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Lawmakers In Pa. Take An 18% Raise They Also Approved Raises For Other State Officials Ranging Up To 27%. Judges Are To Benefit, Too. Gov. Ridge Was Expected To Sign The Measure.

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HARRISBURG — Resembling the cast of a meticulously choreographed stage show, the Senate and House voted yesterday to give themselves and other government officials raises that would make Pennsylvania public servants among the best paid in the nation.

With their arguments prepared in advance, members pledging their support beforehand, and the governor indicating his likely approval, there was little drama left surrounding the first pay-raise vote in eight years.

The Senate put up the politically sensitive votes first in midafternoon, passing the pay-raise bill by a 26-22 vote, with 15 of 27 Republicans and 11 of 21 Democrats voting yes.

The House followed three hours later, voting 104-91, with 56 of 102 Republicans and 48 of 100 Democrats voting yes.

Seven representatives were recorded as not voting. Two - Philadelphia Democratic Reps. Harold James and Leanna Washington - later said they would have voted yes.

"They haven't had a raise in eight years," House Speaker Matthew J. Ryan (R., Delaware) said after the vote. "People have children in college, children in school, and mortgages to pay."

If the bill is signed by Gov. Ridge, as expected, an 18.7 percent pay raise would go into effect Nov. 1 for the lawmakers, who crafted the bill to circumvent a constitutional prohibition against midterm salary increases. Under the bill, the annual salaries of legislators would go from \$47,000 to \$55,800.

Increases would also take effect for judges on Nov. 1, but the governor, lieutenant governor and cabinet officials would have to wait until 1999, after an intervening election, Ridge spokesman Tim Reeves said.

Michael Rosenstein, executive director of the House Appropriations Committee, said the additional compensation would cost taxpayers about \$10 million in the next fiscal year.

Besides the increases, which range from 8 percent for judges to 27 percent for the lieutenant governor, members of all three branches of government would benefit each year from cost-of-living adjustments, based upon the Consumer Price Index for the Philadelphia area.

From its unanimous approval Monday by a conference committee to its passage yesterday by the Senate and House, the bill was carefully directed to win approval with a minimum of political fallout. Only members in so-called safe districts or those unlikely to face strong challenges were compelled by their legislative leaders to vote for the pay raise. Most freshmen, for instance, could vote no.

There was no debate in either chamber before the vote. In the only prevote floor comment, Senate Majority Leader F. Joseph Loeper Jr. (R., Delaware) repeated the arguments that he and others have been using for months.

"The members of the General Assembly have received one increase in the last 13 years," Loeper said, adding that the "last adjustment" came 8 1/2 years ago.

Since 1987, he said, the Consumer Price Index has risen 35 percent - making the legislature's raise "approximately half the rate of inflation."

"These changes in the level of compensation are overdue for all levels of government," he said.

Because the constitution prohibits lawmakers from accepting pay increases in the same term in which they vote for them, the legislation was drawn up to provide the extra money as unvouchered expense money, rather than salary, until Nov. 30, 1996, following the next legislative election. The legislature employed a similar tactic in 1987, and it was upheld by the courts.

SPECIAL PROVISION

Also as happened last time, a nonseverability provision was inserted, perhaps as an incentive to judges, requiring that if one portion of the bill is knocked down by the courts, the entire bill becomes void.

Like the House and Senate in general, members from Philadelphia and the suburban counties were split in their votes.

Sen. Allyson Y. Schwartz (D., Phila.) said she voted against the pay raise

because of its timing.

"I think people deserve it," she said, "but I also think it's a time when many cutbacks are happening."

Despite her vote, Schwartz said she would take the increase.

"I will accept what they pay for this job, but I wasn't going to make it happen," she said. "I think voters judge us by how well we do our jobs."

Sen. David W. Heckler (R., Bucks) said he had told people for months that he would vote for a pay raise if it came before the legislature, and he did. But he said he believed accepting the pay before the next election was an end run around the constitution. He said he would donate the extra money, about \$733 a month, to a charity in his district.

"I have problems with the constitutional provision," he said. "The courts have ruled, but I think they're wrong."

The pay bump for lawmakers moves them up a notch in the nationwide rankings of legislative salaries, according to the National Conference of State Legislatures. Now only California, at \$72,000 a year, and New York, at \$57,500 a year, top Pennsylvania. Michigan, at \$49,155, is now fourth.

RANKING OF GOVERNOR'S PAY

The \$20,000 boost for Pennsylvania's governor is even more dramatic when it comes to national rankings, according to the Council of State Governments. At \$105,000, Pennsylvania's governor ranked ninth. At \$125,000, Pennsylvania would trail only New York, which pays its governor \$130,000.

In terms of percentage, the biggest winner under the legislation is the lieutenant governor, whose salary would jump 27 percent, from \$83,000 to \$105,000.

Until now, the statewide row officers - the attorney general, auditor general and treasurer - made more than the lieutenant governor. Under this bill, their salaries would go up only 24 percent, from \$84,000 to \$104,000.

Members of the state judiciary will get 8 percent boosts. Chief Justice Robert N.C. Nix Jr. would go from \$114,133 to \$123,000 - making him the third- highest-paid state chief justice in the country, behind only those of California and New York. Other Supreme Court justices' salaries would go from \$110,963 to \$119,750.

President judges of the state's two midlevel appellate courts - the Superior Court and the Commonwealth Court - would go from \$108,849 to \$117,750. The other judges on those courts would jump from \$107,264 to \$116,000.

The raises also reach down to the county court level. Common Pleas Court judges' pay in Philadelphia would grow from \$95,111 to \$105,000, for instance, and Municipal Court judges would go from \$92,470 to \$101,250.

The per diem pay for senior judges, retired judges sitting by special assignment from the Supreme Court, would go from \$291 to \$315.

The following is how Philadelphia-area senators voted on the bill, which would raise the pay of legislators, judges and members of the executive branch.

Philadelphia - Vincent J. Fumo (D) yes, Roxanne Jones (D) yes, Vincent Hughes (D) yes, Frank A. Salvatore (R) yes, Allyson Y. Schwartz (D) no, Christine M. Tartaglione (D) no, Hardy Williams (D) yes.

Bucks County - David W. Heckler (R) yes, Robert M. Tomlinson (R) no.

Chester County - James W. Gerlach (R) no.

Delaware County - Clarence D. Bell (R) yes, F. Joseph Loeper Jr. (R) yes.

Montgomery County - Stewart J. Greenleaf (R) no, Edwin G. Holl (R) yes, Richard A. Tilghman (R) yes.

The following is how Philadelphia-area representatives voted on the bill.

Philadelphia - Louise Williams Bishop (D) yes, Alan L. Butkovitz (D) yes, Andrew J. Carn (D) yes, Mark B. Cohen (D) yes, Robert C. Donatucci (D) no, Dwight Evans (D) yes, Mike Horsey (D) yes, Harold James (D) did not vote, Babette Josephs (D) yes, William F. Keller (D) yes, George T. Kenney Jr. (R) yes, Marie A. Lederer (D) no, Kathy M. Manderino (D) yes, Michael P. McGeehan (D) yes, Dennis M. O'Brien (R) yes, Frank L. Oliver (D) yes, John M. Perzel (R) yes, Ben Ramos (D) no, William W. Rieger (D) yes, James R. Roebuck (D) yes, John J. Taylor (R) yes, W. Curtis Thomas (D) did not vote, LeAnna Washington (D) did not vote, Anthony Hardy Williams (D) yes, Christopher R. Wogan (R) yes, Rosita Youngblood (D) no.

Bucks County - Paul I. Clymer (R) yes, Joe Conti (R) yes, Thomas C. Corrigan Sr. (D) yes, Gene D. DiGirolamo (R) no, Thomas W. Druce (R) no, Anthony Melio (D) no, Roy Reinard (R) yes, David J. Steil (R) yes, Matthew N. Wright Jr. (R) no.

Chester County - Robert J. Flick (R) yes, Timothy F. Hennessey (R) yes, Arthur D. Hershey (R) yes, Joseph R. Pitts (R) yes, Carole Rubley (R) no, Curt Schroder (R) did not vote, Elinor Z. Taylor (R) yes.

Delaware County - William F. Adolph Jr. (R) yes, Mario J. Civera Jr. (R) yes, Kathrynann Durham (R) yes, Thomas P. Gannon (R) yes, Thaddeus Kirkland (D) no, Nicholas A. Micozzie (R) yes, Ron Raymond (R) yes, Matthew J. Ryan (R) yes, Gregory S. Vitali (D) no.

Montgomery County - Ellen M. Bard (R) no, Raymond Bunt Jr. (R) yes, Lita I. Cohen (R) yes, Roy W. Cornell (R) yes, Lawrence H. Curry (D) no, John W. Fichter (R) yes, Joseph M. Gladeck Jr. (R) yes, Robert W. Godshall (R) yes, John A. Lawless (R) yes, Eugene F. McGill (R) yes, Robert D. Reber Jr. (R) yes, Colleen A. Sheehan (R) no.