

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## SB 6684

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As Reported By Senate Committee On:  
Judiciary, February 7, 2002

**Title:** An act relating to changing the number of district court judges.

**Brief Description:** Changing provisions relating to specifying the number of district court judicial positions.

**Sponsors:** Senators Kline, McCaslin, Finkbeiner and Thibaudeau.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:** Judiciary: 2/5/02, 2/7/02 [DPS, DNP].

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY

**Majority Report:** That Substitute Senate Bill No. 6684 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Kline, Chair; Long, McCaslin, Poulsen, Thibaudeau and Zarelli.

**Minority Report:** Do not pass.

Signed by Senators Costa and Johnson.

**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.

Currently, King County has 26 district court judges.

**Summary of Substitute Bill:** The number of district court judges in King County is reduced from 26 to 23. Current district court judges serve out the remainder of their terms.

**Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:** The original bill was not considered.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Not requested.

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

**Testimony For:** None.

**Testimony Against:** The weighted caseload analysis has been acknowledged by the Supreme Court to be an inaccurate measure of judicial workload. Cases are more complex today and adequate resources are essential. King County needs the current number of district court judges.

The decision on the number of judges should be based on factors other than just budgetary shortfalls. The Legislature should wait for the court to develop a more realistic model.

**Testified:** CON: Judge Robert McBeth, Judge Wesley St. Clair, Judge Mary Ann Ottinger, King County District Court.