



# NEWS RELEASE

Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts

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## **Budget Cuts Leave 6 Percent of Federal Court Jobs Vacant**

As the federal Judiciary awaits its fiscal year 2005 appropriation from Congress, courts already caught in a money crunch have slashed 1,350 jobs in the past 12 months.

The Judiciary is believed to be the only federal entity that was forced to downsize to this degree, a cut that represents 6 percent of the employees who worked for clerks of court or probation and pretrial services offices.

The cuts hit both large and small court staffs throughout the country. The Western District of Tennessee lost the highest percentage of its employees from October 5, 2003 to October 17, 2004—30 out of 192, for a 15.6 percent cut. A close second is Alaska, which lost 11 of its 72 employees—a 15.3 percent cut. The Central District of California, based in Los Angeles, lost the largest number, 80 of its 957 employees.

“These cuts come at a time when homeland security, criminal, and bankruptcy filings are spiraling upward, and when the fiscal year 2005 budget remains in question,” said Leonidas Ralph Mecham, Director of the Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts. “The Judiciary again faces the possibility of budget cuts for FY 05, including across-the-board reductions, which could reduce court funds below the level needed to avoid scores of additional lay-offs in the coming year.”

The Judiciary’s budget is less than two-tenths of one percent of the entire federal budget.

In addition to the 1,350 jobs that were lost, another 509 employees were furloughed for budget reasons. Many courts have reduced the public hours in their clerks’ offices, cutback on drug testing and drug treatment for convicted felons released from prison, and either frozen or dramatically reduced training, non-case-related travel and new contracts. In September, the Judiciary’s policy-making body, the Judicial Conference of the United States, approved a series of cost-containment measures, which were intended to mitigate the number of future job reductions.

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The following courts have lost more than 10 percent of their jobs in the past year:

Tennessee (Western)

Alaska

Oklahoma (Northern)

Puerto Rico

District of Columbia

New York (Northern)

Arkansas (Eastern)

New York (Eastern)

South Carolina

California (Eastern)

In July 2004, the House passed an appropriations bill that would provide \$4.177 billion for the Judiciary's Salaries and Expenses account for FY 05 — a 5.6 percent increase over FY 04. Two months later the Senate Appropriations Committee approved \$4.13 billion for the same account, a 3 percent increase.

Last month Judiciary leaders appealed to Congress to fund the Judiciary's Salaries and Expenses account at \$4.197 billion, which would provide for the payment of fixed expenses such as rent and return court staffing to the early 2004 level. The Congressional appeal letter can be read at: <http://www.uscourts.gov/judiciary2005.html>

For more information on the Judiciary's budget see: <http://www.uscourts.gov/judiciary2005.html>

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