

# FINAL BILL REPORT

## ESB 5450

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Synopsis as Enacted

**Brief Description:** Concerning superior court judges.

**Sponsors:** Senators Rivers and Wilson, L.; by request of Board For Judicial Administration.

**Senate Committee on Law & Justice**  
**Senate Committee on Ways & Means**  
**House Committee on Civil Rights & Judiciary**  
**House Committee on Appropriations**

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

Superior court judges and court commissioners hear felony and other criminal matters, civil matters, domestic relations matters, guardianship and probate matters, juvenile matters as well as child dependency cases, appeals from lower courts, and appeals from state administrative agencies.

The Washington State Constitution requires the state and the county to share the cost for superior court judges. A superior court judge's benefits and one-half of the salary are paid by the state. The county pays one-half of a judge's salary. For an additional judicial position to become effective, the legislative authority of the affected county must approve the position and agree to pay, out of county funds and without reimbursement from the state, expenses associated with the new position.

Clark County has ten elected superior court judges. Ferry, Pend Oreille, and Stevens counties jointly have two elected superior court judges.

**Summary:** An additional judicial position is created jointly for Clark, Ferry, Pend Oreille, and Stevens counties, changing the number of superior court judges from two to three. The additional judicial position is contingent on Clark, Ferry, Pend Oreille, and Stevens counties documenting their approval of the position by their county legislative authorities, and

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agreeing that the counties will jointly pay the expenses of the additional position without compensation from the state.

**Votes on Final Passage:**

Senate	48	0
House	97	0

**Effective:** June 11, 2020