

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6510

As Passed Senate, February 15, 2002

Title: An act relating to the administrative office of the courts.

Brief Description: Changing provisions relating to the administrative office of the courts.

Sponsors: Senators Kline, Long and Costa; by request of Administrator for the Courts.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Judiciary: 1/28/02, 2/7/02 [DP].

Passed Senate: 2/15/02, 49-0.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators Kline, Chair; Kastama, Vice Chair; Costa, Hargrove, Johnson, Long, Poulsen, Roach, Thibaudeau and Zarelli.

Staff: Lisa Ellis (786-7421)

Background: Since 1986, the Administrator for the Courts has determined the need for new superior court and district judge positions under a weighted caseload analysis. This method takes into account the time required to hear all the cases in a particular court and the amount of available time the judges have to hear them. The Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) reports that the weighted caseload analysis has limitations such as (1) it is expensive and time-consuming to collect the necessary data, (2) the data is limited in its ability to accurately reflect present needs, and (3) the data is self-reported at the district court level.

AOC also recommends updating the Revised Code of Washington to reflect their name change, allowing the administrator of the courts and any assistant to practice law on a pro-bono basis, and requiring the administrator of the courts to support court coordinating councils.

Summary of Bill: AOC examines the need for new superior court and district court judge positions under an objective workload analysis that takes into account available judicial resources and the caseload activity of each court.

All references to "administrator for the courts" are eliminated and replaced with "administrative office of the courts." The administrator and any assistant may engage in the practice of law so long as it is not for remuneration. In addition to other duties, the Administrator for the Courts must administer state funds for improving the operation of the courts and provide support for coordinating councils.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

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

Testimony For: The "objective workload analysis" method of predicting the need for judges is more efficient and will achieve greater accuracy than the outdated "weighted caseload" method. The administrator and assistant in the Administrative Office of the Courts would like to engage in pro bono legal work. The administrator can support trial court coordinating councils by helping to set long range goals and objectives.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Mary McQueen, Administrative Office of the Courts (pro).