

LEGISLATIVE BUDGET BOARD
Austin, Texas

FISCAL NOTE, 79TH LEGISLATIVE REGULAR SESSION

April 26, 2005

TO: Honorable Jeff Wentworth, Chair, Senate Committee on Jurisprudence

FROM: John S. O'Brien, Deputy Director, Legislative Budget Board

IN RE: HB597 by Smithee (Relating to the creation of an additional county court at law in Randall County.), **As Engrossed**

No fiscal implication to the State is anticipated.

The bill would amend Section 25.1931 (a) of the Government Code to create an additional county court at law in Randall County as of October 1, 2006. The bill would take effect September 1, 2005.

Local Government Impact

Currently, Randall County has one statutory court at law; the bill would bring the total to two on October 1, 2006. The county would be responsible for the annual salaries of the court's judge, bailiff, court reporter, court administrator, prosecutor, court appointed attorneys, visiting judges, investigator, legal secretary and court clerks.

The state Comptroller of Public Accounts contacted Randall County authorities. According to the Randall County Auditor, the fiscal year 2004 (October 1, 2003 to September 30, 2004) cost for County Court at Law No. 1 was \$636,044. The Randall County Purchasing Agent estimates that start-up costs for the new court would be \$14,250. Randall County is constructing a court complex to house all courts, district, county, constables, and justices of the peace, whether Court No. 2 is created or not. Building costs for County Court at Law No. 2 cannot be determined, as architectural plans have not been drawn yet and it is not known how much space Court No. 2 will occupy in the new complex. According to the Randall County Auditor's Office staff, all revenues from County Court at Law No. 1 during fiscal 2004 were approximately \$768,000. It is assumed that improved caseload management brought about by the creation of a new county court could result in higher revenues; however, the amount of increased revenues cannot be estimated.

Source Agencies: 212 Office of Court Administration, Texas Judicial Council, 304 Comptroller of Public Accounts

LBB Staff: JOB, DLBa