



Dallas County
Office of Budget and Evaluation

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TO: Justice of the Peace Courts, Commissioners Court

THROUGH: Dr. Ronica Watkins, Budget Officer *RW*

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SUBJECT: FY2027 Baseline Budget for the Justice of the Peace Courts

BACKGROUND

The FY2027 Baseline Budget for the Justice of the Peace (JP) Courts has been developed based on projected staffing needs, informed by workload data derived from monthly reporting forms. The Office of Budget and Evaluation (OBE) continues to prioritize disposition rates over filing rates when calculating earnings. The reporting period under consideration spans from April 2025 through May 2026, adhering to the OBE's established practice of utilizing a twelve-month timeframe for staffing calculations. The purpose of this analysis is to detail the methodology and rationale employed in formulating the proposed budgets for the JP Courts for FY2027.

JUSTICE OF THE PEACE STAFFING SUMMARY

The methodology used in determining the FY2027 staffing for the JP Courts was based on calculating several variables: received cases, disposed cases, and District Attorney dismissals. OBE utilized the information submitted to the Texas Office of Court Administration (OCA) Court Activity Reporting System.

Received Cases

The number of received cases is determined by the assignment of case numbers and their entry into the Odyssey System. The current reporting forms, which include beginning and ending case numbers for each case type, serve as a valuable tool for verifying data in the Odyssey System.

Disposed Cases

The disposed cases, as self-reported by the JP Courts, were the sole basis for calculating earned value for disposed cases. Historically, OBE calculated a disposal rate based on a random sample of cases disposed of during a specified period (January to May of the reporting year), under the assumption that received cases could potentially be disposed of within the same reporting period. The disposal credit calculation considered both the number of received cases and the number of disposed cases.

There continues to be a consistent number of Administrative Hearing, Occupational License, and Driver License cases filed with Justice of the Peace Courts. These cases were included under traffic calculations.

DA Dismissals

DA dismissals encompass both the disposed cases and those specifically reported by the JP as DA Dismissals. This category includes cases returned from the Sheriff's Office from Regional. In previous years, this category reflected a significant number of cases being purged from the JP system. However, with the implementation of the Failure to Appear (FTA) program and the Linebarger, Goggan, Blair, and Sampson (LGB&S) Collection program, the number of cases falling into this category has substantially decreased.

A history of JP Court staffing is noted below, along with a recommendation of staffing changes based on the current staffing methodology.

Table 1
FY2027 JUSTICE OF THE PEACE STAFFING ANALYSIS

Judge	Precinct	FY2024	FY2025	FY2026	FY2027 Methodology*	FY2027 Recommended	Net Change
Jones	1-1	15	15	15	15	15	0
Nash	1-2	10	10	10	9	10	0
O'Brien	2-1	10	10	10	7	10	0
Whitfield	2-2	10	10	10	5	10	0
Swartz	3-1	12	12	12	7	12	0
Seider	3-2	10	10	10	8	10	0
Jones, Jr	4-1	10	10	10	11	11	1
Moreno	4-2	8	9	9	6	9	0
Martinez	5-1	10	10	10	8	10	0
Jasso	5-2	11	11	11	7	11	0
Total		106	107	107	83	108	1

**The FY2027 methodology utilizes the former methodology.*

The FY2027 methodology utilizes the former methodology that was used in previous years due to a lack of consensus regarding the Time and Motion study conducted in 2025 and results in one (1) additional Clerk for JP Court 4-1. The Time and Motion study was a structured method used to analyze and improve work processes by observing tasks and measuring the time and effort required to complete them. The study intended to identify inefficiencies, optimize workflow, and ensure that staffing is responsive to actual needs rather than static metrics. During the study, JP Court staff were timed on how long it took to complete court tasks and operations. Factors such as frequency, ad hoc assignments, and training or time-off were also taken into consideration.

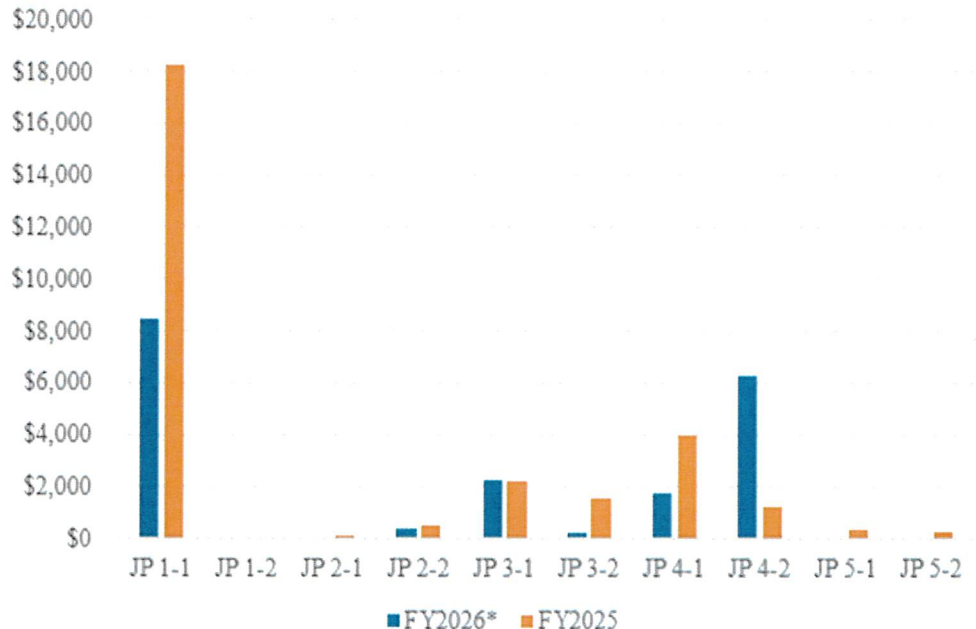
The draft findings of the study noted potential staff overages for the JP Courts, with opportunities to identify efficiencies by consolidating staff, encouraging more paperless transactions, and reevaluating the processing of electronically filed cases. Due to a lack of agreement to implement this staffing model, the former methodology has been utilized to determine staffing. While the former methodology recommends staffing reductions for the remaining nine (9) courts, OBE recommends maintaining the staffing levels for these courts until a third-party independent analysis is conducted.

To provide an alternative perspective and independent analysis, OBE, along with the JP Court Administration, agrees to partner with a third-party entity to conduct an additional Time and Motion study to assess the current staffing formula further and identify continuous improvement of court operations.

Visiting Judges

The utilization of visiting judges is instrumental to court operations and efficiencies and may impact staffing needs among the JP Courts. Table 2 below is an analysis of invoices paid for visiting judge expenses for FY2025 and FY2026, noting the variety of usage among the JP Courts.

Table 2
FY2025-FY2026 VISITING JUDGE EXPENSES



*As of May 31, 2026.

JUSTICE OF THE PEACE OPERATIONAL IMPACTS

Since the elimination of the Constable's Traffic Safety Program and the reduction of the Sheriff's Traffic Safety Program in the FY2012 Approved Budget, traffic case filings in the JP Courts have

steadily declined. Courts that historically received high volumes of traffic filings have experienced significant impacts, reflected in reduced workload volumes and corresponding decreases in authorized staffing levels. Notable observations include:

- Justice of the Peace 1-1: Continues to handle the highest volume of traffic tickets, with 10,073 cases filed during the reporting period, a slight increase from the previous reporting period, where 8,959 cases were filed.

In addition, the following legislation actions have impacted the Justice of the Peace Court operations and staffing:

- Effective September 1, 2013 – The Justice of the Peace Courts began receiving new case types, resulting in new sequence case numbers for Small Claims (JS), Debt Claims (JX), Repair and Remedy (JY), and Evictions (JE). All of these cases reported as received, disposed, and District Attorney Dismissals were included under the civil and evictions calculations.
- Effective September 1, 2019 – SB891 repeals the Collection Program. Under the program, Dallas County was required to fund a dedicated collection clerk in all Justice of the Peace Courts. The staff was not included as part of the staffing formula calculation.
- Effective September 1, 2020 – SB2342 increases JP jurisdiction to \$20,000. In response to the anticipated increase due to the jurisdiction, the collection clerk position was NOT deleted from any Justice of the Peace Court for FY2020 due to the inability to determine the workload volume in each of the Justice Courts that may occur due to the implementation of SB2342.
- Effective July 1, 2026 – Texas Rule of Civil Procedure 330(e) is amended to clarify random case assignment and use of a wheel. “Rotational assignment of cases on a wheel qualifies as random assignment so long as it cannot be abused to be predictable by litigants. In addition to this rule and Texas Rule of Civil Procedure 330, bench exchanges and case transfers are governed by statute, including Texas Government Code sections 24.003 and 74.121.”

RECOMMENDATION

OBE recommends maintaining the staffing levels for nine (9) of the ten (10) Justice of the Peace Courts and increasing the staffing by one for an additional Clerk I position for Justice of the Peace Court 4-1 based on the current methodology. OBE recognizes the importance of reassessing the current staffing formula and believes that data obtained from the draft Time and Motion study,

along with an independent analysis, will assist the JP Courts with identifying operational efficiencies.