

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1424

As Reported By House Committee On:

Law & Justice

Title: An act relating to court seals.

Brief Description: Concerning the use of court seals.

Sponsors: Representative Padden.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Law & Justice: 2/7/95, 2/15/95 [DP].

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON LAW & JUSTICE

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 17 members: Representatives Padden, Chairman; Delvin, Vice Chairman; Hickel, Vice Chairman; Appelwick, Ranking Minority Member; Costa, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Campbell; Carrell; Chappell; Cody; Lambert; McMahan; Morris; Robertson; Sheahan; Smith; Thibaudeau and Veloria.

Staff: Pat Shelledy (786-7149).

Background: In 1992, the Legislature passed a law authorizing district and municipal courts to have court seals. The law provides that "all process" must be issued under court seal. The law was passed to assist people who had previously found it difficult to have federal and state agencies recognize orders from courts of limited jurisdiction, such as name changes.

The word "process" is not defined in statute. Some district court judges have raised the concern that the law seems to require that all process, whether civil or criminal, no matter how trivial or routine, must be under seal.

Summary of Bill: District and municipal courts must issue a document under seal upon request. In all other cases, the court may issue a document under seal.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Testimony For: The bill eliminates confusion about what documents should be placed under seal.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Melanie Stewart, Municipal and District Court Judges Association (pro).