

**STAFF MEASURE SUMMARY****Senate Committee On Judiciary****Fiscal:** Fiscal impact issued**Revenue:** No Revenue Impact**Action Date:** 04/08/15**Action:** Do Pass And Refer To Ways And Means By Prior Reference.**Meeting Dates:** 04/08**Vote:**

Yeas: 5 - Burdick, Gelser, Kruse, Prozanski, Thatcher

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**WHAT THE MEASURE DOES:**

Requires Chief Justice of Supreme Court to annually determine before July 1<sup>st</sup> whether cost-of-living increase occurred in previous calendar year based on Consumer Price Index and increase judges' salaries accordingly. Establishes that salary adjustments are effective July 1<sup>st</sup> of year in which made. Requires first salary adjustment to occur July 1, 2016.

**ISSUES DISCUSSED:**

- Salaries currently set by statute
- Oregon's national rankings on judge salaries
- Comparisons to other states
- Existing barriers to consistent and steady progress on judges' salaries
- Benefits of salaries keeping up with cost-of-living adjustment increases
- Importance and challenges regarding recruitment and retention
- Comparisons to private sector
- Public's misconceptions about judges' salaries
- Lack of opposition to bill

**EFFECT OF COMMITTEE AMENDMENT:**

No amendment.

**BACKGROUND:**

In 2008, the Public Officials Compensation Commission recommended increasing judicial compensation in order to attract and retain a diversified and experienced bench and also to ensure that compensation is in line with the responsibility elected judges carry. A January 2014 judicial salary survey conducted by the National Center for State Courts ranks Oregon judges as follows (adjusted for 2015 increase):

- Oregon Supreme Court – 44<sup>th</sup> out of 51 jurisdictions, including the District of Columbia;
- Oregon Court of Appeals – 32<sup>nd</sup> out of 39 jurisdictions (Note: The Oregon Court of Appeals also consistently ranks as one of the busiest appellate courts in the nation.); and
- Circuit Courts – 41<sup>st</sup> out of 51 jurisdictions, including the District of Columbia.

Senate Bill 446 increases judicial salaries for judges of the Oregon Supreme Court, the Oregon Court of Appeals, the Oregon Tax Court, and Oregon's circuit courts on an annual basis when the cost-of-living increased per the Consumer Price Index. The bill requires the Chief Justice of the Oregon Supreme Court to make cost-of-living increase determinations annually before July 1<sup>st</sup>. If the cost of living increased in the previous calendar year, the Chief Justice must multiply judges' salaries by the percentage determined. Senate Bill 446 makes adjusted salaries effective July 1<sup>st</sup> of applicable years and requires the first adjustment to be made on July 1, 2016.