
Civil Rights & Judiciary Committee

ESB 5450

Brief Description: Concerning superior court judges.

Sponsors: Senators Rivers and Wilson, L.; by request of Board For Judicial Administration.

Brief Summary of Engrossed Bill

- Increases the number of statutorily authorized superior court judge positions in Clark County and Ferry, Pend Oreille, and Stevens counties.

Hearing Date: 2/14/20

Staff: Ingrid Lewis (786-7289).

Background:

The number of superior court judges in each county is set by statute. Any change in the number of full and part-time judges in a county's superior court is determined by the Legislature after receiving a recommendation from the Board of Judicial Administration (BJA). The BJA's recommendation is based on an objective workload analysis developed annually by the Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC). The objective workload analysis considers available judicial resources and the caseload activity of the court.

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 remaining half is paid by the county. For an additional judicial position to become effective, the legislative authority of the affected county must approve the position and agree to pay, out of county funds and without reimbursement from the state, expenses associated with the new position.

Clark County has 10 elected superior court judges. Ferry, Pend Oreille, and Stevens counties jointly have two elected superior court judges.

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.

Summary of Bill:

The number of statutorily authorized superior court judge positions for Clark County is increased from 10 to 11. The number of positions jointly serving Ferry, Pend Oreille, and Stevens counties is increased from two to three.

The additional positions are effective only if the legislative authority of each affected county approves of the position and agrees that the county will pay its share of the cost of the position without reimbursement from the state.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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