



Legislative Council Staff

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Fiscal Note Memorandum

TO: Members of the Senate

FROM: Aaron Carpenter, Senior Fiscal Analyst
aaron.carpenter@coleg.gov, 303-866-4918

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Fiscal Assessment of Adding 15 Judges in SB 25-024

This memorandum is an assessment of the fiscal impact of:

- adding 4 district court and 1 county court judges in FY 2025-26; and
- adding 6 district court and 4 county court judges in FY 2026-27.

Summary of Proposed Amendment

The amendment would remove the addition of 22 judges over three years from the introduced bill, as amended by Senate Appropriations, and instead add 15 judges over two years. Table 1 shows the implementation schedule and docket type for these 15 judges.



Table 1
Additional Judges and Docket Types

Court	Current → New Judge Total	Judges Starting 2025	Judges Starting 2026	Total New Judges	Assumed Docket Type¹	Dockets Affecting Other Agencies²
4 th District	24 → 26	1	1	2	1 civil, 1 domestic	0
7 th District	5 → 6	0	1	1	All cases	1
13 th District	5 → 6	0	1	1	All cases	1
17 th District	16 → 18	1	1	2	1 domestic, 1 D&N	0
18 th District	17 → 19	1	1	2	1 civil, 1 domestic	0
19 th District	11 → 12	0	1	1	All cases	1
23 rd District	8 → 9	1	0	1	Criminal	1
Larimer County	5 → 6	0	1	1	Civil	0
Douglas County	3 → 4	0	1	1	Criminal	1
La Plata County	1 → 2	1	0	1	All cases	1
Mesa County	3 → 4	0	1	1	All cases	1
Eagle County	1 → 2	0	1	1	All cases	1
Total	187 → 202	5	10	15		8

¹ Assumed docket types come from a Judicial Department survey. The four docket types are criminal, civil, dependency & neglect, and domestic.

² Criminal dockets drive impacts for the OSPD, Bridges, and district attorneys.

Fiscal Impact of Amendment

The amendment reduces the fiscal impact of the introduced bill by \$122,740 in FY 2025-26, increases costs in \$314,673 in FY 2026-27, and decreases costs by \$5.7 million in FY 2027-28.

Bill's Revised Fiscal Impact with Amendment

With the amendment, the bill increases General Fund expenditures by about \$3.9 million in FY 2025-26, \$12.2 million in FY 2026-27, and \$11.4 million in FY 2027-28 and ongoing in the Judicial Department, the Office of the State Public Defender, and the Office of the Court Liaison.



Table 1
State Expenditures with Amendment

Fund Source	Budget Year FY 2025-26	Out Year FY 2026-27	Out Year FY 2027-28
General Fund	\$3,339,381	\$10,303,880	\$9,464,000
Cash Funds	\$0	\$0	\$0
Federal Funds	\$0	\$0	\$0
Centrally Appropriated	\$557,814	\$1,927,400	\$1,927,400
Total Expenditures	\$3,897,195	\$12,231,280	\$11,391,400
Total FTE	24.9 FTE	86.9 FTE	86.9 FTE

Table 2
State Expenditures
All Departments

Department	Budget Year FY 2025-26	Out Year FY 2026-27	Out Year FY 2027-28
Judicial Department	\$3,045,958	\$8,655,524	\$7,975,724
Office of the State Public Defender	\$756,398	\$3,224,595	\$3,077,855
Department of the State Court Liaison (Bridges)	\$94,839	\$351,161	\$337,821
Total Costs	\$3,897,195	\$12,231,280	\$11,391,400

Judicial Department—Judges and Support Staff

The bill adds 15 judges over two years. Specifically, 5 judges will start in August 2025 in FY 2025-26 and 10 additional judges will start in July 2026. For each new judge, there is an associated ratio of court clerk staff, research staff, and, in some cases, administrative staff, to help manage the court room. The standard ratios used by the Judicial Department are as follows:

- a district court judge needs 3 support staff (2 clerks and 1 researcher); and
- a county court judge needs 2 support staff (2 clerks).

Using these ratios, the judges included in the bill require a total of 40 new support staff once fully implemented. Like the judges, these staff will phase in over two years, with 14 support staff starting in FY 2025-26, and 26 support staff starting in FY 2026-27.



Office of the State Public Defender

This bill increases the number of criminal and juvenile court dockets that must be staffed by public defenders to ensure availability of counsel for indigent offenders. Based on the 8 assumed criminal dockets, and assuming 2 attorneys per criminal docket a total of 16 public defenders are required. Of these, 4 public defenders will start August 2025, and 12 will start July 2026.

The addition of 24 public defenders requires 13.2 support staff, including investigators (at a 1-to-5 attorney ratio), legal assistants (at a 1-to-6 attorney ratio), administrative assistants (at a 1-to-4 attorney ratio), and central staff (at 4.5 percent of trial office staff). Of these, 3.3 FTE support staff will start August 2025, 9.9 FTE will start July 2026.

Bridges

Similar to OSPD, the increase in the number of criminal court dockets will increase the work to Bridges liaisons to represent defendants who are found incompetent to proceed. Bridges requires a total of 2.0 liaisons, 0.4 manager for the new liaisons, and 0.3 support staff. It is assumed 0.5 liaisons, 0.1 manager and 0.1 staff support will start in August 2025 and 1.5 liaisons, 0.3 manager, and 0.2 staff support will start in July 2026. Standard operating and capital outlay costs are included for these staff.

Centrally Appropriated Costs

Pursuant to a Joint Budget Committee policy, certain costs associated with this bill are addressed through the annual budget process and centrally appropriated in the Long Bill or supplemental appropriations bills, rather than in this bill. These costs, which include employee insurance and supplemental employee retirement payments, are shown in the expenditure table above.

Local Government

Beginning in FY 2025-26, this bill increases district attorney, court security, and court facility costs for counties as described below.

District Attorneys

Statewide, costs to district attorney offices statewide will increase by \$0.9 million in FY 2025-26 and \$3.7 million in FY 2026-27, with similar amounts ongoing.

Sheriffs

Overall, costs for county sheriffs statewide will increase by approximately \$0.8 million per year.