

**OFFICE OF LEGISLATIVE AUDITOR
Fiscal Note**

Fiscal Note On: **HB 911** HLS 26RS 1258
 Bill Text Version: **ORIGINAL**
 Opp. Chamb. Action:
 Proposed Amd.:
 Sub. Bill For.:

Date: March 25, 2026 4:03 PM	Author: MCMAKIN
Dept./Agy.: Orleans Parish Courts and Clerks	Analyst: Barry Kelly
Subject: Consolidation	

PARISH/ORLEANS OR SEE FISC NOTE GF EX Page 1 of 2
 Provides for the complete reform and modernization of the judicial components of Orleans Parish

Purpose of Bill: This bill reorganizes the judicial components of Orleans Parish by: (1) consolidating the civil and criminal district courts and the juvenile court into the newly established 41st Judicial District Court (41st JDC); (2) consolidating the clerks of the civil and criminal courts into a single office; (3) abolishing the Orleans Parish Juvenile Court and transferring its jurisdiction to a juvenile section of the 41st JDC; (4) reducing the total number of authorized judgeships; and (5) creating the Consolidated Judicial Expense Fund (CJEF) to centralize the financial accounting of the district, juvenile, and city courts through the consolidation and transfer of existing court fees and revenue allocations.

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

REVENUES	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29	2029-30	2030-31	5 -YEAR TOTAL
State Gen. Fd.	SEE BELOW					
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	SEE BELOW					
Annual Total						

EXPENDITURE EXPLANATION

This bill may decrease General Fund, Statutory Dedicated, and Local Fund Expenditures, but the exact amount and timing of the decreases are indeterminable. We explain the potential fiscal impacts below for the reduction of judges; clerks; administrative staffing; and for consolidation costs.

Judges: This bill appears to abolish nine judgeships across the Orleans Parish Civil District, Criminal District, and Juvenile Courts. Based on information from the Louisiana Supreme Court, eliminating these positions may decrease state expenditures by \$2.3 million annually, as detailed below:

Expenditure Category	Annual Cost Per Judge	Total Annual Decrease (9 Judges)
State General Fund	\$237,656	\$2,138,904
Statutorily Dedicated Funds	\$18,688	\$168,192
Total	\$256,344	\$2,307,096

See page 2 for additional expenditure explanation.

REVENUE EXPLANATION

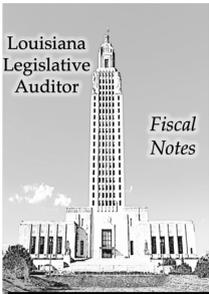
The fiscal impact on governmental revenues appears to be neutral, as funds are transferred to the Consolidated Judicial Expense Fund. However, revenues could be increased or decreased once the Consolidation Review Committee studies and recommends appropriate funding of the Courts. Their recommendations are due to the Louisiana Legislature by January 1, 2028. We provide further explanation below related to Fees and Accounting and Control.

Fees: To support the Consolidated Judicial Expense Fund (CJEF), the measure consolidates and transfers fee structures currently utilized by the separate Orleans Parish courts. While the consolidation and transfer of these existing fees will shift revenues into the new CJEF, the overall impact on local governmental revenues may be initially neutral, but may change upon Committee recommendations.

See page 2 for additional revenue explanation.

<u>Senate</u> <input type="checkbox"/> 13.5.1 >= \$100,000 Annual Fiscal Cost {S & H} <input type="checkbox"/> 13.5.2 >= \$500,000 Annual Tax or Fee Change {S & H}	<u>House</u> <input type="checkbox"/> 6.8(F)(1) >= \$100,000 SGF Fiscal Cost {H & S} <input type="checkbox"/> 6.8(G) >= \$500,000 Tax or Fee Increase or a Net Fee Decrease {S}
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Michael G. Battle
 Manager, Advisory Services



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CONTINUED EXPLANATION from page one:
EXPENDITURE EXPLANATION CONTINUED (from page 1)

Judge Staffing: Abolishing these nine judgeships is expected to also eliminate their associated support staff positions. Because funding sources vary by court, the resulting expenditures decrease may impact a mix of state and local funds. Based on information from the various courts (Supreme, Civil District, and Juvenile) and the City of New Orleans, eliminating 39 staff positions across the three courts may decrease expenditures by \$2.4 million annually, as detailed below:

Court	Staff Positions	Total Annual Decrease	Funding Source
Orleans Parish Criminal District Court	12	\$479,236	State General Fund
Orleans Parish Civil District Court	16	\$1,367,824	Local Fund
Orleans Parish Juvenile Court	11	\$572,571	Local Fund
 Total	 39	 \$2,419,631	

Clerks: This measure reduces the number of elected clerks of court from two to one. Eliminating one elected clerk position will directly reduce the state and local expenditures associated with funding that official's statutory salary, benefits, and expense allowances by as much as \$300,000. Additionally, the bill repeals R.S. 13:1212.1, which eliminates a specific state-funded compensation supplement previously directed to the clerk of the civil district court, further reducing state general fund expenditures by \$10,000 annually. However, the bill mandates that all existing non-elected employees be transferred to the consolidated office with their current salaries and seniority intact.

Administrative Staffing: While the consolidation of the courts and clerks could reduce administrative costs through the merger of redundant Human Resources, IT, and Finance departments, the measure does not mandate any reductions in staff. The bill permits the judges, en banc, to appoint a judicial administrator and assistants as needed, without specifying a maximum number of staff. Any potential savings or changes in payroll expenditures will depend on future court management decisions regarding staffing levels.

Consolidation Expenditures: Initial consolidation and merger expenditures may increase in the short term due to costs associated with rebranding (e.g., signs, stationery), integrating complex IT and records management systems, and any necessary physical relocation of personnel. Furthermore, the measure authorizes, but does not require, the judges of the 41st JDC, acting en banc, to utilize the Consolidated Judicial Expense Fund to finance the planning, design, and construction of a new parish courthouse. Ultimately, the full extent of these short-term operational increases and long-term capital expenditures will depend on a variety of factors, including the master plan and management decisions adopted by the 41st JDC.

REVENUE EXPLANATION CONTINUED (from page 1)

Accounting and Control: This bill creates the CJEF to centralize the accounting and control of the different judicial expense funds currently maintained by the separate district, juvenile, and city courts. Under this new structure, the measure directs the newly consolidated Clerk of Court to deposit up to 40% of their collected revenues into the CJEF, with the remainder retained in a separate Clerk's Operational Fund. This bill provides that the CJEF is governed by a committee of judges who will manage the use of such monies used for operations of the courts.

Senate
 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}

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