

LEGISLATIVE BUDGET BOARD  
Austin, Texas

FISCAL NOTE, 81ST LEGISLATIVE REGULAR SESSION

May 7, 2009

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

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

**IN RE: SB2469** by Hinojosa (Relating to the creation of two additional county courts at law in Hidalgo County.), **Committee Report 1st House, Substituted**

**Estimated Two-year Net Impact to General Revenue Related Funds** for SB2469, Committee Report 1st House, Substituted: an impact of \$0 through the biennium ending August 31, 2011.

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
2010	\$0
2011	\$0
2012	\$0
2013	\$0
2014	\$0

All Funds, Five-Year Impact:

Fiscal Year	Probable Savings/(Cost) from <i>Judicial Fund</i> 573	Probable Revenue Gain from <i>Judicial Fund</i> 573
2010	\$0	\$0
2011	\$0	\$0
2012	(\$75,000)	\$75,000
2013	(\$150,000)	\$150,000
2014	(\$150,000)	\$150,000

Fiscal Analysis

The bill would amend the Government Code to create two new County Courts at Law in Hidalgo County. County Courts at Law No. 7 and No. 8. The bill specifies that County Court at Law No. 7 of Hidalgo County would be created September 1, 2011, and County Court at Law No. 8 of Hidalgo County would be created September 1, 2012. The bill would take effect September 1, 2011.

**Methodology**

The annual recurring cost to the state per county court at law would be \$75,000 from Judicial Fund No. 573. Under current law, the state provides a county-court-at-law judge a salary supplement an amount equal to 60 percent of the state salary of a district judge (\$75,000).

Also, the salary supplement program for county court at law judges is funded from fees and court costs collected by county courts at law statewide and deposited into the Judicial Fund No. 573. This estimate assumes that the County Courts at Law in Hidalgo County would generate sufficient revenue to Judicial Fund No. 573 to cover the cost of the salary supplement.

Local governments pay the other operating costs associated with a county court at law.

**Local Government Impact**

Hidalgo County is currently served by six county courts at law. There would be no costs to the county for fiscal 2009-2011. The average annual total operating costs for the two courts are estimated at \$1,041,373 for fiscal 2012-2014. Fiscal year 2011 would be half of that amount. First year, start-up costs for technology are estimated at \$18,953.

Hidalgo County would be responsible for paying salary and benefits for court personnel. According to the County, it would need two judges, two court reporters, two court coordinators, two bailiffs, and two court administrators. According to Hidalgo County, the average cost of personnel total for two courts is estimated at \$975,525.

Hidalgo County's fiscal year begins January 1.

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

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