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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Courts Creation Bill Heads To Governor

Legislation Paves Way for New Judges for First Time Since 2007

Madison, WI – Last night, the State Senate voted to approve [Assembly Bill 470](#), authored by Representative Ron Tusler (R – Harrison), Senator Jerry Petrowski (R – Marathon), and Representatives Paul Tittl (R – Manitowoc) and Tip McGuire (D – Kenosha). This bill permits the creation of up to 12 new circuit court branches, four in 2021, four in 2022, and four in 2023.

“Passage of this bill by the Legislature recognizes the importance of fair and swift justice in our society,” said Representative Tusler. **“The creation of up to twelve judges over the next few years will help ease caseload backlogs and help ensure justice is served.”**

The bill allows the Director of State Courts to create an additional branch in a county if 1) the county board has passed a resolution supporting an additional branch; and 2) the county will have appropriate facilities in place by May 31st of the year in which the branch is created. A county may also be required to apply for a [Drug Treatment Court](#) or [Treatment Alternatives and Diversion Program](#) grant if it does not already have such a program.

The bill gives discretion to the Director of State Courts to determine which counties are most in need of a branch. All judges will be elected in the spring election of the year the new branch is created.

“Determining which counties are most in need of a judge is difficult, which is why this bill puts justice first by authorizing the Director of State Courts to make these decisions and take into account the intangible factors we legislators cannot,” according to Rep. Tusler.

The Wisconsin Courts System periodically conducts a study of judicial workload. There are many nuances and intangibles not captured by the study, such as: the presence of municipal courts in a county; the presence, utilization, and functions of court commissioners; how charging decisions affect caseload; and the cost and time of travel for judges when there are substitutions or recusals, especially in rural areas.

“Calumet County is well suited for the creation of a second branch and I am hopeful one will be allocated here in the Third Assembly District. Regardless of which counties receive additional judges, the infusion of these positions will have a positive statewide impact.”

The bill will be presented to the Governor later this spring for his approval or veto.

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