

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SB 5426

As Reported by House Committee On:
Judiciary

Title: An act relating to county law library funding.

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

Sponsors: Senators Patterson, Costa, McCaslin, Constantine and Kline.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Judiciary: 2/21/02, 2/22/02 [DP].

Brief Summary of Bill

- Authorizes an additional surcharge on civil filing fees in order to fund county law libraries.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 5 members: Representatives Lantz, Chair; Hurst, Vice Chair; Dickerson, Lovick and Lysen.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 4 members: Representatives Carrell, Ranking Minority Member; Boldt, Esser and Jarrett.

Staff: Bill Perry (786-7123).

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 collected in district court are 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 contribution amount may be increased to \$15.

Summary of Bill:

Counties are authorized to impose an additional surcharge for 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 for 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: Available.

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

Testimony For: The bill just gives a local option for supporting local law libraries. Law libraries provide many important benefits for attorneys, judges, and the general public. They are especially important to members of the public who have legal issues but cannot afford attorneys. Law libraries are also an essential educational resource for paralegal training programs at community colleges.

Testimony Against: The money to support law libraries should come from the general fund, or it should come directly from a true user fee. Making litigants who do not use the library pay the increased fee is not fair and may affect decisions about pursuing worthy claims. Some counties have successfully reduced the costs of their libraries by sharing facilities and resources.

Testified: (In support) Stephanie Delaney, Highline Community College; and Jean Holcomb, King County Law Library.

(Opposed) Judy Warnick, Washington Collector's Association.