

SENATE BILL REPORT

SSB 5753

AS PASSED SENATE, MAY 5, 1993

Brief Description: Creating a new judgeship for Cowlitz County.

SPONSORS: Senate Committee on Ways & Means (originally sponsored by Senators Snyder and L. Smith)

SENATE COMMITTEE ON LAW & JUSTICE

Majority Report: Do pass and be referred to Committee on Ways & Means.

Signed by Senators A. Smith, Chairman; Quigley, Vice Chairman; Hargrove, McCaslin, Nelson, Niemi, Rinehart, Roach, and Spanel.

Staff: Tom McBride (786-7448)

Hearing Dates: February 25, 1993

SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS & MEANS

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 5753 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Bluechel, Cantu, Gaspard, Hargrove, Jesernig, McDonald, Owen, Pelz, Quigley, Roach, L. Smith, Snyder, Talmadge, West, Williams, and Wojahn.

Staff: Cindi Holmstrom (786-7715)

Hearing Dates: March 4, 1993; March 5, 1993

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY

BACKGROUND:

Cowlitz County currently has three superior court judges. The third judge was added in 1981. Cowlitz County has experienced growth in the number of cases filed and tried in superior court. The county does employ a part-time commissioner.

The Washington State Administrator for the Courts has estimated that Cowlitz County needs 3.9 superior court judges to handle the current case load.

The Washington State Constitution provides that the state and counties split the salary expense for superior court judges.

SUMMARY:

An additional superior court judge is authorized for Cowlitz County, increasing the number of superior court judges in Cowlitz County from three to four.

The additional superior court judge becomes effective only if Cowlitz County authorizes the payment of the county's expenses associated with the new position.

The act does not indicate the starting date for the position. The fiscal note was prepared assuming a January 1, 1994 starting date for the new position.

The act is contingent upon funding provided in the Omnibus Appropriations Act.

Appropriation: none

Revenue: none

Fiscal Note: available

TESTIMONY FOR (Law & Justice):

The courts in Cowlitz County are overburdened and the situation will only worsen. The county has mandatory arbitration and employs a court commissioner. County funds are authorized to pay the county's portion of the expense for the new position.

TESTIMONY AGAINST (Law & Justice): None

TESTIFIED (Law & Justice): PRO: Senator Sid Snyder, prime sponsor; Joan Lemieux, Cowlitz County Commissioner; James Warne, Cowlitz County Superior Court; C. Mel Jewell, Cowlitz County Juvenile Court

TESTIMONY FOR (Ways & Means):

The workload shows that the three Cowlitz County Superior Court judges are doing the work of 3.9 judges. A new Superior Court Judge is greatly needed in Cowlitz County.

TESTIMONY AGAINST (Ways & Means): None

TESTIFIED (Ways & Means): Senator Snyder (sponsor); Mel Jewell, Cowlitz County Juvenile Court (pro)