

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6596

As Passed Senate, February 13, 2002

Title: An act relating to the number of district court judges in Spokane county.

Brief Description: Increasing the number of Spokane district court judges.

Sponsors: Senators McCaslin, Brown, Long, Sheahan, Johnson, Kline, Roach and West.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Judiciary: 2/5/02, 2/6/02 [DP].

Passed Senate: 2/13/02, 48-0.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY

Majority Report: Do pass.

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

Staff: Dick Armstrong (786-7460)

Background: The number of district court judges in each county is set by statute. There is a procedure, also in statute, for changing the number of judges in a county.

The Legislature determines the number of district court judges in a county after receiving a recommendation of the Supreme Court. The process of formulating such a recommendation involves the use of a "weighted caseload" analysis developed by the Administrative Office of the Courts. The weighted caseload analysis includes consideration of the amount of judicial time and resources needed to process various kinds of cases.

Summary of Bill: The number of district court judges in Spokane County is increased from nine to ten.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

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

Testimony For: Spokane County needs an additional district court judge. The weighted-case analysis does not accurately reflect the actual workload in Spokane County and an additional district court judge is needed. New laws have been enacted that increase judicial workload, plus more police officers are being added. Harassment cases and DUI cases have added to the workload because the penalties have been increased and the statutes are more complex.

The weighted caseload analysis is being changed to another process that will provide for a more accurate measure of judicial need.

The county is willing to pay the costs of the ad.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: PRO: Judge Mike Padden, District Court, Spokane; Ron Miles, Court Administrator, Spokane; Judge Donna Wilson, District Court, Spokane; Honorable Kate McCaslin, County Commissioner, Spokane.