

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 4201

PROPOSED CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT

Note: The ballot title and explanatory statement were written by the Attorney General as required by law. The complete text of House Joint Resolution 4201 begins on page 32.

Vote cast by the 1993 Legislature on final passage:

House: Yeas, 97; Nays, 0; Excused, 1; Absent or not voting, 0.

Senate: Yeas, 44; Nays, 1; Excused, 4; Absent or not voting, 0.

Statement for

WHAT ARE "CASES IN EQUITY"

"Cases in equity" include cases in which a court issues an injunction or restraining order to prevent some harm from occurring. Domestic violence cases, in which protective orders may be issued, are important examples of "cases in equity."

COURTS USE EQUITY POWERS TO PROTECT FAMILIES AND CHILDREN

The issuance of protective orders is one of the most effective tools that judges and law enforcement agencies have for protecting families and children from threats of violence. It is especially important that these protective orders be available right when they are needed. Delay can lead to tragedy.

THE WASHINGTON COMMISSION ON TRIAL COURTS HAS RECOMMENDED THIS AMENDMENT

Under the current wording of the state constitution, there is some question as to whether courts other than the Superior Courts may exercise jurisdiction in "cases in equity." Unfortunately, Superior Courts are seriously overcrowded and cases may encounter significant delays. The Washington Commission on Trial Courts, appointed by the State Supreme Court, has recommended that District Courts also hear "cases in equity." The Legislature has agreed with this recommendation and concluded that *both* the District and Superior Courts should have jurisdiction over these cases, particularly when they involve domestic violence.

Official Ballot Title:

Shall the constitutional provision which gives jurisdiction in "cases in equity" to superior courts be amended to include district courts?

DISTRICT COURTS SHOULD HEAR EQUITY CASES

This constitutional amendment will clarify that District Courts, as well as Superior Courts, may hear "cases in equity." It will promote the swift issuance of protective orders. The amendment will allow greater flexibility in dealing with court congestion, will promote efficiency in the courts, and will help insure that our domestic violence laws do their job. This amendment deserves your support.

Rebuttal of Statement against

Sponsored by non-attorneys and attorneys, HJR 4201 will make our courts more available to citizens needing protection. District courts are accessible to the public because they are located not only in the county seat, but also in outlying areas—66 locations statewide. And, while many have heavy caseloads, district courts are generally less congested than superior courts and can more quickly handle requests for protective orders arising from family violence and harassment situations.

Voters Pamphlet Statement Prepared by:

ADAM SMITH, State Senator, Chair, Senate Law and Justice Committee; CURT LUDWIG, State Representative, Vice Chair, House Judiciary Committee.

Advisory Committee: MARGARET COLONY, President, League of Women Voters of Washington; HONORABLE PAUL D. HANSON, President of Superior Court Judges' Association, Snohomish County Superior Court; HONORABLE THOMAS C. WARREN, President, District and Municipal Court Judges' Association, Chelan County District Court; STEPHEN DeFOREST, President of the Washington State Bar Association; BILL GATES, Attorney.

The law as it now exists:

In the English legal system inherited by the United States, there were two separate court systems: courts of law and courts in equity. These two types of courts followed somewhat different procedures and exercised different types of powers. Certain powers were held only by courts in equity, such as the power to issue an injunction or the power to rescind a contract. The Washington state Constitution did not establish separate courts of law and courts in equity, and in the United States the distinction between legal powers and equitable powers has grown less and less clear. However, the state Constitution currently provides that "the superior courts will have jurisdiction in . . . all cases in equity," subject to review on appeal. The legislature has created a system of district courts to handle smaller and simpler cases, but the Constitution currently does not provide that district courts may exercise powers historically reserved to courts in equity.

The effect of House Joint Resolution 4201, if approved into law:

The effect of approving this measure would be to amend the Constitution to provide that district courts may exercise equity powers to the same extent as superior courts. The proposed amendment would allow either a superior court or a district court, for instance, to issue an injunction or to specifically require a contract to be performed. The amendment would not change the current system allowing appeals from judgments entered by superior courts or district courts.

Statement against

THIS AMENDMENT WILL NOT DECONGEST OR MAKE THE DISTRICT COURTS, OR THE SUPERIOR COURTS MORE EFFICIENT

HJR 4201, will not improve or decongest our antiquated courts! This proposed Constitutional Amendment was sponsored by lawyer-legislators and is self-serving! Vote NO on this!

THE CONSTITUTION SHOULD NOT BE USED FOR A BAND-AID CURE

The Constitution, Article IV, section 6, *should not* be amended to allow cases in equity in District Courts. This will shift the overburden of the Superior Courts to the overburdened District Courts. Our District Courts are congested, inefficient, and not serving the public expediently now, why burden them more?

THE SPONSORS OF THIS AMENDMENT HAVE HAD TWO YEARS, OR MORE, TO CORRECT THE INEFFICIENCIES AND CONGESTION IN BOTH THE SUPERIOR AND DISTRICT COURTS

Two years ago these same lawyer/legislators tried to shift the burden of the Superior Courts to the District Courts by removing equity from the Superior Court, and it failed. This time they think by adding equity to the District Court it will reduce the congestion. It won't! It will make both courts more congested, and thereby justify their *adding* of more courts! Both courts are overcrowded now! We suggested then to have equity in both courts and to work with them for

complete reform of the judiciary and the courts. They did neither! Now the case overload in District Court today is causing more court congestion, and inefficiency than we had two years ago. They certainly don't need more burden from the Superior Court!

COURT REFORM IS NEEDED NOW, NOT MORE COURTS, OR MONEY, OR AMENDING OF THE CONSTITUTION

For most efficient use of the courts remove family law and child custody to family counseling and have all Superior Courts open from 8AM to 5PM, five days a week.

HJR 4201 is a bad idea. Vote No!

For more information, call (206) 938-0234.

Rebuttal of Statement for

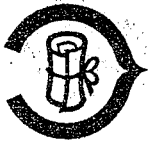
Yes, we need judicial reform but putting equity in our overloaded District Court will not make it more efficient or less congested!

Our overburdened and inefficient courts: the legislature should study the proposal of removing Family-law (divorce, child custody etc.) from adversarial proceedings. This would eliminate more than half of the Superior Courts overload, hence no need to transfer cases to the overloaded District Court (or no need for more courts).

Vote No!

Voters Pamphlet Statement Prepared by:

GENE GOOSMAN, Founder of Equal Justice For All.



COMPLETE TEXT OF House Joint Resolution 4200

BE IT RESOLVED, BY THE SENATE AND HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON, IN LEGISLATIVE SESSION ASSEMBLED:

THAT, At the next general election to be held in this state there shall be submitted to the qualified voters of the state for their approval and ratification, or rejection, an amendment to Article I, section 11 of the Constitution of the state of Washington to read as follows:

Article I, section 11. Absolute freedom of conscience in all matters of religious sentiment, belief and worship, shall be guaranteed to every individual, and no one shall be molested or disturbed in person or property on account of religion; but the liberty of conscience hereby secured shall not be so construed as to excuse acts of licentiousness or justify practices inconsistent with the peace and safety of the state. No public money or property shall be appropriated for or applied to any religious worship, exercise or instruction, or the support of any religious establishment: PROVIDED, HOWEVER, That this article shall not be so construed as to forbid the employment by the state of a chaplain for such of the state custodial, correctional, and mental institutions, or by a county's or public hospital district's hospital, health care facility, or hospice, as in the discretion of the legislature may seem justified. No religious qualification shall be required for any public office or employment, nor shall any person be incompetent as a witness or juror, in consequence of his opinion on matters of religion, nor be questioned in any court of justice touching his religious belief to affect the weight of his testimony.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That the secretary of state shall cause notice of the foregoing constitutional amendment to be published at least four times during the four weeks next preceding the election in every legal newspaper in the state.

PLEASE NOTE:

To obtain a copy of the preceding and following texts for the state measures in larger print, call the Secretary of State's toll-free hotline -- 1-800-448-4881.



COMPLETE TEXT OF House Joint Resolution 4201

BE IT RESOLVED, BY THE SENATE AND HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON, IN LEGISLATIVE SESSION ASSEMBLED:

THAT, At the next general election to be held in this state there shall be submitted to the qualified voters of the state for their approval and ratification, or rejection, an amendment to Article IV, section 6 of the Constitution of the state of Washington to read as follows:

Article IV, section 6. Superior courts and district courts have concurrent jurisdiction in cases in equity. The superior court shall have original jurisdiction (~~in all cases in equity and~~) in all cases at law which involve the title or possession of real property, or the legality of any tax, impost, assessment, toll, or municipal fine, and in all other cases in which the demand or the value of the property in controversy amounts to three thousand dollars or as otherwise determined by law, or a lesser sum in excess of the jurisdiction granted to justices of the peace and other inferior courts, and in all criminal cases amounting to felony, and in all cases of misdemeanor not otherwise provided for by law; of actions of forcible entry and detainer; of proceedings in insolvency; of actions to prevent or abate a nuisance; of all matters of probate, of divorce, and for annulment of marriage; and for such special cases and proceedings as are not otherwise provided for. The superior court shall also have original jurisdiction in all cases and of all proceedings in which jurisdiction shall not have been by law vested exclusively in some other court; and said court shall have the power of naturalization and to issue papers therefor. They shall have such appellate jurisdiction in cases arising in justices' and other inferior courts in their respective counties as may be prescribed by law. They shall always be open, except on nonjudicial days, and their process shall extend to all parts of the state. Said courts and their judges shall have power to issue writs of mandamus, quo warranto, review, certiorari, prohibition, and writs of habeas corpus, on petition by or on behalf of any person in actual custody in their respective counties. Injunctions and writs of prohibition and of habeas corpus may be issued and served on legal holidays and nonjudicial days.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That the secretary of state shall cause notice of the foregoing constitutional amendment to be published at least four times during the four weeks next preceding the election in every legal newspaper in the state.