

# HOUSE BILL REPORT

## SSB 6527

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**As Passed House:**  
March 3, 2004

**Title:** An act relating to attorney fees.

**Brief Description:** Increasing the statutory rate for attorney fees.

**Sponsors:** By Senate Committee on Judiciary (originally sponsored by Senators Johnson, Berkey, Esser and Sheahan).

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:**

Judiciary: 2/26/04, 2/27/04 [DP].

**Floor Activity:**

Passed House: 3/3/04, 96-0.

<p><b>Brief Summary of Substitute Bill</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Raises statutory attorney fees for civil actions from \$125 to \$200.</li></ul>
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### 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:** Trudes Tango Hutcheson (786-7384).

**Background:**

Generally, the prevailing party in a civil lawsuit is entitled to recover the costs of suit. "Costs" include filing and service fees, reasonable expenses incurred in obtaining reports and records, and a statutory attorney's fee of \$125.

The Legislature increased the statutory attorney's fee for cases in superior court, the court of appeals, and the supreme court in 1985 (from \$100 to \$125). Statutory attorney's fee for cases in district court was increased from \$50 to \$125 in 1993.

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**Summary of Bill:**

For civil cases in district and superior court, the court of appeals, and the supreme court, the statutory attorney's fee is raised from \$125 to \$200. If a district court judgment, exclusive of costs, is over \$50, but less than \$200, the statutory attorney's fee remains \$125.

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**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:** It has been many years since the statutory attorney fee was raised. The fee does not cover what it actually costs for an attorney to bring a case. There were concerns with the lower end of judgments, so the bill allows the fee to remain \$125 when the judgment is under \$200 in district court.

**Testimony Against:** None.

**Persons Testifying:** Kevin Underwood, Washington Collectors Association.

**Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying:** None.