

The Florida Senate
BILL ANALYSIS AND FISCAL IMPACT STATEMENT

(This document is based on the provisions contained in the legislation as of the latest date listed below.)

Prepared By: The Professional Staff of the Committee on Judiciary

BILL: SB 118

INTRODUCER: Senator Gruters

SUBJECT: Security in Trial Court Facilities

DATE: September 16, 2019

REVISED: _____

	ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR	REFERENCE	ACTION
1.	Stallard	Cibula	JU	Favorable
2.	_____	_____	ACJ	_____
3.	_____	_____	AP	_____

I. Summary:

SB 118 addresses the decision-making authority and responsibilities of two constitutional officers, the chief judge of a circuit court and the county sheriff, in providing court security. In a recent case before the Second District Court of Appeal, the court resolved the competing claims of authority and responsibility at issue in the case by holding that a chief circuit judge may require a sheriff in the circuit, because the sheriff is an officer of the court, to comply with the judge's order requiring the sheriff to provide security at court facilities.

The bill reiterates that sheriffs are officers of the court, and requires each sheriff to coordinate with his or her local chief judge and county commissioners in developing a court security plan. However, the bill provides that sheriffs retain authority to implement and provide law enforcement services associated with the plan. Finally, the bill provides that the chief judge retains decision-making authority to carry out his or her administrative functions concerning the protection of due process rights and the scheduling and conduct of trials and other judicial proceedings.

II. Present Situation:

Context: A 2017 District Court of Appeal Opinion

In 2017, a controversy arose regarding the authority of the Chief Judge of the Twelfth Circuit to require the Sarasota County Sheriff to provide security at certain court facilities.¹ This culminated in a District Court of Appeal Opinion in which the Court held that a chief circuit judge may compel the sheriffs of his or her circuit to provide security at all court facilities, including those at which no sessions of court (such as trials or hearings) are held.²

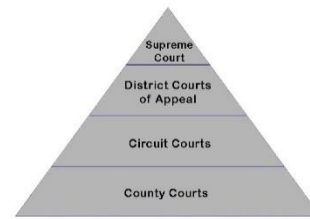
¹ See generally *Knight v. Chief Judge of Florida's Twelfth Judicial Circuit*, 235 So. 3d 996 (Fla. 2d DCA 2017).

² *Id.*

Florida's Court System

The Florida Constitution vests all judicial power in:

- The supreme court;
- The district courts of appeal;
- The circuit courts; and
- The county courts.³



The Constitution provides that “[n]o other courts may be established by the state, any political subdivision or any municipality.”⁴

Court System Administration

The Constitution vests the Florida Supreme Court with broad authority to administer the state courts system and establish court rules of procedure.⁵ The chief justice of the Florida Supreme Court is constitutionally designated as the “chief administrative officer of the judicial system.”⁶ The Constitution also directs that a chief judge be chosen for each district court of appeal and each circuit court.⁷

Chief Judge of the Circuit Court

The chief judge of the circuit court has administrative supervision responsibility for the circuit court, as well as the county courts within his or her circuit.⁸ Currently, there are 20 judicial circuits and 67 county courts, one in each of Florida’s 67 counties,⁹ as constitutionally required.¹⁰

The following maps illustrate the territorial jurisdictions of the circuit and county courts. Note, some circuits contain multiple counties, particularly in North Florida; whereas, some circuits contain only one county, particularly in the larger metropolitan areas in Central and South Florida.¹¹

³ FLA. CONST. art. V., s. 1.

⁴ *Id.* (although the Constitution permits the Legislature to establish quasi-judicial, administrative courts and a civil traffic infraction hearing officer system).

⁵ FLA. CONST. art. V, s. 2(a).

⁶ FLA. CONST. art. V, s. 2(b).

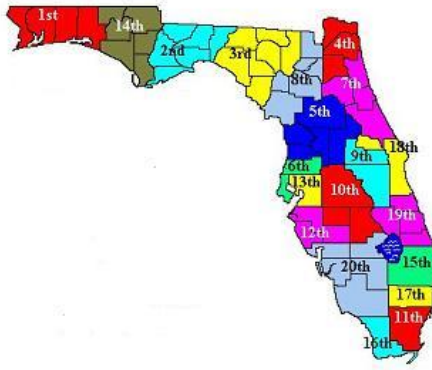
⁷ FLA. CONST. art. V, s. 2(c), (d).

⁸ FLA. CONST. art. V, s. 2(d). Additionally, the chief judge is constitutionally chosen “as provided by supreme court rule.” *Id.*

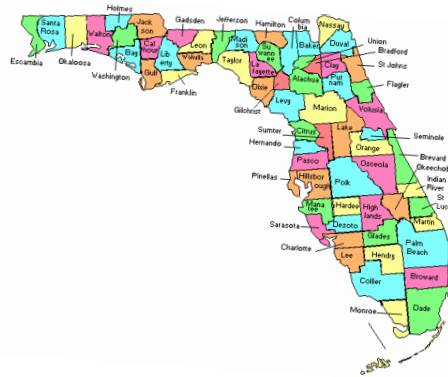
⁹ Florida Courts, *Court System Organization & Structure*, <http://www.flcourts.org/florida-courts/> (last visited Sept. 10, 2019).

¹⁰ FLA. CONST. art. V, s. 6(a) (“There shall be a county court in each county.”).

¹¹ Ron DeSantis, 46th Governor of Florida, Judicial and Judicial Nominating Commission Information, *The Florida Court System*, <https://www.flgov.com/judicial-and-judicial-nominating-commission-information/> (last visited Sept. 10, 2019).



Twenty Judicial Circuits



Sixty-Seven Counties

The chief judge exercises “administrative supervision over all the trial courts within the judicial circuit and over the judges and other officers of such courts.”¹² In exercising his or her responsibility, the chief judge has the power to:

- Assign judges to court divisions and determine the length of the assignment.
- Regulate the use of courtrooms.
- Supervise dockets and calendars.
- Require attendance of all other officers of the court.
- Do everything necessary to promote the prompt and efficient administration of justice in the courts.
- Delegate to the trial court administrator, by administrative order, the authority to bind the circuit in contract.
- Manage, operate, and oversee the jury system.
- Report data to the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court concerning the circuit’s caseload, status of dockets, disposition of cases, and other relevant information.
- Consult with the clerk of court to determine the priority of services provided by the clerk to the trial courts.¹³

County Responsibilities for Funding Court-Related Functions

Under Article V, s. 14 of the Florida Constitution, the state is responsible for most of the costs of the state courts system. However, the Constitution requires counties to:

[F]und the cost of communications services, existing radio systems, existing multi-agency criminal justice information systems, and the cost of construction or lease, maintenance, utilities, and *security of facilities for the trial courts, public defenders’ offices, state attorneys’ offices, and the offices of the clerks of the circuit and county courts performing court-related functions.*¹⁴

¹² Section 43.26, F.S.

¹³ *Id.*

¹⁴ Emphasis added.

The constitutional responsibility for counties to fund court-related functions is implemented in s. 29.008, F.S., which also defines many of the key terms from the constitutional provision above. Among these terms, s. 29.008(1)(a), F.S. defines “facility” as follows:

“Facility” means reasonable and necessary buildings and office space and appurtenant equipment and furnishings, structures, real estate, easements, and related interests in real estate, including, but not limited to, those for the purpose of housing legal materials for use by the general public and personnel, equipment, or functions of the circuit or county courts, public defenders’ offices, state attorneys’ offices, and court-related functions of the office of the clerks of the circuit and county courts and all storage. The term “facility” includes all wiring necessary for court reporting services. The term also includes access to parking for such facilities in connection with such court-related functions that may be available free or from a private provider or a local government for a fee. . . .

1. As of July 1, 2005, equipment and furnishings shall be limited to that appropriate and customary for courtrooms, hearing rooms, jury facilities, and other public areas in courthouses and any other facility occupied by the courts, state attorneys, public defenders, guardians ad litem, and criminal conflict and civil regional counsel. Court reporting equipment in these areas or facilities is not a responsibility of the county.

2. Equipment and furnishings under this paragraph in existence and owned by counties on July 1, 2005, except for that in the possession of the clerks, for areas other than courtrooms, hearing rooms, jury facilities, and other public areas in courthouses and any other facility occupied by the courts, state attorneys, and public defenders, shall be transferred to the state at no charge. This provision does not apply to any communications services as defined in paragraph (f).

Additionally, s. 29.008(1)(e), F.S. defines “security” as follows:

“Security” includes but is not limited to, all reasonable and necessary costs of services of *law enforcement officers or licensed security guards* and all electronic, cellular, or digital monitoring and screening devices necessary to ensure the safety and security of all persons visiting or working in a facility; to provide for security of the facility, including protection of property owned by the county or the state; and for security of prisoners brought to any facility. This includes bailiffs while providing courtroom and other security for each judge and other quasi-judicial officers.¹⁵

Sheriffs

Sheriffs are constitutional county officers.¹⁶ As a constitutional officer, a sheriff exercises independent authority and discretion in carrying out his or her various duties and in appointing and disciplining deputies.¹⁷ The sheriff’s duties include, among other things, conserving the county peace by suppressing riots and making arrests as necessary; and executing process on

¹⁵ Emphasis added.

¹⁶ FLA. CONST. art. VIII, s. (d).

¹⁷ See generally *Demings v. Orange County Citizens Review Bd.*, 15 So. 3d 604, 610–11 (Fla. 5th DCA 2009).

behalf of the Florida Supreme Court, circuit courts, county courts, and board of county commissioners in the sheriff's county.¹⁸

Sheriffs' Courtroom Duties

The sheriff is “the executive officer of the circuit court of the county.”¹⁹ Accordingly, the sheriff or his or her deputies must execute all service of court process in both civil and criminal matters and attend all sessions of court.²⁰ In attending all sessions of court, the sheriff or his or her deputies serve as bailiffs and take charge of the jury, carry out service of process, keep order, and so forth. And it is the sheriff, not the chief judge, who appoints any deputy to serve as a bailiff in a courtroom.²¹

Beyond the Courtroom: Security in other Court Facilities

Although sheriffs and their deputies are required to serve as bailiffs in the courtrooms around the state, unless contracted to do so with the county government, the sheriffs are not constitutionally or statutorily required to take responsibility for the security of all court facilities. Rather, county governments are responsible to provide for and fund security for court facilities and, as set out in s. 29.008(1)(e), F.S., security may be provided by “law enforcement officers” such as municipal police officers,²² or “licensed security guards.”

III. Effect of Proposed Changes:

This bill addresses the decision-making authority and responsibilities of two constitutional officers, the chief judge of a circuit court and the county sheriff, in providing court security. In a recent case before the Second District Court of Appeal, the court resolved the competing claims of authority and responsibility at issue in the case by holding that a chief circuit judge may require a sheriff in the circuit, because the sheriff is an officer of the court, to comply with the judge's order requiring the sheriff to provide security at court facilities.

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The bill is effective July 1, 2020.

¹⁸ See generally s. 30.15, F.S.

¹⁹ Section 26.49, F.S. See also s. 34.07, F.S. (sheriff is executive officer of county courts).

²⁰ Section 30.15(1)(a)-(c), F.S.

²¹ *State ex rel. Wainwright v. Booth*, 291 So. 2d 74, 76–77 (Fla. 2d DCA 1974), writ discharged sub nom. *Booth v. Wainwright*, 300 So. 2d 257 (Fla. 1974).

²² Section 943.10(1), F.S. (“Law enforcement officer means any person who is elected, appointed, or employed full time by any municipality or the state or any political subdivision thereof; who is vested with authority to bear arms and make arrests; and whose primary responsibility is the prevention and detection of crime or the enforcement of the penal, criminal, traffic, or highway laws of the state”).

IV. Constitutional Issues:**A. Municipality/County Mandates Restrictions:**

This bill does not require counties or municipalities to spend funds or limit their authority to raise revenue or receive state-shared revenues as specified in Article VII, s. 18 of the Florida Constitution.

B. Public Records/Open Meetings Issues:

None.

C. Trust Funds Restrictions:

None.

D. State Tax or Fee Increases:

None.

E. Other Constitutional Issues:

None identified.

V. Fiscal Impact Statement:**A. Tax/Fee Issues:**

None.

B. Private Sector Impact:

None.

C. Government Sector Impact:

The bill's "Government Sector" fiscal impact is indeterminate. As the primary funding source for the sheriffs, the county commissioners are required to assist in the development of the comprehensive security plan.

VI. Technical Deficiencies:

None.

VII. Related Issues:

None.

VIII. Statutes Affected:

This bill substantially amends section 30.15 of the Florida Statutes.

IX. Additional Information:

A. Committee Substitute – Statement of Changes:

(Summarizing differences between the Committee Substitute and the prior version of the bill.)

None.

B. Amendments:

None.

This Senate Bill Analysis does not reflect the intent or official position of the bill's introducer or the Florida Senate.
