

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5288

As Passed Senate, March 14, 1997

Title: An act relating to superior court judges.

Brief Description: Creating additional judicial positions in the Spokane superior court.

Sponsors: Senator McCaslin; by request of Administrator for the Courts.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Law & Justice: 2/17/97, 2/19/97 [DP].

Ways & Means: 3/4/97, 3/5/97 [DP].

Passed Senate, 3/14/97, 46-0.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON LAW & JUSTICE

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators Roach, Chair; Fairley, Goings, Hargrove, Long, McCaslin, Stevens and Zarelli.

Staff: Dick Armstrong (786-7460)

SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS & MEANS

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators West, Chair; Deccio, Vice Chair; Strannigan, Vice Chair; Bauer, Brown, Fraser, Hochstatter, Kohl, Long, Loveland, McDonald, Rossi, Sheldon, Snyder, Spanel, Swecker, Thibaudeau, Winsley and Zarelli.

Staff: Bryon Moore (786-7726)

Background: By statute the Legislature determines the number of superior court judges in each county. Spokane County currently has 11 statutorily authorized superior court judicial positions. The county has experienced growth in the number of cases filed and tried in its superior court.

The Washington State Administrator for the Courts has conducted a "weighted caseload" study and estimates that Spokane County needs additional superior court judges to handle the current caseload.

The Washington State Constitution provides that the state and counties should share the salary expense for superior court judges. Other costs associated with a judicial position, such as capital and support staff cost, are borne by the county.

Summary of Bill: Two additional superior court judges are authorized for Spokane County, increasing the number of superior court judicial positions in Spokane County from 11 to 13.

The actual starting dates for additional judges are to be established by the county commissioners upon request of the superior court.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

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

Testimony For (Law & Justice): Legislation often results in increased workload for the courts. Several counties are in need of additional personnel, including superior court judges. The Legislature needs to speak with the judges about the costs of the entire court system, not just judicial positions. Spokane County needs more judges.

Testimony Against (Law & Justice): None.

Testified (Law & Justice): Justice Richard Guy; Mary McQueen, Administrator for the Courts.

Testimony For (Ways & Means): These positions are needed to address the caseload of the Spokane County Superior Court.

Testimony Against (Ways & Means): None.

Testified (Ways & Means): Chuck Foster, Administrator for the Courts.