

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES STAFF FINAL BILL ANALYSIS

BILL #: CS/HB 131 Security in Trial Court Facilities

SPONSOR(S): Judiciary Committee, McClain and others

TIED BILLS: **IDEN./SIM. BILLS:** SB 118

FINAL HOUSE FLOOR ACTION: 118 Y's 0 N's **GOVERNOR'S ACTION:** Approved

SUMMARY ANALYSIS

CS/HB 131 passed the House on February 20, 2020, and subsequently passed the Senate on March 10, 2020.

The Florida Constitution creates the offices of county sheriff and chief judge of each judicial circuit. The Constitution requires each sheriff, within his or her county, to:

- Execute all process of the courts and board of county commissioners;
- Execute all orders of the board of county commissioners;
- Execute writs, processes, warrants, and papers;
- Act as conservators of the peace and apprehend any person disturbing the peace;
- Suppress riots and unlawful assemblies;
- Attend all board meetings at the request of the board of county commissioners; and
- Attend all sessions of the circuit court and county court.

The Constitution authorizes the chief judge of each judicial circuit to:

- Assign judges;
- Regulate the use of courtrooms;
- Supervise dockets and calendars;
- Require attendance of state attorneys, public defenders, clerks, bailiffs, and other officers of the court;
- Delegate to the trial court administrator the authority to bind the circuit in contract;
- Promote the prompt and efficient administration of justice; and
- Manage, operate, and oversee the jury system.

In 2017, a chief judge ordered the local sheriff to provide security for court facilities where no court sessions were held. The sheriff challenged the order, arguing that s. 30.15, F.S., which sets out the powers, duties, and obligations of the sheriff, requires the sheriff to provide court security only within the four corners of a courtroom. The Second District Court of Appeal disagreed and ruled in favor of the chief judge.

The bill amends s. 30.15, F.S., to require each county sheriff to coordinate with the board of county commissioners and the chief judge of the judicial circuit to develop a comprehensive security plan for trial court facilities. The sheriff retains authority over the implementation of security, and the chief judge retains decision-making authority to protect due process rights.

The bill clarifies that sheriffs and their deputies, employees, and contractors are officers of the court when providing security for court facilities.

The bill does not appear to have a fiscal impact on state government. The fiscal impact to local governments is indeterminate.

The bill was approved by the Governor on June 27, 2020, ch. 2020-100 L.O.F., and will become effective on July 1, 2020.

I. SUBSTANTIVE INFORMATION

A. EFFECT OF CHANGES:

Background

County Sheriffs

The Florida Constitution establishes five specific county officers, including the county sheriff.¹ Each sheriff is elected by county voters for a four-year term.² Abolishing the office of sheriff or revising the manner in which the sheriff is chosen may be provided by county charter or special law approved by a vote of the electors of the county under certain circumstances.³

Section 30.15, F.S., provides for the powers and duties of sheriffs. Within their respective counties, sheriffs must, in person or by deputy, among other duties:

- Execute all process of the courts and board of county commissioners;
- Execute all orders of the board of county commissioners;
- Execute writs, processes, warrants, and papers;
- Act as conservators of the peace and apprehend any person disturbing the peace;
- Suppress riots and unlawful assemblies;
- Attend all board meetings at the request of the board of county commissioners; and
- Attend all sessions of the circuit court and county court.⁴

The sheriff is the executive officer of the county court and circuit court of the county.⁵ If a sheriff fails to attend a session of the court, either in person or by deputy, the judge may appoint an interim sheriff to assume the sheriff's responsibilities and duties.⁶

Judicial Administration

The Florida Constitution provides that the chief judge of each judicial circuit is responsible for the administrative supervision of the circuit courts and county courts in the circuit.⁷ The chief judge has authority to:

- Assign judges;
- Regulate the use of courtrooms;
- Supervise dockets and calendars;
- Require attendance of state attorneys, public defenders, clerks, bailiffs, and other officers of the court;
- Delegate to the trial court administrator the authority to bind the circuit in contract;
- Promote the prompt and efficient administration of justice; and
- Manage, operate, and oversee the jury system.⁸

Failure of any judge, clerk, prosecutor, public defender, or other officer of the court to comply with an order or directive of the chief judge under s. 43.26, F.S., constitutes neglect of duty.⁹ Additionally, the Florida Rules of Judicial Administration provide that the chief judge regulates the use of court facilities

¹ Art. VIII, s. 1(d), Fla. Const.

² *Id.*

³ *Id.*

⁴ S. 30.15, F.S.

⁵ Ss. 26.49 and 34.07, F.S.

⁶ S. 30.12, F.S.

⁷ Art. V, s. 2(d), Fla. Const.

⁸ S. 43.26, F.S.; *see also* s. 40.001, F.S.

⁹ S. 43.26(4), F.S.

and directs the formation and implementation of policies and priorities for the operation of all courts and officers within the circuit.¹⁰

Article V of the Florida Constitution allocates funding for the judicial branch between the state and the counties. Article V requires counties to fund:

- The cost of communications services;
- Existing radio systems;
- Existing multi-agency criminal justice information systems;
- Reasonable and necessary salaries, costs, and expenses of the state courts system to meet local requirements as determined by general law; and
- The cost of construction or lease, maintenance, utilities, and security of facilities for the:
 - Trial courts;
 - Public defenders' offices;
 - State attorneys' offices; and
 - Offices of the clerks of the circuit and county courts performing court-related functions.

Court Challenge

In 2017, the chief judge of the Twelfth Judicial Circuit issued an administrative order requiring the local sheriff to provide security for court facilities where no court sessions were held.¹¹ The sheriff challenged the order as exceeding the chief judge's authority and encroaching on the sheriff's constitutional authority. The sheriff argued that s. 30.15, F.S., which compels the sheriff to attend all sessions of court, only requires the sheriff to provide security within the four corners of a courtroom.

The Second District Court of Appeal (DCA) disagreed with the sheriff and ruled in favor of the chief judge, holding that the chief judge's responsibility to promote the administration of justice included the power to issue the order.¹² The DCA reasoned that the chief judge's authority under s. 43.26, F.S., and Rule of Judicial Administration 2.215 extends beyond the literal four corners of a courtroom where sessions are held. The DCA also cited article V of the Florida Constitution and s. 29.008, F.S., which require counties to fund trial court security.¹³ According to the DCA, the chief judge's responsibility to promote the administration of justice includes the power to issue an administrative order directing the sheriff to secure court facilities.

Effect of the Bill

The bill amends s. 30.15, F.S., to require each county sheriff to coordinate with the board of county commissioners and the chief judge of the judicial circuit to develop a comprehensive security plan for trial court facilities. The sheriff retains authority over the implementation and provision of law enforcement services under the plan. The chief judge retains decision-making authority to protect due process rights, such as in the scheduling and conduct of judicial proceedings.

The bill clarifies that sheriffs and their deputies, employees, and contractors are officers of the court when providing security for court facilities.

¹⁰ Fla. R. Jud. Admin. 2.215(b).

¹¹ *In re Security and Operations of Court Facilities*, Twelfth Judicial Circuit Admin. Order 2017-4.2 (Mar. 2, 2017).

¹² *Knight v. Chief Judge of Florida's Twelfth Judicial Circuit*, 235 So. 3d 996 (Fla. 2d DCA 2017).

¹³ Art. V, s. 14(c), Fla. Const.; s. 29.008(1), F.S.

II. FISCAL ANALYSIS & ECONOMIC IMPACT STATEMENT

A. FISCAL IMPACT ON STATE GOVERNMENT:

1. Revenues:

None.

2. Expenditures:

None.

B. FISCAL IMPACT ON LOCAL GOVERNMENTS:

1. Revenues:

None.

2. Expenditures:

The bill's fiscal impact to local governments is indeterminate.

C. DIRECT ECONOMIC IMPACT ON PRIVATE SECTOR:

None.

D. FISCAL COMMENTS:

None.