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## FISCAL IMPACT REPORT

SPONSOR: Campos DATE TYPED: 01/30/03 HB 230

SHORT TITLE: Increase 9<sup>th</sup> Judicial District SB \_\_\_\_\_

ANALYST: Hayes

### APPROPRIATION

Appropriation Contained		Estimated Additional Impact		Recurring or Non-Rec	Fund Affected
FY03	FY04	FY03	FY04		
	\$477.5			Recurring*	General Fund

(Parenthesis ( ) Indicate Expenditure Decreases)

Relates to SB143

### SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Reponses Received From  
 Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC)  
 LFC files

### SUMMARY

#### Synopsis of Bill

House Bill 230 amends Section 34-6-12 NMSA 1978 to increase the number of judgeships in the Ninth Judicial District Court from three to four. The bill appropriates \$293.3 to the 9th district for salaries and benefits, furniture, supplies and equipment for the additional judgeship and support staff. Other appropriations outlined in HB230 totaling \$184.2 provide for additional resources for the district attorneys and public defenders in the 9th district.

The effective date of the provisions of HB230 is July 1, 2003.

#### Significant Issues

1. In 1998, the AOC completed an updated and expanded study to provide the Legislature with a methodology for determining the needs for additional judgeships, the Weighted Caseload Study. The study assigns a weight for each type of case. The weight, expressed in minutes, represents the average amount of judge's time necessary to process a

case of that type. Each weight is then multiplied by the number of new cases filed per category. Although some judges question this methodology, it is the accepted formula of the Chief Judges Council in determining judgeship needs.

2. The Chief Judges Council reviewed the Weighted Caseload Study and voted to support the one judgeship requested for the Ninth Judicial District Court as highlighted in the *Judiciary Unified Budget*.
3. The district attorney's and public defender's offices were notified of the judgeship request so that they had an opportunity to assess and report their respective impacts. However, neither office responded to LFC's request for analysis as of this date.

### **FISCAL IMPLICATIONS**

The appropriation of \$477,485 contained in this bill is a recurring\* expense to the general fund. Any unexpended or unencumbered balance remaining at the end of fiscal year 2004 shall revert to the general fund.

\*Part of the appropriations to the 9th district court, district attorney and public defender is specifically for furniture and equipment. These are considered capital items (defined by DFA as purchases over \$1,500) and are a one-time expense. Therefore, a portion of this appropriation must be designated as non-recurring.

Here is a table delineating the appropriation amount to each agency noted in the bill:

#### **NINTH DISTRICT APPROPRIATIONS**

AGENCY:	Appropriation to Court	Appropriation to District Attorney	Appropriation to Public Defender	TOTAL
AMOUNT:	\$293,290	\$78,665	\$105,530	\$477,485

### **TECHNICAL ISSUES**

Although not noted in the bill, a Section 4 is need to state that the additional judgeship would be filled by appointment by the governor pursuant to the provisions of Article 6 of the Constitution of New Mexico.

### **RELATIONSHIP**

Senate Bill 143, the "judgeship bill," provides for one additional judgeship at the Ninth Judicial District Court. The appropriation amount for the judge, staff, supplies, furniture and equipment is \$293,290, the same amount as HB230. There are also appropriations in SB143 in each of the respective offices for the district attorneys and public defenders affected by the proposed district court judgeship.

### **OTHER SUBSTANTIVE ISSUES**

Besides clarification of recurring vs. non-recurring amounts, references to "additional staff" or

“support staff” in the bill should be clarified by indicating the number of FTE specifically being funded.

**POSSIBLE QUESTIONS**

1. Why is a separate bill being presented for the judgeship in the Ninth Judicial District Court? Typically, all new judges are requested together in the «judgeship bill » pursuant to the *Judiciary Unified Budget*.
2. What is the current caseload per judge at the district court? Is caseload increasing, decreasing or flat in this district? In what areas of law do you see the greatest growth in caseload?

CMH/sb;yr