
HOUSE BILL 1918

State of Washington

69th Legislature

2025 Regular Session

By Representative Dufault

Read first time 02/10/25. Referred to Committee on Civil Rights & Judiciary.

1 AN ACT Relating to creating supreme court judicial districts;
2 amending RCW 2.04.100; adding new sections to chapter 2.04 RCW;
3 creating a new section; and providing a contingent effective date.

4 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

5 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** (1) The legislature finds that the
6 Washington state supreme court serves as the highest judicial
7 authority in the state and must ensure justice for all
8 Washingtonians. As the state's population and legal needs evolve, it
9 is imperative that the court reflects the geographic diversity of
10 Washington to ensure a broad and representative judicial perspective.

11 (2) The legislature further finds that Article IV, section 3 of
12 the Washington state Constitution provides that the supreme court
13 justices shall be elected by voters statewide, ensuring that all
14 Washingtonians have a voice in selecting the justices who serve them.
15 However, this provision does not preclude the state from structuring
16 judicial representation in a manner that promotes regional balance.

17 (3) The legislature recognizes that, historically, the supreme
18 court justices have disproportionately resided in certain urban
19 areas, leaving eastern and central Washington underrepresented. To
20 address this imbalance and enhance public trust in the judiciary, the
21 legislature finds that a district-based residency system will provide

1 fair regional representation while maintaining the integrity of the
2 statewide election process.

3 (4) Therefore, it is the intent of the legislature to:

4 (a) Establish nine supreme court judicial districts, with one
5 supreme court justice drawn from each, and each representing a
6 distinct region of Washington;

7 (b) Require that each supreme court justice reside in the supreme
8 court judicial district they represent at the time of their election
9 and throughout their term; and

10 (c) Require that at least three of the nine supreme court
11 judicial districts consist exclusively of the portions of the state
12 located east of the Cascade mountains.

13 (5) By enacting these provisions, the legislature seeks to
14 strengthen the connection between the judiciary and communities
15 across Washington, enhance public confidence in the state's highest
16 court, and ensure that all regions of the state have a voice in
17 shaping the legal principles that govern Washington.

18 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 2.** A new section is added to chapter 2.04 RCW
19 to read as follows:

20 (1) There shall be nine supreme court judicial districts in the
21 state, with one supreme court justice drawn from each district:

22 (a) District 1 shall consist of King county;

23 (b) District 2 shall consist of Snohomish county;

24 (c) District 3 shall consist of Island, San Juan, Skagit, and
25 Whatcom counties;

26 (d) District 4 shall consist of Pierce county;

27 (e) District 5 shall consist of Clallam, Grays Harbor, Jefferson,
28 Kitsap, Mason, and Thurston counties;

29 (f) District 6 shall consist of Clark, Cowlitz, Lewis, Pacific,
30 Skamania, and Wahkiakum counties;

31 (g) District 7 shall consist of Ferry, Lincoln, Okanogan, Pend
32 Oreille, Spokane, and Stevens counties;

33 (h) District 8 shall consist of Adams, Asotin, Benton, Columbia,
34 Franklin, Garfield, Grant, Walla Walla, and Whitman counties; and

35 (i) District 9 shall consist of Chelan, Douglas, Kittitas,
36 Klickitat, and Yakima counties.

37 (2) Each justice of the supreme court must be a resident of the
38 supreme court judicial district for which the justice is selected or
39 appointed for not less than one year at the time of election or

1 appointment, and shall remain a resident of that district for the
2 duration of the justice's term.

3 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 3.** A new section is added to chapter 2.04 RCW
4 to read as follows:

5 (1) The first election of the justices of the supreme court
6 pursuant to the district-based system provided in section 2 of this
7 act shall be at the first general election held after the effective
8 date of this section.

9 (2)(a) The justices elected pursuant to subsection (1) of this
10 section shall be classified by lot, so that:

11 (i) Three justices shall hold their office for the term of two
12 years;

13 (ii) Three justices shall hold their office for the term of four
14 years; and

15 (iii) Three justices shall hold their office for the term of six
16 years.

17 (b) The lot shall be drawn by the justices who shall for that
18 purpose assemble at the seat of government on the second Monday in
19 January next succeeding their election, and they shall cause the
20 result thereof to be certified to and filed with the secretary of
21 state the same day.

22 (3) The term of any supreme court justice in office prior to the
23 certification of the lot drawing shall be deemed expired upon the
24 certification, and justices elected in the first district-based
25 election shall take the oath of office.

26 (4) After the first district-based election, the terms of
27 justices elected shall be six years from and after the second Monday
28 in January next succeeding their election.

29 **Sec. 4.** RCW 2.04.100 and 1971 c 81 s 3 are each amended to read
30 as follows:

31 If a vacancy occurs in the office of a justice of the supreme
32 court, the governor shall appoint a person who is a resident of the
33 supreme court judicial district for which the vacancy occurs to hold
34 the office until the election and qualification of a justice to fill
35 the vacancy, which election shall take place at the next succeeding
36 general election, and the justice so elected shall hold the office
37 for the remainder of the unexpired term.

1 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 5.** This act takes effect January 1, 2026, if
2 the proposed amendment to Article IV, section 3 of the state
3 Constitution providing for supreme court judicial districts (House
4 Joint Resolution No. (H-1231/25)) is validly submitted to and
5 is approved and ratified by the voters at the next general election.
6 If the proposed amendment is not approved and ratified, this act is
7 void in its entirety.

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