

**LEGISLATIVE BUDGET BOARD**  
**Austin, Texas**

**FISCAL NOTE, 80TH LEGISLATIVE REGULAR SESSION**

**March 16, 2007**

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

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

**IN RE: HB1342** by Oliveira (Relating to the creation of an additional judicial district in Cameron County.), **Committee Report 1st House, Substituted**

**Estimated Two-year Net Impact to General Revenue Related Funds** for HB1342, Committee Report 1st House, Substituted: a negative impact of (\$59,484) through the biennium ending August 31, 2009.

The bill would make no appropriation but could provide the legal basis for an appropriation of funds to implement the provisions of the bill.

**General Revenue-Related Funds, Five-Year Impact:**

Fiscal Year	Probable Net Positive/(Negative) Impact to General Revenue Related Funds
2008	\$0
2009	(\$59,484)
2010	(\$101,973)
2011	(\$101,973)
2012	(\$101,973)

**All Funds, Five-Year Impact:**

Fiscal Year	Probable Revenue Gain/ (Loss) from <i>GENERAL REVENUE FUND 1</i>	Probable Revenue Gain/ (Loss) from <i>JUDICIAL FUND 573</i>	Change in Number of State Employees from FY 2007
2008	\$0	\$0	0.0
2009	(\$59,484)	(\$32,813)	1.0
2010	(\$101,973)	(\$56,250)	1.0
2011	(\$101,973)	(\$56,250)	1.0
2012	(\$101,973)	(\$56,250)	1.0

**Fiscal Analysis**

The bill would amend Chapter 24, Government Code, to create a new judicial district in Cameron County, the 444<sup>th</sup> Judicial District. The district would be created January 1, 2009 and the bill would take effect January 1, 2009.

## **Methodology**

The annual salary provided by the state for a district judge is \$125,000, in addition to benefits (state contributions for group insurance and to the Judicial Retirement System) which are estimated to be \$33,223 annually. The total annual salary and benefits cost for a district judge is estimated to be \$158,223. Because the court would be created on January 1, 2009, the fiscal impact for the first year of court operations is prorated to reflect 7 rather than a full 12 months of operations. The county would pay all other costs.

## **Local Government Impact**

According to information provided by the Cameron County Auditor's Office, a new judicial district for family law matters would cost Cameron County \$318,372 annually in operating expenses. The county currently has a family court under the auspices of the existing district courts. Since a family court already exists, no start-up costs would be incurred through the establishment of a new district court for family matters. The existing Family Court Master's salary of \$127,500 would be redirected to funding the new district court staff since the district judge's salary is paid by the state.

Cameron County's fiscal year begins on October 1. For fiscal 2009, it is assumed that the proposed 444th Judicial District would be in start-up mode and would generate about the same amount of revenue that each of the other district courts generate for Cameron County. As a result, there would be no additional revenue to offset the cost of the additional judicial district. It is assumed that in the future improved caseload management brought about by the creation of a new judicial district could result in higher revenues; however, the amount of the additional revenue cannot be determined.

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

**LBB Staff:** JOB, MN, ZS, JP