

E-SJI News

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SJI SUBMITS FY 2009 BUDGET REQUEST TO CONGRESS

On January 24, 2008, SJI submitted its FY 2009 Budget request to the House and Senate Commerce, Justice, Science (CJS) Appropriations Subcommittees. For FY 2009, SJI is requesting \$5,389,000 to enhance its efforts to improve the quality of justice in State courts. The request is \$1,629,000 above the level provided in the FY 2008 Consolidated Appropriations Act (P.L. 110-161), and \$1,611,000 below the level as authorized by the State Justice Reauthorization Act of 2004 (P.L. 108-372).



Between FY 2006 and 2007, the total amount requested in grant applications increased 41 percent. Specifically, in FY 2007, total funding requested for Project Grants was \$2,771,533; an increase of \$866,533 (45 percent) over FY 2006. Furthermore, Partner Grant awards totaled \$896,379 in FY 2007; a

39 percent increase over FY 2006. The demands for Technical Assistance and Curriculum Adaptation & Training Grants are increasing as well. SJI developed its FY 2009 budget taking into account these grant statistics, and anticipated increases in grant requests for FY 2008 and 2009.

SJI remains the only source of federal funding dedicated exclusively to improving the quality of justice in State courts. There is a strong interest in continuing to support the State courts, since they handle over 97 percent of all the cases in the United States. The funding requested for FY 2009 will enable SJI to continue identifying issues that impact all courts, fostering innovative solutions, and sharing information on successful approaches nationwide.

LSC/SJI PARTNERSHIP YIELDS RESULTS

The Legal Services Corporation (LSC) and SJI began working to tighten the bonds between courts and legal aid providers in FY 2006. This partnership continues to provide additional resources to develop collaborative efforts between the courts and legal service programs in order to better serve self-represented and low-income litigants across the United States. The number of individuals choosing to represent themselves in the courts is increasing, and there is not enough support

available to assist them with legal matters. As a result, innovative technology projects have been developed to fill this gap. One example is the *Access to Justice* (A2J) project, which enabled courts and legal services programs to develop Internet-based programs to provide self-represented litigants better access to the courts. The second is a project called *HotDocs*, developed to support pro bono attorneys who service low-income litigants. *HotDocs* is a software program used

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IMPROVING PATTERN JURY INSTRUCTIONS



THE SUPREME COURT of OHIO



Juries and jury trials have received unprecedented attention in recent years. Much of the focus has been on pretrial jury management issues and in-court trial procedures. While concentration on these management issues has been predominant, many judicial and bar leaders have become increasingly aware of the importance of jury instructions. The attention has centered on what has become recognized as Pattern Jury Instructions (PJI). The Ohio Supreme Court, the Ohio Judicial Conference, and the National Center for State Courts (NCSC) began working together to develop a program for Ohio on how PJI could best serve the courts in assuring credibility to trial judges, lawyers, and reviewing courts in that State, and providing legal accuracy and clarity to jurors. Although the original project focused on Ohio, it was soon realized that many other PJI committees throughout the United States had

been created to examine internal procedures to address the same organizational and technical issues. The Ohio Supreme Court and NCSC received a SJI grant (SJI-07-N-009) to develop a program that would assist the State in this important area.

Ohio has since included other PJI committees in these efforts and is hosting a two-day National Conference on Pattern Jury Instructions, April 17-18, 2008, at the Hyatt Regency in Columbus, Ohio. The conference will feature plenary sessions on topics of interest to all PJI members and concurrent sessions focusing on unique issues related to civil or criminal PJI committees, and PJI committee management and reporting. All members of state and federal PJI committees are invited to attend. States interested are encouraged to visit the website: www.pjiconference.org.

LSC/SJI PARTNERSHIP YIELDS RESULTS

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to create online forms and pleadings. Once a form has been created and uploaded to the web site, self-represented litigants can fill in the form by answering questions and entering the information requested. The software then combines the information and supplies a finished form that can be saved and printed.

LSC recently reported some statistics from the utilization of the *HotDocs* Server. During the second quarter

of 2007, the National Document Assembly server delivered 34,625 interviews, and assembled 18,914 documents, bringing the 2007 totals to 68,157 interviews and 38,682 assembled documents. Compared to the totals for the first and second quarters of 2006, this is an approximately 48 percent increase in the number of delivered interviews, and a 125 percent increase in the number of assembled documents. SJI is proud to have been able to contribute to these successes, and is planning to continue these joint efforts in the future.

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The State Justice Institute is a private, non-profit corporation established by Congress in 1984 to provide support for projects to improve the quality of justice in State courts. SJI is governed by a Board of Directors appointed by the President and confirmed by the Senate.



REMINDERS

Applications for all grants and scholarships must be received by SJI on **May 1, 2008**, to be considered for the third quarter of FY 2008. Please be advised this is not a mail date, but the date the application must be physically received by SJI.

As a reminder, all forms and documents necessary to both apply for and manage SJI grants are available on the SJI website: <http://statejustice.org/forms.php>.

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