
**Juvenile Justice & Family Law
Committee**

HB 2481

Brief Description: Increasing marriage license fees to fund domestic violence programs.

Sponsors: Representatives Dickerson, Lovick, Kessler, McIntire, Lantz, Upthegrove, Simpson, G., Darneille, Tom, Moeller, Chase and Santos.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Requires county auditors to collect an additional \$10.00 for marriage licenses, which shall be deposited in a domestic violence prevention account and used for community-based services for domestic violence victims.

Hearing Date: 1/21/04

Staff: Trudes Tango Hutcheson (786-7384).

Background:

Marriage license fees in Washington are established by statute. The statute requires the county auditor to collect the following fees for issuing marriage licenses:

- \$8.00 (retained by the county for processing marriage licenses);
- \$5.00 (transmitted to the state treasurer for use and support of the prevention of child abuse and neglect); and
- \$10.00 (transmitted to the state treasurer for the Displaced Homemaker Act).

In addition, if approved by the county legislative body, the auditor may impose the following additional fees for issuing a marriage license:

- A fee not to exceed \$15.00 (for funding family services, such as family support centers); and
- A fee not to exceed \$8.00 (for family court services).

County auditors must impose various fees when recording any instrument (not just marriage licenses). County auditors are required to impose the following surcharges:

- \$2.00 per instrument for each document recorded (for the auditor's centennial document preservation and modernization account to be used solely for ongoing preservation of historical documents of county offices);

- \$1.00 per instrument for each document recorded (for the local government archives account); and
- \$1.00 per instrument for each document recorded (for the construction and improvement of a specialized regional facility in eastern Washington for archives and records).

Because some of the fees are optional, not all counties charge the same amount for marriage licenses. The fees range from \$27.00 to \$54.00. King, Pierce, Thurston, Spokane, Kitsap, and several other counties charge \$54.00. Whatcom County charges \$27.00. Pacific and Jefferson Counties charge \$39.00.

In 2002, there were 39,518 marriages in the state.

The Department of Social and Health Services administers funds appropriated from the general fund and Public Safety and Education Account for domestic violence services.

Summary of Bill:

County auditors must collect an additional \$10.00 for marriage licenses, to be deposited in a domestic violence prevention account in the custody of the state treasury.

The revenue collected from the additional fee must be used to fund community-based services for domestic violence victims. The Department of Social and Health Services administers the funds and may establish minimum standards for community-based services receiving the funds.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on 1/15/04.

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