

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5125

As Amended by House, April 14, 2015

Title: An act relating to district court civil jurisdiction.

Brief Description: Increasing district court civil jurisdiction.

Sponsors: Senators Padden, Darneille, Roach and Hatfield.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Law & Justice: 1/22/15, 2/09/15 [DP].

Passed Senate: 3/03/15, 48-0.

Passed House: 4/14/15, 97-0.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON LAW & JUSTICE

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators Padden, Chair; O'Ban, Vice Chair; Pedersen, Ranking Minority Member; Darneille, Kohl-Welles, Pearson and Roach.

Staff: Melissa Burke-Cain (786-7755)

Background: The Legislature limits the district court's jurisdiction based on the case's value, or the amount at issue, in specific civil cases. The Legislature adjusts the case value limit periodically as the economy changes. In 2008, the most recent change, the Legislature raised the civil case jurisdiction from \$50,000 per case to \$75,000 per case exclusive of interest, costs, and attorneys' fees.

Summary of Bill: The value of a civil claim, or the amount at issue in the case, must not exceed \$100,000 exclusive of interest, costs, and attorneys' fees to meet the district court's jurisdiction requirement. The \$100,000 jurisdictional limit applies to each claimant in a case, if a case includes multiple claimants.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

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.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: The bill will allow less-expensive civil cases to be heard in district court with lower costs. Consumers will be able to file cases in district court rather than superior court and they will benefit from a lower filing fee and a quicker trial date.

CON: District court judges do a good job, but the current amount is adequate. There should be no increase and judges should not lobby the Legislature.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Padden, prime sponsor; Sam Meyer, District and Municipal Court Judges' Assn.

CON: Arthur West, citizen.

House Amendment(s): The jurisdictional limit for district court civil actions increases from \$75,000 to \$100,000 and, for each claimant, applies to both the value of the claim and the amount at issue.