

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 2538

As Reported By House Committee On:

Law & Justice
Appropriations

Title: An act relating to superior court judges.

Brief Description: Creating a new superior court position for Lewis county.

Sponsors: Representatives Alexander, DeBolt, Sheahan and Appelwick.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Law & Justice: 1/27/98, 2/5/98 [DPS];
Appropriations: 2/7/98 [DPS(LJ)].

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON LAW & JUSTICE

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 13 members: Representatives Sheahan, Chairman; McDonald, Vice Chairman; Sterk, Vice Chairman; Costa, Ranking Minority Member; Constantine, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Carrell; Cody; Kenney; Lambert; Lantz; Mulliken; Robertson and Sherstad.

Staff: Bill Perry (786-7123).

Background: The Legislature sets by statute the number of superior court judges in each county. Periodically, the Office of the Administrator for the Courts (OAC) conducts a weighted caseload analysis to determine the need for additional judges in the various counties. The Legislature has authorized two judges for Lewis County. The caseload analysis by the OAC indicates a need for an additional judicial position in Lewis County.

Retirement benefits and one-half of the salary and other employee benefits 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 capital and support staff costs, are borne by the county.

New superior court positions are filled by gubernatorial appointment. The appointed judge must then stand for election at the next general election.

Summary of Substitute Bill: The number of superior court judges in Lewis County is increased from two to three. The new position takes effect immediately, but upon request of the superior court, the Lewis County Commissioners may set the actual starting date for the position.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill: The substitute bill adds an emergency clause.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Effective Date of Substitute Bill: The bill contains an emergency clause and takes effect immediately.

Testimony For: Analysis shows the need for this new position. The county is in support of the new position.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Representative Alexander, prime sponsor; Judge H. John Hall, Lewis County Superior Court (pro); Russ Wigley, Chairman, Lewis County Board of County Commissioners (pro); Lewis Zieske, Lewis County Bar Association (pro); and Jeremy Randolph, Lewis County Prosecuting Attorney (pro).

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Majority Report: The substitute bill by Committee on Law & Justice be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 29 members: Representatives Huff, Chairman; Alexander, Vice Chairman; Clements, Vice Chairman; Wensman, Vice Chairman; H. Sommers, Ranking Minority Member; Doumit, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Gombosky, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Benson; Carlson; Chopp; Cody; Cooke; Crouse; Grant; Keiser; Kenney; Kessler; Lambert; Lisk; Mastin; McMorris; Parlette; Poulsen; Regala; D. Schmidt; Sehlin; Sheahan; Talcott and Tokuda.

Staff: Deborah Frazier (786-7152).

Summary of Recommendation of Committee on Appropriations Compared to Recommendation of Committee on Law & Justice: No new changes were recommended.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Effective Date of Substitute Bill: The bill contains an emergency clause and takes effect immediately.

Testimony For: None.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: None.