

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## SB 5836

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As of January 22, 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:** Law & Justice: 1/09/24, 1/11/24 [DP-WM].  
Ways & Means: 1/22/24.

**Brief Summary of Bill**

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

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON LAW & JUSTICE

**Majority Report:** Do pass and be referred to Committee on Ways & Means.

Signed by Senators Dhingra, Chair; Trudeau, Vice Chair; Padden, Ranking Member; Kuderer, McCune, Pedersen, Salomon, Torres, Valdez, Wagoner and Wilson, L..

**Staff:** William Bridges (786-7312)

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS & MEANS

**Staff:** Tianyi Lan (786-7432)

**Background:** The Legislature sets the number of superior court judges in each county. The Washington State Constitution provides that the state and the county share the cost for

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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 part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.*

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 the judge's salary.

The Board for Judicial Administration recommends the creation of new superior court judge positions based on workload analyses by the Administrative Office of the Courts.

Clark County is authorized 11 superior court judges, which was set in 2020.

**Summary of Bill:** The authorized number of superior court judges in Clark County is increased from 11 to 12.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Available.

**Creates Committee/Commission/Task Force that includes Legislative members:** No.

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

**Staff Summary of Public Testimony (Law & Justice):** PRO: Clark County is the fastest growing county in the state. Its population is nearly equal to Spokane County but it has fewer judges. The Superior Court has made great efforts in improving its facilities and processes, but it is not enough. New laws regarding unlawful detainers and civil protection orders have greatly increased the caseload and the result has been long delays. The county council has already committed to funding its share of a superior court judge.

**Persons Testifying (Law & Justice):** PRO: Derek Vanderwood, Clark County Superior Court; Dawn Marie Rubio, Administrative Office of the Courts.

**Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying (Law & Justice):** No one.

**Staff Summary of Public Testimony (Ways & Means):** PRO: Clark County continues to grow and the number of cases has grown. The number of civil protection order cases has approximately doubled since 2019 and there is a significant growth with emergency minor guardianship cases. The court has implemented many recommendations from a national study in order to help with efficiency and processing cases. Additional judicial officer resources are required to help with the system.

**Persons Testifying (Ways & Means):** PRO: Senator Lynda Wilson, Prime Sponsor; Christopher Stanley, Administrative Office of the Courts; Derek Vanderwood, Clark County Superior Court.

**Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying (Ways & Means):** No one.