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*Iowa Department of Justice*

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**DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE**

**ATTORNEY GENERAL TOM MILLER**

**PRESENTATION TO**

**JUSTICE SYSTEMS**

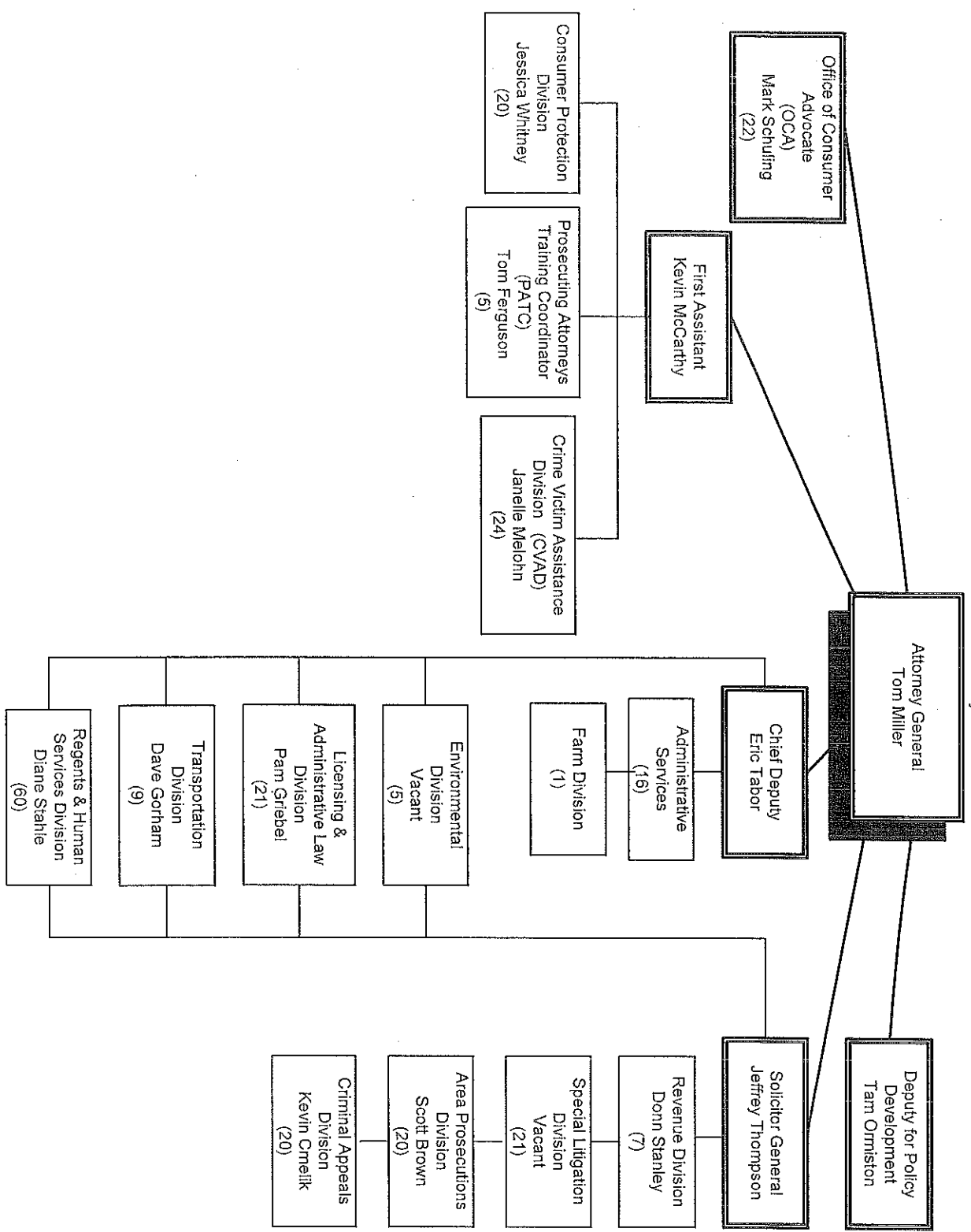
**APPROPRIATIONS SUBCOMMITTEE**

**February 25, 2016**

# Department of Justice

## Iowa Attorney General's Office

February 2016



**Department of Justice**  
**Requests for General Fund Appropriations**

**Office of the Attorney General**

The Department respectfully requests the Legislature to approve a status quo budget for the Office of Attorney General for FY17 - \$7,989,905.

**Iowa Mediation Service**

The Department is required to contract with a non-profit organization to provide mandatory farm mediation services. Since the farm crisis of the 1980's, the Department has contracted with the Iowa Mediation Service ("IMS"). During the 30-year tenure of this program, it has handled approximately 40,000 farmer-creditor cases where most revolve around farm debt. More than 70% of these cases reach an agreement, including mediation releases that allow entities to proceed with legal action. Farmers and lenders have used IMS mediators to satisfactorily resolve their disputes and as a result, farmers have remained on their farms and lenders have retained their customers. Agricultural economists project that the need for such mediation is set to increase due to lower commodity prices and decreasing profit margins resulting in the inability to meet debt repayment.

For FY86-FY92, the legislature appropriated amounts ranging from \$150,000 - \$300,000, annually, to the Department for these farm mediation services. For FY08-09, the Legislature appropriated \$300,000, annually, to the Department for these services.

In addition to farm mediation, IMS has received state monies to provide other types of mediation services: (1) money from the Mortgage Servicing Settlement Fund for mortgage foreclosure mediations and (2) money from the Department of Human Services for family mediations. These resources ended on June 30, 2015. As a result, IMS is experiencing severe budget challenges in providing its core mandatory farm mediation services. IMS is cutting costs and seeking private donations. However, going forward, state assistance is necessary.

The Department respectfully requests the Legislature to re-establish a \$300,000 line item appropriation for farm mediation services for FY17.

**Legal Services**

The Department administers a state grant that funds civil legal services for indigent Iowans. Due to the end of funding for representation in foreclosure defense cases from the Mortgage Servicing Settlement Fund, substantial cuts in federal funding, reductions in other revenues, and rising employee costs, Iowa Legal Aid is unable to provide services to thousands of eligible individuals. The current state appropriation for Iowa Legal Aid is \$2,400,000. The

Board of Directors of Iowa Legal Aid has requested that state funding be increased by \$500,000 for FY17 - **\$2,900,000**.

### **Crime Victim Assistance Grants**

The Department administers a grant program that funds local domestic abuse, sexual abuse, and shelter-based programs. The Department respectfully requests the Legislature to approve a status quo budget for victim services for - **\$6,734,400**.

The Department expects to receive a substantial increase in federal funding for victim assistance grants. To properly administer the additional federal funds, the Department is requesting 5 additional FTEs – 4 program planners and 1 accounting clerk.