

FINAL BILL REPORT

SSB 6189

C 221 L 96
Synopsis as Enacted

Brief Description: Creating the office of public defense.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Ways & Means (originally sponsored by Senators Haugen, Smith and McCaslin; by request of Supreme Court).

Senate Committee on Government Operations

Senate Committee on Ways & Means

House Committee on Law & Justice

Background: Indigent criminal defendants are provided legal counsel at public expense. At the trial level, the public defender program is administered by the county governments. On appeal, legal assistance for indigents is funded through the Administrator for the Courts. Administration of indigent defense cases at the appellate level is managed by each of the three divisions of the Court of Appeals.

Summary: The office of public defense is created as an independent part of the judiciary.

A director is appointed by the Supreme Court from those people meeting specified qualifications. The director is given the powers and authority to administer all appellate criminal indigent defense services. The director is supervised by and acts under the direction of an 11-member advisory committee, which serves without compensation other than travel and expense reimbursement.

The office is directed to periodically report to the Legislature on the standards of indigency used by all state programs.

Provisions are made for the transfer of personnel, files, support equipment, furniture and funds from the Supreme Court and office of the Administrator for the Courts. The office of public defense is subject to termination on June 30, 2000, subject to a sunset review.

Votes on Final Passage:

Senate	49	0	
House	94	0	(House amended)
Senate	46	0	(Senate concurred)

Effective: June 6, 1996