

HOUSE BILL ANALYSIS

SB 6645

Title: An act relating to the office of public defense.

Brief Description: Eliminating the requirement that the director of public defense have experience representing persons accused of crime.

Sponsors: Senators Johnson, Haugen and McCaslin.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON LAW & JUSTICE

Staff: Daniel Jablonsky (786-5793); Edie Adams (786-7180).

Background: The Office of Public Defense is an independent agency of the judicial branch and administers all criminal appellate indigent defense services. The responsibilities of the office include preparing a budget for all costs related to state appellate indigent defense, establishing administrative procedures for the office, and coordinating with the courts to determine how attorney services should be provided. The Office of Public Defense does not provide direct representation of clients.

The Washington Supreme Court appoints the director of the Office of Public Defense from a list of names submitted by an 11-member advisory committee.

The qualifications for appointment as director include: (1) admission to the practice of law in Washington for at least five years; (2) experience in the representation of persons accused of a crime; and (3) proven management or supervisory experience.

Summary of Bill: The qualification requirement that the director of the Office of Public Defense be experienced in the representation of persons accused of a crime is removed and replaced by a general statement allowing the advisory committee to establish other criteria.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Office of Program Research