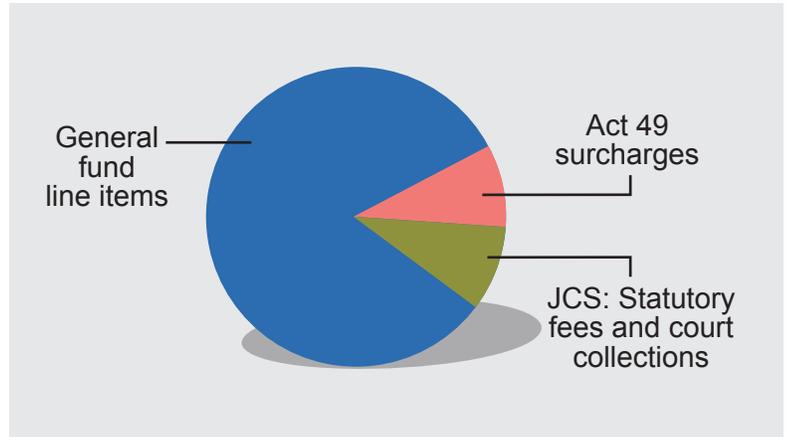


Budget Statement of the Unified Judicial System (UJS) 2026-27

The UJS Budget Explained

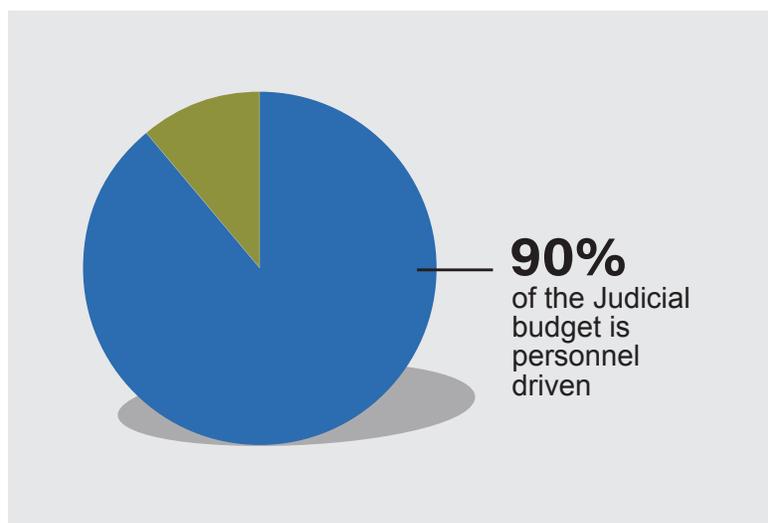
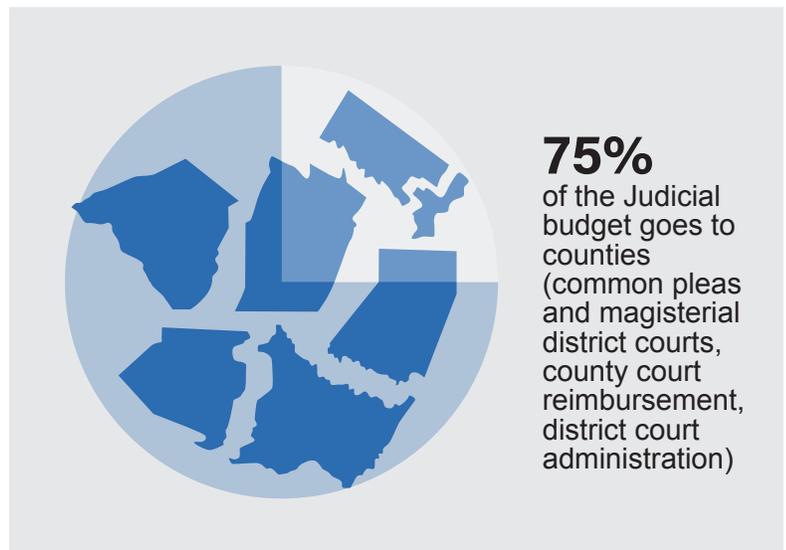
The UJS budget has three components:

- General Fund line items
- "Act 49" augmenting revenue
- Judicial Computer System (JCS) funding derived from statutory fees and court collections.



General Fund

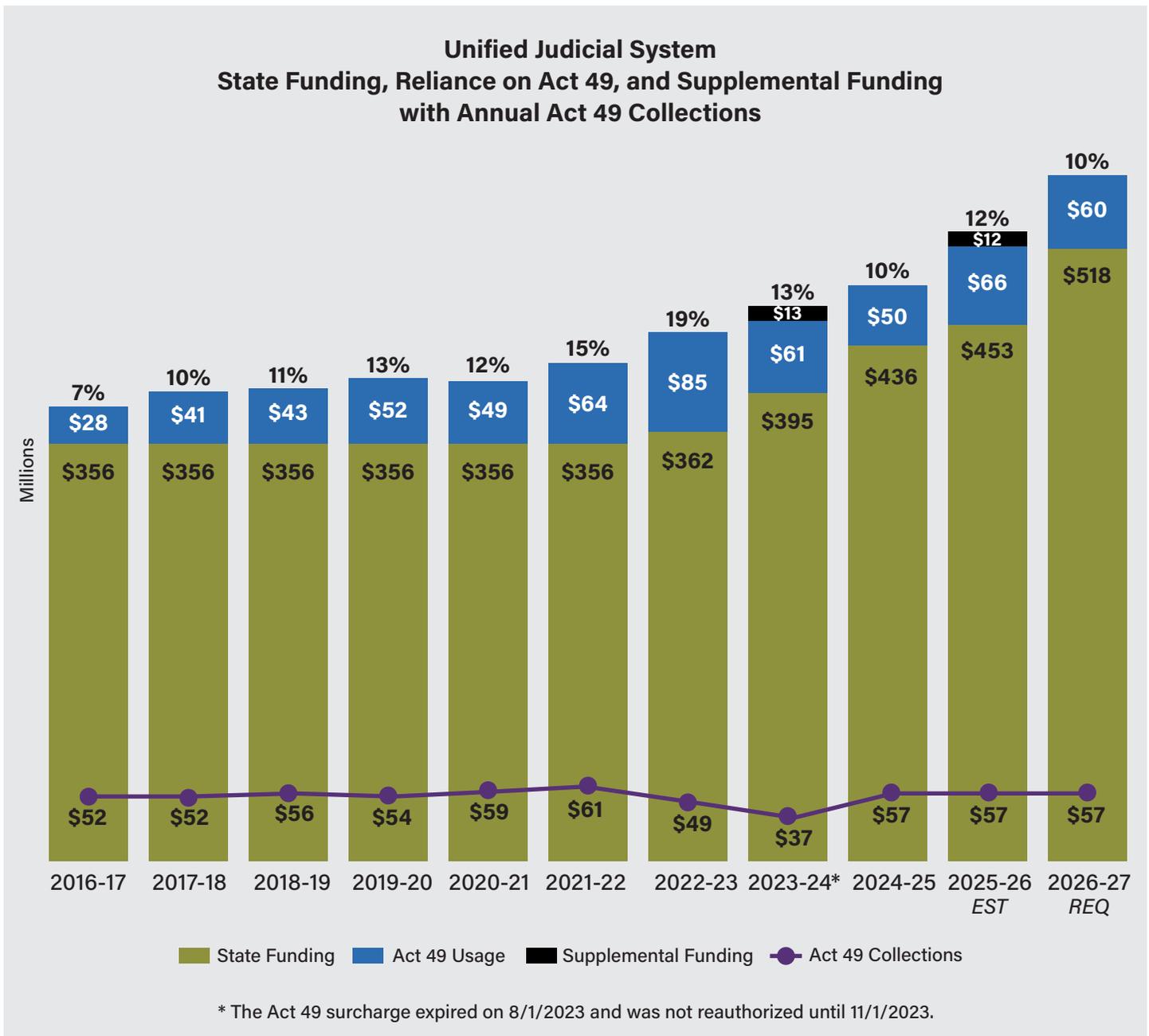
The General Fund provides funding: to all state courts; state-level and district-court administration and operations; and the AOPC, including court management/ judicial education, problem-solving courts, and the Office of Elder Justice in the Courts. Additionally, the line items support several statutory grants for county court expenses and juror costs.



Act 49 Augmenting Revenue

Beginning in FY 2009-10, the General Assembly annually augmented General Fund appropriations with "Act 49." Reliance steadily increased from seven percent in 2016-17 to 19 percent in 2022-23. State funding increases in 2023-2024 and 2024-2025 resulted in a decreased reliance on Act 49 to an amount more in line with actual collections. In the proposed 2026-27 budget, \$60 million in Act 49 funding will be necessary, accounting for 10 percent of the UJS budget.

While Act 49 was intended and has been used to augment the general operation funding of the Judicial Branch, the account balance at the end of 2024-25 was only \$17 million. It is estimated the balance will be even lower - \$8.2 million - as of June 30, 2026. The reason for the marked decrease is simple - if the requested state appropriation is not received, the higher the reliance on Act 49. As the Act 49 balance decreases, however, it limits the amount of augmenting funds that can be applied, resulting in a cascading effect on subsequent budgets.



UJS Budget Request FY 2026-27

1

\$64.9 million - 14.3%
- increase in General
Fund appropriations

2

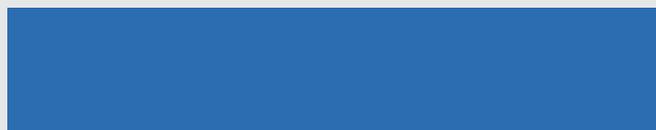
Repeal the statutory
diversion of \$15 million
from the JCS account

General Fund and Act 49

Until FY 2021-22, Act 49 funds were generally sufficient or greater than necessary to bridge the gap between the General Fund appropriation and the overall funding needs of the Judiciary, even to the point of creating a limited amount of reserves.

For FY 2026-27, the Judiciary projects using \$60 million in Act 49 funds, requiring a requested increase in the General Fund appropriation of \$64.9 million.

Act 49 Funds
\$60 million



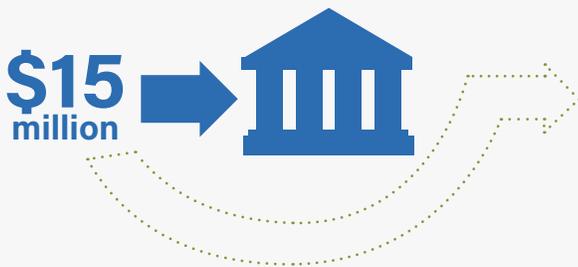
General Fund
\$64.9 million



Adjustments to JCS Funding

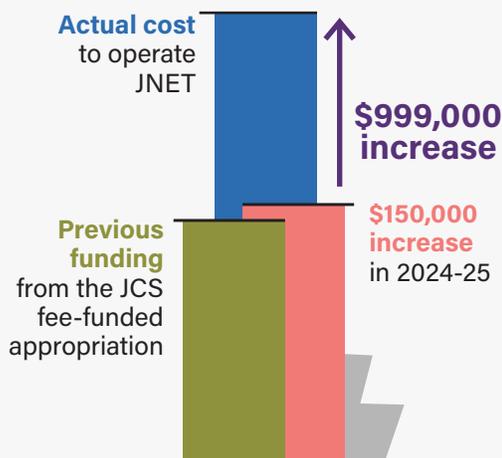
Act 1 of 2026 provided a crucial modification to the JCS funding formula for the current and next two fiscal years. This change delivers additional revenue to offset the steady decline in account revenue since 2008, aligning with a recommendation of the Judicial Computer System Financial Audit Committee (JCSFAC). The voting members of the JCSFAC - six legislative leadership appointees and a commissioned judge - recommended that "Policymakers ... continue to monitor the balance of the JCSAA and adjust accordingly [to] ensure *predictable funding to support the continued operation of the JCS*, most notably the existing case management systems."

The following items are included in the FY 2026-27 budget request to address the JCS:



Repeal of \$15 Million Diversion

Section 1795.2-E of the Fiscal Code annually diverts \$15 million from the JCS account. While this provision is currently suspended, the suspension expires on June 30, 2026. Repealing the diversion is vital to the sustainability of the JCS. Absent such repeal, the benefits of the necessary statutory modifications provided for in Act 1 of 2026 would be rendered futile and the JCS will again be in financial jeopardy.



Integrated Criminal Justice System (JNET) appropriation

\$999,000 increase in the JNET appropriation to provide 100 percent of the secure network's cost, which facilitates exchange of data to and from common pleas and magisterial district courts, previously 50 percent funded from the JCS fee-funded appropriation



Cyber Security and Disaster Recovery

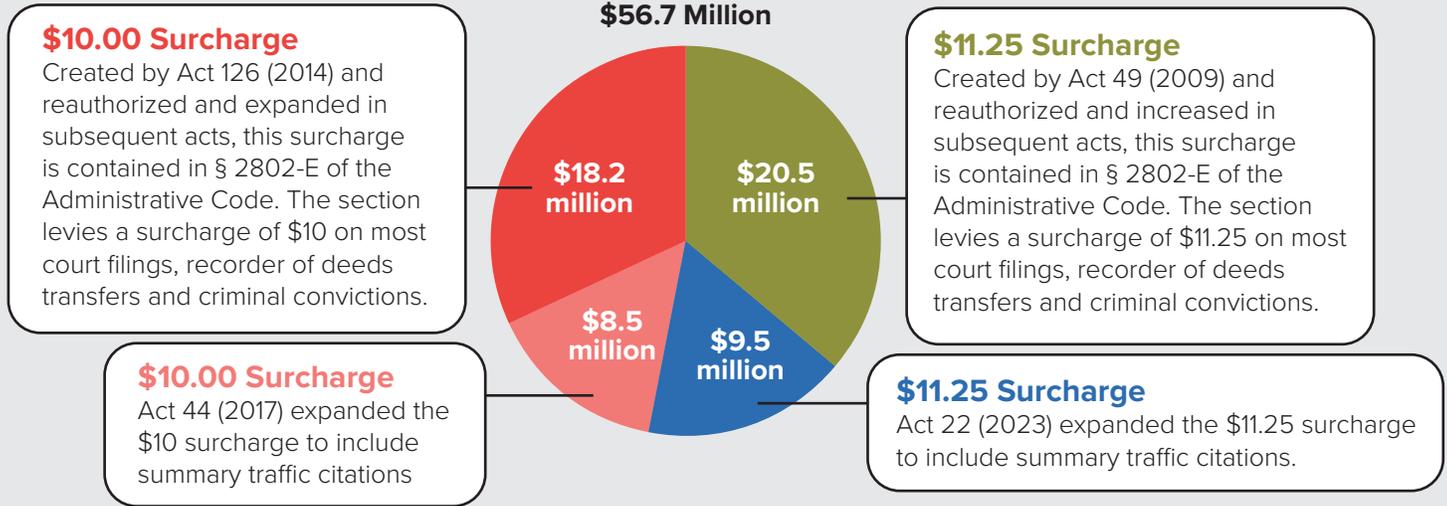
\$1.2 million increase to support Cyber Security and Disaster Recovery to protect the JCS infrastructure from increasing cyber threats, thus ensuring enhanced vigilance and readiness in response.

Judiciary Funding - RESTRICTED REVENUES

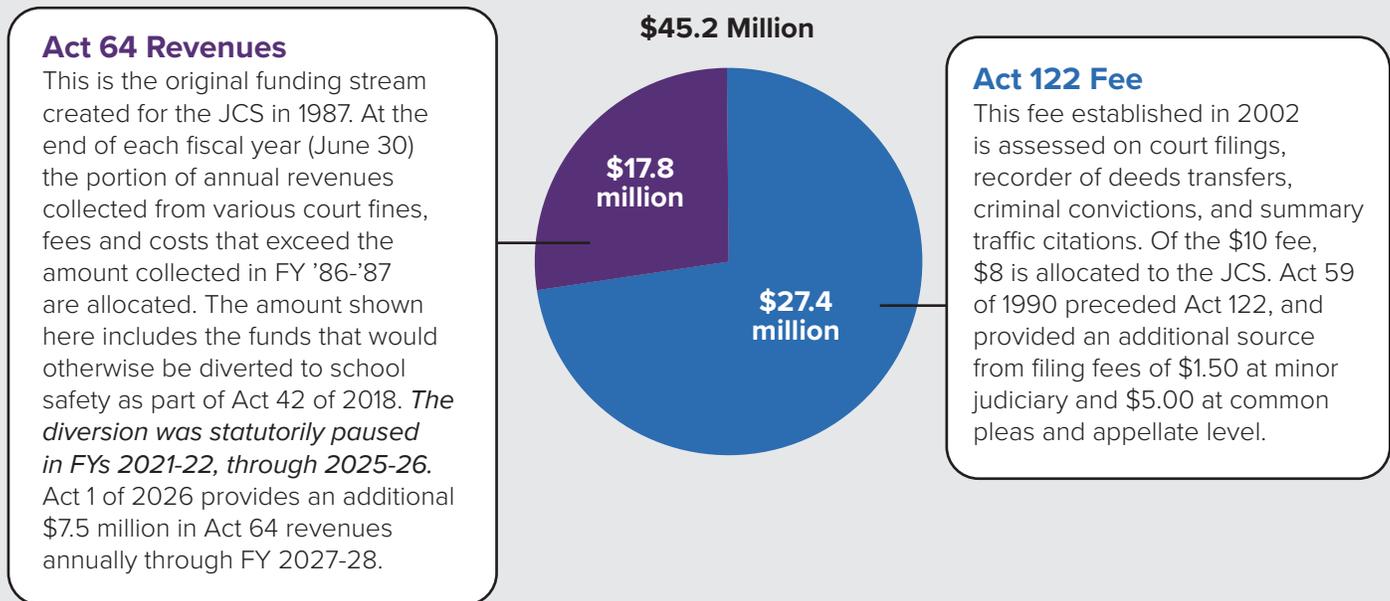
Act 49 Surcharges

Chart A:

Presently, the combined surcharge of \$21.25 is estimated to provide \$56.7 million in annual revenue to the Unified Judicial System to be used for general fund operations. We broadly refer to this combined surcharge as the “Act 49” surcharges. *All Act 49 surcharges sunset on December 31, 2027.*

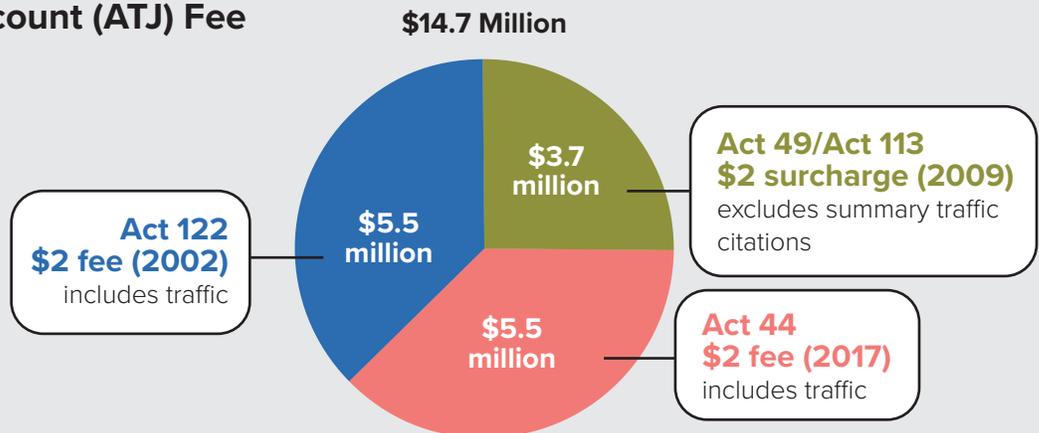


Judicial Computer System (JCS) Funding (assuming repeal of the diversion)



Access to Justice Account (ATJ) Fee

The UJS collects and distributes these fees to the Access to Justice (ATJ) account for civil legal aid. *These surcharges are permanent.*



Judicial Computer System Funding

The final component of the UJS budget is the JCS, which is funded almost exclusively through court collections and a fee. **See Chart A.** Revenue is deposited in the Judicial Computer System Augmentation Account and used for the ongoing operations of the statewide judicial computer system, funding statewide case management systems and the Guardianship Tracking System. As a result, court information is more accessible, providing crucial information to 38,000 law enforcement and public safety officials, and other users.

Act 1 of 2026 will better align revenue with the appropriation necessary to maintain and run the JCS.

