SENATE BILL REPORT SJR 8202

As of January 12, 2001

Brief Description: Amending the Constitution to provide for election of supreme court

justices from nine judicial districts.

Sponsors: Senators McCaslin, Rossi and T. Sheldon.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Judiciary: 1/18/01.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY

Staff: Dick Armstrong (786-7460)

Background: At the present time, the nine justices of the State Supreme Court are each elected by eligible voters on a statewide basis. Generally, there are three Supreme Court justices elected at each biennial general election for a term of six years.

Justices of the Supreme Court are the only judges elected on a statewide basis. Judges of the Court of Appeals are elected from three judicial districts and judges of the district court are elected from district court districts in a county. Judges of the superior court are generally elected on a countywide basis, although some counties jointly elect a judge.

There has been some concern that candidates for a Supreme Court judicial position who reside in one of the more populous counties on the western side of the state have a significant advantage over candidates from the less populated counties in the eastern part of the state.

Summary of Bill: Provisions in the Washington State Constitution regarding of the election of Supreme Court justices are amended to provide for the election of such justices from nine Supreme Court judicial districts. The districts are to be coextensive with the nine congressional districts. If the number of congressional districts change, the redistricting commission must establish the nine Supreme Court judicial districts.

Each justice of the Supreme Court must be a resident of the Supreme Court judicial district for which he or she is elected or appointed for not less than one year at the time of election or appointment. Each Supreme Court judicial position is assigned by lot to a judicial district by the Secretary of State as provided by statute.

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Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 9, 2001.

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