

Committee on Judiciary

CS/CS/SB 596 — Criminal Conflict and Civil Regional Counsels

by Appropriations Committee; Judiciary Committee; and Senator Baxley

The bill brings the Offices of Criminal Conflict and Civil Regional Counsel into parity with the offices of the public defenders and other governmental entities in the following areas:

- Witness coordination.
- Electronic filing of court documents.
- Security access to courthouses.
- Procedure for setting a classification and pay plan.
- Access to confidential court and state records.
- Limits of witness cost reimbursement.
- Investigator death benefits.
- Confidential motor vehicle registration.
- Criminal justice history access.

Current law requires that an existing Regional Counsel plus between two and five additional individuals be nominated for an open Regional Counsel position. The bill lowers the number of nominees in addition to the existing Regional Counsel that are required to be presented to the Governor for a position as Regional Counsel to between zero and three.

The bill also waives an 8-hour guardianship education requirement for attorneys employed by an Office of Criminal Conflict and Civil Regional Counsel; and clarifies that the court must appoint the Office of Criminal Conflict and Civil Regional Counsel if the Public Defender has a conflict of interest in a case involving involuntary treatment of sexually violent predator or involuntary mental health treatment of a prisoner.

Except as otherwise expressly provided in this act, this act shall take effect July 1, 2022.

Vote: Senate 38-0; House 117-0