

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2020 Forward: Indiana Judicial Conference Strategic Plan for the Next Decade

The strategic plan for the next ten years, *2020 Forward*, re-dedicates those areas of achievement previously attained and sets new goals striving for greater accountability and access to justice. We invite readers to study the details of the plan contained in the body of this document, which are highlighted below.

Security

Safety and security in the courthouse must be dramatically improved. Litigants, witnesses, jurors, judicial officers, lawyers, and the public deserve to feel safe in the places where they work and seek justice. Every Indiana county must have a Court Security Plan that conforms to the Indiana Courthouse Security Minimum Security Standards.

Technology

The Odyssey Case Management System is the statewide system for maintaining cases. Court information is available online through the mycase.in.gov application. E-filing allows attorneys and unrepresented litigants to file documents without a trip to the courthouse. Courts are able to conduct hearings remotely, saving time and promoting safety. All courts should be consistently using the same technology programs and systems to allow for efficient access to needed information.

Clerk Functions

Clerks are elected officials partnering with the courts, and we will pursue improvements to clerk and court operations, including setting clear lines of responsibility. The courts are solely responsible for their own records and should perform all functions related to those records.

Court System Structure

Indiana has a complex judicial system and explaining the jurisdiction of each court is difficult, complicated, and confusing. We must simplify the current structure.

Judicial Selection

There are multiple ways a person becomes a judge in Indiana; adopting more uniform and less partisan methods will inspire greater confidence in the judicial system. Indiana should standardize its judicial selection processes for trial court judges across the state. Counties should be permitted to opt into nonpartisan methods for selecting trial court judges.

Centralized Funding

The current approach to fund the court system is inefficient and unfair. The State pays salaries and benefits for judges, magistrates, and prosecutors; however, their staff, public defenders, expert witness fees in pauper defense cases, probation officers, interpreters, psychological evaluations, and other related expenses are paid from local funds with local budgeting determined by county councils. We believe centralized funding will eliminate inequities and increase efficiency.

Access to Justice

To achieve the robust protection of Constitutional rights, Indiana must undertake a serious look at race and equity, resources, legal aid, imposition of fines, and jury selection. Our Constitutional promises of accessible, prompt, and fair justice, and a jury of our peers must extend to all regardless of their financial resources and situation. True access to justice requires the participation of all.