

Supreme Court of Texas
Summary of Budget Recommendations - Senate

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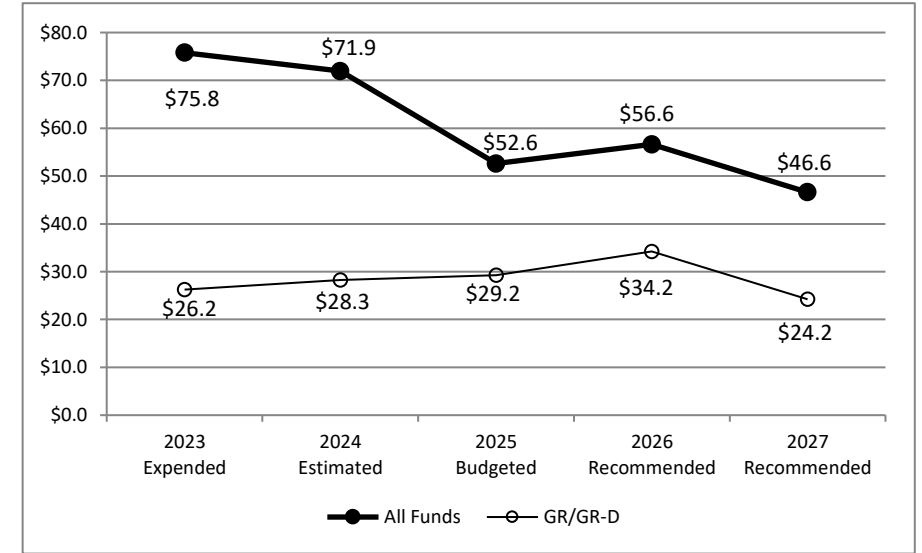
The Honorable James Blacklock, Chief Justice

Jordan Parr, LBB Analyst

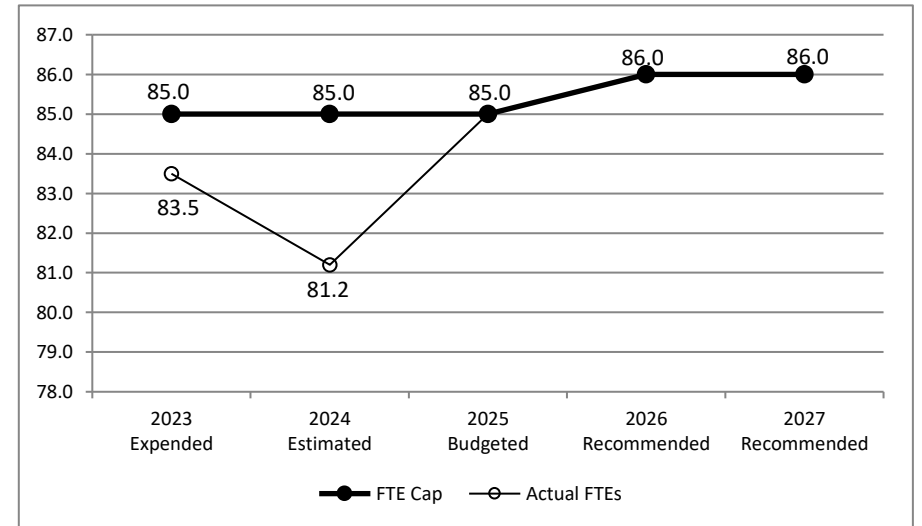
Method of Financing	2024-25 Base	2026-27 Recommended	Biennial Change (\$)	Biennial Change (%)
General Revenue Funds	\$47,522,846	\$48,460,028	\$937,182	2.0%
GR Dedicated Funds	\$10,000,000	\$10,000,000	\$0	0.0%
<i>Total GR-Related Funds</i>	<i>\$57,522,846</i>	<i>\$58,460,028</i>	<i>\$937,182</i>	<i>1.6%</i>
Federal Funds	\$3,763,103	\$3,876,822	\$113,719	3.0%
Other	\$63,241,948	\$40,887,974	(\$22,353,974)	(35.3%)
All Funds	\$124,527,897	\$103,224,824	(\$21,303,073)	(17.1%)

	FY 2025 Budgeted	FY 2027 Recommended	Biennial Change	Percent Change
FTEs	85.0	86.0	1.0	1.2%

Historical Funding Levels (Millions)



Historical Full-Time-Equivalent Employees (FTEs)



The bill pattern for this agency (2026-27 Recommended) represents an estimated 98.9% of the agency's estimated total available funds for the 2026-27 biennium.

Supreme Court of Texas
Summary of Funding Changes and Recommendations - Senate

Funding Changes and Recommendations for the 2026-27 Biennium compared to the 2024-25 Base Spending Level (in millions)	General Revenue	GR-Dedicated	Federal Funds	Other Funds	All Funds	Strategy in Appendix A
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SIGNIFICANT Funding Changes and Recommendations (each issue is explained in Section 3 and additional details are provided in Appendix A):

A)	General Revenue for inflationary increases in operating costs, including supplies and contracts for LexisNexis and Westlaw.	\$0.2	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.2	A.1.1, B.1.4
B)	Other Funds decrease due to an estimated reduction in collections to Judicial Fund No. 573, including judicial fees and civil penalties collected by the Office of the Attorney General. (See also, Selected Fiscal and Policy Issue #1)	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	(\$21.2)	(\$21.2)	B.1.1
C)	General Revenue increase to provide a salary adjustment to all Deputy Clerk positions.	\$0.1	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.1	A.1.1
D)	General Revenue increase to provide 1.0 Mandamus Attorney position.	\$0.3	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.3	A.1.1

OTHER Funding Changes and Recommendations (these issues are not addressed in Section 3 but details are provided in Appendix A):

E)	Increase in funding to biennialize the statewide salary adjustments included in the 2024-25 appropriations.	\$0.4	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.4	A.1.1, B.1.3, B.1.4
F)	Federal Funds increase for reimbursements for federal salaries.	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.1	\$0.0	\$0.1	B.1.3
G)	Other Funds decrease related to Interagency Contracts with the Department of Family Protective Services.	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	(\$1.0)	(\$1.0)	B.1.3
H)	Other Funds decrease to adjust the estimated amount of Appropriated Receipts to align with recent collections.	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	(\$0.1)	(\$0.1)	A.1.1

TOTAL SIGNIFICANT & OTHER Funding Changes and Recommendations (in millions)	\$1.0	\$0.0	\$0.1	(\$22.3)	(\$21.2)	As Listed
<i>SIGNIFICANT & OTHER Funding Increases</i>	\$1.0	\$0.0	\$0.1	\$0.0	\$1.1	As Listed
<i>SIGNIFICANT & OTHER Funding Decreases</i>	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	(\$22.3)	(\$22.3)	As Listed

NOTE: Totals may not sum due to rounding.

**Supreme Court of Texas
Selected Fiscal and Policy Issues - Senate**

1. **Basic Civil Legal Services.** Recommendations for Basic Civil Legal Services (BCLS) funds provide an All Funds total of \$80.3 million, a decrease of \$21.2 million from 2024-25 spending levels. The Supreme Court of Texas (SCOT) estimates that collected revenues and available fund balances for Judicial Fund No. 573 (Fund 573) will total \$34.3 million, equivalent to 2024-25 appropriated amounts. Recommendations for BCLS also include \$31.0 million in General Revenue, \$10.0 million in General Revenue - Dedicated Sexual Assault Program Account No. 5010 to provide basic civil legal services to victims of sexual assault, and \$5.0 million in interagency contracts with the Office of the Attorney General (OAG) from the Crime Victims Compensation Fund No. 469.

Fund 573 revenues include a portion of consolidated civil filing fees under Local Government Code Section 133.151; 12.2667 percent of court costs paid by people convicted of an offense; the net amount of civil penalties recovered by the OAG, not to exceed \$50.0 million per fiscal year; 50 percent of settlements and penalties collected by district or county attorneys for civil liability cases related to synthetic controlled substances; judicial fees collected by SCOT and Courts of Appeals, not to exceed fifty dollars; and abandoned monies in Interest on Lawyers Trust Accounts (IOLTA) or client trust accounts held by a law firm.

According to the court, civil penalties recovered by the OAG are difficult to determine since settlement terms, collection timing, and allocation of collections are decided by the OAG without the court’s participation. Since this revenue is dependent on the type, frequency, and settlement amount of certain court cases, state funds for BCLS have fluctuated.

The two charts below show the All Funds total for BCLS both within and outside of the General Appropriations Act (GAA) in the 2024-25 biennium and the recommended and estimated totals for the 2026-27 biennium, as well as the total funding from both sources.

Funds Within the GAA - Basic Civil Legal Services (Fiscal Year)

	2024 Estimated	2025 Budgeted	2024-25 Base	2026 Recommended	2027 Recommended	2026-27 Recommended	Change from 2024-25 to 2026-27 (\$)	Change from 2024-25 to 2026-27 (%)
General Revenue	\$ 15,490,392	\$ 15,490,392	\$ 30,980,784	\$ 15,490,392	\$ 15,490,392	\$ 30,980,784	\$ -	0.0%
General Revenue—Dedicated Sexual Assault Program No. 5010	\$ 5,000,000	\$ 5,000,000	\$ 10,000,000	\$ 10,000,000	\$ -	\$ 10,000,000	\$ -	0.0%
Judicial Fund No. 573	\$ 38,391,814	\$ 17,144,000	\$ 55,535,814	\$ 17,144,000	\$ 17,144,000	\$ 34,288,000	\$ (21,247,814)	(38.3%)
IAC with Attorney General (Crime Victims Compensation Fund No. 469)	\$ 2,500,000	\$ 2,500,000	\$ 5,000,000	\$ 2,500,000	\$ 2,500,000	\$ 5,000,000	\$ -	0.0%
Total BCLS Funding Within the GAA	\$ 61,382,206	\$ 40,134,392	\$ 101,516,598	\$ 45,134,392	\$ 35,134,392	\$ 80,268,784	\$ (21,247,814)	(20.9%)

Funds Outside the GAA - Basic Civil Legal Services (Calendar Year)

	2024 Estimated	2025 Estimated	2024-25 Total	2026 Estimated	2027 Estimated	2026-27 Total	Change from 2024-25 to 2026-27 (\$)	Change from 2024-25 to 2026-27 (%)
Interest on Lawyers Trust Accounts (IOLTA)	\$ 80,000,000	\$ 67,000,000	\$ 147,000,000	\$ 57,000,000	\$ 49,000,000	\$ 106,000,000	\$ (41,000,000)	(27.9%)
Legal Services Corporation and Other Federal Funding	\$ 130,000,000	\$ 130,000,000	\$ 260,000,000	\$ 130,000,000	\$ 130,000,000	\$ 260,000,000	\$ -	0.0%
Other (Donations and Grants from Foundations)	\$ 40,000,000	\$ 40,000,000	\$ 80,000,000	\$ 41,200,000	\$ 41,200,000	\$ 82,400,000	\$ 2,400,000	3.0%
Total BCLS Funding Outside GAA	\$ 250,000,000	\$ 237,000,000	\$ 487,000,000	\$ 228,200,000	\$ 220,200,000	\$ 448,400,000	\$ (38,600,000)	(7.9%)
Total BCLS Funding from All Revenue Sources	\$ 311,382,206	\$ 277,134,392	\$ 588,516,598	\$ 273,334,392	\$ 255,334,392	\$ 528,668,784	\$ (59,847,814)	(10.2%)

Source: Texas Access to Justice Foundation, Supreme Court of Texas

2. **BCLS Funds Outside the GAA.** As shown in the chart above, BCLS also receives funding from sources outside the GAA, including donations and grants from foundations, Legal Services Corporation and other federal funding, and the interest generated by money held by lawyers on behalf of their clients (IOLTA). The Texas Access to Justice Foundation (TAJF), which administers these funds on behalf of the court, projects \$260.0 million in Legal Services Corporation and other federal funding being available in 2026-27, which continues 2025-26 levels; \$82.4 million in donations and grants, a 3.0 percent increase over 2024-25 spending levels; and \$106.0 million in IOLTA revenue, a decrease of 27.9 percent from 2024-25 spending levels.

According to TAJF, the primary reason for the decline in BCLS revenue is due to IOLTA collections. Lawyers who handle money for their clients participate in the IOLTA program by depositing the funds in a participating financial institution, who transfers the interest earned on those funds to TAJF. As result of the interest rate reductions announced by the Federal Reserve in 2024, revenue to the fund is anticipated to decline. As of October 2024, TAJF projects \$57.0 million in revenue in 2026 and approximately \$49.0 million in 2027, a decrease of approximately 27.9 percent from 2024-25 spending levels.

3. **Court Staffing.** The Eighty-eighth Legislature, Regular Session, 2023, appropriated an additional \$1.1 million in General Revenue for a 10 percent salary adjustment. According to the court, while the effect of the salary adjustments has had a positive impact on retention and recruitment, the court still struggles to attract attorneys due to industry competition and increased workloads for existing staff.

A) Court Administration

According to the court, the mean salary of its attorney positions is \$136,400 and the mean salary of its Deputy Clerk positions is \$59,000, which are below other appellate courts and the Solicitor General of Texas’s office. Additionally, recruitment and retention has been impacted by increased mandamus filings. The court currently has 1.0 permanently funded staff attorney, and 1.0 temporary attorney dedicated to processing 262 mandamus cases, or approximately 131 cases per attorney position. According to the court, the growth rate for mandamus filings from FY2022-2024 was approximately 18 percent, of which 55 percent were emergency matters.

Recommendations include the court’s request for \$0.2 million in General Revenue for 1.0 attorney position to assist with mandamus filings and emergent matters and \$0.1 million in General Revenue to increase the salary for five Deputy Clerk positions.

B) Judicial Commission on Mental Health

The court has also identified a need for additional personnel for the Judicial Commission on Mental Health to assist with programmatic duties, including curriculum creation and coordination for the annual Judicial Summit on Mental Health, the Court Liaison Pilot Program, the County Mental Health Law Plan, and the Mental Health Courts Collaborative. Recommendations provide \$3.0 million in General Revenue and 6.0 FTEs positions for the Commission, an increase of \$0.1 million from 2024-25 spending levels.

Recommendations do not include the agency's request for \$0.2 million in General Revenue for 1.0 Program Specialist position to assist with curriculum creations and statewide training (See also, Items Not Included in Recommendations #2).

C) Children's Commission

According to a report provided by the newly created Juvenile Justice Committee within the Children's Commission, Texas judges have identified the need for additional capacity to support the Children's Commission directive to provide guidance to judges hearing certain juvenile justice cases. The report found that existing resources, including trainings provided by the Juvenile Section of the State Bar of Texas, the Texas Juvenile Law publication maintained by The Texas Juvenile Justice Department, and the Texas Juvenile Mental Health and Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities Law Bench Book, were insufficient in providing guidance.

Recommendations do not include the agency's request for \$0.1 million in General Revenue for 1.0 Juvenile Justice staff attorney position for the Children's Commission to assist with judicial education, bench card creation, peer-to-peer support, and cross system collaboration (See also, Items Not Included in Recommendations #2).

4. **Article-Wide 6 Percent Salary Increase for Non-Judicial Staff.** Recommendations do not include \$9.8 million in All Funds, including \$9.6 million in General Revenue and \$0.2 million in Other Funds, requested by all Article IV agencies to provide a 6.0 percent salary increase for non-judicial staff.

The total portion of this request for the Supreme Court totals \$0.9 million in General Revenue funding for the 2026-27 biennium (See also, Items Not Included in Recommendations #1).

5. **Local Mental Health Court Liaison Program.** In 2021, the Judicial Commission on Mental Health (JCMH) created a four-year pilot program to fund a Court Mental Health Liaison position in Grayson, Denton, and Smith counties. The liaisons were directed to help courts, reduce recidivism, reduce the waitlist for in-patient competency restorations services, and improve mental health placements for individuals charged with non-violent misdemeanors.

Recommendations do not include the court's request for \$1.5 million in General Revenue for the expansion of the Local Court Liaison Pilot Program to five additional counties (See also, Items Not Included in Recommendations #5).

According to the Preliminary Data Summary Report, provided by the JCMH and National Center for State Courts, since its implementation, the pilot program has increased coordination between local providers to identify individual mental health care needs, increased coordination with Local Mental Health Authorities in diversion efforts and preventing the misuse of the criminal legal system, and identified potential cost-savings.

- 6. **Judicial Salaries.** Recommendations provide \$3.6 million in All Funds, including \$2.9 million in estimated General Revenue funds and \$0.7 million in Judicial Fund No. 573, for judicial compensation. This maintains 2024-25 spending levels to cover the salary, benefits, and longevity costs for anticipated increases in judicial tenure at the Supreme Court of Texas (SCOT) during the 2026-27 biennium.

Base salaries for justices of the SCOT are linked to the base salary of a district judge under the tiered, tenure-based compensation structure established by Government Code §659.012. Statute sets the base salary for a SCOT justice at 120 percent of the district judge base salary (\$168,000) for the first four years of their tenure. When their tenure is between 4 and 8 years, the justice earns 110 percent of their \$168,000 base salary (\$184,800). A justice with over 8 years of tenure earns a salary that's 120 percent of their \$168,000 base salary (\$201,600). Justice salaries are funded through an estimated and non-transferrable strategy isolating required compensation appropriations and providing flexibility to adjust funding levels for unanticipated changes in compensation obligations resulting from tenure changes and elections or appointments of persons with years of service credits differing from the previous position holder

The Judicial Compensation Commission has requested a 30 percent increase to the base salary of a district judge from \$140,000 per year to \$182,000. Recommendations do not include additional funding that would be statutorily required for all judicial positions at the court if the base salary was increased.

**Supreme Court of Texas
Rider Highlights - Senate**

Modification of Existing Riders

1. Recommendations modify Rider 3(a)(b), Court Improvement Grants, to increase rider authority for the Judicial Commission on Mental Health from \$1.3 million to \$1.4 million.

2. The following riders include recommendations to remove obsolete language, make conforming changes such as updating fiscal years and amounts to reflect funding recommendations, and clarify deadlines: Rider 2, Basic Civil Legal Services, Rider 3, Court Improvement Projects, Rider 4, Texas Young Lawyers License Receipts, and Rider 5, Supreme Court Support Fees.

Deleted Riders

1. Recommendations delete Rider 7, Contingency for Behavioral Health Funds, as all provisions are currently covered in Article IX, Section 10.04, Statewide Behavioral Health Strategic Plan and Coordinated Expenditures.

Supreme Court of Texas
Items Not Included in Recommendations - Senate

		2026-27 Biennial Total			Information Technology Involved?	Contracting Involved?	Estimated Continued Cost 2028-29
		GR & GR-D	All Funds	FTEs			
Agency Exceptional Items Not Included (in agency priority order)							
1)	6% Judiciary-Wide Inflation Relief and Staff Retention and Recruitment. General Revenue funding to provide a 6 percent salary increase for non-judicial staff (See also, Selected Fiscal and Policy Issue #4).	\$857,362	\$857,362	0.0	No	No	\$857,362
2)	Two Additional FTE's. General Revenue funding for 2.0 FTEs, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1.0 Children's Commission Staff Attorney to provide Juvenile Justice Training; and • 1.0 Program Specialist for Curriculum Creation and Statewide Training provided by the Judicial Commission on Mental Health. (See also, Selected Fiscal and Policy Issue #3). 	\$393,212	\$393,212	2.0	No	No	\$393,212
3)	Travel Funding for Oral Arguments. General Revenue funding for the court to continue to hear out-of-town oral arguments.	\$70,000	\$70,000	0.0	No	No	\$70,000
4)	Juvenile Justice Program - Operational Funding. General Revenue funding to provide judicial training in the juvenile justice system.	\$106,000	\$106,000	0.0	No	No	\$106,000
5)	Expansion of Local Court Liaison Pilot Program. General Revenue funding to create pilot sites in five additional counties (See also, Selected Fiscal and Policy Issue #5).	\$1,453,500	\$1,453,500	0.0	No	No	\$0
TOTAL Items Not Included in Recommendations		\$2,880,074	\$2,880,074	2.0			\$1,426,574

Note: Items listed above reflect agency exceptional items as of their Legislative Appropriations Request and may be updated in future documents.

**Supreme Court of Texas
Appendices - Senate**

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* Appendix is not included - no significant information to report

Supreme Court of Texas
Funding Changes and Recommendations by Strategy - Senate -- ALL FUNDS

Strategy/Goal	2024-25 Base	2026-27 Recommended	Biennial Change	% Change	Comments
APPELLATE COURT OPERATIONS A.1.1	\$11,444,042	\$12,102,798	\$658,756	5.8%	Recommendations reflect a \$297,215 increase in General Revenue funding to biennialize the statewide salary adjustments included in the 2024-25 appropriations, a \$116,000 increase in General Revenue for inflationary costs to court operations, including consumable supplies and subscriptions to LexisNexis/Westlaw, a \$65,000 increase in General Revenue for adjustments to five Deputy Clerk positions, a \$267,892 increase to hire an additional 1.0 Mandamus Attorney, offset by a decrease of \$96,351 in Appropriated Receipts related to court fee collections.
APPELLATE JUSTICE SALARIES A.1.2	\$3,630,120	\$3,630,120	\$0	0.0%	
Total, Goal A, APPELLATE COURT OPERATIONS	\$15,074,162	\$15,732,918	\$658,756	4.4%	
BASIC CIVIL LEGAL SERVICES B.1.1	\$101,516,598	\$80,268,784	(\$21,247,814)	(20.9%)	Recommendations reflect a estimated decrease of \$21,247,814 in revenue collections in Judicial Fund No. 573 for the 2026-27 biennium.
MULTI-DISTRICT LITIGATION B.1.2	\$230,000	\$230,000	\$0	0.0%	
CHILDREN'S COMMISSION B.1.3	\$4,909,598	\$4,059,070	(\$850,528)	(17.3%)	Recommendations reflect a decrease of \$1,009,809 in Interagency Contracts with the Department of Family and Protective Services for the 2026-27 biennium, offset by an increase of \$113,719 in Federal Funds reimbursements for federal salaries, and an increase of \$45,562 in General Revenue to biennialize the statewide salary adjustment in the 2024-25 appropriations.
JUDICIAL COMMISSION ON MENTAL HLTH B.1.4	\$2,797,539	\$2,934,052	\$136,513	4.9%	Recommendations reflect an \$32,513 increase in General Revenue funding to biennialize the statewide salary adjustment in the 2024-25 appropriations and a \$104,000 increase in General Revenue for increased inflationary costs to court operations, including consumable supplies and subscriptions to LexisNexis/Westlaw.
Total, Goal B, COURT PROGRAMS	\$109,453,735	\$87,491,906	(\$21,961,829)	(20.1%)	
Grand Total, All Strategies	\$124,527,897	\$103,224,824	(\$21,303,073)	(17.1%)	

**Supreme Court of Texas
FTE Highlights - Senate**

Full-Time-Equivalent Positions	Expended 2023	Expended 2024	Budgeted 2025	Recommended 2026	Recommended 2027
Cap	85.0	85.0	85.0	86.0	86.0
Actual/Budgeted	83.5	81.2	85.0	NA	NA

Schedule of Exempt Positions (Cap)					
Chief Justice (1)	\$170,500	\$170,500	\$170,500	\$170,500	\$170,500
Justice (8)	\$168,000	\$168,000	\$168,000	\$168,000	\$168,000

Notes:

- a) The Supreme Court of Texas is exempted from Article IX, Section 6.10, which limits the number of FTEs paid from appropriated funds to the amounts specified in the General Appropriations Act.
- b) The base salaries for justices of the Supreme Court of Texas are linked to the base salary of a district judge under the tiered, tenure-based compensation structure established by Government Code §659.012. Statute sets the base salary for a justice, other than the chief justice, of the Supreme Court of Texas at 120.0 percent of the district judge base salary (\$168,000) for the first four years of their tenure. When their tenure is between 4 and 8 years, the justice earns 110.0 percent of their \$168,000 base salary (\$184,800). A justice with over 8 years of tenure earns a salary that's 120.0 percent of their \$168,000 base salary (\$201,600).
- c) State Auditor's Office is the source for the fiscal year 2023 and 2024 annual average (actual) FTE level.