



Office for Access to Justice (ATJ)

FY 2024 Budget Request At A Glance

FY 2023 Enacted:	\$10.0 million (42 positions; 22 attorneys)
Current Services Adjustments:	+\$2.1 million
Program Changes:	+\$1.6 million
FY 2024 Budget Request:	\$13.7 million (51 positions; 27 attorneys)
Change From FY 2023 Enacted:	+\$3.7 million (+36.5%) (+9 positions; +5 attorneys)

Mission:

The mission of the Office for Access to Justice is to ensure equal justice under the law by engaging in transformative and systemic work to ensure that all communities have access to the promises and protections of our legal systems. The ATJ aims to achieve this core mission by promoting access to courts and legal systems through legal assistance and counsel; pursuing data-driven, stakeholder-informed, and innovative approaches to judicial process; and by promoting integrity, accountability, and reform of legal systems with the goal of creating a more holistic and equitable approach to justice.

Organization:

The ATJ serves as the Federal Government's central authority on access to justice matters, promotes inclusive and equal justice for all, ensures implementation of Goal 16 of the United Nations' 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and helps to solve limitations of legal representation throughout the criminal and civil legal systems. The ATJ leads Federal Government efforts in cross-agency, State, local, tribal and third-party collaborations protecting the rights for low- and middle-income and underserved communities within America's legal systems. The ATJ also staffs the Legal Aid Interagency Roundtable (Roundtable), which fosters innovative interagency collaborations among Federal agencies and facilitates non-governmental partnerships to more effectively support underserved individuals and address access to justice issues throughout the Federal Government. The ATJ also houses, among other initiatives: the Department of Justice's Language Access Coordinator, who provides support and resources across the agency to ensure that linguistically marginalized communities have equal access to justice; and the Department of Justice's Federal Government Pro Bono Program, which coordinates opportunities for attorneys across the Federal Government to engage in pro bono work.

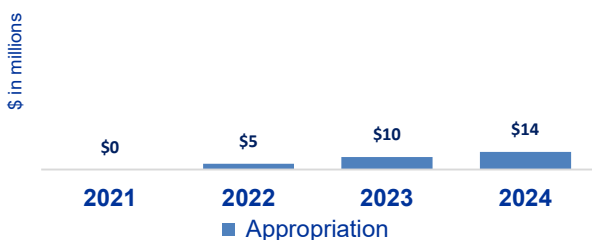
Resources:

The FY 2024 budget request for the ATJ totals \$13.7 million, which is a 36.5 percent increase over the FY 2023 Enacted.

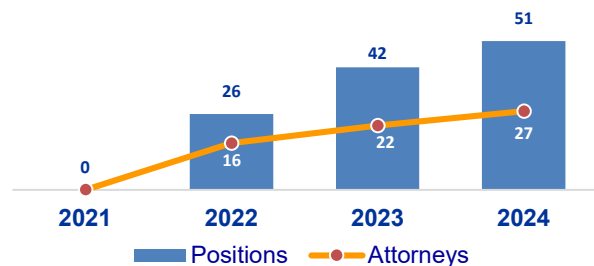
Personnel:

The ATJ's direct authorized positions for FY 2024 total 51 positions, including an increase of nine positions over the FY 2023 Enacted of 42 direct authorized positions.

Funding (FY 2021 - 2024)



Personnel (FY 2021 - 2024)



FY 2024 Strategy:

The ATJ aims to address inequality in the justice system and ensure all Americans have access to adequate legal assistance regardless of social, racial, and economic factors. There are millions of people in the United States who cannot obtain legal assistance, a problem exacerbated by the COVID pandemic. With approximately 37.2 million people living in poverty per the 2020 census, the ATJ works to ensure that all communities are able to obtain both legal representation as well as fair, timely, and equitable justice in both the criminal and civil legal systems. The ATJ will achieve this through advancing new statutory, policy, and practice changes that support development of quality indigent defense and civil legal aid delivery systems at the State and Federal levels; promoting less lawyer- and court-intensive solutions to legal problems; engaging with stakeholders across both governmental and non-governmental organizations; enhancing language access throughout the justice systems; expanding innovative strategies to close the gap between the need for, and the availability of, quality legal assistance; and pursuing reform of legal systems to ensure equal access to justice.

Further, the ATJ will leverage resources to strengthen Federal programs that help vulnerable, marginalized, and underserved communities. The ATJ, through its work with the Roundtable, will also develop policy recommendations that improve access to justice in Federal, State, local, tribal, and international jurisdictions; facilitate strategic partnerships to achieve Federal enforcement and outreach objectives; advance evidence-based research, data collection, and analysis of civil legal aid and indigent defense; and publicize best practices.

By working with its governmental and non-governmental stakeholders, the ATJ can increase access to legal assistance and reduce barriers that will improve the justice delivery systems that serve people nationwide.

Further, the ATJ is requesting to become its own appropriation outside of its current funding vehicle, the Department's General Legal Activities appropriation. This will enable justice stakeholders, advocates, and the public to have better awareness of the ATJ's resources, allowing for greater transparency and accountability of the ATJ's programs. Having a separate appropriation will also help to solidify the ATJ's placement and purpose within the Department of Justice so that its mission and work endures.

FY 2024 Program Changes:

Expanding Language Access: \$750,000 and 2 positions
With this additional funding, the ATJ will expand language access services across the Department, including through increased translation of written materials and interpretation services, quality assessments of both translations and interpretation, as well as trainings on language access legal mandates and how to implement language access best practices for Department staff. The ATJ will also ensure language access obligations are met under Executive Order 13166. The ATJ will build the Department's capacity to assess and improve the quality of its high-impact services to linguistically marginalized communities and those with limited proficiency in English (LEP) as spelled out in the DOJ Equity Action Plan (Action 3) in compliance with Executive Order 13985. Current services are \$443,000 and two positions (zero attorneys).

Strengthening Public Defender Systems and Right to Counsel : \$599,000 and 5 positions (4 attorneys)

With this additional funding, the ATJ will work to strengthen individuals' right to counsel in criminal justice systems. The ATJ will identify best practices and strategies that overcome barriers to effective representation; conduct research and data collection to identify access gaps and the root causes of racial disparities, wrongful conviction, and overrepresentation of vulnerable groups and communities of color in criminal legal systems; support resources for, elevate the voice of, and educate the public about the importance of the public defense function; and enhance opportunities to provide technical assistance and training programs for providers who will help close the justice gap for low and moderate income people and historically underserved communities. Current services are \$1.1 million and four positions (four attorneys).

Leading the Legal Aid Interagency Roundtable: \$199,000 and 2 positions (1 attorney)

With this additional funding, the ATJ will be able to staff and direct the work of the 28-member White House Legal Aid Interagency Roundtable, and actively engage stakeholders representing the legal aid and advocacy organizations and justice gap-impacted communities to help inform federal programs allowing them to be more easily accessed and effective. The ATJ will also be able to provide leadership in advancing relevant evidence-based research and data collection relating to civil legal and indigent defense and promulgate best practices in access to justice across the federal government. Current services are \$293,000 and one position (one attorney).

Office for Access to Justice
(Dollars in Thousands)

	Office for Access to Justice		
	Pos	FTE	Amount
2022 Appropriation	26	3	4,500
2023 Enacted	42	34	10,015
2024 Request	51	47	13,668
Change 2024 from 2023 Enacted	9	13	3,653
Technical Adjustments			
Total Technical Adjustments	0	0	0
Base Adjustments			
Pay & Benefits	0	8	2,105
Total Base Adjustments	0	8	2,105
2024 Current Services	42	42	12,120
Program Changes			
Increases:			
Expanding Language Access	2	1	750
Strengthening Public Defender Systems and Right to Counsel	5	3	599
Leading the Legal Aid Interagency Roundtable	2	1	199
Subtotal, Program Increases	9	5	1,548
Decreases:			
Subtotal, Program Decreases	0	0	0
Total Program Changes	9	5	1,548
2024 Request	51	47	13,668

Office for Access to Justice
(Dollars in Thousands)

Comparison by activity and program	2023 Enacted			2024 Current Services		
	Pos.	FTE	Amount	Pos.	FTE	Amount
Access to Justice	42	34	10,015	42	42	12,120
Total	42	34	10,015	42	42	12,120

Comparison by activity and program	2024 Total Program Changes			2024 Request		
	Pos.	FTE	Amount	Pos.	FTE	Amount
Access to Justice	9	5	1,548	51	47	13,668
Total	9	5	1,548	51	47	13,668