

Louisiana judges get five-figure stipends—without the independent efficiency study

By Dillon Lowe



Thanks to a line-item veto by Gov. Jeff Landry, judges in Louisiana will now receive a one-time stipend without having to participate in a previously required efficiency study.

Landry signed [House Bill 781](#), introduced by state Rep. Jack McFarland, R-Jonesboro, on Monday. The bill appropriates some \$213 million to cover the expenses of various courts in Louisiana—salaries, insurance premiums, office expenses and the like.

The bill also originally stipulated that judges receive a one-time stipend—\$14,961 for district court judges, \$15,280 for Supreme Court justices and \$17,680 for appellate court judges—upon the completion of a work point study. Landry vetoed the study requirement before signing the bill into law.

The study, which would have been conducted with the National Center for State Courts, would have evaluated the efficiency and workload of Louisiana's courts to identify areas where resources are not appropriately allocated. A report on the study's findings would have then been submitted to the Judicial Structure Task Force and the Louisiana Supreme Court.

A stroke of Landry's pen means judges will now receive their pay raises without any such evaluation.

"The study at issue is not scheduled to be completed until Feb. 1, 2025, which is more than halfway through the fiscal year," Landry's veto letter reads. "Additionally, the Supreme Court establishes its own work study and caseload evaluation pursuant to the authority granted to it in [the Louisiana Constitution]."

To further justify doing away with the study requirement, Landry notes that the Supreme Court already has the power to remove judges from office or withhold their salaries for various reasons, including failure to adequately perform their duties.

McFarland, the bill's author, tells *Daily Report* that he was disheartened by Landry's decision.

"I am disappointed," McFarland says. "We have been trying to gather this information as a Legislature for almost three years now."

Those in favor of the study argue that it would be necessary to determine whether courts have too few or too many judges—an argument McFarland wholeheartedly agrees with.

"This was our only way of determining whether we are being disproportionately represented or not represented when it comes to judges," he says.

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