



THE IOWA STATE BAR ASSOCIATION

666 Walnut Street, Suite 2000, Des Moines, Iowa 50309-3909

Phone (515) 283-4637

FAX (515) 558-0637

Stephen R. Eckley
President

sreckley@belinmccormick.com

January 29, 2018

Re: De-Appropriation SF2117

Dear Senators:

I write to you as President of the Iowa State Bar Association, which has approximately 7,500 members statewide. We are aware that you are considering SF2117, a de-appropriations bill that would cut \$4.8 million from the judicial branch budget. A cut of this size, at this stage of the fiscal year, would be devastating to Iowa's court system. Our members see first-hand on a daily basis that due to past cuts our courts are already struggling to provide services to many thousands of Iowans. Legal matters from small claims cases to litigation involving Iowa's largest businesses are being delayed indefinitely.

The State Court Administrator estimates that a cut of \$4.8 million will result in as many as 30 courthouses losing court services for an indefinite period of time. The damage would be widespread, chaotic, and expensive. Cases that receive priority in scheduling would be transferred to other district courts, compounding the disruptions and delays. Criminal cases that are governed by the "speedy trial rule" would have to be transferred and tried, or be dismissed. Defendants, deputies, witnesses, family members, jurors, judges, and lawyers would have to travel back and forth each day. Domestic abuse cases that take priority over all other cases would have to be rescheduled in other counties, requiring everyone concerned to take more time off from work, travel further, etc. Civil cases currently scheduled for trial would have to be continued indefinitely, and as we know based upon recent experiences, continued for as long as a year.

The net effect is that your constituents, other state agencies, and Iowa businesses will incur substantial expenses related to time lost from work, travel costs, the postponing of all manner of legal proceedings, and delays in receiving needed court services. Quite simply, this would create total chaos in the judicial branch and with your constituents back home.

We urge you to remove the de-appropriation for the judicial branch in SF2117, or at a minimum, to cut only \$1.6 million as recommended by Governor Reynolds. Please feel free to contact me directly to discuss this request or to contact our lobbyists at the Capitol, Jim Carney, Doug Struyk and Jenny Dorman.

On behalf of 7,500 ISBA members and your constituents, we thank you for your service and hopefully your support of eliminating or reducing the de-appropriation to the judicial branch.

Sincerely,

Stephen Eckley