

JUDICIAL CROSSROADS TASK FORCE COURT STRUCTURE AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Support the continued use of weighted caseload methodology to determine judicial need, as modified and improved with the assistance of the National Center for State Courts.
2. Support attrition-based reductions of judgeships to the extent they do not adversely impact current levels of service or public safety.
3. Support the consolidation of court services on a sub-county, county, or multi-county basis, pursuant to concurrent jurisdiction plans designed and approved by all courts within the jurisdiction.
 - Impasses should be mediated and resolved through the State Court Administrative Office.
 - The judges of courts participating in a consolidated plan should be authorized to elect the chief judge of the consolidated court.
 - Regardless of the nature or extent of a consolidated court plan, the electoral boundaries of courts within the geographic boundaries of the consolidated court should not change.
 - In exercising its constitutional authority to determine the number of judges needed in a court, the Supreme Court through the State Court Administrative Office should take into account whether the court is making maximum use of its available resources.
 - No later than 60 days after a vacancy occurs in any trial court, the State Court Administrative Office should review the judicial resource needs of the court, and the Supreme Court should recommend to the Governor and the legislature whether the seat should be filled or the judgeship eliminated.
4. Support ensuring that every court has full and unfettered responsibility for the custody and control of its own records, to guarantee accountability and efficiency, and to maximize savings.
5. Support stabilizing the determination of judicial salaries, with adjustments to Court of Appeals and trial court judges' salaries tied to a Civil Service schedule. This recommendation reflects the reality that, although judgeships are elected offices, they are unlike all other state elected offices. Only lawyers are eligible for judgeships, and when successful, they must relinquish their legal careers entirely and conform to a code of conduct that strictly limits other sources of income.
6. Support the provision of health care benefits to all trial court judges and employees on the same basis as is available to all other state employees. Such a provision is not only fair and equitable, it would also facilitate the coordination and consolidation of court services in jurisdictions where such coordination and consolidation can result in substantial savings.
7. Support the creation of Judicial Council to provide administrative direction for the trial court system, under the constitutional authority of the Supreme Court. The Judicial Council would have the following characteristics, based on the successful Minnesota model:
 - Chaired by the Chief Justice of the Michigan Supreme Court
 - Responsible for the development and adoption of a strategic plan which serves as the foundation of the Council's policy-making responsibilities
 - Staffed by the State Court Administrative Office

- 19 members appointed by the Supreme Court, including both the chief justice and another justice, the chief judge of the Court of Appeals, and trial court judges with broad geographic and jurisdictional representation. Include president of the SBM or his/her designee to act as an ex-officio.
 - Members serve three-year terms.
8. Support the amendment of Public Act 185 of 1990 – the act authorizing party-funded trials conducted by retired judges – to allow appeals from the decisions of such trials.
 9. Support Mental Health Code and Revised Judicature Code reforms that allow meaningful pre-court intervention in appropriate circumstances, and more timely and ongoing access to treatment and services.
 10. Support a shift of funding from Department of Corrections spending to the State Court Administrative Office for the expansion of drug courts and family drug courts statewide.