

Fiscal Estimate Narratives

SPD 3/13/2015

LRB Number	15-1421/1	Introduction Number	SB-075	Estimate Type	Original
Description Possession of dogs by certain felony offenders and providing a penalty					

Assumptions Used in Arriving at Fiscal Estimate

The State Public Defender (SPD) is statutorily authorized and required to appoint attorneys to represent indigent defendants in criminal and certain commitment proceedings. The SPD plays a significant role in ensuring that the Wisconsin justice system complies with the right to counsel provided by both the state and federal constitutions. Any legislation has the potential to increase SPD costs if it creates a new criminal offense, expands the definition of an existing criminal offense, or increases the penalties for an existing offense.

This bill would create a new misdemeanor and two new felonies relating to certain felony offenders possessing, controlling or residing with a dog determined to be vicious by a humane or law enforcement officer.

The SPD has no data to predict the number of additional misdemeanor or felony cases that would result from the changes proposed in this bill. The SPD's average cost to provide representation with a private bar attorney in a misdemeanor case is \$255.54, calculated on the basis of the SPD's average cost per case in fiscal year 2014. The SPD's average cost per felony appointed to private bar attorneys was \$551.02 for the same fiscal year.

Because probation or prison could be ordered upon conviction for the proposed felony crimes, or in lieu of incarceration for the proposed misdemeanor, this change would indirectly lead to additional cases in which the Department of Corrections (DOC) would seek to revoke probation or extended supervision. The SPD provides representation in proceedings commenced by the Department of Corrections (DOC) to revoke supervision. Thus, the bill would indirectly increase the number of cases in which the SPD appoints attorneys in revocation proceedings. The average cost during fiscal year 2014 for SPD representation by a private bar attorney in a revocation proceeding was \$294.04.

Because of the annual caseloads for staff attorney positions specified for budgeting purposes under § 977.08(5), Stats., it would be more cost effective to add staff attorney positions if a significant number of SPD cases resulted from this provision of the bill.

Counties are also subject to increased costs when a new crime is created. There are some defendants who, despite exceeding the SPD's statutory financial guidelines, are constitutionally eligible for appointment of counsel because it would be a substantial hardship for them to retain an attorney. The court is required to appoint counsel at county expense for these defendants. Thus, the counties would experience increased costs attributable to the higher classification of criminal charges resulting from this bill. The counties could also incur additional costs associated with incarceration of defendants, both pending trial and after sentencing.

Long-Range Fiscal Implications