

Committee on Judiciary

CS/CS/HB 337 — Courts

by Judiciary Committee; Civil Justice Subcommittee; and Rep. Leek (CS/CS/CS/SB 328 by Appropriations Committee; Infrastructure and Security Committee; Judiciary Committee; and Senator Brandes)

The bill gradually raises the county courts' maximum jurisdictional amount for civil cases demanding money. The current maximum jurisdictional amount of the county courts in civil cases is \$15,000 or less, an amount that was set back in 1992. The bill requires that the county courts' jurisdictional amount be raised incrementally over the next three years as follows:

- For cases filed on or after January 1, 2020, raised to \$30,000; and
- For cases filed on or after January 1, 2023, raised to \$50,000.

As the ceiling of the county courts' jurisdictional amount is raised, the floor of the circuit courts' jurisdictional amount will be raised correspondingly, to cases in excess of \$30,000 effective January 1, 2020, and then \$50,000 effective January 1, 2023.

Additionally, the bill retains the circuit courts' current appellate jurisdiction over county court cases demanding no more than \$15,000 until January 1, 2023. In the meantime, the bill authorizes the Office of State Courts Administrator (OSCA) to study and provide feedback by February 1, 2021, on the impact of adjusting the county courts' jurisdiction and the feasibility of adjusting the circuit courts' appellate jurisdiction.

The bill also retains the current court filing fees by pinning the amount of the fee to the amount of monetary damages being claimed, regardless of whether the case is filed in county or circuit court. Additionally, the bill clarifies the specific monetary portion of various other court fines and fees that must be remitted to the General Revenue Fund after being collected by the Clerks of the Circuit Courts.

Finally, the bill also addresses funding and budgeting by the Clerks of the Circuit Courts, permitting the Clerks to carry forward unspent funds from the prior fiscal year and any remaining funds in the Clerks of Court Trust Fund for budgetary purposes. The bill also clarifies when excess funds in the Clerks of the Court Trust Fund must be transferred to the General Revenue Fund.

If approved by the Governor, these provisions take effect July 1, 2019, except as otherwise specified.

Vote: Senate 36-0; House 109-0