

1 A bill to be entitled
 2 An act relating to courts; amending s. 26.20, F.S.;
 3 requiring each judicial circuit to have a circuit
 4 judge available at all times to hold and conduct
 5 hearings with limited notice; amending s. 44.103,
 6 F.S.; removing a limitation on arbitrator compensation
 7 in court-ordered, nonbinding arbitration; amending s.
 8 92.50, F.S.; providing an alternate method for
 9 authentication of oaths, affidavits, or
 10 acknowledgments taken or administered by or before any
 11 judge; providing an effective date.

12
 13 Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:

14
 15 **Section 1. Section 26.20, Florida Statutes, is amended to**
 16 **read:**

17 26.20 Availability of judge for hearings ~~in chambers. In~~
 18 ~~circuits having more than one circuit judge,~~ At least one
 19 circuit judge in each circuit ~~of said judges~~ shall be available
 20 ~~as nearly as possible~~ at all times to hold and conduct hearings
 21 with limited notice ~~in chambers~~. In each circuit, there must be
 22 at least one judge available on Saturdays, Sundays, holidays,
 23 and after hours on weekdays to hear motions for a temporary
 24 injunction ex parte in domestic violence cases. The chief judge
 25 may assign a judge for this purpose.

CODING: Words **stricken** are deletions; words underlined are additions.

26 **Section 2. Subsection (3) of section 44.103, Florida**
 27 **Statutes, is amended to read:**

28 44.103 Court-ordered, nonbinding arbitration.—

29 (3) Arbitrators shall be selected and compensated in
 30 accordance with rules adopted by the Supreme Court. Arbitrators
 31 shall be compensated by the parties, or, upon a finding by the
 32 court that a party is indigent, an arbitrator may be partially
 33 or fully compensated from state funds according to the party's
 34 present ability to pay. ~~At no time may an arbitrator charge more~~
 35 ~~than \$1,500 per diem, unless the parties agree otherwise.~~ Prior
 36 to approving the use of state funds to reimburse an arbitrator,
 37 the court must ensure that the party reimburses the portion of
 38 the total cost that the party is immediately able to pay and
 39 that the party has agreed to a payment plan established by the
 40 clerk of the court that will fully reimburse the state for the
 41 balance of all state costs for both the arbitrator and any costs
 42 of administering the payment plan and any collection efforts
 43 that may be necessary in the future. Whenever possible,
 44 qualified individuals who have volunteered their time to serve
 45 as arbitrators shall be appointed. If an arbitration program is
 46 funded pursuant to s. 44.108, volunteer arbitrators shall be
 47 entitled to be reimbursed pursuant to s. 112.061 for all actual
 48 expenses necessitated by service as an arbitrator.

49 **Section 3. Subsection (1) of section 92.50, Florida**
 50 **Statutes, is amended to read:**

51 92.50 Oaths, affidavits, and acknowledgments; who may take
52 or administer; requirements.—

53 (1) IN THIS STATE.—Oaths, affidavits, and acknowledgments
54 required or authorized under the laws of this state, except ~~except~~
55 oaths to jurors and witnesses in court and such other oaths,
56 affidavits and acknowledgments as are required by law to be
57 taken or administered by or before particular officers, may ~~may~~ be
58 taken or administered by or before any judge, clerk, or deputy
59 clerk of any court of record within this state, including
60 federal courts, or by or before any United States commissioner
61 or any notary public within this state. The jurat, or
62 certificate of proof or acknowledgment, shall be authenticated
63 by the signature and official seal of such officer or person
64 taking or administering the same; however, when taken or
65 administered by or before any judge, clerk, or deputy clerk of a
66 court of record, the seal of such court may be affixed as the
67 seal of such officer or person. The jurat, or certificate of
68 proof or acknowledgment, may also be authenticated by a judge by
69 affixing his or her signature and printing his or her name,
70 title, and court.

71 **Section 4.** This act shall take effect July 1, 2025.