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2014-15 Governors Budget - Workers' Comp Court of Appeals

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Mission:

The Workers' Compensation Court of Appeals (WCCA) mission is to provide equal access to fair and timely review of disputes within the Court's appellate jurisdiction.

Statewide Outcome(s):

Workers' Compensation Court of Appeals supports the following statewide outcome(s).

Efficient and accountable government services.

A thriving economy that encourages business growth and employment opportunities.

Context:

The WCCA was established by the legislature as the exclusive statewide authority to decide all questions of law and fact in workers' compensation disputes within the court's appellate jurisdiction. This jurisdiction includes the authority to review workers' compensation cases decided by compensation judges at the Office of Administrative Hearings and the Commissioner's designees at the Department of Labor and Industry. The Court also has original jurisdiction authority and can issue such original and remedial orders as are necessary. The WCCA is funded by a direct appropriation from the workers' compensation fund.

The WCCA court consists of five judges appointed to six year terms by the Governor and confirmed by the state Senate. The Governor designates one of the five as the Chief Judge. The Chief Judge is responsible for the administration of the court. Each judge must be a licensed attorney, a citizen of the United States, and have experience with and knowledge of workers' compensation and the workers' compensation laws of Minnesota.

The agency works to:

- deliver services as expeditiously as possible while maintaining the integrity of the decision-making function;
- produce high quality and consistent decisions on a timely basis in order to provide the quick and efficient delivery of indemnity and medical benefits to qualified injured workers at a reasonable cost to employer;
- provide economic stability for injured workers and their families in financial crises due to work-related illnesses and injuries;
- provide for timely cure and treatment of work related illnesses and injuries;
- support a competitive business climate for Minnesota employers by providing high quality and consistent decisions and reducing the amount of litigation; and
- provide direction and motivation for employers to create safe and healthy work environments for employees.

Strategies:

WCCA works to provide equal access to fair and timely review of disputes within the Court's appellate jurisdiction by:

- reviewing the evidentiary record created by the initial decision making body;
- presiding over oral arguments;
- conducting necessary legal research;
- deciding the issues; and
- issuing appropriate written orders, decisions, and memoranda.

Decisions are written to inform the parties and the public of the bases for the court's decisions and to create a body of law interpreting and applying Minnesota workers' compensation laws. Decisions of the WCCA are appealable directly to the Minnesota Supreme Court.

Results:

WCCA main objective is to provide fair, efficient and accountable government services to all stakeholders by producing high quality decisions in a timely manner. To that end, WCCA has been working to expand and improve the use information technology, tighten publication timelines and continue e-service of decisions with other agencies to improve its services.

The ability of a party to fully participate in their case is a fundamental access issue that becomes particularly relevant in the age of technology. In the past, the entire workers' compensation system was paper based. This past year the Office of Administrative Hearings expanded and developed a paperless case management system. As technology advances and stakeholders become more diverse, the WCCA will need plans in place to ensure that services are equally accessible. The WCCA will continue to study the possibilities of e-filing.

Performance Measures	Previous	Current	Trend
# of cases appealed to the WCCA	165	119	Declining
% of WCCA decisions appealed to the Minnesota Supreme Court	8%	16%	Worsening
% of WCCA decisions affirmed by the Minnesota Supreme Court	64%	85%	Improving
% of decisions issued within 90 days of assignment	99%	99%	Stable

Performance Measures Notes:

The statistics represent 2010 as the previous year and 2011 as the current year.

The WCCA appellate caseload decreased in 2011, but remains consistent with the five year average.

Workers Compensation Court of Appeals
Current, Base and Governor's Recommended Expenditures

(Dollars in Thousands, Biennial Totals)

	General Funds	Other State Funds	Federal Funds	All Funds
Current Biennium Expenditures (FY 2012-13)		\$3,406		\$3,406
Current Law Expenditures (FY 2014-15)		\$3,407		\$3,407
Governor's Recommended Expenditures (FY2014-15)		\$3,617		\$3,617
\$ Change from FY 2014-15 Current Law to Governor's Rec		\$210		\$210
% Change from FY 2014-15 Current Law to Governor's Rec		6%		6%

Workers Compensation Court of Appeals**Sources and Uses**

(Dollars in Thousands)

Biennium FY14-FY15				
	General Funds	Other State Funds	Federal Funds	Total Funds
APPROPRIATION		\$3,616		\$3,616
SOURCES OF FUNDS	\$0	\$3,616		\$3,616
EXPENDITURES		\$3,617		\$3,617
PAYROLL EXPENSE		\$3,064		\$3,064
OPERATING EXPENSES		\$553		\$553
USES OF FUNDS		\$3,617		\$3,617

Workers Compensation Court of Appeals

Governor's Changes

(Dollars in Thousands)

	FY 14	FY 15	FY 14-15 Biennium	FY 16	FY 17	FY 16-17 Biennium
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IT System Analysis/Upgrade and Judge Retirement Payouts

The Governor recommends a one-time appropriation increase for the Workers Compensation Court of Appeals (WCCA). Funds will be utilized for a paperless case management system; the system will help the WCCA ensure that services and hardware are compatible and accessible. Some funds will be used for compensation costs related to anticipated retirements.

Performance Measures:

The goal of any IT changes would be to provide fair, efficient, cost effective, and accountable government services to all stakeholders by producing high quality decisions in a timely manner.

Other Funds	Expenditure	210	0	210	0	0	0
	Net Change	210	0	210	0	0	0
Net All Change Items	Other Funds	210	0	210	0	0	0
	Net Change	210	0	210	0	0	0

Workers Compensation Court of Appeals
All Funds FTE by Activity

	Current	Forecast Base	Governor's Recommendation
Activity	FY 2013	FY 2015	FY 2015
Budget Activity: Workers Comp Ct Of Appeals	12.0	12.0	12.0
Workers Compensation Court of Appeals	12.0	12.0	12.0