

2021 Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 358

BY REPRESENTATIVE EDMONDS

1 AN ACT

2 To enact R.S. 13:621.24.2, relative to the Twenty-Fourth Judicial District; to establish the
3 Online Judge Pilot Program; to provide for motions; to provide for oral and written
4 arguments; to provide for admissibility of evidence; to provide for transmission of
5 pleadings; and to provide for related matters.

6 Be it enacted by the Legislature of Louisiana:

7 Section 1. R.S. 13:621.24.2 is hereby enacted to read as follows:

8 §621.24.2. Twenty-Fourth Judicial District; Online Judge Pilot Program

9 A. In an effort to improve access to justice and create a more efficient and
10 effective justice system, the Twenty-Fourth Judicial District Court, by rule adopted
11 by a majority of the judges sitting en banc, may establish the Online Judge Pilot
12 Program. Each division of court, now in existence or subsequently created, is
13 authorized to establish a process to handle any preliminary matter exclusively online.

14 B. Pursuant to the inherent judicial power of the court, the court may order
15 the parties to any civil case to participate in the program. Any party who wishes to
16 opt out of the program shall file a written motion to opt out within ten days after
17 service of the order, which may be granted ex parte. If no party opts out, all parties
18 shall participate in the program unless a party has been exempted by the court due
19 to an undue hardship. An undue hardship exists when a party cannot access the
20 online system or participate in the program without substantial difficulty or expense
21 as determined by the court.

22 C. In an effort to expedite litigation, oral arguments shall be waived and all
23 motions and exceptions shall be referred to the program, unless the court determines

1 that oral arguments or witness testimony is necessary. Written argument may take
 2 place through the program in an asynchronous manner within a time frame specified
 3 by the court. The court may also designate a character limit depending upon the
 4 complexity of the issue. The court may consider only those documents filed in
 5 support of or in opposition to the subject motion and shall consider any documents
 6 to which no objection is made. Any objection to a document shall be raised in a
 7 timely filed opposition or reply memorandum. The court shall consider all
 8 objections prior to rendering judgment. The court shall specifically state in writing
 9 which documents, if any, it held to be inadmissible or declined to consider. The
 10 parties may present and offer additional evidence if oral arguments are permitted or
 11 witness testimony is necessary.

12 D. All messages related to a hearing held through the program shall be
 13 considered part of the court record and may be used for any purpose after having
 14 been certified by the court reporter. Any issue discussed through the program during
 15 the pretrial conference may not be used as evidence in any judicial or administrative
 16 proceeding.

17 E. Notwithstanding any provision of law to the contrary, every pleading
 18 subsequent to the original petition, including a pleading or order that sets a court
 19 date, shall be served by transmitting an electronic copy to all parties through the
 20 program established by the court.

21 F. This Section shall be null and void on and after August 1, 2025.

SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE

GOVERNOR OF THE STATE OF LOUISIANA

APPROVED: _____