

Committee on Appropriations

CS/HB 7027 — The Judicial Branch

by Appropriations Committee; Judiciary Committee; and others

The bill, relating to the judicial branch, creates a sixth appellate district court of appeal, which will have its headquarters in Lakeland, Polk County, Florida. The bill realigns the judicial circuits within the existing First, Second, and Fifth districts and creates a sixth district composed of the Ninth, Tenth, and Twentieth circuits. The Third and Fourth districts remain unchanged. Under the bill, the First DCA will decrease from 15 appellate judges to 13; the Second DCA will decrease from 16 appellate judges to 15; the Fifth DCA will increase from 11 appellate judges to 12; and the Sixth DCA will have 9 appellate judges. The bill ultimately adds a total of seven new appellate judgeships overall, in accordance with the Supreme Court's certification. The creation of the Sixth DCA and the realignment of existing districts is effective January 1, 2023.

The bill makes conforming changes to statute to account for the creation of the sixth district and specifies which judicial circuits constitute the five Criminal Conflict and Civil Regional Counsel districts. The bill recognizes the addition of a judicial nominating commission for the sixth district, effective January 1, 2023. The bill also makes conforming changes to the Office of the Judges of Compensation Claims, to account for the addition of a sixth appellate district.

The bill adds one additional county court judgeship in Lake County, Florida, as recommended in the Supreme Court's certification.

The bill will have a significant fiscal impact on state government expenditures.

If approved by the Governor, these provisions take effect upon becoming law.

Vote: Senate 33-0; House 93-14