

AMENDED IN SENATE AUGUST 18, 2010

AMENDED IN ASSEMBLY MARCH 25, 2010

CALIFORNIA LEGISLATURE—2009–10 REGULAR SESSION

ASSEMBLY BILL

No. 2763

Introduced by Committee on Judiciary (Feuer (Chair), Brownley, Evans, Jones, Lieu, and Monning)

February 25, 2010

An act to amend Sections 69614 and 69615 of the Government Code, relating to courts.

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

AB 2763, as amended, Committee on Judiciary. Judgeships.

(1) Existing law requires the Judicial Council to report to the Legislature and the Governor on or before November 1 of every even-numbered year on the factually determined need for new judgeships in each superior court using specified uniform criteria for the allocation of judgeships.

This bill would require the Judicial Council, on or before November 30, 2011, to provide to the Legislature a special assessment of the need for new judgeships in the family law and juvenile law assignments for each superior court.

(2) Existing law provides that 16 subordinate judicial officer positions in eligible superior courts, as determined by the Judicial Council, shall be converted to judgeships. Beginning in the 2008–09 fiscal year, existing law provides that, upon subsequent authorization by the Legislature, 146 subordinate judicial officer positions in eligible superior courts, as determined by the Judicial Council, shall be converted to judgeships, upon the occurrence of specified conditions, *including that*

the proposed action is ratified by the Legislature, either in the annual Budget Act or another legislative measure, except that no more than 16 positions may be converted to judgeships in any fiscal year.

This bill would provide, notwithstanding the above provisions, that up to 10 additional subordinate judicial officer positions in eligible superior courts may be converted to judgeships in any fiscal year, *commencing with the 2010–11 fiscal year*. Each additional position would be converted to a judgeship only if the conversions will result in a judge being assigned to a family law or juvenile law assignment previously presided over by a subordinate judicial officer. *Legislative ratification would be required, either in the annual Budget Act or by statutory enactment, for the conversion of any of the 146 subordinate judicial officer positions, and by statutory enactment other than the annual Budget Act for the conversion of the 10 additional subordinate judicial officer positions.* The bill would require the Judicial Council to report, beginning with the above-described report due to the Legislature on November 1, 2012, on the implementation and effect of this provision.

Vote: majority. Appropriation: no. Fiscal committee: yes.
State-mandated local program: no.

The people of the State of California do enact as follows:

1 SECTION 1. Section 69614 of the Government Code is
2 amended to read:

3 69614. (a) Upon appropriation by the Legislature in the
4 2006–07 fiscal year, there shall be 50 additional judges allocated
5 to the various superior courts pursuant to the uniform criteria
6 described in subdivision (b) for determining the need for additional
7 superior court judges.

8 (b) The judges shall be allocated, in accordance with the uniform
9 standards for factually determining additional judicial need in each
10 county, as approved by the Judicial Council in August 2001, and
11 as modified and approved by the Judicial Council in August 2004,
12 pursuant to the Update of Judicial Needs Study, based on the
13 following criteria:

14 (1) Court filings data averaged over a period of three years.
15 (2) Workload standards that represent the average amount of
16 time of bench and nonbench work required to resolve each case
17 type.

1 (3) A ranking methodology that provides consideration for
2 courts that have the greatest need relative to their current
3 complement of judicial officers.

4 (c) (1) The Judicial Council shall report to the Legislature and
5 the Governor on or before November 1 of every even-numbered
6 year on the factually determined need for new judgeships in each
7 superior court using the uniform criteria for allocation of judgeships
8 described in subdivision (b), as updated and applied to the average
9 of the prior three years' filings.

10 (2) On or before November 30, 2011, the Judicial Council shall
11 provide to the Legislature a special assessment of the need for new
12 judgeships in the family law and juvenile law assignments for each
13 superior court.

14 (3) The Judicial Council shall report, beginning with the report
15 due to the Legislature on November 1, 2012, on the implementation
16 and effect of subparagraph (C) of paragraph (1) of subdivision (c)
17 of Section 69615.

18 SEC. 2. Section 69615 of the Government Code is amended
19 to read:

20 69615. (a) It is the intent of the Legislature in enacting this
21 section to restore an appropriate balance between subordinate
22 judicial officers and judges in the trial courts by providing for the
23 conversion, as needed, of subordinate judicial officer positions to
24 judgeships in courts that assign subordinate judicial officers to act
25 as temporary judges. The Legislature finds that these positions
26 must be converted to judgeships in order to ensure that critical
27 case types, including family, probate, and juvenile law matters,
28 can be heard by judges.

29 (b) (1) The Legislature finds that because of the unique nature
30 of family and juvenile law matters, including the long-lasting
31 impact of decisions in these cases, particularly on vulnerable
32 children, whenever possible, these cases should be presided over
33 by judges, who are accountable to the public.

34 (2) The Legislature also finds that a Judicial Council study
35 concluded that public trust and confidence in the courts are
36 strongest when the public believes that the decisionmaking
37 processes used by the court are fair and allow each litigant a
38 reasonable opportunity to be heard by the court. In order to improve
39 the public perception of procedural fairness in family law and

1 juvenile law matters, it is necessary that cases be heard by judges
2 whenever possible.

3 (3) It is therefore the intent of the Legislature, in allowing the
4 conversion of up to 10 additional subordinate judicial officer
5 positions, as provided in subparagraph (C) of paragraph (1) of
6 subdivision (c), to expedite the timeline for ensuring that family
7 and juvenile law matters are presided over by judges.

8 (c) (1) (A) Sixteen subordinate judicial officer positions in
9 eligible superior courts, as determined and approved by the Judicial
10 Council on February 23, 2007, pursuant to uniform criteria for
11 determining the need for converting existing subordinate judicial
12 officer positions to superior court judgeships, shall be converted
13 to judgeships as set forth in paragraph (2).

14 (B) Upon subsequent authorization by the Legislature, 146
15 subordinate judicial officer positions in eligible superior courts,
16 as determined by the Judicial Council pursuant to uniform criteria
17 for determining the need for converting existing subordinate
18 judicial officer positions to superior court judgeships, shall be
19 converted to judgeships as set forth in paragraphs (2) and (3),
20 except that no more than 16 subordinate judicial officer positions
21 may be converted in any fiscal year.

22 (C) Notwithstanding subparagraph (B), up to 10 additional
23 subordinate judicial officer positions in eligible superior courts
24 may be converted to superior court judgeships in any fiscal year.
25 Each additional position may be converted to a judgeship only if
26 the conversion will result in a judge being assigned to a family
27 law or juvenile law assignment previously presided over by a
28 subordinate judicial officer. The additional conversions authorized
29 by this subparagraph are subject to the requirements of paragraph
30 (3).

31 (2) The positions for conversion shall be allocated each fiscal
32 year pursuant to uniform allocation standards to be developed by
33 the Judicial Council for factually determining the relative judicial
34 need for conversion of a subordinate judicial officer position that
35 becomes vacant to a superior court judgeship position.

36 (3) Beginning in the 2008–09 2010–11 fiscal year, a subordinate
37 judicial officer position shall be converted to a judgeship when all
38 of the following conditions are met:

1 (A) A vacancy occurs in a subordinate judicial officer position
2 in an eligible superior court as determined by the uniform allocation
3 standards described in paragraph (2).

4 (B) The Judicial Council files notice of the vacancies and
5 allocations with the Chairperson of the Senate Committee on Rules,
6 the Speaker of the Assembly, and the Chairpersons of the Senate
7 and Assembly Committees on Judiciary.

8 (C) *The Except for proposed actions authorized pursuant to*
9 *subparagraph (C) of paragraph (1), the proposed action is ratified*
10 *by the Legislature, either in the annual Budget Act or another*
11 *legislative measure by statutory enactment. Because of the unique*
12 *nature of the need for judges as expressed in subdivision (b), a*
13 *proposed action under subparagraph (C) of paragraph (1) shall*
14 *be ratified by the Legislature by statutory enactment other than*
15 *the annual Budget Act.*

16 (4) Section 12011.5 shall apply to an appointment to a superior
17 court judgeship converted from a subordinate judicial officer
18 position.

19 (d) For purposes of this section, “subordinate judicial officer”
20 means an officer appointed under the authority of Section 22 of
21 Article VI of the California Constitution. This section shall not
22 apply to a subordinate judicial officer position established by
23 Section 4251 of the Family Code.

24 (e) It is the intent of the Legislature that no subordinate judicial
25 officer shall involuntarily lose his or her position solely due to
26 operation of this section. This section does not change the
27 employment relationship between subordinate judicial officers and
28 the trial courts established by law.

29 (f) This section does not limit the authority of the Governor to
30 appoint a person to fill a vacancy pursuant to subdivision (c) of
31 Section 16 of Article VI of the California Constitution.

32 (g) This section does not entitle a court to an increase in funding.

33 (h) The operation of this section shall neither increase nor
34 decrease the number of judicial and subordinate judicial officer
35 positions and court support positions for which a county is
36 responsible by law.