

- SUBJECT:** Pay raises for presiding judges of administrative judicial regions
- COMMITTEE:** Judicial Affairs — committee substitute recommended
- VOTE:** 7 ayes — Thompson, Hartnett, Capelo, Garcia, Hinojosa, Shields, Uresti
0 nays
2 absent — Deshotel, Jim Solis
- WITNESSES:** For — Judge Ray D. Anderson, Board of Regional Presiding Judges; Lynn Nabers, Alliance for Judicial Funding; Judge B.B. Schraub
Against — None
- BACKGROUND:** State judicial districts are organized into nine administrative judicial regions, each overseen by a presiding judge who is responsible for ensuring that regional administrative rules are carried out within policies and guidelines set by the Texas Supreme Court. The presiding judge also works as a liaison with the Supreme Court on other issues related to court administration.
- A presiding judge receives maximum annual compensation of \$18,000 in addition to the judge's regular salary. A presiding judge who is a retired or former district judge or a retired appellate judge and who presides over an administrative region with 30 or more district or statutory county courts receives additional compensation based on the number of courts and judges in the region, currently ranging from \$20,000 to \$35,000.
- DIGEST:** CSHB 3031 would amend the Government Code to provide salary increases for presiding judges of administrative judicial regions. A presiding judge would receive maximum annual compensation of \$23,000. Presiding judges who are retired or former district judges or retired appellate judges who preside over an administrative region with 30 or more courts each would receive a \$5,000 increase in annual compensation.

This bill would take effect September 1, 1999.

SUPPORTERS SAY: Administrative responsibilities for presiding judges of administrative judicial regions have grown since their last salary increase in 1991. Presiding judges now oversee the expansion of the Title IV-D court master program relating to child-support enforcement, including evaluation of the court masters. The Texas Supreme Court also has assigned these judges responsibilities relating to pretrial proceedings in certain cases. They must deal with an increased flow of recusal motions, open records requests, and other administrative questions. Some judges also preside over as many as 30 courts. In light of these added responsibilities, the workload for these judges has increased significantly. CSHB 3031 would give these judges a much-deserved salary increase.

No fiscal impact on the state is anticipated, nor would there be a significant fiscal impact on local government.

OPPONENTS SAY: With nine judicial regions, an across-the-board increase of \$5,000 would result in at least an additional \$45,000 to be paid to the judiciary.

NOTES: The committee substitute is the Legislative Council draft of the original bill.

The companion bill, SB 1229 by Ellis, passed the Senate on May 6 and was referred to the House Judicial Affairs Committee.