

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 2627

As Passed House:

February 12, 2004

Title: An act relating to estimating the need for judicial positions.

Brief Description: Revising the method for estimating the need for judicial positions.

Sponsors: By Representatives Lantz, Carrell and Rockefeller; by request of Administrative Office of the Courts.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Judiciary: 1/30/04, 2/5/04 [DP].

Floor Activity:

Passed House: 2/12/04, 95-0.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Changes the methodology for determining superior court judicial need from a "weighted caseload analysis" to an "objective workload analysis."

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 8 members: Representatives Lantz, Chair; Moeller, Vice Chair; McMahan, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Campbell, Flannigan, Kirby, Lovick and Newhouse.

Staff: Edie Adams (786-7180).

Background:

The Administrator for the Courts (Administrator) is appointed by the Washington Supreme Court from a list of five persons submitted by the Governor. The Administrator is charged with administering various aspects of the state court system, such as fostering court efficiency, training personnel, designing forms, developing standards, and controlling costs.

One of the duties of the Administrator is to examine the need for new superior court and

district court judicial positions. In the 2002 session the Legislature passed HB 2471, which changed the method used to determine judicial need for district courts from a "weighted caseload analysis" to an "objective workload analysis." The measure that made this same change with respect to determining the need for additional superior court judges did not pass the Legislature, so the weighted caseload analysis is still referenced in the statute governing determining the need for judicial positions in superior court.

Summary of Bill:

The weighted caseload analysis that is used by the Administrator to examine the need for new judicial positions is replaced with an "objective workload analysis."

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

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

Testimony For: The old "weighted caseload analysis" is an expensive and time-consuming model for estimating judicial need. It involves a large amount of data collection and verification to develop the weights used in the model. These weights must be validated and updated frequently, or else the model will not accurately estimate judicial need. The "objective workload analysis" proposed in this bill is just as effective at estimating judicial need and not as costly or time-consuming. The objective workload analysis is an input-output model that looks at case filings and case resolutions. It can be performed easily every year, and has been successful at estimating need for district court judicial positions.

Testimony Against: None.

Persons Testifying: Jeff Hall, Board for Judicial Administration.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.