



CAPITOL COMMENTARY

INBRIEF | APRIL 19, 2026

BGR Opposes Cuts to Orleans Parish Judgeships Without a Supreme Court Study

The Louisiana Legislature is considering bills to consolidate Orleans Parish courts and reduce the number of judges. Proponents say the legislation would address longstanding inefficiencies, saving millions of dollars a year for both the State of Louisiana and the City of New Orleans. Opponents contend the bills would make deep and disruptive cuts to the court system without sufficient study and justification.

For many years, the Bureau of Governmental Research (BGR) has [brought attention](#) to court spending and urged careful review of potential excess judgeships. The City's ongoing financial crisis adds urgency to eliminating any unnecessary judgeships. Each excess judgeship would cost the City about \$2 million over a six-year term. But the insufficient analysis of the current bills raises serious concerns about their potential impacts on the Orleans Parish justice system and public safety.

The Louisiana Supreme Court has prepared only preliminary estimates using a new caseload formula that suggests Orleans Parish may have up to 10 more judges than necessary. In providing these estimates to the Legislature in March, the Supreme Court [emphasized](#) that a final determination of the appropriate number of judges would require further qualitative analysis of court workloads, including site visits and supplemental research. The Supreme Court has not conducted this analysis.

This is an unfortunate and troubling pattern with the Supreme Court. Since hurricanes Katrina and Rita in 2005 reshaped the demographics of south Louisiana, the Legislature has made three separate requests for the court and its research arm, the Judicial Council, to determine the appropriate number of trial court judgeships in the state. Each time they reached no conclusions. Moreover, the Supreme Court did not replace its old caseload formula, often cited as inadequate for decision making, until just last year.

Rather than request a new study, some legislators, with the support of the governor, are moving two bills, [House Bill 911](#) and [Senate Bill 217](#). Each would eliminate nine judgeships in Orleans Parish, though they differ on the specific judgeships. The proposed reductions are in some cases not well aligned with the estimates of potentially unnecessary judgeships based on the Supreme Court's formula. More importantly, the formula itself does not fully capture the complexities of the Orleans Parish justice system. This is most apparent at Criminal District Court, which has 13 judges but may need as few as eight, according to the formula. For example:

- The court handled approximately 4,000 criminal cases last year, but a single case often has multiple defendants, multiple charges, or both. This keeps criminal cases open on a judge's docket longer than in other parishes.
- The outsized number of homicides and other violent felonies prosecuted in Orleans, compared to other parishes, increases the burden on court dockets. For example, New Orleans reported 145 homicides last year, compared to 21 in its larger neighbor, Jefferson Parish.
- Orleans criminal court judges presided over 137 jury trials last year, the most in the state. Approximately a quarter of all criminal jury trials happened in Orleans.

These factors and others should be considered in making a final determination of how many judges the court needs.

The bills' proponents want to eliminate judgeships they deem unnecessary before the November 2026 general election for Orleans Parish judges. After the election, a constitutional prohibition against shortening a judge's term would prevent a reduction in those judgeships until 2032.

Underinformed decisions based solely on the caseload formula risk cutting too many judges and delaying justice. Delays could add to case backlogs and increase the parish jail population, which already exceeds the jail’s 1,250-person maximum capacity. Higher costs of pre-trial detention would fall on both the State and the City, potentially wiping out the savings from fewer judgeships.

In this Capitol Commentary, BGR identifies additional information and analysis that legislators and the public need to evaluate the proposed reductions in judgeships.

Relative to the pending legislation, BGR recommends:

- **The Legislature should not eliminate judges at Orleans Parish courts without a comprehensive Supreme Court analysis, including court visits and supplemental research, to determine the appropriate number of judges.** The Legislature should use the results of that analysis to inform

potential amendments to House Bill 911 and Senate Bill 217, aligning any reductions in judgeships with the demonstrated needs of the courts. This is essential to help balance the potential financial benefits of right-sizing the courts with the need to ensure that any cuts do not negatively affect public access to the courts or put public safety at risk.

- **The Supreme Court should promptly complete the necessary supplemental analysis and provide its findings on how many judges the courts need to the Legislature during the current session.** If the Supreme Court does not initiate a review, House and Senate leaders should request one. If the Supreme Court cannot complete its analysis before the June 1 end of the current legislative session, the Legislature should explore options that would enable it to still take the court’s recommendations into account after the session.

**PRELIMINARY ESTIMATES OF JUDGES NEEDED AT ORLEANS PARISH COURTS
BASED ON THE LOUISIANA SUPREME COURT’S CASELOAD FORMULA**

	Current judges	Preliminary estimate of judges needed	Potential surplus judges	Judges cut under HB 911 (engrossed)	Judges cut under SB 217 (engrossed)
District Courts					
Civil District Court	14	12.7	1.3	4	2
Criminal District Court	13	8	5	3	4
Juvenile Court	4	1.2	2.8	2	1
City Courts					
Municipal and Traffic Court	7	4.2*	2.8	-	2
First City Court (civil cases)	3	5.2*	-2.2	-	-
Second City Court (civil cases)	1	0.7*	0.3	-	-
TOTAL	42	32	10	9	9



The Takeaway: The Supreme Court’s caseload formula indicates Orleans Parish might have up to 10 more judges than it needs. HB 911 and HB 217 would each eliminate nine judgeships, though they differ on the specific judges. The formula is just an indicator light for the Supreme Court, which must do a deeper analysis to determine the appropriate number of judges.

*The Supreme Court has not updated the caseload formula for city courts. The court calculated these figures by applying the district court case weights to the city courts’ filing data. As such, the figures are not intended to reflect the optimal number of judges for these courts.

Sources: Letter from John L. Weimer, Chief Justice, Louisiana Supreme Court, to the Honorable Jack G. MacFarland, Chairman, House Committee on Appropriations, March 6, 2026; La. H.B. Bill 911 (Engrossed) and S.B. 217 (Engrossed), Reg. Sess. of 2026.

RISK ANALYSIS

The case for a closer look at Orleans Parish courts

The Legislature has an opportunity to save millions and right-size a court system that may have more judges than it needs. But cutting the wrong number carries consequences that go beyond the bottom line.

BGR RECOMMENDS

Wait for the full study. The Supreme Court must complete a comprehensive analysis, including court visits and supplemental research, before any judgeships are eliminated.

THE POTENTIAL RISKS

Cutting too many Criminal District Court judgeships without Supreme Court analysis



Trials may slow down; case backlogs could grow

Orleans handled 137 jury trials in 2025, nearly 25% of all criminal jury trials statewide. Fewer judges could mean longer waits for court dates.



Pretrial detainees may wait longer for resolution

The accused, victims and families could wait longer for resolution. Delayed justice has real costs for everyone involved.



Pressure on the Orleans Parish Jail could increase

The jail currently holds 1,349 detainees, nearly 8% over its 1,250-person maximum capacity. Additional pretrial detainees would strain an already crowded facility.



The jail's consent decree compliance could become harder to achieve

Supervision was deemed insufficient by a 2026 audit following the May 2025 jailbreak. A larger detainee population could make compliance more difficult.



Risks at the jail for detainees and staff may grow

The sheriff has struggled to fill vacancies. More detainees could require more deputies and conditions for both staff and detainees could deteriorate.



Costs across the justice system could rise

Extended trial timelines and a larger detainee population could drive up operating costs for the District Attorney, public defender and other justice system entities.



The City could face higher jail operating costs

The City is required to provide most of the jail's funding. Higher costs would fall on an already strained City budget, leaving less for other services residents need.

The projected savings could be at risk.

Higher detention costs, extended consent decree monitoring, and rising system-wide expenses could offset projected savings, particularly if cuts go beyond what the evidence supports.



CAPITOL COMMENTARY

INDEPTH | APRIL 19, 2026

In this section, BGR provides a more detailed analysis supporting its key findings and recommendations, focusing on:

- Past efforts to determine how many judges the courts need
- An overview of pending legislation to cut judgeships and consolidate courts
- Preliminary Supreme Court estimates of the appropriate number of judges at Orleans Parish courts
- Why the Supreme Court should analyze the proposed judgeship reductions
- Court consolidation and pooling resources

PAST EFFORTS TO DETERMINE HOW MANY JUDGES THE COURTS NEED

In many ways, the Hurricane Katrina disaster in 2005 was a catalyst for streamlining and consolidating duplicative and balkanized government entities in Orleans Parish and the region.¹ The area’s parochial levee boards were replaced by regional flood protection authorities. Orleans Parish’s two sheriff’s offices were merged. The parish’s seven assessors were reduced to one. But despite indications that Orleans Parish may have more judges than it needs, post-Katrina reforms to the court system have been more modest. Two small courts merged, and three of 45 judgeships were eliminated.

Supreme Court inaction has hindered efforts to assess the appropriate number of judgeships in Orleans Parish and across the state. In the years after the demographic upheaval from hurricanes Katrina and Rita, the Legislature asked the Supreme Court three times for guidance on the appropriate number of judges at the roughly 100 trial courts statewide.² The high court issued a series of seven reports without reaching any conclusions on how many judges the courts need.³

BGR’s 2013 report, *Benchmarking the Bench*, showed

that a caseload formula developed by the Supreme Court’s research arm, the Judicial Council, estimated that Orleans Parish, which had 45 judges at the time, may need as few as 20.⁴ A Supreme Court committee tasked with assessing the appropriate number of judges concluded in 2014 that the formula was outdated and dropped the matter.⁵ In the absence of Supreme Court guidance, the Legislature in the mid-2010s eliminated two judgeships at Orleans Parish Juvenile Court.⁶ The Legislature also consolidated New Orleans’s Municipal and Traffic courts, eliminating a third judgeship in the process.⁷

The longstanding issue of potential excess judgeships is particularly relevant amid the City’s ongoing financial crisis. As Table 1 indicates, the City has budgeted \$20.9 million for the court system in 2026. This underscores the importance of determining the extent to which any unnecessary judgeships and other potential court inefficiencies may be inflating the City’s costs. Based on the Louisiana Legislative Auditor’s fiscal notes attached to the bills, the City would save an average of about

TABLE 1. CITY OF NEW ORLEANS FUNDING FOR COURTS, 2026 BUDGETED

Criminal District Court	\$6,178,000
Municipal and Traffic Court	\$6,143,000
Clerk of Criminal District Court	\$5,618,000
Juvenile Court	\$3,007,000
Total	\$20,946,000



The Takeaway: All the City’s funding is for the criminal courts, which cannot charge filing fees. The civil courts are self-funded by filing fees and fees for mortgage and conveyance records.

Source: [City of New Orleans 2026 Adopted Operating Budget](#)

\$340,000 per year for each eliminated judgeship, while the State would save an estimated \$345,000.⁸ Excess district court judgeships cost the City and the State about \$2 million each over a six-year term.

OVERVIEW OF PENDING LEGISLATION TO CUT JUDGESHIPS AND CONSOLIDATE COURTS

The bills before the Legislature would eliminate nine judgeships as shown in Table 2. The bills also would consolidate pieces of the parish’s fragmented court system – the only one in the state with separate courts for criminal and civil cases. Here is an overview of the bills:

House Bill 911 would eliminate nine judgeships – four of 14 at Civil District Court, three of 13 at Criminal District Court and two of four at Juvenile Court. It would consolidate Civil District Court and Criminal District Court, and their respective clerk’s offices, to create the 41st Judicial District Court. Orleans would have a unified court structure similar to all other parishes. The bill would also abolish Juvenile Court and transfer its juris-

diction to a juvenile section in the newly consolidated court. The reductions in judges and support staff would yield estimated annual savings of \$3.6 million for the State and \$3.4 million for the City, according to the Louisiana Legislative Auditor’s fiscal note.⁹

Senate Bill 217 would also eliminate nine judgeships – four of 13 at Criminal District Court,¹⁰ two of 14 at Civil District Court, two of seven at Municipal and Traffic Court, and one of four at Juvenile Court. While the bill would keep Criminal and Civil district courts separate, it would consolidate their judicial expense funds for court fees and fines into a single fund to be managed by the judges collectively. The Legislative Auditor’s fiscal note estimates annual savings of \$2.6 million for the State and \$2.5 million for the City.¹¹

Senate Bill 256 would consolidate the clerks’ offices for Civil District Court and Criminal District Court into a single office serving both courts. The courts themselves would remain separate. The bill does not have a fiscal note estimating the potential savings from consolidation.

TABLE 2. ORLEANS PARISH JUDGESHIPS PROPOSED FOR ELIMINATION IN BILLS BEFORE THE LOUISIANA LEGISLATURE

	Current judges	House Bill 911*		Senate Bill 217	
		Judges eliminated	Judges remaining	Judges eliminated	Judges remaining
District Courts					
Civil District Court	14	4	10	2	12
Criminal District Court	13	3	10	4	9
Juvenile Court	4	2	2	1	3
City Courts					
Municipal and Traffic Court	7	-	7	2	5
First City Court	3	-	3	-	3
Second City Court	1	-	1	-	1
TOTAL	42	9	33	9	33



The Takeaway: HB 911 and SB 217 would each eliminate nine judgeships, but they differ on the specific judgeships. Under HB 911, all the cuts would occur at the district courts, while SB 217 would eliminate two judgeships at Municipal and Traffic Court. These differences would have to be reconciled if both bills move forward as is.

*House Bill 911 would also consolidate the three district courts to form the 41st Judicial District Court.

Legislators from outside Orleans Parish are sponsoring the bills at the governor's request. Members of New Orleans' legislative delegation oppose the bills. As of April 18, SB 256, the bill to merge the clerks' offices, had passed the Senate and received committee approval in the House. The two bills to eliminate judgeships had made it through committee and are scheduled for full votes in their respective chambers on Monday, April 20.

PRELIMINARY SUPREME COURT ESTIMATES OF THE NUMBER OF JUDGES NEEDED

The number of judges at each of Louisiana's courts is established by State law.¹² The Louisiana Constitution authorizes the Legislature, with two-thirds approval, to increase or decrease the number of judges in a given court.¹³ However, the constitution prohibits eliminating a judgeship during a sitting judge's term.¹⁴ State law requires the Judicial Council to analyze any proposal to create a new judgeship before the Legislature votes on it.¹⁵ Lawmakers are not required to follow the council's recommendations.¹⁶ When it comes to eliminating a judgeship, the Legislature can act without Judicial Council review.

To assess a court's workload, the Judicial Council uses a weighted-caseload formula based on the average number of minutes judges spend on different types of cases. The minutes are then totaled and divided by the average number of minutes that judges have to spend on cases each year. The result is an estimate of how many judges the court needs.

Opponents of past efforts to eliminate judgeships pointed to shortcomings in the formula in use at the time. The formula was based on relatively few case types compared to formulas in other states and expert recommendations. Also, the minutes assigned to different case types were based on estimates of how much time judges spend on cases as opposed to a study of how long the cases take on average.¹⁷ In its 2013 report, BGR acknowledged the formula's drawbacks, but noted that it was meant to

be an indicator light for officials to know where closer examination of apparent judicial surpluses was needed.¹⁸

The Supreme Court addressed these shortcomings in a caseload formula for district courts that it finalized in November 2025 with the assistance of the National Center for State Courts.¹⁹ The new formula has nearly twice as many case types, which enables more precise calculations of court workloads. In addition, the work points are based on a study of how much time judges spend on the various types of cases. Across the state, 96% of district court judges participated in the study, including all 31 district court judges in Orleans Parish. (See the Appendix for details on the new formula compared to the old one.)

In early March, the Supreme Court applied the new formula to the 2025 case filing data for Orleans Parish's six courts at the request of the chair of the Louisiana House Committee on Appropriations.²⁰ As Table 3 indicates, this yielded a preliminary estimate that the parish may have up to 10 more judges than it needs.

The formula suggests that Criminal District Court may have the largest potential surplus with up to five more judges than it needs. However, the Supreme Court's chief justice cautioned in a [letter](#) to the committee chair that a change to a new case management system may have affected the results for Criminal District Court. The Supreme Court recommended averaging three years of filing data to estimate Criminal District Court's workload. BGR's 2013 report found that experts in court workloads recommend averaging multiple years of filing data to account for normal variances in filings.²¹ Thus, the Supreme Court should ideally use three years of filings for all courts.

In addition, the Supreme Court has not updated the case filing weights for city courts, but instead it applied the district court work points to the case filings of the parish's three city courts. Because of this, the letter cautions that figures for the city courts are not intended to reflect their optimal number of judges.

TABLE 3. PRELIMINARY ESTIMATES OF JUDGES NEEDED AT ORLEANS PARISH COURTS BASED ON THE LOUISIANA SUPREME COURT'S CASELOAD FORMULA

	Current judges	Preliminary estimate of judges needed	Potential surplus judges	Judges cut under HB 911 (engrossed)	Judges cut under SB 217 (engrossed)
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*The Supreme Court has not updated the caseload formula for city courts. The court calculated these figures by applying the district court case weights to the city courts' filing data. As such, the figures are not intended to reflect the optimal number of judges for these courts.

Sources: Letter from John L. Weimer, Chief Justice, Louisiana Supreme Court, to the Honorable Jack G. MacFarland, Chairman, House Committee on Appropriations, March 6, 2026; La. H.B. Bill 911 (Engrossed) and S.B. 217 (Engrossed), Reg. Sess. of 2026.

WHY THE SUPREME COURT SHOULD ANALYZE THE PROPOSED JUDGESHIP REDUCTIONS

Before making a final determination of how many judges each court needs, the Supreme Court emphasized it would need to conduct further research, including court visits, to evaluate qualitative factors that are not reflected in the workload formula.²² Examples include extraordinary administrative duties or post-conviction work; complex litigation; and high volumes of jury trials or drug court work. The site visits include interviews with judges and other court officials, who can identify and document factors that they believe are not adequately accounted for by the workload formula.

For example, Criminal District Court could cite several complexities concerning its caseload, some of which are highlighted in Table 4, to counter the preliminary estimates that it has up to five more judges than it needs. Criminal District Court officials also noted in their legislative testimony that some district courts in the state have inflated case filings because of the way defendants are charged. For example, some courts treat each charge as a separate case filing. Such differences in reporting cases are a significant issue when comparing Orleans Parish to other district courts, which will tend to have inflated estimates of judges needed.

The new caseload formula yields significantly higher estimates of the number of judges needed at most Orleans Parish courts compared to the old formula. For

example, under the old formula, BGR estimates that Civil District Court would have an estimated need for just seven judges based on 2025 filings compared to 12.7 judges under the new formula. Similarly, Criminal District Court would have an estimated need for four judges under the old formula, half of its estimated need for eight judges under the new formula. This underscores the importance of using the right data to make decisions about the appropriate size of a court's bench.

The National Center for State Courts study that resulted in the new caseload formula indicates it was not developed for any purpose other than analyzing proposed new judgeships.²³ Some opponents of the bills said this means the formula should not be used to help identify potential excess judgeships. However, the formula simply estimates how many judges a court needs. If the estimated need is higher than the current number of judges, the court may need more judges. Conversely, if the estimate of judges needed is lower than the current number of judges, the court may have too many judges. Moreover, if the Supreme Court cannot use the formula to identify potential excess judgeships, it would have no mechanism for evaluating proposals to eliminate judgeships. Thus, the Legislature may argue it has no choice but to act on its own in eliminating any judgeships that it deems unnecessary. The lack of expert guidance could increase the risk of negative impacts to the court system if the Legislature makes excessive cuts in judgeships.

TABLE 4. UNDERSTANDING THE CONTEXT OF NEW ORLEANS CRIMINAL CASES

- **A single case often has multiple defendants, multiple charges, or both, keeping cases open longer than in other parishes.**
- **Homicides and other violent felonies occur at higher rates; for example, New Orleans reported 145 homicides last year, compared to 21 in Jefferson Parish.**
- **Orleans judges handled 137 criminal jury trials in 2025, nearly 25% of the state's total of 574.**



The Takeaway: Orleans Parish Criminal District Court handled just 3% of criminal cases filed in Louisiana in 2025, a total of 3,953 of 135,252. But other factors, such as violent crime and jury trials, make it a challenging docket for judges..

Sources: Supreme Court of Louisiana, 2025 Annual Report of the Judicial Council of the Supreme Court, p. 47, and information gathered from the Metropolitan Crime Commission and the Jefferson Parish Sheriff's Office.

The bills' proponents say it is essential for the Legislature to take action before the November 2026 election, when all 31 judgeships at Civil District Court, Criminal District Court and Juvenile Court will be on the ballot.²⁴ After the election, the constitutional prohibition against shortening a sitting judge's term would foreclose the possibility of reducing judgeships at any of these courts for six years until 2032. Most of the judgeships targeted for elimination in the bills would be abolished at the end of this year.

But opponents of the bills want to avoid what they view as reckless cuts to the Orleans Parish court system. In some cases, the proposed reductions are not well aligned with the caseload formula's estimates. For example, Civil District Court has an estimated need for 12.7 judges, but HB 911 would reduce the court to 10 judges. Also, SB 217 would eliminate two judgeships at Municipal and Traffic Court, a city court for which the Supreme Court has not updated the caseload formula.

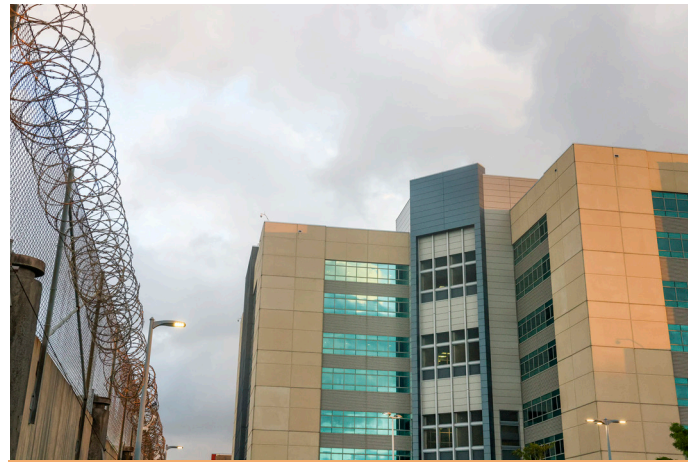
Careful analysis is especially important for Criminal District Court. Inaccurate decisions based solely on the caseload formula that cut too many judgeships risk delaying justice. This could add to case backlogs and increase the parish jail population, which already exceeds the facility's 1,250-person maximum capacity.²⁵ Higher costs of pre-trial detention would fall on the City, potentially wiping out its savings from fewer judgeships.

The Supreme Court and the Judicial Council, which repeatedly delayed dealing with potential excess judgeships in the past, should move quickly to analyze the proposed reductions in judgeships. Such a review would help avoid any cuts in judgeships that could negatively affect the courts and the public's access to them. Conversely, each excess district court judgeship that is not eliminated would cost the City and the State about \$2 million each over a six-year term.

If the Supreme Court cannot complete such a review before the session ends, the Legislature could explore options to provide more time for a study.

COURT CONSOLIDATION AND POOLING RESOURCES

Aside from reducing judgeships, the bills contain measures designed to increase efficiency through consolidation and pooling judicial resources. HB 911 would reinstate a planned consolidation of the civil and criminal district courts that the Legislature approved in 2006 but rescinded in 2012 before the merger took effect. The bill's fiscal note indicates the merger could result in additional administrative savings beyond the reduction of judgeships, though it does not provide an estimate.²⁶



If cuts to criminal court judgeships increase case backlogs and the jail population, the higher costs of pre-trial detention would fall on the City, wiping out cost savings.

SB 217 would pool funding for the civil and criminal courts and their clerks' offices by consolidating their judicial funds for court fees and fines. This could reduce the funding the City must provide to the criminal court and clerk's office, which cannot charge filing fees. Other parishes, which have unified court systems, use fees from civil cases and property records to help cover the costs of handling criminal cases and reduce the impact on parish and state finances.²⁷

Finally, Senate Bill 256 would consolidate the clerks' offices for Civil District Court and Criminal District Court into a single office serving both courts. This could potentially reduce City funding for the consolidated clerk's office compared to what it currently provides to the Clerk of Criminal District Court. However, the bill does not have a fiscal note estimating any potential savings from consolidation.

BGR's 2013 report did not take a position on court consolidation. However, BGR notes that the court system could achieve many of the potential financial benefits of consolidation by sharing some revenues among the civil and criminal courts and clerks' offices. One example of this revenue-sharing is the consolidated judicial expense fund envisioned in SB 217.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The bills before the Legislature are bringing renewed attention to the important issue of whether New Orleans has more judges than it needs. But the bills are not informed by a complete analysis of the proposed reductions and their impacts. The Supreme Court's caseload formula is just the first step in determining the appropriate number of judges. Additional research is essential to assess qualitative factors that are not captured in the formula. Without this analysis, the Legislature risks cutting too many judgeships. The negative repercussions could be significant, especially Criminal District Court, where case backlogs are already contributing to jail overcrowding. The Supreme Court, which has hindered past efforts to right-size the Orleans Parish courts through inaction, should promptly complete the necessary supplemental analysis. If possible, it should provide its findings on how many judges the courts need to the Legislature during the current session. With this in mind, BGR recommends that:

- **The Legislature should not eliminate judges at Orleans Parish courts without comprehensive Supreme Court analysis, including court visits and supplemental research, to determine the appropriate number of judges.** The Legislature should use the results of that analysis to inform potential amendments to House Bill 911 and Senate Bill 217, aligning any reductions in judgeships with the demonstrated needs of the courts. This is essential to help balance the potential financial benefits of right-sizing the courts with the need to ensure that any cuts do not negatively affect public access to the courts or put public safety at risk.
- **The Supreme Court should promptly complete the necessary supplemental analysis and provide its findings on how many judges the courts need to the Legislature during the current session.** If the Supreme Court does not initiate a review, House and Senate leaders should request one. If the Supreme Court cannot complete its analysis before the June 1 end of the current legislative session, the Legislature should explore options that would enable it to still take the court's recommendations into account after the session.

APPENDIX: The Supreme Court's Revised Caseload Formula

In November 2025, the Louisiana Supreme Court developed a new weighted-caseload formula to generate preliminary estimates of the number of judges needed at district courts.

- The formula assigns minutes to different types of cases based on the average amount of time judges spend on the cases.
- The old formula estimated the time while the new formula is based on a study of how much time judges spend on different types of cases.
- The new formula is based on 13 case types compared to seven for the old formula. This allows for more precise estimates of a court's workload.

Table 5 compares the case types and weight in the new formula to the old one.

To illustrate how the new caseload formula works, BGR provides an example based on the Orleans Parish Civil District Court in Table 6.

TABLE 5. COMPARING NEW AND OLD FORMULAS

Case Type	Case Weights in Minutes	
	New Formula	Old Formula
Criminal		
Capital/Life sentence	696	-
Violent felony	354	-
Felony (all)	-	88.4
Nonviolent felony	78	
Misdemeanor	18	9.1
Specialty courts	428	-
Juvenile		
Juvenile delinquency	50	58.9
Juvenile civil/non-delinquency	105	58.9 to 215.7*
Juvenile other	-	17.2
Civil		
General civil	77	34.2
Contracts and torts	48	-
Property	36	-
Probate/Succession	27	
Family/Domestic	150	55.3
Civil/Discovery/Protective Orders	51	-

TABLE 6. APPLYING THE SUPREME COURT'S CASELOAD FORMULA TO CIVIL DISTRICT COURT CASE FILING DATA TO DEVELOP A PRELIMINARY ESTIMATE OF THE NUMBER OF JUDGES NEEDED

Case type	Filings	Case weight (minutes per filing)	Total minutes	Estimated judges needed (77,258 annual casework minutes per judge)
General civil	2,739	77	210,903	2.7
Contracts and torts	4,011	48	192,528	2.5
Property	1,132	36	40,752	0.5
Probate/Succession	1,299	27	35,073	0.5
Family/Domestic	3,338	150	500,700	6.5
Total	12,519	-	979,956	12.7 judges

BGR analysis based on Louisiana Supreme Court data, including Letter from John L. Weimer, Chief Justice, Louisiana Supreme Court, to the Honorable Jack G. MacFarland, Chairman, House Committee on Appropriations, March 6, 2026; BGR, Benchmarking the Bench, p. 5.

Endnotes

- 1 For an overview of post-Katrina governmental reforms, see BGR's 2025 publication, [Responding to the Call](#).
- 2 [La. Acts 2006, 1st Ex. Sess., No. 16. La. Senate Concurrent Resolutions 2007, Reg. Sess., No. 91. La. House Concurrent Resolutions 2011, Reg. Sess., No. 143.](#)
- 3 Judicial Council of the Louisiana Supreme Court, [Final Report of the Judicial Council to Review the Need for Judgeships](#), February 2007. Judicial Council of the Louisiana Supreme Court, [Report of the Judicial Council in Response to Senate Concurrent Resolution #91 of the 2007 Regular Session of the Legislature Regarding the Determination of Judgeships](#), March 2008. (The Judicial Council released four more annual reports in response to this resolution from 2009 to 2012. They are available [here](#).) The Louisiana Supreme Court, [Report to the Louisiana Legislature in response to House Concurrent Resolution No. 143 of the 2011 Regular Legislative Session](#), February 2014.
- 4 BGR, [Benchmarking the Bench: Are Public Dollars Being Wasted on Excess Judgeships in Orleans Parish?](#), September 2013, p. 1.
- 5 BGR, [Court Committee Lining Up to Punt Away Public Dollars](#), February 4, 2014. Supreme Court of Louisiana, [Report to the Louisiana Legislature In Response To House Concurrent Resolution No. 143 of the 2011 Regular Legislative Session](#), February 14, 2014.
- 6 La. Acts 2014, Reg. Sess., No. 466.
- 7 La. Acts 2014, Reg. Sess., No. 845.
- 8 Office of the Legislative Auditor [Fiscal Note on HB 911 \(Engrossed\)](#) and [Fiscal Note on SB 217 \(Engrossed\)](#).
- 9 Legislative Auditor Fiscal Note on HB 911 (Engrossed).
- 10 Legislative Auditor Fiscal Note on SB 217 (Engrossed).
- 11 Ibid.
- 12 For the statutes governing the district courts in Orleans Parish, see La. R.S. 13:1001 et seq.
- 13 La. Const. Art. 5, Sec. 15(D).
- 14 La. Const. Art. 5, Sec. 21.
- 15 La. R.S. 13:61(B)(1).
- 16 La. R.S. 13:61(C).
- 17 BGR, [Benchmarking the Bench](#), p. 6.
- 18 Ibid., p. 1.
- 19 National Center for State Courts, [District Court Judicial Weighted Caseload Study](#), Final Report to the Supreme Court of Louisiana, November 2025. The center also prepared a caseload study of Louisiana's courts of appeal.
- 20 [Letter](#) from John L. Weimer, Chief Justice, Louisiana Supreme Court, to the Honorable Jack G. MacFarland, Chairman, House Committee on Appropriations, March 6, 2026.
- 21 BGR, [Benchmarking the Bench](#), p. 7.
- 22 Chief Justice Weimer letter.
- 23 See Recommendation 1 at National Center for State Courts, p. v.
- 24 The May 16, 2026, judicial elections for certain divisions in Orleans Parish will fill the unexpired terms of those seats. They must run for re-election in the general election in November 2026.
- 25 The City of New Orleans has launched a new jail population dashboard at <https://data.nola.gov>. It can be accessed directly [here](#). The jail population stood at 1,349 as of April 16, 2026.
- 26 Legislative Auditor Fiscal Note on HB 911 (Engrossed).
- 27 For further discussion, see BGR, [A Look Back to Plan Ahead: Analyzing Past New Orleans Budgets to Guide Funding Priorities](#), October 2019, p. 33.

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