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Comptroller

To: Members of the 114th General Assembly

From: Jason Mumpower, Tennessee Comptroller of the Treasury

Date: February 11, 2026

Subject: Tennessee District Attorneys General and District Public Defenders
Weighted Caseload Studies

A blue ink handwritten signature of Jason E. Mumpower.

Tennessee Code Annotated 16-2-513 requires the Comptroller's Office to annually update weighted caseload studies for district attorneys general and public defenders. Weighted caseload studies compare available resources (e.g., the number of district attorneys, the time public defenders have available to carry out their duties) with the estimated resources needed (i.e., the number of full-time equivalent staff needed to process all the cases in a particular district).

The Comptroller's Office will not publish the 2026 weighted caseload studies for Tennessee's district attorneys general and district public defenders because of incomplete data from General Sessions courts and outdated case weights.

Regarding incomplete data from General Sessions courts: some judicial districts have not yet implemented the preferred system needed to upload data from their General Sessions courts, which are under local jurisdiction, into the General Sessions Data Repository (GSDR). The GSDR was created in 2021 to compile all of the data from General Sessions courts in a single database.

As of January 2026, nine counties do not upload data from their General Sessions courts to the GSDR. These counties are Anderson, Carter, Monroe, Shelby, Knox, Hamilton, Davidson, Marion, and Henderson counties. The Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) is currently working with all nine counties so that they will begin uploading all of their General Sessions court data into the GSDR. General Sessions data is important for weighted caseload purposes because district attorneys and public defenders spend some of their time working on cases in General Sessions courts.

In addition to incomplete data, there is another step to take before producing weighted caseload studies for district attorneys and public defenders: conducting new time studies so that the case weights can be updated. The time studies for district attorneys and public defenders have not been updated for over two decades.

Time studies are used to determine the average time typically spent on each type of case. Periodically updating the case weights ensures developments that affect the time needed to process cases – such as new laws, technological changes, and population shifts – are taken into account. The National

Center for State Courts (NCSC), which specializes in conducting time studies and updated the case weights for Tennessee's judicial weighted caseload study in 2025,^A suggests conducting new time studies every five to seven years. Based on that standard, an update to the time studies used for district attorneys and public defenders (last updated in 1999) is long overdue.

The Comptroller's Office requested a quote from the NCSC to conduct a time study and update the case weights for district attorneys general and public defenders. As of November 2025, the total cost of updating the weights for district attorneys is \$156,375. The process would take 12 months. A separate quote was provided for public defenders. The total cost for public defenders was also \$156,375, and the timeline was also 12 months.

The Comptroller's Office currently has \$89,466 available in the budget for weighted caseload studies.

Note: The District Attorneys General Conference (DAGC) recently released a 2025 Workload Study Report, which addresses the staffing needs of assistant district attorneys, victim-witness coordinators, criminal investigators, and criminal secretaries across the state. The DAGC study found current staffing levels fall short in several roles, including assistant district attorney coverage for higher-level felonies. The study also highlights several data limitations, including incomplete data from General Sessions courts. The Public Defenders Conference is also working to collect case data to better assess staffing levels and workload demands and plans to release their own workload study using national standards for public defender workloads. The Public Defenders Conference faces similar issues with data availability.

^A State law requires the Comptroller's Office to annually update a weighted caseload study for the state's trial court judges. The latest judicial weighted caseload study update can be accessed at <https://comptroller.tn.gov/office-functions/research-and-education-accountability/other-collections/weighted-caseload-studies0.html>.