

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## HB 1872

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As Reported By Senate Committee On:  
Judiciary, April 1, 1999

**Title:** An act relating to granting state-wide warrant jurisdiction to courts of limited jurisdiction.

**Brief Description:** Granting state-wide warrant jurisdiction to courts of limited jurisdiction.

**Sponsors:** Representatives Hurst, Lambert, Lovick, O'Brien and Carrell.

**Brief History:** Passed House 3/15/99, 93-0.

**Committee Activity:** Judiciary: 3/31/99, 4/1/99 [DPA].

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY

**Majority Report:** Do pass as amended.

Signed by Senators Heavey, Chair; Kline, Vice Chair; Costa, Goings, Hargrove, Haugen, Long, McCaslin and Thibaudeau.

**Staff:** Penny Nerup (786-7484)

**Background:** Washington law provides two types of courts of limited jurisdiction, the district courts and the municipal courts. Obviously, courts of limited jurisdiction have limits placed upon the types of cases they may hear.

District courts may hear traffic cases, violations of city ordinances, violations of state law, criminal cases, civil cases, or jury cases.

Municipal courts have jurisdiction over all matters arising from city ordinances and may be granted jurisdiction over other matters only by statute.

Warrants issued by courts of limited jurisdiction are only enforceable within the jurisdiction of the issuing court, unlike warrants issued by the superior courts, which are enforceable throughout the state.

**Summary of Amended Bill:** Courts of limited jurisdiction may take recognizance, approve bail, and arraign defendants on warrants issued by other courts of limited jurisdiction throughout the state.

**Amended Bill Compared to Original Bill:** The bill has a delayed effective date of July 1, 2000. In addition, a task force is created to study whether it is beneficial to the operation of the criminal justice system to grant municipal and district courts the authority to take recognizance, approve bail, and arraign defendants on warrants issued by other courts of limited jurisdiction within the state.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Available.

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

**Testimony For:** Warrants are valid statewide, but only the issuing court can deal with the issue. This is a case of fundamental fairness; right now persons are incarcerated over a minor fine waiting to be moved to the jurisdiction that issued the warrant. There are over 312,000 warrants today in Washington. Half of these are for minor charges where the sentence would be payment of a fine. Problems occur after the offender is picked up in one jurisdiction: there is no jail on the western end of the state that has bed space for misdemeanor offenders. Crowding the jails is not a good idea because of liability and safety issues. Additionally there is the cost of transporting the offender, which is often prohibitive from a manpower standpoint in small police departments. Because scofflaws are not transported to the jurisdiction that issued the warrant, and because the jurisdiction that picked them up cannot adjudicate the issue, a very bad attitude develops among these folks toward law enforcement.

**Testimony Against:** None.

**Testified:** PRO: Representative Hurst, prime sponsor; Robert McBeth, Chair, District and Municipal Judges Association; Sheriff G. Brandon, Whatcom County.