

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1112

As Reported by House Committee On:

Judiciary
Appropriations

Title: An act relating to superior court judges.

Brief Description: Creating an additional superior court position.

Sponsors: Representatives Quall, Bailey, Morris, Strow, Kristiansen and Pearson; by request of Board For Judicial Administration.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Judiciary: 1/25/05 [DP];

Appropriations: 2/7/05, 2/9/05 [DP].

Brief Summary of Bill

- Increases the number of superior court judicial positions in Skagit County from three to four.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 8 members: Representatives Lantz, Chair; Flannigan, Vice Chair; Williams, Vice Chair; Priest, Ranking Minority Member; Campbell, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Kirby, Serben and Wood.

Staff: Bill Perry (786-7123).

Background:

The Legislature sets by statute the number of superior court judges in each county.

The state and the counties share the costs of the superior courts. Benefits and one-half of the salary of a superior court judge are paid by the state. The other half of the judge's salary and all other costs associated with a judicial position, such as capital and support staff costs, are borne by the county.

Periodically, the Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) does a workload analysis of the superior courts to determine if additional judicial positions are needed.

Skagit County has three judges. Based on the AOC workload analysis, the Board for Judicial Administration has requested an additional judge for the county.

Summary of Bill:

One additional superior court judge is authorized in Skagit County.

The additional judicial position is effective only if Skagit County documents its approval by January 1, 2007, and agrees to pay for its share of the costs for the position without reimbursement from the state.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Testimony For: The workload analysis actually shows a need for more than one additional judge. The court has done everything it can to increase efficiency. All county commissioners are in agreement that another judge is needed.

Testimony Against: None.

Persons Testifying: Representative Quall, prime sponsor; and Judge John Meyer, Skagit County Superior Court.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 27 members: Representatives Sommers, Chair; Fromhold, Vice Chair; Alexander, Ranking Minority Member; Anderson, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; McDonald, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Bailey, Buri, Clements, Cody, Conway, Darneille, Dunshee, Grant, Haigh, Hunter, Kagi, Kenney, Kessler, Linville, McDermott, McIntire, Miloscia, Pearson, Priest, Schual-Berke, Talcott and Walsh.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 1 member: Representative Hinkle.

Staff: Nona Snell (786-7153).

Summary of Recommendation of Committee On Appropriations Compared to Recommendation of Committee On Judiciary:

No new changes were recommended.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Testimony For: The last time a judge was added to Skagit County was in 1992. At the time there were 3,500 case filings a year. Now there are approximately 6,200 filings a year. The workload analysis indicates a need for 5.4 judges, so the county will still be short by 1.5 judges. The Skagit County Commissioners support the bill.

Testimony Against: None.

Persons Testifying: Representative Quall, prime sponsor; and Jeff Hall, Board for Judicial Administration.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.