

RESOLUTION

WHEREAS, judges serve a role of critical importance in society. They preside over and issue rulings in cases that involve everything from capital murder to boundary disputes. Their decisions directly impact the life, liberty or property of the parties before them, and affect all citizens directly or indirectly. The best and the brightest are needed to make these important decisions; yet, because of inadequate judicial pay, retaining those individuals to judicial office is becoming increasingly difficult; and

WHEREAS, the increasingly frequent turnover in state court judges results in case backlogs, delayed prosecutions and increased costs to civil litigants; and

WHEREAS, Mississippi's judges are the lowest paid in the nation according to the National Center of State Courts. They have not received a pay increase since 2003; and

WHEREAS, increases in the salaries of other important public officials have far outpaced judicial salaries. For example, the Chairman of the Mississippi Workers' Compensation Commission earns \$112,436 annually, and a Commissioner earns \$108,698 annually. Both of these salaries are more than the salaries of the judges who most often review the Commission's cases, including the Chief Judge of the Court of Appeals. As another example, the Commissioner of Public Safety, who ensures that Mississippi's laws are enforced, is paid \$138,115 per year. And the Commissioner of Corrections, who oversees the state prison system, earns \$132,760 annually. Yet, trial judges who make the critical decisions in criminal cases earn substantially less-- \$104,170 per year; and

WHEREAS, because of current economic and political realities, funding raises through general fund appropriations is simply not feasible. Raises funded solely by user fees, however, are achievable; and


WHEREAS, the Capital Area Bar Association, consisting of lawyers and state and federal court judges from Hinds, Madison, and Rankin Counties with 1,208 members, believes that an independent judiciary is the cornerstone of our democracy, and that adequate pay is essential to maintaining an independent judiciary;

IT IS, THEREFORE, RESOLVED by the Board of Directors of the Capital Area Bar Association that a judicial pay bill should be enacted into law during the 2012 Session of the MS Legislature;


IT IS FURTHER RESOLVED that the legislation should include the following three major components; (1) a four-year, step-pay increase for Supreme Court Justices, Court of Appeals Judges, Circuit Court Judges, Chancery Court Judges, and County Court Judges; (2) increased civil filing and appellate court fees to fund the increases; and (3) a periodic review and recommendation by the State Personnel Board concerning adequate levels of pay for justices, judges, staff attorneys, and law clerks.

ADOPTED by unanimous consent of the Board of Directors of the Capital Area Bar Association, this 6th day of December, 2011.


Laura M. Glaze, President


David F. Maron, Vice-President

Attested by:


J. Collins Wohner, Jr., Secretary