

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6458

AS REPORTED BY COMMITTEE ON LAW & JUSTICE, FEBRUARY 7, 1992

Brief Description: Providing for additional superior court judges.

SPONSORS: Senators Nelson, Owen, McMullen and von Reichbauer; by request of Administrator for the Courts

SENATE COMMITTEE ON LAW & JUSTICE

Majority Report: Do pass and be referred to Committee on Ways & Means.

Signed by Senators Nelson, Chairman; Erwin, Hayner, M. Kreidler, Madsen, Newhouse, Rasmussen, and A. Smith.

Staff: Dick Armstrong (786-7460)

Hearing Dates: February 6, 1992; February 7, 1992

BACKGROUND:

By statute, the state Legislature determines the number of superior court judges in each county. Currently, King County is authorized 46 judges, Snohomish County is authorized 11 judges, Skagit County is authorized two judges and Mason County is authorized one judge.

Periodically, the Office of the Administrator for the Courts conducts a "weighted caseload" study of the superior courts in the counties. The most recent study indicates that King County needs 64.6 superior court judges; Snohomish County needs 16.9 superior court judges; Mason County needs 2.01 superior court judges; and Skagit County needs 3.49 superior court judges.

Retirement system benefits and one half of the salary of the superior court judge are paid by the state. The other half of the judge's salary and all other costs associated with the judicial position, such as capital and support staff costs, are borne by the county. A statute also requires that the county hire a court reporter for each superior court judge.

SUMMARY:

The numbers of superior court judges in four counties are increased as follows: in King County, the number of superior court judges is increased from 46 to 58; in Snohomish County, the number of superior court judges is increased from 11 to 13; in Skagit County, the number of superior court judges is increased from two to three judges; and in Mason County, the number of superior court judges is increased from one to two.

The 12 new positions in King County may be phased in by the county between July 1, 1992 and July 1, 1996. In each county, the positions become effective only if the county legislative authority documents its approval of the position and agrees to pay the county's share of the cost of the new positions.

After July 1, 1992 counties are not required to hire a court reporter for each superior court judge.

Appropriation: none

Revenue: none

Fiscal Note: requested January 31, 1992

Effective Date: July 1, 1992

TESTIMONY FOR:

The additional judges are needed in the various counties to keep up with the increasing civil and criminal case workload. The study by the Administrator for the Court supports the need for the additional judicial positions.

TESTIMONY AGAINST: None

TESTIFIED: PRO: Senator Pat McMullen; Keith Wilson, Snohomish County Superior Court; Judge Thorpe, Snohomish County Superior Court; Judge Johnson, King County Superior Court