



Minnesota Judicial Branch Policy Bill Summary

Ensuring Jury Inclusiveness and Representativeness (sections 1 and 3)

Proposal: Explore improving the inclusiveness and representativeness of Minnesota's jury source list by giving the Judicial Branch access to the Department of Revenue's tax records and the Department of Public Safety's race and ethnicity data.

Background:

- The list of potential jurors in Minnesota is currently compiled using the lists of individuals who register to vote, and the list of those who have been issued a driver's license or state ID. This proposal would allow the Judicial Branch to evaluate whether incorporating tax records as an additional or alternative source would make the juror source list more inclusive and representative.
- Presently, the court relies exclusively on the voluntary responses that prospective jurors provide in response to their summons and questionnaire to gather information about race and ethnicity. As a result, the court has no race or ethnicity information on those who do not respond to the summons and cannot study the representativeness of the juror source list. This proposal would permit the Judicial Branch to use race and ethnicity data collected by the Department of Vehicle Services to help ensure the court is upholding defendants' 6th Amendment right to a jury drawn from a fair cross-section of the community.

Increasing No-Fault Arbitration Limit (section 2)

Proposal: Raises the jurisdictional limit for no-fault insurance arbitration from \$10,000 to \$20,000 to account for inflation and ensure no-fault insurance cases stay within arbitration as intended.

Background:

- The No-Fault Automobile Insurance Act was enacted in 1975 to give people injured in car accidents a faster alternative to courtroom litigation for denied, delayed, or underpaid personal injury benefits, and to speed the administration of justice and ease the burden and expense of litigation on the injured person and the courts.
- The statutory jurisdictional limit for no-fault auto insurance cases subject to mandatory arbitration was set at \$10,000 in 1991 and has not changed in 33 years. At the same time, the cost and expense relating to auto accidents have increased significantly, resulting in fewer no-fault arbitrations in Minnesota because fewer and fewer claims meet the \$10,000 limit.
- Addressing this outdated amount will properly route small claim no-fault insurance cases to arbitration as intended by the No-Fault Automobile Insurance Act, where cases will be heard by area focused and knowledgeable decisionmakers.
- Without an increased jurisdictional limit, Minnesota's self-funded no-fault arbitration program will have to drastically increase filing fees or seek state funding.

Modernizing Court Notice by Publication (section 4)

Proposal: Allow courts to publish notices on the Minnesota Judicial Branch website as an alternative to publication by newspaper when the court is required by rule or statute to publish notice.

Background:

- Current law requires the court to publish certain court-issued notices in newspapers when a party cannot be personally served. These circumstances are typically in very time sensitive matters such as orders for protection and harassment restraining orders.
- Although service by publication was originally designed to strengthen due process, shifts in how Minnesotans access information, along with the decreasing numbers of community newspapers, have reduced the effectiveness of newspaper publication.
- Permitting the court to publish these notices on the Judicial Branch webpage is a more efficient and cost-effective alternative that better upholds due process by aligning with how most Minnesotans access information today.
- This proposal only applies to notices required to be published by the court itself. It is not intended to apply to publication requirements or alternate service performed by parties.

Conciliation Court Service Simplification (section 5)

Proposal: Remove the requirement that court administrators serve summons for conciliation court claims.

Background:

- Under Minnesota law, the court administrator must serve the summons in a conciliation court case when the claim is \$2,500 or less. For claims exceeding \$2,500, the plaintiff is responsible for service.
- This proposal would make plaintiffs responsible for serving summons in conciliation court cases involving claims of \$2,500 or less, aligning service in conciliation court with service in all other civil case types.

Clarifying Notice in Divorces and Separations Without Children (section 6)

Proposal: Clarify public authority notice requirements in divorces and legal separations without children.

Background:

- Current statute requires parties in both divorces and legal separations to serve notice on the public authority if either party receives public assistance, whether or not minor children are involved.
- As a result, parties in cases without minor children are unnecessarily serving county child support agencies, which must then respond to confirm there is no IV-D case and that the county will not participate in the dissolution or separation.
- The Minnesota Department of Children, Youth, and Families has reviewed the language and does not have any concerns.

Renewal of Restitution Judgments (section 7)

Proposal: Create a statutory provision for the administrative renewal of restitution judgments.

Background:

- Restitution judgments are entered in civil cases and are based on orders issued in criminal and juvenile delinquency cases directing an offender to compensate the victim for financial losses directly resulting from the offense.
- Although these judgments are entered administratively at the victim's request upon the filing of certain documents, current law does not authorize courts to establish an administrative process for renewing them.
- As a result, victims must use the standard civil judgment renewal process to continue collecting the restitution owed to them which includes filing a new civil case, paying the civil filing fee, and serving the judgment debtor (offender).
- This proposal would make the restitution judgment renewal similar to the existing administrative renewal procedures used for child support and overpayment judgments.

Supreme Court Council on Child Protection and Maltreatment Prevention Report Due Date (sections 8 and 9)

Proposal: Delay the Supreme Court Council on Child Protection's final report due date from January 15, 2026, to December 15, 2026.

Background:

- In 2024, the Minnesota Legislature passed a bill inviting the Chief Justice to establish a Minnesota Supreme Court Council on Child Protection and Maltreatment Prevention. In its first 13 months, the Council heard from 30 subject matter experts, held 27 statewide focus groups, and collected nearly 1,800 survey responses.
- The Council is requesting additional time to fully review stakeholder feedback and develop thoughtful, evidence-based, and actionable recommendations for the Legislature.