

Legislative Auditor

OVERVIEW

REPORT ON THE JUDICIARY'S IMPLEMENTATION OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS IN THE MANAGEMENT AND FINANCIAL AUDIT OF THE JUDICIARY

Honolulu, Hawaii

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Summary

Over the years, Hawaii has pursued the ideal of an efficient, unified, and independent judicial system. The Hawaii Judiciary is a branch of government co-equal to the legislative and executive branches. It has received strong support from the Legislature. To ensure that it was being administered effectively, the Legislature in 1988 requested the Office of the Legislative Auditor to conduct an audit of the management, operations, and expenditures of the Judiciary. In response to that request, the auditor in January 1989 issued its report, *Management and Financial Audit of the Judiciary of the State of Hawaii*.

The audit found numerous problems in the administration of the Judiciary. The Judiciary did not have a clear structure of management authority and responsibility. Policies were inadequate and often ignored, and the numerous management responsibilities were not being carried out. The audit found deficiencies in the Judiciary's management of caseflow, records, information systems, personnel, court related programs, and financial operations.

To remedy some of its past problems and to meet the growing demands placed on the court system, the audit report recommended that the Judiciary look to ways to improve its administration and management. It recommended that the Judiciary differentiate between the authority of administrative judges and those of the administrative director. The report emphasized the need for policies to guide action and decision-making. It recommended a policy on organization that would require all parts of the Judiciary to have accurate descriptions of their functions, staff, and reporting relationships.

To improve the efficiency of the courts, the audit made recommendations to strengthen caseflow and improve records management, particularly in the district courts. Because the work of the courts depends increasingly on automation, the audit recommended that the Judiciary hire a chief information officer with the authority and expertise to provide needed direction and focus. The audit recommended numerous actions in personnel and financial management.

This follow-up report, which was requested by the Legislature, summarizes the recommendations made in the 1989 audit report--in administration, caseflow management, records management, management of information systems, personnel management, management of court related programs, and financial management. It summarizes the Judiciary's response, describes its progress in each area, and then presents our comments on the Judiciary's response.

The Judiciary says that the circuit, family, and district courts have been placed under the general supervision of the administrative judges of the respective courts as required by the statutes. The authority and responsibilities of the administrative judges have been distinguished from those of the administrative director. To codify its policies, it is developing an administrative manual that will be completed in November 1990. The Judiciary has made substantial progress in reorganization and has prepared functional statements and organizational charts for all its units.

The Judiciary says that it has made a number of changes to strengthen and modernize caseflow management. It is giving priority attention to the district courts for automation, staffing, and technical assistance. The Judiciary has advertised for a chief information officer and it is committed to developing a comprehensive, accurate, and timely system for reporting management information. In the personnel area, actions are under way to develop time standards, improve communication, and reduce backlogs and delays in personnel actions. The Judiciary has made numerous changes to comply with audit recommendations in financial management.

We find in general that the Judiciary has made a conscientious effort to implement the recommendations of the 1989 audit. Some of its actions could not be assessed as they have yet to be completed. The complete text of the Judiciary's responses can be found in the appendix to the report.