



Budget Change Request

Change request information

Title Add Legal Assistant II to Civil Team
Number B-09-14 Department 09 - Prosecuting
Requester Heidi Pihoda
Published by Jennifer Smith Publish Date 2023-08-24
Change Type Policy Change

Board outcome *(to be entered by budget after Board action)*

Board Decision
Board Changes

Funds affected

Fund 0010 - General Fund
General Fund Affected? Yes More Than One Fund Affected? No

Policy request priority and connection to the strategic plan

Priority # 8 Strategic Plan Responsive Law,

Does this request include federal, state, or private grants?

Grant Funded? None
Grantor and timeframe

Does this request affect current positions or propose new positions?

HR Payroll e-mailed? No Position Impact Adds Position(s)
Current position numbers affected None

What do you need and why? Include any unexpected and external requirements.

Statement of Need

The Civil Team requests a Legal Assistant II position to provide additional support for responding to time sensitive issues, increased public records requests, ITA hearings, and processing case files pursuant to file retention requirements. This support will allow Paralegal IIs capacity to assist the Deputy Prosecutors with litigation support. An increase in routine hearings and administrative cases will continue to challenge deficiencies in legal support. The County is experiencing a significant increase in civil commitment hearings. Other administrative appeals are increasing too, such as proceedings for land use actions, code compliance, and abatement efforts in court. Unless there is a court ordered or statutorily required deadline, cases are often delayed for months. While these more routine hearings are ultimately handled by an assigned attorney, the bulk of work falls on legal support staff. The Increased strain on current legal staff will continue to make it challenging for more complex litigation to be handled in-house. As a consequence, the County may incur additional cost for outside legal counsel.

Demand for legal support will also increase with an increase of pro se litigation and "watch dog" organizations. National polls suggest that distrust of government is at an all-time high, which will likely result in greater litigation. For example, claims of voting and election irregularities seem to be on the rise as of late and require time and resources by legal support staff.

How will this change the performance of your office or department?

Statement of Need

This position gives Paralegals more capacity to assist the attorneys with litigation and assist the paralegals with public records and file retention. We continue to experience a consistent increase in the volume and complexity of public records requests from most areas of county government. With the implementation of body worn cameras by local law enforcement agencies (which are subject to disclosure under the public records act), we are also facing a significant increase in the time it now takes to fulfill public records requests because most criminal files now contain body worn camera and other digital evidence. For example, one 20-minute body worn camera file could require upwards of an hour to download, additional staff time to entirely review the file to identify exemptions, and additional time to go back through the file frame by frame to make any necessary redactions. Based on current staffing, we do not have the capacity to accommodate this continuous increase while continuing to provide the assistance to requestors required by the Public Records Act.

Expenditure, FTE and revenue assumptions plus current budget level

Assumptions

Legal Assistant II, Range 8 = \$90,349

Current Budget Level

There is zero budget for this position.

What happens if this isn't funded? Are there other options?

Impacts and Alternatives

Overtime would be required to complete administrative tasks when staffing is already stressed with existing workloads. Paralegals would not have capacity to provide the necessary litigation support. Deputy Prosecutors would be required to complete administrative tasks keeping them from completing their legal services to County departments in a timely manner, likely forcing them to work evening and weekend hours. The Increased strain on current legal staff will continue to make it challenging for more complex litigation to be handled in-house. As a consequence, the County may incur additional cost for outside legal counsel.

How does this request affect other offices and departments?

Impact to Other Departments

Which Other Departments are Affected? County departments

Operating Transfer Needed? No

Operating Transfer Coding and Amount

Personnel Information

| FTE | Number | Name | Start Date | End Date |
|------|-------------------------------|--------------------|------------|----------|
| 1.00 | @ Legal Assistant II / 618u08 | LEGAL ASSISTANT II | | |
| 1.00 | < Total | | | |

Operating Revenue Line Items

| Org Code | Object Code | Object Description | Project Code | 2024 | 2025 |
|----------|-------------|--------------------|--------------|------|------|
|----------|-------------|--------------------|--------------|------|------|

Capital Revenue Line Items

| Org Code | Object Code | Object Description | Project Code | 2024 | 2025 |
|----------|-------------|--------------------|--------------|------|------|
|----------|-------------|--------------------|--------------|------|------|

Operating Expenditure Line Items

| Org Code | Object Code | Object Description | Project Code | 2024 | 2025 |
|----------|-------------|---------------------------|---------------|------------------|------------------|
| 0109A980 | 510000 | SALARIES | | 54,156 | 55,776.00 |
| 0109A980 | 521000 | SOCIAL SECURITY | | 4,143 | 4,267.00 |
| 0109A980 | 522000 | RETIREMENT | | 5,085 | 5,237.00 |
| 0109A980 | 523000 | MEDICAL/DENTAL/LIFE | | 26,016 | 27,276.00 |
| 0109A980 | 524000 | WORKERS COMPENSATION-L&I | | 360 | 360.00 |
| 0109A980 | 525000 | UNEMPLOYMENT COMPENSATION | | 162 | 167.00 |
| 0109A980 | 526000 | PAID FAMILY MEDICAL LEAVE | | 118 | 122.00 |
| 0109A980 | 527000 | LONG TERM DISABILITY | | 309 | 318.00 |
| | | | Total: | 90,349.00 | 93,523.00 |

Capital Expenditure Line Items

| Org Code | Object Code | Object Description | Project Code | 2024 | 2025 |
|----------|-------------|--------------------|--------------|------|------|
|----------|-------------|--------------------|--------------|------|------|