



AN ACT PROVIDING THE OPTION FOR AN ASSOCIATE WATER JUDGE; DEFINING THE DUTIES OF AN ASSOCIATE WATER JUDGE; GRANTING THE ASSOCIATE WATER JUDGE STATEWIDE JURISDICTION; PROVIDING AN APPROPRIATION; AMENDING SECTIONS 3-1-1001, 3-1-1010, 3-7-221, 3-7-222, 3-7-223, 3-7-224, AND 19-5-301, MCA; AND PROVIDING AN EFFECTIVE DATE.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF MONTANA:

Section 1. Section 3-1-1001, MCA, is amended to read:

"3-1-1001. Creation, composition, and function of commission. (1) A judicial nomination commission for the state is created. Its function is to provide the governor with a list of candidates for appointment to fill any vacancy on the supreme court or any district court and to provide the chief justice of the supreme court with a list of candidates for appointment to fill any term or vacancy for the chief water judge or associate water judge pursuant to 3-7-221. The commission is composed of seven members as follows:

(a) four lay members who are neither judges nor attorneys, active or retired, who reside in different geographical areas of the state, and each of whom is representative of a different industry, business, or profession, whether actively engaged or retired, who are appointed by the governor;

(b) two attorneys actively engaged in the practice of law, one from that part of the state that is composed of judicial districts 1 through 5, 9, 11, and 18 through 21 and one from that part of the state that is composed of judicial districts 6 through 8, 10, 12 through 17, and 22, who are appointed by the supreme court;

(c) one district judge elected by the district judges under an elective procedure initiated and conducted by the supreme court and certified to election by the chief justice of the supreme court. The election is considered an appointment for the purposes of this part.

(2) Appointments provided for in this section must be made within 30 days of the completion of the preceding terms."

Section 2. Section 3-1-1010, MCA, is amended to read:

"3-1-1010. Lists submitted to governor and chief justice -- report on proceedings. (1) If a supreme court justice, a district court judge, the workers' compensation judge, the associate water judge, or the chief water judge gives notice of the judge's resignation to take effect on a specific date, the commission shall meet as soon as possible after the justice's or judge's proposed resignation date has been verified by the chief justice of the supreme court. If notice is not given, the commission shall meet as soon as possible after a vacancy occurs. The meeting must be held in compliance with 3-1-1007. The commission shall submit to the governor or chief justice, within the time period established under 3-1-1007, a list of not less than three or more than five nominees for appointment to the vacant position.

(2) The list must be accompanied by a written report indicating the vote on each nominee, the content of the application submitted by each nominee, letters and public comments received regarding each nominee, and the commission's reasons for recommending each nominee for appointment. The report must give specific reasons for recommending each nominee."

Section 3. Section 3-7-221, MCA, is amended to read:

"3-7-221. Appointment of chief water judge -- term of office. (1) The chief justice of the Montana supreme court shall appoint a chief water judge as provided in Title 3, chapter 1, part 10. The chief justice of the Montana supreme court may appoint an associate water judge as provided in Title 3, chapter 1, part 10.

(2) To be eligible for the office of chief water judge or associate water judge, a person shall have the qualifications for district court or supreme court judges found in Article VII, section 9, of the Montana constitution.

(3) The term of office of the chief water judge and the associate water judge ~~is from the date of initial appointment until June 30, 1985. After June 30, 1985, the term of office is 4 years, subject to continuation of the water divisions by the legislature.~~

Section 4. Section 3-7-222, MCA, is amended to read:

"3-7-222. Salary -- office space. (1) The chief water judge and the associate water judge ~~is entitled to~~ must receive the same salary and expense allowance as provided for district judges in 3-5-211.

(2) The office of the chief water judge and the associate water judge must be at the location ~~that designated by~~ the chief justice of the Montana supreme court ~~shall designate~~. The Montana supreme court shall provide in its budget for the salary, expenses, and office and staff requirements of the chief water judge and the

associate water judge, which money. Money may be appropriated by the legislature from the general fund for these purposes."

Section 5. Duties of associate water judge. The duties of the associate water judge are the same as those assigned to the chief water judge pursuant to 3-7-223(1) and (2).

Section 6. Section 3-7-223, MCA, is amended to read:

"3-7-223. Duties of the chief water judge. The chief water judge shall:

- (1) administer the adjudication of existing water rights by:
 - (a) coordinating with the department of natural resources and conservation in compiling information submitted on water claim forms under Title 85, chapter 2, part 2, to assure that the information is expeditiously and properly compiled and transferred to the water judge in each water division;
 - (b) assuring that the water judge in each water division moves without unreasonable delay to enter the required preliminary decree;
 - (c) assuring that any contested or conflicting claims are tried and adjudicated as expeditiously as possible;
- (2) conduct hearings in cases certified to the district court under 85-2-309;
- (3) assign court personnel to divisions and duties as needed;
- (4) assign the associate water judge to divisions and cases as needed; and
- ~~(4)~~(5) request and secure the transfer of water judges between divisions as needed."

Section 7. Section 3-7-224, MCA, is amended to read:

"3-7-224. Jurisdiction of chief water judge and associate water judge. (1) The chief water judge and the associate water judge may, at the discretion of the chief justice of the Montana supreme court, also serve as water judge for one of the water divisions.

(2) The chief water judge ~~has~~ and the associate water judge have jurisdiction over cases certified to the district court under 85-2-309 and all matters relating to the determination of existing water rights within the boundaries of the state of Montana.

(3) ~~With regard to the consideration of a matter within the chief water judge's jurisdiction, the~~ With regard

to the consideration of a matter within the chief water judge's jurisdiction, the chief water judge has and the associate water judge have the same powers as a district court judge. The chief water judge and the associate water judge may issue orders, on the motion of an interested party or on the judge's own motion, that may reasonably be required to allow the judge to fulfill the judge's responsibilities, including; but not limited to; requiring the joinder of persons not parties to the administrative hearing being conducted by the department pursuant to 85-2-309 or 85-2-402 as considered necessary to resolve any factual or legal issue certified pursuant to 85-2-309(2)."

Section 8. Section 19-5-301, MCA, is amended to read:

"19-5-301. Membership -- inactive vested members -- inactive nonvested members. (1) Except for a judge or justice who elected in writing to remain under the public employees' retirement system on or before October 1, 1985, a judge of a district court, a justice of the supreme court, and the chief water judge or associate water judge provided for in 3-7-221 must be members of the Montana judges' retirement system.

(2) A judge pro tempore is not eligible for active membership in the retirement system.

(3) A member with at least 5 years of membership service who terminates service and does not take a refund of the member's accumulated contributions is an inactive vested member and retains the right to purchase service credit and to receive a retirement benefit under the provisions of this chapter.

(4) A member with less than 5 years of membership service who terminates service and leaves the member's accumulated contributions in the pension trust fund is an inactive nonvested member and is not eligible for any benefits from the retirement system. An inactive nonvested member is eligible only for a refund of the member's accumulated contributions."

Section 9. Appropriation. There is appropriated \$22,000 for each of the fiscal years 2012 and 2013 from the water adjudication account provided for in 85-2-280 to the Montana supreme court for expenses of the office of the associate and chief water judge.

Section 10. Codification instruction. [Section 5] is intended to be codified as an integral part of Title 3, chapter 7, part 2, and the provisions of Title 3, chapter 7, part 2, apply to [section 5].

Section 11. Effective date. [This act] is effective July 1, 2011.

- END -

I hereby certify that the within bill,
HB 0587, originated in the House.

Chief Clerk of the House

Speaker of the House

Signed this _____ day
of _____, 2011.

President of the Senate

Signed this _____ day
of _____, 2011.

HOUSE BILL NO. 587
INTRODUCED BY W. MCNUTT

AN ACT PROVIDING THE OPTION FOR AN ASSOCIATE WATER JUDGE; DEFINING THE DUTIES OF AN ASSOCIATE WATER JUDGE; GRANTING THE ASSOCIATE WATER JUDGE STATEWIDE JURISDICTION; PROVIDING AN APPROPRIATION; AMENDING SECTIONS 3-1-1001, 3-1-1010, 3-7-221, 3-7-222, 3-7-223, 3-7-224, AND 19-5-301, MCA; AND PROVIDING AN EFFECTIVE DATE.