

# HOUSE BILL REPORT

## SB 5836

---

---

**As Passed House:**  
February 29, 2024

**Title:** An act relating to adding an additional superior court judge in Clark county.

**Brief Description:** Adding an additional superior court judge in Clark county.

**Sponsors:** Senators Wilson, L., Cleveland, Dhingra, Frame, Mullet, Padden and Rivers; by request of Administrative Office of the Courts.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:**

Civil Rights & Judiciary: 2/20/24, 2/21/24 [DP];

Appropriations: 2/23/24, 2/26/24 [DP].

**Floor Activity:**

Passed House: 2/29/24, 95-1.

**Brief Summary of Bill**

- Increases the number of statutorily authorized superior court judges in Clark County from 11 to 12.

---

### HOUSE COMMITTEE ON CIVIL RIGHTS & JUDICIARY

**Majority Report:** Do pass. Signed by 11 members: Representatives Taylor, Chair; Farivar, Vice Chair; Walsh, Ranking Minority Member; Graham, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Abbarno, Cheney, Entenman, Goodman, Peterson, Thai and Walen.

**Staff:** Edie Adams (786-7180).

---

### HOUSE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

**Majority Report:** Do pass. Signed by 29 members: Representatives Ormsby, Chair;

---

*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.*

Bergquist, Vice Chair; Gregerson, Vice Chair; Macri, Vice Chair; Corry, Ranking Minority Member; Chambers, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Connors, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Couture, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Berg, Callan, Chopp, Davis, Fitzgibbon, Harris, Lekanoff, Pollet, Riccelli, Rude, Ryu, Sandlin, Schmick, Senn, Simmons, Slatter, Springer, Stokesbary, Stonier, Tharinger and Wilcox.

**Staff:** Yvonne Walker (786-7841).

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

The state and the county share the cost for superior court judges. Benefits and one-half of the salary of a superior court judge are paid by the state. The other half of the judge's salary and all other costs associated with a judicial position, such as capital and support staff costs, are borne by the county.

New superior court judge positions are filled by gubernatorial appointment, and the appointed judge must stand for election at the next general election.

Clark County has 11 elected superior court judges. The eleventh judge position was added in 2020.

**Summary of Bill:**

The number of statutorily authorized superior court judge positions for Clark County is increased from 11 to 12.

**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 (Civil Rights & Judiciary):**

(In support) The bill will help to increase court efficiency and access to justice in Clark

County Superior Court. The latest judicial need estimate indicates that Clark County is in substantial need of additional judicial officers due to population growth, legislative changes, the community and legal culture, and decisions made by law enforcement and prosecutors. Superior court judicial positions are funded 50 percent from the local government and 50 percent from the state.

(Opposed) None.

**Staff Summary of Public Testimony (Appropriations):**

(In support) This is a good little bill that is aimed at providing resources to a southern Washington superior court. This will increase court efficiency and access to justice. Clark County Superior Court is in need of additional superior officers as supported by the most recent judicial needs estimate. The need for additional judicial officers is based on population growth, legislative changes, community legal culture, and decisions made by law enforcement and prosecutors. The lack of judicial resources is impacting Clark County through long dockets and delays in the resolution of cases.

(Opposed) None.

**Persons Testifying (Civil Rights & Judiciary):** Christopher Stanley, Administrative Office of the Courts.

**Persons Testifying (Appropriations):** Christopher Stanley.

**Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying (Civil Rights & Judiciary):** Derek Vanderwood.

**Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying (Appropriations):** None.