



AOPC

Unified Judicial System Budget Overview

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Administrative Office of Pennsylvania Courts

Pennsylvania Supreme Court & AOPC

- As the administrative arm of the Pennsylvania Supreme Court, the Administrative Office of Pennsylvania Courts (AOPC) carries out the court's policy and management directives, while also providing policy guidance, administrative support, technical assistance, and legal representation for the judges and staff of Pennsylvania's Unified Judicial System and its 60 judicial districts.
- Departments within the AOPC
 - Administrative Services
 - Communications/Intergovernmental Relations
 - Court Administrator
 - Finance
 - Human Resources
 - **Information Technology – *Separate funding source (JCS)***
 - Judicial District Operations and Programs
 - Judicial Education
 - Judicial District Security
 - Legal
 - Research & Statistics

UJS Budget Overview

- FY 2022-23: \$434,640,000
 - 90% personnel, 63% judicial salaries and benefits (79% including appellate court staff)
 - 75% of funding supports county courts
- Roughly 0.5% of Commonwealth budget
 - Comparable to General Assembly
- Three components
 - General Appropriation (83% of non-IT budget)
 - “Act 49” fees/surcharges (17% of non-IT budget)
 - JCS Funding – fees/surcharges – @ \$45 million
 - 100% of IT budget

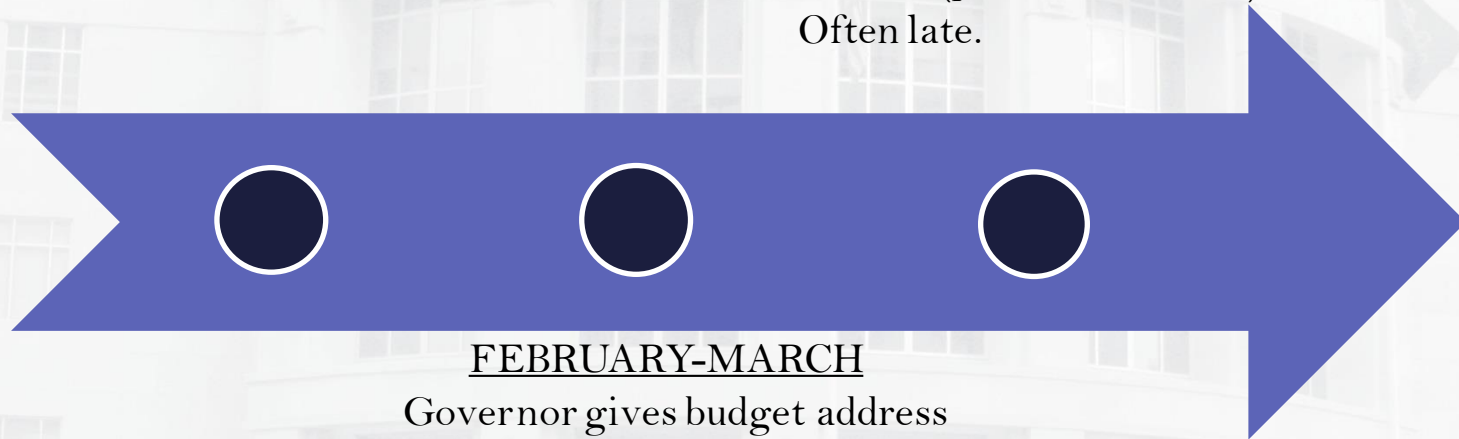
The Budget Cycle

OCTOBER

Judiciary submits its budget request to the Governor

JUNE

Legislature passes and Governor signs on or before June 30 (per Constitution). Often late.



FEBRUARY-MARCH

Governor gives budget address

Judiciary submits required budget documents to Legislature

Budget hearings with Senate and House Appropriation Committees, if scheduled

General Appropriation

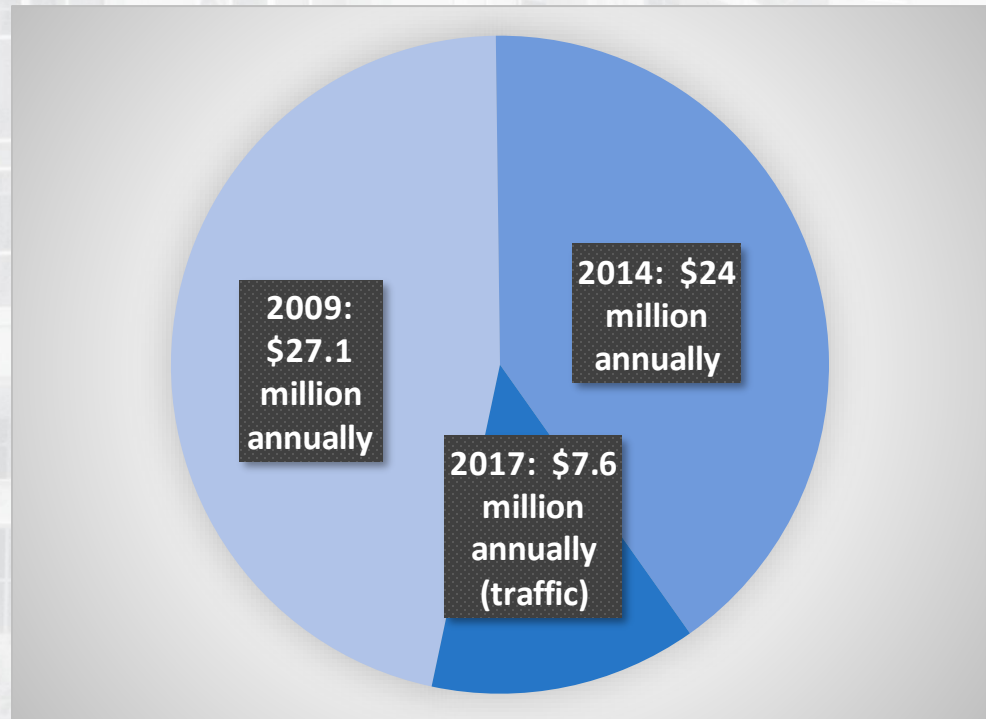
- \$362,369,000
 - Tax dollars
 - Until 2009, only source of non-IT funding
 - FY 2022-23: 1.8% increase (first in 6 years)
 - Had been roughly \$355 million since 2016-17

“ACT 49” RESTRICTED REVENUES

- Roughly \$60 million in annual revenue to the Unified Judicial System for general fund operations.

Three components

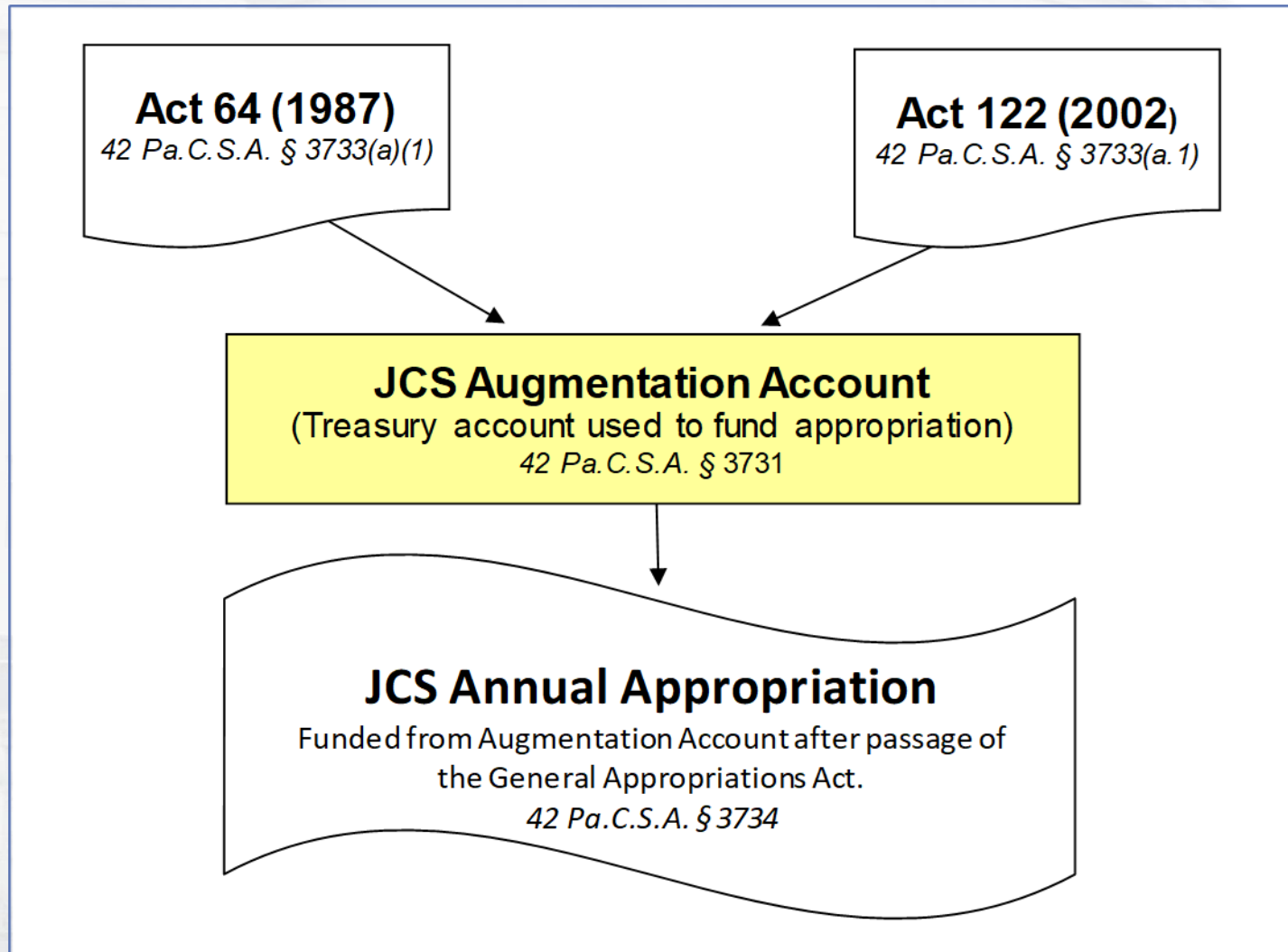
- 2009. \$11.25 surcharge on most court filings, recorder of deeds transfers and criminal convictions. Excludes traffic. \$27.1 million.
- 2014. \$10 surcharge added to same filings. \$24 million.
- 2017. \$10 surcharge expanded to summary traffic citations. \$7.6 million.



Judicial Computer System (JCS) Funding

- In 1987, the Supreme Court adopted a master plan for statewide automation and worked with the Legislature to implement a funding mechanism in order to achieve the Court's plan.
- The idea was that statewide systems would centralize the data and documents for the courts and result in more consistent practices (standardized, statewide forms and reports) and a more integrated and accessible system of justice.
- Statewide data would also provide the opportunity for analysis and evaluation to drive policy changes.
- AOPC/IT (JCS) was created and charged with developing statewide case management systems for all levels of court.

JCS is not Funded with Tax Dollars



Two Funding Sources for JCS

- **Act 64 of 1987**

- Total of fines, fees and costs collected by the UJS in excess of the amount collected in 1986-87
- Act 42 of 2018 annually diverts first \$15M to school safety
 - \$45 million diverted thus far
 - Currently suspended for one year

Two Funding Sources for JCS

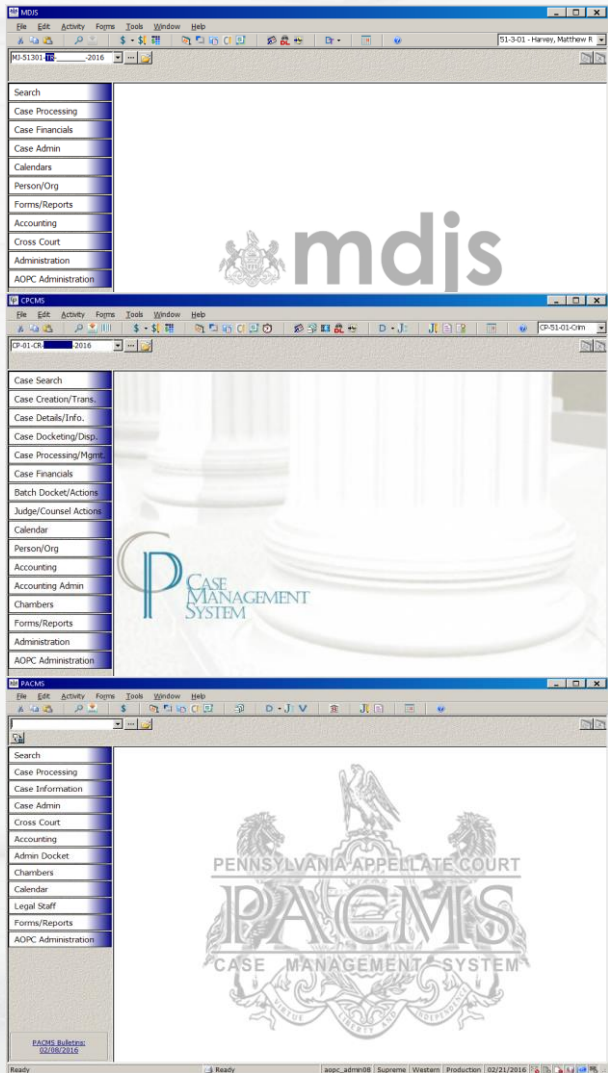
- **Act 122 of 2002**

- Since 2005-06 JCS portion has been **\$8** (of \$10 total)
- Fee is levied on:
 - Initial filings in appellate, common pleas and MDJ courts
 - Filing of deeds and mortgage or property transfers
 - Criminal convictions, guilty pleas and entry into ARD
- Primary revenue sources
 - MDJ Courts (44%)
 - Recorder of Deeds (40%)
 - Courts of Common Pleas (14%)

JCS Benefits to UJS, Commonwealth

- Case Management Systems
 - MDJS, CPCMS, PACMS
- E-filing
 - Currently only in criminal cases
- Guardianship Tracking System
- Use of Data
 - Law Enforcement
 - Policy makers

JCS Statewide Case Management Systems



- **Magisterial District Judge System (MDJS)** – a comprehensive statewide case management system that serves all magisterial district courts, including central and night courts and the Pittsburgh Municipal Court. 1992/2011
- **Common Pleas Case Management System (CPCMS)** – provides comprehensive case management, accounting and reporting functions to the criminal division of the courts of common pleas, and for dependency and delinquency cases. It also includes Philadelphia Municipal Court. 2006/2013
- **Pennsylvania Appellate Court Case Management System (PACMS)** – a statewide case management system used by the three appellate courts – Supreme, Superior and Commonwealth. 1999/2009

Guardianship Tracking System (GTS)

- In 2014, the Supreme Court's Elder Law Task Force produced a long list of recommendations to address the needs and challenges of the Commonwealth's elder population.
- One recommendation was the creation of a statewide guardianship tracking system.
- In 2018, JCS rolled out the newly developed statewide Guardianship Tracking System used by all counties.
 - Statewide Guardian Repository
 - Compliance Tracking and Electronic Notifications
 - Statewide Guardian Alerts
 - Automated Flag Logic
 - Statistical Reporting



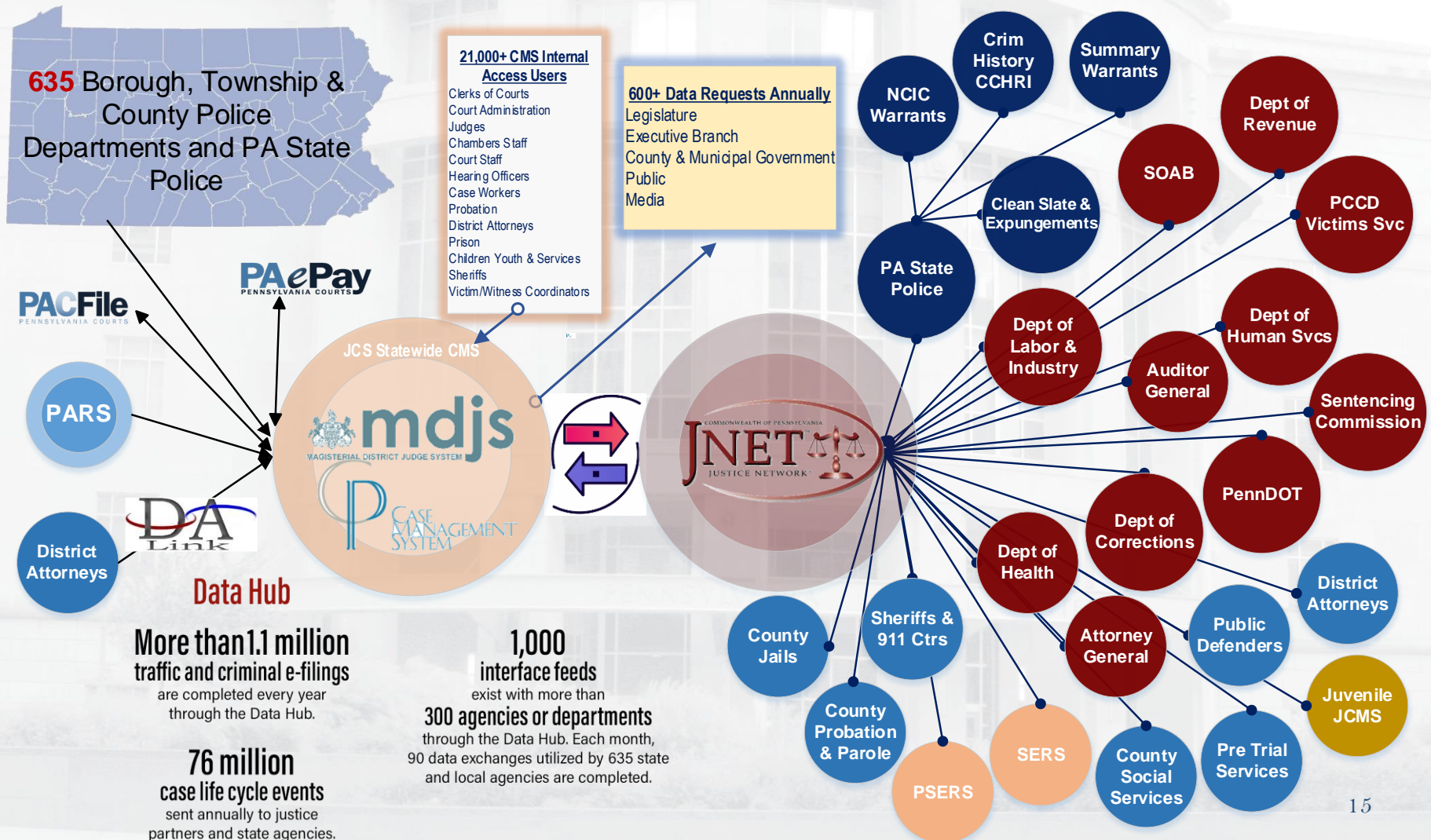
Benefits of JCS Statewide Data and Uniform Practices

Access to and Standardization of Court Data

- Statewide systems allow implementation of broad public access policies, facilitating public access to court records.
- The Web Portal and Data Hub provide centralized access to court information, as well as supporting inter-agency electronic transfer of data.
- Standardization – bulk data from any of the courts can be provided in a homogeneous format and/or layout.
- Data is layered, so online access to more secure data and documents can be provided to those that have secure logins for the web portal.

Benefits of JCS Statewide Data and Uniform Practices

State and Local Agencies Depend on JCS Data



Benefits of JCS Statewide Data and Uniform Practices

Focused Look at JCS Data and Law Enforcement

- Traffic eFiling: 570,000 annually
- Non-Traffic eFiling: 55,000 annually
- Clean Slate:
 - 153,000 records sealed annually
 - 51 million records the past two years for backlog of older cases
 - 9 million estimated additional records for Clean Slate II
- Warrants:
 - 195,000 records annually to PSP & CLEAN/NCIC
 - 105,000 *warrant searches daily from police vehicles across the state*
- Court Dispositions to State Police Criminal History Repository (CCHRI): 310,000 annually



Benefits of JCS Statewide Data and Uniform Practices

JCS Statewide Case Management Collections

- The courts have collected and disbursed over **\$4.6 billion in the last 10 years** through the JCS statewide case management systems.
- The MDJS has a **collection rate of 97%** on all assessed fines, costs and fees.
- JCS has an efficient integrated online payment system (PAePay) that was used to collect **\$164 million in 2021** – almost \$1 in every \$3 collected comes through PAePay.
- Where do all these collected monies go that are paid on fines, fees, costs and restitution?
 - 53% County government
 - 27% Commonwealth entities
 - 15% Private restitution
 - 4% Municipalities
 - 1% Other

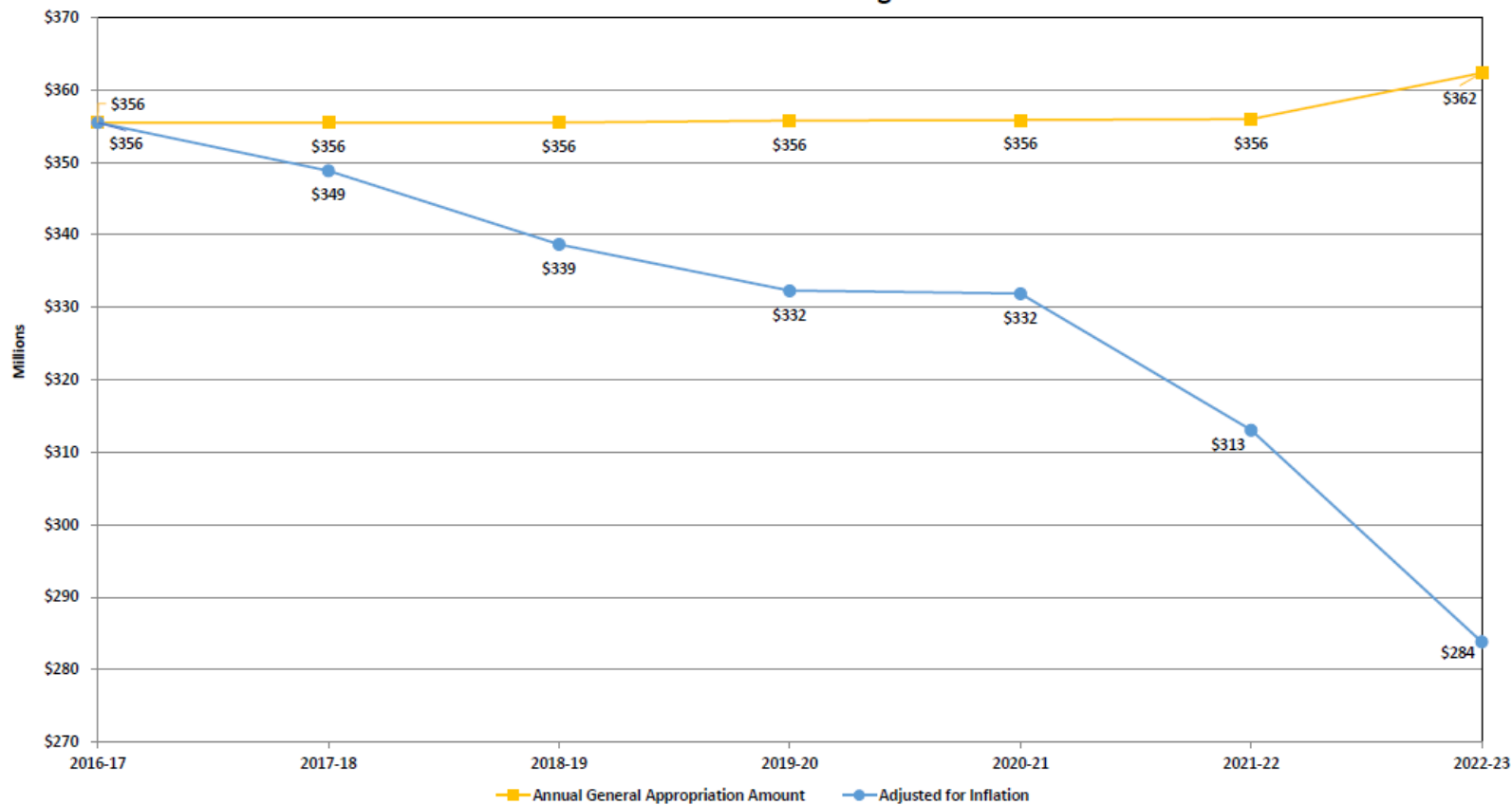
Benefits of JCS Statewide Data and Uniform Practices

Legislation and the Case Management Systems

- Each year, JCS reviews legislation for impacts on AOPC supported systems. Implementing these items are considered mandates and the top priority.
- From 2016 through 2020, JCS made system updates to comply with 27 legislative acts. Here are a few examples:
 - Child Protection (Act 92 of 2018)
 - Clean Slate (Act 56 of 2018)
 - Clean Slate II (Act 83 of 2020)
 - Lottery Intercept (Act 40 and 44 of 2017)
 - PFA/Firearm Relinquishment (Act 79 of 2018)
 - Removal of License Suspension for Drug Convictions (Act 95 of 2018)
 - Restitution Disbursement Schedule (Act 145 of 2018)
 - Safe Harbor for Sexually Exploited Children (Act 130 of 2019)
 - Tax Refund Intercept (Act 93 of 2016)

Challenges – Declining General Appropriation

Unified Judicial System Annual General Appropriation Amount Adjusted for Inflation
FY 2016-17 Through FY 2022-23



Challenges – “ACT 49” always subject to sunset

- 2009: 25 months
- 2011, 2014, 2017: three years
- 2020: one year
- 2021: six months
- 2022: 13 months



Challenges – If Act 49 sunsets . . .

- UJS operations would be fundamentally altered
 - Have to pay the judges per PA Constitution
 - Won't be able to pay staff
 - State-level employees in county courts
 - Counties can't afford to pick up costs
 - Disaster for court users

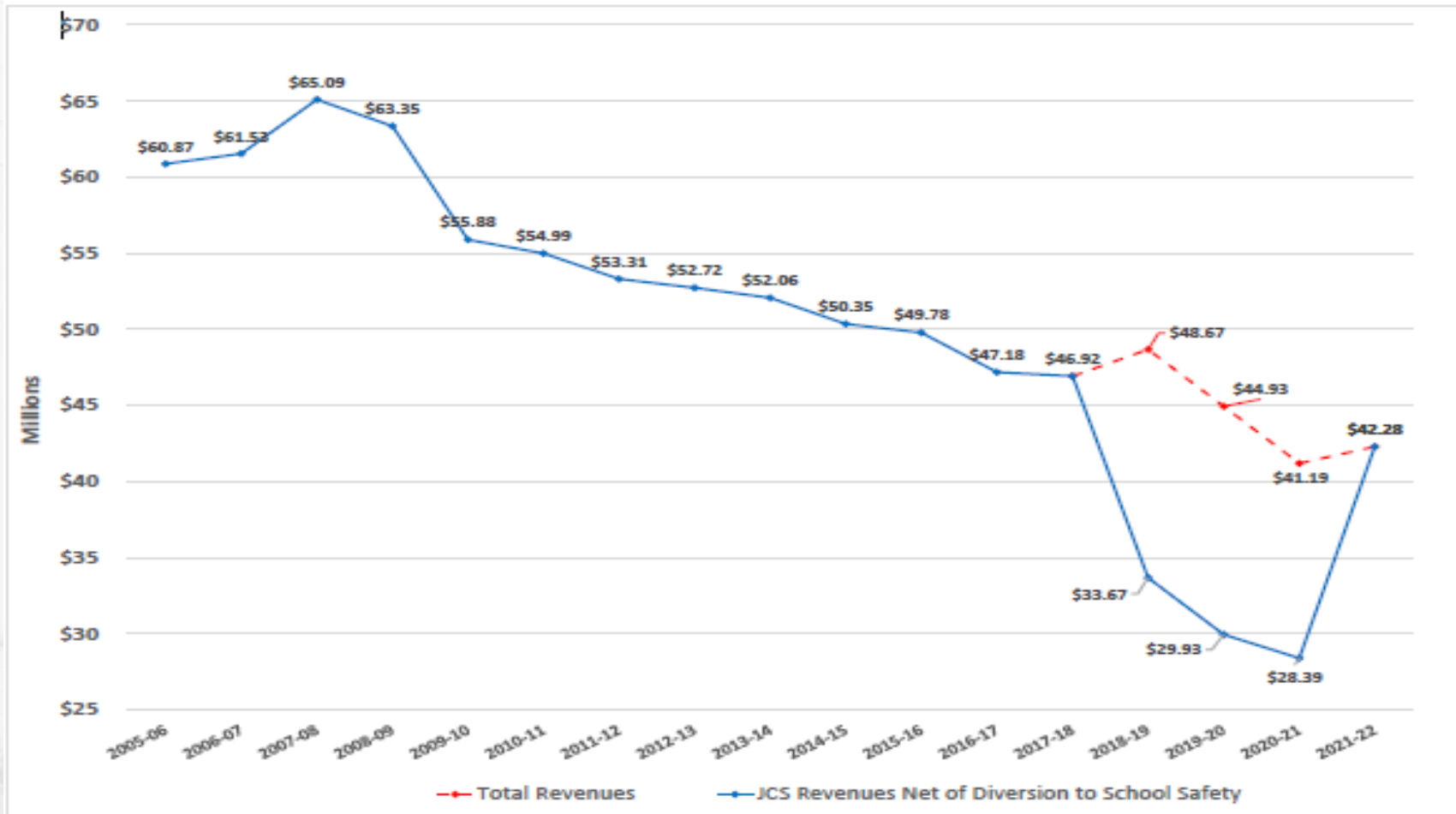
Additional Fee Collection for Others

- Access to Justice Account Fee/Surcharge (\$6)
 - \$17.5 million annually for civil legal aid
 - Administered through IOLTA board
- Office of Attorney General (\$2.50)
 - \$6.1 million annually
- Criminal Justice Enhancement (\$2.50)
 - \$6.1 million annually for District Attorneys

Challenges – JCS Revenue Picture

- Declining Revenues – Peak of **\$65M** in 2007-08 down to **\$41M** in 2020-21
 - Stock market / housing crash of 2008, resulted in fewer home purchases and refinances
 - Mortgage Electronic Registration Systems (MERS)
 - Reduced the number of filings with the Recorder of Deeds
 - When the loan is sold by one bank to another it is no longer filed with the recorder of deeds
 - Overall decline in traffic citations
 - Government offices and courts closed due to COVID-19

JCS Revenues FYs 2005-06 through 2020-21



AOPC Actions Taken re JCS

- AOPC/IT has taken significant steps to keep annual expenditures in line with declining revenues since 2016-17
- In FY 2017-18 Deloitte completed an assessment of JCS regarding governance, budgeting, financial management and project prioritization processes, which resulted in
 - Implementation of stringent governance policies
 - A decision not to create a statewide civil case management system
 - IT staff cut by one-third – annual savings of **\$13 million**
 - Aggressive renegotiation of existing contracts - annual savings of **\$3 million**

Challenges -- JCS Account

- JCS account balance was intended for the development and deployment of a statewide civil system
- **\$75M** in diversions and sweeps over the past three years have fully depleted balance in JCS account.
 - In FYs 2018-19, 2019-20 and 2020-21, each year \$15M was statutorily diverted from JCS account to the School Safety and Security Fund = **\$45M**
 - In FY 2020-21, an additional **\$30M** was transferred from JCS account to the General Fund
- Cost savings alone cannot remedy the effects of sweeps and diversions

Challenges – Interbranch Tension

- Natural part of multi-branch government
 - Checks and Balances
- GA focus on Supreme Court
 - 2006 pay raise
 - 2018 redistricting case
 - 2020 election cases and emergency power cases

Solutions? Education

- Judicial Computer System Financial Audit Review Committee
 - Created in June 2021, issued report in January 2022
- “The Judicial Computer System (JCS) provides a critical service to the Commonwealth, counties, attorneys, participants in the legal system and citizens. Over the course of several months, the JCSFAC received numerous letters and comments from a wide array of county and state agency stakeholders expressing their universal support for the continued operation of AOPC’s case management systems. Every stakeholder indicated that the JCS was a critical component to the core function of their agency and/or was crucial to performing research necessary to inform public policy.”
- “Policymakers should . . . ensure predictable funding to support the continued operation of the JCS.”

Solutions?

- Education
 - An adequately funded judicial system is essential to all Pennsylvanians
 - Budget constriction does not punish the Supreme Court but hurts many others
- Lawyers can help

Questions?

For more information, please visit

www.pacourts.us