

Rep. Edming: Judgeship bill signed into law by Gov. Evers

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WAUSAU - Today, [Assembly Bill \(AB\) 470](#), which would create a total of 12 new circuit court branches around the state, was signed into law by Governor Tony Evers. This bipartisan proposal was authored by a number of legislators, including Representative James Edming (R-Glen Flora). Under this new law, four new circuit court branches will be created in each of the next three years (2021-2023), and will be allocated by the Director of State Courts.

“The drug epidemic that has hit Wisconsin hard has driven caseloads up in courthouses around the state,” said Rep. Edming. “In some counties, including Sawyer and Marathon, which I represent, the caseload has reached the point where an additional judge is needed. This new law will help relieve some of the stress on the judicial system and allow the court system to more quickly and effectively meet the needs of the people it serves.”

An example of the high caseloads can be found in Sawyer County. In 2018, Sawyer County had 402 felony complaints filed in a one-judge county. In comparison, nearby Barron County had 452 felony complaints filed that were split amongst that county’s three judges.

“A couple of years ago I had the opportunity to sit on the bench for the day with Sawyer County Judge John Yackel and it became clear to me that day that he cannot do it alone as the only judge in Sawyer County,” said Rep. Edming. “As I began to look into this issue, I learned that Sawyer County was not the only place in the state facing high caseloads, and other counties, including Marathon, were in the same boat. While this new law does not guarantee new judges to any specific counties, it does provide counties, like Sawyer and Marathon, with the opportunity to submit their plans to the Director of State Courts for consideration.”

AB 470 is now 2019 Wisconsin Act 184.