

Palmer Courthouse Expansion

FY2006 Request: \$3,900,000
Reference No: 39022

AP/AL: Appropriation

Project Type: Construction

Category: Law and Justice

Location: Palmer (Richardson/Glenn Highways)

Contact: Rhonda McLeod

House District: Richardson/Glenn Highways (HD 12)

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Estimated Project Dates: 07/01/2005 - 06/30/2007

Brief Summary and Statement of Need:

The court system requests funding to complete an addition to the Palmer courthouse to accommodate sufficient judicial staff to handle the caseload.

Funding:	<u>FY2006</u>	<u>FY2007</u>	<u>FY2008</u>	<u>FY2009</u>	<u>FY2010</u>	<u>FY2011</u>	<u>Total</u>
ASLC Bonds	\$3,900,000						\$3,900,000
Total:	\$3,900,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$3,900,000

<input type="checkbox"/> State Match Required	<input type="checkbox"/> One-Time Project	<input type="checkbox"/> Phased - new	<input type="checkbox"/> Phased - underway	<input type="checkbox"/> On-Going
0% = Minimum State Match % Required		<input type="checkbox"/> Amendment	<input type="checkbox"/> Mental Health Bill	

Operating & Maintenance Costs:

	<u>Amount</u>	<u>Staff</u>
Project Development:	0	0
Ongoing Operating:	0	0
One-Time Startup:	0	0
Totals:	0	0

Additional Information / Prior Funding History:

Project Description/Justification:

The Palmer Courthouse was expanded in 1999 from three courtrooms to five to accommodate four judicial officers and a frequent visiting judge. By FY01, the caseload had increased to such an extent that the Anchorage court was assigning a district court judge to Palmer for two weeks a month. In FY04, a fifth judicial officer was placed in Palmer. With the addition of that fifth judge, more courtroom space was needed to accommodate the supplemental judicial officers still being assigned to serve in Palmer to address the ever increasing caseload.

Case filings in Palmer increased during FY04 by 10.2% over FY03 case filings totals. Even with the addition of the fifth judge in FY04, caseloads per judicial officer were still the highest in the state. In FY05, a sixth judicial position was added. Due to the lack of courtroom space for the sixth judicial officer, the court has developed a plan for evening and weekend hours and created a small hearing room in the jury assembly room.

The significance of a high caseload ratio to the litigants is how long it takes for a case to be completed; the higher the caseload the longer it will take for a case to be resolved. Population and caseload growth predictions for the Mat-Su Valley indicate that an additional superior court position will be required in the near future. In the meantime, the caseload requires the regular use of visiting judges. This project seeks funding to develop an addition to the courthouse to accommodate current and future judicial officers.

This project consists of adding two courtrooms, associated judicial chambers, jury rooms, space to relocate the law library and additional space for the clerk's office. The request is for funding to cover project management, design, bid document development and the estimated construction costs.