

By the Committee on Judiciary; and Senator Brandes

590-03193-18

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1 A bill to be entitled
2 An act relating to courts; creating s. 25.025, F.S.;
3 authorizing certain Supreme Court Justices to have an
4 appropriate facility in their district of residence
5 designated as their official headquarters; providing
6 that an official headquarters may serve only as a
7 justice's private chambers; providing that such
8 justices are eligible for a certain subsistence
9 allowance and reimbursement for certain transportation
10 expenses; requiring that such allowance and
11 reimbursement be made to the extent appropriated funds
12 are available, as determined by the Chief Justice;
13 requiring the Chief Justice to coordinate with certain
14 persons in implementing designations of official
15 headquarters; providing that a county is not required
16 to provide space for a justice in a county courthouse;
17 authorizing counties to enter into agreements with the
18 Supreme Court for the use of county courthouse space;
19 prohibiting the Supreme Court from using state funds
20 to lease space in a facility to allow a justice to
21 establish an official headquarters; amending s.
22 26.031, F.S.; adding judges to the Ninth Judicial
23 Circuit Court; amending s. 34.01, F.S.; increasing the
24 limit of the amount in controversy in certain actions
25 at law under which the county court has original
26 jurisdiction of such actions; providing for
27 adjustments to the limit at specified intervals due to
28 inflation or deflation; specifying filing fees,
29 service charges, and a requirement for the clerk of

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30 court's remittal of such fees in actions in which the
31 amount in controversy exceeds a specified amount;
32 amending s. 34.022, F.S.; adding judges to certain
33 county courts; providing an effective date.
34

35 Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:
36

37 Section 1. Section 25.025, Florida Statutes, is created to
38 read:

39 25.025 Headquarters.—

40 (1) (a) A Supreme Court justice who permanently resides
41 outside Leon County shall, if he or she so requests, have a
42 district court of appeal courthouse, a county courthouse, or
43 other appropriate facility in his or her district of residence
44 designated as his or her official headquarters pursuant to s.
45 112.061. This official headquarters may serve only as the
46 justice's private chambers.

47 (b) A justice for whom an official headquarters is
48 designated in his or her district of residence under this
49 subsection is eligible for subsistence at a rate to be
50 established by the Chief Justice for each day or partial day
51 that the justice is at the headquarters of the Supreme Court for
52 the conduct of the business of the court. In addition to the
53 subsistence allowance, a justice is eligible for reimbursement
54 for transportation expenses as provided in s. 112.061(7) for
55 travel between the justice's official headquarters and the
56 headquarters of the Supreme Court for the conduct of the
57 business of the court.

58 (c) Payment of subsistence and reimbursement for

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59 transportation expenses relating to travel between a justice's
60 official headquarters and the headquarters of the Supreme Court
61 shall be made to the extent appropriated funds are available, as
62 determined by the Chief Justice.

63 (2) The Chief Justice shall coordinate with each affected
64 justice and other state and local officials as necessary to
65 implement paragraph (1) (a).

66 (3) (a) This section does not require a county to provide
67 space in a county courthouse for a justice. A county may enter
68 into an agreement with the Supreme Court governing the use of
69 space in a county courthouse.

70 (b) The Supreme Court may not use state funds to lease
71 space in a district court of appeal courthouse, county
72 courthouse, or other facility to allow a justice to establish an
73 official headquarters pursuant to subsection (1).

74 Section 2. Subsection (9) of section 26.031, Florida
75 Statutes, is amended to read:

76 26.031 Judicial circuits; number of judges.—The number of
77 circuit judges in each circuit shall be as follows:

78		
79	JUDICIAL CIRCUIT	TOTAL
80	(9) Ninth.....	<u>45</u> 43

81 Section 3. Section 34.01, Florida Statutes, is amended to
82 read:

83 34.01 Jurisdiction of county court.—

84 (1) County courts shall have original jurisdiction:

85 (a) In all misdemeanor cases not cognizable by the circuit
86 courts. ~~†~~

87 (b) Of all violations of municipal and county ordinances. ~~†~~

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88 (c)1. Of all actions at law filed on or before December 31,
89 2019, in which the matter in controversy does not exceed the sum
90 of \$15,000, exclusive of interest, costs, and attorney
91 ~~attorney's~~ fees, except those within the exclusive jurisdiction
92 of the circuit courts. ~~and~~

93 2. Of all actions at law filed on or after January 1, 2020,
94 in which the matter in controversy does not exceed the sum of
95 \$50,000, exclusive of interest, costs, and attorney fees, except
96 those within the exclusive jurisdiction of the circuit courts.
97 This limit must be adjusted every 5 years after January 1, 2020,
98 to reflect the rate of inflation or deflation as indicated in
99 the Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers, U.S. City
100 Average, All Items, or successor reports as reported by the
101 United States Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics,
102 or its successor. Such adjustments must be rounded to the
103 nearest \$5,000.

104 (d) Of disputes occurring in the homeowners' associations
105 as described in s. 720.311(2) (a), which shall be concurrent with
106 jurisdiction of the circuit courts.

107
108 The party instituting an action at law under subparagraph (c)2.
109 in which the amount in controversy exceeds \$15,000 shall pay the
110 filing fees and service charges in the same amounts and in the
111 same manner as provided in s. 28.241, and the party appealing
112 any judgment on such action shall pay the filing fees and
113 service charges in the same amounts and in the same manner as
114 provided in s. 35.22. The clerk of court shall remit the fees as
115 provided in those sections.

116 (2) The county courts shall have jurisdiction previously

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117 exercised by county judges' courts other than that vested in the
 118 circuit court by s. 26.012, except that county court judges may
 119 hear matters involving dissolution of marriage under the
 120 simplified dissolution procedure pursuant to the Florida Family
 121 Law Rules of Procedure or may issue a final order for
 122 dissolution in cases where the matter is uncontested, and the
 123 jurisdiction previously exercised by county courts, the claims
 124 court, small claims courts, small claims magistrates courts,
 125 magistrates courts, justice of the peace courts, municipal
 126 courts, and courts of chartered counties, including but not
 127 limited to the counties referred to in ss. 9, 10, 11, and 24,
 128 Art. VIII of the State Constitution of 1885, as preserved by s.
 129 (6) (e), Art. VIII of the State Constitution of 1968.

130 (3) Judges of county courts shall also be committing trial
 131 court judges. Judges of county courts shall be coroners unless
 132 otherwise provided by law or by rule of the Supreme Court.

133 (4) Judges of county courts may hear all matters in equity
 134 involved in any case within the jurisdictional amount of the
 135 county court, except as otherwise restricted by the State
 136 Constitution or the laws of Florida.

137 (5) A county court is a trial court.

138 Section 4. Subsections (9), (12), (17), and (28) of section
 139 34.022, Florida Statutes, are amended to read:

140 34.022 Number of county court judges for each county.—The
 141 number of county court judges in each county shall be as
 142 follows:

143		
144	COUNTY	TOTAL
145	(9) Citrus.....	<u>2</u> ±

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- 146 (12) Columbia.....2 ±
- 147 (17) Flagler.....2 ±
- 148 (28) Hillsborough.....19 ~~17~~
- 149 Section 5. This act shall take effect July 1, 2018.