



**JUDICIAL BRANCH OF THE NAVAJO NATION  
FISCAL YEAR 2021 BUDGET MESSAGE**

**Chief Justice JoAnn Jayne**

**August 23, 2020**

I would like to thank the staff of the Judicial Branch (“Branch”) who worked tirelessly in preparing the FY 2021 budget in early February 2020. Staff prepared the main budget, and an alternate, before the Pandemic hit our Nation. Despite the public health emergency, Branch staff were valiant in making budget modifications under special circumstances. I commend staff for submitting documents for review and consideration in a timely manner.

Two (2) factors weigh in on the success of a branch. First, strategies, and secondly, adequate resources. Strategies for the Branch has remained defined, structured, and successful. On the other hand, and within the last decade, funding for the Branch began to decrease. Staff positions were eliminated, necessary workplace supplies remained dormant, and facilities became worn with fatigue, some beyond repair, or eliminated. Without sustainable funding, adequate space and safety for staff diminished as cases rose disproportionately. The Branch is grateful for the increase in general funding in the last 3 years. Increased funding allows for sorely needed repairs and upkeep on facilities, supplying staff with up-to-date work instruments, a safer work space, and mostly, a safer, timely, and efficient assistance to the People who use the services of the Branch.

----

The Branch prepared the Fiscal Year 2021 budget with the allocation of General Funds of \$16,624,653. This proposed budget provides funds for 18 business units, with 11 judicial districts comprised of 13 courts, the Administrative Offices of the Courts, Supreme Court, Peacemaking Program, Probation and Parole Services and Judicial Conduct Commission. The general fund allocation represents an increase of \$1,700,000 from FY 2020.

The allocation from indirect costs (IDC) is \$130,107 for 2021 fiscal year. The IDC is a decrease of \$19,997 from FY 2020.

Eighty-seven (88) percent or \$14,672,234 of the funds is dedicated to personnel costs. There are 194 positions in FY 2021. The remaining 12 percent or \$2,082,526 is for operating and maintenance costs. For regular employees, there is a decrease of 1.32 percent in fringe benefit rates and an increase of 0.38 percent for temporary employees. For judges, there is a significant increase of 10.68 percent, up to 80.16 percent.

### **External Funds**

The Branch receives \$3,168,565 from Bureau of Indian Affairs and U.S. Department of Justice (USDOJ) funds. There is \$1,460,349 anticipated for Calendar Year 2021 from Tribal Courts P.L. 93-638 funding for FY 2021 federal budget. The Branch also currently has \$1.5 million from Tribal Courts P.L. 93-638 funding for expenditure from CY 2016-2019. The P.L. 93-638 funds provide for 29 Branch positions.

There are six (6) external grants from the USDOJ with total funds awarded of \$1,830,159. Grant K160800 may be administratively closed by the Navajo Nation. Grant purposes vary from "Healing to Wellness Courts," to "Peacemaking Youth Education and Apprenticeship Program," - all created to support and enhance court services for the People. Goals of the grants focus on veterans, youth, victims, and address gaps in service delivery. Unfortunately, the Branch is not able to draw down on any of these external funds due a hold on the grants. The Navajo Nation is considered a high risk grantee due to a Corrective Action Plan with the federal government as a result of a 2015 audit on the construction of detention facilities.

### **Unmet Needs**

The unmet needs for operations and maintenance for 18 business units is \$ 15,067,055. The unmet needs budget is in the proposed legislation for the Branch proposed general funds budget.

### **Fixed Costs**

The Navajo Nation Integrated Justice Information Sharing Project (NNIJISP) is funded through the Fixed Costs budget. The proposed allocation for NNIJISP is \$375,000. The CARES ACT will assist unmet needs for technology and technical assistance to partners who provide justice services on the Nation. Though the Executive and Judicial Branches are both involved in the project, the Judicial Branch administers the project.

NNIJISP collaborates efforts to establish, centralize and retrieve data by coordinating, planning, implementing, training, configuring, and providing technical support for partners. Partners support systems which maintain and enhance an integrated data justice system with emphasis on optimizing systems, processes, technologies, and services to the public. Courts completed implementation of the Justice Web component of the JustWare system allowing for ePayments. Online, telephonic and credit card payments are accepted for civil traffic fines at District Courts.