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HOUSE BILL NO. 443**AMENDMENT IN THE NATURE OF A SUBSTITUTE**(Proposed by the Senate Committee on Finance and Appropriations
on March 3, 2026)

(Patrons Prior to Substitute—Delegates Hope, McQuinn [HB 194], and Reid [HB 46])

*A BILL to amend and reenact §§ 16.1-69.6:1 and 17.1-507 of the Code of Virginia, relating to maximum number of judges in each judicial district and circuit; study to examine organization and boundaries of certain judicial circuits; report.***Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:****1. That §§ 16.1-69.6:1 and 17.1-507 of the Code of Virginia are amended and reenacted as follows:****§ 16.1-69.6:1. Number of judges.**

For the several judicial districts there shall be full-time general district court judges and juvenile and domestic relations district court judges, the maximum number as hereinafter set forth, who shall during their service reside within their respective districts, except as provided in § 16.1-69.16, and whose compensation and powers shall be the same as now and hereafter prescribed for general district court judges and juvenile and domestic relations district court judges.

The maximum number of judges of the districts shall be as follows:

	General District	Juvenile and Domestic
	Court Judges	Relations District Court Judges
c First	4	4
d Second	7	7
e Two-A	2	1
f Third	2	3
g Fourth	6	5
h Fifth	3	2
i Sixth	5	3
j Seventh	4	4
k Eighth	3	3
l Ninth	4	4
m Tenth	3	3
n Eleventh	3	3
o Twelfth	5-6	6-7
p Thirteenth	6	5
q Fourteenth	5	5
r Fifteenth	8	9-10
s Sixteenth	4	6
t Seventeenth	3	2
u Eighteenth	2	2
v Nineteenth	12	8
w Twentieth	4	4
x Twenty-first	2	2
y Twenty-second	3	4
z Twenty-third	4	5
aa Twenty-fourth	3	6
ab Twenty-fifth	4	5
ac Twenty-sixth	5-6	7
ad Twenty-seventh	5	5
ae Twenty-eighth	3	3
af Twenty-ninth	2	3
ag Thirtieth	2	3
ah Thirty-first	6	6

The election or appointment of any district judge shall be subject to the provisions of § 16.1-69.9:3.

§ 17.1-507. Maximum number of judges; residence requirement; compensation; powers; etc.

A. For the several judicial circuits there shall be judges, the maximum number as hereinafter set forth, who shall during their service reside within their respective circuits and whose compensation and powers shall be the same as now and hereafter prescribed for circuit judges.

The maximum number of judges of the circuits shall be as follows:

- First — 6
- Second — 8
- Third — 4
- Fourth — 8

62 Fifth — 4
63 Sixth — 3
64 Seventh — 5
65 Eighth — 3
66 Ninth — 5
67 Tenth — 4
68 Eleventh — 3
69 Twelfth — 6
70 Thirteenth — 7
71 Fourteenth — 5
72 Fifteenth — 12
73 Sixteenth — 6
74 Seventeenth — 4
75 Eighteenth — 3
76 Nineteenth — 15
77 Twentieth — 5 6
78 Twenty-first — 3
79 Twenty-second — 4
80 Twenty-third — 5
81 Twenty-fourth — 6
82 Twenty-fifth — 7
83 Twenty-sixth — 8
84 Twenty-seventh — 6 7
85 Twenty-eighth — 4
86 Twenty-ninth — 5
87 Thirtieth — 4
88 Thirty-first — 7

89 B. No additional circuit court judge shall be authorized or provided for any judicial circuit until the
90 Judicial Council has made a study of the need for such additional circuit court judge and has reported its
91 findings and recommendations to the House and Senate Committees for Courts of Justice. The boundary of
92 any judicial circuit shall not be changed until a study has been made by the Judicial Council and a report of
93 its findings and recommendations made to said Committees.

94 C. If the Judicial Council finds the need for an additional circuit court judge after a study is made pursuant
95 to subsection B, the study shall be made available to the Compensation Board and the House and Senate
96 Committees for Courts of Justice and the Judicial Council shall publish notice of such finding in a publication
97 of general circulation among attorneys licensed to practice in the Commonwealth. The Compensation Board
98 shall make a study of the need to provide additional courtroom security and deputy court clerk staffing. This
99 study shall be reported to the House and Senate Committees for Courts of Justice, and to the Department of
100 Planning and Budget.

101 **2. That the provisions of §§ 16.1-69.6:1 and 17.1-507 of the Code of Virginia, as amended by this act,**
102 **relating to the Fifteenth and Twentieth Judicial Circuits shall become effective on July 1, 2027.**

103 **3. That the Judicial Council of Virginia (the Council) shall conduct a study examining the organization**
104 **and boundaries of the Fifteenth and Twentieth Judicial Circuits. In conducting its study, the Council**
105 **shall (i) review current caseload data, population data, other relevant data, and all calculations and**
106 **recommendations provided in the three judicial workload studies conducted by the National Center for**
107 **State Courts and submitted to the General Assembly to assess caseloads for the localities within the**
108 **Fifteenth and Twentieth Judicial Circuits; (ii) evaluate current court management practices and**
109 **judicial court assignments and provide an analysis of the impact of such practices and assignments on**
110 **the overall efficiency of the courts and judges; (iii) consider the geography of the Fifteenth and**
111 **Twentieth Judicial Circuits and time spent traveling between courthouses; (iv) analyze the composition**
112 **of localities currently included in the Fifteenth and Twentieth Judicial Circuits as compared to other**
113 **judicial circuits to determine whether they have a disproportionate number of localities with**
114 **significant population and caseload growth; and (v) determine if the citizens of the Fifteenth and**
115 **Twentieth Judicial Circuits would be better served by adjusting the boundary lines of such judicial**
116 **circuits in order to create additional judicial circuits. If boundary lines are not recommended to be**
117 **redrawn, the Council shall provide suggestions to ease burdens on judges and specify any additional**
118 **resources or support that the Office of the Executive Secretary of the Supreme Court of Virginia may**
119 **be able to provide. The Council shall complete its meetings by November 30, 2026, and shall submit to**
120 **the Governor and the General Assembly an executive summary and a report of its findings and**
121 **recommendations for publication as a House or Senate document.**