

Guidelines Relating to the Combination and Splitting of Judicial Districts or Other District Courts

EVALUATION CRITERIA

PROCESS OF EVALUATING REQUESTS FOR COMBINING OR SPLITTING JUDICIAL DISTRICTS

- Step 1.** Requests for the combining or splitting existing judicial districts must be received by the Judicial Administrator's Office from an eligible entity by **October 1st** of each year. The Judicial Council shall consider any request for combining or splitting a judicial district provided the request is submitted in writing by the chief judge or a majority of the judges of the en banc court of the affected jurisdiction, or by a legislator and provided the request is made pursuant to these general guidelines and the applicable evaluation criteria provided below. The Council shall not consider oral requests or requests made by other parties.
- Step 2.** The requesting entity or entities gathers and submits statistical data relevant to the request.
- Step 3.** Staff and two members of the Judicial Council's Standing Trial Court Committee to Review the Need for Judgeships visit the district making the request. They interview the judges and other relevant stakeholders in the affected district of districts. They then make a recommendation to the full Committee.
- Step 4.** The full Committee meets to formulate recommendations to the Judicial Council (judicial representatives affected by the proposal may attend this meeting).
- Step 5.** Judicial Council makes its decision after hearing the recommendations of the Committee and the presentation of the proposing entity or entities.

EVALUATION CRITERIA

In its evaluation of a proposal to combine or split one or more judicial districts, the site visit team shall consider and identify the following criteria:

1. The general effects of the proposal on the efficiency and effectiveness of the administration of justice;
2. The effect of the proposal on the creation or reduction of judgeships;
3. The fiscal effects of the proposal on either reducing or increasing the costs of judicial compensation and retirement in the affected jurisdictions, the operational costs of the clerks of court in the affected jurisdictions, and the operational costs of the affected courts in both the short or long term;
4. The general types of impacts on other local stakeholders, including affected local governments, clerks of court, district attorneys, indigent defender boards, probation offices, the Office of Community Services, law enforcement offices, sheriffs, forensic laboratories, victim assistance programs, and other entities, and the potential fiscal impact on the state. Such impacts should be identified but not necessarily quantified by the Council except if one or more stakeholder wishes to supply information specifying or quantifying such impacts.
5. The Judicial Council shall review the request and shall report its findings and recommendations to the Legislature even if the request is withdrawn.