

SENATE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE FISCAL NOTE

BILL NO. Senate Bill 691

PRINTER NO. 827

AMOUNT

See Fiscal Impact

FUND

General Fund

DATE INTRODUCED

May 28, 2021

PRIME SPONSOR

Senator Gordner

DESCRIPTION

Senate Bill 691 amends § 911(a) (relating to Courts of Common Pleas) of Title 42 (Judiciary and Judicial Procedure) of the Pennsylvania Consolidated Statutes by increasing the number of Judges of the Courts of Common Pleas in the twentieth and twenty-sixth judicial districts within the Commonwealth.

Currently, the twentieth judicial district, which includes all of Huntingdon County, and the twenty-sixth judicial district, which includes all of Columbia County, have one and two Common Pleas judges, respectively. This legislation increases that number to two and three, respectively.

The legislation provides that the new judgeships added shall be established as follows:

- Twentieth judicial district - Established on January 5, 2026, and shall be initially filled by election at the 2025 municipal election; and
- Twenty-sixth judicial district - Established on January 1, 2024, and shall be initially filled by election at the 2023 municipal election.

This act shall take effect immediately.

FISCAL IMPACT:

The current annual cost per Judge of the Courts of Common Pleas is \$338,400, including salary, pension and benefits. This cost does not include the annual county court reimbursement grant, calculated at a statutory rate of \$70,000 per judgeship.

Enactment of this legislation will have no fiscal impact on Commonwealth funds during the 2021-22 and the 2022-23 fiscal years. Thereafter, the Commonwealth will be required to fund the additional judgeships as follows:

- One-half of FY 2023-24 and an entire year every year thereafter for the twenty-sixth judicial district; and
- One-half of FY 2025-26 and an entire year every year thereafter for the twentieth judicial district.

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The following table illustrates the estimated fiscal impact on Commonwealth funds, assuming a 3% increase in salary, pension and benefit costs.

Fiscal Year	Fiscal Impact	Notation
FY 2021-22	No Fiscal Impact	
FY 2022-23	No Fiscal Impact	
FY 2023-24	\$179,504	One-half year funding for the twenty-sixth judicial district
FY 2024-25	\$369,778	Full year funding for the twenty-sixth judicial district
FY 2025-26	\$571,308	One-half year funding for the twentieth judicial district and full year funding for the twenty-sixth judicial district.

In addition, costs for the annual county court reimbursement grant program will increase by \$35,000 per county, representing a partial-year grant for the new judgeships and \$70,000 annually every year thereafter.