

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1556

As Passed House:

February 28, 2003

Title: An act relating to district court judges.

Brief Description: Authorizing one additional district court judge for Clark county.

Sponsors: By Representatives Moeller, Orcutt, Boldt and Fromhold; by request of Administrative Office of the Courts.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Judiciary: 2/11/03, 2/13/03 [DP].

Floor Activity:

Passed House: 2/28/03, 95-0.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Increases the number of district court judges in Clark County from five to six.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 9 members: Representatives Lantz, Chair; Moeller, Vice Chair; Carrell, Ranking Minority Member; McMahan, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Campbell, Flannigan, Kirby, Lovick and Newhouse.

Staff: Aaron Anderson (786-7119), Trudes Tango Hutcheson (786-7384).

Background:

The Legislature sets the number of elected district court judges in each county, and may increase the number of district court judges in any county only upon the recommendation of the Supreme Court. The Supreme Court bases its recommendation on an objective workload analysis of the need for additional judges in a county performed by the Administrative Office of the Courts. The analysis takes into account a variety of factors, including how much time existing judges in the county currently have to hear cases and how much judicial time is needed for various kinds of cases.

The addition of a new district court judge position is conditional upon the agreement by the county legislative authority to pay all costs associated with the creation of the new position. A county may take up to two years to phase in new judicial positions created by the Legislature.

There are five elected district court judges in Clark County. The objective workload analysis for this county indicates a need of 0.5 additional judicial officers in the county.

Summary of Bill:

An additional district court judge position is authorized for Clark County, bringing the total number of district court judges authorized for the county to six.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Testimony For: The new position is needed because Clark County is the fastest growing county in the state. The population was 200,000 when five judges were first authorized; now there are 360,000 people. The need for an additional judge is due to more than just population growth; the bill will support the district court in adopting a program of therapeutic justice for substance abuse, child support, mental health, and other areas. The bill devotes resources at the front end of the court's work with an offender, which will save resources in the future. This bill is important for public safety.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Representative Moeller, prime sponsor; and Ken Eiesland, Clark County District Court.