

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## SB 5052

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As Reported by Senate Committee On:  
Law & Justice, January 28, 2013

**Title:** An act relating to increasing the number of superior court judges in Whatcom county.

**Brief Description:** Increasing the number of superior court judges in Whatcom county.

**Sponsors:** Senators Ericksen, Ranker, Shin, Padden and Kohl-Welles; by request of Board For Judicial Administration.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:** Law & Justice: 1/23/13, 1/28/13 [DP].

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON LAW & JUSTICE

**Majority Report:** Do pass.

Signed by Senators Padden, Chair; Carrell, Vice Chair; Darneille, Kline, Ranking Member; Kohl-Welles, Pearson and Roach.

**Staff:** Jessica Stevenson (786-7465)

**Background:** The number of superior court judges in Washington counties is authorized by statute. The Administrator for the Courts examines the need for new superior court judge positions under an objective workload analysis. The analysis is a statistical model based on workload. The two key components in the analysis are the processed caseload and the number of available judicial officers. Once the analysis is complete, the Board for Judicial Administration reviews the results and makes recommendations to the Legislature.

Article 4, section 13 of the Washington State Constitution provides that the state and the county share the cost for superior court judges. A superior court judge's benefits and one-half of the salary are paid by the state. The county pays one-half of the judge's salary.

Currently, Whatcom County has three superior court judges.

**Summary of Bill:** An additional judicial position is created in Whatcom County, changing the number of superior court judges from three to four. The addition of this judicial position is contingent on Whatcom County documenting its approval of the position by county

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legislative authority, and agreeing that Whatcom County pay for the expenses of the position without compensation from the state.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Available.

**Committee/Commission/Task Force Created:** No.

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

**Staff Summary of Public Testimony:** PRO: Whatcom County has more trials than its current number of superior court judges can hear, and commissioners cannot hear trials. Since the last Whatcom County judge position was added in 1975, the county's population has doubled and criminal cases and civil filings have increased. Whatcom County has already allocated the funds for its portion of the expenses.

**Persons Testifying:** PRO: Senator Ericksen, prime sponsor; Mellani McAleenan, Board for Judicial Administration; Charles Snyder, Whatcom County Superior Court.