

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## SHB 2344

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As Reported By Senate Committee On:  
Judiciary, February 23, 2006

**Title:** An act relating to superior court judges.

**Brief Description:** Increasing the number of superior court judicial positions in Clallam and Cowlitz counties.

**Sponsors:** House Committee on Judiciary (originally sponsored by Representatives Kessler, Buck, Kagi, Curtis, Takko, Blake and Kenney).

**Brief History:** Passed House: 2/09/06, 97-1.

**Committee Activity:** Judiciary: 2/22/06, 2/23/06 [DP].

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY

**Majority Report:** Do pass.

Signed by Senators Kline, Chair; Weinstein, Vice Chair; Johnson, Ranking Minority Member; Carrell, Esser, Hargrove, McCaslin, Rasmussen and Thibaudeau.

**Staff:** Lidia Mori (786-7755)

**Background:** The Legislature sets by statute the number of superior court judges in each county. The state and the counties share the costs of the superior courts. Benefits and one-half of the salary of a superior court judge are 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 borne by the county. Periodically, the Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) does a workload analysis of the superior courts to determine if additional judicial positions are needed. Clallam County has two statutorily authorized judges. Cowlitz County has four authorized judges. The workload analysis conducted by the AOC indicates a need for an additional judge for both counties.

**Summary of Bill:** One additional superior court judge is authorized in Clallam County and one additional superior court judge is authorized in Cowlitz County. The additional judicial positions are effective only if each county documents its approval of the additional position and agrees to pay for its share of the costs for the position without reimbursement from the state.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Not requested.

**Committee/Commission/Task Force Created:** No.

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

**Testimony For:** The most compelling reason for this bill is that, because of court congestion, the civil docket has to wait until the criminal docket is taken care of. This causes great expense and trouble. The AOC workload analysis supports the need for an additional judge in both Clallam and Cowlitz Counties.

**Testimony Against:** None.

**Who Testified:** PRO: Representative Kessler; Jeff Hall, Board for Judicial Administration.