



Kentucky Court of Justice

Compensation Plan - Elected Judicial Officials

The Kentucky Court of Justice (KCOJ) compensation plan includes a request to increase the salaries of judges and circuit court clerks by \$10,000. Similar to KCOJ non-elected employees, our elected officials are greatly underpaid in comparison to their colleagues in other states and similarly situated county officials. Our court system is a leader across the nation for our operations, innovations and processes. However, our judges are paid over 20 percent less than the national average and our circuit court clerks make an average of 11 to 13 percent less than county officials.

Judicial Salaries Lag Behind Most Other States and Territories

How does Kentucky stack up? Check out the below rankings for Supreme Court, Appellate Court, and general jurisdiction (i.e. Circuit) courts.

Supreme Court Rankings		
Ranking	State/Territory	Ave Salary
TOP 3 AVERAGE SALARIES		
1	California	\$261,949
2	Illinois	\$250,442
3	New York	\$233,400
10	Virginia	\$212,365
17	Tennessee	\$199,332
22	Indiana	\$192,644
25	Missouri	\$185,127
-	National Average	\$183,939
31	Ohio	\$178,280
52	Kentucky	\$142,362
BOTTOM 3 AVERAGE SALARIES		
53	West Virginia	\$136,000
54	No. Mariana Islands	\$126,000
55	Puerto Rico	\$120,000

Appellate Court Rankings		
Ranking	State/Territory	Ave Salary
TOP 3 AVERAGE SALARIES		
1	California	\$245,578
2	Illinois	\$235,713
3	New York	\$222,200
9	Virginia	\$195,422
11	Tennessee	\$192,708
15	Indiana	\$187,265
-	National Average	\$177,633
25	Missouri	\$169,214
28	Ohio	\$166,167
BOTTOM 3 AVERAGE SALARIES		
40	Mississippi	\$144,827
41	Kentucky	\$136,632
42	Puerto Rico	\$105,000

*West Virginia does not have this level of court

General Jurisdiction Court Rankings		
Ranking	State/Territory	Ave Salary
TOP 3 AVERAGE SALARIES		
1	District of Columbia	\$218,600
2	Illinois	\$216,297
3	California	\$214,601
12	Tennessee	\$186,060
14	Virginia	\$184,617
-	National Average	\$163,110
31	Indiana	\$159,950
32	Missouri	\$159,578
37	Ohio	\$152,811
51	Kentucky	\$130,926
53	West Virginia	\$126,000
BOTTOM 3 AVERAGE SALARIES		
54	No. Mariana Islands	\$120,000
55	Puerto Rico	\$89,600
56	American Samoa	\$64,365

Level of Court	Kentucky Ave Salary	KY Salary Ranking vs. US States/Territories	Surrounding States Average Salary	% Below
Supreme Court	\$142,362	52/55*	\$193,456	26%
Appellate Court	\$136,632	41/42*	\$191,082	28%
General Jurisdiction	\$130,926	51/56	\$169,330	23%

*There are 56 US states and territories; however, not all have this level of court within the jurisdiction.

Circuit Clerks Make Significantly Less Than Similarly Situated County Officials

Circuit Court Clerks salaries range from 11-13 percent less than other county roles.

Circuit Court Clerk Comparison to County Salaries			
Population Level	Circuit Court Clerk	Other County Roles**	% Difference
0-9,999*	\$76,682	\$85,239	11.16%
10,000-19,999	\$82,253	\$91,796	11.60%
20,000-29,999	\$87,830	\$98,352	11.98%
30,000-44,999	\$93,708	\$104,909	11.95%
45,000-59,999	\$99,062	\$111,466	12.52%
60,000-89,999	\$104,633	\$118,023	12.80%
90,000-499,999	\$110,198	\$124,580	13.05%
500,000+	\$115,789	\$131,137	13.25%

*Hickman, Owsley, and Robertson omitted as Circuit Clerk schedule does not reflect the 0-4,999 population level

**Figure represents maximum salary after first term, step 4 of the salary schedule from the Department for Local Government, January 2021 pursuant to HB810 & KRS 64.5275. Positions reflected are Judge/Executives, County Clerks, Sheriffs, and Jailers operating a full-service jail.