

BILL ANALYSIS

S.B. 729
By: Wentworth
Judiciary
Committee Report (Unamended)

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

As proposed, S.B. 729 requires the Office of Court Administration to contract with an independent, non-profit organization that specializes in providing technical assistance and consulting services to courts, such as the National Center for State Courts, to perform a weighted caseload study on the district courts in Texas. A weighted caseload model translates a court's caseload into a figure indicating the number of hours it should reasonably take the court to dispose of the cases on the court's docket.

A weighted caseload study would provide more accurate data on the caseload of the district courts and enable the legislature to make informed decisions regarding judicial redistricting and the overall structure of the Texas trial court system. At least 25 other states have implemented the weighted caseload methodology in order to assess the need for judicial resources in those states.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

It is the committee's opinion that this bill does not expressly grant any additional rulemaking authority to a state officer, department, agency, or institution.

ANALYSIS

The bill requires the Office of Court Administration of the Texas Judicial System to contract with an independent nonprofit organization that specializes in providing technical assistance and consulting services to courts to conduct a study of the caseloads of the district courts in this state. Requires the study to concentrate on the weighted caseload of each district court, considering the nature and complexity of the cases heard by each court. The bill also requires the organization that conducts the study, not later than September 1, 2006, to report the results of the study to the Office of Court Administration of the Texas Judicial System. Requires the office, not later than October 1, 2006, to file a report on those results with the governor, the lieutenant governor, the speaker of the house of representatives, and the chairs of the standing committees of the senate and house of representatives with jurisdiction over the judicial system.

EFFECTIVE DATE

September 1, 2005