



RON DESANTIS
GOVERNOR

June 29, 2020

Secretary Laurel M. Lee
Secretary of State
R. A. Gray Building, Room 316
500 South Bronough Street
Tallahassee, Florida 32399-0250

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TALLAHASSEE FLORIDA

Dear Secretary Lee:

By the authority vested in me as Governor of the State of Florida, under the provisions of Article III, Section 8, of the Constitution of Florida, I do hereby approve and transmit my approval for House Bill 5301, enacted during the 122nd Session of the Legislature of Florida, since statehood in 1845, during the Regular Session of 2020 and entitled:

An act relating to Judges.

Today I have signed into law HB 5301, an act relating to judges. The bill amends ss. 26.031 and 34.022, F.S., to create the following 10 additional trial court judgeships:

- One Circuit Court Judgeship in the 1st Judicial Circuit;
- Two Circuit Court Judgeships in the 9th Judicial Circuit;
- One Circuit Court Judgeship in the 14th Judicial Circuit;
- Four County Court Judgeships in Hillsborough County;
- One County Court Judgeship in Orange County; and
- One County Court Judgeship in Lee County.

The Fiscal Year 2020-2021 General Appropriations Act contained over \$3.4 million to fund the additional judgeships.

On November 27, 2019, in *In Re: Certification of Need For Additional Judges*, SC19-1907, the Florida Supreme Court used a weighted caseload model and certified the need for 10 judges in the above-described circuits and counties. I agreed with the Court's assessment, and believed that additional judges were warranted.

However, since the Florida Supreme Court's certification was issued, the State Courts System and the state budget outlook have seen significant changes due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Court has taken a number of actions to mitigate the effects of COVID-19 within the State Courts System (e.g., suspending jury trials, etc.), and is unclear what impact COVID-19 will have on judicial workload. This uncertainty,

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coupled with the change in the state budget outlook, require that I veto the funding associated with the additional judges. I simply do not believe that it is fiscally prudent to employ the additional judges at this time. However, by signing HB 5301, we will preserve the establishment of these additional judgeships with the hope that they can be funded as the state budget outlook improves.

Sincerely,

A large, bold, handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ron DeSantis', is written over the word 'Sincerely,'.

Ron DeSantis
Governor