



MEMORANDUM

Date: March 16, 2026

To: The Honorable Chair and Members
Pima County Board of Supervisors

From: Jan Leshner 
County Administrator

Re: **Additional information for the March 24, 2026 Board of Supervisors Meeting –
Petition for Additional Superior Court Judgeships**

Introduction

Pima County continues to experience sustained population growth and corresponding increases in both civil and criminal filings. Over time, this has placed significant pressure on the existing Superior Court judicial system. While court administration has implemented scheduling efficiencies and case management improvements, the current number of judges is no longer sufficient to meet the County's needs.

The workload per judge has risen to levels that risk creating case backlogs, longer trial wait times, and delays in resolving disputes. These conditions affect not only litigants and attorneys but also victims, defendants, families, and businesses that rely on a functioning and timely court system.

The purpose of this memorandum is to recommend that the Board of Supervisors formally petition the Governor to authorize additional judgeships for the Pima County Superior Court. Increasing the number of judges is necessary to address the county's growing caseload, reduce delays in the judicial process, and ensure timely access to justice for residents.

Discussion

Section 12-121 of the Arizona Revised Statutes provides that, in each county having a census of greater than 30,000 inhabitants, may have a judge of the Superior Court for each 30,000 inhabitants, or majority fraction thereof.

Pima County's population as estimated in July 2024 by the US Census Department (United States Census Bureau data.census.gov) to be 1,080,149. Pursuant to the criteria established by Section 12-121 of the Arizona Revised Statutes, a population of 1,080,149 would allow Pima County a total of 36 Superior Court Judges.

Pima County currently has 30 Superior Court Judgeships and is therefore eligible to add Divisions 31 through 36 of the Superior Court of Pima County, which would enhance the Court's ability to adequately address work and caseloads and would allow improved access to the courts for people in need of the services provided by the justice system. Petitioning the Governor for additional judgeships would help:

- Reduce case backlog and improve case processing times.
- Ensure compliance with recommended judicial workload standards.
- Enhance public confidence in the judicial system.

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- Improve access to justice for residents of Pima County.
- Support efficient resolution of criminal, civil, family, and probate matters.

It is estimated that the cost for each additional judge for personnel and necessary equipment is \$829,527. The cost for each additional courtroom is \$3,501,428.

Personnel Costs - Salary & ERE	
Judge	\$ 200,000
Judicial Administrative Assistant	\$ 77,407
Judicial Law Clerk II	\$ 94,099
Court Reporter	\$ 108,919
Courtroom Clerk II	\$ 77,407
Court Security Officer	\$ 77,407
ERE	\$ 70,000
	\$ 705,239
Courtroom Design and Construction	
Construction costs	\$ 2,525,714
Consultation Fees	\$ 407,286
Additional project costs (furniture, technology, AV, Security)	\$ 315,857
Contingency	\$ 252,571
	\$ 3,501,428
ITSD Costs per Courtroom	
Jury Audio/Visual	\$ 175,000
Courtroom PCs and Monitors	\$ 6,880
Printer	\$ 675
Software Licenses	\$ 1,742
	\$ 184,297
ITSD Cost per Chambers	
Judge laptop w/monitors	\$ 2,800
JAA standard desktop w/ monitors	\$ 1,635
Law Clerk/Bailiff laptop w/ monitors	\$ 1,831
Printers (2)	\$ 2,000
Software Licenses	\$ 3,725
	\$ 11,991
Cost per Judge w/o Courtroom	\$ 901,527
Cost per Judge w/Courtroom	\$ 4,402,955

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Pima County Superior Court currently maintains the workload and compliance with judicial standards through the utilization of Court Commissioners. These individuals are first recommended by a selection committee made up of judges, lawyers and others and are then appointed by the Presiding Judge. There are currently 18 Court Commissioners who manage specific caseloads to reduce the workload of judges. Preliminary discussions with the Superior Court Administrator suggest that the number of Commissioners could be reduced through attrition if new judgeships were created and judges appointed.

It is important to note that the State of Arizona pays 50% of the cost of each Superior Court Judge but Pima County pays 100% of the cost of Court Commissioners. As Pima County transitions from Court Commissioners to Judges, the expense borne by the County will be reduced. It is also anticipated that the new Judges could use courtrooms currently operated by Court Commissioners, thus potentially reducing the need for additional courtrooms.

Recommendation

The demand on Pima County's judicial system has outpaced the available number of judges. Without additional judgeships, delays and backlogs will likely worsen. A formal petition to the Governor represents a proactive step toward ensuring that the county's courts can continue to deliver timely and effective justice to the community.

I recommend that the Board petitions Governor Hobbs to approve six additional judges to serve in Divisions 31 through 36 of the Superior Court in and for Pima County pursuant to Article 6, Section 10 and 12, of the Arizona Constitution and Section 12-121 of the Arizona Revised Statutes.

JKL/je

c: Honorable Danelle Liwski, Presiding Judge
Ron Overholt, Superior Court Administrator
Carmine DeBonis, Jr., Deputy County Administrator
Steve Holmes, Deputy County Administrator
Chad Kasmar, Deputy County Administrator
Art Cuaron, Director, Finance & Risk Management
Michael Racy, Racy Associates Inc.