

Department of Legislative Services
 Maryland General Assembly
 2026 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
 Third Reader - Revised

House Bill 608

(The Speaker)(By Request - Judicial Compensation
 Commission)

Appropriations

Budget and Taxation

Judicial and Quasi-Judicial Employees - Compensation

This bill authorizes the Chief Judge of the Appellate Court of Maryland and a judge who serves as an administrative judge for a circuit court or the District Court to receive an annual stipend in addition to the judge’s annual salary. The bill also modifies the annual salary of the chairman of the Workers’ Compensation Commission (WCC) to be at least equal the salary of the Chief Judge of the District Court. **The bill takes effect July 1, 2026.**

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: Special fund expenditures for WCC increase by \$22,300 annually beginning in FY 2027, as discussed below. Although the bill also explicitly authorizes annual stipends for judges serving in administrative roles, the resulting impact is accounted for under separate enacted legislation (Senate Joint Resolution 2 and House Joint Resolution 6 of 2026) that specifies the amount of such stipends, as discussed below.

(in dollars)	FY 2027	FY 2028	FY 2029	FY 2030	FY 2031
Revenues	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
SF Expenditure	22,300	22,300	22,300	22,300	22,300
Net Effect	(\$22,300)	(\$22,300)	(\$22,300)	(\$22,300)	(\$22,300)

Note:() = decrease; GF = general funds; FF = federal funds; SF = special funds; - = indeterminate increase; (-) = indeterminate decrease

Local Effect: The bill does not affect local government operations or finances.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Current Law/Background:

Judicial Compensation Commission

The Judicial Compensation Commission is required to review judicial salaries and make recommendations to the Governor and the General Assembly once every four years with respect to all aspects of judicial compensation. The judicial compensation structure is intended to be adequate to assure that highly qualified persons will be attracted to the bench and will continue to serve there without unreasonable economic hardship. The General Assembly may amend a joint resolution from the commission to decrease, but not increase, any of the commission's salary recommendations. Failure to adopt or amend the joint resolution within 50 calendar days of its introduction results in adoption of the salaries recommended by the commission.

Based on recommendations from the Judicial Compensation Commission, legislation (Senate Joint Resolution 2 and House Joint Resolution 6) proposing increases in judicial salaries from fiscal 2027 through 2030 was introduced this session. In addition to proposed salary increases for all judges, the resolution also recommends an annual stipend of \$7,500 for the Chief Judge of the Appellate Court of Maryland and for any judge who serves as an administrative judge for a circuit court or District Court. Statute specifies that if the General Assembly fails to adopt or amend the joint resolution within 50 days after its introduction, the salaries recommended by the Judicial Compensation Commission must be implemented. Since the General Assembly did not act on the joint resolutions during the applicable time period, Senate Joint Resolution 2 and House Joint Resolution 6 have effectively been enacted. The Chief Judge of the District Court is therefore set to receive an annual salary of \$229,533 in fiscal 2027; the amount increases by \$5,900 annually through fiscal 2030.

The Judiciary advises that authorizing an annual stipend – in addition to recognizing the additional responsibilities these judges perform beyond the regular duties of a judge – may assist recruitment and retention of judges in these leadership positions of court administration. The bill, introduced as companion legislation to the aforementioned joint resolutions by request of the Judicial Compensation Commission, is intended to explicitly authorize judges to receive these annual stipends.

Maryland Rules – Court Administration

The duties and responsibilities of the Chief Judge of the Appellate Court and the administrative judges of the circuit court and District Court are specified in the Maryland Rules.

Chief Judge of the Appellate Court: Generally, Maryland Rule 16-103 specifies that, at the direction of the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Maryland, the Chief Judge of the Appellate Court is responsible for the administration of the Appellate Court, and generally has the authority of a county administrative judge.

Administrative Judge of a Circuit Court: Administrative judges for each circuit court (specified as “county administrative judges” in Maryland Rule 16-105) are designated by the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court (and serve at the Chief Justice’s pleasure), after consideration of the recommendation of the Circuit Administrative Judge. Generally, the county administrative judge must be a judge of that circuit court, and is responsible for the administration of the circuit court. This includes numerous duties such as supervision of the judges, officials, and employees of the court; assignment of judges within the court, as specified; preparation of the court’s budget; and plans related to case management, continuity of operations, and the jury plan.

Administrative Judge of the District Court: The District Court operates in 12 districts across the State. Subject to the approval of the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, the Chief Judge of the District Court must designate a District Court judge in each district as the administrative judge for that district. Subject to the direction of the Chief Judge of the District Court, the administrative judges are generally responsible for, among other things, the administration, operation, and maintenance of the court and the conduct and scheduling of the court’s business.

Chairman of the Workers’ Compensation Commission

Statute specifies that among the members of WCC, the Governor must appoint a chairman, who is the administrative and executive head of WCC, and generally has final authority over (1) the administrative work of WCC and its employees and (2) the assignment of cases for hearing. Also, the chairman must conduct hearings unless the hearings interfere with the performance of the chairman’s administrative and executive functions. The annual salary of the chairman must be at least \$1,500 more than the salary of the other members; the annual salary of a WCC member must at least equal the salary provided in the State budget for a judge of the District Court. Based on the salary structure to be implemented *under the aforementioned resolutions* (and not accounting for the alteration in salary proposed under the bill), the fiscal 2027 salary of the Chair is estimated at \$208,733, reflecting \$1,500 over the fiscal 2027 salary of a WCC member/judge of the District Court.

State Expenditures: As referenced above, Senate Joint Resolution 2 and House Joint Resolution 6 set forth a proposed salary plan for judges over the next four years, whereby all judges receive a salary increase of \$5,900 annually. Judges serving in an administrative role further receive an annual stipend of \$7,500. Due to the failure of the General Assembly to take further action within the required time periods, the resolutions have effectively been

enacted and the recommendations within the resolutions are to be implemented over the next four years. The fiscal impact of the salary increases and the stipend amounts contained within the resolutions are fully accounted for in the analysis prepared for Senate Joint Resolution 2/House Joint Resolution 6.

Special fund expenditures for WCC increase by \$22,325 in fiscal 2027 to increase the salary of the WCC Chair to that of the Chief Judge of the District Court. This estimate accounts for the difference in salary (and fringe benefits) associated with increasing the estimated fiscal 2027 salary of the WCC Chair based on the resolutions (\$208,733) to the annual salary of the Chief Judge of the District Court set forth in the resolutions (\$229,533). Special fund expenditures also increase by similar amounts annually thereafter. Although the Judicial Compensation Commission may again make recommendations for salary increases in fiscal 2031, this analysis does not reflect potential *additional* increases beyond fiscal 2030.

Additional Information

Recent Prior Introductions: Similar legislation has not been introduced during the last three years.

Designated Cross File: SB 313 (The President)(By Request - Judicial Compensation Commission) - Budget and Taxation.

Information Source(s): Judiciary (Administrative Office of the Courts); Department of Legislative Services

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