

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5563

As Passed Senate, March 16, 1999

Title: An act relating to county law library funding.

Brief Description: Authorizing a filing fee surcharge for funding county law libraries.

Sponsors: Senators Costa, Patterson and Roach.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Judiciary: 2/24/99, 3/1/99 [DP].

Passed Senate, 3/16/99, 26-17.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators Heavey, Chair; Kline, Vice Chair; Costa, Goings, Hargrove, McCaslin, Thibaudeau.

Staff: Dick Armstrong (786-7460)

Background: Each county with a population of 8,000 or more is required to maintain a county law library. The library is governed by a board of trustees. Counties may join to form a regional law library.

State law provides that \$12 of every new probate or civil filing fee collected in superior court and \$6 of every civil filing fee in district court is to be used for the support of the county law library. Upon approval of the library board of trustees and the county legislative authority, the \$12 fee may be increased to \$15. The filing fee for a civil cause of action in superior court is \$110 and in district court the filing fee is \$31. In addition, counties may impose an additional surcharge of \$10 on each civil filing in district court and \$15 in small claims court for the purpose of funding dispute resolution centers.

Summary of Bill: Counties are authorized to impose an additional surcharge on civil filing fees for the purpose of additional funding for county law libraries. Upon approval of the county law library board of trustees and the county legislative authority, a surcharge on civil filing fees may be imposed in an amount not to exceed \$15 for superior court and \$6 for district court.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

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

Testimony For: Law libraries have an obligation to provide hundreds and hundreds of documents to the public every year. Nonlawyers account for 70 percent of the use of such libraries. The county desperately needs an option to fund county law libraries. Law libraries are expensive to maintain and it is important that the information is current and up-to-date. The internet does not provide historical perspective.

Testimony Against: There should be a more broad based method of funding law libraries. Filing fees are going up and it is too expensive for small businesses. Collection agencies do not use law libraries. Collection agencies usually only collect on 21 percent. The internet can be used to get legal information; the internet is a better way to get information for the public.

Testified: PRO: Chris Vance, Association of County Officials; Chuck Williams, King County; Judge Thorpe, Superior Court of Snohomish County; Jean Holcomb, Law Librarian, Seattle. CON: Benita Gjurasic, Washington Collectors Association.