

---

 DIGEST

The digest printed below was prepared by House Legislative Services. It constitutes no part of the legislative instrument. The keyword, one-liner, abstract, 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)]

---

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 14 judges of the Orleans Civil District Court.

Proposed law reduces the number of judgeships from 14 to 13 judges, authorizes any current judge to serve the remainder of the unexpired term, and authorizes the use of hearing officers to assist with domestic relations sections.

Present law provides for 12 judges for the criminal district court in Orleans Parish.

Proposed law reduces the number of judges from 12 to nine.

Proposed law provides for nine divisions of the Criminal District Court effective Jan. 1, 2027. Requires abolishment of the divisions of the first four judges, if any, serving on the effective date of proposed law if such judges provide written notice to the La. Supreme Court and secretary of state that they will not qualify to seek reelection by July 1, 2026.

Proposed law provides that if a sufficient number of judges do not provide notice as required by proposed law, the requisite divisions composed of the judges with the least seniority are designated for abolishment at the end of their current terms of office. Further provides that if there is any dispute concerning this calculation, the La. Supreme Court is required to issue an order to the secretary of state designating the divisions to be abolished pursuant to proposed law.

Proposed law prohibits the opening of qualifying for any successor to a judgeship that is abolished and further prohibits an election 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 Constitution of La. and do not exceed authority otherwise provided for a hearing officer or commissioner in a district court in the state of La.

Present law requires each criminal district court in the parish of Orleans to have a position or office of judicial administrator, deputy judicial administrator, and assistants, at least 13 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 have the same authority for cases in present law within the jurisdiction of the Orleans Criminal Court as a commissioner pursuant to present law (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 governor or lapse of time for gubernatorial action.

(Amends R.S. 13:1136, 1137(B), 1302, 1312(A)-(C) and (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, 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.

Summary of Amendments Adopted by House

The Committee Amendments Proposed by House Committee on Judiciary to the reengrossed bill:

1. Reduce the judgeships of the Orleans Civil District Court from 14 to 13 judges.
2. Authorize current judges to serve the remainder of terms.
3. Permit the use of hearing officers to assist with domestic relations sections.