

STATE OF OKLAHOMA

1st Session of the 60th Legislature (2025)

SENATE BILL 118

By: Howard

AS INTRODUCED

An Act relating to judicial officers; requiring Supreme Court to establish the Judicial Performance Evaluation Council; requiring the Supreme Court to establish the Office of Judicial Performance Evaluation within the Administrative Office of the Courts; stating purposes of judicial evaluation process; establishing duties of Judicial Performance Evaluation Council; requiring certain examination by Supreme Court upon receipt of certain report; requiring appointment of director of Office of Judicial Performance Evaluation by Supreme Court; requiring hiring of employees for certain purpose; requiring certain operational support; authorizing hiring of outside vendor for certain purposes; requiring adoption and administration of certain process by Supreme Court; requiring establishment of court rules for certain purposes; requiring distribution of rules to certain officials; providing for confidentiality of certain information; providing exception; providing for waiver of right to confidentiality under certain circumstances; requiring certain information to be publicly available; authorizing certain referrals to Council on Judicial Complaints; requiring annual report of judicial performance evaluation program; specifying information for inclusion in certain report; requiring distribution of report to certain officials; requiring posting of report on certain website; providing for codification; and providing an effective date.

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BE IT ENACTED BY THE PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF OKLAHOMA:

SECTION 1. NEW LAW A new section of law to be codified in the Oklahoma Statutes as Section 1671 of Title 20, unless there is created a duplication in numbering, reads as follows:

A. Under the general administrative authority over all courts in this state granted pursuant to Section 6 of Article VII of the Oklahoma Constitution, the Supreme Court shall establish:

1. The Judicial Performance Evaluation Council (JPEC) to administer the process for reviewing the performance of judicial officers; and

2. The Office of Judicial Performance Evaluation within the Administrative Office of the Courts to assist JPEC in administration of the judicial performance evaluation process.

B. The purposes of the judicial evaluation process are to:

1. Provide information on judicial performance to the people of this state and judges in the courts of this state;

2. Assist judges with opportunities for improving judicial performance;

3. Identify necessary judicial education programs; and

4. Promote goals of protecting judicial independence while fostering public accountability of the judiciary.

1 SECTION 2. NEW LAW A new section of law to be codified  
2 in the Oklahoma Statutes as Section 1672 of Title 20, unless there  
3 is created a duplication in numbering, reads as follows:

4 The Supreme Court shall establish a Judicial Performance  
5 Evaluation Council (JPEC) which shall administer the process for  
6 reviewing the performance of judicial officers. JPEC shall review  
7 survey results according to the judicial performance standards  
8 established by Supreme Court Rules and compile a report. Such  
9 report shall be provided to the Chief Justice for distribution to  
10 the Supreme Court. Upon receipt of the JPEC report, the Supreme  
11 Court shall conduct a comprehensive, de novo examination to  
12 determine whether each individual judge has sufficiently met or has  
13 failed to sufficiently meet judicial performance standards.

14 SECTION 3. NEW LAW A new section of law to be codified  
15 in the Oklahoma Statutes as Section 1673 of Title 20, unless there  
16 is created a duplication in numbering, reads as follows:

17 A. The Supreme Court shall appoint a director of the Office of  
18 Judicial Performance Evaluation (OJPE) within the Administrative  
19 Office of the Courts. The director shall hire one or more employees  
20 to assist the Judicial Performance Evaluation Council in  
21 administration of the judicial performance evaluation process as  
22 defined by Supreme Court Rules. The Administrative Office of the  
23 Courts shall provide operational support to the OJPE employees.

1 B. The OJPE Director may hire an outside vendor to assist in  
2 the administration and management of the surveys established for  
3 evaluation of judicial performance.

4 SECTION 4. NEW LAW A new section of law to be codified  
5 in the Oklahoma Statutes as Section 1674 of Title 20, unless there  
6 is created a duplication in numbering, reads as follows:

7 A. The Supreme Court shall adopt and administer a process  
8 established by Supreme Court Rules for evaluation of judicial  
9 performance for all intermediate appellate judges and district court  
10 judges. Such rules shall include written performance standards and  
11 performance reviews which survey opinions of persons who have  
12 knowledge of the performance of the judge and shall include self-  
13 evaluation by the judge. A copy of the rules required by this  
14 subsection shall be made available to the Governor, the President  
15 Pro Tempore of the Senate, and the Speaker of the House of  
16 Representatives.

17 B. The Supreme Court shall establish rules for improving  
18 judicial performance and may include programs determined to be  
19 appropriate for judges who need improvement in meeting judicial  
20 evaluation standards. A copy of the rules required by this  
21 subsection shall be made available to the Governor, the President  
22 Pro Tempore of the Senate, and the Speaker of the House of  
23 Representatives.

1 C. Information received from the evaluation surveys shall  
2 remain confidential except as provided in this section. If a  
3 judicial officer fails to achieve an overall satisfactory judicial  
4 evaluation by the Supreme Court in the second of two consecutive  
5 evaluations or purposely fails to complete assigned programs or the  
6 self-evaluation, the right to confidentiality of such judicial  
7 officer shall be waived and the failure of such judicial officer to  
8 meet the standards set forth in Supreme Court Rules shall be made  
9 publicly available on the Supreme Court website.

10 D. At any time, the Supreme Court may refer an evaluation  
11 report to the Council on Judicial Complaints.

12 SECTION 5. NEW LAW A new section of law to be codified  
13 in the Oklahoma Statutes as Section 1675 of Title 20, unless there  
14 is created a duplication in numbering, reads as follows:

15 Beginning December 31 of the year following the effective date  
16 of this act, the Supreme Court shall prepare an annual report on the  
17 implementation of the judicial performance evaluation program. The  
18 annual report shall include, but not be limited to, the number of  
19 evaluations performed for each level of judicial officers, the  
20 percentage of responses received, and a summary of the overall  
21 evaluation results and of all actions taken to address inadequacies  
22 and deficiencies. The Supreme Court shall distribute the report  
23 electronically to the Governor, the President Pro Tempore of the  
24 Senate, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, and the

1 chairpersons of the Senate and House committees with jurisdiction  
2 over matters related to the Supreme Court. The annual report on  
3 judicial performance evaluation shall be posted on the Supreme Court  
4 website.

5 SECTION 6. This act shall become effective November 1, 2025.

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