

# SENATE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE FISCAL NOTE

**BILL NO.** Senate Bill 383

**PRINTER'S NO.** 381

**AMOUNT**

No Significant Fiscal Impact

**FUND**

General

**DATE INTRODUCED**

Feb. 20, 2009

**PRIME SPONSOR**

Senator Ori

**HISTORY OF BILL**

Referred to JUDICIARY, Feb. 20, 2009  
Reported as committed, March 10, 2009  
First consideration, March 10, 2009  
Re-referred to APPROPRIATIONS, March 11, 2009  
Re-reported as committed, May 5, 2009

**DESCRIPTION AND PURPOSE OF BILL**

*An Act amending Title 42 (Judiciary and Judicial Procedure) of the Pennsylvania Consolidated Statutes, in organization and jurisdiction of courts of common pleas, authorizing the establishment of problem solving courts.*

Senate Bill 584 amends the Judicial Code (42 Pa.C.S.) by adding a new section to provide for "Problem Solving Courts".

This legislation provides that the Common Pleas Courts (including the Municipal Court of Philadelphia) may establish one or more problem solving courts as special dockets whereby defendants are admitted to a court-supervised individualized treatment program. The courts would be permitted to adopt local rules for the administration of problem solving courts and their related treatment services as long as such rules are not inconsistent with rules established by the Supreme Court.

# **SENATE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE**

## **FISCAL NOTE**

This legislation authorizes the Supreme Court to appoint a statewide problem solving courts coordinator to assist in the establishment of such courts in each judicial district. This legislation further provides that the coordinator may identify sources of funding for problem solving courts, provide technical assistance and develop administrative guidelines and procedures for monitoring problem solving courts and their related treatment services.

The Supreme Court may also establish an interdisciplinary and interbranch advisory committee to advise and assist the statewide coordinator in monitoring and administering problem solving courts statewide.

The Act would take effect in 60 days.

### **FISCAL IMPACT:**

Problem solving courts have been created by the county courts in recent years to respond to problems such as driving under the influence and drug addiction. Problem solving courts attempt to address these problems by diverting individuals from incarceration to appropriate treatment with increased supervision. As of January 2009, there were approximately 60 problem solving courts in Pennsylvania.

The AOPC further advises that it currently provides support to the judicial districts in the creation of problem solving courts and that it employs an individual to coordinate between the county courts, the Supreme Court and the AOPC.

The FY 2009-2010 budget request contained \$225,000 for problem solving courts, but the Governor did not include it in his proposed budget. The request included \$125,000 to conduct performance evaluations of existing problem solving courts and \$100,000 for grants to assist counties with the cost of training staff of local problem solving courts.

The Supreme Court may incur additional costs if it elects to create an advisory inter-branch committee. Such costs would be for reimbursement of expenses and travel. No estimate of such costs is available at this time.

It is estimated that the enactment of this legislation would not have a significant impact on Commonwealth funds.