

TENNESSEE GENERAL ASSEMBLY
FISCAL REVIEW COMMITTEE



FISCAL NOTE

HB 636 - SB 575

February 25, 2019

SUMMARY OF BILL: Creates the new designation of Senior General Sessions and Senior Juvenile Judge (Senior Judge). Establishes a compensation and travel reimbursement rate for Senior Judges, paid by the Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC). Requires local governments to provide quarters and personnel for any appointed Senior Judge.

ESTIMATED FISCAL IMPACT:

Increase State Expenditures – Exceeds \$30,000

Assumptions:

- The proposed language would establish specific requirements which former judges must meet in order to apply and be considered for appointment as a Senior Judge by the Supreme Court.
- The Supreme Court may only appoint a Senior Judge upon an affirmative finding that additional judicial resources are needed in a specific General Sessions or Juvenile Court.
- Upon designation as a Senior Judge, the Supreme Court will assign the Senior Judge to a specific court and determine the duration of the assignment at the court. A designation as a Senior Judge lasts for a term of two years.
- While it is unknown how many courts the Supreme Court will deem in need of additional judicial resources, it is reasonably estimated the Supreme Court will appoint a total of three Senior Judges; one judge to serve in each grand division at various courts when additional judicial resources are deemed necessary.
- The proposed legislation would establish the following for Senior Judge compensation:
 - A fee rate of \$100 each hour spent in court hearing the docket of cases.
 - Reimbursement for travel expenses when traveling outside of the county of residence.
 - Senior Judges are not entitled to participate in the state's insurance or benefit programs.
- The AOC will pay the fee rate and reimbursement of all Senior Judges on a monthly basis, if sufficient funds exist.
- It is reasonably estimated that each Senior Judge will provide judicial services on 20 occasions per year to various courts throughout their assigned grand division. According to the AOC, each assignment in court will last approximately four hours,

resulting in a recurring increase in state expenditures estimated to be \$24,000 (20 assignments x 4 hours x \$100 per hour x 3 judges).

- A precise increase in state expenditures resulting from the reimbursement of travel expenses of Senior Judges cannot be determined; however, it is reasonably estimated to exceed \$2,000 per year per judge, or \$6,000 total.
- The total recurring increase in state expenditures is estimated to exceed \$30,000 (\$24,000 fee rates + \$6,000 travel reimbursement).
- Senior Judges will be assigned to specific courts, when needed, for an unknown amount of time as determined by the Supreme Court.
- Applicable local governments will be required to provide quarters, personnel, or other support as needed for the Senior Judge. Based on information provided by local sources, any quarters or personnel needs of Senior Judges will be accomplished utilizing existing staff and resources; therefore, any increase in local government expenditures is estimated to be not significant.

CERTIFICATION:

The information contained herein is true and correct to the best of my knowledge.



Krista Lee Carsner, Executive Director

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