

House File 2719 - Reprinted

HOUSE FILE 2719
BY COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY

(SUCCESSOR TO HSB 631)

(As Amended and Passed by the House March 4, 2026)

A BILL FOR

1 An Act relating to the collection and publication of judicial
2 officer performance information.

3 BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF IOWA:

unofficial

1 Section 1. NEW SECTION. **46.26 Judicial officer performance**
2 **information.**

3 1. The state commissioner of elections shall collect
4 and publish objective, data-driven information, expressed as
5 unadjusted numbers and adjusted percentile ranks, related to
6 each district court judge including district associate judges,
7 full-time associate juvenile judges, and full-time associate
8 probate judges.

9 a. The information must include all of the following:

10 (1) The percentage of cases in which the judge set a bond
11 amount lower than the bond schedule promulgated pursuant to
12 section 804.21, subsection 5, categorized by offense class.

13 (2) The frequency with which a person is released on the
14 person's own recognizance by the judge when the person is
15 arrested for a violent offense compared to a nonviolent offense,
16 categorized by offense class.

17 (3) The frequency with which the judge's final sentence
18 is lower than the statutory recommendation or the prosecutor's
19 recommendation, categorized by offense class.

20 (4) The number of times the judge grants a deferred judgment,
21 deferred sentence, or suspended sentence.

22 (5) The number of times the judge's rulings are reversed
23 by the court of appeals or the supreme court due to abuse of
24 discretion or error of law, including the percentage of the total
25 number of the judge's opinions or orders appealed in the same
26 time period, with the total number of appeals displayed as the
27 denominator, categorized by issue type.

28 (6) The average time from the filing of a motion or
29 submission of a case for ruling to the judge's final ruling on
30 the motion or case.

31 (7) The number of cases the judge has disposed of compared to
32 the number of outstanding cases remain on the judge's docket each
33 year.

34 b. Beginning five years after the effective date of this Act,
35 each metric must include a five-year rolling trend line.

1 c. The information collected under this subsection must be
2 available for public download in an electronic, machine-readable
3 open format. All data and adjusted metrics must be equally
4 prominent and equally accessible.

5 2. a. The judicial branch shall provide the state
6 commissioner of elections with read-only access to all publicly
7 available information on the Iowa court information system within
8 one year of the effective date of this Act.

9 b. The state court administrator shall annually certify the
10 accuracy and completeness of the information made available under
11 paragraph "a" during the period beginning November 1 and ending
12 December 31.

13 c. The state court administrator shall report any material
14 discrepancies in the information to the general assembly.

15 3. Within eighteen months of the effective date of this Act,
16 the state commissioner of elections shall submit a methodology
17 report to the general assembly that contains all of the
18 following:

19 a. A case complexity index assigning weighted scores to each
20 case type based on objective criteria including statutory penalty
21 range, number of parties, number of hearings, length of the
22 trial or contested hearing, and whether the case involved a
23 constitutional challenge or question of first impression.

24 b. The method for assigning judges to peer groups of
25 comparable docket composition.

26 c. The mathematical formula for each adjusted metric
27 including expression of the adjusted metric as a percentile rank
28 within the judge's peer group and judicial district.

29 d. The minimum case volume threshold for statistical
30 confidence under subsection 4.

31 e. The criteria for distinguishing required opinions and
32 orders under subsection 5, paragraph "a".

33 4. Any metric based on fewer cases than the ninety percent
34 statistical confidence at one standard deviation must display, in
35 boldface type, the following phrase immediately adjacent to the

1 metric:

2 RELIABILITY WARNING: This figure is based on a small number
3 of cases and may not accurately reflect this judge's typical
4 performance.

5 5. a. The state commissioner of elections shall maintain an
6 online searchable public repository of all written opinions and
7 orders that disclose a judge's reasoning, legal analysis, factual
8 findings, or conclusions of law for each judge's current term and
9 the six preceding years to the extent available. In cases of
10 ambiguity, the state commissioner of elections shall err on the
11 side of inclusion.

12 b. Beginning one year after the effective date of this Act,
13 the state court administrator shall provide the opinions and
14 orders required under paragraph "a" electronically each month to
15 the state commissioner of elections.

16 c. The state commissioner of elections shall publish the
17 opinions and orders as searchable documents with redactions
18 consistent with Iowa court rules. The redacted documents
19 must note the category of information redacted. Documents
20 subject to a protective order, that are sealed, or that are
21 otherwise confidential under law shall not be posted. The state
22 commissioner of elections shall provide a notice in place of
23 the document identifying the date the document was issued, the
24 general subject matter to the extent disclosable, and the reason
25 for nonproduction.

26 d. The online searchable public repository shall support
27 full-text search by keyword, date range, case type, and party
28 type.

29 6. The state commissioner of elections shall maintain an
30 internet site that includes all of the following:

31 a. A search by judicial district, county, and judge name.

32 b. (1) A profile page for each judge displaying the
33 unadjusted numbers and adjusted metrics required under subsection
34 1, with peer group and judicial district comparisons, and trend
35 lines where applicable, and a link to the online searchable

1 public repository under subsection 5.

2 (2) The state commissioner of elections shall not add
3 narrative interpretation or editorial commentary to any judge's
4 profile page beyond what this section expressly authorizes and
5 shall not filter or selectively present information in the online
6 searchable public repository.

7 c. (1) A space for each judge's personal statement on
8 judicial philosophy or data trends, not to exceed two thousand
9 words.

10 (2) The state commissioner of elections shall not edit the
11 judge's personal statement except to enforce the word limit or
12 remove verifiably false content after providing notice and an
13 opportunity to revise the personal statement to the judge.

14 d. The methodology report under subsection 3.

15 e. An annual report, to also be submitted to the general
16 assembly, on data collected, documents posted, anomalies,
17 deviations from methodology, and disclaimer acknowledgment
18 statistics.

19 7. a. The state commissioner of elections shall create a
20 standalone internet page for a person to acknowledge the notice
21 under paragraph "b" prior to accessing a judge's profile page.

22 b. The standalone internet page shall require a person to
23 check a box to acknowledge the following statement:

24 **IMPORTANT NOTICE — PLEASE READ BEFORE PROCEEDING**

25 This information is published by the Iowa secretary of state
26 to assist voters in judicial retention elections. Statistics
27 reflect caseload composition as much as judicial performance
28 and do not measure whether a judge reached the correct result.
29 Reversal rates cover only appealed cases. Sentencing and bond
30 departures may be legally appropriate exercises of judicial
31 discretion. Written opinions reflect judicial reasoning but not
32 the full underlying record. Metrics flagged with a reliability
33 warning should be given little or no weight. In reviewing
34 this information, the reader will please remember that every
35 lawsuit is different, with different parties, different facts,

1 and different applicable legal principles. Accordingly, any
2 attempt, such as the information presented on the following
3 page, to reduce such complexity to mere statistics is inherently
4 imperfect.

5 [] I understand and wish to proceed.

6 8. This section does not authorize the state commissioner of
7 elections to supervise, direct, or regulate any judge.

8 9. a. The state commissioner of elections may adopt rules
9 pursuant to chapter 17A to administer this section. A rule
10 adopted by the state commissioner of elections pursuant to
11 chapter 17A for purposes of this section shall not become
12 effective until it is ratified by the general assembly by passage
13 of a joint resolution subject to approval of the governor.

14 b. If the state commissioner of elections determines that
15 such a rule must become effective while the general assembly
16 is not in session, the state commissioner of elections may
17 request temporary approval of the rule by the legislative
18 council. The rule shall become effective upon temporary approval
19 by the legislative council. A rule temporarily approved by
20 the legislative council shall cease to be effective upon the
21 adjournment of the next regular session of the general assembly
22 following the effective date of the rule unless the general
23 assembly ratifies the rule before adjournment.

24 c. The administrative code editor shall publish a notice in
25 the Iowa administrative bulletin if such a rule is ratified,
26 temporarily approved, or ceases to be effective. If such a
27 rule ceases to be effective, the administrative code editor shall
28 remove the rule from the Iowa administrative code as soon as
29 practicable, but no sooner than two weeks after such publication.