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SENATE BILL NO. 397

Offered January 14, 2026

Prefiled January 13, 2026

A *BILL to amend and reenact § 17.1-281 of the Code of Virginia, relating to assessment of costs for construction, renovation, or maintenance of courthouse, jail, or court-related facilities.*

Patron—Diggs

Referred to Committee for Courts of Justice

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:

1. That § 17.1-281 of the Code of Virginia is amended and reenacted as follows:

§ 17.1-281. Assessment for courthouse construction, renovation or maintenance.

A. Any county or city, through its governing body, may assess a sum not in excess of ~~two~~ 10 dollars as part of the costs in (i) each civil action filed in the district or circuit courts located within its boundaries and (ii) each criminal or traffic case in its district or circuit court in which the defendant is charged with a violation of any statute or ordinance. If a town provides court facilities for a county, the governing body of the county shall return to the town a portion of the assessments collected based on the number of civil, criminal and traffic cases originating and heard in the town.

B. The imposition of such assessment shall be by ordinance of the governing body which may provide for different sums in circuit courts and district courts. The assessment shall be collected by the clerk of the court in which the action is filed, remitted to the treasurer of the appropriate county or city and held by such treasurer subject to disbursements by the governing body for the construction, renovation, or maintenance of courthouse or jail and court-related facilities and to defray increases in the cost of heating, cooling, electricity, and ordinary maintenance.

C. Any county or city which, on or after January 1, 2008, operated a courthouse not in compliance with the current safety and security guidelines contained in the Virginia Courthouse Facility Guidelines, as certified by the Department of General Services upon application to the Department by the county or city, and which cannot be feasibly renovated to correct such non-compliance, through its governing body, may assess an additional sum not in excess of three dollars as part of the costs in (i) each civil action filed in the district or circuit courts located within its boundaries and (ii) each criminal or traffic case in its district or circuit court in which the defendant is charged with a violation of any statute or ordinance. Such additional fee assessed under this subsection shall not be assessed in any civil action if the amount in controversy is \$500 or less. Any locality which applies for certification from the Department under this subsection shall reimburse the Department for the actual costs incurred by the Department in complying with the certification request.

D. The imposition of such assessment shall be by ordinance of the governing body, which may provide for different sums in circuit courts and district courts. The assessment shall be collected by the clerk of the court in which the action is filed, remitted to the treasurer of the appropriate county or city, and held by such treasurer subject to disbursements by the governing body solely for the construction, reconstruction, renovation of, or adaptive re-use of a structure for a courthouse.

E. The assessments provided for herein shall be in addition to any other fees prescribed by law. The assessments shall be required in each felony, misdemeanor, or traffic infraction case, regardless of the existence of a local ordinance requiring their payment.

INTRODUCED

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