



SOUTH CAROLINA REVENUE AND FISCAL AFFAIRS OFFICE

STATEMENT OF ESTIMATED FISCAL IMPACT

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This fiscal impact statement is produced in compliance with the South Carolina Code of Laws and House and Senate rules. The focus of the analysis is on governmental expenditure and revenue impacts and may not provide a comprehensive summary of the legislation.

Bill Number:	H. 4755	Introduced on January 13, 2026
Subject:	Judicial Selection Reform	
Requestor:	House Judiciary	
RFA Analyst(s):	Tipton	
Impact Date:	January 21, 2026	

Fiscal Impact Summary

This bill makes several changes to the appointment requirements, procedures, and other related policies of the Judicial Merit Selection Commission (JMSC). Under the bill, the JMSC must be comprised of twelve members appointed by the Governor, none of whom may be members of the General Assembly or a spouse, child, or sibling of a member of the General Assembly. The bill requires the commission to be staffed by the Governor's Office and makes other changes to JMSC statutes related to confidential information, anti-discrimination policies, subpoena powers, and General Assembly family member privileges. The bill takes effect on February 1, 2027.

This bill is expected to increase General Fund expenditures for the Governor's Office by approximately \$1,021,000 in FY 2026-27 and approximately \$700,000 each year thereafter for two attorneys and one paralegal needed to staff the JMSC as required by the bill. These expenses represent salary and fringe for the additional staff, as well as rent, equipment, software licensing, network expansion, travel, and training that would be needed to support the additional staff and the JMSC. The office indicates that additional General Funds would be needed to cover these expenses.

This bill is not expected to have a significant fiscal impact on the House of Representatives, the Senate, or the State Ethics Commission. The Senate indicates that some expenditure savings may be realized due to the elimination of per diem and travel expenses for Senate members of the JMSC. The House of Representative and the State Ethics Commission indicate that the bill is not expected to result in an expenditure impact for either respective entity.

Explanation of Fiscal Impact

Introduced on January 13, 2026

State Expenditure

This bill makes several changes to the appointment requirements, procedures, and other related policies for the JMSC. Currently, the JMSC is made up of four members appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives, three of whom must be members of the House of Representatives, two members appointed by the President of the Senate, one of whom must be a member of the Senate, two members appointed by the Chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee, both of whom must be members of the Senate, and four members appointed by the Governor. Under the bill, all twelve appointments to the commission are to be made by the

Governor's Office, eight of whom must be members of the South Carolina Bar in good standing, and no more than four of whom may be law enforcement professionals. The bill further states that no member of the General Assembly nor their spouse, children, or siblings may serve on the JMSC, and must wait no fewer than two years before qualifying for selection by the Governor. Staffing for the JMSC under this bill will be a responsibility of the Governor's Office.

The bill further modifies the JMSC investigation process of a prospective judicial selection and adjusts requirements for candidates in submitting written testimony and requires that confidential information be reserved for JMSC executive session. The bill makes further modifications to anti-discrimination policies of the commission, confidential record keeping, and subpoena power of the commission. The bill also removes certain privileges for family members of General Assembly members, violators of which must be reported to the State Ethics Commission. The bill takes effect on February 1, 2027, at which time the previous commission members shall vacate their seats immediately to be replaced by those selected by the Governor in accordance with the provisions of the bill.

Governor's Office. The Governor's Office indicates that providing staff for the JMSC as required by the bill will increase office expenditures. The office indicates that two attorneys and one paralegal will be needed to carry out duties required of commission staff, with annual salary and fringe expenses of \$596,095. Annual operating expenses related to the three additional staff members, including technology equipment, software licensing and network expansion, travel, training, workspace rent, and other miscellaneous items are expected to total \$104,124 per year, for total new recurring expenses of \$700,219. The Governor's Office further anticipates one-time equipment and software purchases for the additional staff totaling \$321,000 in non-recurring expenses. Therefore, this bill is expected to increase General Fund expenditures for the Governor's Office by approximately \$1,021,000 in FY 2026-27 and \$700,000 in each year thereafter. The Governor's Office indicates that additional General Funds will be needed to cover these expenses.

House of Representatives and Senate. This bill removes members of the General Assembly from being eligible to serve on the JMSC and states that staffing for the commission must be provided by the Governor's Office. The Senate indicates that some expenditure savings may be realized due to the elimination of per diem and travel expenses for Senate members of the JMSC. The House of Representative indicates that the bill is not expected to result in a fiscal impact for the body.

State Ethics Commission. The bill amends statutes related to the JMSC, violators of which must be reported to the State Ethics Commission. The commission indicates that this will be managed with current resources and will have no fiscal impact.

State Revenue

N/A

Local Expenditure and Local Revenue

N/A



Frank A. Rainwater, Executive Director