

6191

Sponsor(s): Senators McCaslin and Heavey

Brief Description: Allowing judges of a county the option of creating a single trial court system.

SB 6191 - DIGEST

Declares that this act shall apply in any county where the full-time elected superior, district, and municipal court judges have by majority vote agreed to implement this act. Every full-time elected district and municipal court judge holding a position created under chapter 3.34, 3.46, 3.50, or 35.20 RCW shall assume all powers, duties, and jurisdiction of a superior court judge under state law and the state Constitution while retaining all powers, duties, and jurisdiction of the judge's position of a district or municipal court judge. Such judges shall receive compensation equal to a superior court judge in the manner specified in Article IV, section 14 of the Washington state Constitution.

Provides that, upon making the election authorized by this act, the full-time elected judges of the county shall by majority vote (1) determine the date for implementation of this act and (2) elect a presiding judge to a term of not less than two years. Upon the effective date for implementation of this act, every district or municipal court within the county subject to this section shall cease to exist.

Increases per diem payments for jurors to fifty dollars.

Provides that, in any county where this act applies, the presiding judge of the superior court shall establish a local justice advisory committee and determine the size and composition of the council. The advisory committee shall coordinate its activities and recommendations with the local law and justice council where appropriate.

Declares that courthouse facilitators are deemed essential for the superior court. In every courthouse in which the superior court convenes, a courthouse facilitator shall be assigned by the presiding superior court judge in the county. For every ten superior court judges no less than one facilitator shall be assigned.

Creates an office of marshal for the state of Washington. The governor upon nomination by the chief justice of the supreme court shall appoint the Washington state marshal with confirmation by the senate. The marshal shall be responsible for the enforcement of all orders issued by judges of the Washington supreme court, the court of appeals, and the superior court.

Directs the board of judicial administration to study the impact of the provisions of this act, including the impact on the rules of evidence and the rules of discovery.

Requires a report to the legislature and the supreme court by January 1, 2002.

Directs the board of judicial administration to, at its earliest convenience, review statutes and court rules in the areas of, but not limited to, probate, domestic relations, traffic

infractions, small claims, and juvenile justice, and make recommendations to the legislature for use of nonjudicial personnel to process cases.

Directs the joint legislative audit and review committee to conduct a fiscal review of the state court system. The study shall examine, but not be limited to: (1) The funding of state courts, including district and municipal courts;

(2) current sources of revenue generated by the court system;

(3) court workloads at all levels; and

(4) potential fiscal impacts of the implementation of this act. On or before December 31, 2001, the committee shall make recommendations to the legislature on methods to improve the fiscal operation of the court system.

Directs the Washington state institute for public policy to study and evaluate the criminal laws in the Revised Code of Washington and make recommendations to the legislature concerning provisions that may be decriminalized. The institute shall submit a final report to the legislature by January 1, 2002.