



CONGRESSIONAL BUDGET OFFICE COST ESTIMATE

August 3, 2016

S. 2966 **District of Columbia Judicial Financial Transparency Act**

*As ordered reported by the Senate Committee on Homeland Security
and Governmental Affairs on May 25, 2016*

S. 2966 would change portions of the District of Columbia Official Code that governs the D.C. Courts system. Under current law, the Congress annually appropriates funds for the District of Columbia Courts; and its expenditures are recorded in the federal budget. The legislation would revise the financial disclosure requirements for District of Columbia judges. The revisions would establish new dollar thresholds and requirements for reporting to the District of Columbia Commission on Judicial Disabilities and Tenure. The bill also would allow the District of Columbia Courts to collect fines, fees, and other payments via credit card or electronic funds transfer. In addition, S. 2966 would provide new authorities to certain judges and increase the limit for small claims cases in the District of Columbia from \$5,000 to \$10,000.

Based on an analysis of the administrative costs of the District of Columbia Courts, CBO estimates that the bill would have an insignificant effect on federal spending. However, the new financial disclosure requirements would require the District of Columbia to add up to one new staff member. Although the District of Columbia Small Claims Court could be presented with more claims under the bill, the number of judges addressing those claims would not be increased by the legislation. Cases in the setting of a small claims court are often more expeditious and inexpensive to resolve.

Enacting the legislation would not affect direct spending or revenues; therefore, pay-as-you-go procedures do not apply. CBO estimates that enacting S. 2966 would not increase direct spending or on-budget deficits in any of the four consecutive 10-year periods beginning in 2027.

The revisions and increases in jurisdictional limits in the bill would be intergovernmental mandates as defined in the Unfunded Mandates Reform Act (UMRA) because they alter local laws. CBO estimates that the aggregate costs of the mandates would be minimal and fall well below the threshold established in the UMRA (\$77 million in 2016, adjusted annually for inflation). S. 2966 contains no private-sector mandates.

The CBO staff contacts for this estimate are Matthew Pickford (for federal costs) and Rachel Austin (for the intergovernmental mandates). The estimate was approved by H. Samuel Papenfuss, Deputy Assistant Director for Budget Analysis.