

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6412

As Passed Senate, February 14, 2006

Title: An act relating to superior court judges.

Brief Description: Increasing the number of superior court judges in Clallam and Cowlitz counties.

Sponsors: Senators Doumit, Zarelli and Hargrove.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Judiciary: 2/2/06 [DP].

Passed Senate: 2/14/06, 48-0.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators Kline, Chair; Weinstein, Vice Chair; Johnson, Ranking Minority Member; Carrell, Esser, Hargrove, McCaslin, Rasmussen and Thibaudeau.

Staff: Cindy Fazio (786-7405)

Background: The number of superior court judges in each county is set by the Legislature. The state and counties share the costs of the superior courts. Retirement 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 court facilities and support staff costs, are paid by the counties.

Clallam county has two superior court judges. Cowlitz county has four superior court judges. Based on a workload analysis by the Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC), an additional superior court judge is needed for each county.

Summary of Bill: The number of superior court judges in Clallam county is increased to three; the number of superior court judges in Cowlitz county is increased to five.

The superior court positions created by this bill are only effective if Clallam and Cowlitz counties document approval of the positions and agree to fund the expenses of the positions, including, but not limited to, court facilities.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

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

Testimony For: In both counties, our caseloads have increased fifty percent in the last decade. In both counties, we also use innovative methods to increase our efficiency. We participate on the drug court committee and use drug courts for efficiency. We also use settlement conferences. In Cowlitz county, while the commissioners support the creation of the position, our budget cycle is over so we will not have the funds to follow through on the position for perhaps another year.

Testimony Against: None.

Who Testified: PRO: Judge Jill Johanson, Cowlitz County Superior Court.