

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1068

As Reported by House Committee On:
Judiciary

Title: An act relating to superior court judges.

Brief Description: Creating an additional superior court position for the counties of Benton and Franklin jointly.

Sponsors: Representatives Delvin, Hankins, Grant and Benson; by request of Administrator for the Courts.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Judiciary: 1/30/01, 2/15/01 [DPS].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Authorizes an additional superior court judge for Benton and Franklin counties jointly.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 10 members: Representatives Carrell, Republican Co-Chair; Lantz, Democratic Co-Chair; Hurst, Democratic Vice Chair; Lambert, Republican Vice Chair; Boldt, Casada, Dickerson, Esser, Lovick and McDermott.

Staff: Katy Freeman (786-7386).

Background:

The Legislature sets by statute the number of superior court judges in each county. Benton and Franklin counties jointly have five superior court judges. Periodically, the Office of the Administrator for the Courts (OAC) conducts a weighted caseload study to determine the need for additional judicial positions in the various counties. The OAC indicates a need, as of the year 2000, for additional judicial positions in the counties.

Retirement benefits and one-half of the salary of a superior court judge is paid by the

state. The other half of the judge's salary and all other costs associated with a judicial position, such as capital and support staff costs, are paid by the county.

Summary of Substitute Bill:

The number of superior court judge positions in Benton and Franklin Counties is increased from five to six. This new position becomes effective only if the legislative authorities of Benton and Franklin Counties jointly agree that the counties will pay their share of the cost of the position without reimbursement from the state.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:

A five-year limit is imposed on Benton and Franklin counties to approve the new superior court judgeship. If the counties do not jointly approve of the funding for the position by May 1, 2006, the authorization expires.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not Requested.

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

Testimony For: By authorizing an additional judge, this bill will assist Benton and Franklin counties in managing their rising caseload. The caseload in Benton and Franklin counties has been greatly increasing. Although the court has improved the administrative processes to handle these increases, the rising caseload will probably not be met by changes in these processes alone.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Carolyn Brown and Jeff Hall, superior court for Benton and Franklin counties; and Larry Shannon, Washington State Trial Lawyers Association.