

SENATE BILL REPORT

HB 1175

As Reported by Senate Committee On:
Law & Justice, March 29, 2013

Title: An act relating to increasing the number of superior court judges in Benton and Franklin counties jointly.

Brief Description: Increasing the number of superior court judges in Benton and Franklin counties jointly.

Sponsors: Representatives Nealey, Haler, Klippert, Walsh, Schmick, Fagan and Ryu; by request of Board For Judicial Administration.

Brief History: Passed House: 3/05/13, 87-9.

Committee Activity: Law & Justice: 3/20/13, 3/29/13 [DP].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON LAW & JUSTICE

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators Padden, Chair; Kline, Ranking Member; Darneille, Kohl-Welles, Pearson and Roach.

Staff: Jessica Stevenson (786-7465)

Background: The number of superior court judges in Washington counties is authorized by statute. The Administrator for the Courts examines the need for new superior court judge positions under an objective workload analysis. The analysis is a statistical model based on workload. The two key components in the analysis are the processed caseload and the number of available judicial officers. Once the analysis is complete, the Board for Judicial Administration reviews the results of the analysis and makes recommendations to the Legislature.

Article 4, section 13 of the Washington State Constitution provides that the state and the county share the cost for superior court judges. A superior court judge's benefits and one-half of their salary are paid by the state. The county pays one-half of the judge's salary.

Currently, Benton and Franklin counties jointly have six superior court judges.

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

Summary of Bill: An additional judicial position is created jointly in Benton and Franklin counties, changing the number of superior court judges from six to seven. The addition of this judicial position is contingent on Benton and Franklin counties documenting their approval of the position by county legislative authority, and agreeing that Benton and Franklin counties pay for the expenses of the additional position without compensation from the state.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: There has been a great increase of population in these counties, which has resulted in more crimes and civil actions. County commissioners have signed letters approving the additional position. The analysis conducted by the Administrative Office of the Courts demonstrates that there is a need for an additional superior court judge.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Representative Nealey, prime sponsor; Mellani McAllenan, Board for Judicial Administration; Judge Bob Swisher, Benton/Franklin County Superior Courts.