

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6213

As Passed Senate, February 11, 1998

Title: An act relating to jurisdiction of district courts in civil cases.

Brief Description: Extending the long arm statute to district court civil cases.

Sponsors: Senators McCaslin, Snyder, B. Sheldon, Roach, T. Sheldon, Bauer and West.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Law & Justice: 1/19/98, 1/22/98 [DP].
Passed Senate, 2/11/98, 48-0.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON LAW & JUSTICE

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators Roach, Chair; Johnson, Vice Chair; Fairley, Goings, Hargrove, Long, McCaslin, Stevens, Thibaudeau and Zarelli.

Staff: Harry Steinmetz (786-7421)

Background: Currently, district court judges do not have the authority to issue civil process, including writs of execution, attachment, garnishment and replevin, outside of Washington State. The statutory jurisdiction for district courts was recently increased to \$35,000 in civil cases. Matters that involve out-of-state parties and fall within the jurisdiction of district courts cannot be adequately handled in the lower court.

Summary of Bill: Washington's long-arm statute is extended to allow district court judges the same authority to deal with out-of-state parties as superior court judges.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

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

Testimony For: With the recent increase in the jurisdictional limit for civil matters in district courts, there are many lawsuits involving out-of-state parties that could be filed in district court but are, instead, filed in superior court. This is because Washington's "long arm" statute does not apply to district courts. For example, a three-car accident in Spokane involving one driver from Coeur d'Alene would result in a lawsuit being filed in superior court even if the damages were under \$35,000. This bill would allow district courts to issue civil process, thus relieving the burden on the superior court dockets.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Honorable Steven Dwyer, Snohomish County District Judge, Municipal and District Judges Association.