

**SUBJECT:** Increasing the annual state salary supplement for certain county judges

**COMMITTEE:** Judiciary and Civil Jurisprudence — favorable, without amendment

**VOTE:** 9 ayes — Smithee, Farrar, Clardy, Hernandez, Laubenberg, Raymond, Schofield, Sheets, S. Thompson

0 nays

**WITNESSES:** For — Mike Sutherland, Association of Rural Communities in Texas; Jim Allison, County Judges and Commissioners Association of Texas; Don Allred, Oldham County; (*Registered, but did not testify:* Benny Wilson, Hansford County; Donna Warndof, Harris County; Patti Jones, Lubbock County; Mike Hull, Texans for Lawsuit Reform; Rick Thompson, Texas Association of Counties; Donald Lee, Texas Conference of Urban Counties)

Against — None

On — David Slayton, Office of Court Administration, Texas Judicial Council

**BACKGROUND:** Under Government Code, sec. 659.012(a), district court judges are entitled to an annual salary from the state of at least \$125,000, with certain exceptions. In some cases, state judicial salaries may be supplemented by county funds. Government Code, sec. 26.006(a) entitles a county judge to an annual salary supplement from the state of \$15,000 if at least 40 percent of the functions performed by that judge are judicial functions.

The supplement has remained at the same level for nearly 10 years. A recent survey of county judges by the Office of Court Administration found that a majority of county judges reported spending 40 percent or more of their time on judicial functions.

**DIGEST:** HB 2774 would change the annual state salary supplement to which a county judge was entitled from \$15,000 to an amount equal to 25 percent

of the amount appropriated for the annual salary of a district judge in the general appropriations act in accordance with Government Code, sec. 659.012(a). As in current law, this would apply if at least 40 percent of the county judge's functions were judicial.

This bill would take effect September 1, 2015, and would apply only to a salary payment for a pay period beginning on or after that date.

**NOTES:**

The Legislative Budget Board estimates that HB 2774 would have a negative net impact of \$8.7 million to general revenue through fiscal 2016-17.