

**State Commission On Judicial Conduct
Summary of Budget Recommendations - Senate**

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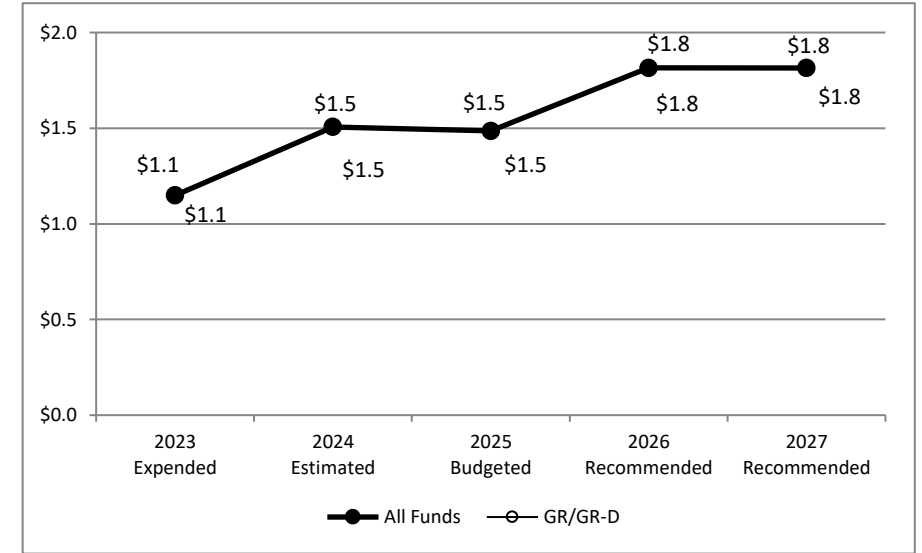
Jacqueline Habersham, Executive Director

Natasha Thomas, LBB Analyst

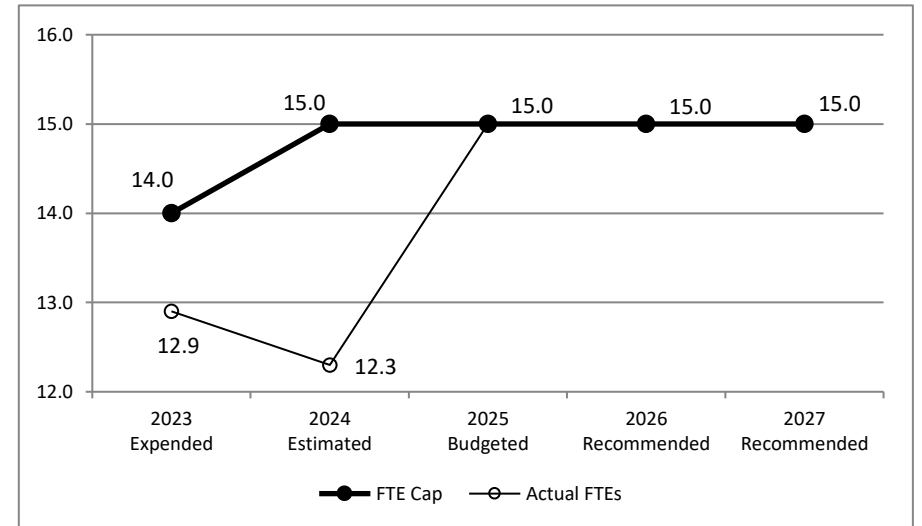
Method of Financing	2024-25 Base	2026-27 Recommended	Biennial Change (\$)	Biennial Change (%)
General Revenue Funds	\$2,991,955	\$3,629,268	\$637,313	21.3%
GR Dedicated Funds	\$0	\$0	\$0	0.0%
<i>Total GR-Related Funds</i>	<i>\$2,991,955</i>	<i>\$3,629,268</i>	<i>\$637,313</i>	<i>21.3%</i>
Federal Funds	\$0	\$0	\$0	0.0%
Other	\$0	\$0	\$0	0.0%
All Funds	\$2,991,955	\$3,629,268	\$637,313	21.3%

	FY 2025 Budgeted	FY 2027 Recommended	Biennial Change	Percent Change
FTEs	15.0	15.0	0.0	0.0%

Historical Funding Levels (Millions)



Historical Full-Time-Equivalent Employees (FTEs)



The bill pattern for this agency (2026-27 Recommended) represents an estimated 100.0% of the agency's estimated total available funds for the 2026-27 biennium.

State Commission On Judicial Conduct
Summary of Funding Changes and Recommendations - Senate

Funding Changes and Recommendations for the 2026-27 Biennium compared to the 2024-25 Base Spending Level	General Revenue	GR-Dedicated	Federal Funds	Other Funds	All Funds	Strategy in Appendix A
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SIGNIFICANT Funding Changes and Recommendations (each issue is explained in Section 3 and additional details are provided in Appendix A):

A)	Salary increase for all staff, including Executive Director and one vacant attorney position.	\$631,925	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$631,925	A.1.1
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OTHER Funding Changes and Recommendations (these issues are not addressed in Section 3 but details are provided in Appendix A):

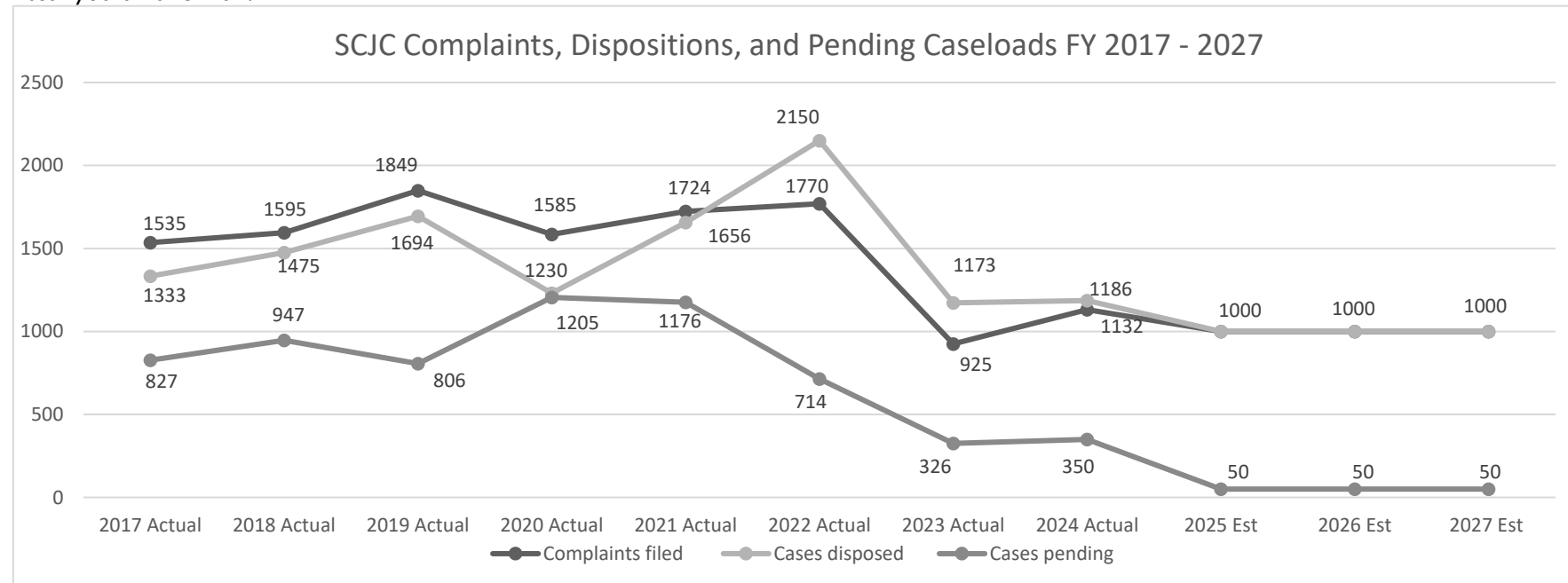
B)	General Revenue funding for travel expenses for Commissioners to attend Commission meetings in Austin.	\$7,800	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$7,800	A.1.1
C)	General Revenue funding to biennialize the statewide salary adjustments included in the 2024-25 appropriations.	\$47,588	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$47,588	A.1.1
D)	Removal of one-time funding for procurement of a new case management system.	(\$50,000)	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	(\$50,000)	A.1.1

TOTAL SIGNIFICANT & OTHER Funding Changes and Recommendations		\$637,313	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$637,313	As Listed
<i>SIGNIFICANT & OTHER Funding Increases</i>		\$687,313	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$687,313	As Listed
<i>SIGNIFICANT & OTHER Funding Decreases</i>		(\$50,000)	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	(\$50,000)	As Listed

**State Commission On Judicial Conduct
Selected Fiscal and Policy Issues - Senate**

1. **Salary Adjustments.** Recommendations provide \$0.6 million in General Revenue to increase the salaries for all agency staff positions, including the executive director (see also, Appendix C, FTE Highlights), and one vacant attorney position.
2. **Case Filings and External Proceedings.** In fiscal year 2017, the agency began collecting complaints through an online filing portal resulting in an increase in complaints, dispositions and pending cases. Data collected by the agency between fiscal years 2017 and 2022 showed that approximately 85.5 percent of complaints filed online were administratively dismissed because the complaints were either improperly made or contained insufficient evidence to substantiate a finding of misconduct. In fiscal year 2022, the agency began requiring that complaints be submitted by mail and include a notary’s signature or an unsworn declaration to deter frivolous complaints.

The figure below shows the actual number of complaints, dispositions, and cases pending for the agency for fiscal years 2017-2024 and the estimated totals for fiscal years 2025-2027.



Note: Information provided by SCJC

In fiscal year 2024, SCJC conducted 8 external proceedings, including 6 Courts of Review and 2 Formal Proceedings. The agency continues to have ongoing costs related to two lawsuits challenging the agency’s authority.

3. **Impact of Recent Legislation.** HB 4344, Eighty-seventh Legislature, Regular Session, 2021, created a 270-day deadline for the agency to resolve complaints. In fiscal year 2023, 22 cases were not resolved within the deadline. In fiscal year 2024, the total number of cases not resolved within the deadline increased to 256. The agency has struggled to meet the deadline due in part to an attorney position that has been vacant for two years. Furthermore, certain cases are inherently more complicated and require more time to investigate than the deadline will allow. According to the agency, cases that do not meet the deadline typically involve a judge who has been criminally indicted or other very serious allegations.

HB 367, Eighty-eighth Legislature, Regular Session, 2023, extended the agency's investigative authority to judicial candidates. Since this took effect, the agency has received 15 complaints on judicial candidates. However, many of the complaints are incomplete, which require an investigation to verify the information described in the complaint. In most cases, that information is insufficient. The agency anticipates complaints on judicial candidates to increase during election seasons.

Recommendations increase the salaries of all filled attorney positions to a minimum of \$120,000 to assist the agency with recruiting and retaining qualified candidates to assist in reducing the complaint backlog and resolving complaints within the deadline.

Recommendations do not include \$40,000 each fiscal year to increase the salary of one vacant attorney position that was provided by the enactment of HB 367, Eighty-eighth Legislature, Regular Session, 2023 (see also, Section 5, Items not Included in Recommendations).

**State Commission On Judicial Conduct
Rider Highlights - Senate**

Deleted Riders

1. Recommendations delete Rider 2, Contingency for SB 21, which was not enacted by the 88th Legislature, Regular Session, 2023.

**State Commission On Judicial Conduct
Items Not Included in Recommendations - Senate**

		2026-27 Biennial Total			Information Technology Involved?	Contracting Involved?	Estimated Continued Cost 2028-29
		GR & GR-D	All Funds	FTEs			
Agency Exceptional Items Not Included (in agency priority order)							
1)	Funding to Increase Salary of One Vacant Attorney Position (\$39,800 Annual/\$79,600 Biennium)	\$79,600	\$79,600	0.0	No	No	\$79,600
2)	Upgrade Existing Case Management System (\$15,000 Annual/\$30,000 Biennium)	\$30,000	\$30,000	0.0	Yes	No	\$30,000
TOTAL Items Not Included in Recommendations		\$109,600	\$109,600	0.0			\$109,600

**State Commission On Judicial Conduct
Appendices - Senate**

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* Appendix is not included - no significant information to report

**State Commission On Judicial Conduct
Funding Changes and Recommendations by Strategy - Senate -- ALL FUNDS**

Strategy/Goal	2024-25 Base	2026-27 Recommended	Biennial Change	% Change	Comments
ADMINISTRATION AND ENFORCEMENT A.1.1	\$2,991,955	\$3,629,268	\$637,313	21.3%	<p>Recommendations reflect a \$631,925 increase in funding to provide a salary adjustment for all staff positions.</p> <p>Recommendations reflect a \$47,588 increase in funding to biennialize the statewide salary adjustments offset by a \$50,000 decrease due to the removal of one-time costs for procurement of a case management system.</p> <p>Recommendations reflect an increase of \$7,800 for travel expenses for Commissioners to attend Commission meetings in Austin.</p>
Total, Goal A, ADMINISTRATION AND ENFORCEMENT	\$2,991,955	\$3,629,268	\$637,313	21.3%	
Grand Total, All Strategies	\$2,991,955	\$3,629,268	\$637,313	21.3%	

**State Commission On Judicial Conduct
FTE Highlights - Senate**

Full-Time-Equivalent Positions	Expended 2023	Expended 2024	Budgeted 2025	Recommended 2026	Recommended 2027
Cap	14.0	15.0	15.0	15.0	15.0
Actual/Budgeted	12.9	12.3	15.0	NA	NA

Schedule of Exempt Positions (Cap)					
Executive Director, Group 5	\$135,149	\$136,642	\$145,284	\$173,535	\$173,535

Notes:

- a) State Auditor's Office is the source for the fiscal year 2023 and 2024 annual average (actual) FTE level.

- b) The Eighty-sixth Legislature, Regular Session, 2019, increased the authority for the annual exempt salary for the Executive Director position from \$126,660 to 135,149 in fiscal years 2023-24. The Commission then set the annual salary at \$128,000. The Eighty-eighth Legislature, Regular Session, 2023, provided an additional \$8,642 in funding in fiscal year 2024 and \$17,284 in fiscal year 2025 to increase the State Commission on Judicial Conduct Executive Director's annual exempt salary from \$128,000 to \$145,284.

- c) Recommendations increase the Executive Director's annual exempt salary from \$145,284 to \$173,535 in the 2026-27 biennium. The increase resulted in a classification change from Group 4 to Group 5.