

Wisconsin Counties Association

2024 ANNUAL CONFERENCE



9:15 – 10:15 AM

**A Deep Dive into Court Funding: Going
Behind the Bench**



Wisconsin Circuit Courts

**A DEEP DIVE INTO COURT FUNDING:
GOING BEHIND THE BENCH**



WISCONSIN CIRCUIT COURTS

What do they do?

How is it funded?

How Behind and Beyond the
Bench Actions Impact
Counties?

Wisconsin Courts

BACKGROUND

Circuit court created in 1962

- In 1962, the court system underwent a major reorganization, creating a two-tiered trial system with circuit courts and county courts.

Constitution was amended in 1977

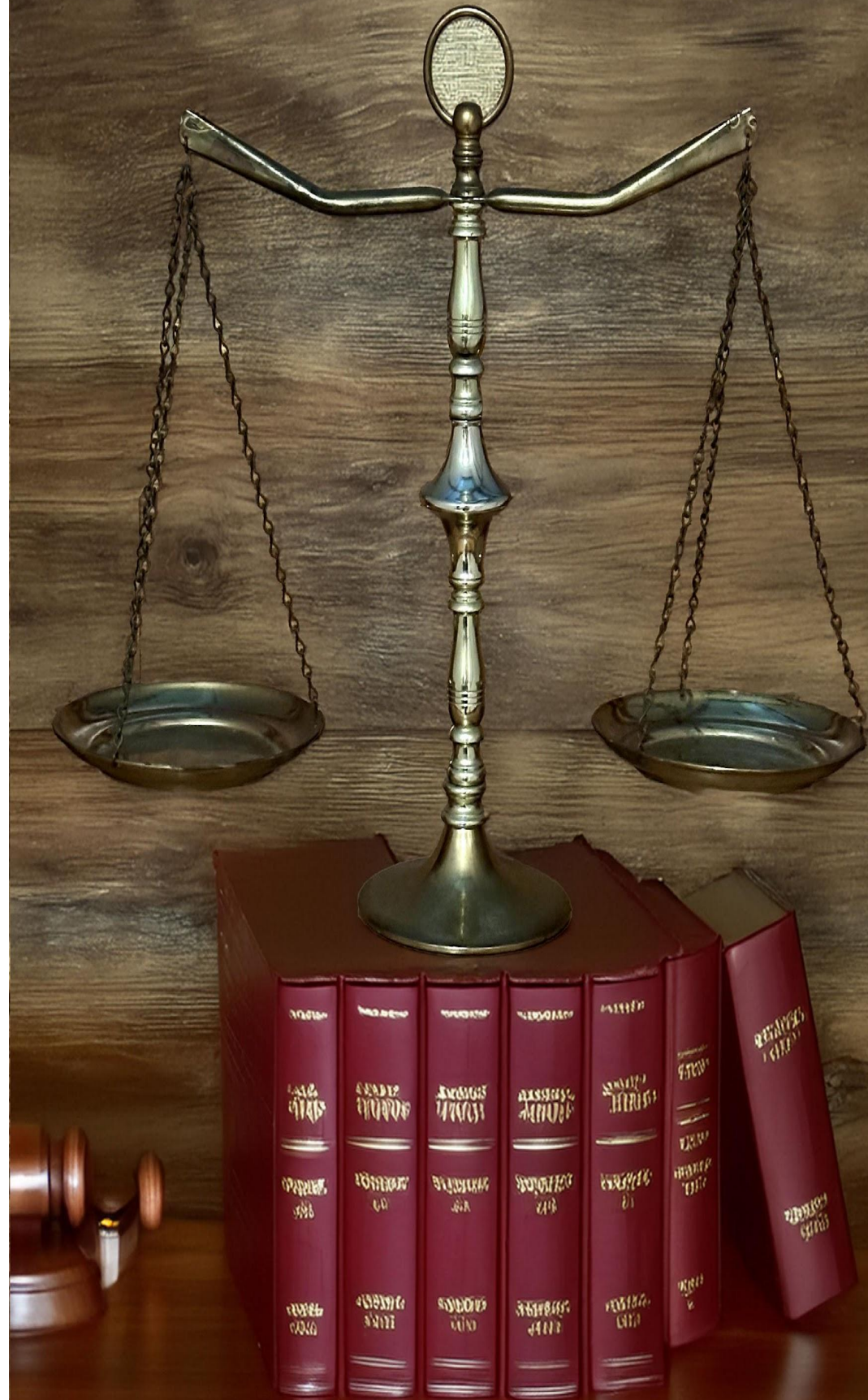
- Merged circuit courts and county courts into one trial system

State's Funding responsibility since 1978:

- Total cost of salaries and fringe benefits for judges and court reporters
- Per diem payments and travel expenses for reserve judges and court reporters

Counties responsible for circuit court operational costs (not all-inclusive list):

- Salaries of Clerks of Court
- Courthouse Security
- Office Supplies
- Jury Costs
- Psychological Exams
- GAL / Court Appointed Attorneys
- Expert Witness and Interpreters
- Court commissioners
- Clerical staff / Training
- Law Libraries
- Other operating costs
- Corp Counsel
- Court Security
- Technology



Circuit Court

Funding

State Support

Circuit Court Cost Appropriation
=
\$28.4M GPR for all 72 Counties
(2024-25)

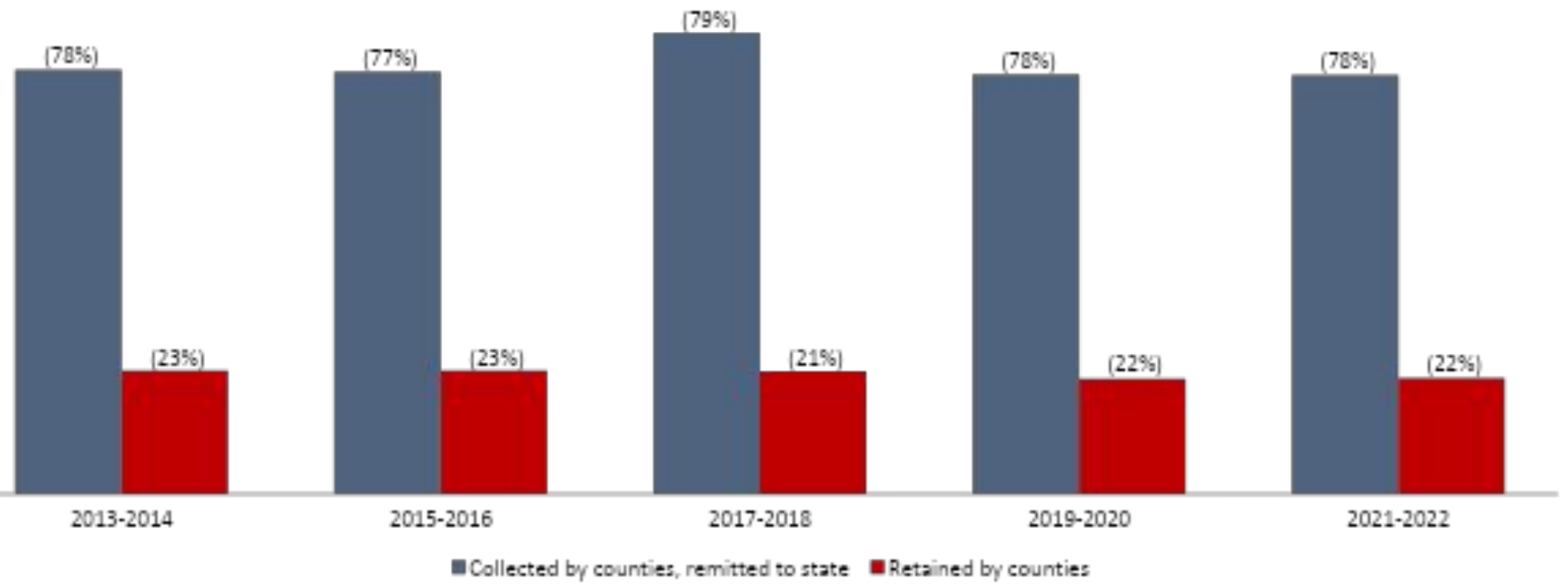
County Expenditures =
\$230 million
(calendar year 2021)

Fees/ Fines/ Forfeitures =
\$136.0M
(2021-22)

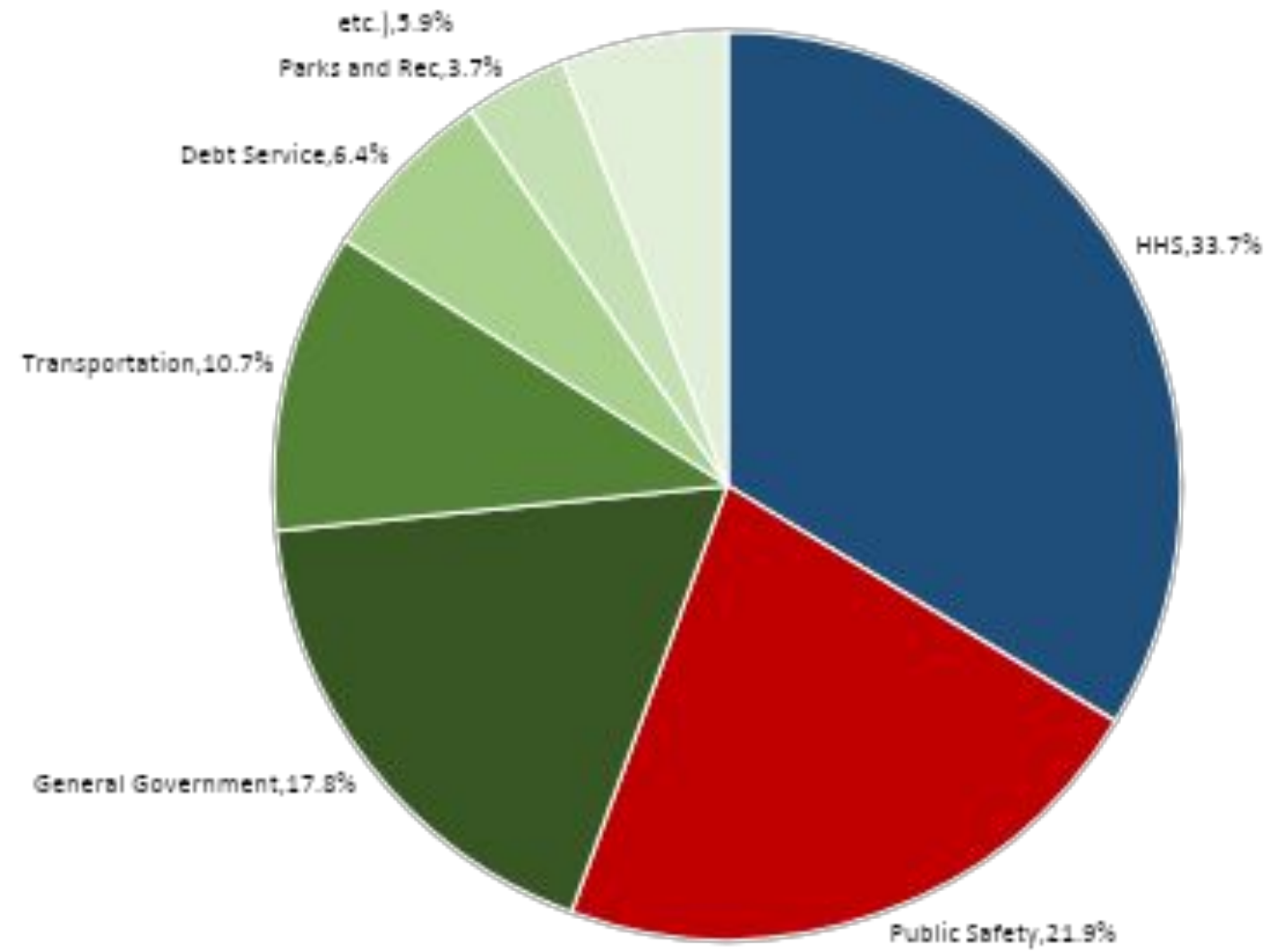




Court Fees, Fines, & Forfeitures



County Expenditures 2023

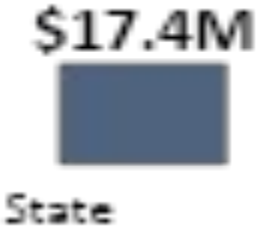


** 2023 figures are estimates based on growth of 2022 data from WI DOR, CMRE

State vs County “Commitment”

Total state spending net of county remittance.

- Includes:
- Guardian ad Litem Payments
 - Interpreter reimbursements



2013-2014

Total County spending after remittance to state

Total state spending net of county remittance.

- Includes:
- Circuit Court cost appropriation (GPR)



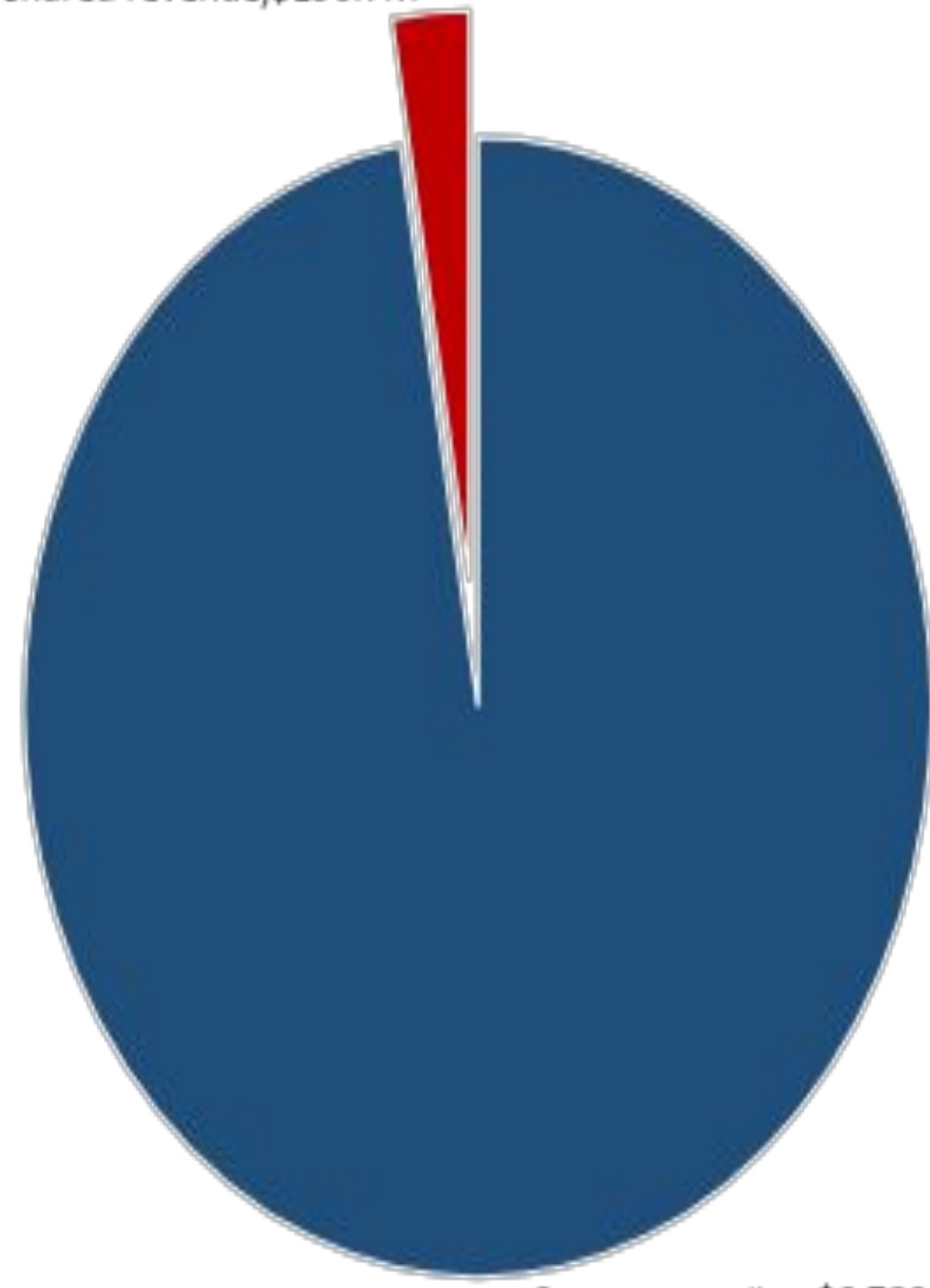
2021-2022





Shared Revenue

TOTAL SHARED REVENUE, \$190.7M



County spending \$6,700.7M

- 2024 shared revenue is 2.8% of 2023 county spending
- Shared revenue ranges from 0.7% to 13.7% of individual county spending

Scale of Funding Tipping Toward Counties

- ❖ State Public Defender
 - Counties have to pay for indigent defendants who qualify for State Public Defender
- ❖ Guardian ad Litem – Majority of Costs Passed on to Counties
 - 2022 total cost \$15.4M (\$5.8M reimbursed)
- ❖ Assistant District Attorneys
 - ADA's are supposed to be funded by the state
 - Counties are paying for additional ADA's at their own expense
- ❖ Victim Witness Appropriation
 - Counties receiving less than 50%
- ❖ Increased Security Costs
 - Total Costs – Mostly at County Expense



Scale of Funding Tipping Toward Counties

Interpreters

For some, costs for interpreters have doubled or tripled in 5 years
(39% growth in 2022)

2022 total cost \$3.2M (only \$808,102 reimbursed)

Only 108 individuals are certified in WI as interpreters. Of those
57 are certified for Spanish.





Costs Beyond The Surface

- Jail Costs / Juvenile Detention / Out-of-Home Placement Costs
- Mental Health
- Transport Costs
- Court Security
- Courtroom and Building Costs



Questions?

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