

SENATE BILL REPORT

SSB 6240

As Passed Senate, February 16, 1998

Title: An act relating to superior court reporters.

Brief Description: Allowing a superior court judge to appoint a stenographer reporter.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Law & Justice (originally sponsored by Senator Stevens).

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Law & Justice: 1/20/98, 1/22/98 [DPS].
Passed Senate, 2/16/98, 49-0.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON LAW & JUSTICE

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 6240 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

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

Staff: Aldo Melchiori (786-7439)

Background: Currently, each superior court judge in counties or districts with a population exceeding 35,000 must appoint a stenographic reporter that meets statutory qualifications. Appointment is optional for smaller counties or districts. Appointment is not required for superior court judges authorized after July 1, 1992.

The advancement of technology has resulted in the ability to produce high quality videotape records of proceedings. In addition, voice recognition technology is being developed which allows the computer to immediately produce a written transcript as witnesses speak. Court rules currently allow electronic recording of civil and criminal proceedings. The new technology could minimize this problem in the future if courts were allowed and encouraged to use it.

Summary of Bill: Each superior court judge in counties or judicial districts may appoint a stenographic reporter. The intent is to give courts flexibility in obtaining new technologies for recording court proceedings.

References to the statutory examination committee regarding court reporters are eliminated from current law.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Testimony For: Costs of appeal are prohibitive and this bill will help control the cost of transcripts. The quality of review will be enhanced by the use of videotape. Time savings will also result.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Senator Stevens, prime sponsor (pro).

House Amendment(s): The requirement that specified courts appoint stenographic reporters is restored. The court reporter's term of office is restored. Courts are allowed to use alternative methods for making the record if the court has been exempted or authorized by court rule.