

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1292

As Reported by House Committee On:
Judiciary

Title: An act relating to superior court judges.

Brief Description: Authorizing additional superior court judicial positions.

Sponsors: Representatives Rockefeller, Delvin, Grant, Moeller, Hankins, Hinkle, Mastin, Eickmeyer, Orcutt, Wallace, Fromhold, Haigh, Holmquist, McMahan and Woods; by request of Administrative Office of the Courts.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Judiciary: 2/4/03, 2/11/03 [DP].

Brief Summary of Bill

- Increases the number of superior court judicial positions in the counties of Clark, Kitsap, Kittitas, and Benton/Franklin.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 9 members: Representatives Lantz, Chair; Moeller, Vice Chair; Carrell, Ranking Minority Member; McMahan, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Campbell, Flannigan, Kirby, Lovick and Newhouse.

Staff: Edie Adams (786-7180).

Background:

The Legislature sets by statute the number of superior court judges in each county. The Administrative Office of the Courts periodically performs an objective workload analysis to determine the need for additional judicial positions in the various counties.

Clark County has eight statutorily authorized judges. The objective workload analysis indicates a need for an additional three judicial officers in the county.

Kitsap County has seven statutorily authorized judges. The objective workload analysis

indicates a need for one additional judicial officer in the county.

Kittitas County has one statutorily authorized judge. The objective workload analysis indicates a need of .2 additional judicial officers in the county.

Benton/Franklin County jointly has five statutorily authorized judges. The objective workload analysis indicates a need of 1.4 additional judicial officers in the county.

Retirement 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.

Summary of Bill:

Superior court judicial positions are increased in several counties as follows:

- Clark County - from eight to 10;
- Kitsap County - from seven to eight;
- Kittitas County - from one to two; and
- Benton/Franklin County - from five to six.

Effective dates for each of the new judicial positions are provided, but the actual starting date for a position may be established by the county's legislative authority upon request of the superior court and recommendation of the county executive authority.

The judicial positions are effective only if the county legislative authority of each county documents its approval and agrees to pay for the county's share of the expenses of the new positions.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Testimony For: Counties have had substantial population growth and increased filings. In the criminal arena, courts are having difficulty meeting the speedy trial requirements. The increasing workload is jeopardizing the capacity of the courts to hear cases in a timely manner. Access delayed is access denied. We can't give cases the time they need in order to ensure justice.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Representative Rockefeller, prime sponsor; Robert Harris, Clark County Superior Court; Jay Roof, Kitsap County Superior Court; Craig Matheson, Benton/Franklin County Superior Court; and Jeff Hall, Office of the Administrator for the Courts.