

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SHB 2446

As Passed Legislature

Title: An act relating to superior court judges.

Brief Description: Creating two additional superior court positions for Chelan and Douglas counties jointly.

Sponsors: By House Committee on Appropriations (originally sponsored by Representative Foreman; by request of Administrator for the Courts).

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Law & Justice: 1/24/96, 1/30/96 [DP];
Appropriations: 2/3/96 [DPS].

Floor Activity:

Passed House: 2/8/96, 95-0.
Senate Amended.
House Concurred.
Passed Legislature.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON LAW & JUSTICE

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 16 members: Representatives Sheahan, Chairman; Delvin, Vice Chairman; Hickel, Vice Chairman; Dellwo, Ranking Minority Member; Costa, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Campbell; Carrell; Chappell; Cody; Lambert; McMahan; Morris; Murray; Robertson; Smith and Sterk.

Staff: Edie Adams (786-7180).

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 28 members: Representatives Huff, Chairman; Clements, Vice Chairman; Pelesky, Vice Chairman; H. Sommers, Ranking Minority Member; Valle, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Beeksma; Brumsickle; Carlson; Chappell; Cooke; Crouse; Dellwo; Dyer; Foreman; Grant; Hargrove; Hickel; Kessler; Lambert; Linville; McMorris; Poulsen; Reams; Rust; Sehlin; Sheahan; Talcott and Wolfe.

Staff: Jim Lux (786-7152).

Background: The Legislature sets by statute the number of Superior Court judges in each county. Periodically, the Office of the Administrator for the Courts (OAC) conducts a weighted caseload study to determine the need for additional judges in the various counties.

Currently, Chelan and Douglas counties jointly have three judges. The weighted caseload analysis by the OAC indicates a need, as of 1995, for 4.53 judges in the counties.

Currently, Spokane County has 10 judges. The weighted caseload analysis by the Administrator for the Courts indicates a need, as of 1995, for 17.56 judges in the county.

Currently, Thurston County has six judges. The weighted caseload analysis by the Administrator for the Courts indicates a need, as of 1995, for 9.25 judges in the county.

Retirement benefits and one-half of the salary of a Superior Court judge is paid by the state. The other half of the judge's salary and all other costs associated with a judicial position, such as capital and support staff costs, are borne by the county.

In 1992, the Legislature authorized 12 new superior court positions in King County. The county was authorized to phase in the filling of the new positions over time, but not beyond July 1, 1996. Currently, King County has filled three of the 12 authorized superior court positions. King County is requesting that the time to fill the remaining nine judicial positions be extended.

Summary of Bill: The number of superior court judicial positions in Chelan and Douglas counties is increased from three to five. Both additional judicial positions will take effect February 1, 1997.

The number of superior court judicial positions in Spokane County is increased from 10 to 11.

The number of superior court judicial positions in Thurston County is increased from 6 to 8. One of the new Thurston County judicial positions is effective July 1, 1996 and the other Thurston County judicial position is effective July 1, 2000.

The new judicial positions become effective only if the legislative authorities of Chelan and Douglas counties jointly agree that the counties will pay their share of the cost of the positions without reimbursement from the state.

The July 1, 1996 deadline for filling currently authorized King County superior court positions is removed.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Effective Date: There are several effective dates in the bill. Please refer to the bill.

Testimony For: (Law & Justice) The workload of superior court judges in Chelan and Douglas counties has increased to an extent that two additional judicial positions are needed.

(Appropriations) None.

Testimony Against: (Law & Justice) None.

(Appropriations) None.

Testified: (Law & Justice) Representative Foreman, prime sponsor; and Judge "Chip" Small, Superior Court Judges Association (pro).

(Appropriations) None.