

SUPREME COURT

Chief Justice Loretta H. Rush
Indiana Supreme Court
311 State House
200 W. Washington Street
Indianapolis, IN 46204-2732



OF INDIANA

(317) 232-2548
fax (317) 233-8691
loretta.rush@courts.in.gov

The budget for Indiana's judicial branch accounts for less than 1% of the State's total budget. We take seriously our responsibility as stewards of taxpayer dollars, and we are proud of our ability to do more with less.

We also take seriously our role in ensuring public safety in Indiana. We are active in this endeavor, working hard to provide you and our law enforcement partners with the best possible data and by implementing best practices in our courts.

In the spirit of this dual commitment to fiscal prudence and public safety, we submit our budget request for the upcoming biennium.

- A **\$3 million** increase in our Court Technology fund to continue protecting critical court-and-public-safety data and to continue rolling out our jail management system.
- **\$1.5 million** to improve public safety by providing critical court security resources.
- A **\$1.5 million** increase in our Collaborative Justice Fund to help fund family recovery courts and safe baby courts.

These operational funding requests amount to roughly 3% of our total budget, but every dollar we're requesting is essential.

Court Technology

In just the past decade, we've launched a statewide case management system for our courts, developed and rolled out electronic filing of cases statewide, built a system allowing law enforcement to issue traffic tickets electronically, and developed systems that make millions of court records available online to the public for free. We also collect court data and share it, including protection orders with law enforcement, risk assessment tools with the Department of Correction, and felony convictions with the Department of Education. Sharing our domestic violence, mental health determinations, and criminal convictions helps keep the wrong people from purchasing firearms, and sharing drug-related convictions helps keep the wrong people from purchasing meth precursors.

These efforts, which are just a sampling, are enormous technological feats that help keep Indiana's citizens safe. And we could not have done them without your strong support. **But we are currently engaged in our largest court technology public safety project ever, and we need your help.**

With the support of the Indiana Sheriff's Association, we are developing a statewide jail management system, INjail, that will provide a critical and comprehensive statewide picture of

our jail population. It will bridge the data gaps from arrest to jail to court to sentence and release. It will interface with our case management systems and the systems used by the Indiana State Police, prosecutors, public defenders, DOC, and probation. It will alert judges and probation officers to an individual's arrest in another county, improve our criminal history records, and help jail staff manage their populations.

Your 2019 jail overcrowding task force saw this need and asked us for something better than our current patchwork quilt of siloed jail systems. We're delivering. INjail is now live in four counties: Elkhart, Grant, Martin, and Warren. And it will soon be deployed in Fountain, Hendricks, and Putnam counties. Many other counties are expressing interest, and the reviews thus far are tremendous.

Though we've been able to launch INJail with federal grants, that federal funding is limited and not guaranteed to continue. Supporting this portion of our budget request will continue to allow us and our partners to build and deploy this vital public safety feature.

Court Security

We likewise find ourselves facing high stakes in keeping our courtrooms, court staff, and court participants safe. When we surveyed Indiana judges on their experience with threats, 74% reported having been the target of a threat.

We have done what we can by providing expert security assessments. And we have tightened our belts in other critical areas to provide funding to county courts for security measures. But over the last five years, we have been able to fund less than half of what counties have requested, leaving court security measures falling woefully short. And while the requested increase may not fill every county need, it will go a long way to filling in critical gaps across the state.

Problem-Solving Courts

And finally, we are always looking for ways to improve the services provided by our court systems—to use best practices to inform better decisions and maximize the impact of the funds you budget for us. One such way is through our successful problem-solving courts, which use more intensive, collaborative, community-driven treatment-based methods to hold individuals accountable for their actions and reduce their risk of recidivism.

Indiana's network of problem-solving courts is growing exponentially. The first two, drug courts, launched in 1996 in Gary City and Vigo County. In 2019, we celebrated our 100th problem-solving court—a veterans court in Pulaski County. And today, only five years later, there are 138 certified courts with another 21 in the planning stage across sixty-one Hoosier counties.

Two years ago, you created a new Collaborative Justice Fund with an annual appropriation of \$6 million to fund these courts. We knew then that this program's growth would quickly outstrip that appropriation, and we're proud to have been right.

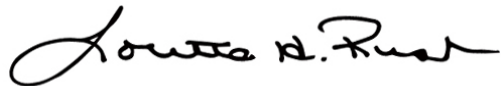
Put simply, these courts spread because our communities see them work. Over 6,000 individuals have graduated from these programs in just the last six years. That's over 6,000 taxpayers,

employees, homeowners, renters, friends, and family members that have been safely returned to their communities as productive citizens.

In 2024, you established the “Safe Baby Courts” program in Indiana Code section 33-23-16-9.5 as a complement to the twenty-four family recovery courts in our state. Together, these two programs help communities address the needs of our most vulnerable population: children who are involved in the child welfare system because of a parent’s substance abuse. Safe baby courts specifically protect children under the age of three. These courts promote public safety by minimizing the instances of maltreatment and impact of trauma on children. Our funding request will help expand our family recovery court network and promote the rapid development of safe baby courts in Indiana.

Indiana’s judicial branch is committed to public safety. We play a critical role in that most fundamental of government functions, and we take our obligation seriously. We have also proven that we can maximize funds the Indiana General Assembly provides to the judicial branch of government, and we always endeavor to be responsible with the funds you provide. We hope you see the essential qualities of the tasks we are pursuing and the vital need for your assistance.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Loretta H. Rush". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Loretta H. Rush
Chief Justice of Indiana

Summary of Indiana Supreme Court Operational Budget Requests:

- Increasing the Court Technology annual appropriation from \$17.58M to \$20.58M.
- A new annual appropriation of \$1.5M for court security.
- Increasing the Collaborative Justice Fund annual appropriation from \$6M to \$7.5M to fund Family Recovery Courts and Safe Baby Courts.