

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5122

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Law & Justice, January 26, 1995

Title: An act relating to the number of district court judges.

Brief Description: Authorizing Benton county to have one additional district court judge.

Sponsors: Senators Smith, Hale, Long and Loveland.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Law & Justice: 1/24/95, 1/26/95 [DPS].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON LAW & JUSTICE

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 5122 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Smith, Chair; C. Anderson, Vice Chair; Hargrove, Haugen, Johnson, Long, Quigley, Rinehart, Roach and Schow.

Staff: Dick Armstrong (786-7460)

Background: By statute the Legislature determines the number of district court judges in each county. Benton County has experienced growth in the number of cases filed and tried in its district courts, in addition to adding the city of Prosser to its district court jurisdiction.

The Washington State Administrator for the Courts has conducted a "weighted caseload" study and estimates that Benton County needs another district court judge to handle the current caseload.

District courts are responsible for expenses relating to salary, capital construction, support staff, and other costs associated with operating a district court.

Legislation enacted in 1994 mistakenly authorized two district court positions for Douglas County.

Summary of Substitute Bill: An additional district court judge is authorized for Benton County, increasing the number of district court judges in the county from two to three. Douglas County is authorized to have one district court judge.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill: The correct number of district court judges for Douglas County is authorized.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 20, 1995.

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

Testimony For: The workload for Benton County has increased substantially and another district court judge is needed. The statute should be amended to reflect the correct number of district court judges in Douglas County.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Judge Eugene Pratt, Benton County (pro); Chuck Foster, Office of the Administrator for the Courts (pro).