

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1822

As Passed House:

March 11, 2003

Title: An act relating to changing the number of district court judicial positions.

Brief Description: Changing the number of district court judicial positions.

Sponsors: By Representatives Lantz, Delvin, O'Brien, Armstrong, Cairnes and Darneille.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Judiciary: 2/20/03, 2/25/03 [DP].

Floor Activity:

Passed House: 3/11/03, 91-1.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Establishes a process for changing the number of district court judges in a county.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 8 members: Representatives Lantz, Chair; Carrell, Ranking Minority Member; McMahan, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Campbell, Flannigan, Kirby, Lovick and Newhouse.

Staff: Edie Adams (786-7180).

Background:

The number of district court judges in each county is set by statute. Any change in the number of judges in a county must be made by the Legislature after receiving a recommendation from the Supreme Court. The recommendation must be based on an objective workload analysis conducted by the Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC). The objective workload analysis takes into account available judicial resources and the caseload activity of the court.

District court judges are elected and hold office for a term of four years. A vacancy in a

judge position is filled by appointment by the county legislative authority until the next general election.

Each county has a district court districting committee responsible for developing the district court districting plan which establishes district court districts within the county according to standards set out in statute. The districting plan must be approved by the county legislative authority and includes provisions on: the boundaries of each district; the number of judges to be elected from each district; the location of courtrooms and records of each court and any other locations where the court will sit; the number and location of district court commissioners; and the departments into which each court will be organized.

Amendments to the district court districting plan must be submitted to the county legislative authority for approval. An amendment that would result in shortening the term or reducing the salary of any district court judge may not be effective until the next regular election for district judge.

Summary of Bill:

The Legislature may change the number of district court judges only in a year in which the quadrennial election for district court judges is not held.

A vacancy in a district court judge position must remain vacant if the remaining judges in the county is equal to or greater than the number of judge positions authorized in statute for that county.

A district court districting committee, when determining the number of judges to be elected in each district court district, must consider the results of an objective workload analysis conducted by the AOC. The districting committee must meet within 45 days of a change in the number of judges to be elected in each district. Amendments to the plan concerning the number of judges elected in a district must be submitted to the county legislative authority within 90 days, and adopted within 180 days, of the effective date of the statutory change in the number of judges.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not Requested.

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

Testimony For: The bill establishes a process for reducing the number of judges in a

county. The bill requires a vacant position to remain open and requires the districting committee to reconvene when there is a change in the number of judges in the statute. It is a request bill from the District and Municipal Court Judges Association and has the support of the Board for Judicial Administration.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Jeff Hall, Board for Judicial Administration; and Suzanne Dale Estey, King County Executive's Office.