



# Ohio Judicial Conference Policy Statement

## POLICY STATEMENT ON JUDICIAL ALLOTMENT & COURT CONSOLIDATION

Prepared by

*Ohio Judicial Conference Court Administration Committee*

Approved by

Ohio Judicial Conference Executive Committee

*March 14, 2014*

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*The Executive Committee establishes Judicial Conference policy and adopts resolutions that express judicial consensus.*

*In addition to the Judicial Conference Officers and Executive Director, the Executive Committee is composed of the co-chairs of the standing committees of the Judicial Conference; the presiding officers and presiding officers elect of Ohio's judicial associations; and the Administrative Director of the Supreme Court of Ohio.*

#### What is a Policy Statement?

A Policy Statement describes as objectively and accurately as possible the position of the Ohio Judicial Conference. Typically policy statements are developed by a standing committee of the Ohio Judicial Conference and presented to the full Executive Committee for their consideration. All policy statements are approved by the full Executive Committee of the Ohio Judicial Conference. The Ohio Judicial Conference prepares these statements to clarify and explain the position the Judicial Conference has taken with regard to a particular issue that the Judicial Conference has determined relevant to the administration of justice.

#### Ohio Judicial Conference

65 South Front Street, 4<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Columbus, OH 43215-3431  
Phone: 614-387-9750  
Fax: 614-387-9759  
[www.ohiojudges.org](http://www.ohiojudges.org)

Ohio courts are committed to public access to justice. The Ohio Judicial Conference believes Ohio judges have a constitutional responsibility and duty to protect the administration of justice. They must ensure that budgetary, structural, or other changes to Ohio courts do not have a negative impact on the capacity of judges to operate and maintain the courts and provide access to justice to the citizens of the state of Ohio.

The Ohio Judicial Conference has adopted the following policy as guidance to local courts when considering structural changes to an Ohio court.

In multi-judge courts, when judgeships will be vacant due to a judicial retirement, death, or other cause, the courts should undertake a process of assessing the continued need for the judgeship. No judgeship should be automatically filled until the court studies whether the judgeship is justified according to prevailing caseload, workload, and other factors affecting the reasonable and necessary operation and maintenance of the court.

All courts should periodically evaluate the operation of their courts, including the addition or reduction of judgeships.

The mechanics of such a process are clearly set forth in procedures developed by the Supreme Court of Ohio. These principles and procedures are fully described in "Procedures for the Creation and Consolidation of Judgeships" that have been issued by the Administrative Director of the Supreme Court and have been followed historically whenever the creation or elimination of judgeships has been considered by the Ohio General Assembly.

All courts are encouraged to adopt efficient and effective practices and to implement cost-saving measures. Any innovations should be carefully considered and consequences weighed so as to avoid any unnecessary or unanticipated impact on the courts. Of primary significance is that transitions should minimize any disruption in court services and to the administration of justice for the public, attorneys, litigants, jurors, witnesses, or others who use Ohio's courts.

The Ohio Judicial Conference believes that the judiciary is an independent branch of government and that all decisions to restructure Ohio courts should be a primary decision of the courts in collaboration with the local funding authorities, the legislative and executive branches of government, as well as members of the local bar and legal community. The fair administration of justice should always be the primary consideration and attempts to achieve cost savings at the expense of the administration of justice should be resisted.