



Judicial Council of Georgia Administrative Office of the Courts

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PRESS RELEASE

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Georgia Courts to Receive American Rescue Plan Act Funds to Address Backlog of Cases, Focusing on Serious Violent Felonies

Atlanta – Supreme Court of Georgia Chief Justice David E. Nahmias announced today that Gov. Brian P. Kemp has allocated up to \$110 million in federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds to address backlogs of court cases, particularly cases involving serious violent felonies.

“Most of our state’s government agencies and businesses slowed down or stopped during the COVID pandemic,” said Chief Justice Nahmias, who is also Chair of the Judicial Council of Georgia. “The meals that restaurants did not serve will never be served, and the airline flights that were canceled have not been rescheduled. But the court cases that could not be decided, particularly when jury trials could not be held safely, remain pending and must be resolved, along with all of the new cases being filed. So we greatly appreciate the Governor’s allocation of ARPA funds to help the judicial system work through the case backlogs and get the courts on which our citizens and businesses depend back on track.”

The Governor’s allocation for grants to eligible courts, prosecutors, and related agencies will come from the \$4.8 billion in ARPA funds apportioned to the State of Georgia to mitigate negative economic impacts caused by the COVID-19 public health emergency. Georgia’s judiciary operated under a Statewide Judicial Emergency Order from March 2020 through June 2021, and necessary limitations on court operations to protect the health of those working in and coming to courthouses during this time resulted in a significant backlog of criminal and civil cases, particularly those requiring jury trials to resolve. Since the judicial emergency order expired on June 30, 2021, courts have increased efforts to resolve cases, but the ongoing pandemic continues to limit the pace and scale of court operations as public health measures remain in place. This ARPA funding will provide an opportunity for eligible courts, prosecutors, and related agencies to hire additional staff and acquire temporary workspaces and courtroom facilities to address the backlog of cases. However, priority will be given to eliminating the backlog of serious violent felony cases in superior

courts around the state, given the impact of those cases on public safety and the significant burdens they place on the judicial system. Serious violent felonies include murder, armed robbery, kidnapping, rape, aggravated child molestation, aggravated sodomy, and aggravated sexual battery.

The Judicial Council of Georgia, which serves as the policymaking body for the judicial branch, has established the Ad Hoc Committee on American Rescue Plan Act Funding to oversee the application process for grants to eligible courts, prosecutors, and related agencies. Supreme Court of Georgia Presiding Justice Michael P. Boggs will serve as the Committee's Chair, and the Judicial Council's Administrative Office of the Courts will facilitate the grant application, awarding, compliance, and reporting processes. The funds must be spent by December 31, 2024.

"We look forward to distributing these funds as soon as possible to assist our courts in addressing the backlog of cases involving serious violent crimes, which will aid in improving public safety," said Presiding Justice Boggs.

More information on grant requirements, application timelines, and contact information is forthcoming at <https://jcaoc.georgiacourts.gov/>.

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