

Special Session



Kansas Supreme Court

10 a.m.

**APRIL
29**

LIFE Center

Logan Intergenerational
Family Education Center

**601 W. North St.
Logan**

Public reception afterward

No Electronics

Cellphones, cameras, and other electronic devices must be silenced and stored out of sight while court is in session.

ON THE COVER

**Supreme
Court justices:
K.J. Wall;
Caleb Stegall;
Eric Rosen;
Marla Luckert
(chief justice);
Dan Biles;
Evelyn Wilson;
and Melissa
Standridge.**

April 2025

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301 SW 10th Ave.
Topeka, KS 66612-1507
kscourts.gov
785-296-2256

Welcome

This special session is the Kansas Supreme Court's first visit to Logan as part of its outreach to familiarize Kansans with the court, its work, and the overall role of the Kansas judiciary. Logan is the 25th community the court has visited since 2011. When this session concludes, we invite you to join us for an informal public reception.

This morning you will hear oral argument in one case. An oral argument is a discussion of facts and law involved in a case on appeal. Attorneys representing each side of a case are granted 15 minutes to present their arguments. The court can grant additional time.

The court ordinarily sits in its courtroom in the Kansas Judicial Center, but it has arranged this special session to make its work accessible to more people. The procedures are the same as if the justices were sitting in their courtroom.

Special thanks

The Supreme Court extends a heartfelt thanks to the Logan Intergenerational Family Education Center, Logan High School, and USD No. 326, specifically Mike Gower, superintendent, and David Kirkendall, principal, and local attorney Brien Stockman. Everyone has gone beyond their regular duties to make our visit successful.

We also thank Phillips County Government Emergency Services, Kansas Highway Patrol, and Kansas Department for Wildlife and Parks for providing security and being on hand in case there is a medical emergency. Thanks also to Chief Judge Paula Hofaker and the judges and staff of the 17th Judicial District for helping us plan and carry out our visit.

In 2011, the Supreme Court began conducting special sessions outside its Topeka courtroom. That year, it marked the state's 150th anniversary by convening in the historic Supreme Court courtroom in the Kansas Statehouse. The court returned to the Statehouse for another special session in January 2025. Since then, the court has conducted special sessions in:

- Colby
- Concordia
- Dodge City
- El Dorado
- Emporia
- Garden City
- Great Bend
- Greensburg
- Hays
- Hiawatha
- Hutchinson
- Kansas City
- Lansing
- Lawrence
- Louisburg
- Manhattan
- Overland Park
- Parsons
- Pittsburg
- Salina
- Topeka
- Wichita
- Winfield

Oral argument

An oral argument is an oral presentation attorneys make to the court. It is an opportunity for attorneys



Justice Dan Biles asks an attorney a question during an oral argument at the Hays special session. (Photo courtesy of Mitch Weber, FHSU.)

to emphasize certain legal points and for the appellate court to ask questions about the case to help clarify the parties' arguments.

Oral argument is not an opportunity to raise new facts or new legal arguments.

Attorneys must limit their presentations to information in

the trial court record and to legal issues raised on appeal.

Order of oral arguments:

- the appellant (party who filed the appeal) speaks first.
- the appellee (opposing party) speaks after the appellant.
- the appellant may follow with a brief rebuttal or reply argument.
- during oral argument, justices may ask the attorneys questions.

Oral arguments are always open to the public. The Supreme Court has its regular sessions in the Kansas Judicial Center in Topeka. The court's docket is available online, as is a livestream of all the court's proceedings. Archived oral arguments are also available. Visit us at kscourts.gov.

Kansas appellate courts

There are two appellate courts in the Kansas judicial system—the Kansas Supreme Court and the Kansas Court of Appeals.

The Court of Appeals hears all appeals from district courts in both civil and criminal cases, except those that may be appealed directly to the Supreme Court. It also has jurisdiction over original actions in habeas corpus and certain appeals from decisions by administrative agencies.

The Supreme Court is the state court of last resort. It hears direct appeals from district courts in the most serious criminal cases and appeals in cases where a statute has been held unconstitutional. It may review decisions by the Court of Appeals, and it may transfer cases from that court to the Supreme Court. It also has jurisdiction over certain original actions.

Appellate procedure

An appeal transfers a case from a trial court to a higher court—an appellate court—for review of the lower court decision or judgment to ensure the law has been followed.

An appellate court does not preside over trials. Appellate court hearings do not involve witnesses, juries, new evidence, or court reporters. Instead, an appellate court reviews the written record of the trial court to determine whether any significant legal errors occurred during the trial. The trial court record includes the evidence admitted during the trial, transcripts of witness testimony, and rulings from the trial court.

Appellate procedure requires that parties provide the court with written arguments called briefs. Briefs describe the facts of the case and lay out the parties' legal arguments. The appellate court studies the briefs, examines the trial court record, and researches relevant law. As part of its review, the appellate court may hear oral argument from the attorneys for the parties.

The Supreme Court moved into the new Kansas Judicial Center in 1978. The building also houses the Kansas Court of Appeals, various court offices, the Clerk of the Appellate Courts, the Supreme Court Law Library, and the Judicial Council.

Sometimes during oral argument, a justice will refer to briefs or other materials such as Kansas statutes. The Kansas appellate courts have made the transition to electronic documents, so some justices access case briefs and other legal materials using their laptop computers they carry with them.

Court decisions

Following oral arguments, the court will discuss in private the legal questions raised in the case. Later, one justice assigned the task of writing the collective decision of the court will begin drafting the court's decision, which is called an opinion. At the same time, the other members of the court are also writing decisions for other cases.

Decision drafts circulate among members of the court. The justices comment on the circulating decision drafts and debate legal points with each other. This process continues until a majority of justices agree on a final version of a decision.

A justice who disagrees with the majority decision may write a dissent that explains why the justice disagrees. A justice who agrees with the result, but not necessarily for the same reasons, may write a special concurrence.

Court decisions are posted on the Kansas judicial branch website as soon as they are released, typically around 9:30 a.m. Friday, although they can be released any day of the week.

Visit the court's search decisions page at kscourts.gov/Cases-Decisions/Decisions.

The Supreme Court can:



- uphold the decision or order of the lower court.



- set aside the decision or order of the lower court.



- return to the trial court with instructions, such as ordering a new trial.

Courtroom participants



Justice
K.J. Wall



Justice
Caleb Stegall



Justice
Eric Rosen



Chief Justice
Marla Luckert



Justice
Dan Biles



Justice
Evelyn Wilson



Justice Melissa
Standridge



Bailiff



Court
Clerk



Appellant
Counsel



Appellee
Counsel



Lectern

Bench: The Supreme Court sits at the front of the courtroom on a raised platform called the bench. The justice with the most seniority on the bench—the chief justice—sits in the center and the remaining justices alternate taking seats to her right and to her left in order of their seniority. The newest justice on the bench sits to the chief justice’s far left or, if you are facing the bench, to your right.

Clerk: The Clerk of the Appellate Courts sits at a table near the court’s right end of the bench. The clerk calls the docket at the beginning of the court session.

Bailiff: Court is called to order by the bailiff. Everyone in the courtroom stands when justices enter the courtroom and again when they leave. The honorary bailiff for today’s session is Debra Grammon. She is mayor of Logan and retired in September 2024 after 24 years as clerk of the district court for Phillips County.

Attorneys: Attorneys scheduled to argue are seated at tables before the bench. Appellant counsel sits nearest the clerk and appellee counsel sits nearest the lectern. Each attorney’s time is monitored by the chief justice and arguments are stopped when the time allotted expires. Justices may ask questions throughout an attorney’s argument to clarify issues the court will discuss later in case conference.

Case to be heard

Appeal No. 127,534: *State of Kansas (appellant) v. Stanton S. Holt (appellee)*

Counsel for Appellant: Kristen Patty

Counsel for Appellees: Andrew Lohmann, assistant solicitor general, Kansas Attorney General's Office

Geary County: (Criminal Appeal) Holt is serving two consecutive life sentences plus 123 to 355 years in prison. A jury convicted Holt in 1994 in Geary County District Court of two counts of first-degree murder, as well as multiple counts of aggravated burglary and other charges related to a series of burglaries in 1993. In October 2020, Holt filed a motion for postconviction DNA testing of trial evidence. The district court initially ordered the evidence be sent to the Kansas Bureau of Investigation lab for testing. However, the district court later rescinded the testing order and denied Holt's motion after hearing testimony from a KBI supervisor at an evidentiary hearing. The KBI supervisor testified that the evidence the lab received wasn't appropriately preserved and lacked documentation. The district court concluded that because of how the evidence had been packaged and stored since the trial, DNA testing of the evidence would not produce results accurate to a reasonable degree of scientific certainty. Holt appeals, claiming the district court erred in denying his motion. Holt asserts Kansas law allows him to seek DNA testing and that whether the results of the testing would be accurate to a reasonable degree of scientific certainty is not a factor under the law. The State argues the district court correctly denied Holt's motion for postconviction DNA testing because the evidence had undergone DNA testing at the time of trial. It further argues that even if new DNA testing is done, the condition of the evidence would result in the DNA testing being meaningless or inconclusive.

Kansas Supreme Court

The Kansas Supreme Court is the highest court in the state court system. A Supreme Court decision sets binding legal precedent that lower courts must follow.

The Supreme Court also regulates the practice of law in Kansas through its authority to admit persons to practice as attorneys in the courts of Kansas, to prescribe rules to supervise attorney conduct, and to discipline attorneys.

The Supreme Court also approves rules of procedure and practice used throughout state courts in Kansas. Under the Kansas Constitution, the court has supervisory authority over the entire judicial branch and over all judicial officers and court employees.

Becoming a justice

Supreme Court justices are appointed through a merit-based nomination process that Kansans voted to add to the Kansas Constitution in 1958.

When there is a vacancy on the bench, the Supreme Court Nominating Commission reviews applications and conducts public interviews of the nominees. The commission narrows the nominee pool to three names that it sends to the governor. The governor chooses one nominee to appoint.

The Supreme Court Nominating Commission has nine members. There is one lawyer and one nonlawyer from each of the state's four congressional districts, plus one lawyer who serves as chairperson. Nonlawyers are appointed by the governor. Lawyers are elected by other lawyers within their congressional districts. The chairperson is elected by lawyers statewide.

There have been 82 Supreme Court justices since Kansas became a state in 1861. Of them, six have been women. The first woman appointed to the bench was Kay McFarland in 1977. She became the first woman to serve as chief justice in 1995. She retired from the bench in 2009 and died in 2015 at age 80.

Learn more about the Supreme Court Nominating Commission at kscourts.gov/Judges/Become-a-Judge/Supreme-Court-Nominating-Commission.

Judges and justices must follow the law and not be influenced by politics, special interest groups, public opinion, or their own personal beliefs.

When the Supreme Court Nominating Commission reviews nominees for justice, they look at the person's:

- legal and judicial experience;
- educational background;
- character and ethics;
- temperament;
- service to the community;
- impartiality; and
- respect of colleagues.

Judges and justices demonstrate their accountability by following a Code of Judicial Conduct that establishes standards of ethical behavior. They also take an oath of office that includes swearing to support, protect, and defend the U.S. Constitution and Kansas Constitution.

Retention elections

Once a justice takes a seat on the bench, their term expires the second Monday in January following the first general election that occurs after the justice has served 12 months in office.

To remain on the bench, the justice must file a declaration of intention with the Secretary of State at least 60 days prior to the next general election. The justice's name then will appear on the ballot. Justices retained by voters serve six-year terms. Retirement is mandatory at age 75 or on completing the term in which the justice turns 75.

William Agnew Johnston was the longest-serving member of the Kansas Supreme Court. He was an associate justice from 1884 to 1903 and then chief justice from 1903 to 1935—a total of 51 years. He served when justices were directly elected by voters and when there were no age restrictions. The chief justice died in 1937 at the age of 88.

Chief Justice Marla Luckert



Luckert was appointed to the Supreme Court in 2003. She became chief justice in 2019. Luckert is a fourth generation native of Sherman County and a graduate of Goodland High School. She then moved to Topeka, where she received her bachelor's and law degrees with academic honors from Washburn University, which has awarded her an

honorary Doctor of Law degree. She served as technical editor of the Washburn Law Journal and received faculty and alumni awards for best student note.

Luckert joined a Topeka law firm. Her peers selected her to be in The Best Lawyers in America. She also was an adjunct professor of law at Washburn University.

She was appointed district judge of the 3rd Judicial District (Shawnee County) in 1992. She became chief judge in 2000.

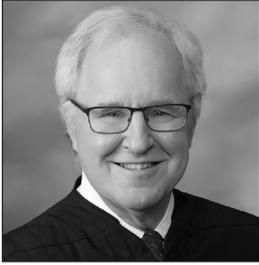
Luckert is co-chair of the Civil Justice Committee of the joint Conference of Chief Justices and State Court Administrators, and a past member of the board of directors of the Chief Justices Conference. She also serves on the Judicial Conference of the United States Committee on Federal-State Jurisdiction and was selected for membership in the American Law Institute. She is past president of many judicial and attorney organizations.

She received a certificate of recognition from the Legal Services Corporation for extraordinary commitment to providing equal access to justice and increased pro bono practice in Kansas. She received distinguished service awards from Washburn University and many law-related organizations, the 19th Amendment Centennial Celebration Committee's Outstanding Woman of Kansas, and the Topeka YWCA Woman of Excellence and Go Topeka's Entrepreneurial and Minority Business Development Program Woman of Influence awards.

She has served on charitable and civic boards and been an active community volunteer, including delivering Meals on Wheels.

Read Luckert's full biography at kscourts.gov/Judges/Supreme-Court-Justices/Marla-J-Luckert.

Justice Eric Rosen



Rosen was appointed to the Supreme Court in 2005.

Rosen is from Topeka and earned a bachelor's degree and a master's degree with honors from the University of Kansas. He received his law degree from Washburn University School of Law. Rosen served 12 years as judge in the 3rd Judicial District (Shawnee

County). He also served two years as chief judge of the district's domestic division. Rosen was a partner in the law firm of Hein, Ebert, and Rosen. He also served as associate general counsel for the Kansas Securities Commissioner and as assistant district attorney and assistant public defender in Shawnee County.

Rosen graduated from Appellate Judges School at New York University School of Law and is a member of that school's Dwight D. Opperman Institute of Judicial Administration. He is a member of the American Judges Association, American Judicature Society, Kansas District Judges Association, and the Kansas and Topeka Bar Associations.

In 2002, Rosen served on a 24-member presidential commission charged with commemorating the 50th anniversary of the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision of the U.S. Supreme Court. Other commendations include the E. Newton Vickers Professionalism Award, the Smiling Bull Award from the Leavenworth County Bar Association, the Martin Luther King Living the Dream Humanitarian Award, an honorary diploma and certificate of honor for his many contributions to Topeka High School, the Attorney General's Victim Service Award for Outstanding Judge, and the Topeka Capital-Journal's Kansan of Distinction in the area of law. In 2013, he was inducted into the Topeka West High School graduate hall of fame.

Rosen serves as chair of the Kansas Judicial Council. He is the Supreme Court liaison for attorney disciplinary matters, the Lawyers Assistance Program, Judges Assistance Committee, and to court services officers.

Read his full biography at kscourts.gov/Judges/Supreme-Court-Justices/Eric-S-Rosen.

Justice Dan Biles



Biles was appointed to the Supreme Court in 2009.

Biles was born in El Dorado. He graduated from Kansas State University with a degree in journalism and from Washburn University School of Law.

While in law school, Biles worked for The Associated Press in Topeka until 1980, when he served as assistant attorney general in the litigation division under Robert Stephan. In 1985, he entered private practice in Overland Park, where he focused on administrative, trial, and appellate work on behalf of individuals, corporations, and various state, county, and local government agencies. He represented the Kansas State Board of Education as its private attorney until he was appointed to the Supreme Court.

Biles is a past chair of the National Council of State Education Attorneys, which is connected to the National Association of State Boards of Education, Washington, D.C. In 2009, he received the state education attorneys' Douglas F. Bates Distinguished Service Award.

He has been active in many organizations and has served on the board of directors of Community Living Opportunities Inc., a Kansas nonprofit corporation serving more than 300 children and adults with severe developmental disabilities in residential, day programs, and case management. He also served as an advisory board member of the Johnson County Housing Coalition.

Biles is the Supreme Court liaison for electronic case filing and electronic case management in state district and appellate courts, a multiyear effort that will improve court efficiency and generate cost savings. He also is court liaison for pro se litigants, the Alternative Dispute Resolution Council, technology and computer services, and the Kansas Bar Association's federal courts committee.

Read his full biography at kscourts.gov/Judges/Supreme-Court-Justices/Dan-Biles.

Justice Caleb Stegall



Stegall was appointed to the Supreme Court in 2014.

Stegall was born in Topeka and grew up in Lawrence. He graduated from Lawrence High School in 1989 and from the University of Kansas School of Law in 1999. He lives in rural Jefferson County.

Stegall is the Supreme Court liaison for the Client Protection Fund Commission, Judicial Conduct Commission, Judicial Ethics Advisory Panel, and to court clerks. He is also second liaison for the Kansas eCourt Steering Committee, eFiling Committee, and for technology and computer services.

Read his full biography at kscourts.gov/Judges/Supreme-Court-Justices/Caleb-Stegall.

Justice Evelyn Wilson



Evelyn Zabel Wilson joined the Kansas Supreme Court in January 2020. At the time of her appointment, she was serving as chief judge of the 3rd Judicial District (Shawnee County). During her 15-year tenure as a district judge, she presided over at least 80 felony jury trials. She also served a few years as an adjunct professor at Washburn

University School of Law in Topeka, where she taught trial advocacy and advanced trial advocacy classes.

Before her appointment as a district judge, Wilson was managing partner at Wright, Henson, Somers, Sebelius, Clark & Baker of Topeka. During her 12 years at the firm, she was a civil litigation attorney, obtaining an AV rating from Martindale-Hubbell. Prior to her time in Topeka, Wilson spent seven years in a rural, two-person law firm in northwest Kansas, where she tried both civil and criminal cases to juries and practiced in the areas of criminal, personal injury, municipal, contract, banking, probate, divorce, adoption, appellate, and workers compensation law. She also served as Oberlin city counselor and prosecutor for several years.

Her memberships include the American Bar Association, Kansas Bar Association, Kansas Bar Foundation, Kansas Women Attorneys Association, Sam A. Crow Inn of Court, Topeka Bar Association, Topeka Lawyers Club, Women Attorneys Association of Topeka, and Grace Episcopal Cathedral.

Wilson is a graduate of Bethany College and Washburn University School of Law, and she is a third-generation Kansan.

Read her full biography at kscourts.gov/Judges/Supreme-Court-Justices/Evelyn-Z-Wilson.

Justice Keynen “K.J.” Wall Jr.



Wall was appointed to the Supreme Court in 2020.

Wall is from Scott City and earned a bachelor's degree in communications from Kansas State University, where he was CEDA National Debate Champion and National Debate All-American in 1993.

He then earned a master's degree in scientific and technical communications from the University of Minnesota in 1996, and a law degree from the University of Kansas School of Law, graduating Order of the Coif in December 2001.

After law school, Wall was a law clerk for Chief Judge John W. Lungstrum of the U.S. District Court for the District of Kansas. In 2004 he became associate attorney for Witwer, Oldenburg, Barry & Johnson in Greeley, Colorado, and in 2008, senior legal counsel for Federated Insurance in Owatonna, Minnesota.

Wall returned to Kansas in 2013 as special projects counsel and deputy general counsel for the Kansas Supreme Court, where he handled capital cases and special projects.

He was a partner of Forbes Law Group, LLC, at the time of his appointment and represented county hospitals, rural healthcare providers, and community mental health centers throughout Kansas.

Wall is the Supreme Court liaison to the Child Support Guidelines Advisory Committee, KU Law Research Clinic, Access to Justice Committee, Language Access Committee, and the Board of Examiners of Court Reporters. He currently chairs the Kansas Supreme Court's Rural Justice Initiative Committee.

Read his full biography at kscourts.gov/Judges/Supreme-Court-Justices/Keynen-KJ-Wall.

Justice Melissa Standridge



Standridge was appointed to the Supreme Court in 2020 after serving 12 years on the Court of Appeals.

Standridge received her bachelor's degree from the University of Kansas and her law degree from the University of Missouri-Kansas City School of Law, where she graduated cum laude. She served as editor-in-

chief of the UMKC Law Review, and received the Clerk Boardman Callaghan Award, Exemplary Third-Year Student.

After graduating law school, Standridge was chambers counsel for U.S. District Judge Elmo Hunter, U.S. District Court of Western Missouri. She then joined Shook, Hardy & Bacon as an associate attorney. Before being appointed to the Court of Appeals, she served as chambers counsel for U.S. District Magistrate Judge David Waxse, U.S. District Court of Kansas.

She has received service awards from the Kansas Bar Association, UMKC School of Law, and the American Inns of Court, as well as the Carol Foreman Medal of Civility from the Kansas Women Attorneys Association, Diversity Award from the Kansas Bar Association, Angel in Adoption for the 3rd Congressional District from the Congressional Coalition on Adoption Institute, Kansas City Legal Leaders of the Year Award from The Daily Record and the Tierra Farrow Community Leadership Award from the UMKC Women Law Student Association.

She has served on charitable and civic group boards and been an active community volunteer, including delivering Meals on Wheels.

Standridge is the Supreme Court liaison to the Board of Law Examiners, Admissions Review Committee, attorney registration, Board of Law Examiners, National Center for State Courts' family plans and programs, Kansas Children's Cabinet, Permanent Families Account Advisory Committee, and the Task Force on Permanency Planning.

Read her full biography at kscourts.gov/Judges/Supreme-Court-Justices/Melissa-Taylor-Standridge.

About the Kansas judicial branch

Kansas state government, like our federal government, is composed of three branches: the legislative branch, which makes laws; the executive branch, which enforces laws; and the judicial branch, which interprets and applies laws.

Kansas courts are unified in the judicial branch. In 1972, voters added to the Kansas Constitution an amendment that vests judicial power in a single court system, giving the Supreme Court general administrative authority over all courts in Kansas.

Kansas courts—including district courts, the Court of Appeals, and the Supreme Court—provide the people of Kansas a venue to resolve disputes through a legal process by interpreting and applying the law and by determining when laws are unconstitutional.

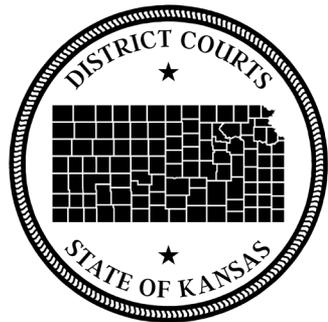
District courts

District courts are trial courts, with general original jurisdiction over all criminal and civil cases, including divorce and domestic relations, damage suits, probate and estate administration, guardianships, conservatorships, care of the mentally ill, juvenile matters, and small claims. They are where criminal and civil jury trials take place.

District courts are created by the Kansas Constitution. They are grouped in 31 judicial districts, and each district has at least one district judge. The districts vary in size from one to many counties and in number of judges.

Kansas statutes require that each county have a district court with at least one judge, either district or magistrate, who is a resident of and has a principal office in that county. Each district court also is required to have an office of the clerk of the court where cases may be filed.

Each judicial district has a chief judge who makes case assignments and has general supervisory authority over the clerical and



administrative functions of the court. The chief judge may appoint a chief clerk, chief clerk administrator, or court administrator to help with administrative functions, such as jury management, personnel administration, and budget preparation.

Each judicial district also has a court services division in which court services officers supervise the probation of nearly 17,000 adult and juvenile offenders statewide, work with children in need of care, conduct home studies or mediations for divorce and child custody issues, and research and write presentence investigation reports.

Caseload

In fiscal year 2024, nearly than 334,000 cases were filed in Kansas district courts, including about:

- 1,600 adoptions
- 3,100 property disputes
- 10,200 probate cases
- 8,700 divorces
- 12,000 misdemeanor cases
- 20,300 felony cases
- 95,700 contract disputes

District courts also protected vulnerable Kansans by issuing about 15,300 restraining orders and processing more than 4,800 child in need of care cases.

Budget

Funding for Kansas courts accounts for less than 1% of all funds in the state budget.

The judicial branch budget for fiscal year 2025, which began July 1, 2024, is about \$222.2 million. Of that amount, about \$211.0 million is from the state general fund.

The balance of the judicial branch budget—about \$11.2 million—comes from grants, pass-through funding, and fees. Beginning in fiscal year 2023, all fees, fines, and forfeitures paid to courts are deposited into the state general fund or other state and local expenditure-specific funds as spelled out in statute. These deposits to the state general fund also include fees that fund core judiciary

operations.

Expenditures

Each Kansas county pays the operating expenses for the district court in its county. This includes costs to maintain court facilities and provide necessary office supplies and equipment.

With most district court building and operating expenses paid by counties, the base judicial branch budget is used primarily to pay salaries for 290 judges and justices and about 1,700 employees. For fiscal year 2025, about 90% of our budget request is to fund salaries and wages.

Funding requests

The 2024 Legislature appropriated funding for a 5% salary increase for all non-judge judicial branch employees as of July 1, 2024. The judiciary thanks the Kansas Legislature for its work to strengthen the court system by making these appropriations.

To maintain a well-functioning judiciary, we must continue to offer employee salaries that are competitive in the job market. To account for the continuing impact of inflation, we asked for a cost-of-living adjustment in our fiscal year 2026 budget request.



Chief Justice Marla Luckert delivers her State of the Judiciary address in January 2024. State officials and Kansas legislators were in the audience.

In fiscal year 2018, Kansas judges received their first salary increase of any kind in nine fiscal years. It was a 2.5% increase. Without increases during those nine years, Kansas judge salaries fell far behind the market in pay. Since fiscal year 2018, Kansas

judges received pay increases to begin to address this gap. As of July

1, 2024, Kansas judges ranked 48 out of 50 states in actual salaries according to a report from the National Center for State Courts.

The judicial branch budget request for fiscal year 2025 includes funding needed to implement the new judicial salary formula codified after the Legislature passed 2023 House Substitute for Senate Bill 229. This formula uses district judge salaries as its lodestar. Beginning January 1, 2025, district court judges will earn 75% of the annual salary of a U.S. district judge. Salaries for the remaining classes of Kansas judges are calculated from the resulting district judge figure.

Judges have profound responsibilities. Among the weightiest are when they are called to impose death and other significant criminal sentences that deprive others of life and liberty. They also resolve child custody disputes that affect fundamental parental rights. And they conduct many other criminal and civil proceedings that result in life-altering judgments. Kansans want highly qualified individuals to make the decisions asked of judges.



Fair and impartial courts for all Kansans