

HB 575

HD1, SD1



The Judiciary, State of Hawai'i

Testimony to the Senate Committee on Ways and Means

Senator David Y. Ige, Chair
Senator Michelle Kidani, Vice Chair

Friday, April 1, 2011, 9:00 a.m.
State Capitol, Conference Room 211

by
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WRITTEN COMMENTS ONLY

Bill No. and Title: House Bill No. 575, H.D. 1, S.D.1, Relating to Salaries

Purpose: Extends the five per cent legislative salary decrease from June 30, 2011, to June 30, 2013. Applies the five per cent salary reduction to executive and judicial branch positions.

Judiciary's Position:

The Judiciary is acutely cognizant of the financial circumstances of the State of Hawai'i, and appreciates the efforts of the Legislature to provide the Judiciary with the financial resources for us to continue to provide core and fundamental services to the people of the State of Hawai'i. Although the Judiciary does not take a position on the intent or purpose of House Bill No. 575, H.D. 1, S.D. 1, the Judiciary provides the following background information for the Committee's consideration. The salaries of trial judges in Hawai'i, based on a 2010 cost-of-living comparison done by the National Center for State Courts, rank last, that is, 51st, of judges in all states including the District of Columbia. The Commission on Salaries 2007 report to the legislature, which recommended the salary increases that would be deferred by this bill, further noted that (1) judges had not received a pay increase from 1990 to 1999, and (2) "[i]n order to attract and retain competent and experienced individuals, salaries commensurate with their abilities are critical."



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Most recently, in its March 2011 Report, the Special Committee on the Effects of the Economy on the Judiciary of the American Judicature Society, Hawai'i Chapter, concluded:

During the course of Committee discussions, one consequence of the budget reductions was noted that while certainly unintended had significant consequences.

In 2009, the year in which budget reductions were announced, 9 judges representing 161 years of judicial experience retired. Reasons varied but one element was a concern with how the budget reductions would impact pensions. As pension is salary based, a reduction in salaries can lesson pension amounts.

Report of the Special Committee on the Effects of the Economy on the Judiciary of the American Judicature Society, Hawai'i Chapter, at Page 11.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on this measure.