



Judicial Council of California

455 Golden Gate Avenue · San Francisco, California 94102-3688

courts.ca.gov

REPORT TO THE JUDICIAL COUNCIL

Item No.: 26-065

For business meeting on April 24, 2026

Title

Judicial Branch Administration: Judicial
Branch Workers' Compensation Program

Report Type

Action Required

Rules, Forms, Standards, or Statutes Affected

None

Effective Date

April 24, 2026

Recommended by

Judicial Branch Workers' Compensation
Program Advisory Committee
Shelby Wineinger, Chair

Date of Report

March 25, 2026

Contact

Edward Metro, 415-865-4902
edward.metro@jud.ca.gov

Executive Summary

The Judicial Branch Workers' Compensation Program Advisory Committee recommends approval of the workers' compensation cost allocation of \$17.96 million for the trial courts and \$1.29 million for the state judiciary for fiscal year 2026–27 to cover the cost of claims for the next fiscal year while maintaining a positive fund balance. The committee also recommends a one-year extension of the clinical consultation pilot program as a benefit for its membership and with the aim of reducing the number of claims filed. This extension would effectively continue the pilot program through June 30, 2027.

Recommendation

The Judicial Branch Workers' Compensation Program Advisory Committee recommends that the Judicial Council, effective April 24, 2026:

1. Approve the fiscal year 2026–27 workers' compensation cost allocation of \$17.96 million for participating trial courts and \$1.29 million for the state judiciary; and
2. Approve a one-year extension of the Judicial Branch Workers' Compensation Program's clinical consultation pilot program as a continued benefit to its members.

Relevant Previous Council Action

At its meeting on April 25, 2025, the Judicial Council approved the Judicial Branch Workers' Compensation Program (JBWCP) premium for fiscal year (FY) 2025–26 for participating members to cover the cost of claims for that fiscal year while maintaining a positive fund balance. The Judicial Council also approved the revision of the JBWCP's nurse triage process to include clinical consultation as a benefit for its membership as a one-year pilot, effective July 1, 2025.

Analysis/Rationale

Workers' compensation cost allocation for FY 2026–27

The JBWCP is a self-funded program that assumes the financial risk for providing workers' compensation benefits to its members. Each member contributes a portion of the costs associated with the recommended allocation for workers' compensation premiums. The actuary for the JBWCP evaluates the claims experience and payroll data from the past three years for its members, projecting the premiums amount required to meet these expenses in the forthcoming year, while utilizing a 70 percent confidence level. The premium cost allocation is then split among the members based on their respective claims experience and the payroll history of each court.

This year, the committee is recommending \$17.96 million for the trial courts¹ and \$1.29 million for the state judiciary² for FY 2026–27 premiums, representing a premium decrease of approximately 2.7 percent and an increase of 0.6 percent, respectively (see Links A and B). The JBWCP continues to see better-than-expected claim development and relatively flat claim severity, despite the rising medical costs observed throughout the workers' compensation industry.

Approving the proposal for the premium allocation is essential for maintaining the financial stability of the JBWCP. It is crucial to support the JBWCP's financial health and sustainability in (1) covering all upcoming workers' compensation claim costs, and (2) preventing any financial challenges that may lead to falling into deficit.

If the Judicial Council approves the proposed workers' compensation premium allocation for FY 2026–27, the JBWCP will be funded at the appropriate level to continue covering the cost of claims while maintaining a positive fund balance.

¹ All trial courts other than the Superior Court of Los Angeles County participate in the JBWCP. The trial court cost allocation is for trial court staff from the participating superior courts. Superior court judges are included as members under the state judiciary.

² The state judiciary cost allocation is for staff at the Supreme Court of California, Courts of Appeal, Habeas Corpus Resource Center, Commission on Judicial Performance, the Judicial Council of California, and all judges and justices.

One-year extension of the clinical consultation pilot program

At its meeting on April 25, 2025, the Judicial Council approved a one-year pilot program to provide clinical consultation services to the JBWCP. The clinical consultation service allows qualified nursing professionals to manage and coordinate the health-care needs of employees who have sustained work-related injuries and illnesses at the time of injury and before filing a claim. This system of early intervention and guidance provides direct support to the injured workers and helps reduce unnecessary physician visits and lost work time, resulting in reduced workers' compensation costs for the court and the JBWCP.

The pilot program went live on July 1, 2025, and is currently active through June 30, 2026. The program realizes savings through claim reduction and emergency room avoidance. During the six-month check-in, utilization was low. The JBWCP received 11 triage calls to the clinical consultation phone number. From the 11 calls, the estimated savings amounted to approximately \$2,149, or roughly \$200 per call.

The committee recommends a year extension of the clinical consultation pilot program through June 30, 2027. The JBWCP will continue to develop communication materials to further remind the courts of the clinical consultation service, as well as provide ongoing training and support to court staff. Through the increased education and member outreach, the JBWCP will expect to see an increase in utilization across the membership, which will provide more information to the committee to further evaluate and determine the next steps during its meeting in February 2027.

Policy implications

The proposal has no policy implications.

Comments

No comments or concerns were received when the JBWCP Advisory Committee and staff provided this proposal to the clerk/executive officers of the state judiciary and members of the Court Executives Advisory Committee.

Alternatives considered

If the Judicial Council does not agree with the recommended allocation, JBWCP staff will work with the actuary to reevaluate the premium allocation to determine another funding level. During this time, the burden of claims cost will fall on the JBWCP's fund balance. Accordingly, the JBWCP will risk its solvency and its ability to cover the cost of claims.

The committee had also considered the option not to approve the continuation of the clinical consultation pilot program. Due to positive feedback from the JBWCP's membership, the committee is in favor of extending the pilot program to continue to provide this service to its membership. If the Judicial Council does not agree with extending the pilot program one more year, JBWCP staff will work with the third-party administrator to determine another means to reduce the frequency of workers' compensation claims and costs for the JBWCP.

Fiscal and Operational Impacts

For FY 2026–27, the proposed premiums are \$17.96 million for trial court members and \$1.29 million for state judiciary members, reflecting a decrease of 2.7 percent and an increase of 0.6 percent, respectively. This allocation will ensure the continued funding stability and administration of the JBWCP.

Additionally, there is no projected fiscal impact on extending the clinical consultation pilot program. Although the utilization was low, the clinical consultation program actually lowered costs this past year since consultation is less expensive at \$90 per call versus \$135 per hour for an assessment nurse. Through increased member outreach and greater utilization, clinical consultation should also have a positive impact on reducing the number of claims filed, which benefits the injured worker, the court, and the JBWCP.

Attachments and Links

1. Link A: *Workers' Compensation Fiscal Year 2026–27 Premium: Trial Courts*, courts.ca.gov/system/files/file/trial_court_2026-27_draft_premiums.pdf
2. Link B: *Workers' Compensation Fiscal Year 2026–27 Premium: State Judiciary*, courts.ca.gov/system/files/file/judiciary_2026-27_draft_premiums.pdf