

**JUSTICE COURT AMENDMENTS**

2001 GENERAL SESSION

STATE OF UTAH

**Sponsor: Brent H. Goodfellow**

**This act modifies the Judicial Code by eliminating the salary cap for Justice Court judges. The act also changes who appoints Justice Court judges in municipalities with the council-manager form of government from the chair of the city council to the city manager.**

This act affects sections of Utah Code Annotated 1953 as follows:

AMENDS:

**78-5-128**, as last amended by Chapter 148, Laws of Utah 2000

**78-5-134**, as last amended by Chapter 313, Laws of Utah 1998

*Be it enacted by the Legislature of the state of Utah:*

Section 1. Section **78-5-128** is amended to read:

**78-5-128. Determination of compensation and limits -- Salary survey -- Limits on secondary employment.**

(1) (a) Every justice court judge shall be paid a fixed compensation determined by the governing body of the respective municipality or county taking into consideration recommendations of the office of the state court administrator as provided in Subsection (2) ~~but in no case may the salary for a justice court judge be an amount greater than 72% of the salary of a district court judge~~.

(i) A justice court judge employed by one entity may not receive a salary greater than 85% of the salary of a district court judge.

(ii) A justice court judge employed by more than one entity as a justice court judge, may not receive a total salary for service as a justice court judge greater than the salary of a district court judge.

(b) The compensation shall be comprised of a monthly salary and shall be computed upon the number of hours, days, or other periods of time that the justice court judge is to be available to perform all judicial functions.

(2) (a) The state court administrator with the approval of the Judicial Council shall survey

areas of the state relating to the functions and activities of the justice courts, taking into consideration the diverse economic factors of the various localities of the justice courts, and develop recommended monthly salaries. These recommendations shall be furnished to the governing bodies of the municipalities and the counties to assist them in determining salaries.

(b) The state court administrator may make studies concerned with the economic as well as administrative feasibility to encourage the various political subdivisions to utilize the same person or persons to act as justice court judges for their several jurisdictions and to assist political subdivisions desiring to enter into agreements for that purpose.

(3) A justice court judge may not appear as an attorney in any criminal matter in a federal, state, or justice court or appear as an attorney in any justice court or in any juvenile court case involving conduct which would be criminal if committed by an adult.

(4) A justice court judge may not hold any office or employment including contracting for services in any justice agency of state government or any political subdivision of the state including law enforcement, prosecution, criminal defense, corrections, or court employment.

(5) A justice court judge may not hold any office in any political party or organization engaged in any political activity or serve as an elected official in state government or any political subdivision of the state.

(6) A justice court judge may not own or be employed by any business entity which regularly litigates in small claims court.

(7) Any judge who violates this section is subject to removal by the Judicial Conduct Commission under Title 78, Chapter 8, Judicial Conduct Commission and Supreme Court Oversight of Judges.

Section 2. Section **78-5-134** is amended to read:

**78-5-134. Justice court judges to be appointed -- Procedure -- Report to Judicial Council -- Retention election -- Vacancy.**

(1) As used in this section:

(a) "Appointing authority" means:

(i) the chair of the county commission in counties having the county commission form of

county government;

(ii) the county executive in counties having the county executive-council form of government;

(iii) the chair of the city commission, city council, or town council in municipalities having~~[-~~ (A)] the traditional management arrangement established by Title 10, Chapter 3, Part 1, Governing Body; ~~[and]~~

~~[(B)]~~ (iv) the city manager, in the council-manager optional form of government defined in Section 10-3-1209; and

~~[(iv)]~~ (v) the mayor, in the council-mayor optional form of government defined in Section 10-3-1209~~[-and]~~.

(b) "Local legislative body" means:

(i) the county commission or county council; and

(ii) the city commission, city council, or town council.

(2) Justice court judges shall be appointed by the appointing authority and confirmed by a majority vote of the local legislative body.

(3) (a) After a newly appointed justice court judge has been confirmed, the local legislative body shall report the confirmed judge's name to the Judicial Council.

(b) The Judicial Council shall certify the judge as qualified to hold office upon successful completion of the orientation program and upon the written opinion of the county or municipal attorney that the judge meets the statutory qualifications for office.

(c) A justice court judge may not perform judicial duties until certified by the Judicial Council.

(4) Upon the expiration of a county justice court judge's term of office the judge shall be subject to an unopposed retention election in accordance with the procedures set forth in Section 20A-12-201.

(5) Upon the expiration of a municipal justice court judge's term of office a municipal justice court judge shall be reappointed absent a showing of good cause by the appointing authority.

(a) If an appointing authority asserts good cause to not reappoint a municipal justice court

judge, at the request of the judge, the good cause shall be presented at a formal hearing of the local legislative body.

(b) The local legislative body shall determine by majority vote whether good cause exists not to reappoint the municipal justice court judge.

(c) The decision of the local legislative body is not subject to appeal.

(d) In determining whether good cause exists to not reappoint a municipal justice court judge, the appointing authority and local legislative body shall consider:

(i) whether or not the judge has been certified as meeting the evaluation criteria for judicial performance established by the Judicial Council; and

(ii) any other factors considered relevant by the appointing authority.

(6) Before reappointment or retention election, each justice court judge shall be evaluated in accordance with the performance evaluation program established in Subsection 78-3-21(4).

(7) (a) At the conclusion of a term of office or when a vacancy occurs in the position of justice court judge, the appointing authority may contract with a justice court judge in the county or an adjacent county to serve as justice court judge.

(b) The contract shall be for the duration of the justice court judge's term of office.

(8) Vacancies in the office of justice court judge shall be filled as provided in Section 20A-1-506.