

- **Judicial vacancies, caseload rising, committee told-
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- **By Minhaj Hassan | April 28th, 2011**
- **TRENTON - As the state asks for another \$25 million in cuts, the caseload only seems to be increasing, and the number of judicial vacancies remains high, the head of the Judiciary told the Assembly Budget Committee on Thursday afternoon.**
- **...**
- **Glenn Grant, administrative director of the courts, acknowledged that while the department is smaller and leaner from three years ago, there are 50 state judge vacancies, and 17 others are slated to leave this year.**
- **He added that the \$25 million in cuts the state requested it make in its salary program is not possible, since those salaries are contractually obligated. Thus, the shortfall must be absorbed in other areas of the proposed \$663 million proposed spending plan.**
- **The budget constraints could affect successful programs like probation and drug court, which Assemblyman Albert Coutinho, (D-29), Newark, said could use more investment since they have proven to be effective. The amount allocated for drug courts, \$43 million, is the same as last year.**
- **Probation, especially for nonviolent offenders, remains a very successful method to keep individual in line. And, the state could save money instead of imposing a jail sentence on them, Grant said.**
- **While it costs approximately \$28,000 to house an offender at a county jail, and between \$38,000 and \$40,000 at a state-run facility, it costs \$11,000 for probations.**
- **Drug courts have also proven to be effective, as the rate of recidivism is much smaller than someone serving jail time (16 percent vs. 54 percent), according to Grant.**
- **Its been an extraordinary success, Grant said. The evidence says that drug courts work.**
- **To save the department money, Assemblyman Gary Chiusano, (R-24), Augusta, suggested replacing the \$5 paper checks for jury duty, since it probably costs more to process the checks.**
- **The Legal Services Fund, which provides legal services to poor people, also saw its funding limited, at a time when more and more people are using them.**
- **The result, he said, has been more self represented litigants, which is something of a nationwide trend.**
- **We see that growing, not declining over the years, he said.**
- **Assemblyman Declan OScanlon, (R-12), of Little Silver, admitted after hearing the testimony, that the state has got to come up with a revenue source that is recession-resistant.**
- **Assemblyman Lou Greenwald, (D-6), Voorhees also said that the judicial systems issues must be addressed.**
- **Justice is not Republican or Democrat, he said.**