

# HOUSE BILL REPORT

## HB 1757

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**As Reported by House Committee On:**  
Judiciary

**Title:** An act relating to law libraries.

**Brief Description:** Permitting law library services through online electronic research tools.

**Sponsors:** Representatives Carrell and Anderson.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:**

Judiciary: 2/16/01, 2/27/01 [DP].

**Brief Summary of Bill**

- Requires the State Library to investigate possible provision of online electronic legal research services through the county law libraries.
- Allows the State Library to enter into a contract for such services if the State Library concludes such a contract would improve delivery of legal research services.
- Allows counties to contract with the State Library for those services and to charge a fee to library patrons.

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### HOUSE COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY

**Majority Report:** Do pass. Signed by 10 members: Representatives Carrell, Republican Co-Chair; Lantz, Democratic Co-Chair; Hurst, Democratic Vice Chair; Lambert, Republican Vice Chair; Boldt, Casada, Dickerson, Esser, Lovick and McDermott.

**Staff:** Bill Perry (786-7123).

**Background:**

Each county with a population of 8,000 or more is required to maintain a county law library. The library is governed by a board of trustees. Smaller counties may have a law library which is run by the prosecuting attorney. Counties may also join to form a

regional law library. In a county where a library is required, a "suitable" room with adequate heat, light, and janitorial services must be provided by the county. In a county of 300,000 population or more, the law library must be free to all users. In smaller counties, libraries must be free for judges, county officials, lawyers, and any others as determined by the law library board.

Funding for law libraries is through portions of the civil filing fees in superior and district courts. Twelve dollars of every new probate or civil filing fee collected in superior court and \$6 of every civil filing fee collected in district court is to be used for the support of the county law library. Upon approval of the library board of trustees and the county legislative authority, the fee in superior court may be increased to \$15.

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**Summary of Bill:**

The State Library is directed to investigate the possibility of contracting for on-line electronic legal research services to be provided to county law libraries.

If the State Library determines such a contract would improve delivery of county law library services, the State Library may enter into a contract with a vendor. Any county may then contract with the State Library for those same services.

County law libraries may charge patrons for the use of any on-line services provided for under such a contract.

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**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Preliminary fiscal note available.

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

**Testimony For:** The bill is another way to find efficiencies in government and to provide relief to the county law libraries.

**Testimony Against:** This kind of service delivery would require increased staffing at the state and county level because legal research requires sophisticated, trained users to be efficient.

(With concerns) Smaller libraries, the very ones that need the most help, may not be able to use such a system without state subsidy. A pilot project is underway on other kinds of online library research services, but there is evidence vendors of legal research services are not interested in participating in this kind of program.

**Testified:** (In support) Representative Carrell, prime sponsor.

(With concerns) Nancy Zussy, Washington State Library; Jean Holcomb, King County Law Library; and Julie Murray, King County.

(Opposed) Deborah Norwood, Washington State Law Library.