

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

RS31672 / S1436

Low rates of judicial compensation continue to exacerbate the Judicial Branch's growing recruitment problem. Pay for Idaho's judges not only ranks near dead-last nationally, but also now fails to compete with the compensation of other Idaho public sector attorneys. In order to address this serious issue and ensure experienced, high-quality candidates apply for judicial service, this bill seeks to: (1) significantly increase salaries for all judicial positions over a four (4) year span, and (2) create a Citizens' Committee on Judicial Compensation to establish future judicial salaries. Specifically, this proposal will amend I.C. § 59-502 to increase the salary of supreme court justices by 10% in 2025 and revise the pay differentials between judicial positions to a percentage basis in order to avoid future compression. Accordingly, the corresponding 2025 increases will be 9.8% for court of appeals judges, 8.2% for district judges, and 7.9% for magistrate judges. Thereafter, each judicial position will receive an additional 5% salary increase in 2026, 2027, and 2028. In 2022, a pay increase for Idaho's judges was tied to a policy proposal to revise the judicial selection process. That proposal failed to become law, and as a result, Idaho's judges were the only state employees not to receive an increase in compensation. Similarly, judicial CEC has been tied to a policy proposal this year. In order to separate the question of judicial compensation from political considerations, and in an effort to allow a more thorough assessment of the need for future increases in judicial salaries, this bill also seeks to create a Citizens' Committee on Judicial Compensation. This Committee is modeled specifically after the Citizens' Committee on Legislative Compensation established in I.C. § 67-406a, and it will consist of three (3) citizen members appointed by the Governor and three (3) citizen members appointed by agreement of the Pro Tem and Speaker. The Committee will establish the salaries for all of Idaho's judicial officers every two (2) years beginning July 1, 2029, and the salaries set by the Committee will be subject to legislative review and veto.

FISCAL NOTE

The total annual fiscal impact for this increase in salary and associated benefits, which are paid from the general fund, will be \$2,662,486 for FY26, \$1,740,501 for FY27, \$1,789,872 for FY28 and \$1,879,365 for FY29.

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DISCLAIMER: This statement of purpose and fiscal note are a mere attachment to this bill and prepared by a proponent of the bill. It is neither intended as an expression of legislative intent nor intended for any use outside of the legislative process, including judicial review (Joint Rule 18).