
A BILL FOR AN ACT

PROPOSING AMENDMENTS TO ARTICLE VI OF THE CONSTITUTION OF THE
STATE OF HAWAII TO AMEND THE MANNER IN WHICH JUSTICES AND
JUDGES ARE APPOINTED, CONSENTED TO, AND RETAINED.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF HAWAII:

1 SECTION 1. The legislature finds that the Constitution of
2 the State of Hawaii currently requires a justice or judge to
3 petition the judicial selection commission to be retained in
4 office at least six months prior to the expiration of the
5 justice's or judge's term of office. If the judicial selection
6 commission determines that the justice or judge should be
7 retained in office, the judicial selection commission is
8 authorized by the Hawaii State Constitution to renew the justice's
9 or judge's term. Thus, unlike the initial appointment of a
10 justice or judge, consent of the senate is not currently required
11 to renew a justice's or judge's term.

12 The legislature also finds that the process used by the
13 judicial selection commission to determine whether a justice or
14 judge should be retained takes place in private, and its decisions
15 are final and not appealable. The legislature believes that to
16 promote transparency in the judicial retention process, the senate



1 should have the power to consent to or reverse the decision of the
2 judicial selection commission regarding the retention of a justice
3 or judge.

4 The legislature further finds that the senate consent
5 provisions of the Hawaii State Constitution relating to the
6 appointment of district court judges are incongruous to those
7 relating to supreme court justices and intermediate court of
8 appeals and circuit court judges. In the case of supreme court
9 justices and intermediate court of appeals and circuit court
10 judges, if the senate fails to reject an initial appointment to
11 these courts within thirty days of receiving the appointment
12 notice, the appointee is automatically considered appointed to the
13 judicial position. For district court judgeship appointees, the
14 exact opposite occurs. The appointee is automatically considered
15 rejected if not consented to by the senate within thirty days of
16 receipt of the district court judgeship appointment. Furthermore,
17 unlike in the case of appointments to the supreme court,
18 intermediate court of appeals, and circuit court where the holding
19 of a public hearing on an appointment is optional, the senate is
20 constitutionally mandated to conduct a public hearing for a
21 district court nominee, regardless of whether the appointment



1 occurs during the regular session or the interim period between
2 regular sessions.

3 The purpose of this Act is to propose amendments to article
4 VI, section 3, of the Constitution of the State of Hawaii to:

5 (1) Change the required time frame from thirty to ninety
6 days for certain processes to appoint and consent to a
7 justice's or judge's appointment;

8 (2) Harmonize the senate consent provisions for district
9 court judgeship nominees to mirror the senate consent
10 provisions relating to supreme court justices and
11 intermediate court of appeals and circuit court judges;
12 and

13 (3) Authorize the senate to approve or reject subsequent
14 terms of office for a justice or judge.

15 SECTION 2. Article VI, section 3, of the Constitution of
16 the State of Hawaii is amended to read as follows:

17 "APPOINTMENT OF JUSTICES AND JUDGES

18 Section 3. The governor, with the consent of the senate,
19 shall fill a vacancy in the office of the chief justice, supreme
20 court, intermediate appellate court and circuit courts, by
21 appointing a person from a list of not less than four, and not



1 more than six, nominees for the vacancy, presented to the
2 governor by the judicial selection commission.

3 If the governor fails to make any appointment within
4 [~~thirty~~] ninety days of presentation, or within ten days of the
5 senate's rejection of any previous appointment, the appointment
6 shall be made by the judicial selection commission from the list
7 with the consent of the senate. If the senate fails to reject
8 any appointment within [~~thirty~~] ninety days thereof, it shall be
9 deemed to have [~~given its consent~~] consented to [~~such~~] the
10 appointment. If the senate [~~shall reject~~] rejects any
11 appointment, the governor shall make another appointment from
12 the list within ten days thereof. The same appointment and
13 consent procedure shall be followed until a valid appointment
14 has been made, or failing this, the judicial selection
15 commission shall make the appointment from the list, without
16 senate consent.

17 The chief justice, with the consent of the senate, shall
18 fill a vacancy in the district courts by appointing a person
19 from a list of not less than six nominees for the vacancy
20 presented by the judicial selection commission. If the chief
21 justice fails to make [~~the~~] any appointment within [~~thirty~~]



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1 ninety days of presentation, or within ten days of the senate's
2 rejection of any previous appointment, the appointment shall be
3 made by the judicial selection commission from the list with the
4 consent of the senate. [~~The senate shall hold a public hearing
5 and vote on each appointment within thirty days of any
6 appointment. If the senate fails to do so, the nomination shall
7 be returned to the commission and the commission shall make the
8 appointment from the list without senate consent.~~] If the
9 senate fails to reject any appointment within ninety days
10 thereof, it shall be deemed to have consented to the
11 appointment. If the senate rejects any appointment, the chief
12 justice shall make another appointment from the list within ten
13 days thereof. The same appointment and consent procedure shall
14 be followed until a valid appointment has been made, or failing
15 this, the judicial selection commission shall make the
16 appointment from the list, without senate consent.

17 The chief justice shall appoint per diem district court
18 judges as provided by law.

19 The judicial selection commission shall disclose to the
20 public the list of nominees for each vacancy concurrently with



1 the presentation of each list to the governor or the chief
2 justice, as applicable.

3 **QUALIFICATIONS FOR APPOINTMENT**

4 Justices and judges shall be residents and citizens of the
5 State and of the United States, and licensed to practice law by
6 the supreme court. A justice of the supreme court, a judge of
7 the intermediate appellate court and a judge of the circuit
8 court shall have been so licensed for a period of not less than
9 ten years preceding nomination. A judge of the district court
10 shall have been so licensed for a period of not less than five
11 years preceding nomination.

12 No justice or judge shall, during the term of office,
13 engage in the practice of law, or run for or hold any other
14 office or position of profit under the United States, the State
15 or its political subdivisions.

16 **TENURE; RETENTION AND RETIREMENT**

17 The term of office of justices and judges of the supreme
18 court, intermediate appellate court and circuit courts shall be
19 ten years. Judges of district courts shall hold office for the
20 periods as provided by law. [~~At least six~~] Between twelve and
21 nine months prior to the expiration of a justice's or judge's



1 term of office, every justice and judge shall petition the
2 judicial selection commission to be retained in office or shall
3 inform the judicial selection commission of an intention to
4 retire. [~~If the judicial selection commission determines that~~
5 ~~the justice or judge should be retained in office, the~~
6 ~~commission shall renew the term of office of the justice or~~
7 ~~judge for the period provided by this section or by law.]~~

8 Within ninety days of receiving a retention petition, the
9 judicial selection commission shall determine whether the
10 justice or judge should be retained and issue a recommendation
11 to either approve or reject the retention petition. Upon
12 conclusion of the judicial selection commission's proceedings to
13 determine whether a justice or judge should be retained for
14 another term, the judicial selection commission shall
15 immediately transmit written notice of its determination and a
16 copy of the retention petition to the senate. Within ninety
17 days of receiving the judicial selection commission's
18 determination and the copy of the retention petition, the senate
19 may vote to consent to or reject the petition. If the senate
20 consents to or fails to reject the retention petition during the
21 specified period, the justice or judge shall be retained for



1 another term or until the justice or judge is no longer
2 qualified to serve in the respective office. If the senate
3 fails to vote on a retention petition within the specified time
4 period, or prior to the expiration of the justice's or judge's
5 current term of office, whichever occurs earlier, the judicial
6 selection commission's determination shall be deemed final.

7 Justices and judges shall be retired upon attaining the age
8 of seventy years. They shall be included in any retirement law
9 of the State."

10 SECTION 3. The question to be printed on the ballot shall
11 be as follows:

12 "Should the process to appoint, consent to, and retain a
13 justice or judge for a term of office be amended to:

14 (1) Extend certain time periods relating to appointment
15 and consideration of a justice's or judge's
16 appointment from thirty to ninety days;

17 (2) Harmonize the senate consent procedures for district
18 court judgeship nominees so that these procedures
19 mirror the senate consent procedures relating to
20 supreme court justices and intermediate court of appeals
21 and circuit court judges; and



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1 (3) Authorize the senate to approve or reject the
 2 retention of a justice or judge for a subsequent term
 3 of office?"

4 SECTION 4. Constitutional material to be repealed is
 5 bracketed and stricken. New constitutional material is
 6 underscored.

7 SECTION 5. This amendment shall take effect upon
 8 compliance with article XVII, section 3, of the Constitution of
 9 the State of Hawaii.

10

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Report Title:

Constitutional Amendment; Justices; Judges; Senate Consent Procedures; Term Renewals

Description:

Proposes amendments to the Constitution of the State of Hawaii relating to the appointment and retention of justices and judges. Changes the required time frames from thirty to ninety days for the process to appoint and consent to a justice or judge. Harmonizes the senate consent procedures for district court judgeship nominees to mirror the senate consent procedures relating to supreme court justices and intermediate court of appeals and circuit court judges. Authorizes the senate to approve or reject subsequent terms of office for justices and judges.

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