

House Bill 742 (AS PASSED HOUSE AND SENATE)

By: Representatives Nix of the 69th, Cooke of the 18th, Stover of the 71st, Pezold of the 133rd, Epps of the 132nd, and others

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED
AN ACT

To amend Code Section 15-6-2 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to the number of superior court judges for each judicial circuit, so as to provide for an additional judge of the Coweta Judicial Circuit and the Waycross Judicial Circuit; to provide for the initial appointment of such judges by the Governor; to provide for the election and terms of office of such judges; to provide for powers, duties, and responsibilities of each such judge; to provide for related matters; to provide for effective dates; to repeal conflicting laws; and for other purposes.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF GEORGIA:

PART I

SECTION 1-1.

Code Section 15-6-2 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to the number of superior court judges each judicial circuit, is amended by revising paragraph (14) as follows:

"(14) Coweta Circuit 6 7"

SECTION 1-2.

One additional judge of the superior court is added to the Coweta Judicial Circuit, thereby increasing to seven the number of judges of such circuit.

SECTION 1-3.

Such additional judge shall be appointed by the Governor for a term beginning July 1, 2014, and continuing through December 31, 2016, and until his or her successor is elected and qualified. His or her successor shall be elected in the manner provided by law for the election of judges of the superior courts of this state at the nonpartisan judicial election in 2016, for a term of four years beginning on January 1, 2017, and until his or her successor is elected and qualified. Future successors shall be elected at the nonpartisan judicial

election each four years after such election for terms of four years and until their successors are elected and qualified. They shall take office on the first day of January following the date of the election.

SECTION 1-4.

The additional judge of the superior courts of the Coweta Judicial Circuit shall have and may exercise all powers, duties, dignity, jurisdiction, privileges, and immunities of the present judges of the superior courts of this state. Any of the judges of the Coweta Judicial Circuit may preside over any cause, whether in their own or in other circuits, and perform any official act as judge thereof, including sitting on appellate courts as provided by law.

SECTION 1-5.

The qualifications of such additional judge and his or her successors shall be the same as are now provided by law for all other superior court judges, and his or her compensation, salary, and expense allowance from the State of Georgia and from the counties composing the Coweta Judicial Circuit shall be the same as are now provided by law for the other superior court judges of such circuit. The provisions, if any, enacted for the supplementation by the counties of such circuit of the salary of the judges of the superior courts of the Coweta Judicial Circuit shall also be applicable to the additional judge provided for by this Act.

SECTION 1-6.

All writs and processes in the superior courts of the Coweta Judicial Circuit shall be returnable to the terms of such superior courts as they are now fixed and provided by law, or as they may hereafter be fixed or determined by law, and all terms of such courts shall be held in the same manner as though there were but one judge, it being the intent and purpose of this Act to provide seven judges equal in jurisdiction and authority to attend and perform the functions, powers, and duties of the judges of such superior courts and to direct and conduct all hearings and trials in such courts.

SECTION 1-7.

The drawing and impaneling of all jurors, whether grand, petit, or special, may be by any of the judges of the superior courts of such circuit; and they, or any one of them, shall have full power and authority to draw and impanel jurors for service in such courts so as to have jurors for the trial of cases before any of such judges separately or before each of them at the same time.

SECTION 1-8.

The seven judges of the superior courts of the Coweta Judicial Circuit shall be authorized and empowered to appoint an additional court reporter for such circuit, whose compensation shall be as now or hereafter provided by law.

SECTION 1-9.

All writs, processes, orders, subpoenas, and any other official paper issuing out of the superior courts of the Coweta Judicial Circuit may bear teste in the name of any judge of the Coweta Judicial Circuit and, when issued by and in the name of any judge of such circuit, shall be fully valid and may be heard and determined before the same or any other judge of such circuit. Any judge of such circuit may preside over any case therein and perform any official act as judge thereof.

SECTION 1-10.

Upon request of any judge of the circuit, the governing authorities of the counties composing the Coweta Judicial Circuit shall be authorized to furnish the judges of such circuit with suitable courtrooms and facilities, office space, telephones, furniture, office equipment, supplies, and such personnel as may be considered necessary by the court to the proper function of the court. All of the expenditures authorized in this Act are declared to be an expense of the court and payable out of the county treasury as such.

SECTION 1-11.

Nothing in this Act shall be deemed to limit or restrict the inherent powers, duties, and responsibilities of superior court judges provided by the Constitution and statutes of the State of Georgia.

PART II

SECTION 2-1.

Code Section 15-6-2 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to the number of superior court judges for each judicial circuit, is amended by revising paragraph (41) as follows:

"(41) Waycross Circuit 3 4"

SECTION 2-2.

A new judge of the superior court is added to the Waycross Judicial Circuit, thereby increasing to four the number of judges of such circuit.

SECTION 2-3.

The initial judge appointed as provided by this Act shall be appointed by the Governor for a term beginning July 1, 2014, and expiring December 31, 2016, and until a successor is elected and qualified. A successor to the initial judge shall be elected in a manner provided by Code Section 21-2-138 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated for the election of judges of the superior courts of this state in 2016 for a term of four years beginning on January 1, 2017, and until the election and qualification of a successor. Future successors shall be elected each four years thereafter as provided by Code Section 21-2-138 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated for terms of four years and until the election and qualification of a successor. They shall take office on the first day of January following the date of the election. Such elections shall be held and conducted in a manner provided by law for the election of judges of the superior courts of this state.

SECTION 2-4.

Such additional judge shall have and may exercise all powers, duties, dignity, jurisdiction, privileges, and immunities of the present judges of the superior courts of this state. Any of the judges of the superior court of such circuit may preside over any case therein and perform any official act as judge thereof.

SECTION 2-5.

Every person who offers for nomination and election as one of the judges of the superior courts of the Waycross Judicial Circuit shall designate with the state party authority in all state primaries and with the proper authority in all general elections the specific place for which he or she offers by naming the incumbent judge whom he or she desires to succeed; and thereupon he or she shall be qualified, if otherwise qualified, to run for such specific judgeship and no other. In the event there is no incumbent judge in the place for which he or she desires to offer, the candidate shall qualify by announcing his or her intention to run for the office for which there is no incumbent.

SECTION 2-6.

The qualifications of such additional judge and his or her successors shall be the same as are now provided by law for all other superior court judges; and his or her compensation, salary, and expense allowance from the State of Georgia and from the counties of such circuit shall be the same as that of the other judges of the superior courts of the Waycross Judicial Circuit. The provisions, if any, heretofore enacted for the supplementation by the counties of such circuit of the salaries of the judges of the superior courts of the Waycross Judicial Circuit shall also be applicable to the additional judge provided for by this Act.

SECTION 2-7.

All writs and processes in the superior courts of the Waycross Judicial Circuit shall be returnable to the terms of such superior court as they are now fixed and provided by law, or as they may hereafter be fixed or determined by law; and all terms of such courts shall be held in the same manner as though there were but one judge, it being the intent and purpose of this Act to provide judges coequal in jurisdiction and authority to attend to and perform the functions, powers, and duties of the judges of such superior courts and to direct and conduct all hearings and trials in such courts.

SECTION 2-8.

The judges of the superior courts of the Waycross Judicial Circuit of Georgia in transacting the business of such courts and in performing their duties and responsibilities shall share, divide, and allocate the work and duties to be performed by each. In the event of any disagreement among such judges in any respect hereof, the decision of the senior judge in point of service, who shall be known as the chief judge, shall be controlling. The judge with the longest period of time of service shall be the senior judge. The chief judge shall have the right to appoint referees of the juvenile courts of the counties composing such circuit; and, in the event a juvenile court is established in any of such counties within such circuit, as provided by law, the chief judge shall appoint the judge of such court as provided by law. The judges of the superior courts of the Waycross Judicial Circuit shall have, and they are hereby clothed with, full power, authority, and discretion to determine from time to time, and term to term, the manner of calling the dockets and fixing the calendars and order of business in such courts. They may assign to one of such judges the hearing of trials by jury for a term, and the hearing of all other matters not requiring a trial by a jury to one of the other judges; and they may rotate such order of business at the next term. They may conduct trials by jury at the same time in the same county or otherwise within such circuit, or they may hear chambers business and motion business at the same time at any place within such circuit. They may provide in all respects for holding the superior courts of such circuit so as to facilitate the hearing and determination of all the business of such courts at any time pending and ready for trial or hearing. In all such matters relating to the manner of fixing, arranging for, and disposing of the business of such courts, and making appointments as authorized by law where the judges thereof cannot agree or shall differ, the opinion or order of the chief judge as hereinbefore defined shall control.

SECTION 2-9.

The drawing and empaneling of all jurors, whether grand, petit, or special, may be by each of the judges of the superior courts of such circuit; and they, or each of them, shall have full

power and authority to draw and empanel jurors for service in such courts so as to have jurors for the trial of cases before each of such judges separately or before each of them at the same time.

SECTION 2-10.

The judges of the Waycross Judicial Circuit shall be authorized and empowered to appoint an additional court reporter for such circuit, whose compensation shall be as now or hereafter provided by law.

SECTION 2-11.

All writs, processes, orders, subpoenas, and any other official paper issuing out of the superior courts of the Waycross Judicial Circuit may bear teste in the name of any judge of the Waycross Judicial Circuit and, when issued by and in the name of any judge of such circuit, shall be fully valid and may be heard and determined before the same or any other judge of such circuit. Any judge of such court may preside over any cause therein and perform any official act as judge thereof.

SECTION 2-12.

Upon request of any judge of the circuit, the governing authorities of the counties composing the Waycross Judicial Circuit are hereby authorized to furnish the judges of such circuit with suitable courtrooms and facilities, office space, telephones, furniture, office equipment, supplies, and such personnel as may be considered necessary by the court to the proper function of the court. All of the expenditures authorized herein are hereby declared to be an expense of court and payable out of the county treasury as such.

SECTION 2-13.

Nothing herein enumerated shall be deemed to limit or restrict the inherent powers, duties, and responsibilities of superior court judges provided by the Constitution and statutes of the State of Georgia.

PART III

SECTION 3-1.

(a) For purposes of making the initial appointment of the judges to fill the superior court judgeships created by this Act, this Act shall become effective upon its approval by the Governor or upon its becoming law without such approval.

(b) For all other purposes, this Act shall become effective on July 1, 2014.

186

SECTION 3-2.

187

All laws and parts of laws in conflict with this Act are repealed.