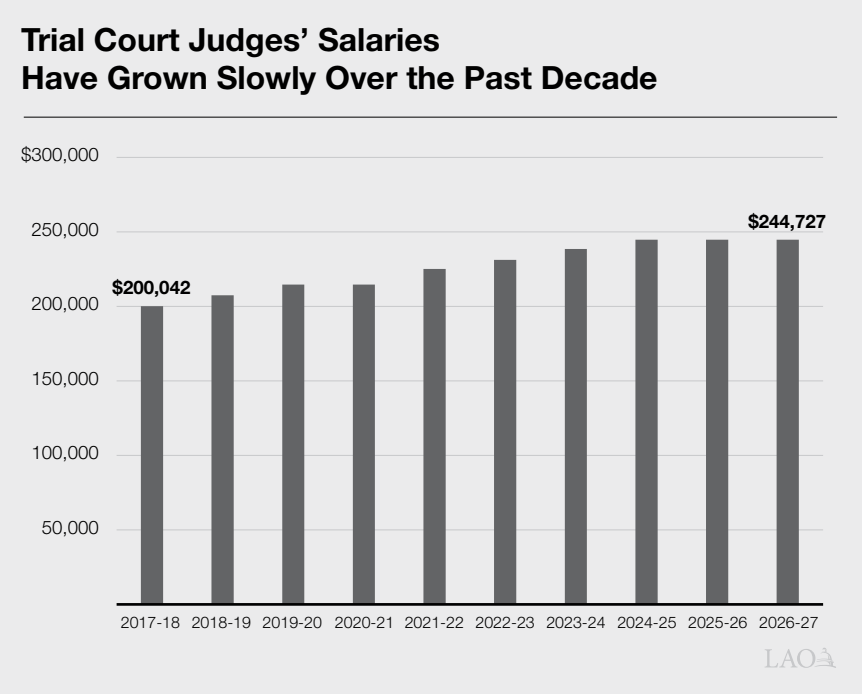
Judgeships Will Be Allocated Based on Judicial Needs Assessment (JNA)

- Judicial Council regularly conducts the JNA study, which uses data on court workload to estimate how many judgeships each superior court needs. Currently, the JNA estimates that 159 additional judgeships are needed in 18 counties. Based on this assessment, the 13 new judgeships will be allocated as shown in the figure below.

Allocation of New Judgeships

Superior Court	Existing Judgeships	Assessed Need for Additional Judgeship	New Judgeships
Riverside	89.0	45	4
San Bernardino	103.0	31	2
Kern	47.0	15	1
Sacramento	79.0	11	1
Stanislaus	26.0	10	1
San Joaquin	35.5	9	1
Fresno	53.0	8	1
Tulare	25.0	5	1
Placer	15.5	4	1

Salaries for Trial Court Judges



Salaries Set Based on Statutory Formula

- Statute establishes judges' base salaries and governs annual raises. The California Department of Human Resources (CalHR) calculates annual increases in judges' salaries, which take effect July 1. The formula used to calculate them is tied to the average annual salary increases received by state employees.
- Looking at base salary alone, California judges are among the highest paid in the country, according to the National Center for State Courts. Only judges in Illinois, Hawaii, and the District of Columbia make more. However, when adjusting for cost of living, the state's ranking drops to 28th in the country.
- Additionally, trial court judges' salaries have not grown as fast as the cost of living. While salaries have increased by 26 percent over the past decade, the California Consumer Price Index has increased by 33 percent.

Salaries for Trial Court Judges

(Continued)

Some Counties Give Trial Court Judges Additional Benefits That Can Contribute to Salary

- Some counties choose to provide benefits to trial court judges. The Judicial Council last formally studied counties' supplemental benefit offerings in 2009. It found then that 90 percent of trial court judges serve in courts where they receive some form of supplemental benefit, including benefits that can augment salary.
- For example, as of 2015, Los Angeles County contributed funds to allow trial court judges to purchase medical, dental and vision coverage, or life and disability insurances. Any funds not used to purchase such benefits can be retained by judges as salary. At the time, this was up to $57,000 per judge. Other counties might offer parking allowances or a gym stipend, while judges in Alpine, Inyo, and San Benito reportedly received no supplemental benefits at the time of the 2009 study.

Pay Structure Subject to Litigation

- Some judges have contested the formula used by CalHR to determine annual salary increases. A lawsuit filed against the state in 2014 argued that the state wrongfully withheld salary increases from judges between 2008 and 2013. The court issued a $40 million judgment against the state.
- A lawsuit filed in 2024 alleges that CalHR's formula for calculating annual salary growth inappropriately excludes certain targeted wage increases. Litigation is ongoing.

Court Construction Projects

Budget Includes Funding for 13 Judicial Branch Capital Outlay Projects

(Dollars in Thousands)

Project	Amount Approved	Phase(s)	Fund Source
Kern County: New East County Courthouse	$64,014 6,408	D S, A, PC	Lease Revenue Bond Authority General Fund
Kings County: One New Shelled Courtroom for One New Judgeship	$7,618	C	General Fund
Lake County: Clearlake Courthouse Renovation	$21,845 2,712	C PP, WD	Lease Revenue Bond Authority General Fund
Los Angeles County: New Santa Clarita Courthouse	$627,033 12,460	D PC	Lease Revenue Bond Authority General Fund
Los Angeles County: Spring Street Courthouse—Chatsworth Buildout	$6,276	PP, WD	General Fund
Nevada County: New Nevada City Courthouse	$195,583 1,491	D PC	Lease Revenue Bond Authority General Fund
Placer County: Tahoe Courthouse Renovation	$17,540 6,439	D S, A, PC	Lease Revenue Bond Authority General Fund
Plumas County: New Quincy Courthouse	$69,598 2,276	D PC	Lease Revenue Bond Authority General Fund
San Joaquin County: New Tracy Courthouse	$65,854 3,503	D PC	Lease Revenue Bond Authority General Fund
San Joaquin County: One New Shelled Courtroom for One New Judgeship	$6,420	WD, C	General Fund
San Luis Obispo County: New San Luis Obispo Courthouse	$320,265	D	Lease Revenue Bond Authority
Solano County: New Solano Hall of Justice (Fairfield)	$316,779	D	Lease Revenue Bond Authority
Sutter County: One New Shelled Courtroom for One New Judgeship	$6,521	C	General Fund

The 2026-27 Budget Provides $1.8 Billion for Court Construction...

- The budget includes a total of $1.7 billion in one-time lease revenue bond authority and $62.1 million one-time General Fund to support various phases of 13 capital outlay projects, as shown above.

Court Construction Projects

(Continued)

…And Includes Language Indicating Possibility of Additional Funding in 2027-28

- The budget also includes language specifying the Legislature may authorize up to $1.3 billion in additional funding in 2027-28 for judicial branch capital outlay projects. The Legislature, however, can choose to provide more or less than this amount.

Facility Modification Projects

Facility Modification Projects Have Specific Definition

- Facility modification projects involve physical changes to a facility (or its building components) that improve its designed level of functionality. Such projects are generally smaller than construction projects.

Funding Is Provided Annually for Such Projects

- The annual budget currently provides $80 million—$65 million from the State Court Facilities Construction Fund (SCFCF) and $15 million from the General Fund—for trial court facility modification projects for use at Judicial Council's discretion.

2026-27 Budget Provides Limited-Term Funding for Orange Central Justice Center Project

- The 2026-27 budget supplemented the ongoing funding with $36 million General Fund and $3.6 million SCFCF in 2026-27 and $35 million General Fund and $3.5 million SCFCF in 2027-28 to support the Orange Central Justice Center facility modification project.

Facility Maintenance Projects

Facility Maintenance Projects Are Typically Supported by Ongoing Facility Maintenance and Operation Funding…

- Trial court facility operations and maintenance monies are used to support ongoing facility operations, repairs, and maintenance. These include preventative and routine maintenance, equipment replacement, utilities, and leases. A total of $198 million—$104 million from the Court Facilities Trust Fund and $94 million from the General Fund—is provided annually to support facility operations and maintenance costs. Some maintenance projects are also funded with facility modification funding.

…Though Many Maintenance Needs Remain Unmet

- Deferred maintenance broadly refers to facility needs that are not met by the facility modification or facility maintenance monies. As of August 2026, the judicial branch identified 22,356 deferred maintenance projects—22,169 related to trial courts and 187 related to appellate courts—totaling around $6.1 billion.

2026-27 Budget Provides One-Time Augmentation for Deferred Maintenance

- The 2026-27 budget provides an additional $151 million one-time General Fund for deferred maintenance projects. Of this amount, $1 million is provided specifically for deferred maintenance and other extensive repairs at the Compton Courthouse.