



State of Kansas
Office of Special Counsel
Kansas Judicial Center
301 SW 10th
Topeka, Kansas 66612-1507
(785) 559-9040

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Joint Committee on State Building Construction

Marisa Bayless, Special Counsel to Chief Justice Marla Luckert

Chair McGinn and members of the joint committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to appear today to testify concerning the Judicial Branch Five-Year Capital Improvement Plan which includes funding for the second year of the Garden Level reconfiguration and a request for the Judicial Branch Learning Center.

Garden Level reconfiguration

The Judicial Branch is assessing and planning for changes on the lower level (often called the garden level) of the Kansas Judicial Center. The renovations are necessary following the completion of other building projects and the commensurate changes to traffic flow and use. The Judicial Branch Five-Year Capital Improvement Plan includes \$300,000 to complete the remaining projects in FY 2026.

Other projects—such as the Learning Center and the remodel of the Court of Appeals attorney offices—will also necessitate further reconfiguration of some garden level spaces.

Judicial Branch Learning Center

The Judicial Branch has many visitors throughout the year who have questions about the Judicial Branch, some of which include the structure of the Judicial Branch, the cases heard by courts, how a case flows through the appeals process, and how the Judicial Branch interacts with the other branches of the government. Many of these visitors are school-aged children who are visiting the Judicial Branch as part of a civics or government learning experience. Education and inspiring the next generation of citizens, attorneys, legislators, and community leaders is essential to the success of our state.

Phase I: Study and Design

Two years ago, the Joint Committee on State Building Committee approved funding to allow the Judicial Branch to look at models in other states, work with architects to develop design concepts and to convene

a committee to examine how this project might intersect with other learning exhibits in the Capitol Complex and surrounding areas.

During that time, members of the Learning Center Committee have visited centers in other states and engaged HTK Architects to design renderings to reconfigure the Judicial Branch library space. At each step, we have worked with the Learning Center Committee, which is comprised of members from all three branches of government. A representative from the Kansas State Department of Education and our legislative representative, former superintendent and current Senator Brenda Dietrich, have been instrumental in helping identify exhibits that will best align with Kansas standards so that the Center can be a resource for school-aged children throughout the state. The Judicial Branch Learning Center can also support and call attention to career opportunities for job opportunities with varying skill levels, ranging from court service officers to lawyers and judges.

Phase II: Construction

The Judicial Branch Five-Year Capital Improvement Plan includes a \$7.8 million request for the construction of the new Judicial Branch Learning Center. \$6.45 million for construction and design over a period of two years, with additional funds in subsequent years for planned updates to exhibits.

The goal is to create an informative and instructive space, but also to include engaging elements that are suitable for visitors of all ages. The Judicial Branch is working with the Kansas Historical Society to identify appropriate exhibits, and the renderings include a model Court Room that can be used for classroom experiences, mock trials, and an interactive court case experience. We have also looked at models in Colorado, Wyoming, Missouri and Ohio.

The Judicial Branch and the Learning Center Committee are eager to move forward with this project. We believe it will be an important addition to the Capitol Visitors Center and the exhibit space in the newly renovated Docking Building. Planning discussions have also focused on maintaining momentum and concerns that delaying construction could result in higher costs for supplies.

Attached to this testimony are floor plans and renderings for how the existing library space will be reconfigured. If any member of the legislature is interested in taking a tour of the existing space, our office would be happy to schedule that.

Again, the Judicial Branch appreciates your leadership and your continued partnership as we seek to be a resource for all Kansans. We respectfully ask that this committee recommend the funding requests above. If you have any additional questions, please contact Cheryl Semmel, Director of Government Relations or me.

Judicial Branch Learning Committee Members

Hon. Karen Arnold-Burger, *Chief Judge*, Kansas Court of Appeals

Mike Beene, *Assistant Secretary of Commerce*, Department of Commerce

Frank Burnam, *Director of Facilities and Property Management*, Department of Administration

Jennifer Cocking, *Assistant General Counsel*, Capitol Federal

Senator Brenda Dietrich, District 20

Trae Johnson, *Assistant Director of Education and Outreach*, Kansas State Historical Society

Nathan McAlister, *Humanities Program Manager*, State Department of Education

Deana Mead, *Executive Coordinator of Projects & Events*, Kansas Bar Association

Hon. Jennifer O'Hare, *District Magistrate Judge*, 12th Judicial District

Marisa Bayless, *Special Counsel to the Chief Justice*, Kansas Supreme Court

Meryl Carver-Almond, *General Counsel to the Chief Justice*, Kansas Supreme Court

Laurel Klein Searles, *Chief of Attorney Services and Education*, Office of Judicial Administration

Cheryl Semmel, *Director of Government Relations*, Kansas Supreme Court

Stephanie Smith, *Judicial Administrator*, Office of Judicial Administration

Kansas Judicial Learning Center



LEARNING CENTER

Floor plan

Service

1. Reception Desk
2. Cubbies/ Seating
3. Wrap up activities area

Introduction

1. Theater
2. Federal VS State Government
3. Kansas Constitution / Bill of Rights
4. Three branches of Government
5. Suffrage

Judicial Information

1. 4 Pillars of the Rule of Law
2. Informed Voter
3. Judicial Districts Interactive Screen
4. Checks and Balances
5. Understanding The Courts System
6. How a Court Case Works
7. Interactive Kiosk /Display/Seating/ Courageous Attorney's
8. Interactive Learning Game Review

Court Room and Features

1. Court Room Entrance (Storage)
2. Gallery
3. Defendant, Plaintiff, and Lectern
4. Judge, Witness, and Clerk
5. Jury Box
6. Exhibits (Robe, etc)
7. Interactive Court Case Display / You be judge / Notorious Kansans
8. Legal Careers



Three Branches of Government Exhibit

- Example from Ohio
 - Interactive
 - Engaging
 - Provides information on all three branches of government
 - Focus that it is the people's government



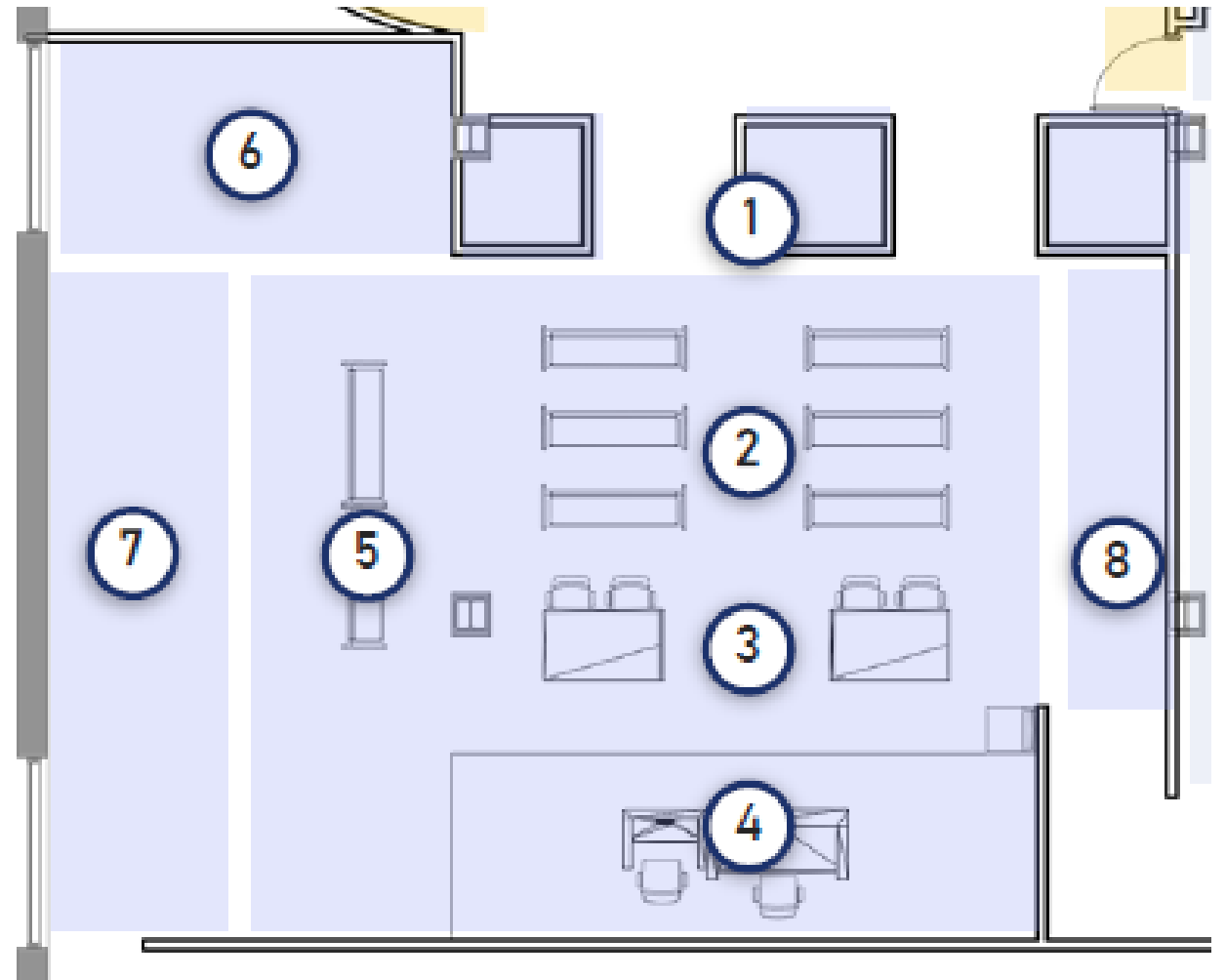
Three Branches of Government

- Highlight Kansas
 - Symbolism
 - Fountains, Height of the building, Distance between the Judicial Center and the Statehouse
 - Offer information about other places to visit through QR codes
 - Capitol, Docking Building, Kansas Historical Museum, etc.
 - Kansas specific legislation to highlight the separation of powers
 - Utilize maps to show locations of courts, legislative districts, etc.
 - Ensure we are meeting Kansas education standards
 - Offer an opportunity for students to share what they would like to see changed in Kansas

Court Room Floor Plan

Court Room and Features

1. Court Room Entrance (Storage)
2. Gallery
3. Defendant, Plaintiff, and Lectern
4. Judge, Witness, and Clerk
5. Jury Box
6. Exhibits (Robe, etc)
7. Interactive Court Case Display /
8. Legal Careers

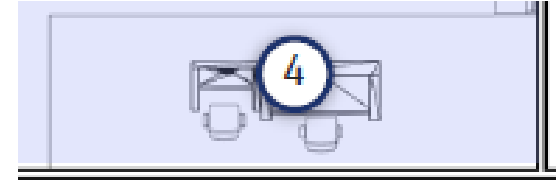




Defendant, Plaintiff, and Lectern

- Should include signage to explain the roles of the attorneys and parties and rules in the courtroom
- Mock trial materials will be available for students to utilize
 - Appropriate for different grade levels
 - Allow for jury trial or bench trial
 - Know your rights or civil rights cases
 - Kansas specific cases that connect with state education standards
 - Utilize familiar characters

Judge, Witness, Clerk



- Should include signage to explain the roles of the judge, witnesses, and clerk
- All should be included in the mock trial
- Judges' robes should be available

Legal Careers

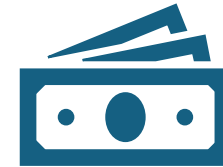


**Should feature a variety of careers
in the legal field**

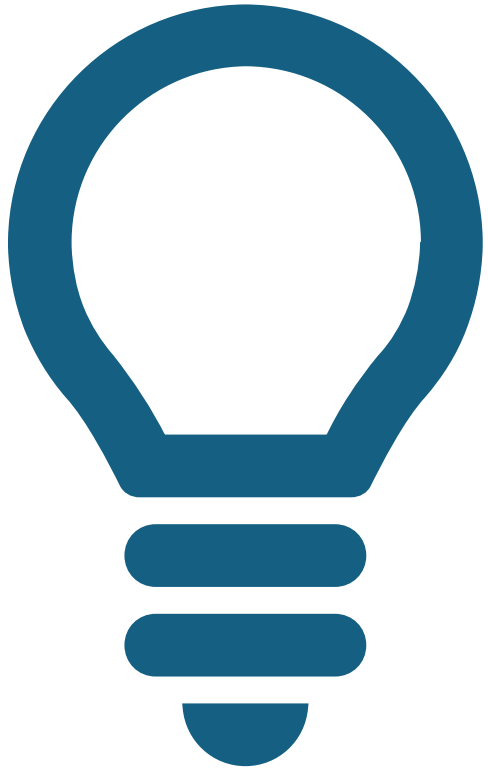
Attorneys, judges, law enforcement, CSOs, clerks,
court reporters, etc.



Highlight education requirements



Note earning potential in Kansas



Other Ideas