

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1312

As Reported By House Committee On:
Law & Justice

Title: An act relating to superior court judges.

Brief Description: Providing for additional judges for Snohomish county superior court.

Sponsors: Representatives Sherstad, Sheahan, O'Brien, Costa and Dunshee.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Law & Justice: 2/14/97, 2/19/97 [DP].

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON LAW & JUSTICE

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 13 members: Representatives Sheahan, Chairman; McDonald, Vice Chairman; Sterk, Vice Chairman; Costa, Ranking Minority Member; Constantine, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Carrell; Cody; Kenney; Lambert; Lantz; Radcliff; Sherstad and Skinner.

Staff: Edie Adams (786-7180).

Background: The Legislature sets, by statute, the number of superior court judges in each county. Periodically, the Office of the Administrator for the Courts conducts a weighted caseload study to determine the need for additional judges in the various counties. Snohomish County has 13 statutorily authorized judges. The weighted caseload analysis by the Administrator for the Courts indicates a need, as of 1996, for an additional 6.19 judicial officers in the county.

Retirement benefits and one-half of the salary of a superior court judge are 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.

Summary of Bill: The number of statutorily authorized judicial positions in Snohomish County is increased from 13 to 15. The additional judicial positions will take effect January 1, 1998, but the actual starting dates must be established by the Snohomish County Council upon request of the superior court and by recommendation of the Snohomish County Executive.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect on January 1, 1998.

Testimony For: Snohomish County urgently needs additional judges. Court calendars are stretched to the limits due to large increases in criminal cases. This is preventing the court from hearing civil and domestic matters in a timely matter. The state should pay the entire cost of a superior court judge, because he or she is truly an officer of the state, and it is quite costly for the counties to pay for all costs associated with bringing an additional judge on line.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Representative Sherstad, prime sponsor; Justice Richard Guy, Washington State Supreme Court (pro); Bob Carlberg, Snohomish County Superior Court Administrator (pro); and Ed Larson, Snohomish County Council and Snohomish County Executive (pro).