

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SB 5174

As Reported by House Committee On:
Judiciary
General Government & Information Technology

Title: An act relating to increasing the number of district court judges in Skagit county.

Brief Description: Increasing the number of district court judges in Skagit county.

Sponsors: Senators Bailey, Ranker, Pearson and Sheldon; by request of Board For Judicial Administration.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Judiciary: 3/12/15, 3/19/15 [DP];

General Government & Information Technology: 3/31/15 [DP].

Brief Summary of Bill

- Raises the number of statutorily authorized district court judges in Skagit County from two to three.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 12 members: Representatives Jinkins, Chair; Kilduff, Vice Chair; Rodne, Ranking Minority Member; Goodman, Haler, Hansen, Kirby, Klippert, Muri, Orwall, Stokesbary and Walkinshaw.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 1 member: Representative Shea, Assistant Ranking Minority Member.

Staff: Omeara Harrington (786-7136).

Background:

The number of district court judges in each county is set by statute. Any change in the number of full- and part-time judges in a county's district court is determined by the Legislature after receiving a recommendation from the Board for Judicial Administration

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.

(BJA). The BJA's recommendation is based on an objective workload analysis developed annually by the Administrative Office of the Courts. The objective workload analysis takes into account available judicial resources and the caseload activity of the court.

In order for an additional judicial position to become effective, the legislative authority of the affected county must approve the position and agree to pay the expenses associated with the new position out of county funds and without reimbursement from the state.

Skagit County has two elected district court judges. The BJA recommends an increase in the number of district court judge positions in Skagit County.

Summary of Bill:

The number of statutorily authorized district court judges in Skagit County is increased from two to three. This new position becomes effective only if the legislative authority of Skagit County approves the position and agrees that the county will pay the expenses of the additional position without reimbursement from the state.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) This is a very simple bill. The workload of the court has grown significantly and Skagit County needs another judge. The judicial needs estimate supports this position, as does the county. The approval for the new position has already been locally endorsed.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Senator Bailey, prime sponsor; and Mellani McAleenan, Board for Judicial Administration.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.

**HOUSE COMMITTEE ON GENERAL GOVERNMENT & INFORMATION
TECHNOLOGY**

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 7 members: Representatives Hudgins, Chair; Senn, Vice Chair; MacEwen, Ranking Minority Member; Caldier, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; McCabe, Morris and Takko.

Staff: Meghan Bunch (786-7119).

Summary of Recommendation of Committee On General Government & Information Technology Compared to Recommendation of Committee On Judiciary:

No new changes were recommended.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) This bill is Board for Judicial Administration request legislation. Skagit County (County) has not had a new judge since the 1980s and truly needs a new judge. The County plans to eliminate a court commissioner position and use that funding for the new judge position. Employing another judge instead of a commissioner will give the County more flexibility, since judges have more authority than commissioners under the law. For a small extra expense, the County can handle a greater workload.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Representative MacEwen; Representative Morris; and Melanie McAleenan, Board for Judicial Administration.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.