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Senate Bill 825 (Substitute S-2 as reported)
Sponsor: Senator William Van Regenmorter
Committee: Judiciary

CONTENT

The bill would amend the Revised Judicature Act (RJA) to authorize two additional circuit court judgeships in Kent County and one additional circuit court judgeship in Ottawa County. The 17th Judicial Circuit, which consists of Kent County, currently has seven judges. The 20th Judicial Circuit, which consists of Ottawa County, currently has three judges. Under the bill, subject to Section 550 of the RJA, the 17th Circuit could have two more judges effective January 1, 2003, and the 20th Circuit could have one additional judge effective January 1, 2005.

If two new judgeships were added to the 17th Circuit by election in 2002, as authorized by the bill, the candidate receiving the highest number of votes in the November 2002 general election would be elected to an eight-year term. If one new judgeship were added to the 20th Circuit by election in 2004, the candidate receiving the highest number of votes in the November 2004 general election would be elected to an eight-year term.

(Section 550 provides that an additional circuit judgeship permitted by the RJA may not be authorized to be filled by election unless each county in the circuit approves the creation of that judgeship by a resolution adopted by the county board of commissioners. The county clerk must file a copy of the resolution with the State Court Administrator by 4:00 p.m. of the 16th Tuesday preceding the August primary for the election to fill the additional judgeship.)

The bill is tie-barred to Senate Bills 76, 764, 765, 766, and 786 and House Bill 5357, all of which would revise the number of judgeships in various courts throughout the State.

MCL 600.518 & 600.521

Legislative Analyst: P. Affholter

FISCAL IMPACT

Based on the 2002 salary of a circuit judge, the State would incur the following annual costs for each new circuit judgeship:

Salary	\$139,919
Social Security/Medicare	7,293
Defined Contribution Retirement	<u>9,794</u>
Total	\$157,006

Local costs would depend on the cost of fringe benefits for judges provided by the county, support staff costs, and whether additional office courtroom facilities would be necessary.

According to the State Court Administrative Office Judicial Resources Report, Kent County has the flexibility to accommodate two additional judges in the downtown Grand Rapids courthouse.

Date Completed: 11-29-01

Fiscal Analyst: B. Bowerman