

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1269

As Passed House:
February 28, 2007

Title: An act relating to superior court judicial positions.

Brief Description: Modifying provisions relating to superior court judicial positions.

Sponsors: By Representatives Quall, Strow, Bailey, Morris and Kenney; by request of Board For Judicial Administration.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Judiciary: 1/31/07, 2/2/07 [DP];

Appropriations: 2/13/07, 2/14/07 [DP].

Floor Activity:

Passed House: 2/28/07, 96-1.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Separates the joint superior court shared by Island County and San Juan County into two superior courts; and
- Increases the number of superior court judges from two judges shared jointly by the two counties to three judges, with two in Island County and one in San Juan County.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 11 members: Representatives Lantz, Chair; Goodman, Vice Chair; Rodne, Ranking Minority Member; Warnick, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Ahern, Flannigan, Kirby, Moeller, Pedersen, Ross and Williams.

Staff: Bill Perry (786-7123).

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

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.

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 34 members: Representatives Sommers, Chair; Dunshee, Vice Chair; Alexander, Ranking Minority Member; Bailey, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Haler, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Anderson, Buri, Chandler, Cody, Conway, Darneille, Dunn, Ericks, Fromhold, Grant, Haigh, Hinkle, Hunt, Hunter, Kagi, Kenney, Kessler, Kretz, Linville, McDermott, McDonald, McIntire, Morrell, Pettigrew, Priest, Schual-Berke, Seaquist, P. Sullivan and Walsh.

Staff: Owen Rowe (786-7391).

Background:

The Legislature sets by statute the number of superior court judges in each county. The state and the counties share the costs of the superior courts. 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.

Most counties operate their own superior courts. In a few cases, however, two or more counties with relatively small populations share judges jointly. Island County and San Juan County share two judges.

Periodically, the Administrative Office of the Courts does a workload analysis of the superior courts to determine if additional judicial positions are needed.

Summary of Bill:

The total number of superior court judges in Island County and San Juan County is increased from two to three. Island County and San Juan County no longer share judges of the superior court. Island County retains the two existing judicial positions, and a new judicial position is created in San Juan County.

The new judicial position in San Juan County, and the allocation of two positions for Island County, take effect only after both counties document their approval of the changes and agree to bear their shares of the costs of the positions.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: (Judiciary)

(In support) The bill will benefit both counties. There is a need for three positions in the current two-county joint superior court. By splitting the joint district into two separate superior courts, Island County will not have to expand its current facility to accommodate another judge, and San Juan County will have its own superior court judge for the first time.

Both counties have documented their willingness to pay their share of the costs of the positions.

(Opposed) None.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: (Appropriations)

(In support) The combined Superior Court District of San Juan and Island County needs a third judge; however, San Juan views this legislation as an opportunity to separate and have their own judge and has the support of the San Juan Council, Island County Commissioners and the presiding judge of the combined district, Vicki Churchill. We request and urge your support of this bill.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: (Judiciary) Jeff Hall, Board of Judicial Administration.

Persons Testifying: (Appropriations) Jeff Hall, Board of Judicial Administration; and Michael Merringer, Island/San Juan Superior Court.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: (Judiciary) None.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: (Appropriations) None.