

Budget Bill Addresses Judges' Travel Costs

The Justice Systems Budget Subcommittee approved a budget bill that provides funding to the Judicial Branch for fiscal year 2010, which runs from July 1, 2009, through June 30, 2010. Part of the bill addresses the reduction of travel by judges.

If language in the bill is enacted, judges may waive reimbursement for any travel costs outside of the judge's county of residence for fiscal year 2010. The Legislature wanted to make sure that the Supreme Court, and all judges,

were aware of how serious the Legislature views the impact of the travel restriction issued by Chief Justice Ternus.

Language in the bill also allows any judge or magistrate to voluntarily agree to be furloughed on any day that employees of the judicial branch are furloughed. The money that is saved from these voluntary furloughs cannot be used for judges' salaries. Some members on the committee had heard from judges that they would volunteer to be furloughed, but there wasn't

statutory language to allow the voluntary furloughs.

The bill appropriates a total of \$149 million for fiscal year 2010, which represents a 1.8% reduction from the previous fiscal year. The co-chairs of the Budget Subcommittee acknowledged that this may not be enough to ward off all budgetary concerns, but stated that with the adopted statutory language and more work along the multi-step process, they hope to address all problems.