

Date of Hearing: June 28, 2023

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Chris Holden, Chair

SB 75 (Roth) – As Amended March 20, 2023

Policy Committee: Judiciary

Vote: 10 - 0

Urgency: No

State Mandated Local Program: No

Reimbursable: No

SUMMARY:

This bill authorizes, upon appropriation, 26 additional superior court judgeships that must be allocated based on the Judicial Council's Judicial Needs Study.

FISCAL EFFECT:

Costs (General Fund) in the hundreds of millions of dollars. The Judicial Council reports ongoing operational costs of approximately \$44.2 million annually and one-time facility costs ranging from \$91 million to \$208 million to support 26 additional judgeships. The operational cost for one judgeship position is approximately \$1.7 million per year and includes funding for approximately nine staff positions that support the work of each judge. Facilities costs will depend on where the judges are assigned; some courthouses may have vacant space or space that can be renovated to provide a new courtroom, but others may need new building space.

COMMENTS:

1) **Purpose.** According to the author:

Based on the Judicial Council's 2022 Judicial Needs Assessment, seventeen counties (17) require additional judgeships for a total requirement of ninety-eight (98) new judicial positions in the State. Of the ninety-eight (98) positions required in the State, Riverside and San Bernardino counties need a total of fifty-two (52) of those judicial positions in order to provide appropriate access to justice for Inland Southern California residents. The fifty-two (52) positions needed in these two counties represents 55 percent of the overall need in the State.

This disparity is expected to widen as Riverside and San Bernardino counties are projected to continue their rapid growth. Riverside County has experienced a 62 percent increase in population since 2000 and San Bernardino County experienced a 33 percent increase in population during the same period. Furthermore, according to the Judicial Council of California's 2022 Court Statistics Report, Riverside County Superior Court had 3,515 filings per judicial position, the 3rd highest number amongst the state's 58 counties. While San Bernardino and Riverside counties are the two counties

with the most need, 15 other counties require additional resources as well. Without action, the exceptional inequity seen in this region and others will only grow.

- 2) **Background.** Due to budget constraints, California does not have enough sitting judges to serve the needs of the state's growing population. Although the California Budget Act of 2022 authorized and funded 23 new superior court judgeships, the Judicial Council reported in its November 2022 Judicial Needs Assessment that the state needs an additional 98 judge positions to meet current workload. Using a weighted methodology, the Judicial Council has determined which counties have the greatest need for new judicial officers based on workload, including San Bernardino County, Riverside County, and Kern County. This bill, upon appropriation, authorizes an additional 26 superior court judge positions, which must be distributed as described in the Judicial Needs Assessment.

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