

**AGREEMENTS  
between the  
Judicial Department of the State of Vermont**

**and the**

**VERMONT STATE EMPLOYEES' ASSOCIATION, INC.**

**JUDICIARY BARGAINING UNIT**

**Effective July 1, 2026— Expiring June 30, 2028**

|                                                          |    |
|----------------------------------------------------------|----|
| PREAMBLE: .....                                          | 4  |
| ARTICLE I RECOGNITION .....                              | 4  |
| ARTICLE 2 MANAGEMENT RIGHTS .....                        | 5  |
| ARTICLE 3 VSEA RIGHTS.....                               | 6  |
| ARTICLE 4 NO STRIKE – NO LOCKOUT .....                   | 9  |
| ARTICLE 5 NON-DISCRIMINATION .....                       | 10 |
| ARTICLE 6 EXCHANGE OF INFORMATION .....                  | 11 |
| ARTICLE 7 EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM .....              | 12 |
| ARTICLE 8 TUITION REIMBURSEMENT .....                    | 12 |
| ARTICLE 9 EMPLOYEE PERSONNEL RECORDS .....               | 14 |
| ARTICLE 10 VACANCIES/PROMOTIONS.....                     | 16 |
| ARTICLE 11 PROBATIONARY EMPLOYMENT.....                  | 17 |
| ARTICLE 12 PERFORMANCE EVALUATION.....                   | 18 |
| ARTICLE 13 CODE OF CONDUCT AND DISCIPLINARY ACTION.....  | 20 |
| ARTICLE 14 GRIEVANCE AND ARBITRATION PROCEDURE .....     | 27 |
| ARTICLE 15 CLASSIFICATION PLAN AND REVIEW PROCEDURE..... | 33 |
| ARTICLE 16 COMPENSATION/BENEFITS.....                    | 37 |
| ARTICLE 17 OVERTIME AND CALL-IN PAY .....                | 49 |
| ARTICLE 18 INSURANCE PROGRAMS .....                      | 53 |
| ARTICLE 19 REDUCTIONS IN FORCE .....                     | 53 |
| ARTICLE 20 EMPLOYEE WORK WEEK .....                      | 57 |
| ARTICLE 21 OBSERVANCE OF HOLIDAYS .....                  | 57 |
| ARTICLE 22 ANNUAL LEAVE .....                            | 59 |
| ARTICLE 23 SICK LEAVE .....                              | 63 |
| ARTICLE 24 OTHER LEAVE .....                             | 72 |
| ARTICLE 25 OFF PAYROLL AND OTHER LEAVES OF ABSENCE ..... | 75 |
| ARTICLE 26 WORK ASSIGNMENTS .....                        | 80 |
| ARTICLE 27 PARENTAL LEAVE/MEDICAL LEAVE.....             | 80 |
| ARTICLE 28 BUILDING CLOSING .....                        | 86 |
| ARTICLE 29 SEPARABILITY .....                            | 88 |

|                                                                               |      |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|
| ARTICLE 30 LABOR MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE.....                                    | 88   |
| ARTICLE 31 DURATION AND PROCEDURE FOR NEGOTIATING SUCCESSOR<br>AGREEMENT..... | 89   |
| ARTICLE 32 EXPENSES REIMBURSEMENT.....                                        | 90   |
| ARTICLE 33 MILEAGE REIMBURSEMENT.....                                         | 90   |
| ARTICLE 34 WORKPLACE ANTAGONISM.....                                          | 91   |
| ARTICLE 35 DEFINITIONS .....                                                  | 92   |
| APPENDIX A PAY PLAN FOR 2026-2027.....                                        | 99   |
| APPENDIX B PAY PLAN FOR 2027-2028.....                                        | 100  |
| APPENDIX C OPTIONAL TELEWORKING ARRANGEMENT.....                              | 101  |
| APPENDIX D ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS AND INTERNET USE POLICY .....            | 1044 |
| APPENDIX E AUDIO RECORDING IN THE INFORMATION CENTER.....                     | 108  |

This Agreement is made and entered into this day, between the Judicial Department of the State of Vermont (hereinafter referred to as "Employer", "Judicial Department", "Judiciary" or the "Judicial Branch") and the Judicial Bargaining Unit of the Vermont State Employees' Association, Inc. (hereinafter referred to as the "VSEA" or the "Union");

#### ***PREAMBLE:***

WHEREAS, the Legislature of the State of Vermont enacted legislation providing for collective bargaining between the Judiciary and those defined as eligible employees by 3 V.S.A. Ch. 28, as the same may be amended from time to time, and

WHEREAS, it is the intent of the parties to promote the efficient administration of Judiciary service; to provide for the well-being of employees; and to maintain high standards of work performance on behalf of the public; and

WHEREAS, during the life of this Agreement, the parties agree that neither the Judiciary nor the VSEA will request the Legislature to pass legislation which alters or nullifies any provision of this Agreement,

NOW THEREFORE, the parties to this Agreement, in consideration of the mutual covenants herein set forth, agree as follows:

#### ***ARTICLE I RECOGNITION***

The Judiciary recognizes the VSEA as the exclusive representative of those Judiciary employees eligible for representation by a labor organization pursuant to Title 3, Vermont Statutes Annotated, Chapter 28, in the form in effect as of the date of execution of the Agreement. The Judiciary shall give the VSEA not less than annual written notice of any new managerial, supervisory or confidential position. At VSEA's request, the Judiciary will meet to discuss any such designation. The Judiciary will not designate an incumbent employee or position as managerial, supervisory or confidential unless there has been a change in duties. An Employee whose eligibility for representation under this Agreement changes for reasons other than a reclassification will be notified with a brief explanation of the decision and a statement of the employee's right to appeal the designation to the Vermont Labor Relations Board. The notice shall state explicitly both the old and new designations.

The Judiciary shall not enter into any consultations, agreements, or informal discussions regarding employment relations matters with any other organization or individual purporting to represent any group of employees, and must not engage in any type of conduct which would imply recognition of any organization, group, or individual other than the VSEA as a representative of the employees in any bargaining unit. Employees shall have the right at any time to present complaints to their employer informally, and to have such complaints considered in good faith with or without the intervention of VSEA so long as any adjustment is not inconsistent with the terms of this Agreement.

## **ARTICLE 2 MANAGEMENT RIGHTS**

It is understood and agreed that Ch. 2, Secs. 4 and 5 of the Vermont Constitution provides as follows:

Sec. 4 Judiciary – the judicial power of the Judiciary will be vested in a unified judicial system which shall be composed of a Supreme Court, a Superior Court, and such other subordinate courts as the General Assembly may from time to time ordain and establish.

Sec. 5 Departments to be Distinct – The Legislative, Executive and Judiciary departments, shall be separate and distinct, so that neither exercises the powers properly belonging to the others.

Consequently, except as specifically set forth herein, as required by law or otherwise specifically agreed to in writing between the parties, the Judiciary possesses the sole right and authority to operate its Department and direct the Judiciary employees in all aspects including, but not limited to, the right:

- To plan, direct and control Judiciary activities, to determine Judiciary policies and to establish standards of service offered to the public;
- To schedule and assign work to employees;
- To determine the means, methods, processes, materials and equipment utilized by the Judiciary, and to introduce new or improved methods, equipment or facilities;
- To determine the qualifications and staffing of jobs;
- To create, revise and eliminate jobs, or to furlough or lay off employees due to lack of work or funds or for other legitimate reasons in accordance with the procedures set forth in Article 19 hereof;
- To contract out work, and discontinue services or programs, in whole or in part. However, no employee will be laid off or otherwise be removed from employment as a result of contracting out except in circumstances where the

work is beyond the capacity of Judiciary employees, or where the work or program can be performed more economically under an outside contract, or where an outside contractor has management techniques, equipment or technology which will result in better public service and increased productivity. Prior to any such lay off or other job elimination under this paragraph the VSEA will be notified and given an opportunity to discuss alternatives. A permanent status employee who, as a result of contracting out, loses their job will be deemed to have been reduced in force under the Reduction in Force Article.

- When the Judiciary contemplates contracting out bargaining unit work and publishes a formal request for proposal, a concurrent notice of such publication will be sent to the VSEA. Upon request, VSEA shall be permitted to inspect the RFP specifications. The notice of publication of an RFP, which may result in the layoff of Judiciary employee(s), shall serve as notice to VSEA of intent to contract out and shall give VSEA the opportunity to discuss alternatives. Such notice must be sent at least thirty (30) days before the effective date of any Reduction in Force (RIF) and at least five (5) days before any employee is officially notified of layoff. If the VSEA wishes to discuss alternatives, it shall so notify the Judiciary in writing within ten (10) days of the publication of such RFP. Such notification shall include a recitation of the alternatives the VSEA would like to discuss, but this shall not preclude the discussion of other possible alternatives. The period for discussing alternatives shall overlap the period for discussing alternatives under the RIF Article and shall terminate at the same time as the end of the discussion period under the RIF Article.
- To hire and terminate employees, including the right to hire temporary employees;
- To maintain order, and to suspend, discipline and discharge permanent status employees for just cause;
- To make, publish and require observance of reasonable rules and regulations. If the Judiciary intends to issue a Judiciary wide rule for personnel administration of bargaining unit employees which is not prescribed or controlled by law, the Judiciary will notify the VSEA twenty-one (21) business days in advance and bargain with the VSEA to the extent the rule impacts a subject of bargaining under 3 VSA Section 1013.
- To promulgate other regulations incidental to the management of the Judiciary affecting the public health, safety and welfare.

### **ARTICLE 3 VSEA RIGHTS**

1. The VSEA Director(s) or a representative shall be allowed to visit any Judiciary facility during working hours for the purpose of conducting VSEA business or investigating an employee complaint or grievance, provided that permission is obtained in advance from the appropriate managers, if available, and provided

that such meetings do not adversely affect the efficient conduct of Judiciary business. Permission shall not be unreasonably withheld. VSEA stewards shall be allowed to visit any Judiciary facility in their designated areas of responsibility for the purpose of receiving or investigating grievances or complaints, subject to the procedures specified this Article.

2. The Judiciary will include in its package of orientation materials for new bargaining unit employees a VSEA informational brochure, provided by the VSEA, identifying it as the exclusive bargaining agent and a copy of this Agreement. The VSEA's informational brochure to be distributed by the Judiciary will consist of no more than 10 sheets of paper, 8.5" x 11", printed on both sides, and fastened together as a single document. On the bottom of the front cover shall be printed: "This brochure is produced by VSEA and the Judiciary Department is not responsible for its content" in at least 7-point Avenir.
3. The Judiciary shall provide the VSEA with sufficient space on designated bulletin boards generally accessible to employees for the purpose of posting VSEA information.
4. Union organizing activity will not be conducted on Judiciary premises during scheduled work time, excluding all authorized breaks and meal periods.
5. If space is readily available on the premises, the Judiciary shall provide places where VSEA staff, representatives, and/or VSEA stewards can confer privately during working hours with bargaining unit employees regarding any complaints or grievances they may have. Such places shall be within the VSEA steward's designated area of responsibility. The Judiciary shall provide space which is normally available for public meetings on the premises of State-owned buildings controlled by the Judiciary for VSEA meetings during non-duty hours when these meetings do not conflict with established plans of the Judiciary. All necessary expenses charged by non-Judiciary agencies included in such use shall be the responsibility of the VSEA. The VSEA must request the use of this space through the appropriate authority as far in advance of the anticipated meeting as is practical. For securing space to conduct VSEA elections, polling space shall be requested at least two weeks in advance.
6. A VSEA steward, and/or a VSEA staff representative may be permitted to attend any meeting held by the Judiciary when permission is granted by the appropriate supervisor.
7. The VSEA shall have exclusive payroll deduction for membership dues. Dues, to include any VSEA approved insurance program premiums, shall be deducted on each payday from each bargaining unit employee who has designated VSEA as

their representative. The amount of dues to be deducted will be certified by the VSEA to the designated Judiciary official.

8. VSEA Business: Subject to the efficient conduct of Judiciary business, which shall prevail in any instance of conflict, permission for reasonable time off during normal working hours without loss of pay and without charge to accrued benefits shall not be unreasonably withheld in the following instances to:
- (a) Three (3) members of the VSEA Board of Trustees to attend 12 regular Trustee meetings and up to two special Trustee meetings a year.
  - (b) No more than six (6) identified members of the Legislative Council for attendance at any of the four regular council meetings per fiscal year with paid release time. The Judiciary may grant permission for attendance at not more than one additional special meeting.
  - (c) Officers/Delegates, up to a maximum of one for every fifty bargaining unit employees shall be allowed reasonable time off, not to exceed the limits established (g) below to attend national or regional meetings of the VSEA national affiliate;
  - (d) Unit Chairperson or Chapter Officer, up to a total of four (4) judiciary employees statewide, up to 40 hours per year, subject to the operating needs of the Judiciary for conduct of unit Labor Relations/Contract Administration business;
  - (e) Up to five (5) Unit executive committee members will be given time off to attend five meetings per year.
  - (f) Up to ten (10) stewards for the processing and handling of complaints and grievances, including necessary appearances at all steps of the grievance procedure; up to 40 hours per steward per year shall be considered a reasonable time for processing and handling of complaints and grievances, and may be extended by mutual agreement in any instance. In addition, stewards shall be entitled to an additional 16 hours per year of release time for training purposes.
  - (g) Any of the above listed categories and chapter officers for the purpose of attending training sessions approved in advance by the Judiciary. Approval shall not be unreasonably withheld. However, no employee will be permitted more than a total of 136 hours, 210 for Unit Chairpersons, of time off in any fiscal year under section 8, subsections a-g above.
  - (h) Up to four (4) members of Labor Management Committees for meetings scheduled by the Judiciary and the VSEA.



- (i) Up to seven (7) members of the bargaining team on any day when time off under this section is granted in their capacity as a member of the team. Consistent with past practice, members of the bargaining team will be granted up to one (1) day of training and, up to four (4) days for meeting to prepare for bargaining prior to its start. In addition, members of the bargaining team will have time off under this section for a reasonable number of days to attend bargaining sessions scheduled with management and to prepare for such sessions. Except in the instance of conflicting Judiciary business, the Judiciary shall make a reasonable effort to assist employees who are scheduled for bargaining meetings with the Judiciary, by accommodating a request by the employee to readjust their schedule in order to preserve days off. Normally, the rescheduling will take place within the same pay period, with no guarantee of back-to-back days off when rescheduling occurs. Any such rescheduling shall be for a full workday off, unless by mutual agreement of the employee and supervisor. VSEA reserves the right to cancel the meeting when the absence of a team member results from inability to reschedule. VSEA agrees to hold the Judiciary harmless from VSEA-grievances relating to any complaint(s) due to rescheduling of a team member.
- (j) The Judiciary shall provide VSEA an opportunity to meet with each newly hired bargaining unit employee to present information about VSEA. This meeting shall occur within thirty (30) days of the employee's date of hire. This meeting shall last up to one hour and the attending employee shall be paid their regular rate of pay during this meeting.

In any such instances, under this Section, such employees shall coordinate their absences from work to minimize the adverse impact on the efficient conduct of Judiciary business and in all cases must secure advance permission from appropriate supervisors and permission may be denied to more than one VSEA Officer to be absent from the same work site at any one time if such multiple absences will have an adverse impact on the efficient conduct of Judiciary business. The employee shall also give the Judiciary as much prior notice of any such meetings as possible, including concurrent written notice to the appropriate manager when VSEA sends a notice of meetings to its own representatives. "VSEA business" as referred to in this Article involves the institutional role of the VSEA as required by current law in dealing with the Judiciary.

#### **ARTICLE 4**

#### **NO STRIKE – NO LOCKOUT**

1. The Judiciary and the VSEA subscribe to the principle that differences shall be resolved by peaceful and appropriate means without interruption of work.

During the term of this Agreement, neither the VSEA nor its agents or any employee, for any reason, will authorize, institute, aid, condone or engage in a strike as defined by 3 V.S.A. 1011 (16), as amended. During the terms of this Agreement, neither the Judiciary nor its agents for any reason shall authorize, institute, aid, or promote any lockout of employees covered by this Agreement.

2. The VSEA agrees to notify all officers, representatives, and members of their obligation and responsibility for maintaining compliance with this Article, including their responsibility to remain at work during any interruption which may be caused or initiated by others, and to encourage employees to return to work unless there is a credible threat to the personal safety of such employees.
3. The Judiciary may discipline any employee who violates this Article and any employee who fails to carry out their responsibilities under this Article.

## **ARTICLE 5 NON-DISCRIMINATION**

The provisions of this Agreement shall be applied equally to all employees. Neither the Judiciary nor the VSEA shall discriminate against, intimidate, nor harass any employee covered by this Agreement because of race, creed, citizenship, religion, color, national origin, ancestry, marital status, disability, age, sex, sexual orientation or other protected characteristics, credit history, membership or non-membership in the VSEA, filing a complaint or grievance, gender identity, HIV status, crime victim status, or any other factor for which discrimination is prohibited by law. The Judiciary may promulgate and enforce regulations and policies deemed necessary to properly implement and enforce applicable laws and this Paragraph which prohibit discrimination based upon protected characteristics (e.g. sexual harassment and blood borne pathogen policies). The provisions of this Paragraph prohibiting discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation shall not be construed to change the definition of family or dependent in any employee benefit plan. Any complaint alleging a violation of this Article may be initiated and processed through the grievance and arbitration procedure set forth in Article 14 hereof. This does not waive any of the employee's rights granted under state or federal law or preclude the timely filing of any complaint. See Judiciary Website for its Non-Discrimination Policies including but not limited to the Policy and Procedure Regarding Gender Bias and Sexual Harassment in The Workplace Policy and Procedure Regarding Persons with Disabilities.

**ARTICLE 6**  
**EXCHANGE OF INFORMATION**

1. The Judiciary shall furnish the VSEA in hard copy or in electronic format with the records and documents specified in this section when they become available unless the Judiciary discontinues their compilation.
  - (a) One copy of each class specification and any revision thereto;
  - (b) One copy of each interpretive memorandum of personnel policies and procedures issued by the Judiciary after the effective date of this Agreement;
  - (c) One copy of any master list of legislatively approved Judiciary positions designating status as bargaining unit eligible or exempt;
  - (d) Lists of new hires into such categories, separations, transfers, position reallocations, reassignments, and promotions; and
  - (e) On a one-time basis, single copies of all forms currently in use by the Judiciary for personnel administration and all revisions thereto.
2. The Judiciary shall furnish the VSEA with one copy of all address changes of permanent and limited status classified employees within the bargaining unit who have completed their original probationary period.
3. The VSEA shall furnish the Judiciary with the following information and documents, and amendments or changes to these documents as they become available, in hard copy or in electronic format.
  - (a) A list of the VSEA's officers, trustees, council, chapter presidents, and standing committee members;
  - (b) A list of the VSEA's stewards, the stewards' places of employment and the stewards' designated areas of responsibility for the Judiciary bargaining unit;
  - (c) A list of names of the VSEA's staff members and legal counsel together with their telephone and pager numbers and their e-mail addresses; and
  - (d) The number of the VSEA's members in the Judiciary Unit on an annual basis.
  - (e) Additionally, the Judiciary shall establish a separate and distinct VSEA folder within the Judiciary electronic mail system. In connection with such separate folder, the Judiciary shall furnish the VSEA with the work e-mail contact information for each Unit employee. The VSEA and Unit employees may use such folder only for the purposes of Labor-Management and other VSEA statewide meeting announcements, and circulation of the minutes resulting from such meetings.

4. The Judiciary shall also provide to VSEA upon its request all such additional information to which VSEA is lawfully entitled in order to exercise its responsibilities as exclusive bargaining representative under Title 3 V.S.A. Chapter 28. Upon request by the VSEA, information which the Judiciary is required to furnish under this Article which can be made available in a computer-tape or other machine-readable format shall be furnished in such format to the VSEA provided, however, that such request would not result in more than a negligible cost differential relative to hard copy.

5. When the VSEA requests copies of notes taken during management interviews of witness(s) for the investigation of possible employee violations of Judiciary Code of Conduct or work rules, management may redact information that reveals the identity of the witness(s), unless discipline has been levied, in which case VSEA will receive notes with witness names intact.

## **ARTICLE 7**

### **EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM**

To the extent access to the current program outlined in the agreement between the State of Vermont and the Non-Management Unit of VSEA remains available to the Judiciary at a sustainable cost, the State's Employee Assistance Program will continue to be available to covered employees. If the Judiciary should ever be of the judgment that such program is no longer available at a sustainable cost, it shall meet and confer with the VSEA to attempt to develop a replacement program before making any determination to discontinue participation in the State's program. VSEA recognizes the value of employee assistance and will assist in developing the program and encourage employee participation. Employees participating in the Employee Assistance Program will be assured of strict confidentiality to the extent that this is within the control of the Judiciary.

## **ARTICLE 8**

### **TUITION REIMBURSEMENT**

1. The purpose of this article shall be to provide permanent status covered employees with career development opportunities by establishing policies and procedures relating to tuition reimbursement for post-secondary and/or graduate level courses taken by such employees during off-duty hours to the extent of funding authorized by the Court Administrator.
2. The Court Administrator shall appoint a three-person committee to process applications and make recommendations for tuition reimbursement. Any tuition reimbursement must be approved by the Court Administrator or designee. Upon request of the Unit Chairperson, the Judiciary shall provide quarterly written updates as to the balance of the tuition reimbursement funds, the number of

applicants, the amount of funds dispersed during the fiscal year, and annual notification of the names of the members of the committee.

3. The applicant must have successfully completed the original probationary period, normally at the end of the first six (6) months of employment, at the time the class begins and must still be employed by the Judiciary upon completion of the course.
4. All courses must be of college level, undergraduate or graduate. The course number and a brief course description must be included in the application along with an articulation from the employee of how the knowledge gained will apply to the job or enhance the employee's performance. To be eligible for tuition reimbursement, the employee must complete the course with a passing grade of at least a "C" in a graded course or passing a pass/fail course.
5. The maximum available funding for tuition reimbursement for covered employees shall be \$ 12,000 annually. If approved by the Committee pursuant to these procedures, and subject to available funding, employees may receive reimbursement for up to four courses per year. The maximum reimbursement shall be \$ 650 per credit or up to 100% of the actual cost of tuition, whichever is lower, for courses that are deemed to be directly job-related, or which are mandated part of an approved degree program. For courses that are deemed to be indirectly job-related such as required electives outside the major course of study, tuition reimbursement may be granted up to 100% of the cost of tuition. Only tuition fees may be included. No other fees or expenses such as travel, registration, activity fees, insurance, parking, or textbook purchases will be reimbursed.
6. Reimbursement must be for a job-related, off-duty course or a course of study as determined by the Committee. The term job-related means that there is a reasonable expectation that tangible benefits will accrue to the Judiciary by allowing the employee to take a course which will enable them to keep up with changing concepts or developments in their respective fields, or the course will result in increased knowledge or skill and is aimed primarily at improving the employee's performance and upward mobility. The term off duty means that the course is conducted during a period when the employee is not expected to be on the job, for example, during hours outside the normal work schedule or while on approved leave. The Judiciary will only pay for courses where there is a reasonable relationship between the course and the employee's current or progressive employment in the Judiciary.
7. When applications for reimbursement exceed available funds, the Committee shall give priority to employees working toward a post-secondary degree who have previously participated in the program and/or courses that are directly

job-related. The Committee may adjust the rate of reimbursement to fit requests within the budget.

8. Requests for reimbursement shall be submitted for review by the Committee before the course begins. At a minimum, the Committee shall schedule three application periods per year with sufficient lead time to allow employees to request reimbursement for courses. The Committee shall allocate the available funding to meet the needs of employees considering the schedules of the educational institutions.

There will be no reimbursement of tuition if prior approval was not obtained. A notice of approval or disapproval will be mailed to the applicant after receipt and review of the application by the Committee.

9. Upon completion of the course the applicant shall submit:

- (a) A request for reimbursement with a copy of the notice of approval,
- (b) A grade report, and
- (c) Proof of tuition payment.

10. Upon receipt of tuition reimbursement funds employees will be subject to retention incentive on a pro-rata basis. Voluntary termination up to 12 months after the date the payment was issued will require refund a portion of the payment received to the Judiciary prior to termination date. If payment is not forthcoming prior to termination, the Judiciary may reduce the remaining paychecks accordingly. Any such reimbursement, however, shall not result in an employee being paid less than minimum wage for the hours worked during those pay periods when reimbursement is subtracted from pay. The requirement regarding reimbursement shall be clearly identified on the applications signed by the employees at the time of their request.

0-6 months from payment date must repay 75%

7-9 months from payment date must repay 50%

10-12 months from payment date must repay 25%

## **ARTICLE 9**

### **EMPLOYEE PERSONNEL RECORDS**

1. An employee's official personnel file is that file maintained at the Court Administrator's Office in Montpelier. An employee's annual performance evaluation as well as the record of any formal level of discipline (reprimands and more severe) shall be stored at such location. Supervisors at an employee's work location may also keep supplemental records regarding issues related to

any need for corrective action and any other personnel record about which the employee is given actual notice at the time the supervisor places such record on file. If any form of discipline is proposed for an employee, such supervisory notes, as well as the official personnel file, must be regarded as discoverable and made available to the employee upon request.

2. With the exception of material that is confidential or privileged under law, an employee will be allowed access to their personnel file during normal working hours. Subject to the exception stated above, copies of all documents and materials placed in an employee's official personnel file(s) will be provided to the employee, on a one-time basis, at no cost to the employee. Additional copies will be provided to the employee and/or their authorized representative at the employee's request at the going rate for photocopy cost per page.
3. Any material, document, note, or other tangible item which is to be entered or used by the employer in any grievance hearing held in accordance with the Grievance Procedure Article, of this Agreement is to be provided to the employee on a one-time basis, at no cost to them.
4. The employee has the right to provide written authorization to the Judiciary for their bargaining representative or attorney to act for them in requesting access to their personnel file and receiving the material they are entitled to have in accordance with the preceding part of this Article. The Judiciary shall honor this authorization upon its receipt for the purpose of investigating a potential grievance or for processing an existing grievance, but not as a blanket authorization.
5. Letters of reprimand or warning, supervisors' notes, or written records of relief from duty (including investigation notes) which are more than two (2) years old and have not resulted in other discipline or adverse performance evaluation against the employee will be removed, on the employee's request to the Court Administrator, from the employee's official personnel file and destroyed.
6. An employee shall be allowed to place in their official personnel file a written rebuttal to a letter of reprimand, warning, counseling letter, disciplinary suspension, or personnel evaluation. Such rebuttal must be submitted within thirty (30) workdays after receipt of such adverse personnel action (except in case of a later grievance settlement).
7. An employee, with the concurrence of the Manager, shall have the option of placing in their official personnel file any work-related commendations.

**ARTICLE 10**  
**VACANCIES/PROMOTIONS**

1. When the Judiciary decides to fill a permanent or limited service, vacant bargaining unit position through competitive procedures, notice shall be posted internally and externally concurrently for an amount of time determined by the Court Administrator.
2. Vacancy notices shall include minimum requirements, rate of pay, a brief description of duties, and any special skills required.
3. The appointing authority or designee shall consider all certified applicants. Applicants cannot become certified if they are immediate family to the hiring authority and/or if hired would report directly to a supervisor who is immediate family or if their direct manager reports to a person who is immediate family. Permanent or limited-service employee candidates who meet the minimum requirements for a bargaining unit position shall be entitled to be interviewed.
4. It is the purpose of the recruitment process to match the best-qualified people to a job so that the Judicial Branch is able to achieve its goals and objectives effectively and efficiently. The recruitment process is designed to publicize Judicial Branch vacancies to allow qualified applicants within and outside the court system to apply. The Judicial Branch is committed to a policy of equal employment opportunity, and the recruitment process is designed to treat all applicants equitably.
5. If a current list of qualified candidates exists at the time of the occurrence of vacancy, the Court Administrator may choose to use that list rather than open the position to recruitment.
6. Selection Procedure

The Court Administrator or designee shall establish the type of selection procedure subject to the requirement of the preceding sections. The selection procedure shall include one or more of the following selection devices: an application and resume review to determine whether the applicant meets the minimum educational or experience qualifications, a review of experience and education, and an interview.

1) Conducting the Interview

The individual or panel members who interview each applicant shall ask a standard group of questions and may expand on the questions depending on the applicant's response and experience. All interviews for one selection process shall be conducted in as similar environment as



possible. The applicants shall also be given a general explanation of the job and the benefits associated with it and be given the opportunity to ask questions.

2) Selection

- a) The interview panel or interviewer will consider the following when making recommendations or selection: information provided on the employment application; education and experience relevant to the position being filled; and the applicant's strengths and weaknesses for the position being filled. The interviewer(s) may contact prior employers to verify employment and to receive a rating of the applicant's job performance.
- b) If the interview panel does not make a recommendation or the interviewer does not make a selection from the interview group, the Court Administrator may reopen the recruitment process to obtain additional candidates.

7. Temporary Service Credit

A bargaining unit or limited status employee, who worked as a temporary employee during the two-year period immediately prior to their most recent date of hire as a bargaining unit employee or limited status employee, may request in writing credit for the period of temporary service. The request must be made following successful completion of the probationary period. The employee must have at least 1,000 hours of temporary service in the first year immediately preceding the date of hire. If this time requirement is met, the employee may be eligible for temporary service credit in the 2nd year immediately preceding such date of hire if they have worked at least 1,000 hours of temporary service in such 2nd year. Temporary Service Credit becomes effective the month after the completed application is approved.

**ARTICLE 11**  
**PROBATIONARY EMPLOYMENT**

1. A newly hired employee shall serve a six (6) month probationary period. The probationary period may be extended at the discretion of the Judiciary. Prior to the end of the probationary period, the supervisor shall evaluate the performance of the probationary employee. The supervisor shall discuss the evaluation with the employee and forward the evaluation to the Court Administrator along with a recommendation to the Court Administrator that the employee become permanent, be terminated, or that the probationary period be extended. However, no failure to conduct such evaluation shall preclude the Judiciary from terminating a probationary employee in accordance with section

2 of this Article. Any recommendation for the extension of the probationary period shall include a new termination date of the probationary period and reasons for the extension.

2. Initial probationary employees may be extended in probationary status, disciplined, laid off or dismissed by the Judiciary solely at its discretion without regard to any other provision of this Agreement and with no right to the grievance process, but they shall otherwise be covered by all terms of this Agreement, except as restricted below.

(a) No provisions of the Performance Evaluation Article may be grieved.

(b) Upon successful completion of the initial probationary period, an employee will be credited with annual leave or personal leave accrued during such period.

(c) Initial probationary employees hired into another position shall be considered, for all purposes, to be a new hire.

(d) The following contract provisions shall not apply to initial probationers:

- Military Leave with Pay
- Medical Leave of Absence
- Sick Leave Bank and LTD Bank
- Tuition Reimbursement
- Injury on the Job - Disability RIF
- Parental Leave/Family Leave
- RIF Rights

## **ARTICLE 12**

### **PERFORMANCE EVALUATION**

1. The Court Administrator shall establish and revise as deemed appropriate a performance evaluation procedure. The determination of performance evaluation standards and criteria is understood to be the exclusive prerogative of the Judiciary, provided, however, the Judiciary will notify VSEA twenty-one (21) days prior to the date of implementation of any proposed change in such standards and criteria as they appear on the form and give VSEA an opportunity to respond and suggest alternatives to the changed form prior to its implementation.

2. Performance evaluations shall be based exclusively on job duties, responsibilities, and other performance related factors. Once the standards are developed and communicated to employees, the supervisor will monitor performance and then counsel and guide employees to help optimize performance. The supervisor may convene or will accommodate a reasonable request by an employee for a meeting to discuss any such work deficiency, suggested improvement, or rating or any performance evaluation standard or criterion that the employee considers unreasonable or not achievable.
3. Each supervisor must communicate to employees the duties the employee is to perform and the expected level of performance the employee is to achieve. After achieving permanent status, if an employee is not achieving the expected level of performance, a supervisor shall notify the employee as soon as possible of the deficiencies in the employee's performance. The supervisor has the responsibility and is expected to give reasonable counsel and assistance to an employee to help the employee improve job performance and meet job performance expectations. Employees shall be warned in a progressive manner of poor job performance.
  - (a) Level I – Oral Warning. This is a means by which the supervisor calls to the attention of the employee that the employee is not performing the job to established standards. The employee must be informed of what standards are to be achieved and when these standards should be achieved. A notation of this warning must be included in the employee's personnel file, and the employee shall be provided a copy. An employee shall be entitled to Union representation at any Level I meeting and shall be so advised.
  - (b) Level II – Written Warning. An employee shall be entitled to Union representation in connection with any Level II warning and shall be so advised. If the supervisor feels the employee has not responded adequately to the Level I warning after a reasonable period of time, the supervisor may give the employee a Level II warning. The Level II warning is a formal letter to the employee describing performance deficiencies and what improvement is expected. The Level II warning shall contain a specific date (normally between 3 and 6 months) on which a review of the employee's progress toward improvement will occur and the warning shall also notify the employee that, if significant progress has not occurred by the date of review, the employee may be placed in a warning period.
  - (c) Level III – Warning Period. A warning period shall be established upon recommendation of the supervisor and approval of the Court Administrator for employees who have not significantly improved their

performance as a result of a written warning. The warning period shall be sixty (60) days in duration but may be extended by the Court Administrator to a maximum of six (6) months. At the end of the warning period, the employee must consistently perform the job to expected standards. If the evaluation of the employee's performance still results in unsatisfactory performance, the employee may be demoted or terminated. The record indicating that an employee has been placed in a warning period for performance reasons shall be maintained in the employee's personnel file for a period of five (5) years. If there is a recurrence of the same performance deficiency within a period of twelve (12) months, the initial response may be at the warning period stage

4. An employee shall be allowed to place in their personnel file written rebuttal to a letter of reprimand, warning, counseling or a performance evaluation. Such rebuttal must be submitted within thirty (30) workdays after receipt of such adverse personnel action (except in case of a later grievance settlement). Employees may initiate appeals of Level I and Level II warnings, Level III warning periods and demotions at Step II of the Grievance Procedure. Appeals of terminations may be initiated at Step III of the Grievance Procedure. Employees in their original probationary period shall not have the right of appeal.

### **ARTICLE 13**

#### **CODE OF CONDUCT AND DISCIPLINARY ACTION**

##### **1. Code of Conduct -**

Listed below is the Judicial Branch employee code of conduct. This list is not exhaustive but is intended to be illustrative of the professional conduct expected of each employee so that each Judicial Branch employee has a general understanding of the conduct expected and so that the employee will work diligently to accomplish the goals of the Judicial Branch and exercise good discretion when doing so. Violations of some of the provisions of the code of conduct listed are more serious than others. Violations that may result in the employee's immediate discharge regardless of the employee's length of service or work record are specifically noted.

- (a) It is the policy of the Judiciary that discriminatory behavior will not be condoned or tolerated. Any employee who violates this policy is subject to disciplinary action up to and including dismissal. (the 'Appendix D Policy and Procedure Regarding Gender Bias and Sexual Harassment in the Workplace' and 'Appendix E Policy and Procedure Regarding Persons with Disabilities' may be found on the Judiciary intranet.)

(b) Accurate court records are critical to the prompt and fair administration of justice. No employee shall misuse, falsify or alter court records or remove the records from a court or office without proper authorization.

- 1) The confidentiality of information that is legally confidential contained in judicial and administrative records must be protected. It is the duty of the employee to protect the confidentiality of manually and electronically stored information. Employees should safeguard confidential information, both written and oral, unless disclosure is authorized by the court, refusing ever to use such information for personal advantage, and abstain at all times from public comment about pending court proceedings, except for strictly procedural matters. Breach of confidentiality of this information or falsifying records may result in immediate dismissal.
- 2) A former court employee shall not disclose confidential information when disclosure by a current court employee would be a breach of Confidentiality.

(c ) No employee shall conduct himself or herself in any manner which shall reflect negatively on the Court. Such conduct shall include drinking alcoholic beverages or using illegal drugs while on duty or working while under the influence of drugs or alcohol. A violation of this rule may result in immediate dismissal. The Judiciary has established a 'Drug Free Workplace Policy' which may be found on the Judiciary intranet. Those employees working under a federal grant funded position are subject to further restrictions found in the policy. Employees Subject to this policy shall be notified annually. An employee whose position will become subject to this policy shall be given no less than thirty (30) days' notice.

(d) The property and image of the court should be respected. Employees should refrain from the careless, negligent or improper use of the property of the court or the property of the court employees. The theft, misuse, or misappropriation of the funds or property of the court or court employees will not be tolerated and may result in immediate dismissal.

(e) Employees are expected to obey proper authority and to respect the rights of their co-workers. An employee's failure or refusal to comply with a rightful order to accept a reasonable and proper assignment from an authorized supervisor may result in dismissal. If an employee considers an order to be unreasonable, the employee should obey under protest and then bring the matter to the attention of the Court Administrator within five working days. The only exception is an order or instruction that may jeopardize the employee's safety or health, or the employee

believes to be unethical or illegal. In that case, the employee should ask for a written order or directive and bring the matter to the immediate attention of the Court Administrator.

(f) Court employees are expected to be courteous and of assistance to the public and furnish accurate information as requested in accordance with established policy. They should be tactful in the performance of their duties and exercise the utmost patience, impartiality and discretion when dealing with the public.

(g) Every Judicial Branch employee shall avoid conflicts of interest in the performance of professional duties. Even though no misuse of office is involved or intended, conflicts of interest involving Judicial Branch employees can seriously undermine the community's confidence and trust in the Judiciary, therefore, every Judicial Branch employee is required to exercise diligence in becoming aware of conflicts of interests and disclosing those conflicts to the employee's immediate supervisor. Employees who violate this section of the code of conduct may be subject to immediate dismissal. Conflicts of interest include but are not limited to the following:

- 1) No employee shall solicit or accept a fee, gift, or other valuable item in the course of or in connection with the employee's job when a fee, gift or other valuable item has the appearance of being given or is given in the hope or expectation of receiving a favor or better treatment than that accorded other persons by the court. Honoraria or expenses paid for papers, talks, demonstrations, or appearances made by employees on their own time and not related to their employment by the Judiciary shall not be deemed a violation of this section.
- 2) No employee shall use their position to secure special privileges, favors or exemptions for themselves or others.
- 3) An employee shall not engage in any employment, activity or enterprise which may be determined by the employee's supervisor incompatible, or in conflict with the duties, functions, or responsibilities of the court by which they are employed, including but not limited to the following: (NOTE: Some of these may not apply to volunteers.)
  - a) Outside employment with an entity that regularly appears in court or conducts business with the court system, and

requires the court employee to have frequent contact with attorneys who appear in the court system; or

- b) Outside employment which cannot be fulfilled outside the employee's work schedule or is incompatible with the performance of the court employee's duties and responsibilities; or
- c) Outside employment which involves the practice of law; or
- d) Outside employment which requires or induces the court employee to disclose confidential information acquired in the course of and by reason of official duties; or
- e) Outside employment within the judicial, executive or legislative branch of government without written consent of both employers.

(h) Every Judicial Branch employee shall during their hours of duty and subject to such other laws, rules, and regulations as pertain thereto, devote their full-time attention and efforts to the responsibilities of their position. Specifically, all employees shall:

- 1) Report for work promptly and regularly and not leave early.
- 2) Not be absent from work without proper approval from the supervisor;
- 3) Meet established standards for quantity, timeliness and quality of work;
- 4) Behave in a manner that does not disrupt the professional working environment, exercising self-control, even under provocation, and refraining from practical jokes, fighting, horseplay, offensive language, or other conduct which is offensive to other employees; and
- 5) Work conscientiously to accomplish the goals of the court and refrain from the misuse of work time.

(i) The dress, personal hygiene and appearance of judicial employees must be in conformance with accepted community standards, reflect positively on the court, and be appropriate when due consideration is given to the employee's duties. For customer-facing roles or situations when interaction with others are likely the following items are examples of inappropriate attire: barefoot; rubber or plastic flip flops; pajamas;

baseball hats; athletic wear; worn zip-up hoodie sweatshirt; T-shirts and sweatshirts with printing or images; spaghetti-strap tank tops; shorts other than dress shorts; sweat pants; denim pants; political messaging or logos that may be reasonably deemed offensive. Exceptions due to health, religious or other extenuating circumstances may be considered by local managers (i.e. Jeans Friday when no hearings are held).

(j) Political activity:

An employee as defined in this code of conduct shall not use their official authority for the purpose of interfering with or affecting the nomination or election of any candidate for public office. An employee shall not command or solicit from any other employee direct or indirect participation in any political activity or enforce or solicit in a coercive fashion contribution for any political party, organization or candidate. An employee shall retain their right to vote and express freely their opinion on all political subjects. An employee shall not be prohibited from participation in local community activities or from holding public office in the community in which the employee resides, provided that such activity does not conflict with Section 3.01 of the Rules and Regulations for Personnel Administration for the Executive Branch and the Federal Hatch Act.

2. Just Cause Standard -

An employee who has completed their original probationary period shall not be disciplined except for just cause. Four levels of disciplinary actions are established. Disciplinary actions will generally be imposed in the order of progressive severity described below. However, there may be cases that warrant bypassing steps in the progressive disciplinary procedures or applying discipline in differing degrees so long as it is imposed for just cause.

The Court Administrator or designee may relieve employees from duty with compensation and benefits pending the outcome of investigations or legal actions if the Court Administrator deems it is in the best interests of the Judiciary. A relief from duty of this nature may be for any period of time until a formal outcome is determined. An employee shall have the right to have a union representative present whenever the employee may be disciplined in any manner as a result of the meeting. The Judiciary shall inform an employee of such right prior to taking disciplinary action. With the consent of the employee and the VSEA, an employee may be relieved from duty without compensation and/or benefits pending the outcome of such investigations or legal actions.



The Court Administrator or designee may place an employee on administrative leave without compensation during an investigation into allegations of criminal misconduct once probable cause has been judicially determined. If the result of such an investigation determines that no unpaid leave is warranted, the employee shall receive any pay and benefits that have been withheld during the unpaid administrative leave. Health insurance benefits may be maintained upon continued payment of the employee's share by the employee. Accrued benefits may not be utilized to avoid the unpaid administrative leave.

### 3. Disciplinary Actions –

"Disciplinary Actions – An employee shall be entitled to Union representation in connection with any meeting with a supervisor which could result in disciplinary action being taken and shall be so advised. This right of representation shall be recognized when the discussion of a particular matter turns from a general gathering of facts to determine what happened at an incident to a specific focus on an individual employee that specifically attempts to elicit information that may result in discipline. The supervisor or program manager shall inform the employee before asking any questions at such a meeting that a disciplinary action is contemplated, and that the employee is entitled to VSEA representation and at least one meeting at which they can hear the possible action and reasons therefore and state their defense if applicable, before any discipline is imposed. Discussions between the supervisor or program manager and employee regarding disciplinary actions shall:

- (d) Be conducted in private and in a manner that will not embarrass the employee;
- (e) Afford the employee opportunity for union representation;
- (f) Include a full explanation of the facts that surround the incident(s);
- (g) Include an opportunity for the employee to present their arguments or explanations; and
- (h) Be confidential.

If the employee refuses to participate in a meeting to discuss a disciplinary action, the employee shall be informed in writing of the incident(s) and the disciplinary action to be imposed within five working days. In those instances where the Court Administrator determines it is inappropriate for the supervisor to conduct the disciplinary meeting, the Court Administrator or their designee, shall conduct the meeting. As soon after the meeting as possible, the employee shall be informed of the disciplinary action taken and of the right to appeal."

- (a) Oral Warning. This is the least severe of all disciplinary actions. It is a means by which a supervisor or program manager calls to the attention of an employee specific deficiencies in the employee's job performance because of work rule violations or one or more violations of the work rules or regulations by the employee. At this step, counseling the employee is the most important concern. A record of an oral warning shall be made by the supervisor and placed in the employee's personnel file at the Court Administrator's office. The record of oral warning shall be removed from the employee's file two (2) years after the issuance if no other disciplinary warnings concerning the same subject have been issued. An employee may appeal a Step I warning through the grievance procedure. The supervisor of an employee who has been warned may request the Court Administrator to remove the warning prior to the date the warning would normally be removed. The Court Administrator may direct the warning be removed if it is determined there is good cause to do so.
- (b) Written Warning. A written warning is the next more severe disciplinary action. It consists of a formal memorandum or letter in which the immediate supervisor informs the employee that the employee has violated a work rule or regulation. These memoranda or letters will warn the employee that behavior must be corrected within a specified period of time if more severe penalties are to be avoided and should give direct and concrete instructions for future conduct. The original of the written warning shall be presented to the employee, and a copy shall be included in the employee's personnel file. The written warning shall be removed from the employee's file two (2) years after issuance if there have been no additional disciplinary warnings issued concerning the same subject. An employee may appeal a written warning through the grievance procedure. The supervisor of an employee who has been warned may request the Court Administrator to remove the warning prior to the date the warning would normally be removed. The Court Administrator may direct the warning be removed if it is determined there is good cause to do so.
- (c) Suspensions. This is an action by which the Court Administrator, upon recommendation of a supervisor or program manager, temporarily suspends an employee from employment without compensation for a period not to exceed thirty workdays. Suspensions include the following:
- i. Loss of pay for the time specified,
  - ii. Loss of annual, sick, and personal leave accrual during the period involved, where applicable.

- iii. No accrual of service credit which may affect the calculation of longevity pay, additional annual leave, and step increases in salary, where applicable.

Employees may not use annual leave, personal leave, sick leave or compensatory time while suspended. Benefits for employees who are suspended without pay shall be administered as if the employee were on an unpaid leave of absence. Before they are suspended, employees shall be given a written memorandum specifying the reasons for the suspension and the exact date and time when the employee is to return to work. A copy of this memorandum shall also be placed in the employee's personnel file. An appeal of a suspension action must be filed within the prescribed time established in Step III of the grievance procedure.

- (d) Dismissal. The Court Administrator, upon recommendation of a supervisor or program manager, may dismiss an employee for just cause. Written notice of dismissal must be given to the employee within twenty-four (24) hours of oral notification. In the dismissal notice, the supervisor shall state the reason(s) for dismissal and inform the employee of the right to appeal the dismissal within the time limits established in Step III of the grievance procedure.

#### 4. Immediate Suspension/Discharge

There are some work rule and regulation violations which are so serious that they may warrant the immediate discharge of the employee. The parties agree that there are appropriate cases that may warrant the Judiciary bypassing progressive discipline or corrective action; applying discipline or corrective action in different degrees or applying progressive discipline for an aggregate of dissimilar offenses, except that dissimilar offenses shall not necessarily result in automatic progression; as long as it is imposing discipline or corrective action for just cause. In deciding which disciplinary action to take, the Court Administrator, upon the recommendation of the supervisor or Human Resources manager should consider the factors for determining the appropriate level of discipline as determined by the Vermont Labor Relations Board.

### **ARTICLE 14 GRIEVANCE AND ARBITRATION PROCEDURE**

1. Purpose - The intent of this Article is to provide for a mutually satisfactory method for settlement of complaints and grievances, as defined in Section 2 of this Article, filed by an individual, unit, or the duly certified bargaining representative. Complaints and grievances relating to classification are covered

by Article 15 of this Agreement. It is expected that employees and supervisors, and the VSEA, will make a sincere effort to reconcile their differences as quickly as possible at the lowest possible organization level.

## 2. Definitions -

- (a) "Complaint" is an employee's or group of employees' informal expression to the immediate supervisor of dissatisfaction with aspects of employment or working conditions under a collective bargaining agreement that are clearly identified to the supervisor as a complaint.
- (b) "Grievance" is an employee's, group of employees' or the employee's collective bargaining representative's expressed dissatisfaction, presented in writing, with aspects of employment or working conditions covered by a collective bargaining agreement, or the discriminatory application of a rule or regulation.
- (c) A grievance shall contain the following information:
  - (1) The full name and address of the party or parties submitting the grievance;
  - (2) A statement of the facts concerning the grievance;
  - (3) Specific references to the pertinent section(s) of the contract or of the rules and regulations alleged to have been violated;
  - (4) A statement of the specific remedial action sought;
  - (5) A request for a grievance meeting, if desired.

## 3. Procedure for Complaints

### (a) Step I

The employee or group of employees shall notify the immediate supervisor of their dissatisfaction within fifteen (15) days of the date upon which they could have reasonably become aware of the event which gave rise to their Complaint. The employee (s) may make the complaint orally or in writing but must identify their expression of dissatisfaction as a Complaint under Article 14.

- i. Within fifteen (15) days of the submission of the Complaint, the immediate supervisor, at their sole discretion, shall respond in one of three ways:
  - a. Send a written response to the employee(s);

- b. Hold a phone discussion with the employee(s) and/or their representative;
  - c. Hold a meeting with the employee(s) and/or their Representative.
- ii. If a phone discussion or meeting takes place, the immediate supervisor will send a written response within fifteen (15) days to the employee(s) and their representative.

(b) Step II

- i. If the employee(s) continues to be dissatisfied, or the immediate supervisor does not respond in the time frame specified, the Complaint may be presented in writing to the Court Administrator's Designee.
- ii. The Complaint shall be discussed informally with the employee(s) and their representative within fifteen (15) days of receipt. The Court Administrator's Designee will decide whether the discussion will be in-person or via telephone.
- iii. The Court Administrator's designee will determine all aspects of the in person or telephone discussion and conduct it in such a way as to minimize its impact on the operations of the Judiciary unit.
- iv. After a phone discussion or meeting, the Chief of Finance & Administration or designee will send a written response within fifteen (15) days to the employee(s) and their representative.

(c) A Complaint may not be pursued beyond Step II of the Complaint procedure.

#### 4. Procedure for Grievances.

(a) Step I (Immediate Supervisor)

The employee shall notify the immediate supervisor of a grievance within fifteen business days of the date upon which the employee could have reasonably been aware of the occurrence of the matter which gave rise to the grievance. The grievance may be made orally but must be followed up in a written manner and must be identified as a grievance by the employee. If the grievance involves an action by the immediate

supervisor, the Step I filing may be made exclusively with the supervisor's supervisor. If the grievance involves an action by the Court Manager, it may be initially filed at Step II.

- i. Within 5 days of the submission of the grievance, the grievance shall be discussed informally by the aggrieved employee with the immediate supervisor and the Court Manager. The immediate supervisor and the Court Manager shall notify the employee in writing of the decision within five business days after the discussion of the grievance.
- ii. Step I may be waived by procedures in Subsection 4 of this Article if the level of review is inappropriate to the type of grievance.

(b) Step II (Court Administrator's Office Level)

- i. If no satisfactory settlement is reached at Step I or the responding supervisor does not respond to the grievance, the grievance shall be presented in writing to the Court Administrator. The submission must occur within five business days after the receipt of the Step I decision, otherwise the matter shall be considered closed. If Step I is by-passed for reasons above specified, the grievance must be submitted in writing to the Court Administrator within the time limit specified for a Step I submission. The submission of the grievance should also contain a request for a hearing if so desired.
- ii. If a Step II grievance hearing is requested, the Court Administrator or designee shall hold the hearing within ten business days from receipt of the grievance unless a satisfactory solution can be agreed to before such hearing. The hearing shall be conducted informally. Within ten (10) business days of the hearing, the Court Administrator or designee shall notify the aggrieved employee and the VSEA of the decision in writing. If the grievance involves an action taken by the Court Administrator, the grievance shall be heard instead by the Chief Administrative Judge or their designee.
- iii. If no Step II grievance hearing is requested, the hearing authority shall notify the aggrieved employee and the VSEA

of the decision in writing within ten (10) business days after the receipt of the Step II grievance.

- iv. The hearing authority may interview any witness or review any materials which may have a bearing on the grievance without resorting to a grievance hearing unless such a hearing has been requested.

(c) Step III (VLRB Level) If the grievance is not satisfactorily resolved at the level of the Court Administrator it may be appealed by the grievant or the VSEA to the Vermont Labor Relations Board (VLRB). If the grievance relates to the dismissal of a covered employee who has attained permanent status, it shall be initiated with the VLRB. A filing at this level must be made within thirty (30) days of the Step II decision or the dismissal of the employee, whichever the case may be. The decision of the VLRB shall be final and binding, except that questions of law may be appealed to the Vermont Supreme Court. By mutual agreement of the parties, the Step III appeal may be to final and binding arbitration under the labor relations rules of the American Arbitration Association, subject to the standards set forth in the Vermont Arbitration Act, Title 12 V.S.A. Chapter 192 as the same may be amended from time to time, in lieu of an appeal to the VLRB. Any administrative costs associated with Step III appeals will be shared equally by the parties.

#### 5. Extension of Time Limits -

Work schedules and job requirements may limit the ability of any party to initiate a grievance or Complaint, respond to a grievance or Complaint, hold a grievance hearing or Complaint discussion or proceed to the next level of a grievance or Complaint within the established time requirements. If the employee or the reviewing party has just reason for not being able to meet the established time limits, they shall notify the other party prior to the expiration of the time limit, and they may mutually agree to an extension of time. Neither party shall lose any rights due to a time extension. All extensions of time limits must be confirmed in writing.

#### 6. Waiver of Review Level -

The level of review may be waived in the grievance procedure by mutual agreement of the parties if:

- (a) The proposed resolution of the grievance is not within the authority of the reviewing party at that level; or

- (b) The reviewing party believes they cannot appropriately respond to the grievance.

The parties may mutually agree to waive the grievance procedure at any level and proceed to the next level of review. All time limits shall be suspended until the parties have been notified of the decision of the waiver request. Neither party shall lose any rights while waivers are being considered, and all waivers shall be confirmed in writing.

#### 7. The Parties' Rights -

- (a) The employee has the right to the assistance of the VSEA, or private counsel of their choice and at their expense, to prepare the written grievance and to represent the employee in grievance hearings. The employee must notify the Court Administrator in advance of any meeting in which the employee intends to have a representative other than a VSEA representative present.
- (b) Employees involved in complaint and grievance meetings, investigation meetings, or meetings with their VSEA Representative regarding disciplinary or other corrective actions, may do so during working hours without loss of pay and without charge to accumulated leave, after requesting permission from the supervisor to do so, which permission shall not be unreasonably withheld. Meetings with a VSEA Representative shall normally be limited to no more than one (1) hour in any given workday. This provision shall not be construed to expand the release time afforded to VSEA officers under Article 3.
- (c) The reviewing authority at any step of this procedure shall have the right to have a representative present. The reviewing authority shall notify the VSEA and the employee in advance if a representative will be present.
- (d) Any material, document, note, or other tangible item which is to be entered or used by any party at Step II or Step III of any grievance proceeding shall be provided to the other party 48 hours prior to the proceeding at no cost.

#### 8. Alternative Dispute Resolution -

In recognition of the parties' commitment to reconcile their differences in the least adversarial manner possible, the VSEA and the Judiciary may agree to utilize mediation or other processes which will facilitate the goal of positive labor relations. In the event of an agreement to mediate, the mediator shall be jointly selected by the parties, and all Grievance Procedure time limits will be suspended until the mediation process (or other agreed upon alternative



process) is completed. No evidence or testimony which is presented in any process utilized pursuant to this subsection shall be utilized or referred to in any way should the formal grievance procedure be resumed, nor shall any mediator be called as a witness by either party. Either party may elect to discontinue utilizing the alternative process at any time. The cost of any such mediator shall be borne equally by the parties hereto.

## **ARTICLE 15**

### **CLASSIFICATION PLAN AND REVIEW PROCEDURE**

#### **1. Classification Plan -**

(a) This classification plan covers all positions in the bargaining unit.

##### **(b) Definitions**

- i. Request for classification review: a request for a review of a new or existing position to determine the proper class assignment.
- ii. Request for reconsideration: a request by the Judiciary, the VSEA, or the employee for the Court Administrator or their designee to review a Step 1 classification decision.
- iii. Classification grievance: an appeal of a Step 2 reconsideration decision to the Vermont Labor Relations Board ("VLRB").
- iv. Wherever used, the term "employee" means employee or employees of the Judiciary, as appropriate, who are covered by the terms of this Agreement
- v. "Business days" means calendar days exclusive of Saturdays, Sunday, and holidays observed by the State of Vermont.

#### **2. Classification Review Procedure**

(a) The classification methodology for the Judiciary will be based on the Willis Classification System. The Judiciary will maintain a classification plan for all employees in the bargaining unit based on the analysis of each position's duties and responsibilities, as performed at a satisfactory level, as they relate to the factors of the Willis Classification System. The plan shall group positions that have common characteristics and assign them to a class. For each class, a title shall be assigned, a general description prepared and minimum qualifications established. All class descriptions shall be provided to the VSEA, and upon request to employees. A copy of

the "Willis Guide to Classification" will be available on the Judiciary website.

(b) Request for Classification Review – Step 1

If a significant change occurs in a position or classification that alters its duties or responsibilities in a manner that justifies a change in classification based on the principles underlying the Judiciary classification plan, the Court Administrator, the VSEA or the affected employee may request in writing that a classification review of the position occur to ascertain if it is assigned to the proper class. The request shall be submitted to the Human Resources Manager and shall consist of a form containing the applicant's name and other identifying and contact information, accompanied by a written statement of the facts upon which the applicant's request is based, together with any documents supporting reclassification. The request shall be deemed filed on the date that it is received by the office of the Human Resources Manager.

The VSEA may submit a class action request for classification review on behalf of employees in the same class, filing one (1) request that applies to the entire class.; Any employee within the affected class may elect via written notification to the Human Resources Manager not to have the results of the class review applicable to them until after such employee's next step increase occurs.

The Human Resources Manager or their designee shall conduct an analysis of the position or positions that are the subject of the request, based on the duties performed on the date the request was filed, gathering such information as is necessary to properly classify the position, including holding an interview with the impacted employee and their direct supervisor. In the case of a class action, management shall hold interviews with at least one employee and their supervisor for each impacted job title. The VSEA and/or the employee shall have the right to present documentary and other information to the Human Resources Manager, and shall have access to all information gathered by them, including participating in any site visit and the opportunity to hear any interviews or other oral statements, and shall be provided copies of any documents presented to or considered by the Human Resources Manager.

Within 120 calendar days of filing of the request, the Human Resources Manager shall issue a written decision concerning the proper classification of the position(s), stating with specificity the facts and reasoning upon

which the decision is based. The decision will be final on the thirtieth day following its receipt by the VSEA and the employee(s), unless the VSEA and/or the employee(s) file a request for reconsideration during that period.

### 3. Reconsideration of Classification Determination – Step 2

(a) A request to reconsider a Step 1 decision shall be filed in writing with the Court Administrator within thirty days of the Step 1 decision. The request for reconsideration shall be deemed filed on the date that it is received in the Office of the Court Administrator.

(b) The request shall include:

- i. the name of the employee/employees
- ii. the class title, pay grade equivalent and work unit of the position under review;
- iii. a statement of the specific reasons that the Step 1 decision was incorrect;
- iv. a copy of the Step 1 decision;
- v. the remedial action requested, including the class or classes to which reassignment is sought; and
- vi. appropriate signature and date.

(c) If the reconsideration request relates to a bargaining unit position and is made by the Judiciary or the employee, the court Administrator shall promptly notify the VSEA of the request. The VSEA shall have the opportunity to represent the employee(s).

(d) The employee(s) shall promptly file a copy of the request for reconsideration with the Human Resources Manager. Within ten business days of receipt of the request, the Human Resources Manager or their designee shall forward to the Court Administrator all of the information, documents, and other evidence gathered or submitted during the Step 1 analysis of the position.

(e) Within sixty days of a request for reconsideration, the Court Administrator or their designee shall issue a written decision on the request for reconsideration. The decision shall be in writing and shall state with specificity the facts and reasons upon which it is based. The

Court Administrator shall send the decision to the employee(s) and to the VSEA.

At the option of any party to the dispute, the Court Administrator or their designee may meet with the VSEA and/or the employee before issuing the decision.

#### 4. Classification Grievance Procedure – Step 3

(a) Within thirty (30) business days of the notification of the reconsideration determination, the Judiciary, or the VSEA or the employee may file a classification grievance with the Vermont Labor Relations Board ("VLRB"), using the VLRB's rules and procedures that apply to grievances within the Judiciary. In addition, the grievance shall include:

- i. a written statement of the reasons that the decision(s) below were arbitrary and capricious;
- ii. The entire record of the proceedings below, including the decisions at the Step 1 and Step 2 and all documents and other information presented to the decision maker(s) below.

(b) The VLRB shall decide the grievance based on the record of the proceedings below and determine whether the reclassification decision was arbitrary and capricious. There shall be no hearing de novo.

(c) The parties agree to offer a training for members of the VLRB on the Willis system, to be provided by an expert selected by agreement of the parties, and whose fee, if any, shall be paid equally by both the VSEA and the Judiciary.

#### 5. Pay Adjustments

In the event that the employee(s) is reclassified to be higher classification, the new rate of pay will be retroactive to the next pay period following the date the reclassification request was filed. Notwithstanding any other provisions of this agreement, any such pay adjustment shall be implemented only upon funding by the Legislature.

#### 6. Rights and Restrictions

(a) The employee has the right to the assistance of the VSEA or private counsel of their choosing to prepare the classification grievance and to represent the employee at the employee's expense before the VLRB. In those cases where the VSEA is not representing the employee, the VSEA shall have the right to participate in all proceedings under this article, the

grievance proceedings, and shall have access to all records and documents relating to the request for reclassification or subsequent proceedings.

- (b) The employee may present information relevant to the reclassification request or request for reconsideration on work time.

Other Judicial Branch employees who are asked to present information in connection with the reclassification request may do so during work time.

- (c) All time periods under this Article may be extended by agreement of the parties.

## **ARTICLE 16**

### **COMPENSATION/BENEFITS**

#### **1. Compensation –**

- (a) The existing pay plan in effect on June 30, 2026, shall continue in effect through June 30, 2028 as adjusted by paragraph (e), (f) and (g) below. See Appendix A. An updated pay plan effective the first full pay period in July of 2027 shall be created and become the new Appendix B.
- (b) Subject to full funding by the Vermont Legislature and receipt thereof by the Judiciary, the Judiciary will create new positions for the incumbents in the following titles: Judicial Assistant, Probate Register, Court Officer B; Court Security & Screening Officer; Security & Safety Officer. The Judicial Department will devise, at their sole discretion, the titles, job descriptions, and position classification reports for the above listed titles.
- (c) Effective the second full pay cycle after July 1, 2026, the following pay grade changes will be made while retaining each individual's existing step. Step dates will be reset to the second full pay cycle after July 1, 2026:
- former Judicial Assistants will move into a title at pay grade 21.
  - former Probate Registers will move into a title at pay grade 21.
  - former Court Officer B's will move into a title at pay grade 19.
  - former Court Security & Screening Officers will move into a title at pay grade 19.
  - former Security & Safety Officers will move into a title at pay grade 20.

Once retitled, neither the VSEA nor any employee in the affected positions shall file any reclassification request before July 1, 2028, unless

the Judiciary subsequently substantially reconfigures the job duties in such a manner that increases the scope and responsibility of the position.

- (d) Should the Governor's Twin State Family Medical Insurance plan be implemented it shall be provided to the members of the bargaining unit at no cost to the members. Should such Plan not be implemented or be implemented and then discontinued, an across-the-board increase of one quarter of one percent (0.25%) shall be applied effective with the beginning of the first full payroll period following such decision.
- (e) Effective as of the start of the first full pay period after July 1, 2026, each bargaining unit employee employed as of July 1, 2026 shall receive an across-the-board increase of two percent (2.0%). Such increase shall be added to the existing pay plan.
- (f) Each bargaining unit employee employed as of January 10, 2027 will receive an across the board increase of two percent (2.0%). Such increase shall be added to the existing pay plan.
- (g) Effective as of the start of the first full pay period after July 1, 2027, each bargaining unit employee employed as of July 1, 2027 shall receive an across-the-board increase of three percent (3.0%). Such increase shall be added to the existing pay plan.
- (h) The Judiciary's financial commitments stated above in subsection (a) through (g) above are subject to the complete funding of these commitments by the Legislature and the full receipt thereof by the Judiciary. It is anticipated that the Legislature will fund the same wage increases for the executive branch employees. If, however, the Legislature should for any reason fully fund the executive branch's requirements to cover its settlements, but appropriates an amount for the Judiciary Unit's , new title, pay increase and/or lump sum payment that is less than the funding needed by the Judiciary to pay the new title, pay increase and/or lump sum payments provided in this agreement, the Judiciary shall have the right to re-open these negotiations in order to bargain an agreement that is within the dollars it receives.
- (i) The ability of covered employees to move on step in accordance with the applicable provisions and timelines of the Agreement will remain in effect throughout the two-year duration of the Agreement.
- (j) Reorganization – Terms of Compensation: During the life of this Agreement, any employee who, as a result of Judiciary restructuring, accepts a position with a rate of compensation which is less than the rate

of compensation they are then earning which places the hourly rate between the pay grid steps or above the pay grade maximum, shall be at a "red circled" hourly rate. When a pay raise occurs within the Judicial Branch, the increase for red circled employees will be calculated as follows:

The hourly rate will be unchanged until such time as the step rate to which the red circled employee is assigned equals or surpasses their current rate of pay (this will most likely be achieved through the implementation of a ABI resulting from collective bargaining) or the employee meets the requirements to advance to the next step.

Any ABI increase that occurs prior to the employee's next step date that does not raise the hourly rate for the applicable step to the employee's current hourly rate will be paid entirely in cash.

If the ABI increase would raise the hourly rate for the applicable step higher than the employee's current hourly rate, such current hourly rate will be increased to the applicable hourly rate. Any portion of an ABI that is not included in the new step hourly rate for the employee will be paid in cash.

## 2. Compensation Plan -

(a) The compensation plan for Judiciary employees has 28 pay grades, each pay grade having salary steps. It is the policy of the Judiciary to establish pay grade equivalents to coincide with the compensation plan approved by the General Assembly. The Court Administrator shall assign each class established in the Judiciary classification plan to a pay grade equivalent. The positions shall be assigned to pay grade equivalents based on responsibility, prevailing salary rates for similar positions, and other pertinent information.

### (b) Hiring Rates

- i. New employees - Employees new to Vermont State Government shall be hired at Step 1 of the pay grade equivalent to which the position class is assigned except as provided for by subsection iv. Hereof.
- ii. Employees from other state agencies - employees who are transferring from permanent positions in other state departments shall be treated as if they were transferring between positions within the Judiciary.

- A. If the Judiciary position's pay grade equivalent is greater than the pay grade of the employee's Executive Branch position, the employee shall start at the step within the new pay grade equivalent that guarantees at least a 5% salary increase or an 8% salary increase if the pay grade is three or more pay grades but never lower than Step 2.
  - B. If the Judiciary position's pay grade equivalent is equal to the employee's Executive Branch pay grade, the employee shall be assigned to the same step that the person was assigned in the Executive Branch.
  - C. If the Judiciary position's pay grade equivalent is lower than the employee's Executive Branch pay grade, the employee shall receive the end of probation salary level of the Judiciary position. If the Court Administrator determines the employee's Executive Branch experience will contribute to the employee's ability to perform effectively in the new position, the employee may be slotted on a step in the pay grade that exceeds Step 2, but does not exceed the employee's present salary. In no case may an employee's salary exceed the maximum salary step of the pay grade equivalent.
- iii. Re-employment - A permanent employee in good standing who has voluntarily terminated employment from the Judiciary or left due to a reduction in force shall have salary restoration rights for two years after the separation. Salary restoration depends upon the relevance of experience gained in the previous position to the new position and the degree of responsibility of the previous position as compared to the new position. The maximum restored salary is defined as the salary at the time of termination plus any salary adjustment to which an employee would have been entitled, unless specifically excluded by the Legislature, had the employee remained employed with the Judiciary in the same pay grade equivalent. If a person's maximum restored salary falls in between steps in the pay grade equivalent, the maximum restored salary shall be the higher step. However, in no instance may a re-employed person's salary exceed the maximum salary step of the new position's pay grade equivalent.
  - A. Hiring rate where the new position is at a higher pay grade equivalent - If the person's previous experience warrants, the starting salary shall be the step within the new pay



grade equivalent that guarantees at least a 5% salary increase or an 8% salary increase if the pay grade is three or more pay grades over the employee's maximum restored salary or step 2 of the new pay grade equivalent, whichever is greater.

B. Hiring rate where the new position is at the same pay grade equivalent - If the person's previous experience warrants, the person's starting salary shall be the maximum restored salary.

C. Hiring rate where the new position is at a lower pay grade equivalent. The person's starting salary shall be Step 2 of the new pay grade equivalent. If the person's maximum restored salary is greater than Step 2, depending on the person's previous Judicial Branch experience, the Court Administrator may establish a starting step above Step 2, but not to exceed the person's maximum restored salary.

iv. Hiring above the minimum salary - In instances of difficult recruitment or extraordinary qualifications of an applicant, the Court Administrator may authorize a starting salary above the minimum of the pay grade equivalent.

(c) Step Movement- advancement through the steps of a pay grade equivalent for permanent employees shall be governed by the time requirements set forth below.

i. Anniversary Date - The date on which an employee most recently completed an original probation, or in the case of restored or rehired employees, the date of restoration or rehire. In the case of completion of original probation, the date shall be the actual date of completion rather than the effective date of the associated pay increase. This date will be used initially as the date upon which step increases may be granted in accordance with the compensation plan provisions.

Step Date - The date on which an employee moved to a specific pay grade and step.

The required time on each step shall be as follows:

Step 2 (End of Probation) through 5 - one year

Step 6 through 12 - two years

### Step 13 through 15 - three years

Movement to a higher step level is predicated on satisfactory performance. Any employee who has been warned under Article 12, Section 3 of unsatisfactory job performance shall not advance to the next step level until the employee's supervisor has notified the Court Administrator that the employee is performing satisfactorily. The advance to the next step level should occur on the Monday of the first full pay period following the notification to the Court Administrator.

- ii. Normally, step movement will take place on the employee's Step Date. The effective date for all pay increases will be as follows: If an employee's actual step date occurs before midnight Saturday of the first week of the applicable pay period, then the employee's effective date of increase shall be retroactive to the beginning of the same pay period. If the employee's actual step date occurs after midnight Saturday of the first week of the applicable pay period, then the employee's effective date of increase shall occur on the first day of the pay period following the employee's step date.

### (d) Reassignment of Pay Grades Due to Classification Review

A position class may be reassigned to a greater pay grade equivalent due to an action or an employee may be assigned to a new class at a greater pay grade equivalent due to a classification review. If adequate funding is available, all permanent status employees within the reassigned class or a reassigned permanent status employee to a class with a greater pay grade equivalent shall be slotted into step 2 of the new pay grade equivalent or into the step in the new pay grade equivalent which will give the employee at least a 5% salary increase or an 8% salary increase if the pay grade is three or more pay grades, whichever is greater. However, no employee may receive a salary that exceeds step 15 of the new pay grade equivalent. All reassignments are effective at the beginning of the next pay period following the date of the original classification request submission to the CAO Human Resources Division. Employees who are still in their original probationary period shall have their salary adjusted to the minimum rate of the new pay grade equivalent. If adequate funding is not available, the reallocation of pay grades shall become effective at the beginning of the first pay period in the next fiscal year. If an employee is reassigned to a higher class

within two years of a previous reassignment to a higher class, the employee shall be slotted into the new pay grade at the step that results in a salary increase.

If a class or position is reassigned to a lower pay grade equivalent as a result of a classification study, the employees affected by the study shall have their compensation established as follows:

Where the review assigns the position one or two pay grades below its former pay grade assignment, the rate of pay shall be "red-circled" and shall not be subject to a reduction. Such employee will move to the step next above their red-circled rate on the next step date, except when the salary is over the maximum for the pay grade or falls on a step in the new Pay Grade. The next step date in such cases shall be based on the effective date of the reassignment and will be calculated on the required time on step assigned to the step next below the employee's red circled rate.

Where the review assigns the position three or more pay grades below its former pay grade assignment, the employee shall be placed on a specific step in the new (lower) pay grade that is at least a 1.5% decrease in salary and then slotted down, but shall not be paid less than the minimum, nor more than the maximum for such lower pay grade. All such employees will establish a new Step Date.

After this action, any employee whose compensation was set by subsection i above and whose salary exceeds step 15 of the new pay grade will have their salary red circled until such time as the compensation for step 15 exceeds the employee's salary and at that time the employee will be slotted on step 15. For a period of two years following this action, the employee shall have salary restoration rights for any upward pay grade movement up to and including the employee's former pay grade. During this two-year period, movement to a grade higher than the former pay grade shall be treated in the same manner as a promotion or classification upgrade depending on the type of action.

When a reassignment pay raise results in a junior employee receiving a greater salary than a senior employee assigned to the same or a greater pay grade equivalent, the Court Administrator, in the interests of fairness and equity, may adjust the senior employees' salary. For purposes of this section, seniority is based

upon total uninterrupted state service, except where the interruption is caused by a reduction in force.

(e) Promotion

Upon promotion, an employee shall receive a salary increase to the step in the new pay grade equivalent with at least a 5% salary increase or an 8% salary increase if the pay grade is three or more pay grades, or to step 2 of the new pay grade equivalent, whichever is greater. The employee will not receive a salary increase at the end of the promotional probationary period. For purposes of this provision, promotion shall mean the advancement of an employee from the employee's present pay grade equivalent to a higher pay grade equivalent through a change from one position to another position. If the new position is vacant, the pay raise associated with the promotion should be effective at the beginning of the pay period immediately following the acceptance of the promotion by the employee. If the position is not vacant when the promotion is accepted, the pay raise will occur at the beginning of the pay period immediately following the termination date of the previous incumbent.

(f) Lateral Transfer

- i. If an employee transfers from one position in the Judicial Branch to another position in the Judicial Branch at the same pay grade equivalent, the employee shall receive the same salary. The Court Administrator may increase the salary in accordance with subsection (e).

(g) Demotion

- i. Voluntary demotion

An employee may voluntarily transfer from a position classified at a pay grade equivalent to a new position with a lower grade equivalent. If the pay grade for the new position is not more than two (2) pay grades lower than that of the current position, the employee will be placed on the step that is closest to but does not exceed the employee's then current rate of pay. If the pay grade for the new position is three (3) or more pay grades lower than that of the current position, the employee shall be placed on a specific step in the new (lower) pay grade that is within the range for salary upon demotion specified in Section 6.072, et seq., of the Executive Branch Rules and Regulations for Personnel Administration which represents at least a

one and one-half (1.5%) percent decrease in salary and then slotted down, but shall not be paid less than the minimum, nor more than the maximum for such lower pay grade. All such employees will establish a new Step Date.

ii. Involuntary demotion

An involuntary demotion may occur by either transferring an employee to a lower pay grade equivalent position in the work unit or by reassigning the employee's position to another class with a lower pay grade equivalent as a result of unsatisfactory performance. A reassignment to a lower pay grade equivalent that occurs as a result of a classification study or action shall not be considered an involuntary demotion. An employee who is involuntarily demoted shall have the base salary reduced to the maximum salary step of the new pay grade equivalent or, to the step in the new pay grade equivalent that reduces the employee's current salary by at least 5%, whichever is the greater reduction. In no event shall the salary be reduced to less than the step 2 salary rate of the new pay grade equivalent. For a period of two years following this action, the employee shall have salary restoration rights for any upward pay grade movement up to and including the employee's former pay grade. During this two-year period, movement to a grade higher than the former pay grade shall be treated in the same manner as a promotion or classification upgrade depending on the type of action.

(h) Original Probationary Period

Upon satisfactory completion of an original probationary period, an employee earning less than the step 2 salary rate for the employee's pay grade equivalent shall receive a salary increase to that step 2 rate. The increase shall be effective at the beginning of the bi-weekly pay period immediately following the date of the completion of the probationary period. If an employee was hired at or above the step 2 salary rate, the employee will not receive an end of probation increase.

(i) Temporary Assignment

i. Alternate Rate Pay

Employees may be specially assigned by the Court Administrator to assume the duties of a position assigned to a higher pay classification than the employee's own within the bargaining unit. Upon completion of the assignment, the employee shall return to their regular position without the loss of any contract right that would otherwise have accrued. If this occurs the

employee may be eligible for alternate rate pay as described below.

The alternate rate pay shall be the step in the new pay grade equivalent that is the promotion rate for the employee under subsection (e) above. For an employee to be eligible for alternate rate pay, the replaced employee's pay grade equivalent must be at least one pay grade equivalent greater than the employee's own. Alternate rate pay will apply only for the duration of the reassignment. At the end of the reassignment period, the employee will return to the employee's normal salary, plus any salary adjustments that would have normally been granted had the employee not been specially assigned. Any salary increase which occurs during the period of special assignment shall be given to the specially assigned person in the same manner as it would have applied to a person holding the position on permanent assignment.

Special assignment justifying alternate rate pay shall occur only when an employee is required by the Court Administrator to perform a majority of those duties of the specially assigned position which are substantially different from the employee's own normal duties for a period of five (5) or more consecutive full work days, effective upon execution of this agreement. If special circumstances warrant, the Court Administrator may approve alternate rate pay for shorter periods of time. The performance standard of a specially assigned employee shall be the same as that expected of a newly assigned permanent employee during the probationary period. If all of the above conditions are met, the Employee shall receive the alternate rate of pay during the special assignment retroactive to the first day of such assignment.

ii. Interim Appointment Outside Bargaining Unit

In the event of an interim appointment of a covered employee to a position exempt from the bargaining unit, such employee shall be compensated at an interim rate set by the Court Administrator. Upon completion of the assignment, the employee shall return to their regular position without the loss of any contract right that would otherwise have accrued. The employee shall make a written request to the Association for a leave of absence from the Bargaining Unit for the duration of such special assignment.

(j) Termination

Any employee who wishes to terminate employment voluntarily with the Judicial Branch must give the supervisor two (2) weeks written notice. The written notice shall indicate the last day the employee will work and the reason for termination. The termination will be effective on the last day of work.

A terminating employee, regardless of the nature of the termination, will be paid for any unused annual leave or unused compensatory time if eligible for cash payment, provided proper notice was given in the case of voluntary termination. If insufficient notice is given, the employee's accumulated annual leave shall be reduced by the amount of time that the notice is insufficient. Where circumstances warrant, the Court Administrator may waive the notice provision.

The Court Administrator may withhold the employee's final paycheck until all state-owned property which was assigned to the employee has been returned. In the case of an involuntary termination, the employee shall receive two weeks' notice or two weeks' pay in lieu of notice.

Notwithstanding this provision, an employee may be dismissed without notice or pay in lieu of notice for a violation of a rule which notes that immediate dismissal could result. Regardless of the type of termination, the Court Administrator may require the employee to leave work immediately upon notice of termination. If this is required, it will have no impact on any payments due the employee.

(k) Employee Benefits

The Judicial Branch extends to its permanent employees working the equivalent of twenty (20) hours or more per week the benefits available to all state employees. All employees will be subject to deductions for F.I.C.A. Since the details of these benefits change from year to year, complete information about these benefits is available from the Human Resources Manager. However, permanent employees employed prior to January 1, 1985, who work at least fifteen (15) hours per week and who were receiving benefits shall continue to be eligible for those benefits.

(l) Market Factor Adjustments

The Judiciary, upon the determination of the Court Administrator, may exceed established classified pay plan steps and maximums in order to implement market factor adjustments for the purpose of attracting and retaining qualified employees in the Judiciary. If the Court Administrator determines to make a market factor adjustment, the impact of such

decision shall be negotiated for up to 45 calendar days with the VSEA. At the end of the 45-calendar day period, commencing with the notice to the VSEA, the Judiciary may implement any proposed adjustment without further negotiations or recourse to the statutory impasse procedures. The Judiciary may subsequently lower any rate which has been adjusted above the established step and maximum provided no then current employee is reduced in salary or step as a result.

(m) Employee Development Fund

The Judiciary shall provide funds in the amount of \$28,000 for fiscal year 2027 and \$28,000 for fiscal year 2028 in order to assist in the professional development, personal wellness activities, elder and day care expenses, of its employees covered by this Agreement and/or activity that will bring credit to the Judiciary. A joint committee consisting of two members appointed by each party shall, no later than August 1, 2008, put into place the eligibility standards for participation in the program. These standards shall be designed to make eligible activities that assist an employee's professional performance, bring credit to the Judiciary or otherwise work to the mutual advantage of the parties. The deadline for applications for funding under this program shall be July 15, 2027 and July 15, 2028 respectively. An employee must be actively employed with the Judicial Branch bargaining unit at the deadline for annual application in order to be eligible for the reimbursement. Approved expenses incurred during the fiscal year are reimbursable if submitted by the deadline. Not more than \$175 shall be available to any employee per fiscal year. Within this limitation, and upon a majority of the committee's approval of each application, the yearly Fund amount shall be divided equally among those employees who provide sufficient proof to the joint committee of conducting an eligible activity. Payments will be disbursed after July 1, 2027 and July 1, 2028 respectively.

(n) Merit Award

Managers may recommend to Human Resources that an employee receive a special compensation adjustment for outstanding performance, a successful project or similar. Adjustments will be in the form of a nonrecurring bonus. All such awards are subject to available funds and must receive approval of the Court Administrator. Management has sole authority over this program and no aspect of the program including but not limited to, manager recommendation and employee approval or non-approval, shall be grievable.



**ARTICLE 17**  
**OVERTIME AND CALL-IN PAY**

1. Eligibility for Overtime compensation

(a) All bargaining unit employees in classes assigned to pay grades 5 through 28 shall receive overtime compensation at the rate of one and one-half times their regular hourly rate for all hours worked in excess of eight in any work day or forty in any work week, excluding hours claimed as sick leave.

i. Authorization of Overtime

A. Except as required by law, no employee will be compensated for work in excess of the employee's normal work schedule unless the work was approved in advance by the judge pertaining to work in the courtroom or the supervisor for all types of work. Overtime, the use of permanent part-time employees beyond their established work schedule, must have the prior authorization of the Court Administrator or designee unless the supervisor's budget contains money to pay for those purposes. When a jury trial or other court hearing extends past the normal work schedule, judges or supervisors may authorize overtime as necessary to insure the efficient operation of court.

B. All overtime work which has been assigned to an employee by the appropriate authority and is actually worked by the employee shall be compensated by cash. The employee may request compensatory time in lieu of cash or request a combination of compensatory time and cash. Compensatory time shall be granted at the discretion of the supervisor.

C. No employees may authorize overtime for themselves.

ii. Computation of Overtime

A. The smallest division of an hour to be used in the computation of overtime is fifteen minutes.

B. It is expected that travel between work locations shall be conducted during normal working hours. An employee who is required by a supervisor to report to and remain at a work location other than the employee's normal work station at a time that would make it impossible for the employee to

travel to the work location during normal working hours plus normal commuting time shall be granted overtime compensation or compensatory time off at the overtime rate applicable to the employee for the additional time required to travel to the work location. Voluntary in-state or out of state travel time shall not count as time worked. However, in-state travel time to and from and time attending required conferences, conventions, seminars, training courses and related activities will be considered as time actually worked for purposes of computing overtime compensation. Time spent for meals and the normal commutation time, when appropriate, shall be deducted from such travel time. Required out of state travel time above and beyond normal commuting time which is completed in a single day shall count as time worked. Required out of state travel which involves more than one day, and which cannot be accomplished during scheduled work hours, shall count as time worked but shall be compensated for by straight time compensatory time off. All compensation/reimbursement for travel time shall be subject to the protocols set forth in Bulletin #3.4 of the executive branch's Agency of Administration.

- C. If a manager assigns an employee to be available to address work issues outside of their regularly schedule workhours, the employee will receive \$3.75 an hour for each hour so assigned. During such hours the employee must be able to respond within one hour of initial contact by Judiciary. Hours worked outside of regularly scheduled hours will be paid at overtime rate.
- D. Hours actually worked, hours on annual leave, compensatory time off, unworked holidays, paid training time and personal leave shall be considered as time actually worked for the purpose of determining eligibility for overtime compensation.

iii. After Hours Coverage for Protective Orders

- A. If the Judiciary finds it necessary to provide state-wide applicant support for any legislatively mandated protection orders, an employee may volunteer to provide coverage. All after hours services will be provided over phone and internet on a remote state-wide basis with no need to travel from

one's home. Volunteers must have timely access to telephone, electronic computing device, standard software suite and internet service needed to service these applicants.

- B. The Judiciary shall determine the number of employees needed to meet projected state-wide applicant need. Managers shall annually solicit a list of volunteers from court staff. Managers will assign eligible volunteers before engaging a contract worker. Once an employee has volunteered for such list, however, the employee may not remove themselves from such list without sixty (60) days advance written notice to the appropriate manager. When an employee eligible for overtime is called outside the hours of their normal shift to consider a matter, such employee shall receive a minimum of one hour's overtime pay for handling the call, inclusive of the call. A second call occurring within the initial hour shall not require payment beyond the hour unless the second call extends beyond the hour starting when the first call was received, at which point the employee shall be compensated at overtime rates for time worked.
- C. If the call proceeds to starting the application process over the phone the employee will be paid four (4) hours overtime, inclusive of the call. A second call occurring within the four hours shall not require payment beyond the four hours unless the second call extends beyond the four-hour overtime period starting when the initial call was received, at which point the employee shall be compensated at overtime rates for time worked.
- D. The Judiciary shall establish a reasonable system with priority given to those employees who volunteer for consistent and substantial blocks of coverage and do not avoid duty on holidays. A manager may remove a person from the after-hours list as long as the decision is made with sufficient reason. If an employee who is scheduled for coverage on a given day is unable to perform such assignment, it shall be the responsibility of the employee to provide timely notice to the appropriate manager. A volunteer who is absent from work due to personal illness is

prohibited from providing after-hours coverage for 12 hours after the end of the day they are ill.

iv. After Hours Rate of Pay

Three dollars and seventy-five cents (\$3.75) per hour shall be paid to any employee providing coverage for afterhours. This rate of pay shall not be accrued concurrently with either the one (1) hour of pay earned by handling a call, nor the four (4) hours of pay earned by starting an application. Payment of this rate shall fully compensate employees for the use of personal electronic devices and personal internet service associated with providing after-hours service to applicants. Volunteers scheduled and receiving coverage pay shall not fail to respond when contacted to take an applicant call. Those volunteers who show a pattern of not responding may be removed from the after-hours list.

v. Call-In Pay

When a full-time employee eligible for overtime is called in to a Judiciary duty station or other location and required to work at any time other than continuously into the normally scheduled shift, the employee shall receive compensation at overtime rates for all hours worked. Any eligible employee called in under this section shall receive a minimum of four (4) hours of overtime compensation. If a part-time permanent employee who is eligible for overtime compensation is called in to work at a time outside normal court business hours, the employee shall receive a minimum of four (4) hours of overtime compensation. The overtime rate paid for call in pay shall not be reduced or affected by use of sick leave within the work week.

2. Compensatory Time

(a) Accumulation

- i. Compensatory time may only be earned for authorized overtime hours worked.
- ii. The amount of compensatory time earned shall be computed at the rate of one and one half hours for each hour of overtime actually worked.

A. The accrual year for compensatory time accumulation shall be April 1 to March 31.

- B. No employee shall be allowed to accumulate more than 240 hours of compensatory time. Any subsequent overtime incurred by an employee shall be paid in cash.

(b) Use of Compensatory Time

- i. Compensatory time off may be used and must be authorized in the same manner as the use of annual leave.

- ii. Any compensatory time earned during an accrual year ending March 31 must be used within the year following that March 31. If an employee did not use the compensatory time within the time period, the employee will be paid for the unused compensatory time in cash.

**ARTICLE 18  
INSURANCE PROGRAMS**

All other settlements reached in executive branch bargaining for the duration of this contract period with respect to health insurance, life insurance and dental insurance shall be applicable to the Judicial Unit, including, but not limited to, co-pays and contributions.

**ARTICLE 19  
REDUCTIONS IN FORCE**

1. Initiation of a Reduction in Force (Layoff) – inadequate funding, changes in statutory mandate or judicial goals, reorganization, improved technology, or a lack of work may cause a reduction in the Judicial Branch's work force. When any of these situations occur, the Court Administrator shall establish a plan to accomplish the reduction in force. The plan shall designate positions, classes of positions, or programs within the Judiciary to be transferred, abolished or vacated by layoff. Once the plan is approved, employees in positions designated for transfer or reduction in force shall be given a twenty business day notice.

2. Status of Employees -

For purpose of a layoff, Judicial Branch employees shall be categorized into the following groups:

- (a) Permanent Status Employees - Those employees who have successfully completed their original probationary with the Judicial Branch.

- (b) Probationary Status Employees - Those employees who are currently in their original probationary period with the Judicial Branch.

(c ) Limited-Service Employees - Those employees, including employees who voluntarily accept a promotion, transfer, or demotion from a permanent position to a limited-service position. An employee with limited status in a limited service position has rights under this article with three (3) or more years of prior service as a Permanent status classified employee or after three (3) consecutive years in one (1) or more limited service position(s), or any combination of three (3) years in permanent status and limited service.

(c) Temporary Employees - Those employees paid on the state payroll but not entitled to state employee employment benefits.

### 3. Programs of the Judicial Branch -

For the purpose of a layoff under this Agreement, the Judiciary is divided into the following programs:

(a) Supreme Court

(b) Court Administrator's Office and Associated Boards

(c) Trial Courts

In addition, each program is subdivided by geography based on county boundaries.

### 4. Seniority -

An employee's seniority shall be determined solely by eligible Judicial Branch service. Eligible Judicial Branch service shall include the following:

(a) All time served continuously in the Judiciary as a permanent, probationary, limited service or temporary employee.

(b) Any period of "leave of absence without pay" shall be deducted when computing time for seniority except for a "leave of absence without pay" due to a military service obligation as permitted in this Agreement.

(c) In computing eligible time for seniority, employees who now work or previously worked less than a full-time work schedule at any time during the eligible period of employment shall be credited for time actually worked. (For example: An employee who worked one half time for 2 years would receive one year credit toward seniority.)

(d) An employee eligible for veteran's preference under this policy shall have seniority over an employee who is not eligible for veteran's preference where a calculation of seniority between the employees is equal.

5. Reduction in Force Notice – when a reduction in force plan has been established, the Court Administrator shall send a notice by certified mail return receipt requested to employees whose positions are to be eliminated or transferred. The notice shall contain the effective date of the action, an explanation of retention rights, a list of eligible positions for the possible use of retention rights, and a deadline to notify the Court Administrator regarding the election to use retention rights.

6. Reduction in Force Procedures -

An employee designated for layoff due to the employee's position being abolished or transferred may exercise retention rights. Retention rights shall be exercised in the following manner:

- (a) No employee may exercise retention rights over any employee who has greater seniority regardless of class or pay grade.
- (b) An employee designated for layoff or transfer who has seniority shall exercise retention rights on the least senior employee in the same position class in the program and the geographic area to which the employee's position is assigned.
- (c) If there are no employees on which to exercise retention rights under b., a senior employee may exercise retention rights over any employee who has less seniority in a position within the same program and geographic area where the position's pay grade is equal or not more than five (5) pay grades lower, as long as the employee meets the minimum qualifications of the "new" position.
- (d) If there are no employees on which to exercise retention rights under c., a senior employee may exercise retention rights on any employee with less seniority in the same program statewide in a position with an equal or lower pay grade as long as the employee meets the minimum qualifications of the "new" position.
- (e) An employee designated for layoff or transfer shall receive as part of their notice a list of positions on which the employee may exercise retention rights. Within 3 business days of receipt of the notice of layoff, the employee must notify the Court Administrator of the employee's intent to exercise their rights of retention and at that time must designate the position on which they wish to exercise their rights.

## 7. Demotion in Lieu of Layoff or Transfer -

A permanent status employee designated for layoff or transfer may request to be demoted rather than laid off or transferred. If the employee requests demotion, the employee shall be entitled to be reassigned to a vacant position in a position class which has an equal or lower pay grade equivalent and is in the same location or program, as long as the employee scheduled to be laid off meets the minimum qualifications and testing requirements of the position in the equal or lower position class. An employee must request this option within three business days after receiving notice of layoff or transfer. The notice of layoff shall inform the employee when the demotion option is available. An employee demoted under this section shall be paid in accordance with the provisions of this Agreement relating to Re-Employment.

## 8. Reduction in Force (RIF) Rights -

An employee who was laid off because of a RIF shall have certain rights for thirty days prior to the effective date of layoff and for two years after the effective day of the layoff.

- (a) The employee has mandatory re-employment rights to any position at the same or lower pay grade which becomes vacant in the geographic location and program from which the employee was laid off while RIF rights are in force. The Court Administrator must notify the employee. The employee must meet the minimum qualifications of the position to exercise this right.
- (b) If an employee refuses or waives three offers of re-employment, mandatory re-employment rights pursuant to subsection "a)" above, shall be terminated.
- (c) An employee who is rehired after a layoff, shall be paid in accordance with Article 16 Section 2(b)iii hereof entitled Re-employment. The employee will have any unused sick leave credits at the time of layoff restored. The employee will be considered to have been continuously employed except that the period during which the employee was laid off will not count toward seniority.
- (d) An employee must accept an offer of re-employment in writing within five days. Failure to accept an offer within five days shall be considered a waiver of re employment rights to that position. An employee accepting an offer must begin work within three weeks of the date of acceptance.
- (e) An employee who is laid off shall be paid for any annual leave or earned compensatory time at the employee's prevailing straight time rate.



- (f) If two or more employees who were laid off are eligible for mandatory re-employment, the employee with greater seniority shall be re-employed first.

## **ARTICLE 20 EMPLOYEE WORK WEEK**

### **1. Hours of Personnel Staffing –**

In order to serve the public effectively, it is expected that all full time courts and offices be open to the public during the hours from 8:00 A.M. to 4:30 P.M. Courts, especially those with two or more employees in the clerk's or register's office, are expected to be open during the noon hour for the convenience of the public, unless otherwise authorized by the Court Administrator. All courts and offices should post their hours of operation prominently.

### **2. Employee Work Week -**

The Vermont General Assembly has established 40 (forty) hours to be the standard full time state employee work week. Covered employees shall be assigned a forty (40) hour per week work schedule so as to ensure courts and offices are appropriately open for Judicial Branch business.

## **ARTICLE 21 OBSERVANCE OF HOLIDAYS**

### **Holidays –**

#### **(a) Observances of Holidays**

- i. The following holidays shall be observed by Judicial Offices:

**New Year's Day** January 1

**Martin Luther King Jr. Day** Third Monday in January

**Presidents' Day** Third Monday in February

**Town Meeting Day** First Tuesday in March

**Memorial Day** Last Monday in May

**Juneteenth** June 19

**Independence Day** July 4

**Bennington Battle Day** August 16

**Labor Day** First Monday in September

**Indigenous Peoples' Day** Second Monday in October

**Veterans Day** November 11

**Thanksgiving Day** Fourth Thursday in November

**Day After Thanksgiving**

**Christmas Day** December 25

- ii. Any holiday which falls on a Saturday shall be observed on the preceding Friday. Any holiday which falls on a Sunday shall be observed on the following Monday.
- iii. The Chief Justice may declare other days as administrative holidays in addition to those holidays designated Judicial Branch offices shall close on such a day except for those operations which must maintain essential services.

(b) Compensation for holidays –

- i. A permanent employee, including a permanent part-time employee, who is normally scheduled to work on the day a holiday falls shall receive the regular pay as if the day had been a workday. A permanent employee, including a permanent part-time employee, who is not scheduled to work on the day on which a holiday falls shall receive holiday compensation proportional to the number of hours they is regularly scheduled to work during the pay period (for example, an employee who works half, or 50% of the time but does not work on Thursdays would receive half a day's pay for the Thanksgiving holiday; an employee who works four days a week, or 80% of the time, but does not work Mondays, would receive 80% of a day's pay for Monday holidays).
- ii. The effective date of a permanent employee's separation from Judicial Branch service shall be the last workday of actual performance on the job. If it is a calendar day immediately preceding a day observed as a holiday, the effective date of separation shall be the workday observed as a holiday.
- iii. Permanent employees shall receive their regular compensation for holidays.
  - A. Permanent employees required to work on New Year's Day, Presidents' Day, Memorial Day, Juneteenth, Independence Day,

Labor Day, Indigenous Peoples' Day, Veterans Day, Thanksgiving Day, or Christmas shall be paid their normal holiday compensation plus one and one-half times their normal hourly rate for each hour worked.

- B. Permanent employees required to work on Town Meeting Day, Bennington Battle Day or any administrative holiday declared by the Chief Justice shall be paid their normal holiday compensation plus their normal hourly rate for each hour worked.
  - C. Permanent employees required to work on the Day After Thanksgiving shall receive their normal day's pay plus compensatory time off on an hour for hour basis for each hour worked. An employee whose regularly scheduled day off is Friday and does not work on the Day After Thanksgiving shall receive compensatory time off instead of normal holiday compensation.
  - D. Work on Martin Luther King Jr. Day shall be compensated in the same manner as set forth in the Non-Management Unit Agreement between the VSEA and the State of Vermont.
  - E. After hours RFA work on a holiday or administrative holiday shall be compensated at time and one-half rates.
- iv. An employee who is off payroll due to disciplinary suspension or is absent without authorization on the scheduled workday or any portion thereof immediately prior to or the next workday following the day observed as a holiday and who does not work on such holiday shall not be eligible for holiday compensation. An employee who is off payroll for any other reason the day before or after a day observed as a holiday shall be eligible to receive holiday compensation.

## **ARTICLE 22 ANNUAL LEAVE**

### **Annual Leave -**

Consistent with the workload requirements of the Judicial Branch, a permanent employee may accrue and use annual leave so the employee may have periods of rest and relaxation from the job for health and well-being. Employees are encouraged to request annual leave in blocks of time sufficient to ensure rest and relaxation. However, annual leave may also be taken in brief amounts for the personal convenience of the employee.

#### **(a) Accrual of Annual Leave Credits**

- i. Annual leave credits are not accumulated and may not be used during the first six months of employment for an employee in an original probationary period. However, an employee who has completed an original probationary period in state government will be allowed to accumulate annual leave credits upon employment in the Judicial Branch.
- ii. A permanent full-time employee accrues annual leave as follows:
  - A. A permanent employee shall be credited with six days, or 48 hours, of annual leave upon completion of the employee's first six months of service.
  - B. A permanent employee with more than six (6) months but fewer than five (5) years of full-time service shall accrue annual leave at the rate of one day per completed calendar month of service, or 3.69 hours per biweekly pay period as of 7/7/96. Total accumulation may not exceed thirty (30) workdays, or 240 hours.
  - C. A permanent employee with five (5) or more but fewer than ten (10) years of full-time service shall accrue annual leave at the rate of one and one-quarter days per calendar month of service, or 4.62 hours per biweekly pay period as of 7/7/96. Total accumulation may not exceed thirty-five (35) workdays, or 280 hours.
  - D. A permanent employee with ten (10) or more years but fewer than fifteen (15) years of full-time service shall accrue annual leave at the rate of one and one-half days per calendar month of service, or 5.54 hours per biweekly pay period beginning 7/7/96. Total accumulation may not exceed forty (40) workdays, or 320 hours.
  - E. A permanent employee with fifteen (15) or more years but fewer than twenty (20) years of full-time service shall accrue annual leave at the rate of one and two-thirds days per calendar month of service, or 6.13 hours per biweekly pay period beginning 7/7/96. Total accumulation may not exceed forty-two and one-half (42.5) workdays, or 340 hours.
  - F. A permanent employee with twenty (20) or more years, but fewer than thirty (30) years of full-time service shall accrue annual leave at the rate of one and three-quarters day per calendar month of service, or 6.46 hours per biweekly pay period beginning 7/7/96. Total accumulation may not exceed forty-five (45) workdays, or 360 hours.

- G. A permanent employee with thirty (30) or more years of full-time service shall accrue annual leave at the rate of two days per calendar month of service, or 7.38 hours per biweekly pay period beginning 7/7/96. Total accumulation may not exceed forty-five (45) workdays, or 360 hours.
- iii. A permanent part-time employee earns leave on a prorated basis for their regularly assigned hours. For example, an employee with fewer than five years of service who works a half-time schedule earns one-half day of annual leave per month, or 1.85 hours per biweekly pay period beginning 7/7/96; if the employee worked 32 hours or four full days a week, four-fifths day per month, or 2.95 hours per biweekly pay period beginning 7/7/96 would be earned.
  - iv. Except in the instances of reduction in force, direct hire from another branch of state government or for an employee who left state service in good standing within two years of the rehire date (restored employee), an employee rehired by the Judicial Branch shall not receive credit for prior state service in establishing the employee's rate of annual leave accrual. An employee re-employed after layoff by the Judicial Branch or a restored employee shall receive credit for prior permanent Judicial Branch and state employment in establishing the employee's rate of annual leave accrual. For these employees, credit for prior permanent Judicial Branch and state government service is limited to the last period of continuous state service. An employee with multiple service breaks shall be eligible to have all prior Judicial and State service re-accredited provided that the length of the service break was less than 2 years and all prior service had been restored during the previous employment period. A written request, together with verification of prior service and its restoration must be submitted to the Court Administrator's Office within sixty (60) days of hire. The employee shall not, however, accrue leave credits for the period during which the employee was not on the payroll.
  - v. Time spent on leave of absence without pay shall not be counted in determining rates of annual leave accrual.
  - vi. Upon satisfactory completion of the first six months of employment as a permanent employee, annual leave shall be earned on the basis of a completed pay period of service. A permanent employee shall not be penalized annual leave credit for any pay period during which the employee is off payroll for 20 hours or less. However, an employee who is off payroll for more than 20 hours during a pay period shall not accrue annual leave for that pay period. This test shall also apply to the

accumulated annual leave credited to the employee's account upon completion of the first six (6) months of employment. For example, an employee who was off payroll for more than 20 hours during one pay period of the first six (6) months of employment would be credited with only five and a half (5.5) days of leave upon completion of probation. If the same employee was off payroll for more than 20 hours during the two different pay periods during the first six (6) months of employment, the employee would only be credited with five (5) days.

- vii. An employee rehired after layoff, or a restored employee shall accrue annual leave upon completion of the first calendar month of service.

(b) Use of Annual Leave Credits

- i. Annual leave credits shall not be advanced for use prior to being earned.
- ii. A permanent employee granted a leave of absence without pay may use accumulated annual leave before entering upon leave of absence status, or the employee may request that it be retained on account until the employee returns to active duty.
- iii. Vacation scheduling is the exclusive prerogative of the supervisor. Leave must be requested in advance by the employee and is subject to approval by the supervisor. The supervisor shall not unreasonably withhold approval of the use of annual leave.
- iv. An employee shall not be charged annual leave for absence on a holiday or an administrative holiday.
- v. Annual leave accrued by an employee separating from Judicial Branch service shall be paid as a lump sum with the final payment for active service. A separating employee who has been in an "on payroll" status for all of the employee's scheduled workdays during the final calendar month of employment, shall be entitled to annual leave accrual for that month.
- vi. Employees will be charged for annual leave if there is insufficient accumulated compensatory time when they are unable to report or are delayed for work due to weather conditions, impassable roads or other emergency situations. Employees may be allowed to make up missed time within the same pay period at the supervisor's discretion. This provision will not apply to employees who are assigned to work at locations other than their home station.

- vii. The supervisor may authorize the use of annual leave on the same day of request. The employee must request use of annual leave within the first hour of work. The granting of the use of annual leave in this manner is totally at the discretion of the supervisor.
- viii. The supervisor may retroactively authorize the use of annual leave if the employee did not obtain proper authorization and the circumstances so warrant.

(c) Responsibilities

- i. The employee shall:
  - A. Make a timely request for the use of annual leave and receive prior approval for the use of annual leave for vacation or personal convenience.
  - B. Notify the supervisor within the first hour of work, if possible, if the employee is unable to report or will be delayed for work due to weather conditions, impassable roads, or other emergency situations.
- ii. The supervisor shall:
  - A. Make a reasonable effort to schedule vacations in accordance with the wishes of employees consistent with the needs of the court.
  - B. Establish reasonable procedures for requesting use of annual leave.
  - C. Report the use of annual leave to the Court Administrator's Office in accordance with the provisions of this section and the instructions from the Court Administrator's Office.

**ARTICLE 23**  
**SICK LEAVE**

1. Sick Leave - It is the policy of the Judicial Branch to help protect the income of permanent employees when they cannot work due to illness, injury or incapacity for emergency periods when the employee must be absent from duty due to death or illness in their immediate family. Sick leave shall be administered in accordance with the following provisions:

- (a) Accrual of Sick Leave Credit

- i. A permanent full-time employee shall receive sick leave credit as follows:
  - A. Upon appointment (original or restoration), the employee shall be credited with six (6) sick leave days, or 48 hours, which may be drawn upon during the first six (6) months of service.
  - B. At the end of the first pay period following the completion of six months of service and at the end of every pay period thereafter, the employee shall be credited with sick leave.
  - C. An employee with fewer than five (5) years of service shall accrue sick leave at the rate of one (1) workday per calendar month, or 3.69 hours per biweekly pay period beginning 7/7/96.
  - D. An employee with five (5) or more but fewer than ten (10) years of service shall accrue sick leave at the rate of one and one-quarter workdays per calendar month, or 4.62 hours per biweekly pay period beginning 7/7/96.
  - E. An employee with ten (10) or more but fewer than twenty (20) years of service shall accrue sick leave at the rate of one and one-half workdays per calendar month, or 5.54 hours per biweekly pay period beginning 7/7/96.
  - F. An employee with twenty (20) or more years of service shall accrue sick leave at the rate of one and three-fourths workdays per calendar month, or 6.46 hours per biweekly pay period beginning 7/7/96.
  - G. There shall be no limit placed on the total accumulation of earned sick leave days.
- ii. A permanent part time employee earns leave on a prorated basis for their regularly assigned hours. For example, a part time employee who works a half time schedule earns one-half of the regular accrual per pay period of sick leave; if the employee works four (4) days a week, the employee earns four fifths of the regular accrual per pay period of sick leave.
- iii. When a permanent employee separates from state service, the entire amount of unused sick leave shall lapse. An employee rehired by the state shall not receive credit for prior state service



in establishing the rate of sick leave accrual, except in the instance of separation due to reduction in force, direct hire from another branch of state government or an employee who is restored to state service. A restored employee is one who is eligible for salary restoration under the terms of this Agreement. A restored employee or employee re-employed after separation due to reduction in force shall receive credit for prior state service in establishing the rate of sick leave accrual. An employee re-employed after separation due to reduction in force shall be credited with the amount of unused sick leave credit at the time of the employee's layoff. Credit for prior state service is limited to the approved service credit determined under the terms of this Agreement. The employee shall not, however, accrue sick leave credits for the period during which the employee was separated from state service.

- iv. Time spent on leave of absence without pay shall not be counted in determining the rates of sick leave accrual.
- v. Sick leave benefits may not be used by an employee prior to being credited to the employee's account.
- vi. Upon satisfactory completion of the first six (6) months of employment as a permanent employee, sick leave shall be granted on the basis of completed calendar months of service. A permanent employee shall not be penalized sick leave credit for any pay period during which the employee is off payroll less than or equal to 20 hours. However, an employee who is off payroll for more than 20 hours during a pay period shall not accrue sick leave for that pay period.

(b) Use of Sick Leave

- i. The use of earned sick leave credits shall be authorized by the supervisor for employees who are absent from work and unable to perform their duties because of illness, injury, or quarantine for contagious disease. Employees may request in advance the use of sick leave credits for the employee's and the employee's dependents' medical or dental appointments which cannot reasonably be made outside the employee's normal working hours. As long as the medical or dental appointments do not interfere with the employee's work assignments, the supervisor shall authorize the use of sick leave credits. The time within a pay period used for sick leave shall not count as time worked for

overtime purposes. The use of sick leave within a pay period shall not affect overtime compensation paid for call in pay. The employee shall notify their supervisor or manager in advance as to the estimated length of time necessary for such medical or dental appointment and shall return to work as quickly as reasonably possible following completion of such appointment. Additionally, an employee who estimates the use of 10 or more consecutive days of sick leave shall, if reasonably possible, notify their supervisor or manager in advance as to the estimated length of such sick leave and shall update the supervisor if the leave will continue longer than the time estimated.

- ii. The use of sick leave credits may be authorized by a supervisor to permit a permanent employee to be absent from duty due to death or illness in the employee's immediate family. The use of sick leave for this purpose shall normally be limited to ten (10) workdays, which should be sufficient time in which to make funeral arrangements and to attend to family matters, or in instance of family illness, to arrange for continued care of the ill family member. In unusual or special circumstances, the Court Administrator or designee may authorize use of additional sick leave credits or allow the use of sick leave for instances where the immediate family is not involved. This provision should not be construed to limit any rights or benefits to which the employee is entitled under the Family Medical Leave Act.
- iii. An employee who has an accumulated sick leave balance shall be authorized its use although recovery and return to duty is impossible. However, periodically, at the request of the Court Administrator, the disability or illness and inability to perform job related duties must be certified to by a licensed physician or osteopath.
- iv. If an employee is unable to work because of pregnancy, miscarriage, abortion or illness resulting there from, they may use accumulated sick leave credits, under the same conditions which apply to other illnesses and disabilities. If the employee wishes to extend their period of absence beyond the time of physical disability for the purpose of child rearing, they may request use of accumulated annual leave, personal leave, compensatory time off, and/or they may request a leave of absence without pay pursuant to sub-section xi. hereof. A leave of absence without pay may also

be requested if the employee does not have sufficient sick leave credit to cover the period of physical disability.

- v. An employee shall notify the supervisor no later than one (1) hour prior to the beginning of the scheduled workday, unless another protocol allowing for less notice has been established by a particular Court Manager, of the employee's inability to report to work due to illness unless the employee is physically unable to do so.
- vi. The supervisor may require the submission of a certificate from a physician or other evidence to justify the approval of sick leave or to ensure the employee is in good health and is able to perform the job without risk to the employee, co-workers, or the public. The Judicial Branch may require an employee to be examined at state expense by a physician chosen by the Judicial Branch to ensure the employee is fit to return to duty or to determine, in the case of an employee still on the job, the employee's fitness for duty.
- vii. An employee who misrepresents a claim for sick leave or shows a pattern of abuse of the use of sick leave shall be subject to disciplinary action including dismissal.
- viii. An employee shall not be charged sick leave for absence on a day observed as a holiday or an administrative holiday.
- ix. If, during a scheduled vacation, an employee becomes ill to the extent that hospitalization is required, the employee's absence from the date of hospitalization may be charged to sick leave rather than annual leave. Similarly, if an employee becomes ill during a vacation and is confined at home or temporary residence for three (3) or more days pursuant to a doctor's order, as evidenced by a doctor's certificate, the period of confinement may be charged to sick leave rather than annual leave.
- x. When a permanent employee is awarded weekly compensation under the provisions of the Worker's Compensation Act or by the State Board on State Employee Benefits, the employee may be granted sick leave, or annual leave when sick leave credits are exhausted, to the extent of the difference between such compensation and the employee's regular weekly rate.

- xi. The supervisor may retroactively authorize the use of sick leave if the employee did not obtain proper approval and when the circumstances so warrant.
- xii. Use of Sick Leave – no employee who is out as a result of being on off-payroll status shall be allowed to return to work earlier than scheduled with the Judiciary if the effect of such early return would be to cause the Judiciary to be obligated to pay for two individuals doing the same job, provided however that any such employee shall provide the Judiciary a minimum of two weeks advance notice of the desire to return to work earlier than scheduled and shall be granted permission to do so in all other circumstances.

(c) Sick Leave Banks

- i. An employee who is unable to perform their duties because of an extended, non-job-related, illness or injury of more than ten (10) work days duration, and who has exhausted all accrued sick leave may be allowed to borrow up to ten (10) days of future sick leave accrual, with the approval of the Court Administrator or designee. Prior to borrowing sick leave, the employee must exhaust their own sick leave, the balance of any compensatory time accrued and one half of their accrued personal leave. Employees who borrow sick leave shall not accrue additional sick leave until the negative leave balance has been eliminated. Use of other types of accrued leave shall not be unreasonably denied if an employee with a negative sick leave balance is subsequently unable to perform their duties because of illness or injury. Any loan unpaid at time of termination of employment will be deducted from the employee's final two (2) paychecks. Factors considered when reviewing a request for leave time, including but not limited to: years of service, other leave balances, rate of leave accrual and past leave usage.

- ii. Long Term Disability Sick Leave Bank

- A. Purpose

- The Judicial Branch Long Term Disability (LTD) Sick Leave Bank is established for the benefit of all bargaining unit employees of the judicial Branch who are absent and unable to perform their duties because of a non-job related, long-term illness or disability, and who have, or will, exhaust all

of their sick leave, whether or not the employee has contributed to the bank, or is expected to return to work.

#### B. Eligibility

Bargaining Unit employees of the Judicial Branch who have completed their original probationary period, including both full and part time employees, are eligible to donate to the Judicial Branch LTD Bank and to apply for use of sick leave from the Bank.

#### C. Donating Leave

Non-management personal leave and/or annual leave only may be donated to the Judicial LTD Sick Leave Bank. Employees may donate up to 100% of their personal leave balance, and up to 50% of their annual leave balance; however, employees must retain the equivalent at least 10 days of annual leave (normally 80 hours).

The Judicial Branch LTD Sick Leave Bank is operated on a continuing basis, and an employee may donate leave at any time. There will be at least one formal donation drive each year and additional donation drives may be conducted as needed.

#### D. Application Process

Employees may apply to the Court Administrator for use of leave from the LTD Sick Leave Bank via applications which shall be available through the Human Resources Manager at the Court Administrator's Office. Employees applying for use of sick leave from the LTD Bank should apply as soon as they have information about the illness, including specific information as to the nature and duration of the illness or disability, and any medical certification that may be available (i.e. information from a health care provider regarding the diagnosis and/or prognosis). If for any reason the employee cannot disclose the nature of the illness or disability when completing the application for leave from the bank, the employee should contact the Human Resources Manager at the Court Administrator's Office.

Completed applications should be returned to the Human Resources Manager at the Court Administrator's Office, who

will forward it to the Court Administrator for a decision. If approved, a memorandum of approval will be sent to the Payroll Division authorizing the use of the additional sick time.

#### E. Criteria for Applying to the LTD Bank

A long-term disability is defined as a physical or mental condition causing the employee to be unable to perform their duties and resulting in their absence from work for more than 30 continuous calendar days. The applicant must have previously exhausted all of their sick leave or anticipate exhausting their remaining balance during the absence. The applicant must also have previously borrowed the authorized ten (10) days of future sick leave accrual before becoming eligible to access the Long-Term Disability Sick Leave Bank.

Requests are limited to a maximum of 13 weeks, although employees are not limited to one request. Employees are not required to pay back any leave granted from the Sick Leave Bank that they have used. However, employees are required to give back any unused sick leave that has been granted.

Factors considered when reviewing a request for leave time, including but not limited to: years of service, other leave balances, rate of leave accrual, past leave usage and the balance available in the bank.

#### F. Confidentiality

The Court Administrator has the right to request specific information relating to the nature and duration of the illness or disability. This information will be kept confidential.

#### G. Procedure for Confidentiality

No information will be placed in the Employee Personnel File, and there will be no computer records regarding requests for sick leave from the Bank. All information will be kept by the Human Resources Manager in a Sick Bank File and will be destroyed after a two-year period.

The Sick Leave Bank is administered solely by the Human Resources Manager and the decision-making authority rests solely with the Court Administrator. However, the Judiciary Unit Chair shall be advised on a quarterly basis concerning the status of the Bank and any decisions made with respect to requests during the preceding quarter. The Court Administrator and Human Resources Manager shall keep all information including names confidential.

(d) Responsibilities

- i. The employee shall:
  - A. Give the supervisor advance notice of absence due to illness if the employee has advance knowledge of the inability to perform the essential functions of the position.
  - B. In other instances, notify the supervisor no later than one (1) hour before the beginning of the scheduled workday, if possible, of the employee's inability to report to work unless the work site manager has a protocol allowing less notice.
    - 1) Notify the supervisor as soon as possible when time off from work is necessitated by a family emergency.
    - 2) Obtain a doctor's certificate if requested by the supervisor.
- ii. In case of a paid or unpaid medical leave of absence the supervisor shall:
  - A. In the instance of extended illness, keep informed as to the employee's ability to perform the essential functions of the position and anticipated date of return to work.
  - B. Ensure that sick leave is not misused, and if necessary, require submission of a doctor's certificate as to the necessity for the leave.

(e) Medical Expenses

If, in the performance of duty, an employee is exposed to contagious diseases or to persons who have contagious diseases, or to hazardous materials or chemicals, or is expected to be so exposed, the state will authorize and provide for the necessary medical examinations, inoculations or both at no cost to the employee.

**ARTICLE 24  
OTHER LEAVE**

**1. Personal Leave –**

**(a) Non-management Employees**

- i. Commencing with the first payroll period in July 2026, covered employees shall be entitled to personal leave days as prescribed in this subsection (a)(i). **Accrual**
  - A. Employees who have fewer than five (5) years of continuous state service on any July 1 shall be credited with five (5) days of personal leave to use during each fiscal year.
  - B. Employees with at least five (5) but fewer than ten (10) years of continuous state service on any July 1 shall be credited with six (6) days of personal leave to use during each fiscal year.
  - C. Employees with at least ten (10) but fewer than fifteen (15) years of continuous state service on any July 1 shall be credited with seven (7) days of personal leave to use during each fiscal year.
  - D. Employees with fifteen (15) or more years of continuous state service on any July 1 shall be credited with nine (9) days of personal leave to use during each fiscal year.
- ii. **Use of Personal Leave**

Personal leave shall be taken by the employee at times mutually agreed upon by the employee and the supervisor. Unused personal leave is not compensable in cash, shall not be convertible to other forms of leave, and shall not be accumulated from year to year. The use of personal leave may be authorized retroactively by the supervisor if the employee did not obtain proper authorization and the circumstances so warrant.

**2. Military Leave –**

**(a) Active Duty for Training**

- i. A permanent employee entering the Armed Forces for active duty for training shall be granted a leave of absence without pay for the period of the active duty for training and for training for the



employee's military occupational specialty. The employee shall be reinstated to the position provided that:

- A. The employee satisfactorily fulfilled the military assignment, and;
  - B. The employee indicated the desire to return to the position upon completion of the active-duty training.
- ii. A permanent employee returning to work following leave of absence for active duty for training shall be compensated at an amount at least equivalent to the base salary the employee was receiving at the time of departure. A returning employee shall be granted any salary adjustment to which the employee would have been entitled. The employee shall not be entitled to merit increases except as the guidelines relating thereto shall provide and will not be eligible for the end of probation salary increase until the full probationary period is served.
  - iii. A permanent employee on leave of absence for active duty for training who returns to state employment in accordance with the conditions outlined above shall have that time counted in computing the total years' service for purposes of determining the rate of annual and sick leave accrual and reduction in force rights. However, the employee shall not accrue those leave credits during the period of leave of absence.
  - iv. A permanent employee on leave of absence for active duty for training may receive service credits in the retirement system by special action of the Retirement Board.
  - v. A permanent employee on leave of absence for active duty for training may, at the employee's option, receive cash payment for accrued annual leave upon the commencement of employee's absence. Sick leave credits shall be retained in the employee's account upon the employee's return to active employment.

(b) Annual Training

A permanent employee who is a member of the Organized Reserve or National Guard shall be allowed military leave with pay at the rate of the employee's minimum compensation for annual training scheduled by military authority in any Federal Training Year - October 1 to September 30 up to a maximum of eleven (11) workdays. A permanent employee who has more than eleven (11) days of field training scheduled in one

Federal Training Year shall be entitled to leave without pay for those days in excess of eleven (11), and shall be placed in an off payroll status, unless the employee elects to use accumulated annual leave, compensatory time, or personal leave credits for the period of absence. A permanent part-time employee shall be granted military leave with pay on a prorated basis.

(c) Miscellaneous Military Obligations

- i. A permanent employee ordered to take a selective service pre-induction physical examination shall be granted leave with full pay for time necessarily absent for the examination.
- ii. A member of the National Guard ordered to duty by the Governor for emergency or other reasons shall receive military pay differential in lieu of the employee's minimum biweekly compensation prorated for each workday involved.

(d) Inactive Duty Training

An employee shall not be granted leave with pay for any scheduled weekly or monthly training activities nor the "equivalent training" scheduled for the convenience of the employee. However, an employee whose work schedule conflicts with scheduled drills (for example, an employee whose regular work schedule includes Sunday) shall be granted time off either without pay or by use of the employee's annual leave credits, to satisfy military obligations.

(e) Responsibilities

Each employee shall notify the supervisor as soon as possible of scheduled military obligations and give a copy of the employee's military orders to the supervisor.

3. Court and Jury Duty –

It is the policy of the Judicial Branch to encourage employees to recognize and perform civic responsibilities.

An employee summoned as a witness in court or selected for jury duty shall be excused from work to perform that duty when the employee furnishes to the supervisor timely notice of subpoena or summons. It is the obligation of the employee to notify the supervisor as soon as the employee is notified of the appearance date.

(a) Job Related Court Appearances

Attendance at court in connection with an employee's official duties or where the state is a party to the case, shall not be considered absent from work. When an employee appears in court as a witness in connection with official duties, the employee shall be entitled to reimbursement of travel expenses in the same manner as the employee is reimbursed during the normal course of employment. The employee shall not be entitled to witness fees or witness travel expense reimbursement.

**(b) Non-Job-Related Court Appearances**

An employee who has been absent from work because of jury duty shall be considered to have worked for the time spent on jury duty and shall receive normal compensation for the time of service. Employees do not have to use accrued leave for this purpose. The employee shall be entitled to receive reimbursement for mileage at the rate established for state employees. An employee who requests annual leave, personal leave, or compensatory time off, to appear voluntarily as a party or as a witness in a civil or criminal action shall be granted time off to the extent that the employee has accrued such leave time.

**4. Arrangement for Death in Immediate Family -**

Employees who experience a death in their immediate family, as defined by this Agreement, will be granted five (5) days paid time off. The employee must notify their supervisor as soon as practicable and be approved for this leave before taking it. Employees who are approved for this leave will use the VTHR payroll code 'Paid Not Worked' (PDNW), or similar code to be designated by Human Resources. Such time must be used within 180 days of the passing.

**5. All Employees leave balances shall be made available in a confidential employee-facing payroll portal when practicable.**

**ARTICLE 25  
OFF PAYROLL AND OTHER LEAVES OF ABSENCE**

**Off Payroll and Other Leaves of Absence**

**i. Other leaves of absence**

- A. To permit an employee to accept temporary assignment with another unit of government in accordance with the provisions of the Federal Intergovernmental Personnel Act; or**

B. Any other justifiable reason at the request of the employee and with the concurrence of the Court Administrator.

1) General provisions governing leaves of absence

Unless specifically provided for elsewhere, the following provisions shall apply to all leaves granted under this section.

2) Serious illness as defined in Article 35.

3) An employee shall not be granted a leave of absence to accept a temporary or permanent position or to enter into a contractual agreement. The Court Administrator may waive this provision when it is in the best interest of the Judicial Branch.

4) An employee granted a leave of absence without pay shall not receive annual and sick leave credits for the period of absence, nor shall that time be counted in determining the rate of annual and sick leave accrual or for other compensation or employee fringe benefits that are based on length of service. The employee shall maintain their insurance during this leave of absence by paying the entire premium during the leave except in the instance of a medical leave of absence where the Judiciary will continue to pay the Judiciary's share of the health insurance premium. In the case of leaves of absence for family or parental leave, the employee will only be responsible for the employee's share of the benefits.

5) All leaves of absence must be approved in advance and must be for a definite period of time with an established date for return to duty. All requests for a leave of absence must be made in writing and approved in writing by the Court Administrator or designee. The Court Administrator or designee shall notify the employee of the decision within ten (10) business days of the request receipt. The employee or the employee's designee shall provide reasonable notice to the Court Administrator's Office of the need to extend leave.

6) The Court Administrator may grant a leave of absence for a period of more than ten (10) days up to twelve (12) months (see Off-Payroll status below) and may extend the leave of absence under the same conditions not to exceed an

aggregate of eighteen (18) months in any five-year period of employment. However, an employee injured on the job and eligible for benefits under Worker's Compensation or from the Judiciary Board on Judiciary Employee Benefits may be granted leave for up to two years in a five-year period.

- 7) An employee granted leave in accordance with the provisions of the Federal Intergovernmental Personnel Act shall be granted leave for a two-year period which may be extended for an additional two years. In the event a conflict arises between the provisions of this policy and the Intergovernmental Personnel Act, the provisions of the Act shall prevail.
- 8) If an administrative leave of absence without pay is granted, the Human Resources Manager at the Court Administrator's Office shall contact the employee to give information concerning the continuation of benefits (i.e. medical, dental, etc.) for the duration of the leave of absence.
- 9) An employee who fails to return from a leave of absence on the scheduled return date shall be considered "absent without leave" and shall be subject to disciplinary action.
- 10) An employee who fails to return from a leave of absence, paid or unpaid for five (5) consecutive workdays after a leave is terminated, or an employee who is absent from work for five (5) consecutive workdays without calling in shall be considered to have voluntarily quit. This provision does not prevent discipline for absenteeism.
- 11) Upon return from leave taken, an employee shall be offered the same or comparable job at the same level of compensation, employment benefits, seniority or any other term or condition of the employment existing on the day leave began. This shall not apply if, prior to requesting leave, the employee had been given notice or had given notice that the employment would terminate. This shall not apply if the employer can demonstrate by clear and convincing evidence that:
  - A. During the period of leave the employee's job would have been terminated or the employee laid off for

reasons unrelated to the leave or the condition for which the leave was granted; or

- B. The employee performed unique services and hiring a permanent replacement during the leave, after giving reasonable notice to the employee of intent to do so, was the only alternative available to prevent substantial and grievous economic injury to the operation of the Judiciary.

#### (b) Off-Payroll

An employee's supervisor may grant time off payroll for short periods when it is necessary for the employee to be absent from duty, and the employee has no accumulated leave credits. Off-payroll time ordinarily cannot exceed ten consecutive workdays. If an employee anticipates being unable to work for more than ten days, the employee must request a leave of absence under the provisions outlined above.

Covered employees shall be eligible for up to two voluntary off payroll days per contract year without pay upon receiving the approval of their Clerk or designee. Unused off payroll days under this provision shall not accumulate from year to year.

An employee who does not report for work or who is absent from duty during any portion of a workday and who does not have authorization for such absence shall be considered "absent without leave". Any such absence shall be without pay and, in addition, may be grounds for disciplinary action. However, an absence which is not authorized in advance later may be approved and leave granted retroactively if the circumstances warrant.

An employee shall not accrue annual or sick leave credit for any pay period during which the employee is off the payroll for twenty (20) or more hours. An employee who is off payroll on the scheduled workday shall refer to Article 21 in regard to holiday compensation. However, this provision shall not apply to any voluntary and pre-approved off payroll up to two (2) days per calendar year."

#### (c) Civic Duty Leave

Employees who serve as select person, city councilor, alderperson, village trustees, zoning board members, school board members, or board of civil authority members or the functional equivalent thereof may, subject to the operating needs of the Judicial Branch, be granted up to three days off per year without loss of pay for the purpose of conducting official business which cannot

be accomplished outside the normal working hours. The Court Administrator or their designee must approve in advance the use of civic duty leave.

(d) Fire and Rescue Duty

An employee who is a member of a municipal fire department or rescue team reachable within a 30 minute drive from the employee's work location shall, subject to the operating needs of the Judicial Branch, be granted leave without loss of pay or benefits to answer emergency alarms or calls, not drills, within the employee's municipality or outside the employees' municipality as part of a mutual aid call or multiple alarm call or conflagration for which the employee is reasonably available and is called and has so notified the appointing authority to the extent practicable.

(e) Leave of Absence for Political Activity

i. Leave of absence to run for office

Subject to the operating needs of the Judicial Branch, and subject to any conflict of interest or any other legal barrier as may be determined by the Attorney General, and subject to the Hatch Act or any other applicable federal law, leave of absence without pay may be granted to run for any public office at the state, national or local level or to act in any such capacity if elected. Leave under this situation must be specifically approved in advance by the Court Administrator and the Chief Justice. No employee shall be discriminated against under this Section based on the employee's lawful political activity.

(f) Legislative Leave

To the extent authorized by 21 V.S.A. 496, and subject to any conflict of interest or legal barrier as may be determined by the Attorney General, the Hatch Act or any other applicable federal law, state employees shall be entitled to leave of absence in order to serve in the General Assembly. Leave under this situation must be specifically approved in advance by the Court Administrator and the Chief Justice.

(g) Political Activity

An employee shall not use their official authority for the purpose of interfering with or affecting the nomination or election of any candidate for public office. An employee shall not command or solicit in a coercive fashion from any other employee direct or indirect participation in any political activity or enforce or solicit in a coercive fashion contribution for any political party, organization or candidate. An employee shall retain their right to vote and express freely their

opinion on all political subjects. An employee shall not be prohibited from participation in local community activities or from holding public office in the community in which the employee resides, provided that such activity does not conflict with Section 3.01 of the Rules and Regulations for Personnel Administration for the Executive Branch and the Federal Hatch Act.

## **ARTICLE 26 WORK ASSIGNMENTS**

The operating needs of the Judiciary may require the permanent re assignment of an employee to a different work location. If the reassignment is to a regular duty station outside a thirty five (35) mile radius of the employee's current duty station, measured by the shortest route on paved roads that does not include roads that are traditionally closed during the winter, and more than one employee hold the job title in that location, then Judiciary will consider qualified volunteers who possess the special skill or experience which fulfills the Judiciary's needs.

If no suitable volunteer is identified by the Judiciary within ten (10) workdays, the Judiciary will select, at its sole discretion, the qualified employee possessing the special skill or experience which fulfills the Judiciary's needs. The Judiciary will give four (4) week's prior notice of any such permanent re assignment and will try to accommodate those persons who need extra time to make the change or move. The Judiciary will also try to give additional notice of such changes or moves if feasible.

## **ARTICLE 27 PARENTAL LEAVE/FAMILY/MEDICAL LEAVE**

### **1. Policy**

It is the policy of the Judiciary to permit employees reasonable time off to care for dependent children in instances such as illness, birth, or adoption, and in cases of serious illness of a member of an employee's immediate family or for their own serious illness. Leave for such purposes is provided by both federal and state statutes ("statutory leave"). Vermont's Parental and Family Leave Act, 21 V.S.A. §470 *et seq.*, and the Family Medical Leave Act, 29 U.S.C. §2601 *et seq.*, establish the rights and obligations of employees and employers pertaining to such leaves.

The following provisions integrate the basic requirements of the statutes and this collective bargaining agreement ("Agreement"), but do not create a waiver by the Judiciary or by the employees of other rights and/or obligations under law or this Agreement. In the event of any conflict created by the amendment of statute or otherwise, the rights and responsibilities of the Judiciary and employees will be determined by statute, except to the extent that such amendments would diminish the rights to which the employee is entitled under the



terms of this Agreement. No provisions of this Article shall be determined to diminish the entitlement of any employee to unpaid leave under either of the above referenced statutes. Leave taken under this Agreement shall be credited against any such statutory entitlement to the full extent permitted by law.

## 2. Definitions

For purposes of this Article, the following definitions shall apply.

- a) "Eligible Employee" for the purposes of the statutory leaves, means an employee who has worked for the State of Vermont (Executive Branch or Judiciary) for one year and for an average of 30 hours a week. All references to employees in this Article are references to eligible employees.
- b) "Family Member" means:
  - 1. An individual with whom the employee is legally married or a civil union partner.
  - 2. Domestic partner is an individual with whom the employee has an enduring domestic relationship of a spousal nature, provided the employee and the domestic partner:
    - i. Have shared a residence for at least six consecutive months;
    - ii. Are at least 18 years of age;
    - iii. Are not married to or considered a domestic partner of another individual;
    - iv. Are not related by blood closer than would bar marriage under State law; and
    - v. Have agreed between themselves to be responsible for each other's welfare.
  - 3. Child, regardless of age, includes an employee's: biological, adopted, or foster child; stepchild or legal ward; a child of the spouse or civil union or domestic partner; or a child to whom the employee stands in loco parentis, regardless of legal documentation; an individual to whom the employee stood in loco parentis when the individual was under 18 years of age; or any individual for whom the employee provides caregiving responsibilities similar to those of a parent-child relationship.
  - 4. Grandparent, grandchild, or sibling of the employee or their spouse or civil union or domestic partner, regardless of whether the relationship is biological, foster, or step relationship.
  - 5. Parent of an employee or their spouse or civil union or domestic partner includes biological, foster, adoptive, or step relationship.
  - 6. A person who stands in loco parentis for the employee or who stood in loco parentis when the employee or their spouse or civil union or domestic partner was under 18 years of age.
  - 7. A legal guardian of the employee or their spouse or civil union or domestic partner
- c) "Family/Medical and/or Parental Leave" means a leave of absence from employment for any of the following reasons:
  - 1. The serious health condition of an employee or a member of an eligible employee's family;
  - 2. Pregnancy and recovery from childbirth or miscarriage;

3. The birth of a child or initial placement of a child 18 years of age or younger with the employee for the purpose of adoption or foster care and to care for or bond with a child within one year after the child's birth or placement for adoption or foster care;
4. Bereavement due to the death of the individual's family member that occurs not more than one year after the family member's death;
  - a. Safe Leave related to domestic violence, sexual assault, or stalking pursuant to 21 V.S.A. § 470 *et seq.*; or
5. Qualifying exigency when a member of the eligible employees family member is on covered active duty or under an impending call to covered active duty that is related to active duty service by a family member in the U.S. Armed Forces.

### 3. Rights & Responsibilities

Under the state and federal leave laws both the Judiciary and the employee have certain rights and responsibilities.

#### a) Responsibilities and Rights:

- i. An employee is entitled to a total of twelve (12) weeks of unpaid statutory Family/Medical Leave and/or statutory Parental Leave within a twelve (12) month period beginning the first day either Leave is used. The entitlement to these Leaves will be based upon a rolling twelve (12) month period following the first utilization thereof by an eligible employee.

#### b) An employee is also entitled to Short-term Leave as further described below.

1. During the Family/Medical Leave and/or statutory Parental Leave, at the employee's option the employee may use up to twelve (12) weeks of any earned compensatory hours, accrued paid leave, including, but not limited to, sick leave, annual leave or personal leave. . No combination of paid and unpaid leaves shall extend the statutory Family/Medical Leave beyond twelve (12) weeks. The rules regarding the use of sick leave as stated in Article 23 shall be applicable.
2. During any such leave, the Judiciary will continue to pay the employee's benefits at the same level and rate as if the employee were not on leave. After the Leave expires, the Judiciary will return the employee to the same position at the same level of compensation, benefits, seniority and other terms of employment as they existed on the day the leave began unless:
  - i. Prior to an employee requesting leave, the employee had given notice or received notice that employment would terminate; or
  - ii. If the Judiciary can demonstrate by clear and convincing evidence that the employee's position would have terminated or the employee would have been laid off for reasons unrelated to the leave or the condition for which the leave was granted.

3. The employee must provide reasonable notice of intent to take a leave, the date of anticipated commencement and expected duration of the leave, and provide required certification or documentation of the need for leave, or the Judiciary may deny the leave. The employee must provide reasonable advance notice to the Judiciary if the employee wishes to request an extension of the leave, to the extent available. It is the Judiciary's option whether to permit an employee to return to work in advance of the expiration of the leave granted. The Judiciary may require an employee to continue to make their regular contribution to the cost of benefits during the leave. Unless the employee is on leave due to his/her serious health condition or safe leave, the Judiciary has the right to require the refund of any compensation paid during the leave, except for earned accrued paid leave, if the employee does not return to work.
  4. The calculation of the amount of Family/Medical Leave or Parental Leave time used by employees who are employed less than full time or by employees using intermittent leave or reduced schedule leave will be made on a prorate basis consistent with applicable statute.
4. Parental Leave – Adoption, Pregnancy, and Childbirth
- a) A leave of absence without pay shall be granted upon request for up to four (4) months, which includes any statutory Leaves, for employees (either parent) who have requested Parental Leave. Upon request the appointing authority may extend the leave an additional two (2) months. For any approved leave extensions beyond the statutory leaves, this Agreement's administrative leave provisions shall be applicable, including, but not limited to, the requirement that the employee shall pay one hundred percent (100%) of their insurance benefits. Notwithstanding the foregoing, if the approved leave extension results from the employee's serious health condition, this Agreement's medical leave of absence provisions shall be applicable, including the State's commitment to pay a portion of insurance benefits, so long as the employee continues to make required payment of their share of the premium.
  - b) During the initial four (4) months of a leave, at the employee's option, the employee may use the same types of leave as specified under Section 3(a)(2) above. No combination of paid and unpaid leaves shall extend the Parental Leave beyond six (6) months.
  - c) Notwithstanding the above, an employee may use accrued sick leave for the period of disability resulting from pregnancy, miscarriage, abortion, or serious health condition resulting therefrom.
5. FAMILY/MEDICAL Leave – Leave For Serious Health Condition
- a) In the case of serious health condition of an employee or their family member, Family/Medical Leave shall be granted on request and receipt of medical certification of the serious health condition, period of incapacity and the amount of leave time needed for recovery or to care for the family member.

Such Family/Medical Leave shall be unpaid, except as provided in Section 3(a)(2) above.

b) If the Judiciary has sufficient information to determine that an eligible employee or their Family Member has a Serious Medical Condition for which the employee takes leave from work for 5 days, the Judiciary may designate such leave as FMLA/PFLA Leave.

c) No combination of paid and unpaid leaves shall extend the statutory Family/Medical Leave beyond twelve (12) weeks. Notwithstanding the foregoing, even if statutory Family/Medical Leave is exhausted, this Agreement's sick leave, medical leave of absence and/or administrative leave provisions are still applicable and may provide for additional leave consistent with these provisions.

6. Intermittent Leave/Reduced Leave Schedule

An employee who qualifies for Family/Medical Leave and/or statutory Parental Leave may take the leave as intermittent leave or on a reduced schedule when supported by medical certification or other documentation. If an employee is taking Family/Medical Leave and/or statutory Parental Leave due to the serious health condition of a family member, the employee may take intermittent leave or reduced schedule leave to provide care or psychological comfort to the family member. Employees must attempt to schedule the intermittent leave or reduced schedule leave so it does not disrupt the Judiciary's operations. The Judiciary may assign the employee to an alternative position within the same agency/department/work location for which the employee is qualified with equivalent pay and benefits to better accommodate the requested leave. If the Judiciary assigns the employee to an alternative position, once the need for the intermittent or reduced leave schedule is ended, the Judiciary will place the employee in a position which is the same or equivalent to the employee's position at the time the leave began. If the position is an equivalent position it will be within the same agency/department/work location as the employee's position at the time when the leave began.

When an employee is granted Parental Leave after the birth or placement of a child, the Judiciary, in its discretion, may grant the employee's request for intermittent leave or reduced schedule leave. However, if the birthing person has a serious health condition in relation to the birth of a newborn then the provisions for intermittent leave/reduced schedule leave for Family/Medical Leave and/or statutory Parental Leave are applicable. If the newborn has a serious health condition, then the provisions for intermittent leave/reduced schedule leave for Family/Medical Leave and/or statutory Parental Leave are applicable to either parent. Prior to the birth of a child, a pregnant employee can take intermittent leave for prenatal exams or for their own serious health condition, (e.g., severe morning sickness, preeclampsia, gestational diabetes, etc.).

7. Bereavement Leave (see also Article 24, Section 4)

- a) An employee may take up to two (2) weeks of the twelve (12) weeks provided

in a twelve (12) month period due to the death of a family member, when supported by documentation. Leave may be taken in relation to the administration or settlement of the deceased family member's estate within one (1) year after the family member's death. At the employee's option, the employee may use the same types of leave as specified under Section 3(a)(2) above. No combination of paid and unpaid leaves shall extend the statutory Parental Leave beyond twelve (12) weeks.

- b) Notwithstanding the above, should an employee exhaust their statutory entitlement of Bereavement Leave, up to ten (10) days of sick leave may be authorized by an appointing authority or the delegated representative to permit a classified employee to be absent from duty due to a death in their immediate family.

#### 8. Short-Term Family Leave

- a) In addition to the Leaves provided above, an employee shall be entitled to take unpaid leave not to exceed four (4) hours in any thirty (30) day period and not to exceed twenty-four (24) hours in a twelve (12) month period. This leave may be taken for any of the following purposes:
  - 1. To participate in preschool or school activities directly related to the academic educational advancement of the employee's family member, such as a parent-teacher conference.
  - 2. To attend or to accompany the employee's family member to routine medical or dental appointments.
  - 3. To accompany the employee's family member to other appointments for professional services related to their care and well-being.
  - 4. To respond to a medical emergency involving the employee's family member.
- b) The Judiciary may require that the leave be taken in a minimum of two (2) hour segments. An employee shall make a reasonable attempt to schedule appointments for which leave may be taken under this section outside of regular work hours. In order to take leave under this section, an employee shall provide the employer with the earliest possible notice, but in no case later than seven (7) days before leave is to be taken except in the case of an emergency. In this subsection, "emergency" means circumstances where the required seven (7) days' notice could have a significant adverse impact on the family member of the employee. At the employee's option, the employee may use the same types of leave as specified under Section 3(a)(2) above.

#### 9. Alleged Crime Victims; Relief From Stalking or Abuse

- a) In addition to the Leaves provided above, an employee who is alleged in an affidavit filed by a law enforcement official with a prosecuting attorney of competent state or federal jurisdiction to have sustained physical, emotional, or financial injury or death as a direct result of the commission or attempted commission of a crime or act of delinquency shall be entitled to take unpaid leave from employment for the purpose of attending a deposition or court proceeding related to:
  - 1. A criminal proceeding, when the employee is an alleged victim and the employee has a right or obligation to appear at the

- proceeding;
  - 2. A relief from abuse hearing pursuant to 15 V.S.A. § 1103, when the employee seeks the order as plaintiff;
  - 3. A hearing concerning an order against stalking or sexual assault pursuant to 12 V.S.A. § 5133, when the employee seeks the order as plaintiff; or
  - 4. A relief from abuse, neglect, or exploitation hearing pursuant to 33 V.S.A. Chapter 69, when the employee is the plaintiff
- b) An alleged victim also includes an employee's family member if the person:
- 1. Is a minor;
  - 2. Has been found to be incompetent;
  - 3. Is alleged to have suffered physical or emotional injury as a result of the violent crime or act of delinquency; or
  - 4. Was killed as a result of the alleged crime or act of delinquency.
- c) As used in this subdivision 9(b):
- 1. "Family member" means an individual who is not identified in the affidavit as the defendant and is the alleged victim's:
    - i. Child, foster child, or stepchild;
    - ii. Ward who lives with the alleged victim;
    - iii. Spouse, domestic partner, or civil union partner;
    - iv. Sibling;
    - v. Grandparent;
    - vi. Grandchild;
    - vii. Parent or a parent of the alleged victim's spouse domestic partner, or civil union partner;
    - viii. Legal guardian; or
    - ix. An individual for whom the alleged victim stands in loco parentis or who stood in loco parentis for the alleged victim when the alleged victim was a child.

At the employee's option, the employee may use the same types of leave as specified under Section 3(a)(2) above. No combination of paid and unpaid leaves shall extend the statutory Family/Medical Leave beyond twelve (12) weeks.

## **ARTICLE 28**

### **BUILDING CLOSING**

1. The Judiciary shall decide when, if and to what extent Court facilities shall remain open or closed due to adverse conditions. Without limitation, adverse conditions include emergencies such as fire, flood or heavy snow. In addition, normal operations may be interrupted by adverse conditions such as: site construction; utility outage; system or equipment failure.
2. The appropriate Judiciary manager shall contact the Court Administrator or their designee if adverse conditions exist which suggest closing is appropriate.
3. In the event that the facility is not closed but an employee, out of concern for personal safety, decides not to report to work or determines it is necessary to leave,

the employee shall provide notice to their supervisor of such absence. Such employee shall have the absence charged against their own leave balance.

4. When conditions at facilities are rapidly changing, employees should remain engaged while management assesses whether conditions merit declaring a closure.

5. Should building closure of no more than 15 days duration be declared by the Court Administrator or their designee, the appropriate manager will provide one of the following directives to employees depending upon local circumstances:

- a. Excuse the onsite employee from work with regular pay. This will occur most frequently when road conditions are deemed unsafe due to bad weather. The manager will instruct the employee on the code to enter into the payroll system.
- b. Employees absent due to authorized paid leave during the period their duty station is closed may also receive regular pay. If onsite employees receive regular pay, those who were on authorized paid leave (annual, personal, sick, compensatory time) should not charge their leave balances for the regularly scheduled work hours they were absent. Instead, they will be instructed by their supervisor to charge time to regular pay.
- c. Allow the employee to Telework from the employee's home residence on a temporary, ad-hoc basis. Such an arrangement does not necessitate the submission of a Judiciary Flex-Work form. Employees may elect not to telework, as prescribed by Appendix C, in which case the Judiciary shall provide an alternate Judicial duty station.
- d. Temporarily reassign the employee to an alternate Judiciary duty station. Mileage shall be reimbursed and travel time shall be within scheduled work hours.
- e. Employees currently engaged in a teleworking arrangement prior to the closing will continue to work as they are unaffected by the building closure provided that their ability to work has not been impeded. If impeded from teleworking, they will receive their regular pay for up to 16 hours, after which the Judiciary shall make alternate arrangements to enable them to perform their job.
- f. Employees expressly assigned by their supervisor to work onsite in the closed building shall receive hourly pay at straight time rates for the hours so worked. This payment will be in addition to the employee's regular pay.

6. Managers will attempt to provide employees with at least two weeks' notice of building closure of more than 15 days' duration and the details of any relocation or telework assignments. In such a case that two weeks' notice is not possible, notice shall be provided as soon as possible, and employees shall be compensated in

accordance with section 5 above until such time as two weeks have elapsed. Following the notification period, the appropriate manager shall provide one of the following directives to employees depending upon local circumstances:

- a. Assign the employee to Telework from the employee's home residence on a temporary, ad-hoc basis. Such an arrangement does not necessitate the submission of a Judiciary Flex-Work form. Employees may elect not to telework, as prescribed by Appendix C, in which case the Judiciary shall provide an alternate Judicial duty station.
- b. Temporarily reassign the employee to an alternate Judiciary duty station. If that station is more than 25 miles, by the shortest route, from their original duty station, mileage and travel time outside their scheduled work hours will be reimbursed.
- c. Employees currently engaged in a teleworking arrangement prior to the closing will continue to work as they are unaffected by the building closure provided that their ability to work has not been impeded. If impeded from teleworking the Judiciary shall make alternate arrangements to enable them to perform their job.
- d. Employees expressly assigned by their supervisor to work onsite in the closed building shall receive hourly pay at straight time rates for the hours so worked. This payment will be in addition to the employee's regular pay.

## **ARTICLE 29 SEPARABILITY**

If any provisions of this contract, or the application of any provisions thereof to any person or circumstance, shall be held invalid by any court of competent jurisdiction, the remainder of this contract, or the application of that provision to persons or circumstances other than those as to which it held invalid, shall not be affected thereby.

## **ARTICLE 30 LABOR MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE**

1. A Judiciary Labor Management committee consisting of not more than four members selected by the VSEA from among the bargaining unit and not more than four members selected by the Judiciary shall meet quarterly, unless otherwise mutually agreed upon, to discuss a mutually agreed agenda which may include methods of improving labor relations, productivity, safety, and health problems of a continuing nature. The Committee shall also consider the development of appropriate employee evaluation forms and other problems which have an impact on conditions of employment; provided, however, these



sessions are not for the purpose of discussing pending grievances or for collective bargaining on any subject.

2. The Labor/Management Committee shall also determine the appropriate appearance of the Judiciary blazers for Court Officers and Court Security & Screening Officers. Court Officers and Court Security & Screening Officers shall receive reimbursement or vouchers for the purchase of two (2) individually tailored blazers upon hire, and one (1) individually tailored blazer for each 2<sup>nd</sup> year thereafter before July 1. Existing practices with regard to the cleaning and maintenance of such blazers shall be continued. The annual sum of \$ 200 per Court Officer/Court Security & Screening Officer shall be allocated for this purpose.
3. The Court Administrator's Office shall comply with VOSHA and other State and Federal statutory safety and health requirements. Complaints over health and safety concerns may be referred to the Statewide Labor-Management Committee. The VSEA will select two (2) representatives to meet for two (2) hours per month with the Security Programs Manager or their designee to discuss safety issues and explore remedies to suggest to the CAO. Both parties will prepare for the meetings by compiling and exchanging agenda items and data before the meeting.
4. This Article is not intended to enlarge or diminish the rights and obligations of the parties as otherwise required by law to engage in collective bargaining, nor to prevent informal meetings between fewer than three representatives of each party.
5. Agreements which result from labor management discussions shall not produce any modifications to the collective bargaining agreement unless signed off by the VSEA's Director(s) and the Court Administrator. Participation in labor-management discussions shall not be construed as a waiver of the right of access to the collective bargaining process over mandatory subjects for collective bargaining.
6. A request to include work related items as agenda items for continuing discussion or recommendation shall be carefully considered and shall not be unreasonably denied.

**ARTICLE 31**  
**DURATION AND PROCEDURE FOR NEGOTIATING**  
**SUCCESSOR AGREEMENT**

The duration of this Agreement shall be from July 1, 2026 to midnight June 30, 2028. The parties agree to meet not later than February 1, 2028 to commence negotiations

concerning the successor agreement to commence July 1, 2028. The provisions of this Agreement shall become effective July 1, 2026, except as otherwise provided herein.

### ***ARTICLE 32 EXPENSES REIMBURSEMENT***

1. All Judiciary employees, when away from home and office on official duties, shall be reimbursed for expenses incurred for lodging, meals and incidentals, at the applicable rate established by the General Services Administration ("GSA") for that location.
2. In state mid-tour meals are not reimbursable expenses, except for lunches after an overnight stay when away from home and official duty station. Judiciary employees participating in meetings, seminars, conventions, training or conference sessions shall be reimbursed meal expenses incurred provided the meal is a necessary part of a prearranged or programmed meeting in which all participants are served from a pre-selected menu with no control over the cost of the meal. "Necessary" means the employee must attend the meal and the employee must pay for the meal. In certain cases, when an in-state lunch is not the mid-tour meal and is otherwise eligible to be reimbursed under this Article, will be reimbursed at the applicable GSA rate for that location.
3. Employees shall be expected to make a reasonable effort to procure lodging and meals with as little expenses as possible while not unreasonably sacrificing personal convenience and comfort.
4. Reimbursement for other work-related expenses not covered above arising from emergency or other unusual circumstances will be made at the discretion of the Judiciary only after application for reimbursement is made by the employee in writing. Such application will include the nature and amount of the expense, the date on which it occurred and full written justification for the reimbursement.
5. When an employee is away from home or workstation, the cost of a dinner may be reimbursed when the employee is eligible to claim lodging or is required to work well beyond the normal dinner hour.

### ***ARTICLE 33 MILEAGE REIMBURSEMENT***

1. For authorized automobile mileage actually and necessarily traveled in the performance of official duties, a Judiciary employee using their own vehicle shall be reimbursed at the rate established by the GSA. The normal commute

distance between an employee's home and their official duty station shall not be deducted from mileage incurred in the course of business.

(a) Prior to the start of the 2018 fiscal year and prior to the start of each fiscal year thereafter, the Judiciary shall identify those bargaining unit employees who, based on their assignments, are likely to exceed 15,377 miles. The Judiciary will assign a state vehicle to these employees. At the time the Judiciary notifies an employee that it is assigning the employee a state vehicle, the employee shall identify any extenuating or unusual circumstances that may affect their utilization of a state vehicle. Based on those circumstances, the Judiciary, at its sole discretion, may opt to waive or raise the mileage expense reimbursement limit, or otherwise address those circumstances.

(b) If the Judiciary notifies a bargaining unit employee in writing that they are likely to exceed that 15,377 mile limit, and if said employee declines an assignment of a state vehicle, then any automobile mileage incurred by a judicial employee using their own vehicle in the performance of official duties in excess of 15,377 miles shall not be reimbursable. A bargaining unit employee who has not been notified by the Judiciary and has not been assigned a state vehicle shall not be subject to the mileage expense reimbursement limit.

(c) An employee who is assigned a state vehicle is expected to utilize that vehicle for the entirety of the fiscal year, absent an emergency or change of assignment.

2. The Labor-Management Committee shall be utilized as a discussion vehicle for exploring the suggestions of both parties concerning energy conservation, reduction of energy costs and appropriate incentives, therefore.

### **ARTICLE 34 WORKPLACE ANTAGONISM**

The Vermont Judiciary endeavors to provide a work environment in which all employees are treated with respect and dignity by each other. Employees are expected to act in a manner which does not unreasonably interfere with another employee's ability to perform their work. If an employee believes that they cannot perform their work because of unreasonable interference caused by another employee's antagonistic, belligerent, and/or malicious acts, the impacted employee is encouraged to communicate directly, either verbally or in writing, with the other employee in an effort to resolve the situation. If the impacted employee is unwilling to communicate directly with the other employee, or if such efforts have failed to

resolve the situation, the impacted employee may attempt to resolve the situation in the following manner:

(a) The impacted employee can request the assistance of a supervisor, a Human Resources Representative, a manager, a VSEA representative, or a VSEA steward to facilitate informal resolution of the situation;

(b) when mutually agreed, the employees can request the assistance of the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) personnel to facilitate an informal resolution of the situation;

(c) when mutually agreed, the employees may request that the Judiciary provide a mediator to assist in resolving the matter.

In attempting to resolve the situation, the parties agree to pursue the above-mentioned remedies in the sequence outlined above. The parties agree that no aspect of the situation, the informal process, including but not limited to the assistance of supervisors, personnel officers, managers, VSEA representatives, stewards and/or Employee Assistance Program (EAP) representatives, or mediator and/or any of their outcomes shall be grievable. This article is not applicable to and does not limit those rights set forth elsewhere in this Contract pertaining to employees who believe they are being harassed on the basis of a legally protected characteristic identified in this Contract, or in State or Federal law, including, but not necessarily limited to race, religion, color, sex, national origin, disability, sexual orientation, or age.

### **ARTICLE 35 DEFINITIONS**

Unless a different meaning is plainly required by the context, the following words and phrases mean:

**ACCESS** - the ability to enter a Judiciary System or application or the act of doing so or attempting to do so, depending on context based on who is the user.

**ADMINISTRATIVE HOLIDAY** – a workday on which the Chief Justice officially closes Judicial Branch offices except those operations which must maintain essential services.

**ALLOCATION** – the determination of the classification of a new position. See also **REALLOCATION**.

**ANNUAL TRAINING** – annual active duty for training limited to a maximum of eleven workdays in a calendar year for a member of an organized reserve or the National Guard.

**ANNUAL LEAVE** – paid authorized absence for vacation or personal convenience.

**APPOINTING AUTHORITY** – the person authorized by statute, or lawfully-delegated authority, to appoint and dismiss employees.

**APPOINTMENT** - the designation of a person as an employee.

**AREA OF RESPONSIBILITY** – a specific region or locale, together with the employees stationed therein, which region and employees are served by a single steward.

**ARMED FORCES** – United States Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Coast Guard, Air Force, and all reserve units, and the National Guard, including the Air National Guard.

**ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI)** - a machine-based system that can, for a given set of human-defined objectives, make predictions, recommendations, or decisions influencing real or virtual environments. AI systems use machine- and human-based inputs to perceive real and virtual environments, abstract such perceptions into models through analysis in an automated manner, and use model inference to formulate options for information or action.

**ASSIGNMENT** – the placing of a new class in pay grade. See also REASSIGNMENT.

**CLASS** – one or more positions sufficiently similar as to the duties performed, degree of supervision exercised or received, minimum requirements of training, experience, or skill, and such other characteristics that the same title, the same test of fitness, and the same pay grade may be applied to each position.

**CLASSIFIED EMPLOYEE** – an employee of the Judiciary who is hired in the classified service.

**CLASSIFICATION PLAN** – the arrangement of positions into separate classes and the ranking of the classes in relative order.

**CLASSIFIED POSITION** – a position in the Judicial Branch which is assigned to a class.

**CONTINUOUS STATE SERVICE** – uninterrupted service by an employee; authorized military leaves, educational leaves and other authorized leaves of absence shall not be an interruption of service.

**CONTROL**- the authority held by the Judiciary to grant or deny access to all its Systems and the Judiciary's power to trace, review, audit, record, access, intercept, monitor, block, restrict, screen, delete, recover, restore, publish, or disclose any information at any time without notice.

**DAYS** – Business days unless otherwise specifically indicated as calendar days.

DEMOTION – As defined in Article 16, §2(g) as the same may be amended from time to time.

DIVISION – A component of the Judicial Branch headed by a Director.

ELECTRONIC/WIRELESS COMMUNICATION DEVICE or ELECTRONIC/WIRELESS DEVICES - include, but are not limited to, smart and/or cellular phones, tablets or any other portable electronic device used to access electronic mail, voice communications and internet service or wireless connection.

EMPLOYEE – as defined in Chapter 28 of T. 3 V.S.A., as the same may be amended from time to time.

ESSENTIAL SERVICES - services which must be continued in order to ensure the safety and welfare of the residents and property of the State and the convenience of the public.

EXAMINATION – all the tests including, but not limited to, written tests, ratings of training and experience, oral boards, performance tests, probationary periods and any authorized extensions thereof.

HOURS ACTUALLY WORKED – (see TIME ACTUALLY WORKED).

IMMEDIATE FAMILY – Shall be the employee's parent, spouse, civil union partner, child, sibling, stepchild, ward of the employee who lives with the employee, foster child, grandparent, grandchild, or spouse's parent, child, sibling, step child, grandparent, and grandchild, foster child, ward who resides with the spouse, or any person residing with the employee.

INFORMATION – data of any kind, used in any way, in Judiciary Systems. Examples include messages, communications, emails, files, records, recordings, transmissions, signals, programs, and macros.

JUDICIARY – the Judicial Branch of the State Government.

JUDICIARY BUSINESS – any activity engaged in for the performance of work on the Judiciary's behalf.

JUDICIARY SYSTEMS or SYSTEMS - all software, hardware, electronic and/or wireless communication devices, interconnections, intranet and technical information related to them. Systems include, but are not limited to, other systems accessed by or through those devices, such as the internet, email, or voice communications. Systems also include, but are not limited to, designs, specifications, Artificial Intelligence, passwords, access codes and encryption codes. Judiciary Systems do not include the Wi-Fi system provided for public use. Judges, Employees, volunteers, and independent

contractors shall not use the public Wi-Fi system provided by the Judiciary for Judiciary Business.

**JURY DUTY** – the day or part of a day when an employee serves as a juror, is examined for jury duty or is required to report to the court as a prospective juror.

**LACK OF WORK** – when (1) there is insufficient funds to permit the continuation of current staffing; or (2) there is not enough work to justify the continuation of current staffing.

**LAY OFF** – the separation of a classified employee due to lack of work or otherwise pursuant to management rights.

**LEAVE OF ABSENCE** – the means by which an employee may be absent from their position without pay for a period of time in excess of ten workdays.

**LIMITED STATUS** – that condition which applies to an employee who has completed an original probationary period and is occupying a limited-service classified position. An employee with limited status is entitled to all the rights and privileges of a permanent status employee except reduction in force and reemployment.

**MILITARY PAY DIFFERENTIAL** – the difference between the employee's base salary received from the State of Vermont and base pay received from the military, if any.

**MINIMUM QUALIFICATIONS** – the lowest level of skills, experience and educational qualifications.

**NORMAL WORKING HOURS** – the hours between the beginning and ending of an employee's regularly scheduled shift.

**PAY GRADE** – one of the established ranges within the total compensation plan for which a minimum and maximum rate is provided. Each class is assigned a pay grade.

**PERMANENT STATUS** – that condition which applies to an employee who has completed an original probationary period and is occupying a permanent classified position.

**POSITION** – a group of current duties and responsibilities normally requiring the full-time or part time employment of only one person.

**ORIGINAL PROBATIONARY PERIOD** – that working test period, normally six months from effective date of appointment, plus any extensions, during which the employee is expected to demonstrate satisfactory performance of job duties.

**PROMOTION** – a change of an employee from a position of one class to a different position of another class assigned to a higher pay grade.

REALLOCATION – change of a position from one class to another class.

REASSIGNMENT – the change of a class from one pay grade to another pay grade.  
See also ASSIGNMENT.

RED-CIRCLED – the freezing of an employee's salary between steps or above the maximum of a pay grade to which an employee is assigned.

REDUCTION IN FORCE – a reduction is the layoff of a classified employee from employment due to lack of work or otherwise pursuant to management right.

REGULAR HOURLY RATE – the amount of money obtained by dividing an employee's basic weekly salary by 40.

RESTORATION – as set forth in Article 16, §2(b)iii of the Agreement as the same may be amended from time to time.

SENIORITY – the length of continuous Judicial Branch Service.

SERIOUS ILLNESS/SERIOUS MEDICAL CONDITION, means one or more of the following, consistent with Vermont's Parental Family Leave Act and the federal Family Medical Leave Act, as they may be amended from time:

(PFLA)

(A) an accident, illness, injury, disease, or physical or mental condition that:

(i) poses imminent danger of death;

(ii) requires inpatient care in a hospital, hospice, or residential medical care facility; or

(iii) requires continuing treatment by a health care provider; or

(B) rehabilitation from an accident, illness, injury, disease, or physical or mental condition described in above including treatment for substance use disorder.

(FMLA)

(C ) an illness, injury, impairment or physical or mental condition that involves inpatient care or continuing treatment by a health care provider.

SICK LEAVE – as set forth in Article 23 of the Agreement, as the same may be amended from time to time.

SPECIFICATION – a written description of the nature, level of responsibilities, required skills, and minimum qualifications for a class.

SYSTEMS - see JUDICIARY SYSTEMS



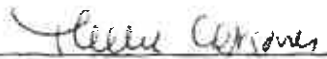
TELEWORK – an arrangement that gives an employee an approved alternative, generally the employee's home, to working at an assigned workspace.

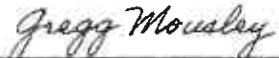
TIME ACTUALLY WORKED – authorized time spent by an employee in the actual performance of assigned job-related duties, or on annual leave, compensatory time off, at a grievance hearing at the request of the State, unworked holidays, paid Association leave time and personal leave. "Hours Actually Worked" is defined the same as "Time Actually Worked."

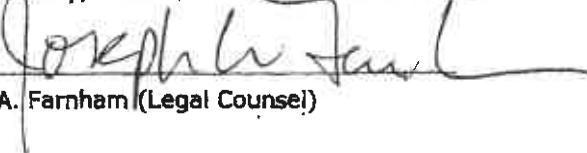
WORKDAY – a regularly scheduled day of work which shall begin at the time the employee's regular and normal work schedule begins and continues for twenty-four consecutive hours. For filing procedure and prior notice purposes the terms "Workday(s)" and "Business Day(s)", as referred to in this contract, shall be considered to be Monday through Friday, excluding legal and administrative holidays and the day after Thanksgiving.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the Judiciary Department of the State of Vermont and the Judiciary Bargaining Unit of the Vermont State Employees' Association hereby execute this Agreement by the duly authorized representatives as of the day above first written.

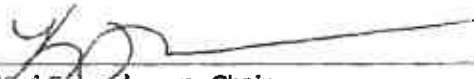
For the Judicial Department of the State of Vermont:

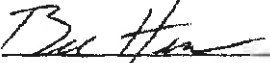
  
Therese Corsones, Esq., Court Administrator

  
Gregg Mousley, Chief of Finance and Administration

  
Joseph A. Farnham (Legal Counsel)

For the Judicial Bargaining Unit of the Vermont State Employees' Association, Inc.:

  
Karl Freyenhagen, Chair

  
Bee Hesselbach, Vice Chair

  
Adam Norton, Chief Negotiator (VSEA)

***APPENDIX A***  
***PAY PLAN FOR 2026-2027***

**Appendix II (July 12, 2026 - January 9, 2027) (CLS Pay Plan)**

| Pay Grade | Step 1 | Step 2 | Step 3 | Step 4 | Step 5 | Step 6 | Step 7 | Step 8 | Step 9 | Step 10 | Step 11 | Step 12 | Step 13 | Step 14 | Step 15 |
|-----------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
|           |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |         |         |         |         |         |         |
|           |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |         |         |         |         |         |         |
| 5         | 12.20  | 12.50  | 12.93  | 13.31  | 13.73  | 14.18  | 14.56  | 15.00  | 15.45  | 15.87   | 16.25   | 16.73   | 17.13   | 17.61   | 18.07   |
| 6         | 12.48  | 12.99  | 13.43  | 13.86  | 14.24  | 14.72  | 15.12  | 15.63  | 16.04  | 16.50   | 16.93   | 17.40   | 17.87   | 18.31   | 18.82   |
| 7         | 12.97  | 13.53  | 13.97  | 14.38  | 14.82  | 15.22  | 15.79  | 16.22  | 16.75  | 17.15   | 17.63   | 18.12   | 18.60   | 19.08   | 19.66   |
| 8         | 13.47  | 14.14  | 14.56  | 15.00  | 15.45  | 15.91  | 16.39  | 16.93  | 17.47  | 17.92   | 18.37   | 18.90   | 19.34   | 19.88   | 20.44   |
| 9         | 14.14  | 14.72  | 15.16  | 15.67  | 16.16  | 16.65  | 17.13  | 17.69  | 18.19  | 18.71   | 19.21   | 19.77   | 20.25   | 20.85   | 21.40   |
| 10        | 14.70  | 15.22  | 15.84  | 16.27  | 16.78  | 17.31  | 17.88  | 18.42  | 18.99  | 19.56   | 19.97   | 20.56   | 21.11   | 21.69   | 22.31   |
| 11        | 15.28  | 15.95  | 16.55  | 17.06  | 17.60  | 18.13  | 18.71  | 19.27  | 19.86  | 20.43   | 20.94   | 21.52   | 22.15   | 22.73   | 23.33   |
| 12        | 16.00  | 16.73  | 17.27  | 17.84  | 18.34  | 18.96  | 19.61  | 20.20  | 20.85  | 21.41   | 21.97   | 22.58   | 23.14   | 23.81   | 24.45   |
| 13        | 16.75  | 17.48  | 18.12  | 18.68  | 19.26  | 19.84  | 20.49  | 21.11  | 21.80  | 22.45   | 23.05   | 23.66   | 24.31   | 24.97   | 25.65   |
| 14        | 17.53  | 18.31  | 18.97  | 19.62  | 20.21  | 20.87  | 21.50  | 22.19  | 22.88  | 23.53   | 24.18   | 24.79   | 25.53   | 26.24   | 26.95   |
| 15        | 18.37  | 19.21  | 19.88  | 20.51  | 21.20  | 21.92  | 22.58  | 23.28  | 24.04  | 24.70   | 25.44   | 26.10   | 26.81   | 27.53   | 28.34   |
| 16        | 19.27  | 20.18  | 20.88  | 21.52  | 22.24  | 22.95  | 23.70  | 24.44  | 25.22  | 25.93   | 26.67   | 27.44   | 28.16   | 28.96   | 29.77   |
| 17        | 20.27  | 21.20  | 21.97  | 22.64  | 23.40  | 24.17  | 24.91  | 25.66  | 26.52  | 27.32   | 28.05   | 28.87   | 29.68   | 30.55   | 31.38   |
| 18        | 21.41  | 22.34  | 23.12  | 23.89  | 24.68  | 25.48  | 26.33  | 27.11  | 28.04  | 28.85   | 29.65   | 30.49   | 31.29   | 32.16   | 33.11   |
| 19        | 22.51  | 23.58  | 24.41  | 25.21  | 26.04  | 26.90  | 27.74  | 28.63  | 29.58  | 30.42   | 31.25   | 32.11   | 33.05   | 33.92   | 34.91   |
| 20        | 23.75  | 24.79  | 25.72  | 26.54  | 27.48  | 28.35  | 29.27  | 30.25  | 31.24  | 32.09   | 32.99   | 33.90   | 34.89   | 35.92   | 36.88   |
| 21        | 25.08  | 26.24  | 27.18  | 28.06  | 29.00  | 29.95  | 30.91  | 31.95  | 32.99  | 33.90   | 34.89   | 35.92   | 36.88   | 38.00   | 39.04   |
| 22        | 26.50  | 27.74  | 28.74  | 29.70  | 30.67  | 31.71  | 32.75  | 33.84  | 34.91  | 35.93   | 36.91   | 38.02   | 39.08   | 40.19   | 41.37   |
| 23        | 28.05  | 29.37  | 30.51  | 31.45  | 32.51  | 33.55  | 34.67  | 35.88  | 37.00  | 38.09   | 39.15   | 40.24   | 41.43   | 42.61   | 43.80   |
| 24        | 29.73  | 31.16  | 32.29  | 33.34  | 34.47  | 35.63  | 36.77  | 38.04  | 39.31  | 40.42   | 41.57   | 42.71   | 43.93   | 45.22   | 46.49   |
| 25        | 31.54  | 33.05  | 34.30  | 35.39  | 36.61  | 37.77  | 39.04  | 40.41  | 41.71  | 42.88   | 44.15   | 45.33   | 46.63   | 48.01   | 49.45   |
| 26        | 33.53  | 35.08  | 36.44  | 37.62  | 38.89  | 40.17  | 41.49  | 42.88  | 44.32  | 45.58   | 46.94   | 48.24   | 49.60   | 51.05   | 52.55   |
| 27        | 35.66  | 37.32  | 38.80  | 40.05  | 41.40  | 42.73  | 44.20  | 45.67  | 47.14  | 48.52   | 49.91   | 51.34   | 52.80   | 54.35   | 55.92   |
| 28        | 37.80  | 39.68  | 41.23  | 42.57  | 44.06  | 45.46  | 47.00  | 48.55  | 50.18  | 51.65   | 53.17   | 54.63   | 56.30   | 57.94   | 59.62   |
| 29        | 40.45  | 42.37  | 44.01  | 45.45  | 46.99  | 48.54  | 50.17  | 51.89  | 53.58  | 55.15   | 56.74   | 58.38   | 60.11   | 61.78   | 63.57   |
| 30        | 43.11  | 45.18  | 46.89  | 48.46  | 50.08  | 51.77  | 53.51  | 55.27  | 57.13  | 58.82   | 60.51   | 62.29   | 64.07   | 65.95   | 67.90   |
| 31        | 46.03  | 48.20  | 50.08  | 51.77  | 53.51  | 55.27  | 57.13  | 59.10  | 61.07  | 62.90   | 64.68   | 66.60   | 68.54   | 70.47   | 72.57   |
| 32        | 49.19  | 51.55  | 53.52  | 55.29  | 57.20  | 59.12  | 61.15  | 63.25  | 65.36  | 67.27   | 69.19   | 71.25   | 73.32   | 75.45   | 77.66   |

***APPENDIX B***  
***PAY PLAN FOR 2027-2028***

To Be Available Upon Publication by The Executive Branch

## **APPENDIX C**

### **OPTIONAL TELEWORKING ARRANGEMENT**

#### **1. Overview**

- (a) "Telework" is an arrangement that gives an employee an approved alternative, generally the employee's home, to working at an assigned workspace.
- (b) All requests to telework, require the approval of the Court Administrator or designee. Employees shall receive a written response to teleworking requests no later than two weeks after having submitted their request.
- (c) Not all job duties are appropriate for telework, and not all positions or units will be able to telework as easily as others. Departments will assess business operations to determine which positions and employees are appropriate to telework, and the limits of the remote telework model.
- (d) Telework is a voluntary choice of the employee, provided at the sole discretion of the Court Administrator or designee and may be terminated at any time with two weeks' notice by either party.
- (e) A decision whether to grant a request to telework is not subject to appeal or a grievance. If the Judiciary determines to end a telework arrangement, the employee's sole recourse is to file a Complaint under Article 14.
- (f) Ad hoc, non-recurring or occasional telework does not require a teleworking agreement but does require supervisor approval. Ad hoc telework, upon the request of an employee, may be used with supervisor approval for continuity of operations such as inclement weather, environmental catastrophe, or public health emergencies.

#### **2. Employee Requirements**

- (a) The employee has reviewed the Judiciary Flex-work request form and agreed to abide by its terms and conditions.
- (b) The employee has completed the Judiciary Flex-work request form including specifying the percentage of their work schedule to be performed remotely.
- (c) Employees engaged in telework will comply with all existing job requirements, including, but not limited to, performance expectations/standards, policies, procedures, laws, applicable collective

bargaining provisions, and applicable security and confidentiality requirements.

If an employee is expecting to telework on a day that the employee's duty station closes due to inclement weather, the employee is required to work.

- (d) The teleworking employee has access to high-speed internet and adheres to the Judiciary Technology Service Center procedures for equipment and information security standards.
- (e) The employee requesting teleworking is responsible for all costs including internet, Wi-Fi, electricity, phones, lighting, chair and work surface.
- (f) The employee is accessible and reachable on short-order using the predetermined communication method(s) set with their supervisor (telephone, Teams, chat, email, etc.) during scheduled work hours.
- (g) A telework schedule is not an alternate work schedule; employees are expected to be available during established work hours.
- (h) Employees must maintain their workspace in a reasonably safe and secure condition. If Employee sustains a work-related injury, the State's workers' compensation laws and rules apply. Employee remains responsible for following the established procedures to report such an injury and complete/process required forms.
- (i) The employee must be available to return to their assigned duty station on short notice if required by their supervisor (i.e. events such as onsite training, team meetings or to meet business need). The Judiciary shall not be arbitrary capricious in making a decision to require an employee to return to their duty station.

### 3. Conditions for teleworking

- (a) Positions eligible for teleworking can have no more than 20% of the primary job duties be dependent upon location at a Judiciary business site.
- (b) The supervisor has reviewed the employee's telework application and has determined it is not inconsistent with business operations.
- (c) The supervisor has developed clear measures of performance for the employee working remotely from the unit and department.

(d) The supervisor confirms the employee has adequate office supplies and equipment at the telework location.

(e) If authorized for telework, the supervisor works with the employee to:

- Establish clear performance expectations.
- Identify ways to communicate and the frequency of communications.
- Provide frequent and ongoing feedback.
- Establish reporting expectations.
- Manage by results and sets expectations.

(f) The initial request to telework, if approved, will have a planned end date of July 1 of the following year. Thereafter, telework arrangements must be reviewed and re-approved annually by June 30 of each year. However, as noted in 1(d) above, either party may terminate a telework arrangements with two weeks' notice.

(g) The Judiciary shall not be liable for injuries to members of Employee's family and/or third parties which occur on Employee's premises, nor for the injuries to Employee which occur outside of the scheduled workday or outside the scope of employment.

(h) The Judiciary retains the right to retrieve equipment or other Judiciary property from the alternate worksite once a demand for the return of the property has been refused.



## **APPENDIX D**

### **ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS and USE POLICY**

#### **Statement of Purpose:**

To prescribe rules of conduct and procedure for Judiciary Employees when using or accessing Judiciary owned or provided computers, electronic communication devices and /or systems as defined below. These rules also apply to electronic communications or transactions in which an Employee represents him/herself as a Judiciary Employee or representative of the Judiciary, regardless of whether they are using or accessing Judiciary equipment.

These rules do not impair the right and obligation of the Judiciary to limit access to systems and records that contain information that is subject to any statutory, regulatory, or common law privilege or obligation to limit access, nor does it alter any agency's rights or obligations under the Vermont public records law (1 V.S.A. § 315, et seq.) or the Vermont Rules for Public Access to Court Records.

#### **Definitions:**

**Access** - the ability to enter a Judiciary System or application or the act of doing so or attempting to do so, depending on context based on who is the user.

**Artificial Intelligence (AI)** - a machine-based system that can, for a given set of human-defined objectives, make predictions, recommendations, or decisions influencing real or virtual environments. AI systems use machine- and human-based inputs to perceive real and virtual environments, abstract such perceptions into models through analysis in an automated manner, and use model inference to formulate options for information or action.

**Control** - the authority held by the Judiciary to grant or deny access to all its Systems and the Judiciary's power to trace, review, audit, record, access, intercept, monitor, block, restrict, screen, delete, recover, restore, publish, or disclose any information at any time without notice.

**Electronic/Wireless Communication Devices or Electronic/Wireless Devices** -

NOTE: will replace "Electronic Communications" definition in Article 35 of CBA)

include, but are not

limited to, smart and/or cellular phones, tablets or any other portable electronic device used to access electronic mail, voice communications and internet service or wireless connection.

**Information** - (NOTE: will replace "Information" definition in CBA) data of any kind, used in any way, in Judiciary Systems. Examples include messages, communications, emails, files, records, recordings, transmissions, signals, programs, and macros.

**Judiciary Business** - any activity engaged in for the performance of work on the Judiciary's behalf.

**Judiciary Systems or Systems** (NOTE: will replace "Judiciary Systems" definition in CBA)- all software, hardware, electronic and/or wireless communication devices, interconnections, intranet and technical information related to them. Systems include, but are not limited to, other systems accessed by or through those devices, such as the internet, email, or voice communications. Systems also include, but are not

limited to, designs, specifications, Artificial Intelligence, passwords, access codes and encryption codes. Judiciary Systems do not include the Wi-Fi system provided for public use. Judges, Employees, volunteers, and independent contractors shall not use the public Wi-Fi system provided by the Judiciary for Judiciary Business.

**User Responsibilities:**

Employees are responsible for appropriate access to and use of the Judiciary Systems in accordance with this policy. They are expected to adhere to the highest ethical standards when using these Systems. Users of the System shall use the utmost care to protect the integrity of the Judiciary Systems and take all reasonable steps to guard against all unauthorized use, including but not limited to cyber-attacks.

**Appropriate Use of Judiciary Systems:**

1. Employees are expected to use the Judiciary Systems for Judiciary Business, except as defined by Authorized Limited Personal Use below. Employees with access to a Judiciary email account must use their Judiciary email account for Judiciary Business. Employees with access to Judiciary Systems shall not disclose their access codes or passwords to others.
2. Employees must conform to reasonable professional standards for use of Judiciary Systems and as detailed in this policy. See Authorized Limited Personal Use and Prohibited Use below for more detail.
3. Employees must respect intellectual property rights at all times when obtaining information over the Internet. Copyrighted or licensed information may only be used with the express legal right to do so.

4. The Judiciary reserves and may exercise all rights relating to Information used in its Systems. The Judiciary may trace, review, audit, record, access, intercept, block, restrict, screen, delete, recover, restore, publish or disclose any Information used in its Systems subject to relevant policies, laws, and regulations. This includes access to Information transferred to a non- Judicial System.

5. The Judiciary has the right to monitor the Judiciary Systems used by its Employees. Monitoring may occur in, but is not limited to, circumstances when there is a reason to suspect that an Employee is involved in activities that are prohibited by law, violate Judiciary policy or regulations, or jeopardize the integrity and/or performance of the Judiciary Systems. Monitoring may also occur in the normal course of network administration and troubleshooting, or on a random basis using electronic tools designed to monitor internet usage. Data generated by such tools may become evidence of Employee misconduct in which case it may be used in the same manner and is subject to the same rules of evidence as any other information that is part of a formal investigation into Employee conduct.

6. Employees shall be mindful that email messages and data communicated electronically may be considered public records subject to disclosure under the Vermont Rules for Public Access to Court Records and/or the Vermont Public Records Act (1 V.S.A. § 315, et seq.). A "public record" is any record produced or acquired in the course of Judiciary Business , regardless of whether the record resides in a Judiciary-provided system or personal account, including but not limited to a personal email account and cell phone. See Rule 2 of the Vermont Rules for Public Access to

Court Records; 1 V.S.A. § 317(b). Any public record contained in a non-state-provided system (email or otherwise) is subject to Vermont's Access to Public Records Act.

7. An Employee may use Artificial Intelligence to perform Judiciary Business only if they have applied for and received pre-approval from the Vermont Judiciary Artificial Intelligence Advisory Board.

#### **Authorized Limited Personal Use:**

The primary purpose for the use of Judiciary Systems is for the business purposes of the Judiciary. Limited Personal Use by Employees is permitted where such use meets all the following tests. No such use will be allowed where all the following are not met:

1. The user must be authorized to use the Judiciary System by management.  
Managers will exercise reasonable discretion in determining which Employees will be denied personal use of internet or electronic and wireless communication devices and services, including when such use is denied because of abuse or violation of this policy.
2. The use must not interfere with the performance of job duties or disrupt others in the performance of their job duties.
3. The use must not impose a burden on Judiciary resources as a result of frequency or volume of use.
4. The use must not otherwise violate this policy. The fact that the use occurs in a private setting or outside of scheduled work hours does not affect this prohibition.

#### **Prohibited Use of Judiciary Systems:**

The use or attempted use of any aspect of the Judiciary System that is prohibited includes, but is not limited as follows:

1. No user may attempt to access, copy, delete, or alter the messages or Information of any other user without Judiciary authorization.
2. No Judiciary System may be used to attempt unauthorized access to data and or any Information System.
3. No user may use any type of file removal/deletion program on any Judiciary System without approval and assistance of the Technology Services Center.
4. Attempts to obscure access, e.g. through encryption, or monitoring of user activity on the Judiciary Systems is strictly prohibited unless the user has Judiciary approval.
5. Except when directed, no Employee shall send email that is, or appears to be, sent from another Employee's email or that attempts to mask the sender's identity. This prohibition does not include email sent that clearly indicates the sender's identity.
6. No user may engage in any activity that impairs operation of any Judiciary System. Such activities include, but are not limited to, sending junk mail such as chain letters, unsolicited commercial email, and/or pyramid schemes, injecting computer viruses or unofficial mass mailings via email. This also includes hacking, which means gaining or attempting to gain unauthorized access to any Judiciary System unless acting within the proper scope of official duties.
7. Use of Judiciary Systems for offensive or disruptive purposes is prohibited. This prohibition includes profanity, vulgarity, sexual content, or character slurs. Any inappropriate reference, regardless of whether presented as a statement, language, image, email signature block, audio file, or in any other way that is reasonably likely

- to be perceived as offensive or disparaging of others on the basis of race, color, age, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, national origin, disability, or other legally protected status is also prohibited.
8. Employees who obligate the Judiciary to pay for services without prior approval may be held personally liable for those costs and may be subject to disciplinary action up to and including dismissal. To obtain necessary services and/or software Employees should contact the Technology Services Center for approval and procurement.
  9. Except as otherwise may be protected by law, including but not limited to the First Amendment to the United States Constitution, Article 20 of the Vermont Constitution, and the provisions of the Judiciary Employees Labor Relations Act, 3 V.S.A. §§ 1010 *et seq.*, lobbying public officials for an Employee's personal benefit or asking others to lobby on their behalf for personal benefit is prohibited.
  10. Using or allowing others to use Judiciary Systems to conduct transactions or advertising for a personal profit-making business is strictly forbidden.
  11. Use of Judiciary Systems for solicitation for charitable or other causes is prohibited, except for officially sanctioned activities.
  12. Because each internet e-mail user's identification includes the suffix "@vtcourts.gov" it is imperative that judges, Employees, volunteers, and independent contractors shall refrain from using their vtcourts.gov email address in news groups, chat groups, online shopping, bulletin boards, or anything else where the content is not clearly work-related because such messages might be construed as an official Judicial Branch position.
  13. Except as otherwise may be permitted under the Judiciary Employees Labor Relations Act, 3 V.S.A. §§ 1010 *et seq.*, it is prohibited to use or attempt to use Judiciary Systems to engage in activities that are in any way disruptive or harmful to the reputation or business of the Judicial Branch.
  14. Review of material which would otherwise be prohibited under this policy is permitted for case related or other Judiciary Business-related review purposes.
  15. Any use of the Judiciary Systems that is expressly prohibited herein, is not for Judiciary Business purposes, or does not qualify as Authorized Limited Personal Use is prohibited. Prohibited use of any Judiciary System may result in revocation of Judiciary Systems access, other appropriate administrative action, or disciplinary or corrective action.

#### **Storage and Retention of Electronic Communications:**

Judiciary employees should be mindful of the general records schedules issued by Vermont State Archives and Records Administration and the specific record schedules applicable to case and administrative records for the Vermont Judiciary. These schedules are available through the Secretary of State's Vermont State Archives and Records Administration. If you have any questions about these policies, please contact the Judiciary Records Liaison.

**APPENDIX E**  
***Audio Recording in the Information Center***

The following is the agreement ("Agreement") reached by the Judicial Department of the State of Vermont ("Judiciary") and the Vermont State Employees' Association, Inc., (VSEA) in recognition of desire to establish protocols for recording audio communication for the employees employed by the Judiciary Information Center.

1. Both parties recognize that the Information Center occupies a unique function within the Judiciary. It operates as a high-volume 'call center' and therefore its employees spend almost all their worktime engaged in telephonic conversation with customers (litigants, attorneys... etc.). Further, call centers have a long-established management practice of recording phone calls for training and quality purposes. The Judiciary finds it necessary to record Information Center audio communications for the following purposes: employee training, assessing employee performance and evidence of customer conduct for security or other concerns.
2. Recording of conversations will occur when a person calls the Information Center main number. If calls to the Information Center are subsequently forwarded to a different Judiciary number or outside the Judiciary, the call will no longer be recorded from the point it was forwarded.
3. Calls directly (not via the main number) between Information Center employees will not be recorded.
4. Access to recordings will be limited to certain TSC managers, Information Center management and Information Center employees during their training.
5. Information Center recordings will be retained for 6 months from the date of recording.
6. The VSEA may request access to recordings under the terms of Article 6 'Exchange of Information' of the CBA.