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## Civil Rights & Judiciary Committee

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### SSB 5621

**Brief Description:** Increasing the jurisdictional amount for small claims courts.

**Sponsors:** Senate Committee on Law & Justice (originally sponsored by Senators Warnick, Padden, Holy, Wagoner and Wilson, L.).

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Brief Summary of Substitute Bill</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Increases the jurisdiction of the small claims department in each district court from \$5,000 to \$10,000, but only for cases brought by a natural person.</li></ul>
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**Hearing Date:** 3/19/19

**Staff:** Cece Clynych (786-7195).

**Background:**

Within each district court is a small claims department which has nonexclusive jurisdiction over cases for the recovery of money only if the amount claimed does not exceed \$5,000. In small claims cases, formal pleadings are not required, and hearings and dispositions are conducted informally. Each party in a small claims case is usually self-represented, and attorneys are not allowed to participate unless the judge grants permission.

Generally, any individual, business, partnership, or corporation may bring a small claims suit against any other individual, business, partnership, or corporation. Small claims usually must be filed in the district court of the county in which the defendant resides. Appeals may be taken to the superior court, but no party may appeal a judgment where the amount claimed is less than \$250, and the party who filed the claim may not appeal unless the amount claimed exceeds \$1,000.

**Summary of Bill:**

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*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.*

The jurisdiction of the small claims department in each district court is raised to \$10,000 for cases brought by a natural person. The jurisdictional limit remains at \$5,000 for all other cases. "Natural person" means a human being.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Available.

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