

LEGISLATIVE BUDGET BOARD

Austin, Texas

FISCAL NOTE, 79TH LEGISLATIVE REGULAR SESSION

May 6, 2005

TO: Honorable Will Hartnett, Chair, House Committee on Judiciary

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

IN RE: SB1620 by Lucio (Relating to the composition of the judicial districts in Cameron and Willacy Counties.), **As Engrossed**

No fiscal implication to the State is anticipated.

The bill would amend Chapter 24 of the Government Code relating to the composition of the judicial districts in Cameron and Willacy Counties. The bill would remove Willacy County from from the jurisdiction of the 103rd, 107th, 138th, 357th, and 404th district courts and transfer all cases that are pending in these district courts to the 197th District Court. The 197th District Court is currently composed of Cameron County.

The bill would take effect September 1, 2005.

Local Government Impact

No significant fiscal implication to units of local government is anticipated. Cameron and Willacy Counties are currently served the by the 103rd, 107th, 138th, 197th, 357th and 404th district courts. This bill would remove Willacy County from all of the courts except the 197th. Willacy County has a population of less than 9,000 and its portion of the courts' caseload is 8 percent. In 2004, 3,267 cases were filed in these district courts, of which 257 were from Willacy County.

The Cameron County Auditor indicated that by moving Willacy County's caseload to one designated district, court case management would be streamlined and judicial matters would be handled by one judge in one location. The county auditor indicates this will create greater efficiency and continuity in service delivery.

Cameron County is responsible for the budget of all six district courts. The fiscal 2005 operating budget for the district courts (combined) is \$2.5 million. When court is held in Willacy County, the county reimburses Cameron County for court services such as a bailiffs and court reporters. The Cameron County auditor and the budget officer indicated that moving Willacy County's caseload to the 197th district Court would not require additional staff, building, supplies or operating expenses; therefore, the transition would have no significant fiscal impact on Cameron or Willacy counties.

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

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