

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 2203

As Reported By House Committee On:
Judiciary

Title: An act relating to courts.

Brief Description: Allowing superior courts to use collection agencies.

Sponsors: Representatives L. Johnson, J. Kohl, Long, King, Sheldon and Springer.

Brief History:

Reported by House Committee on:
Judiciary, January 26, 1994, DPS.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 15 members: Representatives Appelwick, Chair; Johanson, Vice Chair; Padden, Ranking Minority Member; Ballasiotes, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Campbell; Chappell; Eide; Forner; J. Kohl; Long; Morris; H. Myers; Scott; Tate and Wineberry.

Staff: Bill Perry (786-7123).

Background: Courts may impose a variety of costs, fees, fines and assessments on parties in a legal action. Collection of these costs may be difficult. Many courts lack the personnel and resources to pursue collection, and many debts go unpaid.

District Courts are expressly authorized by statute to contract with collection agencies for the collection of debts in District Court. The statute also allows the court to assess the costs of collection against the debtor.

Summary of Substitute Bill: The Superior Courts are authorized to use collection agencies for the collection of unpaid court obligations.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill: The substitute adds provisions that expressly allow the use of county collection agencies; require competitive bidding for collection agency contracts; require approval of the

Department of Corrections for debt collection from an offender under the supervision of the department; and require the court to retain control over the debt.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

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

Testimony For: The ability to use collection agencies will increase the efficiency of courts that do not have the personnel to do their own collections.

Testimony Against: The use of collection agencies in District Courts has led to excessive and unnecessary costs being charged to citizens.

Witnesses: Jan Michels, Washington Association of County Clerks (pro); Melanie Smith, Department of Corrections (pro); and Harold Chambers (con).