

The Senate Committee on Judiciary offered the following substitute to SB 9:

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED  
AN ACT

1 To create a new judicial circuit for the State of Georgia, to be known as the Columbia  
2 Judicial Circuit and to be composed of Columbia County; to provide for the judges and the  
3 district attorney of said new circuit and their terms, selection, and compensation; to transfer  
4 certain judges from the Augusta Judicial Circuit to the Columbia Judicial Circuit; to provide  
5 for the transfer of certain funds from the Augusta Judicial Circuit to the Columbia Judicial  
6 Circuit; to provide for and allocate circuit-wide costs and expenditures; to conform the  
7 county salary supplements for the judges of the Augusta Judicial Circuit; to amend Article 1  
8 of Chapter 6 of Title 15 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to general  
9 provisions regarding the superior courts, so as to revise the composition and terms of court  
10 of the Augusta Judicial Circuit; to provide for the composition, terms of court, and number  
11 of judges of the Columbia Judicial Circuit; to provide for related matters; to repeal  
12 conflicting laws; and for other purposes.

13 BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF GEORGIA:

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**PART I**  
**SECTION 1-1.**

16 Effective July 1, 2021, there is created a new judicial circuit of the superior courts of this  
17 state to be known as the Columbia Judicial Circuit, which circuit shall be composed of  
18 Columbia County. There shall be a district attorney and three judges of the Columbia  
19 Judicial Circuit. The offices of the judges and district attorney of the Columbia Judicial  
20 Circuit shall be subject to the following provisions:

21 (1) The district attorney of the Columbia Judicial Circuit shall be appointed by the  
22 Governor for a term beginning July 1, 2021, and expiring December 31, 2022. A  
23 successor to the district attorney so appointed shall be elected by the voters of the  
24 Columbia Judicial Circuit at the 2022 general election, and at the general election  
25 quadrennially thereafter, for a term of four years. A candidate for appointment or  
26 election to this office in 2021 or thereafter shall be a resident of Columbia County;

27 (2) The Honorable James G. Blanchard, Jr., the Honorable Sheryl B. Jolly, and the  
28 Honorable J. Wade Padgett, currently judges of the Augusta Judicial Circuit and residents  
29 of Columbia County, shall become judges of the Columbia Judicial Circuit. Each judge,  
30 respectively, shall serve out their current term of office for which he or she was selected,  
31 and his or her successor shall be elected by the voters of the Columbia Judicial Circuit  
32 at the nonpartisan judicial election next preceding the expiration of their term of office,  
33 and at the nonpartisan judicial election quadrennially thereafter, for a term of four years.

34 A candidate for election to these offices shall be a resident of Columbia County; and

35 (3) The active judge who is senior in time of service shall serve as chief judge of the  
36 Columbia Judicial Circuit.

37

**SECTION 1-2.**

38 All proceedings and litigations, civil, equitable, and criminal, pending in the Superior Court  
39 of Columbia County at such time as it was a part of the Augusta Judicial Circuit, including  
40 all complaints, pleadings, petitions, indictments, special presentments, summonses,  
41 processes, motions, writs, and mesne and final proceedings, together with all books and  
42 records of any kind or character belonging to or issued, returnable, filed, pending, or  
43 commenced in such county, shall relate to, become a part of, and be transferred to the  
44 Columbia Judicial Circuit and its jurisdiction.

45

**SECTION 1-3.**

46 In addition to the salary and expenses paid from state funds, and notwithstanding any other  
47 provision of law, each judge of the superior court of the Columbia Judicial Circuit shall  
48 receive from the funds of Columbia County an additional supplement to such salary and  
49 expenses in an amount equal to the aggregate total of additional supplements to the salary  
50 and expenses of the judges of the Augusta Judicial Circuit then in effect and paid by the  
51 counties of the Augusta Judicial Circuit on January 1, 2021.

52

**SECTION 1-4.**

53 In addition to the salary and expenses paid from state funds, the district attorney of the  
54 Columbia Judicial Circuit shall receive from the funds of Columbia County an additional  
55 supplement to such salary and expenses equal to the aggregate total of additional  
56 supplements to the salary and expenses of the district attorney of the Augusta Judicial Circuit  
57 then in effect and paid by the counties of the Augusta Judicial Circuit on January 1, 2021.

58

**SECTION 1-5.**

59 The governing authority of Columbia County shall be authorized, but not required, to  
60 authorize the employment of assistant district attorneys, deputy district attorneys, or other

61 attorneys, investigators, paraprofessionals, clerical assistants, victim and witness assistance  
62 personnel, and other employees or independent contractors, as authorized under Code  
63 Section 15-18-20 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated.

64

**SECTION 1-6.**

65 (a) Effective with the creation of the Columbia Judicial Circuit, the Augusta Judicial Circuit  
66 shall transfer to the Columbia Judicial Circuit the sum equal to 25 percent of the amount it  
67 holds as of January 1, 2021, for costs collected pursuant to Code Section 15-23-7 of the  
68 Official Code of Georgia Annotated for court connected or court referred alternative dispute  
69 resolution programs.

70 (b) Effective with the creation of the Columbia Judicial Circuit, the district attorney of the  
71 Augusta Judicial Circuit shall pay over to the district attorney of the Columbia Judicial  
72 Circuit the sum equal to the amount he or she holds as of January 1, 2021, that was secured  
73 pursuant to condemnation or forfeiture actions from criminal cases that originated from a  
74 violation of law in Columbia County.

75

**PART II**

76

**SECTION 2-1.**

77 Effective with the creation of the Columbia Judicial Circuit, the judges of the Augusta  
78 Judicial Circuit shall be composed of the five remaining judges of the Augusta Judicial  
79 Circuit, namely, the Honorable Carl C. Brown, Jr., the Honorable Daniel J. Craig, the  
80 Honorable John Flythe, the Honorable Ashley Wright, and the successor to the Honorable  
81 Michael N. Annis, and their successors. Each judge, respectively, shall serve out their  
82 current term of office for which he or she was selected, and his or her successor shall be  
83 elected by the voters of the Augusta Judicial Circuit at the nonpartisan judicial election next  
84 preceding the expiration of their term of office, and at the nonpartisan judicial election

85 quadrennially thereafter, for a term of four years. A candidate for election to these offices  
86 shall be a resident of Richmond County or Burke County.

87 **SECTION 2-2.**

88 (a) Except as provided for under Sections 2-3 and 2-4 of this Act:

89 (1) Ninety percent of the circuit-wide costs and expenditures of the Augusta Judicial  
90 Circuit shall be paid by Richmond County; and

91 (2) Ten percent of the circuit-wide costs and expenditures of the Augusta Judicial Circuit  
92 shall be paid by Burke County.

93 (b) The percentages provided for under subsection (a) of this section may be revised by an  
94 agreement in writing executed between the governing authority of Richmond County and the  
95 governing authority of Burke County.

96 **SECTION 2-3.**

97 (a) In addition to the salary and expenses paid from state funds, and notwithstanding any  
98 other provision of law, each judge of the superior court of the Augusta Judicial Circuit shall  
99 receive from the funds of Richmond County and Burke County additional supplements in  
100 proportions provided for under subsection (b) of this section.

101 (b)(1) Richmond County shall pay an additional supplement equal to:

102 (A) The amount of the additional supplement to the salary and expenses of the judges  
103 of the Augusta Judicial Circuit then in effect and paid by Richmond County on  
104 January 1, 2021; and

105 (B) Eighty percent of the additional supplement to the salary and expenses of the  
106 judges of the Augusta Judicial Circuit then in effect and paid by Columbia County on  
107 January 1, 2021.

108 (2) Burke County shall pay an additional supplement equal to:

- 109 (A) The amount of the additional supplement to the salary and expenses of the judges  
110 of the Augusta Judicial Circuit then in effect and paid by Burke County on January 1,  
111 2021; and
- 112 (B) Twenty percent of the additional supplement to the salary and expenses of the  
113 judges of the Augusta Judicial Circuit then in effect and paid by Columbia County on  
114 January 1, 2021.

115 **SECTION 2-4.**

116 (a) In addition to the salary and expenses paid from state funds, the district attorney of the  
117 Augusta Judicial Circuit shall receive from the funds of Richmond County and Burke County  
118 an additional supplement in proportions provided for under subsection (b) of this section.

119 (b)(1) Richmond County shall pay an additional supplement equal to:

120 (A) The amount of the additional supplement to the salary and expenses of the district  
121 attorney of the Augusta Judicial Circuit then in effect and paid by Richmond County  
122 on January 1, 2021; and

123 (B) Eighty percent of the additional supplement to the salary and expenses of the  
124 district attorney of the Augusta Judicial Circuit then in effect and paid by Columbia  
125 County on January 1, 2021.

126 (2) Burke County shall pay an additional supplement equal to:

127 (A) The amount of the additional supplement to the salary and expenses of the district  
128 attorney of the Augusta Judicial Circuit then in effect and paid by Burke County on  
129 January 1, 2021; and

130 (B) Twenty percent of the additional supplement to the salary and expenses of the  
131 district attorney of the Augusta Judicial Circuit then in effect and paid by Columbia  
132 County on January 1, 2021.

133

**PART III**

134

**SECTION 3-1.**

135 Senior or retired judges of the Augusta Judicial Circuit who, as of June 30, 2021, receive a  
136 retirement supplement or have been paid a retirement supplement from Columbia County,  
137 Richmond County, and Burke County shall continue to receive such supplements from such  
138 counties in the same amounts and in the same ratios as such supplements are paid as of June  
139 30, 2021.

140

**SECTION 3-2.**

141 Any judge of the Augusta Judicial Circuit who is in active service as of July 1, 2021, or who  
142 shall be appointed or elected as a judge of the Augusta Judicial Circuit on or after July 1,  
143 2021, shall, upon his or her retirement from active service and eligibility for retirement  
144 payments under a State of Georgia retirement system, receive a retirement supplement from  
145 the county or counties that comprise the Augusta Judicial Circuit as of the date such judge  
146 discontinues active service. Such retirement supplement shall be in an amount equal to the  
147 percentage that his or her State of Georgia retirement payments are to his or her last salary  
148 from the State of Georgia as an active judge of the Augusta Judicial Circuit, multiplied by  
149 the aggregate county salary supplement then paid to active judges as of the date of such  
150 judge's retirement from active service.

151

**SECTION 3-3.**

152 Any judge of the Columbia Judicial Circuit who is in active service as of July 1, 2021, or  
153 who shall be appointed or elected as a judge of the Columbia Judicial Circuit after July 1,  
154 2021, shall, upon his or her retirement from active service and eligibility for retirement  
155 payments under a State of Georgia retirement system, receive a retirement supplement from  
156 the county or counties that comprise the Columbia Judicial Circuit as of the date such judge

157 discontinues active service. Such retirement supplement shall be in an amount equal to the  
158 percentage that his or her State of Georgia retirement payments are to his or her last salary  
159 from the State of Georgia as an active judge of the Columbia Judicial Circuit, multiplied by  
160 the aggregate county salary supplement then paid to active judges as of the date of such  
161 judge's retirement from active service.

162 **SECTION 3-4.**

163 Any retirement supplements due under this part by a judicial circuit made up of more than  
164 one county shall be paid in the same proportions as those counties divide the payment of  
165 salary supplements to active judges of that judicial circuit.

166 **PART IV**

167 **SECTION 4-1.**

168 Article 1 of Chapter 6 of Title 15 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to  
169 general provisions regarding superior courts, is amended by revising paragraph (5) of, and  
170 adding a new paragraph to, Code Section 15-6-1, relating to composition of judicial circuits,  
171 as follows:

172 "(5) Augusta Judicial Circuit, composed of the Counties of Burke,~~Columbia~~, and  
173 Richmond;"

174 "(11.1) Columbia Judicial Circuit, composed of the County of Columbia;"

175 **SECTION 4-2.**

176 Said article is further amended by revising paragraph (5) of, and adding a new paragraph to,  
177 Code Section 15-6-2, relating to number of superior court judges, to read as follows:

178 "(5) Augusta Circuit . . . . . 8 5"

179 "(11.1) Columbia Circuit . . . . . 3"

180 **SECTION 4-3.**

181 Said article is further amended by revising paragraph (5) of, and adding a new paragraph to,  
182 Code Section 15-6-3, relating to terms of court, as follows:

183 **"(5) Augusta Circuit:**

184 (A) Burke County — Fourth Monday in April and October.

185 (B) ~~Columbia County — Fourth Monday in March and September.~~

186 ~~(C)~~ Richmond County — Third Monday in January, March, May, July, September, and  
187 November."

188 **"(11.1) Columbia Circuit:**

189 Columbia County — Fourth Monday in March and September."

190 **PART V**191 **SECTION 5-1.**

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