
Judiciary Committee

E2SSB 5827

Title: An act relating to enforcement of judgments.

Brief Description: Changing provisions relating to the enforcement of judgments.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Judiciary (originally sponsored by Senator McCaslin).

Brief Summary of Engrossed Second Substitute Bill

- Expands the law that allows a 10 year extension of the time for enforcing a judgment from a superior court to also cover judgments originating from federal courts, courts of other states, and district courts of this state.
- Allows the assignee or other current owner of a judgment to get a 10 year extension on the enforcement of a judgment in the same manner as the original judgment creditor.
- Clarifies that garnishment and other legal procedures can be used to enforce a judgment that has been extended.
- Provides that an extension must be granted to a judgment creditor as a matter of right, subject to limited review.

Hearing Date: 2/26/02

Staff: Bill Perry (786-7123).

Background:

The statute of limitations for enforcing the judgment of a court is generally 10 years. In 1994, however, the Legislature authorized judgment creditors to seek a 10 year extension on this period. Under the current law, a judgment creditor may, within 90 days before the expiration of the 10 year period, apply to the court that issued the judgment for an extension. These provisions apply to all manner of civil judgments and also include restitution or other financial obligations ordered in criminal cases, and both judicial and administrative orders for the payment of accrued child support.

The current extension provision is limited to judgments from "courts of record of this state." It also authorizes an extension only for "a party in whose favor a judgment has been

rendered." Courts have held that these provisions mean that extensions cannot be applied for if the judgment is from a federal court, or if the judgment is currently held by someone other than the original judgment creditor.

Summary of Bill:

The class of courts whose judgments may be extended for an additional 10 years is expanded to include not just "courts of record of this state," but also:

- The U.S. Supreme Court, courts of appeal, district courts, and bankruptcy courts;
- The Washington state Supreme Court, courts of appeal, superior courts, and district courts; and
- Courts from other states and jurisdictions whose judgments have been filed in a Washington court.

The assignee or other current holder of a judgment may seek an extension of the 10 year statute of limitations.

Garnishment or "other legal process" are explicitly included as enforcement mechanisms that may be used by a judgement creditor during the original 10 year period of limitation and during an extension.

Generally, judgments are not enforceable beyond 20 years past the date of entry of the judgment in the originating court. However, the 20 year limit does not apply to judgments for child support or to court-ordered legal obligations in adult or juvenile criminal cases. Extensions under Washington law do not operate to extend the expiration date of foreign judgments beyond the date applicable in the jurisdiction of origin.

An application for an extension must be granted as a matter of right, subject to review only on questions of timeliness of the application, factual dispute over whether or how much of the debt is still owed, or errors in calculating the judgment summary amounts.

A properly filed and recorded judgment lien does not need to be re-recorded upon the extension of the judgment, and the lien retains its original priority position.

No filing fee is required when a collection agency or county collection service applies for an extension regarding a court-ordered restitution or other legal financial obligation.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not Requested.

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