

Dear Judicial Branch Employee:

As we are all painfully aware, the State budget crisis is very real and very severe. Although a State budget for the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2016, has not yet been finalized, we have no reason to expect the approval of a final budget under which layoffs will not be necessary. The budget cuts we face are simply too large.

The layoffs of State employees has already commenced in the Executive Branch. Regrettably and unavoidably, we must now start the process of downsizing the Judicial Branch workforce.

The initial layoff notices to our employees will be delivered tomorrow, Thursday, April 14. All layoffs will occur in a manner consistent with the "seniority" definition in each of our four collective bargaining agreements and in accord with our existing practice and procedures. This means that no employee will be directed to leave his or her workplace upon receiving a layoff notice. The effective date of the Judicial Branch layoffs will be June 24, 2016. Although each agreement differs in the length of notification required prior to a layoff taking effect, we are committed to giving each of the affected employees as much notice as possible regarding these life-altering actions.

This is, by far, the most difficult action that we have had to take as Chief Justice and Chief Court Administrator. Each Judicial Branch employee was hired with the expectation that he or she would have a long and successful career within the Branch. We are truly sorry that these actions must now be taken, and we recognize that these layoffs will significantly affect the lives of our employees and their families.

The staff reductions and the expected budget cuts will also change how and where the Judicial Branch conducts its business. We are currently developing plans to close courthouses and offices, and to consolidate the staff and operations into other locations. To leverage our reduced workforce, we will be realigning and transferring the court business being conducted in some court locations to other court locations. We are also looking at reducing and eliminating programs that provide vital rehabilitative and treatment services to juvenile and adult offenders. We have no choice given the magnitude of the proposed budget cuts to the Branch.

We will keep you apprised of further developments.

Sincerely,

Chief Justice Chase T. Rogers

Judge Patrick L. Carroll III