
Civil Rights & Judiciary Committee

SB 5003

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

Sponsors: Senators Lovick, Robinson, Dhingra, Lias, Nobles, Stanford and Torres; by request of Administrative Office of the Courts.

<p style="text-align: center;">Brief Summary of Bill</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Increases the number of district court judges in Snohomish County from eight to nine.

Hearing Date: 3/2/23

Staff: John Burzynski (786-7133).

Background:

District courts are courts of limited jurisdiction. District court civil jurisdiction includes various specified civil actions and proceedings, including actions for breach of contract and actions for injury to persons and property, if the amount at issue does not exceed \$100,000, exclusive of interest, costs, and attorney's fees. A district court's criminal jurisdiction is concurrent with the superior court for all misdemeanors, gross misdemeanors, and violations of city ordinances. Additionally, district courts have jurisdiction over domestic violence protection order proceedings, sexual assault protection order proceedings, stalking protection order proceedings, anti-harassment protection order proceedings, name change proceedings, and certain lien foreclosure proceedings. District courts also have limited jurisdiction over temporary extreme risk protection orders.

The number of district court judges in each county is established by law. Snohomish County currently has eight elected district court judges. State law authorizes the Washington Supreme

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

Court to provide recommendations to the Legislature to change the number of district court judges in a county based on an objective workload analysis that considers available judicial resources and caseload activity. The Administrator for the Courts must examine the need for new district court judge positions under an objective workload analysis and such analysis must be reviewed by the Board for Judicial Administration (BJA), which shall make recommendations to the Legislature. The BJA has issued a recommendation to increase the number of district court judges by one position for Snohomish County.

State law requires that, before an additional district judge position becomes effective, the legislative authority of the county must approve the new position and agree to pay the expenses associated with the position out of county funds and without reimbursement from the state. However, if the Legislature approves an increase in the base number of district judges, such increase and all related costs may be paid for by the county from moneys provided through the County Criminal Justice Assistance Account.

Summary of Bill:

The number of statutorily authorized district court judges in Snohomish County is increased from eight to nine.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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