

Legislative Analysis



MERGE TWO DISTRICT COURT DISTRICTS

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House Bill 4420

Sponsor: Rep. Bob Constan

Committee: Judiciary

Complete to 5-23-08

A REVISED SUMMARY OF HOUSE BILL 4420 AS INTRODUCED 3-7-07

Currently, the 20th judicial district consists of the City of Dearborn Heights, is a district of the third class, and has two judges. Garden City is also a district of the third class and has one judge.

The bill would amend the Revised Judicature Act to allow the consolidation and merger of the 20th District Court and the 21st District Court if both cities approve the reformation of the 20th District and the abolition of the 21st District.

The bill would also delete obsolete portions of several provisions.

MCL 600.8121

FISCAL IMPACT:

House Bill 4420 would allow the merger of two District Courts into a single 20th District Court with three judges. The fiscal impact of this bill is indeterminate at this time. The bill would initially increase costs to the local units of government by an unknown amount for the expenses of the consolidation, but would potentially generate future savings to these local units through cost efficiencies from the merger of the two court districts.

Initially, the bill is expected to increase costs to the local units of government for the one-time expenses of consolidation. This increased cost is indeterminate and would depend upon a variety of factors, including moving expenses, the cost of building renovations required to move the judge and employees to the Dearborn Heights location, and any expenditure related to coordinating the two courts' technical requirements such as case management software changes or file conversions. In a FY 2000 supplemental appropriations bill, PA 291 of 2000, the state appropriated \$250,000 in general funds for the consolidation of the 27th District Court. In this consolidation of the District Courts of Riverview and Wyandotte, funding was needed for technical and data needs because the two locations used different case management software. In addition, the funding was used to upgrade the mainframe computer system and to fund necessary building renovations.

Under House Bill 4420, the consolidation of the two District Courts is expected to generate future savings to the local units of government. A significant factor in evaluating

the impact of this bill depends upon the future staffing levels of the new merged District Court. If staffing levels are lowered because of shared responsibilities related to the merger, then the court's expenses would be decreased by the amount saved in salaries and benefits for those positions. Each District Court currently has a court administrator, at least one court recorder, a number of court clerks, as well as security and probation personnel. Because the 21st District Court consistently carries a lower caseload than the caseload of the two judges in the 20th District Court, it has been argued that the merger would allow a more even distribution of caseload between the three judges, which could result in lower staffing needs. In addition, costs savings that might be realized include reduced court security personnel expenses and a reduction from current staffing levels for court administration and probation.

There would be no significant fiscal impact on the state of Michigan.

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