



# HOUSE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

## FISCAL NOTE

SENATE BILL NO. 361

PRINTER'S NO. 1283

PRIME SPONSOR: Ward

### COST / (SAVINGS)

FUND	FY 2023/24	FY 2024/25
General Fund	See Fiscal Impact	See Fiscal Impact

### SUMMARY:

Increases the number of Judges of the Courts of Common Pleas in the Eighth, Eleventh, Twelfth, Fifteenth, Twentieth, Twenty-Sixth, Thirty-First, Thirty-Eighth, Forty-Fourth, and Fiftieth Judicial Districts.

### ANALYSIS:

Senate Bill 361 amends Title 42 (Judiciary and Judicial Procedure) Section 911(a) (relating to Courts of Common Pleas) by increasing the number of Judges of the Courts of Common Pleas in seven Judicial Districts within the Commonwealth.

Judicial District	County	Current Number of Judges	Additional Judges	New Number of Judges
Eighth	Northumberland	3	1	4
Eleventh	Luzerne	10	1	11
Twelfth	Dauphin	10	1	11
Fifteenth	Chester	14	1	15
Twentieth	Huntingdon	1	1	2
Twenty-sixth	Columbia & Montour	2	1	3
Thirty-first	Lehigh	10	1	11
Thirty-eighth	Montgomery	24	2	26
Forty-fourth	Sullivan	1	1	2
Fiftieth	Butler	6	1	7

The new judgeships for the Eighth (Northumberland), Eleventh (Luzerne), Twelfth (Dauphin), Thirty-First (Lehigh), Forty-Fourth (Sullivan), and Fiftieth (Butler) districts will be established on January 5, 2026, and will be filled by election at the 2025 municipal election. The new judgeships for the thirty-eighth district (Montgomery) will be established on January 3, 2028, and will be filled by election at the 2027 municipal election. The new judgeships for the other districts will be filled by appointment by the Governor with the consent of two-thirds of the members of the Pennsylvania Senate.

This legislation would take effect immediately upon enactment.

### FISCAL IMPACT:

According to the Administrative Office of Pennsylvania Courts (AOPC), the FY 2023/24 average salary of a new Court of Common Pleas judge is approximately \$327,000. This includes salary, pension, and benefits. In addition to this cost, the annual county court reimbursement grant is calculated at a statutory rate of \$70,000 per judgeship.

Of the eleven new judgeships provided for in Senate Bill 361, only three are eligible to be filled in FY 2023/24 or FY 2024/25. Once these three positions are filled, they will cost the Commonwealth approximately \$1.19 million annually. Once all eleven positions are filled, the additional annual cost to the Commonwealth will be \$4.37 million.

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**DATE:** December 12, 2023

*Estimates are calculated using the best information available. Actual costs and revenue impact incurred may vary from estimates.*