

LEGISLATIVE BUDGET BOARD
Austin, Texas

FISCAL NOTE, 80TH LEGISLATIVE REGULAR SESSION

May 10, 2007

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

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

IN RE: HB4008 by Chavez (Relating to the creation of additional county criminal courts at law in El Paso County.), **As Engrossed**

No significant fiscal implication to the State is anticipated.

The bill would amend Section 25.0731 (a) of the Government Code to create two additional county criminal courts at law in El Paso County. County Criminal Courts at Law No. 3 and No. 4 of El Paso County would be created on September 1, 2007.

The bill would also give preference to certain cases involving family violence and similar offenses in County Criminal Court at Law No 4.

The bill would take effect September 1, 2007.

If the new judges choose not to engage in the private practice of law and the county meets the other provisions of Section 25.0015, Government Code, the state impact would be \$70,000 annually; however, it is unknown whether the judges and county would meet the provisions that would require state compensation.

Local Government Impact

Currently, El Paso County is served by seven county courts at law and two county criminal courts at law. According to the El Paso County Auditor's Office, the establishment of two additional county criminal courts would result in the county being responsible for the salaries and benefits of the court's judge, bailiff, certified court reporter, court coordinator, three trial attorneys, court clerk, office specialist and collection clerk totaling \$562,867 annually, per court. The auditor's office estimated operating and equipment expenses of \$26,159 annually, per court.

El Paso County's fiscal year begins on October 1. For fiscal 2008, it is assumed that the proposed county criminal courts at law would be in start-up mode and would generate no additional revenue to offset the cost of the additional county courts. In the future, it is assumed that improved caseload management brought about by the creation of two new criminal county courts at law could result in higher revenues; however, the amount of increased revenues cannot be estimated.

Source Agencies: 304 Comptroller of Public Accounts

LBB Staff: JOB, MN, DB