

# Wisconsin Justice Initiative: Justice requires judges to speak out on lawyer compensation proposal

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April 19, 2018 – Judges should step up and submit comments about the petition pending before the State Supreme Court that would increase compensation for lawyers who agree to represent defendants who can't afford lawyers, the Wisconsin Justice Initiative said Thursday.

Thus far, only two judges – Ashland County Circuit Judge Robert E. Eaton and Bayfield County Circuit Judge John P. Anderson – have submitted comments on the proposal.

“This petition directly affects how much true justice is actually done in Wisconsin,” WJI Executive Director Gretchen Schuldt said. “The silence of the judges is really disturbing.”

The petition calls increasing from \$40 an hour \$100 an hour the rate paid to private attorneys who accept State Public Defender assignments when the public defender's office is overloaded or has a conflict.

More and more attorneys are refusing to accept cases at the \$40 rate, which is the lowest in the nation. That means pre-trial defendants are sitting in jail longer without lawyers to help them or with lawyers who are inexperienced or who cannot provide adequate representation.

“Judges are the very ones who should be speaking out,” Schuldt said. “Judges are supposed to ensure defendants get a fair trial with effective representation by counsel. They really need to let the Supreme Court know what is going on in their counties.”

Judges in both rural and urban counties should participate in the process, she said.

The deadline for comments is May 1. The Supreme Court will hold a public hearing on the proposal May 16.

“Judges should say what they believe, and they should say it to the Supreme Court,” Schuldt said. “Some judges may support this petition, some may not. But this issue is crucial to the administration of justice in the state and judges need to be part of the conversation.”

Comments should be on Microsoft Word and contain reference to Rule Petition 17-06. They should be submitted by May 1 to [clerk@wicourts.gov](mailto:clerk@wicourts.gov) and [carrie.jamto@wicourts.gov](mailto:carrie.jamto@wicourts.gov).

In addition, if comments are more than 10 pages long, 10 hard copies should be mailed to Clerk of Supreme Court, Attention: Deputy Clerk-Rules, P.O. Box 1688, Madison, WI 53701-1688.