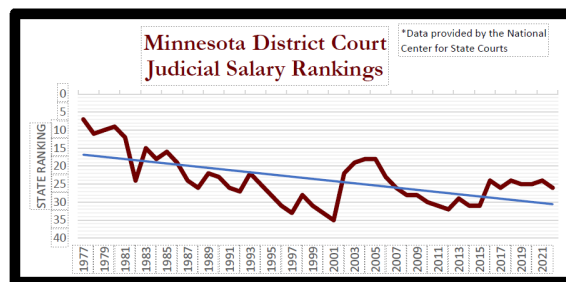


The Minnesota District Judges Association (MDJA) membership comprises over 300 Judges across the State of Minnesota. It includes nearly every District Court Judge, most Courts of Appeals Judges and Supreme Court Justices, and many retired and Senior Judges. MDJA's 2025 legislative priorities are Judicial & Staff Pay; Pensions; Real Estate Safety Updates; and Compensation Council Modifications.

Judicial & Staff Pay

- MDJA and Judicial Council jointly support a 6% judicial and staff pay increase in FY 26 and FY 27.
- Despite significant compensation increases last biennium, the Minnesota Judicial Branch compensation structure remains behind its public-sector comparators by 6%. Adequate funding is necessary to retain and motivate a qualified workforce relative to local competitors and to not fall below the broader job market in the future. Minnesota also needs to ensure that judge salaries remain competitive with other public sector legal positions. Today, judges in some counties make less than the county attorneys (and chief deputy county attorneys) who appear before them.
- The Minnesota Judicial Branch continues to face challenges with recruitment and retention. Since 2020, the Judicial Branch's employee turnover rate has increased by 15%. The top reason departing employees provide for leaving the Judicial Branch is wage/salary. During the same period, the number of applicants for each open position within the Judicial Branch has fallen by 27%.

- When compared to other states, Minnesota's District Court Judge pay has struggled to make upward progress. Minnesota's District Court Judge pay now ranks in the middle (#25) of all states.



- Since 2020, when the average number of applications per open judicial vacancy peaked at 15, there has been a steady and consistent decline in the number of applications to just 10 per vacancy in 2024, (and even lower in greater MN), for a reduction of 33%-50%. This decline suggests fewer individuals view a district judge as an attractive career option.

Pensions

- MDJA supports the annual \$6 million contribution to the retirement fund in the base budget.
- Safeguarding Minnesota Judges' pension stability and ensuring the availability of pension contributions in retirement is essential to the recruitment and retention of quality judges.



Safety

- MDJA supports real estate updates to the Judicial and Court Staff Safety and Privacy Act passed in 2024.
- The safety of Minnesota’s Judges, court staff, and members of their households are put at risk by the dissemination and perpetual Internet access of home addresses and personal information. The Judicial and Court Staff Safety and Privacy Act will alleviate these safety concerns.
- Extending the Act to real estate is a top priority during the 2025 Legislative Session. MDJA led an interim workgroup to recommend consensus changes to the application of the Safety Act to real estate transaction. The working included input from the Minnesota and Federal Bar Associations; Minnesota Judicial Branch, Minnesota Federal Bench; Land Title Association; Counties, County Recorders, as well as consultation with other data practices and real estate experts.

*“The **chronic stress** of . . . safety threats . . . negatively impacts [my] sleep, cognition and well-being.”*

- Minnesota Judicial Officer,
MDJA Judicial Safety Survey in 2023

Compensation Council Modifications

- MDJA and Judicial Council jointly support legislation to modify recent changes to the Compensation Council that directly impact the Judicial Branch.
- The two Compensation Council modification changes to be advanced include:
 1. Changing the date by which the Council submits its report to legislative leaders from April 1 in odd-numbered years to August 1 in even-numbered years. The timing of the report will render the recommendations being useful/informative to the Judicial Branch, Governor recommendations, and MDJA in advance of action by the Legislative and MDJA .
 2. Removing ex parte communication prohibitions between any member of the judiciary from the time the Council convenes to the time its recommendations are issued. This will facilitate better partnership between MDJA, the Judicial Branch, and the Council. These communications provide the Compensation Council important data, policy, and analytical support and this improvement will facilitate better partnership between the Judicial Branch and the Council.

The Honorable Mary Mahler MDJA President mary.mahler@courts.state.mn.us	Nancy Haas, Esq. MDJA Legislative Liaison nancy.haas@poulhaas.com
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