

## Executive Summary

### Special Committee on Judicial Compensation

#### SUMMARY

The implementation of the Judicial Compensation Commission (Commission) recommendations will assist the Judiciary in continuing to attract experienced and qualified candidates for judgeships who represent the communities in which they serve; recognize the increased responsibilities with added systems, such as Maryland Electronic Court (MDEC), and support equity and fairness, while facilitating efforts to achieve market competitiveness.

The Special Committee on Judicial Compensation (Committee) recommends adopting the recommendations of the Commission.

Current judgeships within Maryland as of March 2, 2026:

Judicial Classification	Filled	Vacant
<b>District Court Judges (including Chief Judge)</b>	112	12
<b>Circuit Court Judges</b>	176	0
<b>Appellate Court Judges (including Chief Judge)</b>	14	1
<b>Supreme Court Justices (including Chief Justice)</b>	7	0

Recommended Salary Increases					
Position	Current Salary: 07/01/2025 (FY 2026)	07/01/2026 (FY 2027)	07/01/2027 (FY 2028)	07/01/2028 (FY 2029)	07/01/2029 (FY 2030)
Chief Justice, Supreme Court of Maryland	\$255,433	\$261,333	\$267,233	\$273,133	\$279,033
Justice, Supreme Court of Maryland	\$236,433	\$242,333	\$248,233	\$254,133	\$260,033
Chief Judge, Appellate Court of Maryland	\$226,633	\$232,533	\$238,433	\$244,333	\$250,233
Judge, Appellate Court of Maryland	\$223,633	\$229,533	\$235,433	\$241,333	\$247,233
Judge, Circuit Court	\$214,433	\$220,333	\$226,233	\$232,133	\$238,033
Chief Judge, District Court	\$223,633	\$229,533	\$235,433	\$241,333	\$247,233
Judge, District Court	\$201,333	\$207,233	\$213,133	\$219,033	\$224,933

Assuming all 322 judgeships are filled, the fiscal impact (including recommended administrative judge stipends) is set forth in the below chart:

<b>Fiscal Year Impact without Fringe Benefits</b>	<b>FY 2027</b>	<b>FY 2028</b>	<b>FY 2029</b>	<b>FY 2030</b>
Total Salaries for all Judgeships	\$69,659,126	\$71,558,926	\$73,458,726	\$75,358,526
Total Stipend (Supplemental) for Administrative Judges	\$277,500	\$277,500	\$277,500	\$277,500
<b>Total Compensation</b>	<b>\$69,936,626</b>	<b>\$71,836,426</b>	<b>\$73,736,226</b>	<b>\$75,636,026</b>
<b>Increase from Prior FY</b>	<b>\$2,177,300</b>	<b>\$1,899,800</b>	<b>\$1,899,800</b>	<b>\$1,899,800</b>

The recommended total increase in compensation for all judges over the course of the four-year period (including the recommended stipends for administrative judges) is: \$7,599,200.

<b>Judicial Classification</b>	<b>Recommended Percentage Increase FY 2027</b>	<b>Recommended Percentage Increase FY 2028</b>	<b>Recommended Percentage Increase FY 2029</b>	<b>Recommended Percentage Increase FY 2030</b>
Chief Justice, Supreme Court of Maryland	2.31%	2.26%	2.21%	2.16%
Justice, Supreme Court of Maryland	2.50%	2.43%	2.38%	2.32%
Chief Judge, Appellate Court of Maryland	2.60%	2.54%	2.47%	2.41%
Judge, Appellate Court of Maryland	2.64%	2.57%	2.51%	2.44%
Judge, Circuit Court	2.75%	2.68%	2.61%	2.54%
Chief Judge, District Court	2.64%	2.57%	2.51%	2.44%
Judge, District Court	2.93%	2.85%	2.77%	2.69%

<b>Hourly Rate for Senior Judges Based on Recommended Increase for Active Judges</b>						
<b>Judicial Classification</b>	<b>FY 2025 Hourly Rate*</b>	<b>FY 2026 Current Hourly Rate</b>	<b>FY 2027 Hourly Rate</b>	<b>FY 2028 Hourly Rate</b>	<b>FY 2029 Hourly Rate</b>	<b>FY 2030 Hourly Rate</b>
Chief Justice, Supreme Court of Maryland	\$124.71	\$129.79	\$132.79	\$135.79	\$138.79	\$141.79
Justice, Supreme Court of Maryland	\$115.06	\$120.14	\$123.14	\$126.13	\$129.13	\$132.13
Chief Judge, Appellate Court of Maryland	\$110.08	\$115.16	\$118.16	\$121.15	\$124.15	\$127.15
Judge, Appellate Court of Maryland	\$108.55	\$113.63	\$116.63	\$119.63	\$122.63	\$125.63
Judge, Circuit Court	\$103.88	\$108.96	\$111.96	\$114.96	\$117.95	\$120.95

Chief Judge, District Court	\$108.55	\$113.63	\$116.63	\$119.63	\$122.63	\$125.63
Judge, District Court	\$97.22	\$102.30	\$105.30	\$108.30	\$111.30	\$114.30

*Hourly rate for FY2025 used for total cost of senior judge utilization.*

<b>Senior Judges Estimated Fiscal Impact based on Total Cost for FY 2025</b>					
<b>Total Senior Judges as of December 11, 2025</b>	<b>Total Cost for FY 2025</b>	<b>Estimated Total Cost for FY 2027</b>	<b>Estimated Total Cost for FY 2028</b>	<b>Estimated Total Cost for FY 2029</b>	<b>Estimated Total Cost for FY 2030</b>
<b>182</b>	\$9,377,859.55	\$10,129,809.89	\$10,403,703.29	\$10,685,448.36	\$10,959,379.17
Estimated Increase (Fringe not included)		\$751,950.34	\$273,893.40	\$281,745.07	\$273,930.81

*The estimated totals for each fiscal year are based on payments to Senior Judges in FY 2025 (\$9,377,859.55)*

<b>Salary Increases for Magistrates Based on Recommended Increase for Active Judges (90% of a District Court Judge's Salary)</b>					
<b>Position</b>	<b>Current Salary FY 2026</b>	<b>FY 2027</b>	<b>FY 2028</b>	<b>FY 2029</b>	<b>FY 2030</b>
<b>Magistrate</b>	\$181,200	\$186,510	\$191,820	\$197,130	\$202,440
<b>Estimated Fiscal Year Impact for Total Magistrate Compensation (Fringe not included)</b>	\$12,684,000	\$13,055,679	\$13,427,379	\$13,799,079	\$14,170,779
<b>Estimated Increase from Prior FY (Fringe not included)</b>		<b>\$371,700</b>	<b>\$371,700</b>	<b>\$371,700</b>	<b>\$371,700</b>

Currently there are 67 active Magistrates. Allegany County has a part-time magistrate. There are 70 Magistrates PINs. 3 PINs at 1.0 are vacant and .40 is vacant (Allegany).

### **Findings of the Special Committee on Judicial Compensation**

As has been past practice, the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court appointed a Special Committee on Judicial Compensation consisting of incumbent judges and support staff from the Judiciary. This Committee has met several times over the last six months to consider the issues associated with judicial compensation in order to prepare this report, which consists of comparative data and an analysis of judicial salaries in states similar to Maryland in their geography, economy, and judicial structure for presentation to the Commission.

As a result of this study, the Committee noted several areas of concern:

- **Judicial Salaries Versus Inflation:** Over the past 20 years (2005 – 2025) Maryland judicial salaries have historically not kept pace with inflation. However, the Commission has taken this into consideration in recent years. Currently, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics Consumer Price Index (CPI-U), the cost of living for all urban consumers in the Northeast United States increased by 92.40% over the most recent 20 years. Judicial salaries increased by 56% to 75% during that same time. The Bureau of Labor Statistics reports that the cost-of-living for all urban consumers in the Baltimore/Washington Region also increased by 84.87% over the most recent 20 years.
- **Regional Ranking:** Of the nine regional states with which Maryland is most comparable geographically and economically, the salaries of Maryland judges currently rank in the bottom half: Circuit Court – sixth; Appellate Court– fourth; Supreme Court– sixth; Chief Justice, Supreme Court – sixth. Of the seven states (including Maryland) having limited jurisdiction courts comparable to the District Court, Maryland ranked third out of seven without the cost-of-living factor being applied and ranked fourth out of seven with the cost-of-living factor being applied.
- **National Ranking:** Of the fifty states and the District of Columbia<sup>1</sup> in a national ranking, the salaries of Maryland judges have gained in their competitive positions in terms of absolute dollars, but when a cost-of-living factor is applied, the salaries fall short. With the cost-of-living factor applied, the ranking is: Circuit Court – 38th, Appellate Court – 35th, Supreme Court of Maryland – 37th, Chief Justice, Supreme Court – 29th. Without the cost-of-living factor, the ranking is: Circuit Court – 15th, Appellate Court – 13th, Supreme Court – 14th; Chief Justice, Supreme Court – 11th.
- **Federal Judicial Salaries:** A prior Committee recommended keeping pace with federal judicial salaries to maintain Maryland’s competitive standing, which it believed was critical, given Maryland’s proximity to the District of Columbia. However, it appears the gap between Maryland judicial salaries and federal judicial salaries continues to widen. For example, a judge on the federal intermediate appellate court earns a salary of \$262,300 while a judge on the Appellate Court – Maryland’s intermediate court – earns a salary of \$223,633, a difference of \$38,667.
- **Legal Associate Salaries:** According to Chambers Associate and Vault (2025), a District of Columbia Law Firm 1st year Associate makes \$223,909, which is \$22,576 more than an associate judge of the District Court and \$9,476 more than an associate judge of the Circuit Court. In their third year, a District of Columbia Law Firm Associate makes more than every single judge in the Maryland Judiciary, including \$3,900 more than the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court.
- **Law Professor Salaries:** According to University of Baltimore Compensation Analyst, a University of Baltimore Law School Professor salary average is \$207,635, which is \$6,302 more than an associate judge of the District Court. According to University of Maryland Compensation Manager, a University of Maryland Law School Professor salary average is \$254,573, which is \$53,240 more than an associate Judge of the District Court and \$40,140 more than an associate judge of the Circuit Court.

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<sup>1</sup> The National Center for State Courts (NCSC) Survey of Judicial Salaries includes U.S. Territories that are not included in this summary.