

***RESOLUTION***

**WHEREAS**, the budgets of Walton County for Fiscal Year 2025 for the General Fund, all special revenue funds, debt service funds, and capital funds were adopted on June 4, 2024, and

**WHEREAS**, to maintain compliance with the state of Georgia budget requirements per O.C.G.A. sections 36-81-3, it is necessary to amend said budgets, now

**THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE** Board of Commissioners of Walton County, amends the Fiscal Year 2025 budget to make changes to the Fiscal Year 2025 budget as presented in the attached summary schedule.

Adopted this 5th day of November 2024

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Chairman, David G. Thompson

Attest:

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County Clerk, Rhonda R. Hawk

**AMENDMENT SUMMARY**  
**November 2024 Agenda**

1. **Superior Court 2150**: FY 2025 As proposed by Judge Wynne amendment to increase personnel expenditures in the amount of \$ 5,375.20. The amendment would result in a decrease in the fund balance.
2. **Probate Court 2450**: FY 2025 As proposed by Judge Wright amendment to increase personnel expenditures in the amount of \$ 4,306.00. The amendment would result in a decrease in the fund balance.

On Wed, Jul 17, 2024 at 10:26 AM Ken Wynne <[Ken.Wynne@georgiacourts.gov](mailto:Ken.Wynne@georgiacourts.gov)> wrote:

Mr. Cooper and Mr. Ward:

I'm reaching out to ask you to help me resolve issues concerning the pay for the Superior Court law clerks and the salary supplements for the judges and judicial assistants. I'll address the law clerks' pay first.

As you know, both Walton County and Newton County approved the request of the District Attorney and the Public Defender to create a pay scale for assistant district attorneys and assistant public defenders, with Newton County adopting Walton County's pay scale for those attorneys. When I met with each board to present the Superior Court budget, I requested that the Superior Court law clerks be included in that pay scale, but it appears they were not. Admittedly, I did not present this in my written documentation but simply made the request at the budget meetings. That was my error. I am looking to you for advice as to how best to proceed with moving the law clerks into the pay scale at this point.

Some context might be helpful. We have five law clerks (one for each judge) three of which are based in Newton County and paid by Newton County alone, one law clerk based in Walton County and paid by Walton County alone, and one state-paid law clerk in Walton County whose salary is supplemented by both counties because the state pay scale is lower than the counties. Like the judges, each law clerk serves both counties in the circuit by assisting the judges in deciding cases in both counties.

Some years ago, when Judge Ott was Chief Judge, he requested that the law clerks be taken out of the counties' pay structure. His reasoning was valid at the time, because the counties' pay scales differed each year, and the judges have always had to maintain pay equality among all the law clerks because all perform the same work. To do otherwise would not be fair.

In addition, all judges in the past hired clerks to stay for only two years. For this reason, it was important that all clerks be paid the same. However, equal pay is no longer a concern because most of the current judges would like to encourage their clerks to stay and make a career as staff attorneys, thus obviating the need for equal pay; the more experienced staff attorneys should be paid more than a recent law school graduate. The pay scale would encourage longevity for those clerks who want to pursue a career as a judicial staff attorney, giving the judge and the people of the circuit the benefit of their experience.

From a pay equality standpoint, including the law clerks in the pay scale with the ADA's and the APD's is justified for multiple reasons, two of which I will highlight. First, comparatively speaking, while the law clerks do not engage in litigation as the ADA's and APD's do, they are required to have a greater breadth of legal knowledge. ADA's and APD's handle criminal cases only. In contrast, the law clerks are required to know not only criminal law and procedure but civil law and procedure as well, because they assist the judges in deciding both kinds of cases. Second, they assist the judges in making sure we get it right. What I mean by that is this: there is a difference between *advocating* a legal position and *deciding* what the correct legal position actually is. Judges and their law clerks have to get it right to avoid retrials and to

minimize or eliminate, as far as humanly possible, reversals of trial court decisions by appellate courts. Reversals and retrials only delay justice for the parties.

I am asking your help and guidance as to how I can correct this pay inequity, and I apologize for creating the necessity of having to ask.

As for the salary supplements for the judges and their judicial assistants, as you may be aware, the Superior Court judges are paid by the state, but our salaries are supplemented by both counties. Historically, the counties have always shared this equally. However, I learned this week that Walton County included the judges and staff in its COLA, but Newton County did not. Can we correct this disparity as well?

I am available to discuss these issues by phone or in person, and I have a great deal of flexibility this week and next week. I'm always grateful for the support the judiciary has received from both counties, and I appreciate the work that both counties, especially the finance and human resources departments, do to keep our courts running smoothly. I look forward to hearing from you.

Ken Wynne  
Judge, Superior Courts  
Alcovy Judicial Circuit  
1132 Usher Street  
Room 313  
Covington, GA 30014

(770) 788-3781 (Office)  
(770) 784-1869 (Fax)

Email request to John A. Ward III, County Manager

On Wed, Sep 25, 2024 at 9:03 AM Bruce Wright <[bwright@co.walton.ga.us](mailto:bwright@co.walton.ga.us)> wrote:

Good morning Sir! Public Defender David Phillips, has worked exclusively with my traffic court since 2018. He has saved the county many thousands of dollars since taking on that role.

Previously, we had to hire outside private attorneys to be public defenders for my court. We paid appx \$33,000.00, the last year before I was able to get the public defender's office to take our caseload. He currently gets a supplement of \$3,268.19. You and I had recently discussed increasing his supplement. I wanted to get the increase started by July 1, 2024. However, I was too late for that to happen. I'm checking back to you to see if or what needs to be done by me for the increase to happen. I want to increase the supplement to \$6,000.00. If we were to lose him, we can expect to pay well of \$40,000.00, due to our volume at this time. Thank you for any and all assistance.

Bruce E. Wright, Judge  
Walton County Probate Court  
303 S. Hammond Dr.  
Monroe, Ga 30655  
770-267-1345

12:04 PM  
(16 minutes  
ago)

**Bruce Wright**

to me

Yes that is correct. I am requesting an additional \$6k for a total of appx \$9k supplement for David Phillips. If any misunderstanding occurred, it was my fault. Thanks...

Bruce E. Wright, Judge  
Walton County Probate Court  
303 S. Hammond Dr.  
Monroe, Ga 30655  
770-267-1345

On Wed, Oct 30, 2024 at 11:52 AM Melissia Rusk <[melissia.rusk@co.walton.ga.us](mailto:melissia.rusk@co.walton.ga.us)> wrote:  
Judge Wright,

In your email you requested the supplement to increase to \$6,000 however during our telephone conversation you stated you were requesting the supplement be increased by \$6,000 which would take the current \$3,268.19 supplement to \$9,268.19. Could you please confirm? Thank you so much.

***Melissia Rusk***

Human Resources Director  
Walton County Board of Commissioners  
137 E. Washington Street  
Monroe, Georgia 30655  
770-266-1600

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