
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)]

DIGEST

SB 217 Reengrossed 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.

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

Proposed law reduces the judges from twelve to nine.

Proposed law provides that effective January 1, 2027, there shall be nine divisions of the Criminal District Court. The divisions of the first four judges, if any, serving on the effective date of proposed law that provide written notice to the supreme court and secretary of state by July 1, 2026, that they will not qualify to seek re-election shall be abolished.

Proposed law provides that if a sufficient number of judges do not provide notice pursuant to proposed law, then the requisite Divisions comprising the judges who have served on the court the least amount of time shall be designated to be abolished at the end of their current term of office. If there is any dispute concerning this calculation the supreme court shall issue an order to the secretary of state designating what divisions shall be abolished pursuant to proposed law.

Proposed law provides that no qualifying shall be opened for any successor to a judgeship that is abolished pursuant to proposed law, and no election shall be held for any judgeship abolished pursuant to proposed law.

Proposed law provides that the judges, en banc, may appoint a hearing officer in the same manner as any district court or may appoint a commissioner to perform duties in accordance with the rules of the court as prescribed by the elected judges that are in accordance with the Louisiana Constitution and do not exceed authority otherwise provided for in the law for a hearing officer or commissioner in a district court in the state.

Present law provides each criminal district court in the parish of Orleans shall have a position or office of judicial administrator, deputy judicial administrator, and assistants, at least thirteen law clerks, and at least four secretaries.

Proposed law repeals the fixed number of law clerks and secretaries and provides for law clerks and secretaries for each section at amounts approved by the executive committee of the Consolidated Judicial Expense Fund for the parish of Orleans.

Proposed law provides that the commissioners shall have the same authority for cases in present law, within the jurisdiction of the Orleans Criminal Court as a commissioner pursuant to R.S. 13:713, including the authority to make a report and recommendation to the judges concerning claims for post-conviction relief by the incarcerated.

Proposed law provides that the salaries of commissioners may be optionally supplemented by the city of New Orleans or the Consolidated Judicial Expense Fund for the parish of Orleans, as determined by its executive committee.

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 upon signature of the governor or lapse of time for gubernatorial action.

(Amends R.S. 13:1137(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, 2151(D), 2151.4(D), 2492(A)(1), (5), and (6); adds R.S. 13:1312(E) and (F), and 2492(A)(8); repeals R.S. 13:1304, and 1347(D), (F), and (G), 1595.1, and 2492(A)(7)(b))

Summary of Amendments Adopted by Senate

Committee Amendments Proposed by Senate Committee on Judiciary A to the original bill

1. Makes technical changes.
2. Reduces the number of divisions of criminal district court from 12 to 9 judges, effective January 1, 2027.
3. Provides procedure for determining what divisions shall be abolished.
4. Prohibits qualification and election for any successor judgeship to the abolished division.
5. Clarifies the divisions being abolished.
6. Changes the date that the first judgeship vacancy is abolished by death, resignation, retirement, or removal of any division from after January 1, 2027 to December 31, 2026.
7. Repeals provision providing additional judges for the Orleans Parish Juvenile Court.

Senate Floor Amendments to engrossed bill

1. Makes technical changes.

2. Provides that the commissioners shall have the same authority for cases in present law, within the jurisdiction of the Orleans Criminal Court, including the authority to make a report and recommendation to the judges concerning claims for post-conviction relief by the incarcerated.
3. Provides that the judges of the Juvenile Court in Orleans Parish, en banc, may appoint a hearing officer in the same manner as any district court or may appoint a commissioner to perform duties in accordance with the rules of the court as prescribed by the elected judges that do not exceed authority otherwise provided for in the law for a hearing officer or commissioner in a district court in the state. The salaries of commissioners may be optionally supplemented by the city of New Orleans or the Consolidated Judicial Expense Fund for the parish of Orleans, as determined by its executive committee.
4. Effective upon signature of the governor or lapse of time for gubernatorial action.