

JUDICIARY

BUDGET HEARING WRAP

Monday, March 2, 2026



General Overview:

Pennsylvania Supreme Court Justices Kevin M. Dougherty 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 asked the justices their thoughts on the Governor's proposed budget, the use of AI, and concerns with recreational marijuana.

Key Takeaways:

- The Governor is proposing a total General Fund spending amount of \$500.2 million for the Judiciary in Fiscal Year 2026-27, an overall increase of \$46.7 million, or 10.3%, over the current fiscal year.
 - The Judicial Branch also receives part of its funding through various fees, which are not included in General Fund spending support.
- The Judiciary began its budget hearing by stating that it requested an increase of \$64 million for FY 2026-27, meaning the Governor's proposal falls \$18 million short of the Judiciary's full budget request.
 - The justices claim this request represents the true cost of meeting the courts' obligations.
- House Republicans learned that Treatment Courts are working effectively in providing second-chance opportunities for mental health and substance abuse-related offenses.
 - Overall, treatment courts continue to show improved success year after year.
- Committee members also shared concerns that the Governor's recreational marijuana proposal won't result in any cost savings for the Judicial Branch, as the Governor has said.
 - The justices confirmed that the Judiciary has not provided an official estimate to the Governor's Office of the costs or cost savings associated with the proposal to legalize recreational marijuana.
- The Judiciary was asked to provide an update on cybersecurity across state and county computer systems. Many County Courts still require upgrades, but several Cybersecurity Regional Summits planned for this spring will assist with training.
- AI has become more prevalent in all areas of life, including its use in legal documents. House Republicans were informed that AI is not generally used by employees in the Court system.
 - At this point, there is no official policy for an attorney using AI in the Pennsylvania Court system.

Notable Q&A:



Rep. Charity Krupa inquires about the real financial impact on the courts under the Governor's recreational marijuana proposal.

Rep. Josh Kail asks for an update on the use of AI in court proceedings.



Rep. Jim Rigby asked why the Commission for Fairness and Justice needs such a large funding increase.

