

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1202

As Passed House:
February 4, 2005

Title: An act relating to district court judges.

Brief Description: Creating additional district court judge positions.

Sponsors: By Representatives Williams, Woods, Lantz, Hunt, Campbell, Appleton, McCune, Eickmeyer, Ormsby and Kilmer; by request of Board For Judicial Administration.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Judiciary: 1/25/05 [DP].

Floor Activity:

Passed House: 2/4/05, 96-0.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Increases the number of district court judges in Thurston County from two to three and in Kitsap 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: Trudes Tango Hutcheson (786-7384).

Background:

The number of district court judges in each county is set by statute. Any change in the number of judges in a county must be made by the Legislature after receiving a recommendation from the Supreme Court. The recommendation must be based on an objective workload analysis conducted by the Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC). The objective workload analysis takes into account available judicial resources and the caseload activity of the court.

Kitsap County has three statutorily authorized district court positions, and Thurston County has two. In 2003, the Legislature added one additional district court position in Clark County.

The county must pay all costs associated with a district court judge position. The county may phase in a newly authorized judge position over a two-year period.

Summary of Bill:

The number of statutorily authorized district court judges is increased in Kitsap County from three to four and in Thurston County from two to three. The additional district court position created in Clark County in 2003 is recreated, giving the county two more years to phase in the additional judge position.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Testimony For: District courts are offering more services to the public and are overburdened. Cases that used to take one day often take two or more days. The issues in drunk driving and domestic violence cases are increasingly complex. Case loads have almost doubled. The Board of County Commissioners endorses this bill. This bill will not cost the state money because counties pay the cost of district court judge positions.

Testimony Against: None.

Persons Testifying: Representative Williams, prime sponsor; Judge Marilyn Paja, Kitsap County District Court; and Judge Kip Stolz, Thurston County District Court.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.