





- Financial Crisis
- Perverse Consequences in Case Processing as State budget reduced
- Current structure hindered implementation of new technology
- Improve Access to Courts



- Chief Justice addresses Joint Assembly
- Legislature authorizes Judicial Operation Commission
- Members from Legislature, Judiciary, Executive & Public (Only 4 members are stakeholders)
- Commission & Supreme Court establish Principles



- Need to convince Legislators to vote against parochial interests
- Involving stakeholders & public in conversation
- Construct the proposal so that recommendations are interdependent

– or –

Prevent politicians from buying their way out of tough decisions

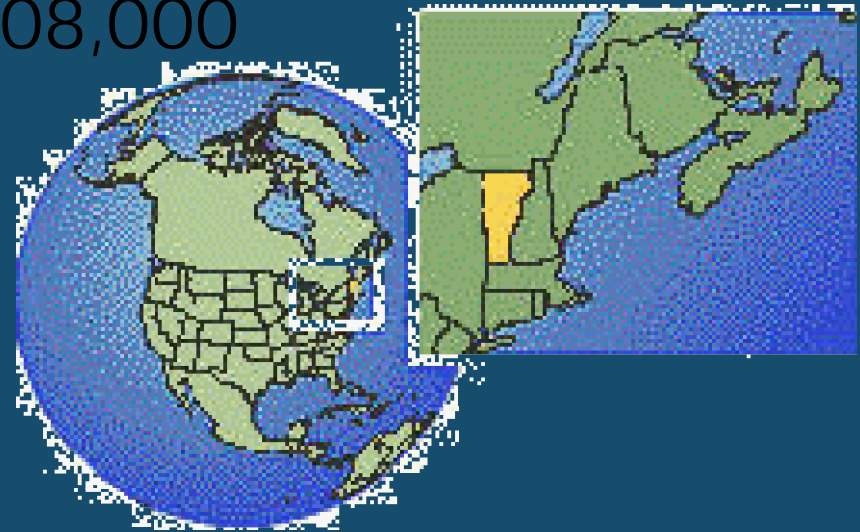
- Bringing Legislative leadership on board



- Transitioned from Court Reporters in early 1990's
- Centralized Traffic and Civil Citations in 1980's
- Transitioned indigent defense and witness payments in the early 1990's
- Moved Judge Secretaries into clerk's office
- Pooled law clerks
- Created one-tier bench in early 1980's
- Juror payments transferred to employers
- Contested minor matters heard by hearing officers



- Toy State: population of 608,000
- Rural and Mountainous
- Citizen's Legislature
- Judicial Branch
  - | 5 Member Supreme Court
  - | 31 Trial Judges - appointed
  - | 17 Probate Judges – elected
  - | 28 Side Judges – elected, lay judges with both judicial and administrative authority
- Judicial Branch: unified in theory but not in fact

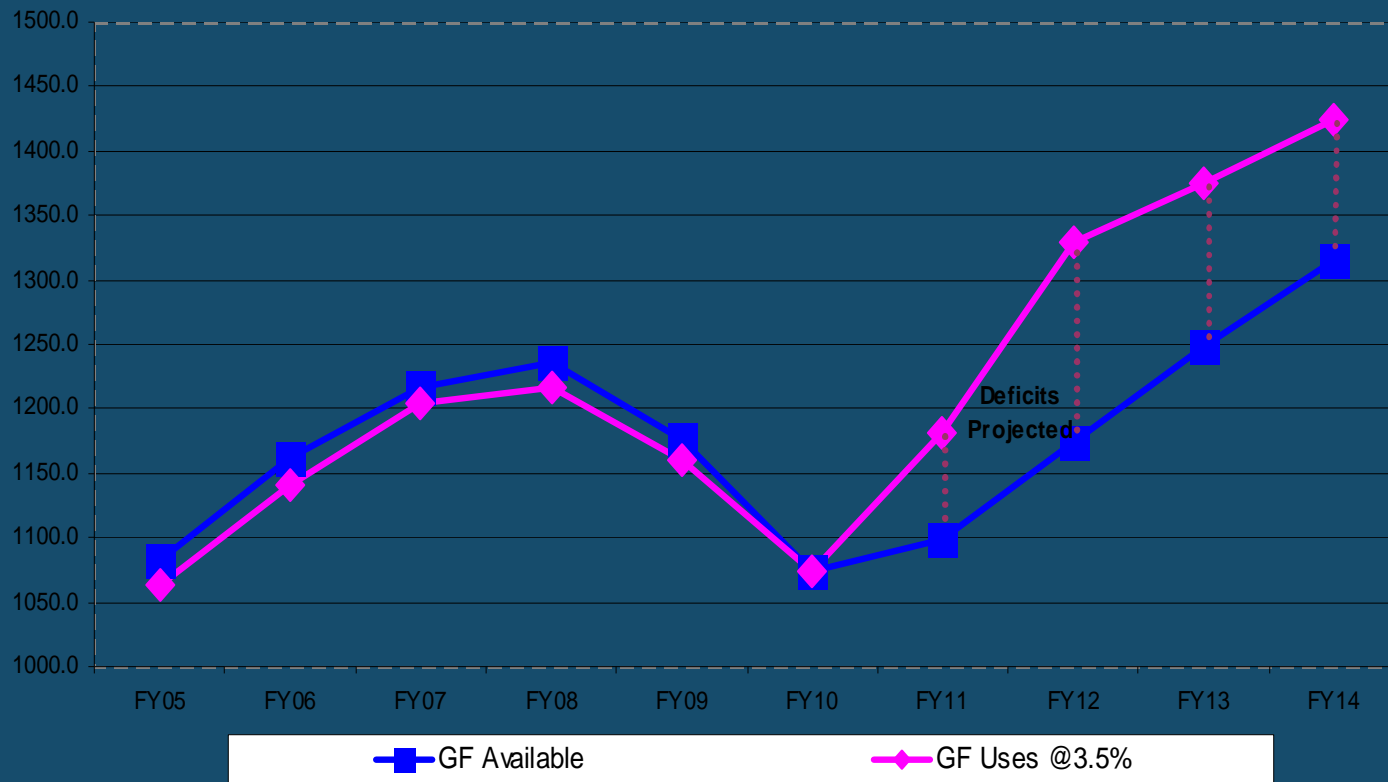




## GF Budget Picture - Sept 09 - Projection thru FY14

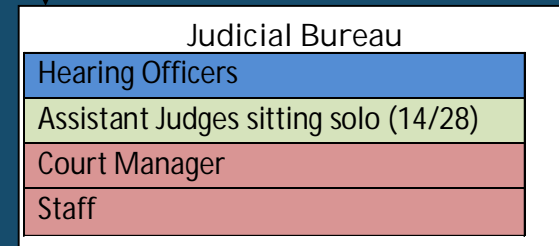
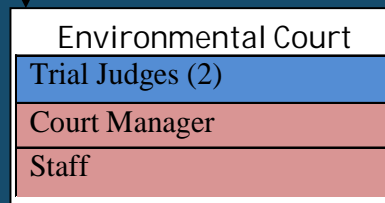
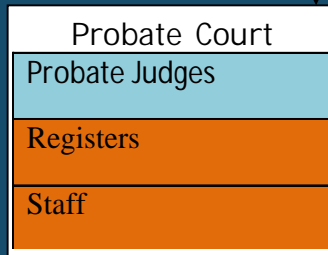
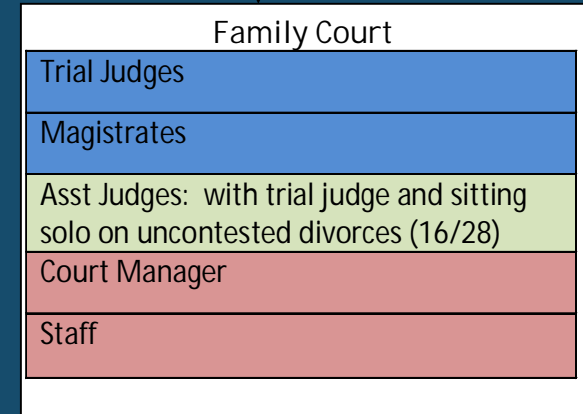
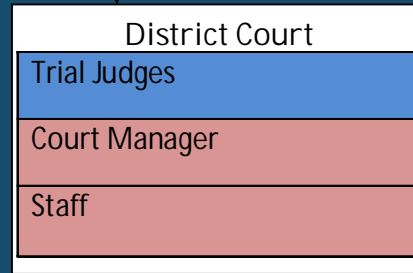
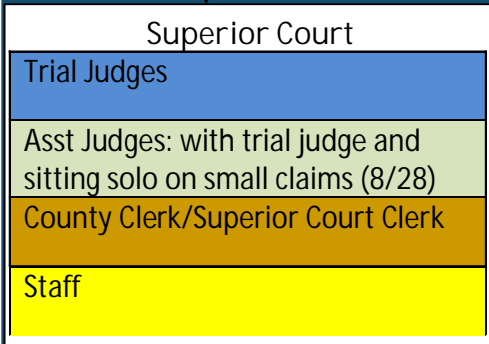
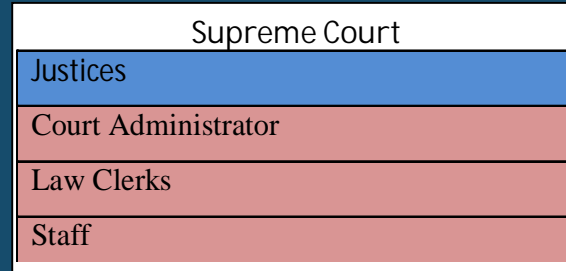
Assumes 3.5% growth on FY10 base including ARRA,

(ARRA funds used to support GF Base in FY09=\$75m, FY10=\$175m, and FY11=\$100m)



- Appointed; Statutory Salary
- Elected; Statutory Salary
- Elected; Statutory Hourly Rate
- Hired by Assistant Judges; Statutory Salary

- Hired by Supreme Court or Designee; State Employee
- Hired by County Clerk; County Employee
- Hired by Probate Judge; State Employee





“This is not a cycle; it’s a reset.”

Jeff Immelt  
CEO General Electric

- All personnel accountable to the Supreme Court
- Courts unified under one management structure
- Consolidate 17 Probate Part-time Judges to 5 Full-time Judges
- Reduce number of administrative clerk's offices
- Reduce number of middle managers (28 to 12)
- Eliminate judicial duties for Side Judges
- Expand access to Judiciary through technology
- Reduce fat-fingering of data by court staff

- Case Management System with Statewide Database
- Electronic Document Management & Filing Cabinet
- E-Filing, E-Payment and Electronic Interfaces

- Paperless Case Processing
- Reduced Fat-fingering by staff
- Access to Courts from offices, living rooms, libraries..
- Full services at every court counter
- Move work to people, not people to work
- Access 24/7 for filing, payments, viewing court orders
- Improved customer service
- Case files, documents and recordings of proceedings available to litigants



# How Did We Do It?

- Economic Crisis
- Extraordinary Leadership
- Teamwork
- Technical support from NCSC
- A Bold Plan that challenged every Sacred Cow



- May, 2008: Legislative Mandate to create a Commission on Court Operations
- Oct, 2008 – Oct, 2009: Work of the Commission
  - | Gathered data
  - | Conducted Focus Groups
  - | NCSC Work Load Study – judges and staff
- Nov. 2009: Commission Report and Draft Legislation
- Jan – May 2010: Legislative Session
- June 2010: Governor signed historic legislation restructuring Vermont Judiciary



- Nine Principles

- Framed by the Supreme Court
- Adopted by the Commission
- Substantively Similar to NCSC Principles

- Framework for everything we did





A well defined governance structure for policy formulation and administration for the entire court system.

**We Said:**

A governance structure that meets our constitutional mission as a separate branch of government to resolve disputes fairly in a timely, convenient, cost effective, understandable and respectful manner.



- Challenge: How to Pay for Restructuring
- Strategy: Use the NCSC Weighted Case Load Study to reallocate costs throughout the system
  - Identify most efficient courts
  - Reconfigure staffing based on WCS results for staffing in the most efficient courts
  - Base salaries of part time elected judges on WCS results for judges



- Technology = linchpin
  - Increase efficiency of staff
  - Increase access to justice
  - Decrease cost to taxpayer
- No savings without technology
- No benefits from technology without radical restructuring



- Standards helped measure the cost of budget cuts to the Judiciary
  - Direct correlation between backlog growth and implementation of furloughs and half day closings



- Selection of Commission Members
- Engagement of lawyers and justice partners
  - Surveys
  - Focus Groups
- Regular communication with court staff
  - Weekly phone calls with the Chief Justice
  - Weekly newsletter



“I will invite your criticism and concerns at any time....Being an independent branch does not mean we must be aloof or cloistered or beyond reproach.”

Chief Justice Paul Reiber  
before the House Judiciary Committee  
February 9, 2010



- Presiding Judge responsible for each court unit
- A more professional staff
- Opportunity for real leadership
  - ; Engage in strategic planning
  - ; Equitably distribute judicial/staff resources between divisions
  - ; Collaborate with local justice partners
  - ; Develop case management strategies to ensure that courts are meeting performance standards



- New job descriptions for managerial staff
- New “super clerks” and court operations managers
- A designated presiding judge for each unit
- Nov. 18: Presiding judges and the new Super Clerks will begin a strategic planning process
- Mending fences with the probate judges and the assistant judges





- Developing a new web based CMS
  - Ready for roll out in 2012
- Rolling out electronic filing
  - October 18, first civil complaint was filed electronically
- Preparing for our first legislative session...post restructuring



- Visit our web site

[www.vermontjudiciary.org](http://www.vermontjudiciary.org)

Search the commission library

- E-mail me: [bob.greemore@state.vt.us](mailto:bob.greemore@state.vt.us)