



LEGISLATIVE FISCAL OFFICE
Fiscal Note

Fiscal Note On: **SB 197** SLS 26RS 512
 Bill Text Version: **ENGROSSED**
 Opp. Chamb. Action:
 Proposed Amd.:
 Sub. Bill For.:

| | | |
|---|---------|---------------------------------|
| Date: April 1, 2026 | 5:29 PM | Author: MORRIS, JAY |
| Dept./Agy.: Supreme Court | | |
| Subject: Reduces Number of Judges on Fourth Circuit Court of | | Analyst: Daniel Druilhet |

COURTS EG SEE FISC NOTE GF EX Page 1 of 1
 Reduces number of judges on the Fourth Circuit Court of Appeal. (2/3-CA5s9) (8/1/26)

Current law provides that the Court of Appeal for the Fourth Circuit, domiciled in the city of New Orleans, shall have 12 judges; provides that eight judges shall be elected from the first district of the fourth circuit by qualified electors thereof; provides that one judge shall be elected from the second district by the qualified electors thereof; provides that one judge shall be elected from the third district by the qualified electors thereof; provides that two judges shall be elected from the circuit at large by the qualified electors thereof. Proposed law reduces the total number of judges in the Fourth Circuit Court of Appeal from 12 to 8; reduces the number of judges elected from the first district from 8 to 5; reduces the number of judges elected from the circuit at large from 2 to 1; provides that it does not deprive any judge in office of the ability to serve the entire remainder of his or her term; provides that to effectuate its provisions, 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 12/31/31, whether at the end of the current term or due to a vacancy caused by death, resignation, retirement, or incapacity of the judge.

| EXPENDITURES | 2026-27 | 2027-28 | 2028-29 | 2029-30 | 2030-31 | 5 -YEAR TOTAL |
|---------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|---------------|
| State Gen. Fd. | SEE BELOW | SEE BELOW | SEE BELOW | SEE BELOW | SEE BELOW | |
| Agy. Self-Gen. | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 |
| Ded./Other | SEE BELOW | SEE BELOW | SEE BELOW | SEE BELOW | SEE BELOW | |
| Federal Funds | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 |
| Local Funds | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 |
| Annual Total | | | | | | |
| REVENUES | 2026-27 | 2027-28 | 2028-29 | 2029-30 | 2030-31 | 5 -YEAR TOTAL |
| State Gen. Fd. | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 |
| Agy. Self-Gen. | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 |
| Ded./Other | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 |
| Federal Funds | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 |
| Local Funds | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 |
| Annual Total | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 |

EXPENDITURE EXPLANATION

Proposed law will result in a decrease of approximately \$2.9 M per fiscal year, likely starting in FY 32, to reduce the number of judges on the Fourth Circuit Court of Appeal. Proposed law is not scheduled to take effect until the active terms of the judges for Divisions F, G, and H, of the first district of the fourth circuit, and the impacted at large seat are scheduled to end. To the extent that a vacancy occurs in either of the three impacted judicial seats (caused by death, resignation, retirement, or incapacity of the judge) or within the at-large seat, prior to the end of the current term, expenditure impacts may occur earlier than FY 32.

Once implemented, the following is the expenditure impact that is expected for each of the four judgeships in the Fourth Circuit Court of Appeal. The majority of funds within the projected decrease are from SGF, with a portion of judicial salaries and benefits covered by Statutory Dedications (Judge's Supplemental Compensation Fund):

| | |
|------------------|--|
| \$169,407 | Judge Salary |
| \$ 13,800 | Judge's Supplemental Compensation Fund |
| \$ 76,892 | Judge Benefits |
| \$180,000 | (2) Law Clerk Salaries |
| \$ 83,689 | Law Clerk Benefits |
| \$ 58,000 | (1) Administrative Assistant Salary |
| \$ 31,233 | Administrative Assistant Benefits |
| \$ 7,500 | Travel |
| \$ 9,000 | Staff Parking |
| \$629,521 | |

Additionally, with the elimination of four judgeships, the central staff division of the Fourth Circuit Court of Appeal may be reduced by the same percentage as the reduction in judgeships (approximately 33%), which would result in a reduction of three staff attorneys and an additional savings of \$360,000. Additionally, there may be a decrease in expenditures related to leases for the current office space used in the Supreme Court by Fourth Circuit staff.

Beginning in FY 32, after the terms of the impacted judicial seats end, for a total of four judgeships, expenditures are expected to decrease by \$2.9 M per fiscal year - (\$629,521 x 4) plus any reduction in staff attorneys (\$360,000).

REVENUE EXPLANATION

There is no anticipated direct material effect on governmental revenues as a result of this measure.

Senate Dual Referral Rules
 13.5.1 >= \$100,000 Annual Fiscal Cost {S & H}
 13.5.2 >= \$500,000 Annual Tax or Fee Change {S & H}

House
 6.8(F)(1) >= \$100,000 SGF Fiscal Cost {H & S}
 6.8(G) >= \$500,000 Tax or Fee Increase or a Net Fee Decrease {S}


Patrice Thomas
Deputy Fiscal Officer