

SESSION OF 2013

SUPPLEMENTAL NOTE ON SENATE BILL NO. 8

As Amended by Senate Committee on Judiciary

Brief*

SB 8, as amended, would create the Kansas Commission on Judicial Nominations. The Commission would consist of seven members:

- Two non-lawyer members appointed by the Speaker of the House;
- One non-lawyer member appointed by the House Minority Leader;
- One non-lawyer member appointed by the State Treasurer;
- One lawyer member appointed by the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court;
- One lawyer member appointed by the Attorney General; and
- One retired district judge appointed by the Kansas County and District Attorneys Association.

Members would serve two-year terms and be reimbursed for travel and other expenses. They would elect a chairperson from their membership, and a majority would constitute a quorum. Final action would require a vote of a majority of the members.

*Supplemental notes are prepared by the Legislative Research Department and do not express legislative intent. The supplemental note and fiscal note for this bill may be accessed on the Internet at <http://www.kslegislature.org>

The Commission would be subject to the Kansas Open Meetings Act (KOMA), except it could recess for a closed or executive meeting when considering confidential information related to the appointee's qualifications for office. The relevant section of KOMA would be amended to reflect this exception. Any confidential document or information obtained by the Commission would remain so, and would not be a public record or subject to discovery or subpoena.

When the Governor or Chief Justice appoints a Supreme Court justice or Court of Appeals judge, the Commission would be required to interview the appointee within 30 days and obtain information on the appointee's qualifications. The Commission would be required to prepare a written report of its assessment of the appointee's qualifications, approve the report by a majority of the Commission, and submit the report to the President of the Senate and the chairperson of the Senate Judiciary Committee within 30 days of the appointment.

The bill would provide that such appointments may be considered and acted upon by the Senate in either executive or regular session, except final action would not be permitted in executive session.

These appointments would be referred to the Senate Judiciary Committee immediately after the Commission's report is received or, if no report is received, on the next legislative day following the deadline for submission of the report. The Judiciary Committee would have 15 legislative days to return the appointment to the Senate with a report. If the Judiciary Committee does not do so, the appointment would be considered returned to the Senate without recommendation on the next legislative day following the deadline.

The Senate would be permitted to consider and act upon the appointment at any time after it is returned to the Senate. Unanimous consent would be required to permit a motion to confirm before the appointment is returned.

The Act would take effect upon approval by the qualified electors of the state of a revision to Article 3 of the *Kansas Constitution* and the publication of the Act in the statute book.

Background

SB 8 was introduced by Senator Jeff King as a companion bill to SCR 1601, which proposes to amend the *Kansas Constitution* by changing the selection process for appellate judges and justices.

The Senate Judiciary Committee held a joint hearing on SCR 1601 and SB 8. The following conferees testified as proponents: Representative Ed Bideau; Attorney General Derek Schmidt; Judge Anthony Powell; and several law professors, attorneys, and private citizens. A representative of Americans for Prosperity and several private citizens offered written proponent testimony.

Opponents who testified included: Chief Judge Thomas Malone of the Kansas Court of Appeals; Anne Burke, chairperson of the Supreme Court Nominating Commission; a former lay member of the Commission; and representatives of the Kansas Bar Association, Kansas Association of Defense Counsel, Defense Research Institute, Kansas Appleseed Center for Law and Justice, Kansas Association for Justice, League of Women Voters, Committee for Economic Development, Institute for Justice, and the MainStream Coalition. Chief Justice Lawton Nuss of the Kansas Supreme Court, two law professors, the Wichita Bar Association, and various chambers of commerce submitted written opponent testimony.

The Senate Committee amended the bill to change the name of the Commission from the "Kansas Commission on Judicial Qualifications" to the "Kansas Commission on Judicial Nominations." The Committee also approved an amendment making the Commission subject to KOMA, with an executive session exception for confidential information,

and adding a provision regarding confidentiality of documents and information. The Committee recommended the bill be passed as amended.

The fiscal note indicates any costs associated with the bill would be negligible. Any fiscal effect associated with SB 8 is not reflected in *The FY 2014 Governor's Budget Report*.