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Judicial Crossroads Task Force recommends judge reductions, tech upgrades

The State Bar of Michigan's Judicial Crossroads Task Force released its 24-page report Jan. 26 on how to fix an "outdated justice system" during a massive state budget crisis.

The collective's recommendations include reducing judgeships where needed, create specialized dockets such as business, and putting in a standardized statewide computer case-management system.

The report was written for members of the Legislature, the governor and the Michigan Supreme Court to review with the intent that they will consider making changes.

One of the suggestions is eliminating and/or consolidating judge positions through retirement, death, and term limits where population and caseloads have declined.

Consolidating dockets also was mentioned, as well as

- Making trial court judge salaries and health care benefits uniform.
- Converting separate court information systems into an integrated whole along the lines of the federal court technology system, along with an e-filing surcharge.
- Creating a pilot business docket in Wayne and Oakland circuit courts.
- Shifting indigent defense funding responsibility from local government to the state — something that would involve large immediate cost but result in large potential net savings.

A full copy of the report can be found at www.michbar.org/judicialcrossroads.



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- o [April 2009](#)
- o [March 2009](#)
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- o [January 2009](#)
- o [December 2008](#)
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