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State of the Judiciary: Chief Justice Bevan Talks Collaboration, Investing in Idaho's Courts

Amid a pandemic, Idaho's court system responded as it always has: by evolving to meet the needs of the times. But that evolution, which preserved the people's access to resolve their disputes, required investments that must now be maintained, Chief Justice G. Richard Bevan told state lawmakers on Wednesday.

"I have faith and confidence that we will continue to meet the demands of our tomorrows as we accept the challenges before us today — just like those who have come before," Chief Justice Bevan said during his State of the Judiciary address.

The yearly address to the Idaho Legislature complements the Judicial Branch's annual report and provides a regular touchpoint between the two branches of government. A recording of Bevan's remarks will be posted as soon as it is available at annualreport.isc.idaho.gov. The text of his speech can be found accompanying this press release at isc.idaho.gov.

In the pandemic's second year, Idaho's courts again never closed to anyone wishing to file or respond to a claim. Chief Justice Bevan explained the Supreme Court's current actions to keep courts operating while protecting public health and safety. He lauded the hard work of the hundreds of dedicated judges, court clerks and other personnel who keep the courts running amid multiple waves of COVID-19 variants.

"[B]ecause of the dedication of so many devoted people, the rule of law remains alive and well in Idaho," the chief justice said.

The Judicial Branch has worked with the Legislature since this state's founding to evolve a court system that reflects Idaho. Chief Justice Bevan spoke about that history of collaboration and shared the courts' requests to lawmakers this year, intended in part to help maintain the historic investments in court access and operations.

"We fully expect that the benefits of technology and the time savings it provides will continue as one silver lining to the otherwise dark cloud of the pandemic," Chief Justice Bevan said.

This year, the Supreme Court's requests include:

- A one-time appropriation from the Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Fund of the American Rescue Plan Act to support continued development of court technology infrastructure and cybersecurity. Revenues in the Court Technology Fund established by the Legislature are not keeping pace with the cost of court technology operations across the state.
- Increased spending authority to use already-collected revenue to expand high-demand services in Idaho's family courts, treatment courts and related other programs.
- Funding for deputy trial court administrators to assist in each judicial district. Idaho's trial court administrators perform legally complex and time-intensive work maintaining court operations in every county, and can no longer accomplish all that is demanded of them on their own.
- An additional district judge and two magistrate judges in Idaho's Fourth Judicial District to ease high caseloads and support innovative court solutions.

Information on these and other requests can be found on the Judicial Branch's [annual report website](#).

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