

SENATE BILL 2011

By Bell

AN ACT to amend Tennessee Code Annotated, Title 8;
Title 16; Title 17 and Title 18, relative to judicial
districts.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE:

SECTION 1. Tennessee Code Annotated, Title 16, Chapter 2, Part 5, is amended by
adding the following new section:

(a)

(1) By no later than July 1, 2031, and every tenth July 1 thereafter, the
speaker of the senate and the speaker of the house of representatives shall
establish an advisory task force to review the composition of Tennessee's current
judicial districts codified at § 16-2-506.

(2) The task force shall be composed of eleven (11) members, as
follows:

(A) Three (3) current trial court judges, one (1) representing each
grand division, appointed by joint action of the speaker of the senate and
speaker of the house of representatives;

(B) Three (3) current district attorneys general, one (1)
representing each grand division, appointed by joint action of the speaker
of the senate and speaker of the house of representatives;

(C) Three (3) current district public defenders, one (1)
representing each grand division, appointed by the joint action of the
speaker of the senate and speaker of the house of representatives; and

(D) Two (2) citizen members, one (1) appointed by each speaker.

The citizen members must reside in different grand divisions.

(3) The speakers shall jointly designate one (1) of the members to serve as chair of the task force.

(4) By no later than January 1 following creation of the task force, the task force shall complete its findings and recommend and publish a proposed statewide judicial redistricting plan. The plan must provide reasonable and timely access to Tennessee's circuit, chancery, and criminal courts and must promote the efficient utilization of publicly funded resources allocated for the courts.

(5) Prior to completing its findings and recommending this plan, the task force shall conduct at least one (1) public hearing within each of the three (3) grand divisions and shall receive oral and written testimony from interested organizations and citizens of this state. In addition, the task force shall establish a publicly accessible judicial redistricting task force page on the website of the administrative office of the courts for redistricting-related information, including meeting notices and redistricting plans.

(6) The task force shall deliver a report of its findings, as well as its proposed judicial redistricting plan, to the governor, the speakers of the senate and house of representatives, the judiciary committee of the senate, the civil justice committee of the house of representatives, and the administrative office of the courts at least one (1) week prior to publication of the proposed judicial redistricting plan.

(7) The administrative office of the courts shall provide support services to the task force created under this section.

(8) The members of the task force shall serve without compensation but are entitled to reimbursement of travel expenses incurred. All reimbursement for travel expenses must be in conformity with the comprehensive state travel regulations as promulgated by the commissioner of finance and administration and approved by the attorney general and reporter.

(9) The task force ceases to exist upon completion of the task force's report and recommendations.

(b) On or before December 31 following submission of a proposed redistricting plan, it is the duty of the general assembly to:

(1) Reapportion the judicial districts codified at § 16-2-506 to provide reasonable and timely access to Tennessee's circuit, chancery, and criminal courts; and

(2) Promote the efficient utilization of publicly funded resources allocated for the courts.

(c) If the legislature fails to pass legislation required by subsection (b), then the funding for each judicial district that has a disproportionately high number of judges, as determined by the comptroller, must be reduced by ten percent (10%) during the subsequent fiscal year; provided, that this subsection (c) is subject to appropriations in the general appropriations act. The comptroller shall determine which judicial districts have a disproportionately high number of judges based on the most recent census data and the weighted caseload report required by § 16-2-513 and provide the determination to the finance, ways and means committees of the house of representatives and senate.

SECTION 2. This act is not an appropriation of funds, and funds must not be obligated or expended pursuant to this act unless the funds are specifically appropriated by the general appropriations act.

SECTION 3. This act takes effect upon becoming a law, the public welfare requiring it.