

JUDICIAL PERFORMANCE EVALUATION

COMMISSION AMENDMENTS

2010 GENERAL SESSION

STATE OF UTAH

Chief Sponsor: D. Chris Butters

House Sponsor: Curtis Oda

LONG TITLE

General Description:

This bill amends the judicial performance evaluation survey.

Highlighted Provisions:

This bill:

- ▶ eliminates witnesses who have testified in cases considered by the judge from the list of mandatory survey respondent groups; and
- ▶ expands the survey topic of "judicial temperament" to include questions about judicial demeanor and personal attributes that promote trust and confidence in the judiciary.

Monies Appropriated in this Bill:

None

Other Special Clauses:

None

Utah Code Sections Affected:

AMENDS:

78A-12-203, as last amended by Laws of Utah 2009, Chapter 243

78A-12-204, as last amended by Laws of Utah 2009, Chapter 243

78A-12-205, as enacted by Laws of Utah 2008, Chapter 248

78A-12-206, as enacted by Laws of Utah 2008, Chapter 248



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

Section 1. Section **78A-12-203** is amended to read:

78A-12-203. Judicial performance evaluations.

(1) Beginning with the 2012 judicial retention elections, the commission shall prepare a performance evaluation for:

(a) each judge in the third and fifth year of the judge's term if the judge is not a justice of the Supreme Court; and

(b) each justice of the Supreme Court in the third, seventh, and ninth year of the justice's term.

(2) Except as provided in Subsection (3), the performance evaluation for a judge under Subsection (1) shall consider only:

(a) the results of the judge's most recent judicial performance survey that is conducted by a third party in accordance with Section 78A-12-204;

(b) information concerning the judge's compliance with minimum performance standards established in accordance with Section 78A-12-205;

(c) courtroom observation;

(d) the judge's judicial disciplinary record, if any;

(e) public comment solicited by the commission;

(f) information from an earlier judicial performance evaluation concerning the judge;

and

(g) any other factor that the commission:

(i) considers relevant to evaluating the judge's performance for the purpose of a retention election; and

(ii) establishes by rule.

(3) The commission shall make rules concerning the conduct of courtroom observation under Subsection (2), which shall include the following:

(a) an indication of who may perform the courtroom observation;

(b) a determination of whether the courtroom observation shall be made in person or may be made by electronic means; and

(c) a list of principles and standards used to evaluate the behavior observed.

59 (4) (a) As part of the evaluation conducted under this section, the commission shall
60 determine whether to recommend that the voters retain the judge.

61 (b) (i) If a judge meets the minimum performance standards established in accordance
62 with Section 78A-12-205 there is a rebuttable presumption that the commission will
63 recommend the voters retain the judge.

64 (ii) If a judge fails to meet the minimum performance standards established in
65 accordance with Section 78A-12-205 there is a rebuttable presumption that the commission
66 will recommend the voters not retain the judge.

67 (c) The commission may elect to make no recommendation on whether the voters
68 should retain a judge if the commission determines that the information concerning the judge is
69 insufficient to make a recommendation.

70 (d) (i) If the commission deviates from a presumption for or against recommending the
71 voters retain a judge or elects to make no recommendation on whether the voters should retain
72 a judge, the commission shall provide a detailed explanation of the reason for that deviation or
73 election in the commission's report under Section 78A-12-206.

74 (ii) If the commission makes no recommendation because of a tie vote, the commission
75 shall note that fact in the commission's report.

76 (5) (a) Before considering the judicial performance evaluation of any judge, the
77 commission shall notify the judge of the date and time of any commission meeting during
78 which the judge's judicial performance evaluation will be considered.

79 (b) The commission shall allow a judge who is the subject of a judicial performance
80 evaluation to appear and speak at any commission meeting, except a closed meeting, during
81 which the judge's judicial performance evaluation is considered.

82 (c) The commission may meet in a closed meeting to discuss a judge's judicial
83 performance evaluation by complying with Title 52, Chapter 4, Open and Public Meetings Act.

84 (6) (a) The commission shall compile a midterm report of its judicial performance
85 evaluation of a judge.

86 (b) The midterm report of a judicial performance evaluation shall include information
87 that the commission considers appropriate for purposes of judicial self-improvement.

88 (c) The report shall be provided to the evaluated judge and the presiding judge of the
89 district in which the evaluated judge serves. If the evaluated judge is the presiding judge, the

90 midterm report shall be provided to the chair of the board of judges for the court level on which
91 the evaluated judge serves.

92 ~~[(6)]~~ (7) The commission may make rules in accordance with Title 63G, Chapter 3,
93 Utah Administrative Rulemaking Act, as necessary to administer the evaluation required by
94 this section.

95 Section 2. Section **78A-12-204** is amended to read:

96 **78A-12-204. Judicial performance survey.**

97 (1) The judicial performance survey required by Section 78A-12-203 concerning a
98 judge who is subject to a retention election shall be conducted on an ongoing basis during the
99 judge's term in office by a third party under contract to the commission.

100 (2) The judicial performance survey shall include as respondents a sample of each of
101 the following groups as applicable:

102 (a) attorneys who have appeared before the judge as counsel;

103 (b) jurors who have served in a case before the judge;

104 (c) litigants whose cases have been considered by the judge; and

105 ~~[(d) witnesses who have testified in cases considered by the judge; and]~~

106 ~~[(e)]~~ (d) court staff who have worked with the judge.

107 (3) The commission may include an additional classification of respondents if the
108 commission:

109 (a) considers a survey of that classification of respondents helpful to voters in
110 determining whether to vote to retain a judge; and

111 (b) establishes the additional classification of respondents by rule.

112 (4) All survey responses are anonymous, including comments included with a survey
113 response.

114 (5) If the commission provides any information to a judge or the Judicial Council, the
115 information shall be provided in such a way as to protect the confidentiality of a survey
116 respondent.

117 (6) A survey shall be provided to a potential survey respondent within 30 days of the
118 day on which the case in which the person appears in the judge's court is closed, exclusive of
119 any appeal, except for court staff and attorneys, who may be surveyed at any time during the
120 survey period.

- 121 (7) Survey topics shall include questions concerning a judge's:
122 (a) legal ability, including the following:
123 (i) demonstration of understanding of the substantive law and any relevant rules of
124 procedure and evidence;
125 (ii) attentiveness to factual and legal issues before the court;
126 (iii) adherence to precedent and ability to clearly explain departures from precedent;
127 and
128 (iv) grasp of the practical impact on the parties of the judge's rulings, including the
129 effect of delay and increased litigation expense;
130 (b) integrity, including the following:
131 (i) avoidance of impropriety or the appearance of impropriety; and
132 (ii) display of fairness and impartiality toward all parties;
133 (c) communication skills, including clearly articulating the basis for written rulings;
134 (d) judicial temperament, including the following:
135 (i) demonstration of courtesy toward attorneys, court staff, and others in the judge's
136 court;
137 (ii) maintenance of decorum in the courtroom; ~~and~~
138 (iii) demonstration of judicial demeanor and personal attributes that promote public
139 trust and confidence in the judicial system; and
140 ~~[(iii)]~~ (iv) preparedness for oral argument; and
141 (e) administrative performance, including the following:
142 (i) management of workload;
143 (ii) sharing proportionally the workload within the court or district; and
144 (iii) issuance of opinions and orders without unnecessary delay.
145 (8) (a) If the commission determines that a certain survey question or topic is not
146 appropriate for a category of respondents, the commission may omit that question or topic from
147 the survey provided to that category of respondents.
148 (b) Litigants ~~and witnesses~~ may be surveyed only about judicial temperament.
149 (c) The commission shall, by rule, determine appropriate litigants ~~and witnesses~~ to be
150 surveyed.
151 (9) The survey shall allow respondents to indicate responses in a manner determined by

152 the commission, which shall be:

153 (a) on a numerical scale from one to five, with one representing inadequate
154 performance and five representing outstanding performance; or

155 (b) in the affirmative or negative, with an option to indicate the respondent's inability
156 to respond in the affirmative or negative.

157 (10) The commission shall compile and make available to each judge that judge's
158 survey results with each of the judge's judicial performance evaluations.

159 (11) The commission may make rules in accordance with Title 63G, Chapter 3, Utah
160 Administrative Rulemaking Act, as necessary to administer the judicial performance survey.

161 Section 3. Section **78A-12-205** is amended to read:

162 **78A-12-205. Minimum performance standards.**

163 (1) The commission shall establish a minimum performance standard requiring that:

164 (a) the judge have no more than one formal disciplinary action taken against the judge
165 by the Judicial Conduct Commission or the Utah Supreme Court during the judge's current
166 term; and

167 (b) the judge receive a minimum score on the judicial performance survey as follows:

168 (i) an average score of at least a 3.0 on at least 80% of the questions, excluding litigant
169 [~~and witness~~] respondents, for questions scored on the numerical scale; and

170 (ii) if the commission includes a question on the survey that does not use the numerical
171 scale, the commission shall establish the minimum performance standard for all questions,
172 excluding any question to litigant [~~and witness~~] respondents, that do not use the numerical
173 scale to be substantially equivalent to the standard required under Subsection (1)(b)(i).

174 (2) The commission may establish an additional minimum performance standard if the
175 commission by at least two-thirds vote:

176 (a) determines that satisfaction of the standard is necessary to the satisfactory
177 performance of the judge; and

178 (b) adopts the standard.

179 (3) The commission may make rules in accordance with Title 63G, Chapter 3, Utah
180 Administrative Rulemaking Act, to establish a minimum performance standard.

181 Section 4. Section **78A-12-206** is amended to read:

182 **78A-12-206. Publication of the judicial performance evaluation.**

183 (1) (a) The commission shall compile a retention report of its judicial performance
184 evaluation of a judge.

185 (b) The report of a judicial performance evaluation nearest the judge's next scheduled
186 retention election shall be provided to the judge at least 45 days before the last day on which
187 the judge may file a declaration of the judge's candidacy in the retention election.

188 (c) A report prepared in accordance with Subsection (1)(b) and information obtained in
189 connection with the evaluation become a public record under Title 63G, Chapter 2,
190 Government Records Access and Management Act, on the day following the last day on which
191 the judge who is the subject of the report may file a declaration of the judge's candidacy in the
192 judge's scheduled retention election if the judge declares the judge's candidacy for the retention
193 election.

194 (d) A report that is not public under Subsection (1)(c) is a protected record under Title
195 63G, Chapter 2, Government Records Access and Management Act.

196 (2) A judge who is the subject of a retention report under this section, within 15 days of
197 receiving a copy of the commission's report under Subsection (1)(b), may:

198 (a) provide a written response to the report; and

199 (b) request an interview with the commission for the purpose of addressing the report.

200 (3) (a) After receiving a response from a judge in any form allowed by Subsection (2),
201 the commission may meet and reconsider its decision to recommend the judge not be retained.

202 (b) If the commission does not change its decision to recommend the judge not be
203 retained, the judge may provide a written statement, not to exceed 100 words, that shall be
204 included in the commission's report.

205 (4) The retention report of a judicial performance evaluation shall include:

206 (a) the results of the judicial performance survey, in both raw and summary form;

207 (b) information concerning the judge's compliance with the minimum performance
208 standards;

209 (c) information concerning any formal or informal discipline against a judge that is not
210 subject to restrictions on disclosure under Title 78A, Chapter 11, Judicial Conduct
211 Commission;

212 (d) a narrative concerning the judge's performance;

213 (e) the commission's recommendation concerning whether the judge should be

214 retained, or the statement required of the commission if it declines to make a recommendation;
215 (f) the number of votes for and against the commission's recommendation; and
216 (g) any other information the commission considers appropriate to include in the
217 report.

218 (5) (a) The commission may not include in its retention report specific information
219 concerning an earlier judicial performance evaluation.

220 (b) The commission may refer to information from an earlier judicial performance
221 evaluation concerning the judge in the commission's report only if the reference is in general
222 terms.

223 (6) The retention report of the commission's judicial performance evaluation shall be
224 made publicly available on an Internet website.

225 (7) The commission may make the report of the judicial performance evaluation
226 immediately preceding the judge's retention election publicly available through other means
227 within budgetary constraints.

228 (8) The commission shall provide a summary of the judicial performance evaluation
229 for each judge to the lieutenant governor for publication in the voter information pamphlet in
230 the manner required by Title 20A, Chapter 7, Issues Submitted to the Voters.

231 (9) The commission may also provide any information collected during the course of a
232 judge's judicial performance evaluation immediately preceding the judge's retention election to
233 the public to the extent that information is not otherwise subject to restrictions on disclosure.

234 (10) The commission shall provide the Judicial Council with:

235 (a) the judicial performance survey results for each judge; and

236 (b) a copy of the retention report of each judicial performance evaluation.

237 (11) The Judicial Council shall provide information obtained concerning a judge under
238 Subsection (10) to the subject judge's presiding judge, if any.

Legislative Review Note
as of 2-9-10 3:12 PM

Office of Legislative Research and General Counsel

S.B. 210 - Judicial Performance Evaluation Commission Amendments

Fiscal Note

2010 General Session

State of Utah

State Impact

Enactment of this bill will not require additional appropriations.

Individual, Business and/or Local Impact

Enactment of this bill likely will not result in direct, measurable costs and/or benefits for individuals, businesses, or local governments.
