

# JUDICIAL BRANCH BUDGET HEARING WRAP

## Wednesday, February 26, 2025



### **General Overview:**

Pennsylvania Supreme Court Justices Christine Donohue and P. Kevin Brobson and Pennsylvania Court Administrator Andrea Tuominen testified before the House Appropriations Committee this afternoon on behalf of the judicial branch of Pennsylvania's state government. House Republicans focused their questions on how the courts plan to spend proposed funding increases, how the governor's proposal for recreational marijuana would impact them, and the long-term fiscal health of the judicial branch.

### **Key Takeaways:**

- The Pennsylvania Judicial branch was the victim of a massive cyber-attack, and members questioned the courts about how they are working to improve their cyber security.
- Committee members shared their concerns with courts on recreational marijuana. While the justices acknowledged that there will be "a lot of collateral consequences" of enactment, they declined to offer recommendations on how they intend to navigate the issues likely to face the justice system.
- The Pennsylvania Justice Network (JNET) is an invaluable tool used by judges and law enforcement. The court's budget proposal requested a 40% increase for the JNET line item. When questioned, the justices asserted that this increase reflects a necessary investment to keep the system operational.
- Committee members also raised concerns about the sustainability of the judiciary branch's reliance on fees to fund their operations. This issue poses potential challenges that need to be addressed moving forward.

### **Notable Q&A:**



Rep. Marla Brown asked the justices how they are protecting seniors and what their recommendations are for working with juvenile offenders after the closure of the state Youth Detention Centers.

Rep. Josh Kail discusses merit-based selection process for judges instead of direct elections.



Rep. Charity Krupa inquires about the fiscal sustainability of the judicial branch and the reliance on fees for operating expenses.