

**Budget Testimony
on behalf of the Ohio Court of Claims**

before the

**Ohio House of Representatives
Finance and Appropriations Committee
Transportation Subcommittee**

Wednesday, March 15, 2017

Chairman McColley, Ranking Member Reece, and Members of the Subcommittee:

I am Mark Reed, Clerk of the Ohio Court of Claims. I thank you for providing me this opportunity to testify in support of this proposed budget for the Court of Claims. Also here with me today is Jennie Parks, Director of Operations for the Court of Claims and the Court's Chief Fiscal Officer.

The Court of Claims is the only statutory trial court with statewide jurisdiction. Prior to its creation, there was no forum for civil actions filed against the state of Ohio. The Court of Claims' principle duties include:

1. Adjudicating civil actions filed against the state;
2. Hearing appeals from decisions made by the Attorney General on claims allowed under the Victims of Crime Law; and

3. Acting as the state's fiduciary agent for processing claims of wrongful imprisonment, and
4. Beginning in September 2016, serving as an alternative forum for the resolution of disputes regarding access to public records.

For the upcoming biennium, the Court has submitted a budget that is largely flat with the exception of increases mandated by statute or as required to cover increased costs of employee benefits and other program charge-backs as required by the Department of Administrative Services or the Office of Budget and Management.

For FY2018, the Court is requesting a total appropriation of \$3,660,512 (an increase of \$190,174 or 5.5%, from FY2017 and a FY2019 total appropriation of \$3,762,651, an increase of \$132,139 or 3.6%, from FY2018).

The budget breakdown is as follows:

- 83.3% Payroll (includes staff, magistrates & judges)
- 6.4 % Purchased Services (court reporters, assigned referees, & court case management system support)
- 8.9 % Supplies & Maintenance
- 1.4 % Equipment (namely, courtroom audio/video technology systems)

Since the last budget, the Court has successfully achieved several important goals, including the following:

- Fully implemented electronic filing for all case related documents.
- Consistent with electronic filing, the Court now accepts electronic payments for all filing fees.
- Revised and updated the Court website, which has been now been recognized by the National Association of Court Management as one of the ten best court websites in the nation.
- Successfully accomplished the creation of a new dispute resolution process for public records cases consistent with new legislation.

This budget will support several key new initiatives:

- Complete replacement of the Court Case Management System that dates back to 1998.
- Integrate existing e-file application with the new case management system.
- Overhaul and implement new workflow processes consistent with an E-Court model.
- Improve and expand the Court's public record dispute process.
- Create electronic training curriculum in the areas of law unique to the Court of Claims.

We believe we will be fully able to implement these new initiatives within our proposed budget by continuing to scrutinize and selectively fill positions as vacancies occur, and by continuing to look for savings opportunities as business practices continue to be streamlined.

I thank you for the opportunity to appear before this Committee and will be happy to answer any questions you may have.