

2026 Regular Session

SENATE BILL NO. 217

BY SENATOR MORRIS

COURTS. Provides for the administration of courts in Orleans Parish and the number of court judges. (2/3 - CA 5s15(D)) (8/1/26)

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AN ACT

To amend and reenact R.S. 13:1136, 1137(B), 1302, 1312(A), (B), (C), (D)(1), 1335, 1337(A) and (B), 1343(A), 1344(A) and (D), 1347(A)(3), (B), and (C), 1383, 1384, 1595, 1595.1, 2151(D), 2151.4(D), 2492(A)(1), (5), and (6), to enact R.S. 13:1312(E) and (F) and 2492(A)(8), and to repeal R.S. 13:1304, and 1347(D) and 2492(A)(7)(b), relative to courts in Orleans Parish; to provide for the number of court judges and commissioners; to provide for payment of court expenses from the Consolidated Judicial Expense Fund; and to provide for related matters.

Be it enacted by the Legislature of Louisiana:

Section 1. R.S. 13:1136, 1137(B), 1302, 1312(A), (B), (C), (D)(1), 1335, 1337(A) and (B), 1343(A), 1344(A) and (D), 1347(A)(3), (B), and (C), 1383, 1384, 1595, 1595.1, 2151(D), 2151.4(D), 2492(A)(1), (5), and (6) are hereby amended and reenacted and R.S. 13:1312(E) and (F) and 2492(A)(8) are hereby enacted to read as follows;

§1136. Civil district court for the parish of Orleans; judges

A. There shall be one civil district court for the parish of Orleans. ~~It~~ **Effective January 1, 2027, it** shall be composed of ~~fourteen~~ **twelve** judges. ~~The judges of division A through J of said court on July 1, 1979, shall continue to serve the terms~~

1           ~~for which they were elected.~~ Their successors shall be elected by the qualified  
2           electors of the parish of Orleans for terms of six years.

3           ~~B. Divisions K and L of the civil district court for the parish of Orleans are~~  
4           ~~hereby created for the purpose of nomination and election of the judges elected to fill~~  
5           ~~the two additional judgeships created by this Section. Judges elected to those~~  
6           ~~divisions shall be elected by the qualified voters of Orleans Parish and shall have~~  
7           ~~jurisdiction throughout the parish. One judge shall be elected to and shall preside~~  
8           ~~over division K and one judge shall be elected to and shall preside over division L.~~

9           ~~C. The judges elected to division K and L shall be elected for six year terms~~  
10          ~~at the congressional elections held in 1984 and every sixth year thereafter.~~

11          ~~D. Divisions M and N of the civil district court for the parish of Orleans are~~  
12          ~~hereby created for the purpose of nomination and election of the judges elected to fill~~  
13          ~~the two additional judgeships created by this Section. Judges elected to these~~  
14          ~~divisions shall be elected by the qualified voters of Orleans Parish and shall have~~  
15          ~~jurisdiction throughout the parish.~~

16          ~~E. The judges elected to divisions M and N shall be elected for a six year~~  
17          ~~term at the congressional election held in 1996 and every sixth year thereafter.~~

18          ~~F. The additional judges shall have the same qualifications and shall receive~~  
19          ~~the same emoluments of office, compensation, and expense allowances, payable~~  
20          ~~from the same sources and in the same manner, as are now or may hereafter be~~  
21          ~~provided for other judges of the civil district court for the parish of Orleans. Each of~~  
22          ~~such judges shall have the right to appoint a crier, stenographer and minute clerk for~~  
23          ~~his own section of said court, who shall perform the same duties and receive the~~  
24          ~~same compensation, payable in the same manner and from the same sources, as~~  
25          ~~similar officials in other sections of divisions of said court.~~

26                 **B. Divisions "C" and "L" and the judgeships for Divisions "C" and "L"**  
27                 **shall be abolished December 31, 2026, effective at midnight. The Divisions of**  
28                 **Civil District Court shall be A, B, D, E, F, G, H, I, J, K, M, and N.**

29          ~~G.C.~~ All of the judges of the civil district court for the parish of Orleans shall

1 be elected at the congressional elections, commencing in 1984 and every sixth year  
2 thereafter. Each judge shall take office on the first day of January of the year  
3 following election and shall serve through December thirty-first of the last year of  
4 his term. The term of office of judges of the civil district court for the parish of  
5 Orleans shall be six years.

6 §1137. Civil district court for the Parish of Orleans; jurisdiction

7 \* \* \*

8 B. The court **of appeal with jurisdiction over the parish of Orleans** has  
9 appellate jurisdiction over all cases tried in the city courts of New Orleans ~~where the~~  
10 ~~amount in dispute, value of the movable property involved, or fund to be distributed~~  
11 ~~does not exceed one hundred dollars, exclusive of interest. These appeals shall be~~  
12 ~~tried de novo by a single judge, and without a jury; however, the Civil District Court~~  
13 ~~for the Parish of Orleans may provide by rule that no evidence shall be admitted on~~  
14 ~~the trial de novo which was not offered in the city court unless it is shown to the~~  
15 ~~satisfaction of the court that despite the exercise of reasonable diligence by the party~~  
16 ~~offering it such evidence could not have been produced at the trial in the city court.~~

17 \* \* \*

18 §1302. Criers

19 The judge of each division of the civil district court shall appoint a crier for  
20 his division who shall be commissioned by the civil sheriff as a deputy sheriff, and  
21 who shall perform such duties as may be provided by law and the rules of the court.  
22 When directed by the court, the crier shall administer the oath required by law of all  
23 witnesses and jurors. Each crier shall receive a compensation **payable by the sheriff**  
24 **of Orleans Parish for service as a bailiff in the same manner as a deputy of**  
25 **similar experience and any such other amount** as the court en banc **executive**  
26 **committee of the judicial expense fund** may fix ~~which in any event shall not be less~~  
27 ~~than three hundred dollars per month, payable out of the judicial expense fund of the~~  
28 ~~parish of Orleans on the warrant of the judge of the division in which the crier~~  
29 ~~serves. In addition to the compensation payable to each crier from any source~~



1 maintenance, improvement or repair, or both, of each courtroom, the courthouse  
 2 itself or its furnishings, or both, and may contribute to any pension, retirement  
 3 system and group hospitalization plans to which officers and employees paid out of  
 4 the fund may belong.

5 C. The ~~judges, en banc,~~ **executive committee of the Consolidated Judicial**  
 6 **Expense Fund for the parish of Orleans** may further appoint such secretarial,  
 7 clerical, research, administrative, or other personnel as they deem necessary to  
 8 expedite the business and function of the court and fix and pay all or any part of the  
 9 salaries of such personnel out of the monies in the judicial expense fund. In like  
 10 manner, the ~~judges, en banc,~~ **executive committee of the Consolidated Judicial**  
 11 **Expense Fund for the parish of Orleans** may utilize the monies in the judicial  
 12 expense fund to pay all or any part of the cost of establishing or maintaining, or both,  
 13 a law library for the court, or for buying or maintaining, or both, any type of  
 14 equipment, supplies, or other items consistent with or germane to the efficient  
 15 operation of the court. In general, the judicial expense fund is established and may  
 16 be used for any purpose or purposes connected with, incidental to, or related to the  
 17 proper administration or function of the said court or the offices of the individual  
 18 judges and is in addition to any and all other funds, salaries, expenses, or other  
 19 monies that are now or hereafter provided, authorized, or established by law for any  
 20 of the aforesaid purposes.

21 D.(1) The ~~judges, en banc,~~ **executive committee of the Consolidated**  
 22 **Judicial Expense Fund for the parish of Orleans** may utilize the monies in the  
 23 judicial expense fund to pay all or any part of the cost of planning, designing, and  
 24 constructing a new courthouse for the parish of Orleans, which shall house the  
 25 following courts and all related support offices:

- 26 (a) Civil District Court.
- 27 (b) First and Second City Courts.
- 28 (c) Juvenile Courts.

29 \* \* \*



1 next regular session by enacting a law to either repeal or reallocate the  
 2 particular judgeship subject to the provisions of Paragraph 1 of this Subsection  
 3 then on the thirtieth day following adjournment of that regular session: the  
 4 provisions of Paragraph 1 of this Subsection shall no longer be applicable, the  
 5 judgeship shall no longer be considered abolished, and the deadlines pursuant  
 6 to this Section for calling an election to fill the vacancy shall apply in the same  
 7 manner as if the vacancy arose on that date.

\* \* \*

§1337. Appellate and supervisory jurisdiction; writs

10 A. The ~~Criminal District Court~~ **Court of appeal with jurisdiction** for the  
 11 Parish of Orleans shall have appellate jurisdiction of all cases tried before the  
 12 Municipal Court of New Orleans and the Traffic Court of New Orleans. Appeals  
 13 from the municipal and traffic courts shall be on the law and the facts and shall be  
 14 tried upon the records made and the evidence offered in said courts by the judge to  
 15 whom the appeal shall be allotted. ~~In all cases tried before the judges of the criminal~~  
 16 ~~district court in which an appeal does not lie to the supreme court, an appeal shall lie~~  
 17 ~~on questions of law and fact to two or more of the judges of the criminal district~~  
 18 ~~court, as prescribed by said court. The criminal district court shall adopt rules~~  
 19 ~~regulating the manner of taking and hearing and deciding such appeals.~~

20 B. The ~~Criminal District Court~~ **Court of appeal with jurisdiction** for the  
 21 Parish of Orleans shall have general supervisory jurisdiction over the municipal and  
 22 traffic courts of New Orleans and shall have authority to issue writs of habeas corpus  
 23 in criminal cases, as well as such other writs and orders as are necessary in aid of the  
 24 jurisdiction of the court.

\* \* \*

§1343. Allotment of cases among judges; holding of preliminary examination not  
ground for recusation

28 A. All cases pending in the criminal district court shall be allotted equally  
 29 among the Sections ~~A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H, I, J, K, and L~~ of the court. Except on





1 The judges shall hold court in one building to be provided by the city of New  
2 Orleans.

3 §1384. Criminal district courts; office or positions and functions

4 Each criminal district court in the parish of Orleans shall have a position or  
5 office of judicial administrator, deputy judicial administrator, and assistants, at least  
6 thirteen law clerks, and at least four secretaries and shall provide for the conduct of  
7 the jury commission and sanity hearings, the cost of all of which shall be  
8 appropriated in the appropriation bill which provides for judicial expenses and shall  
9 be allocated by the Judicial Budgetary Control Council to such court. **The amount**  
10 **necessary in excess of the amount appropriated may be charged on the**  
11 **Consolidated Judicial Expense Fund or otherwise, when required by law shall**  
12 **be paid by the parish of Orleans.**

13 \* \* \*

14 §1595. Judges; criers and stenographers

15 A. ~~In addition to Sections "A", "B", and "C" of the Juvenile Court for the~~  
16 ~~Parish of Orleans, there is hereby created a new section of the court to be designated~~  
17 ~~as Section "D". The additional judge created by this Section shall be known as the~~  
18 ~~judge of Section "D" of the Juvenile Court for the Parish of Orleans. Each judge shall~~  
19 ~~have the right to appoint a crier and stenographer for his own section of the court,~~  
20 ~~who shall perform the same duties and receive the same compensation, payable in~~  
21 ~~the same manner and from the same sources as similar officials in other sections of~~  
22 ~~the court. The judge of Section "D" of the juvenile court shall be elected by the~~  
23 ~~voters of Orleans Parish concurrently with the next election for mayor of the city of~~  
24 ~~New Orleans.~~

25 B. The judgeship created for Section "D" of the Juvenile Court for the parish  
26 of Orleans shall be abolished effective December 31, 2014, at midnight.

27 ~~C.~~**B.** The first judgeship becoming vacant by death, resignation, retirement,  
28 or removal during the term of office **of any of the other Sections after January 1,**  
29 **2027,** shall be abolished at midnight of such day. **If any incumbent judge is**



1 D. The civil jurisdiction is concurrent with the district court in cases where  
2 the amount in dispute, as defined in Code of Civil Procedure Article 4841(B), or the  
3 value of the property involved, does not exceed ~~twenty-five~~ **fifty** thousand dollars.

4 \* \* \*

5 §2492. Number of judges; qualifications; election; salary; vacation

6 A. (1)The Municipal and Traffic Court of New Orleans shall consist of eight  
7 judgeships through December 31, 2020. ~~Thereafter~~ **Until January 1, 2027**, it shall  
8 consist of seven judgeships, **thereafter it shall consist of six judgeships.**

9 \* \* \*

10 (5) Division "H" and the judgeship for Division "H" shall be abolished  
11 December 31, 2020, effective at midnight. **Division "F" and the judgeship for**  
12 **Division "F" shall be abolished on December 31, 2026, effective at midnight.** The  
13 other divisions shall remain unchanged as previously designated Divisions "A"  
14 through "G".

15 (6) A vacancy in Divisions "A" through **"E" and "G"** shall be filled by  
16 election to that division as provided in this Section.

17 \* \* \*

18 **(8) The first judgeship becoming vacant by death, resignation,**  
19 **retirement, or removal of any division after January 1, 2027, shall be abolished**  
20 **at midnight of such day. If any incumbent judge is prohibited from serving in**  
21 **office at the commencement of the next term due to the provisions of Article V,**  
22 **Section 23 of the Constitution of Louisiana, that division shall be considered as**  
23 **vacant by retirement solely for the purposes of this paragraph as of the end of**  
24 **that term and no qualifying shall be opened for a successor if that seat is the**  
25 **judgeship that is required to be abolished pursuant to this Paragraph.**

26 \* \* \*

27 Section 2. R.S. 13:1304, and 1347(D) and 2492(A)(7)(b) are hereby repealed.

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The original instrument and the following digest, which constitutes no part of the legislative instrument, were prepared by Senate Legislative Services. The keyword, summary, and digest do not constitute part of the law or proof or indicia of legislative intent. [R.S. 1:13(B) and 24:177(E)]

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DIGEST

SB 217 Original 2026 Regular Session Morris

Present law provides for the number of judges in Orleans Parish and for the administration of the courts. Provides for the funds and payment from the judicial expense fund.

Proposed law reduces the number of judges for the civil district court in Orleans Parish from fourteen to twelve judges.

Present law provides for twelve judges for the criminal district court in Orleans Parish.

Proposed law provides that on or before March 1, 2028, and every two years thereafter, the judicial council is to study the need for the number of judges on the criminal district court.

Proposed law provides that if the supreme court certifies a recommendation to the legislature to abolish a judgeship based on the judicial council report, then provisions concerning calling of a special election to fill a vacancy for that judgeship are to be temporarily suspended for a vacancy arising thereafter by resignation, retirement, or removal to allow the legislature to consider the recommendation. Provides that for purposes of filling the particular judgeship is to be treated in the same manner as if it had been abolished prior to the deadline for calling the special election to fill its vacancy.

Proposed law provides that if the legislature fails to act on the particular recommendation at the next regular session it can repeal or reallocate the particular judgeship on the thirtieth day following session adjournment and the judgeship shall no longer be considered abolished.

Proposed law repeals provisions dividing the civil district court into seven divisions and provisions regarding an additional commissioner in the criminal district court of Orleans Parish.

Effective August 1, 2026.

(Amends R.S. 13:1136, 1137(B), 1302, 1312(A), (B), (C), (D)(1), 1335, 1337(A) and (B), 1343(A), 1344(A) and (D), 1347(A)(3), (B), and (C), 1383, 1384, 1595, 1595.1, 2151(D), 2151.4(D), 2492(A)(1), (5), and (6); adds enact R.S. 13:1312(E) and (F) and 2492(A)(8); repeals R.S. 13:1304, and 1347(D) and 2492(A)(7)(b))