

## Clerk of Court Compensation Review Fact Sheet

### **Historical Review**

- Clerk of Court compensation can only be set every 4 years. This is an adjustment reviewing 2023-2026 and looking at 2027-2030, not just a look at the current year's budget.
- This adjustment was already approved for Register of Deeds, Treasurer, & County Clerk, who received a 20% increase. Historically the board and the county have adjusted these salaries similarly to the Clerk of Court.
- Comparing the Clerk of Court to the County Clerk's Office, the Court has a staff 2,500% larger, we have 4,700% higher revenue, and a 1,700% higher impact on GPR.
- Compared to other elected officials, the Clerk of Court has made almost \$32,000 less in 2025-2026. Even if other electeds do not receive an increase in 2029, over the 4-year term, the Clerk of Court would get paid another \$86,000 less. That is equivalent to losing almost an entire year's salary.

### **Lost Rate**

- In the last decade, inflation increased by more than 31% and county employees received a 33.75% COLA raise. Clerk of Court compensation increased by 28.2%. This means, in that the Clerk of Court has effectively taken a 2.9% pay cut (5.4% counting expected inflation for 2026) and received 5.55% lower rate adjustment than county employees.
- A county employee making the same wage as the Clerk of Court in 2015 would have received **\$66,451 more** by the end of this year, as well as bankable benefit time not available to elected officials.

### **Lower Wages**

- Clerk of Court salary is lower than many other county salaries of division heads including almost \$39k less than the Dir. of Justice Reform which is almost 19 times smaller by budget and 22 times smaller by staff. It is also 12% less than the Juvenile Court Administrator and 45% behind the similarly sized Public Safety Communications Director.
- The Clerk of Court's salary is even lower than non-director positions including being smaller than the salaries of a Senior Geographic Information Systems Analyst, Assistant to the County Exec, and Public Safety Communications Technical Services Manager.
- Lower wages and a lower wage rate adjustment mean that the Clerk of Court is taking a doubly multiplied hit to compensation over time.
- Vacation time is also something that can't be granted to elected officials. Unlike county employees, Clerk of Court gets no bankable vacation, sick, floating holiday, and wellness hours that are worth up to tens of thousands of dollars to county employees on retirement. This includes the 1% pay exchange for more vacation time in 2026.

## **Double Duty & Greater Risk**

- Dane Rolls Register in Probate into Clerk of Court, while other counties have this as a separate office with its own compensation averaging \$60-80k just for the RIP. In cases where the Clerk of Court is also a RIP, other counties provide an additional stipend for overseeing both roles. So Dane County already gets two jobs and two salaries in one role with no extra compensation.
- The public nature of the Clerk's position means more risk. The Clerk's name goes out on every jury summons, every traffic ticket hearing, and most documents from the court. The Clerk has been named in frivolous lawsuits and received threatening letters. These are risks that most other county staff and department heads do not face.

## **Workload & Fiscal Merit-Based Considerations**

- Our court dealt with more than 52,000 incoming cases, not to mention cases continuing on from previous years, such as family cases which can have events coming up for 18 years. We process more than 2,000,000 pages of documents per year, and have a trend of 5-7% year over year increases as our population continues to grow.
- The Dane County Court is also the first court in the state to clear its backlog of COVID cases and one of the few to have done so at all.
- My work was directly responsible for bringing in an additional \$840,000 in new, real dollars to the county this year and continuing forward each year. My work with the legislature will likely bring in an additional \$400,000 or more for next year, totaling about 1.2M+ per year, on an ongoing basis that our taxpayers no longer have to cover.
- Because of that work, for the 2026 budget, my office covered a cut of more than 6% cut to our department's GPR reliance, higher than the County Executive's requested amount, without reducing any staff or services.

## **Proposal**

- The current proposal in 2025 RES-338 does not provide adequate compensation addressing any of the previous points, does not keep pace with the cost of living, and does not follow the adjustments made by this board for other elected officials.
- The Clerk of Court respectfully requests an adjustment based on equivalent criteria between this position and other elected offices, in keeping with fair wages compared to other county employees, taking into account the efficiency and strong fiscal performance of the department, and based on the size, structure, and importance of a well functioning court system.