

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

RS32288 / H0188

Judicial Salaries are established by the Legislature in section 59-502, Idaho Code, which also indexes such salaries to a Supreme Court Justice's salary to avoid salary compression between the four types of judgeships. Judicial salaries in Idaho have simply not kept pace with market changes. In six (6) of the last sixteen (16) years no increase to judicial salaries has been provided via amendment to § 59-502. At the same time, salaries for experienced attorneys have increased. The resulting lag of judicial compensation behind the market salaries for other experienced attorney positions creates serious hurdles to recruiting and retaining experienced, qualified attorneys to serve as Idaho's judges. Five (5) years ago District Judge openings resulted in an average of eleven (11) applicants per position. By this past fiscal year, that number had plummeted to 4.6 candidates per opening, and several recent District Judge openings only received applications from the bare minimum of three (3) candidates. Judges are also leaving the bench to return to other work. While no judges left the bench to return to other work in fiscal year 2023, three (3) judges did in fiscal year 2024, and four (4) judges have done so thus far in fiscal year 2025. Adequate judicial compensation is routinely cited as a primary reason experienced Idaho attorneys do not pursue or continue a judicial career. This bill seeks to establish judicial salaries that are more competitive with the compensation for other public and private sector experienced attorney positions in Idaho and the judicial compensation rates paid by the states surrounding Idaho. Specifically, this bill will increase the salaries of the justices of the supreme court by seven percent (7%) per year each of the next four (4) years. Due to the dollar amount salary differentials between the types of judgeships, the salaries of the judges of the court of appeals, district judges, and magistrate judges will increase slightly more than seven percent (7%) per year each of the next four (4) years.

FISCAL NOTE

The total annual fiscal impact for this increase in salary and associated benefits, which are paid from the general fund, will be \$2,716,903 for FY26, \$2,847,269 for FY27, \$2,979,954 for FY28, and \$3,188,551 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).