

MINUTES
SENATE JUDICIARY & RULES COMMITTEE

DATE: Monday, March 27, 2023

TIME: 1:00 P.M.

PLACE: Room WW54

MEMBERS PRESENT: Chairman Lakey, Vice Chairman Foreman, Senators Lee, Hart, Hartgen, Wintrow, and Ruchti

ABSENT/ EXCUSED: Senators Anthon, and Ricks

NOTE: The sign-in sheet, testimonies and other related materials will be retained with the minutes in the Committee's office until the end of the session and will then be located on file with the minutes in the Legislative Services Library.

CONVENED: **Chairman Lakey** called the meeting of the Senate Judiciary & Rules Committee (Committee) to order at 1:00 p.m.

H 348 **Judicial Salaries.** **Senator Lakey** said **H 348** was a new attempt to adjust the salaries of judges, since **S 1156** failed on the House side. He said this version increased the annual salary of a Justice of the Supreme Court by 3 percent, to a total of \$165,212. The bill amended State Code to reduce the salary difference between Supreme Court Justices and Court of Appeals Judges from \$10,000 to \$8,000, which resulted in a 4.5 percent salary increase. **Senator Lakey** said the salary difference between Court of Appeals and District Judges remained \$6,000, which resulted in a 4.7 percent salary increase for District Judges. He said the final change was a reduced salary difference between District and Magistrate Judges from \$12,000 to \$8,000, which resulted in a 8.2 percent increase for Magistrate Judges.

DISCUSSION: **Senator Ruchti** expressed his dislike for the differential between district and magistrate court judge salaries because he believed district courts had more complex responsibilities. **Senator Lakey** said he tended to agree with that opinion.

Senator Lee said she preferred a solution that included a \$6,000 differential between the different courts for consistency and avoided any discrediting of a court's work.

Senator Lakey acknowledged the scope of magistrate judges included probate and family law, both of which often had significant financial and asset implications. He also noted the proposed salary adjustments from both bills.

Senator Wintrow asked if the last bill, **S 1156**, included a 7 percent salary increase for all the different courts. **Chairman Lakey** said it was not 7 percent, but it was close.

MOTION: **Senator Lee** moved to send **H 348** to the floor with a **do pass** recommendation. **Senator Hartgen** seconded the motion.

DISCUSSION: **Senator Wintrow** said she was unable to support the motion because she agreed with the changes proposed in **S 1156**, which failed, and she was not ready to support the new changes.

Chairman Lakey said his feelings mirrored Senator Wintrow's.

MOTION VOTE: The motion carried by **voice vote**. **Vice Chairman Foreman** and **Senator Wintrow** asked to be recorded as voting nay.

ADJOURNED: There being no further business at this time, **Chairman Lakey** adjourned the meeting at 1:11 p.m.

Senator Lakey
Chair

Sharon Pennington
Secretary

Kieran Sprague
Assistant Secretary