

Fiscal Estimate Narratives

SPD 6/20/2007

LRB Number	07-2726/1	Introduction Number	AB-0412	Estimate Type	Original
Description Crimes committed against individuals who are at least 65 years old and providing penalties					

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 proceedings. The SPD plays a major role in ensuring that the Wisconsin justice system complies with the right to counsel provided by both the state and federal constitutions. Any legislation that creates a new criminal offense or expands the definition of an existing criminal offense has the potential to increase SPD costs.

Although this bill does not create a new criminal offense, it would increase the maximum penalties for certain offenses (those in which the victim has attained age 65). The proposed changes could result in additional trials and/or contested sentencing hearings. Also, the bill would convert some misdemeanor offenses to felonies. For FY 2006, the average SPD cost to provide representation in a misdemeanor case was \$228.10, and the comparable average cost for a felony (class D-I) was \$545.60.

The SPD does not have the data to predict the increased costs that could result from the changes proposed in this bill. Neither SPD nor any other Wisconsin justice agency (to our knowledge) systematically tracks the age of adult victims.

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 possibility of additional trials and contested sentencing hearings could add to county costs in cases in which the court appoints the defense attorney. The counties could also incur additional costs associated with longer incarceration of defendants, both pending trial and after sentencing.

Long-Range Fiscal Implications