

Senate Bill No. 557

(By Senators Cookman and Unger)

[Introduced February 12, 2014; referred to the Committee on the
Judiciary; and then to the Committee on Finance.]

**FISCAL
NOTE**

A BILL to amend and reenact §51-2-1 of the Code of West Virginia,
1931, as amended, relating to authorizing an additional
circuit court judge for the twenty-third judicial circuit
consisting of Berkeley, Jefferson and Morgan counties.

Be it enacted by the Legislature of West Virginia:

That §51-2-1 of the Code of West Virginia, 1931, as amended,
be amended and reenacted to read as follows:

ARTICLE 2. CIRCUIT COURTS; CIRCUIT JUDGES.

**§51-2-1. Judicial circuits; terms of office; legislative findings
and declarations; elections; terms of court.**

(a) The state shall be divided into the following judicial
circuits with the following number of judges:

(1) The counties of Brooke, Hancock and Ohio shall constitute
the first circuit and shall have four judges;

1 (2) The counties of Marshall, Tyler and Wetzel shall
2 constitute the second circuit and shall have two judges;

3 (3) The counties of Doddridge, Pleasants and Ritchie shall
4 constitute the third circuit and shall have one judge;

5 (4) The counties of Wood and Wirt shall constitute the fourth
6 circuit and shall have three judges;

7 (5) The counties of Calhoun, Jackson, Mason and Roane shall
8 constitute the fifth circuit and shall have two judges;

9 (6) The county of Cabell shall constitute the sixth circuit
10 and shall have four judges;

11 (7) The county of Logan shall constitute the seventh circuit
12 and shall have two judges;

13 (8) The county of McDowell shall constitute the eighth circuit
14 and shall have two judges;

15 (9) The county of Mercer shall constitute the ninth circuit
16 and shall have three judges;

17 (10) The county of Raleigh shall constitute the tenth circuit
18 and shall have three judges;

19 (11) The counties of Greenbrier and Pocahontas shall
20 constitute the eleventh circuit and shall have two judges;

21 (12) The county of Fayette shall constitute the twelfth
22 circuit and shall have two judges;

23 (13) The county of Kanawha shall constitute the thirteenth

1 circuit and shall have seven judges;

2 (14) The counties of Braxton, Clay, Gilmer and Webster shall
3 constitute the fourteenth circuit and shall have two judges;

4 (15) The county of Harrison shall constitute the fifteenth
5 circuit and shall have three judges;

6 (16) The county of Marion shall constitute the sixteenth
7 circuit and shall have two judges;

8 (17) The county of Monongalia shall constitute the seventeenth
9 circuit and shall have two judges: *Provided*, That effective July
10 1, 2009, said circuit court shall have three judges.

11 (18) The county of Preston shall constitute the eighteenth
12 circuit and shall have one judge;

13 (19) The counties of Barbour and Taylor shall constitute the
14 nineteenth circuit and shall have one judge;

15 (20) The county of Randolph shall constitute the twentieth
16 circuit and shall have one judge;

17 (21) The counties of Grant, Mineral and Tucker shall
18 constitute the twenty-first circuit and shall have two judges;

19 (22) The counties of Hampshire, Hardy and Pendleton shall
20 constitute the twenty-second circuit and shall have two judges;

21 (23) The counties of Berkeley, Jefferson and Morgan shall
22 constitute the twenty-third circuit and shall have ~~five~~ six judges;

23 (24) The county of Wayne shall constitute the twenty-fourth

1 circuit and shall have two judges;

2 (25) The counties of Lincoln and Boone shall constitute the
3 twenty-fifth circuit and shall have two judges;

4 (26) The counties of Lewis and Upshur shall constitute the
5 twenty-sixth circuit and shall have one judge;

6 (27) The county of Wyoming shall constitute the twenty-seventh
7 circuit and shall have one judge;

8 (28) The county of Nicholas shall constitute the twenty-eighth
9 circuit and shall have one judge;

10 (29) The county of Putnam shall constitute the twenty-ninth
11 circuit and shall have two judges;

12 (30) The county of Mingo shall constitute the thirtieth
13 circuit and shall have one judge; and

14 (31) The counties of Monroe and Summers shall constitute the
15 thirty-first circuit and shall have one judge.

16 (b) The Kanawha County circuit court shall be a court of
17 concurrent jurisdiction with each single judge circuit where the
18 sitting judge in the single judge circuit is unavailable by reason
19 of sickness, vacation or other reason.

20 (c) Any judge in office on the effective date of the
21 reenactment of this section shall continue as a judge of the
22 circuit as constituted under prior enactments of this section,
23 unless sooner removed or retired as provided by law, until December

1 31, 2008.

2 (d) The term of office of all circuit court judges shall be
3 for eight years. The term of office for all circuit court judges
4 elected during the general election conducted in the year 2008
5 shall commence on January 1, 2009, and end on December 31, 2016.

6 (e) For election purposes, in every judicial circuit having
7 two or more judges there shall be numbered divisions corresponding
8 to the number of circuit judges in each circuit. Each judge shall
9 be elected at large from the entire circuit. In each numbered
10 division of a judicial circuit, the candidates for nomination or
11 election shall be voted upon and the votes cast for the candidates
12 in each division shall be tallied separately from the votes cast
13 for candidates in other numbered divisions within the circuit. The
14 candidate receiving the highest number of the votes cast within a
15 numbered division shall be nominated or elected, as the case may
16 be.

17 (f) Judges serving a judicial circuit comprised of four or
18 more counties with two or more judges ~~shall~~ may not be residents of
19 the same county.

20 (g) The Supreme Court of Appeals shall, by rule, establish the
21 terms of court of circuit judges.

NOTE: The purpose of this bill is to authorize an additional

circuit court judge for the twenty-third Judicial Circuit consisting of Berkeley, Jefferson and Morgan counties.

Strike-throughs indicate language that would be stricken from the present law, and underscoring indicates new language that would be added.