

HOUSE SUMMARY OF SENATE AMENDMENTS

HB 842

2020 Regular Session

Hilferty

COURTS: Provides relative to the assessment, collection, and distribution of certain court costs and fees in the parish of Orleans

Synopsis of Senate Amendments

1. Directs that 20% of funds in the Orleans Parish administration of criminal justice fund shall be distributed to the Orleans Parish clerk of court instead of the Orleans Parish court.
2. Makes technical corrections to further specify that commercial surety underwriters are not excepted from paying the present law premium fee in the parish of Orleans.

Digest of Bill as Finally Passed by Senate

Present law (R.S. 13:1377) requires any defendant, other than an indigent, who pleads guilty or is convicted of an offense by the Criminal District Court for the Parish of Orleans to be assessed costs of court not to exceed the sum of \$100, such costs to be in addition to any fine, clerk's fees, or sentence imposed by the court. When any defendant, other than an indigent, fails to pay such costs, present law requires the defendant to be sentenced to a term of 30 days in the parish prison.

Present law (R.S. 13:1377) provides that when any bail bond posted in the Criminal District Court for the Parish of Orleans guaranteeing the appearance of any defendant in any case in the Criminal District Court for the Parish of Orleans has been forfeited, the surety company or its local agent or insurance company for which the agent is writing bail bonds shall be assessed costs in the sum of \$25.

Present law (R.S. 13:1377) provides that these present law costs shall be collected by the judicial administrator of the criminal district court of the parish of Orleans and deposited in a bank or banks in the city of New Orleans to be credited to a special fund to be designated as the Criminal Court Cost Fund. Present law provides that the Criminal Court Cost Fund is administered by the judges of the Criminal District Court for the Parish of Orleans and is to be expended to assist in the operation and maintenance of the Criminal District Court for the Parish of Orleans, Criminal Courts Building, and to assist in the operation of the offices of the various officials and agencies which maintain offices in the building.

Proposed law repeals present law (R.S. 13:1377).

Present law (R.S. 13:1381.2) requires any defendant, other than an indigent, who pleads guilty or is convicted of an offense by the Criminal District Court for the Parish of Orleans to be assessed a fee of not less than \$25, such costs to be in addition to any fine, clerk's fees, costs due to the Criminal Court Cost Fund, or sentence imposed by the court. Present law provides that when any defendant, other than an indigent, fails to pay the costs, the defendant shall be sentenced to a term of 30 days in the parish prison.

Proposed law repeals the provision which requires the defendant to be sentenced to a term of 30 days in parish prison for the failure to pay the \$25 cost.

Present law (R.S. 13:1381.4) provides that in all criminal cases over which the Criminal District Court for Orleans Parish has original, appellate, supervisory, or concurrent jurisdiction, including traffic violations other than parking, there shall be taxed as costs against every defendant who is convicted after trial or plea of guilty or nolo contendere or

who forfeits his bond the sum of \$5, which shall be in addition to all other fines, costs, or forfeitures lawfully imposed and which shall be transmitted to the judicial administrator of the Criminal District Court for Orleans Parish.

In addition, present law (R.S. 13:1381.4) authorizes the court, in addition to all other fines, costs, or forfeitures, to impose an additional cost against any defendant who has been finally convicted of a misdemeanor, excluding traffic violations, or a felony. The additional costs shall not exceed \$500 in the case of a misdemeanor nor exceed \$2,500 in the case of a felony. All such sums collected shall be transmitted to the judicial administrator for further disposition.

Present law (R.S. 13:1381.4) requires the judicial administrator of the Criminal District Court for Orleans Parish to place all sums collected or received under present law (R.S. 13:1381.4) in a separate account to be designated as the judicial expense fund for the Criminal District Court for Orleans Parish.

Present law (R.S. 13:1381.4) establishes the judicial expense fund to be used for any purpose connected with, incidental to, or related to the proper administration or function of the court or the office of the judges and is in addition to any and all other funds, salaries, expenses, or other monies that are provided, authorized, or established by law.

Proposed law repeals the required present law (R.S. 13:1381.4) assessment of \$5 and the court's present law (R.S. 13:1381.4) authority to impose an additional cost of up to \$500 for misdemeanors and up to \$2,500 for felonies.

Proposed law repeals the court's authority to use the judicial expense fund in addition to any and all other funds, salaries, expenses, or other monies that are provided, authorized, or established by law.

Proposed law retains the present law requirement that the judges of the court shall cause to be conducted annually an audit of the fund and the books and accounts relating thereto and shall file the same with the office of the legislative auditor where it shall be available for public inspection. Further retains the present law provision which prohibits any judge's salary from being paid from the judicial expense fund.

Present law (R.S. 13:1381.5) requires all funds collected and deposited in the Orleans Parish administration of criminal justice fund to be distributed as specified by present law, including a requirement that 40% of all funds received be distributed to the Orleans Parish criminal district court's judicial expense fund.

Proposed law retains present law but provides that the 40% distribution shall be split equally between the Orleans Parish Clerk of Court and the Clerk of the Criminal District Court Expense Fund instead of the Orleans Parish criminal district court's judicial expense fund.

Proposed law also provides that the funds received by the court shall be deposited into a special escrow account and retained for one year before being distributed to the city of New Orleans to be used in defraying the expenses of the criminal justice system in Orleans Parish.

Proposed law further provides that the funds shall not be disbursed to the city of New Orleans from the special escrow account for any purpose previously set forth by the provisions of R.S. 13:1381.4 prior to the effective date of this Act.

When a defendant is convicted after trial, enters a plea of guilty or nolo contendere, or forfeits bond, present law (R.S. 15:168) requires every court of original criminal jurisdiction to assess a special cost of \$45 to be remitted to the district indigent defender fund.

Proposed law retains present law with respect to all courts of original criminal jurisdiction in parishes other than Orleans Parish, and amends present law to authorize instead of requiring the assessment in courts of original criminal jurisdiction in Orleans Parish.

Present law (R.S. 15:571.11) provides that all fines and forfeitures, including forfeitures of criminal bail bonds, imposed in criminal cases and prosecutions by the courts of Orleans Parish and any payments ordered as a condition of probation shall, upon collection, be paid to the criminal sheriff of Orleans Parish who shall deposit same in a special account, and shall thereafter be divided equally between the district attorney of Orleans Parish and the Criminal District Court of Orleans Parish in two special accounts, one account to be administered by the judges of the Criminal District Court of Orleans Parish, and the other account to be administered by the district attorney of Orleans Parish to be used in defraying the expenses of the criminal courts of the parish, extraditions, and such other expenses pertaining to the operation of the Criminal District Court of Orleans Parish and the office of the district attorney of Orleans Parish.

Proposed law amends present law to provide that the funds shall be equally divided between the district attorney of Orleans Parish and, instead of the Criminal District Court of Orleans Parish, the city of New Orleans. Further provides that the funds shall be used to defray the expenses of the criminal justice system of the parish instead of the expenses of the criminal courts.

Proposed law provides that the portion of the funds dispersed to the district attorney of Orleans Parish shall be deposited into a special account to be administered in accordance with present law provisions.

Proposed law provides that the portion of funds dispersed to the Criminal District Court of Orleans Parish pursuant to present law shall be deposited into a special escrow account and retained for one year before being disbursed to the city of New Orleans to be used in defraying the expenses of the criminal justice system of the parish, extraditions, and other expenses pertaining to the operation of the criminal justice system of Orleans Parish.

Proposed law also provides that the funds must not be disbursed to the city of New Orleans from the special escrow account for any purpose previously set forth by the provisions of R.S. 13:1381.4 prior to the effective date of this Act.

Present law (R.S. 16:16.3) provides that in all criminal cases over which the district attorney's office in Orleans Parish has jurisdiction, there shall be taxed as costs against every defendant who is convicted after trial or after he pleads guilty or who forfeits his bond a nonrefundable sum of \$20, which shall be in addition to all other fines, costs, or forfeitures lawfully imposed.

Proposed law authorizes instead of requires the imposition of this present law \$20 cost.

Present law (R.S. 22:822) requires a fee on premiums for all commercial surety underwriters who write criminal bail bonds in the state of La. and provides that all premium fees collected by the sheriff shall be remitted within 60 days after receipt. In Orleans Parish, present law requires two dollars of the three dollars collected for each \$100 worth of liability underwritten by the commercial surety on all premium fees collected by the sheriff to be maintained, supervised, and distributed as provided in present law (R.S. 13:1381.5) and the one additional dollar of the three dollars collected for each \$100 worth of liability underwritten by the commercial surety shall be allocated to the Criminal District Court for the Parish of Orleans.

Proposed law removes the present law provision regarding fees on premiums for commercial surety underwriters in Orleans Parish to conform to present law.

Proposed law amends present law to provide that all two of the dollars collected for each \$100 worth of liability underwritten by the commercial surety on all premium fees are to be maintained, supervised, and distributed as provided in present law (R.S. 13:1381.5).

Proposed law provides that the provisions of this Act will cease to be effective on July 1, 2022.

(Amends R.S. 13:1381.2(A), 1381.4, and 1381.5(B)(2)(a), R.S. 15:168(B)(1) and 571.11(D), R.S. 16:16.3(A), and R.S. 22:822(A) and (B)(3); Adds R.S. 13:1381.5(B)(2)(e); Repeals R.S. 13:1377)