

SENATE BILL REPORT

SSB 5395

As Passed Senate, March 10, 2001

Title: An act relating to the administrator for the courts.

Brief Description: Changing provisions relating to the administrator for the courts.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Ways & Means (originally sponsored by Senators Long, Constantine and Kline; by request of Administrator for the Courts).

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Judiciary: 2/8/01, 2/13/01 [DP-WM].

Ways & Means: 2/22/01, 3/6/01 [DPS].

Passed Senate: 3/10/01, 49-0.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY

Majority Report: Do pass and be referred to Committee on Ways & Means.

Signed by Senators Kline, Chair; Constantine, Vice Chair; Costa, Johnson, Kastama, Long, McCaslin, Roach and Thibaudeau.

Staff: Dick Armstrong (786-7460)

SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS & MEANS

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 5395 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Brown, Chair; Constantine, Vice Chair; Fairley, Vice Chair; Fraser, Hewitt, Kline, Kohl-Welles, Long, Parlette, Rasmussen, Regala, Rossi, Sheahan, B. Sheldon, Snyder, Spanel, Winsley and Zarelli.

Staff: Bryon Moore (786-7726)

Background: The Office of the Administrator for the Courts (OAC) is a state agency that has the responsibility of assisting judicial personnel in carrying out their court duties. The OAC, under the supervision and direction of the Chief Justice, helps administer programs, conducts training and educational seminars, gathers statistical data, prepares budgets, and assists judges in the administration of the judiciary.

The Board for Judicial Administration, as part of its court reform package, is recommending that the statutes governing the powers and duties of the OAC be expanded and modernized to reflect the needs of the judiciary.

Summary of Bill: The requirement that the Administrator for the Courts not be older than 60 years of age at the time of appointment is removed from the statute. The prohibition against the OAC staff directly or indirectly practicing law is deleted.

The OAC is authorized to provide technical support of court coordinating councils, under the direction of the Board for Judicial Administration.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

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

Testimony For (Judiciary): Staff attorneys give a wide variety of legal advice to numerous bar committees and they do pro bono work. The OAC should do more work on identifying the needs of poor persons who have unmet civil needs. Court coordinating councils will be an innovative means of improving the court system, especially on a regional basis. The OAC hopes that the Legislature will provide seed money to support the councils. The councils will provide much needed administrative assistance.

Testimony Against (Judiciary): None.

Testified (Judiciary): PRO: Chief Justice Gerry Alexander, BJA; Mary McQueen, OAC; Judge Michael Roewe, District Court Judges Association; Kirk Johns, WSBA.

Testimony For (Ways & Means): This implements some of the recommendations of the Court 2001 Project conducted by the Board for Judicial Administration. The local court coordinating councils are crucial to improving judicial operations.

Testimony Against (Ways & Means): None.

Testified (Ways & Means): PRO: Mary McQueen, OAC; Victor Moore, OAC.