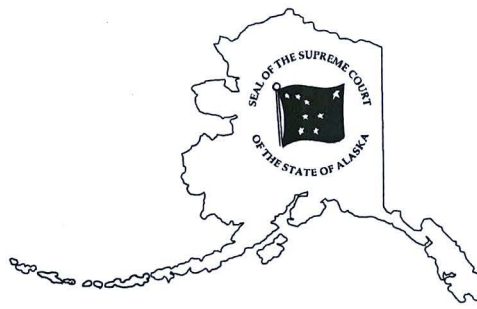


SB

151

<TARGET><BILL>SB 151</BILL><SUBJECT>SB
151</SUBJECT><COMM>SJUD30</COMM></TARGET>



ALASKA COURT SYSTEM State of Alaska

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SENATE BILL 151 NUMBER OF SUPERIOR COURT JUDGES Version A

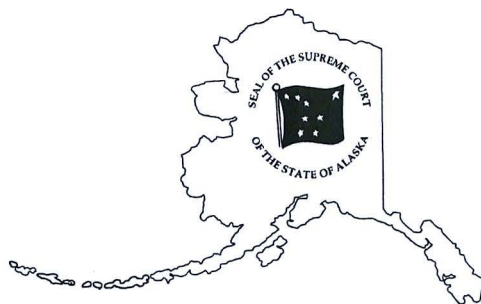
Sponsor Statement

The Alaska Court System is requesting a change to AS 22.10.120 to increase the number of superior court judges in the state from 42 to 43. Specifically, the court is seeking authorization for the additional superior court seat so that one of the two existing district court slots in Juneau can be converted to a superior court judgeship. Superior court judges have broader jurisdiction than district court judges; the change would allow the new judge to handle a greater variety of cases, thus ensuring that the caseload in Juneau is handled more efficiently and effectively.

The two existing Juneau superior court judges handle about 590 cases per judge per year, the second-highest caseload per superior court judge of any court except Anchorage (where other resources are available to assist with cases). The high caseload has resulted in a reduced capacity to schedule and decide matters as expeditiously as the court system would like.

Further, one of long-serving district court judges in Juneau has announced his plan to retire effective June 30, 2018. This bill is therefore timely; if passed, the solicitation for applicants to that soon-to-be-vacant position will be for a superior court rather than a district court judge.

The new superior court judge will share a judicial assistant and law clerk with the existing Juneau judges, and would have the already-existing courtroom and materials from the district court position, so that no additional resources are necessary. The court system will absorb the additional salary and benefits for the superior court judge with savings it has achieved elsewhere through attrition. Therefore, Senate Bill 151 has a zero fiscal note.



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January 22, 2018

The Honorable Senator John Coghill
Chair, Senate Judiciary Committee
State Capitol, Room 119
Juneau, Alaska 99801-1182

Re: Senate Bill 151, Number of Superior Court Judges

Dear Senator Coghill:

On behalf of the Alaska Court System, I would like to request a hearing in the Senate Judiciary Committee on Senate Bill 151, a bill introduced through the Rules Committee at the request of the court system.

Senate Bill 151 would change the number of superior court judges authorized in the state from a total of 42, the current number set in AS 22.10.120, to 43. The additional superior court judge would be assigned to serve in the First Judicial District, specifically in Juneau. The court system will absorb the extra costs associated with this change; the court system has therefore submitted a zero fiscal note.

Attached to this letter are:

- A sponsor statement setting forth the court system's reasons for the requested bill;
- The latest version of Senate Bill 151;
- The court system's fiscal note (zero) for SB 151; and
- A chart showing comparative case filing data for superior courts.

Please let me know if you would like any other information. Thank you for considering this request.

Sincerely,

Nancy Meade
General Counsel, Alaska Court System

Fiscal Note

State of Alaska
2018 Legislative Session

Bill Version: SB 151
Fiscal Note Number: _____
() Publish Date: _____

Identifier: SB151-JUD-ACS-01-22-18
Title: NUMBER OF SUPERIOR COURT JUDGES
Sponsor: RLS BY REQUEST
Requester: Senate Judiciary

Department: Judiciary
Appropriation: Alaska Court System
Allocation: Trial Courts
OMB Component Number: 768

Expenditures/Revenues

Note: Amounts do not include inflation unless otherwise noted below. (Thousands of Dollars)

	FY2019	Included in	Out-Year Cost Estimates				
	Appropriation Requested	Governor's FY2019 Request	FY 2020	FY 2021	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024
OPERATING EXPENDITURES	FY 2019	FY 2019	FY 2020	FY 2021	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024
Personal Services							
Travel							
Services							
Commodities							
Capital Outlay							
Grants & Benefits							
Miscellaneous							
Total Operating	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0

Fund Source (Operating Only)

None							
Total	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0

Positions

Full-time							
Part-time							
Temporary							

Change in Revenues

None							
Total	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0

Estimated SUPPLEMENTAL (FY2018) cost: 0.0 *(separate supplemental appropriation required)*
(discuss reasons and fund source(s) in analysis section)

Estimated CAPITAL (FY2019) cost: 0.0 *(separate capital appropriation required)*
(discuss reasons and fund source(s) in analysis section)

ASSOCIATED REGULATIONS

Does the bill direct, or will the bill result in, regulation changes adopted by your agency? No
If yes, by what date are the regulations to be adopted, amended or repealed?

Why this fiscal note differs from previous version/comments:

Initial version.

Prepared By: <u>Nancy Meade, General Counsel</u>	Phone: <u>(907)463-4736</u>
Division: <u>Alaska Court System</u>	Date: <u>01/22/2018 01:00 PM</u>
Approved By: <u>Nancy Meade for Christine Johnson, Administrative Director</u>	Date: <u>01/22/18</u>
Agency: <u>Alaska Court System</u>	

FISCAL NOTE ANALYSIS

STATE OF ALASKA
2018 LEGISLATIVE SESSION

BILL NO. SB151

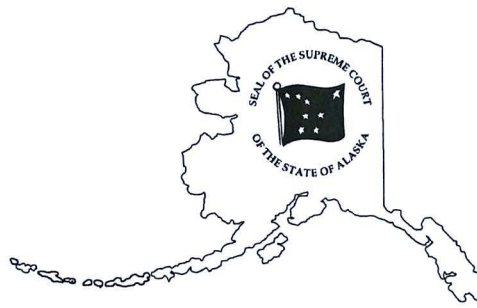
Analysis

Senate Bill 151 increases the total number of superior court judges that are authorized in the state by one, from a total of 42 to 43. It specifies that the additional judge will serve in the First Judicial District (generally, Southeast Alaska). Specifically, the added superior court judge will be assigned to Juneau.

The court system has requested this statutory change to authorize it to reclassify one of the existing district court judge seats to instead be a superior court judgeship. Superior court judges have broader jurisdiction, and having that position upgraded will allow the Juneau caseloads to be handled more efficiently and more effectively. This change will alter the current judicial staffing of Juneau from two superior plus two district judges, to instead be three superior and one district court judge. The superior court judge will use the existing office that the district court judge has used, and will share the two law clerks and the two judicial assistants that currently serve the other two superior court judges in Juneau.

The extra cost of changing this position will be absorbed by the court system. Because the office, existing support staff, and existing supplies will be used without added resources, the increase in cost is limited to the increased salary, plus associated mandatory benefits costs, of a superior court judge over that of the district court judge. That extra amount equals approximately \$35,000. The court is able to cover this amount with savings it has realized from staff attrition in a number of areas. The court system has decreased its number of employees by approximately 9% in the past three years; a portion of the savings in personnel costs from those many positions will cover the additional marginal cost of eliminating a district court judge spot and simultaneously adding the superior court slot.

The court system therefore submits this zero fiscal note.



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State of Alaska

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SENATE BILL 151
NUMBER OF SUPERIOR COURT JUDGES
Version A
Supporting Document

Number of Superior Court Case Filings per Superior Court Judge

<u>Court</u>	<u>FY 17 Superior Ct. filings</u>	<u>Superior Ct. Judges</u>	<u>Filings/S.Ct. Judge</u>
Anchorage	11,077	17	652
Juneau	1,180	2	590
Palmer	2,243	4	561
Kenai	1,587	3	529
Bethel	1,022	2	511