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Budget Committee Members,

For the last 12 years the Probate Court has operated with the same number of staff members that were employed by the court beginning in 1980. In the years since that time the workload of the court has increased tremendously. I have attached one table that illustrates the total caseload of the court in comparison to the staffing level dating back to 2001. In addition to this I have attached a second table that illustrates a staffing level and caseload comparison between Lumpkin, Dawson, White and Union County Probate Court.

The counties chosen for comparison purposes are demographically similar to Lumpkin County, and all of the courts chosen have the same core areas of jurisdiction with a few exceptions. The first table shows a substantial increase in the services provided in 3 of 4 areas. The second table shows that the total amount of activity combining all vital functions of the court together for Lumpkin County Probate Court is between 50% and 61% more than the subject counties chosen for comparison.

The Probate Court cannot continue to operate efficiently and effectively at the current staffing level. The Estate Clerk and the Traffic Clerk spend one half of each day performing the duties of a receptionist which prohibits them from being able to perform their assigned duties efficiently and results in a back log in all areas. As the case load of the court has increased the revenue has increased as well. The total amount of revenue for the Probate Court between 2001 and 2016 was \$4,482,972. In contrast the expenditures have been an example of the fiscal

conservatism exercised by the court over the last 16 years. The total amount of expenditures for the Probate Court between 2001 and 2016 was \$3,404,795. This has resulted in revenues that exceed expenditures by \$1,078,132.

The court has also been completely self-sufficient for the last 12 years in the area of technology expenses. Through an act of local legislation the court has collected a technology fee for every adjudicated traffic citation since 2005. This technology fee has been utilized to pay for the software program utilized by the court, and all computer purchases and the maintenance of those devices. Beginning this year the technology fee is being utilized to pay the lease for the 2 copy machines used by the court, as well as all communication expenses which include land line and mobile devices.

Over the last 16 years during my tenure as Probate Judge I have never requested any additional personnel. The decision to do so is something that I have agonized over for several months. However, based upon the substantial increase in the workload for the court over the last several years, I feel that there is no longer an alternative for the court to continue to efficiently and effectively perform the duties required of it.

Sincerely,



Michael A. Chastain

Probate Court Judge Lumpkin County

STAFFING AND CASELOAD COMPARISON BY COUNTY

	<u>DAWSON</u> Number of Full Time Clerks: 3	<u>LUMPKIN</u> Number of Full Time Clerks: 2	<u>UNION</u> Number of Full Time Clerks: 3	<u>WHITE</u> Number of Full Time Clerks: 3
CONCEALED WEAPONS CARRY LICENSES ISSUED	913	996	1085	474
MARRIAGE LICENSE APPLICATIONS	185	304	166	261
TRAFFIC CITATIONS	2851 *NO DUI CASES	2184	1098	1627
ESTATE FILINGS	142	139	148	131
GUARDIANSHIP FILINGS	38	34	23	41
VITAL RECORDS ISSUED	0 DAWSON COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT	2810	1486	1778
TOTAL OF YEARLY ACTIVITY	4129	6467	4006	4312

Probate Court Staffing History

1980- 2nd Full Time Clerk Added

2000- 2 Full Time Clerks & 1 Part Time Clerk

2001- 3 Full Time Clerks

2004- 2 Full Time Clerks & 1 Part Time Clerk

2005- Present- 2 Full Time Clerks

PROBATE COURT STAFFING HISTORY AND CASELOAD COMPARISON BASED ON STAFFING LEVELS

YEARLY CASELOAD ACTIVITY	2001	2004	2016
NUMBER OF PROBATE COURT EMPLOYEES	3 FULL TIME CLERKS	2 FULL TIME CLERKS & 1 PART TIME CLERK	2 FULL TIME CLERKS
CONCEALED WEAPONS CARRY LICENCES ISSUED	226	210	996
MARRIAGE LICENSE APPLICATIONS	163	256	304
TRAFFIC CITATIONS	2603	2245	2184
ESTATE AND GUARDIANSHIP FILINGS	118	145	173