

# HOUSE BILL REPORT

## SB 5247

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**As Reported by House Committee On:**  
Judiciary

**Title:** An act relating to superior court judicial positions.

**Brief Description:** Modifying provisions relating to superior court judicial positions.

**Sponsors:** Senators Spanel and Haugen; by request of Board For Judicial Administration.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:**

Judiciary: 3/16/07 [DP].

**Brief Summary of Bill**

- Separates the joint superior court shared by Island County and San Juan County into two superior courts.
- Increases the number of superior court judges from two judges shared jointly by the two counties to three judges, with two in Island County and one in San Juan County.

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### HOUSE COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY

**Majority Report:** Do pass. Signed by 10 members: Representatives Lantz, Chair; Goodman, Vice Chair; Rodne, Ranking Minority Member; Warnick, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Ahern, Flannigan, Kirby, Moeller, Pedersen and Ross.

**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.

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*This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.*

Most counties operate their own superior courts. In a few cases, however, two or more counties with relatively small populations share judges jointly. Island County and San Juan County share two judges.

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

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**Summary of Bill:**

The total number of superior court judges in Island County and San Juan County is increased from two to three. Island County and San Juan County no longer share judges of the superior court. Island County retains the two existing judicial positions, and a new judicial position is created in San Juan County.

The new judicial position in San Juan County, and the allocation of two positions for Island County, take effect only after both counties document their approval of the changes and agree to bear their shares of the costs of the positions.

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**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Not requested.

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

**Staff Summary of Public Testimony:**

(In support) The bill is identical to a House bill previously approved by the committee. It provides improved judicial services for two counties and for the state.

(Opposed) None.

**Persons Testifying:** Vickie Churchill, Island and San Juan County Judicial District.

**Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying:** None.