

2026 Regular Session

SENATE BILL NO. 197

BY SENATOR MORRIS

COURTS. Reduces number of judges on the Fourth Circuit Court of Appeal. (2/3-CA5s9) (8/1/26)

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AN ACT

To amend and reenact R.S. 13:312.1(D), relative to judges on the court of appeal; to provide for the number of judges on the Fourth Circuit Court of Appeal; to reduce the number of judges serving on the fourth circuit; to provide for implementation of the reduced number of judges; and to provide for related matters.

Be it enacted by the Legislature of Louisiana:

Section 1. R.S. 13:312.1(D) is hereby amended and reenacted to read as follows:

§312.1. Circuit court of appeal; domicile; number of judges; election

* * *

D. The Court of Appeal for the Fourth Circuit, domiciled in the city of New Orleans, shall have ~~twelve~~ **eight** judges. ~~Eight~~ **Five** judges shall be elected from the first district of the fourth circuit by the qualified electors thereof. One judge shall be elected from the second district by the qualified electors thereof. One judge shall be elected from the third district by the qualified electors thereof. ~~Two judges~~ **One judge** shall be elected from the circuit at large by the qualified electors thereof.

* * *

Section 2. No provision of this Act shall deprive any judge in office of the ability to

1 serve the entire remainder of his or her term. To effectuate the provisions of this Act, no
2 further elections shall be held for Divisions F, G, or H of the first district of the fourth circuit
3 or for the at large seat currently held by Chief Judge Roland Belsome with a term expiring
4 on December 31, 2031, whether at the end of the current term or due to a vacancy caused by
5 the death, resignation, retirement, or incapacity of the judge.

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 197 Engrossed

2026 Regular Session

Morris

Present law provides for 12 judges at the Court of Appeal for the Fourth Circuit in New Orleans. Provides election of eight judges from the first district of the fourth circuit; one judge elected from the third district; and two judges elected from the circuit at large.

Proposed law reduces from 12 to eight the total number of judges in the fourth circuit as follows:

- (1) Reduces from eight to five, the judges elected from the first district.
- (2) Reduces from two to one, the judges elected from the circuit at large.

Proposed law is not to deprive any judge in office of the ability to serve the entire remainder of his or her term. To effectuate the provisions of this Act, no further elections shall be held for Divisions F, G, or H of the first district of the fourth circuit or for the at large seat currently held by Chief Judge Roland Belsome with a term expiring on December 31, 2031, whether at the end of the current term or due to a vacancy caused by the death, resignation, retirement, or incapacity of the judge.

Effective August 1, 2026.

(Amends R.S. 13:312.1(D))