

SENATE BILL REPORT

HB 2522

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Judiciary, February 25, 2000

Title: An act relating to district court jurisdiction.

Brief Description: Modifying court jurisdiction.

Sponsors: Representatives Lantz, McDonald, Constantine, Lambert, Dickerson, Barlean, Hurst and Carrell.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Judiciary: 2/18/2000, 2/25/2000 [DP].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators Heavey, Chair; Kline, Vice Chair; Goings, Hargrove, Haugen, Johnson, Long, McCaslin, Thibaudeau and Zarelli.

Staff: Dick Armstrong (786-7460)

Background: Jurisdiction of the district courts is controlled by constitutional and statutory provisions. The Constitution gives the superior courts exclusive jurisdiction over some matters, such as actions affecting the title of real property and felony crimes, but generally allows the Legislature to set the jurisdiction of the district courts.

Superior and district courts have concurrent jurisdiction over many kinds of civil cases. For these kinds of cases, parties may choose which court to use.

Current law enumerates several classes of cases that may be heard in district court. However, all of these are limited to actions in which the amount in controversy does not exceed \$35,000.

This jurisdictional limit has been set over the past 40 years by the Legislature as follows:

1961 - \$500
1965 - \$1,000
1979 - \$3,000
1981 - \$7,500
1984 - \$10,000
1991 - \$25,000
1997 - \$35,000

Summary of Bill: The dollar limit on the jurisdiction of district courts is raised from \$35,000 to \$50,000.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Testimony For: The bill will help the counties to deal with court congestion and court costs by shifting some of the cases to district courts. District courts can do the job and they can do the job quicker and cheaper. It is estimated that 3 percent of civil cases will be moved to district court.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: PRO: Representative Lantz, prime sponsor; Judge Lukovich, District and Municipal Court Judges Assn.; Chuck Foster, AFC.