

Supporting the Judiciary's Data & IT Infrastructure

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Exceptional Item #2 (\$3.2 million) will allow the Office of Court Administration (OCA) to help 2,800 local courts improve their data quality and help make case-level court data a reality.
- With OCA serving as the IT backbone for the state judiciary, Exceptional Item #3 (\$2.9 million) updates hardware and invests in personnel to better serve state judicial users.
- These exceptional items serve as the foundation for additional improvements on how our judiciary operates in the 21st century.

BACKGROUND

OCA operates as the IT department for the judicial branch of government. With civil and criminal case filings reaching new highs, this function is all the more important. The agency directly offers many IT products and services (eFile Texas, various case management systems, etc.), and it provides technical assistance addressing the data needs of courts across the state. When data quality problems occur at the local level, they can distort trend analyses, backlog calculations, and clearance rate measures. Requests for assistance with these problems already outpace OCA's capacity funded by the Legislature last session, making it especially important to address data quality problems now, before they further affect the case-level data of the near future.

TEXAS DISTRICT COURT CASE FILINGS IN FY2025:

237,027

criminal cases

300,380

civil cases

**Both represent
decade highpoints in
case filings.**

Texas 2036 preliminary
analysis of OCA CARD data

PROPOSED ACTION

Texas 2036 supports the adoption of OCA's Exceptional Items #2 and 3. Exceptional Item #2 would expand the number of personnel dedicated to addressing the backlog of local courts' data-quality requests for assistance. Exceptional Item #3 will help OCA replace aging hardware and bring on personnel to build its in-house capacity for offering IT services products to state judicial users.

BUDGET COST ESTIMATE

OCA estimates Exceptional Item #2 to cost just over \$1.5 million each fiscal year of the biennium and covering 13 FTEs. Exceptional Item #3 would cost \$1.8 million the first year and \$1 million the second year of the biennium, covering a hardware upgrade and 5 FTEs.

PUBLIC POLICY IMPACT

Texas courts are busier than ever, but the way we collect data to allocate resources and evaluate policy impact is nearly a century old. Since 1929, most Texas judicial statistics are reported in the aggregate, and county-level figures obscure what is happening in sprawling rural jurisdictions and dense urban counties. Data quality issues compound the problem. Case-level data will help us identify the specific courts and case types where delay is concentrated. This will ultimately save Texans money while improving government services by empowering the Legislature to pursue informed strategies to deliver justice efficiently for taxpayers, litigants, and defendants.

The upcoming transition to case-level data will depend on local trial courts providing high quality data with OCA's help. Additionally, OCA's services support judges and clerks in doing their job, and they directly help Texans navigate the judiciary. Both exceptional items serve to bolster OCA's capacity to help the state judiciary perform and meet the needs of Texans.

FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT

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