

40-1-111. Appointment of judicial commissioners or magistrates — Duties — Terms — Compensation — Continuing education. —

(a) (1) (A) The chief legislative body of any county having a population of less than two hundred thousand (200,000) or a population of not less than two hundred seventy-six thousand (276,000) nor more than two hundred seventy-seven thousand (277,000), according to the 1970 federal census or any subsequent federal census may appoint, and the chief legislative body of any county having a population of over seven hundred thousand (700,000), according to the 1970 federal census or any subsequent federal census, may initially appoint one (1) or more judicial commissioners whose duty or duties shall include, but not be limited to, the following:

(i) Issuance of search warrants and felony arrest warrants upon a finding of probable cause and pursuant to requests from on-duty law enforcement officers and in accordance with the procedures outlined in chapters 5 and 6 of this title;

(ii) Issuance of mittimus following compliance with the procedures prescribed by § 40-5-103;

(iii) The appointing of attorneys for indigent defendants in accordance with applicable law and guidelines established by the presiding general sessions judge of the county;

(iv) The setting and approving of bonds and the release on recognizance of defendants in accordance with applicable law and guidelines established by the presiding general sessions judge of the county; and

(v) Issuance of injunctions and other appropriate orders as designated by the general sessions judges in cases of alleged domestic violence.

(B) (i) This subdivision (a)(1)(B)(i) applies to any county having a population of less than two hundred thousand (200,000) or a population of not less than two hundred seventy-six thousand (276,000) nor more than two hundred seventy-seven thousand (277,000), according to the 1970 federal census or any subsequent federal census. The term or terms of the officers shall be established by the chief legislative body of the county to which this subdivision (a)(1)(B)(i) applies but shall not exceed a four-year term. No member of the county legislative body of any county to which this subdivision (a)(1)(B)(i) applies shall be eligible for appointment as a judicial commissioner. Notwithstanding the provisions of this subdivision (a)(1)(B)(i) to the contrary, the presiding general sessions criminal judge of a county to which this subdivision (a)(1)(B)(i) applies may appoint a temporary or part-time judicial commissioner to serve at the pleasure of the presiding judge in case of absence, emergency or other need. The legislative body of any county to which this subdivision (a)(1)(B)(i) applies, in appointing, evaluating and making decisions relative to retention and reappointment, shall take into consideration views, comments and suggestions of the judges of the courts in which the judicial commissioners are appointed to serve.

(ii) Any subsequent term of a judicial commissioner initially appointed by the chief legislative body of any county having a population of over seven hundred thousand (700,000), according to the 1970 federal census or any subsequent federal census, shall be by the general sessions judges of that county. The term or terms of the officers shall be established by the general sessions criminal court judges of the county but shall not exceed a four-year term. No member of the county legislative body of the county shall be eligible for appointment as a judicial commissioner. Notwithstanding the provisions

of this subdivision (a)(1)(B)(ii) to the contrary, the presiding general sessions criminal court judge of the county may appoint a temporary, or part-time, judicial commissioner to serve at the pleasure of the presiding judge in case of absence, emergency or other need. The general sessions judges of the county in appointing, evaluating and making decisions relative to retention and reappointment shall take into consideration views, comments and suggestions of the judges of the courts in which the judicial commissioners are appointed to serve.

(C) In any county having a population greater than seven hundred thousand (700,000), according to the 1970 federal census or any subsequent federal census, to be eligible for appointment and service as a judicial commissioner a person must be licensed to practice law in the state of Tennessee.

(D) Any county, having a population greater than seven hundred thousand (700,000), according to the 1970 federal census or any subsequent federal census, which appoints and makes use of judicial commissioners shall maintain records sufficient to allow an annual determination of whether the use of judicial commissioners is accomplishing the purposes intended.

(2) (A) On an annual basis the county legislative body shall conduct a public hearing to examine and evaluate the program of judicial commissioners and to determine if the program is being conducted in accordance with law and is contributing to the orderly, effective and fair administration of justice. As a part of the public hearing the county legislative body shall examine the effectiveness of the system of judicial commissioners and hear the opinions of the public concerning the system. The county legislative body shall give notice of the public hearing at least thirty (30) days prior to the meeting.

(B) Following the hearing and not later than April 1 of each year, the county legislative body shall cause to be submitted to the judges of the general sessions criminal court of the county, the chair of the judiciary committee of the senate and the chair of the judiciary committee of the house of representatives a written report setting forth findings and the overall evaluation of the use of judicial commissioners.

(3) The judicial commissioner or commissioners shall be compensated from the general fund of the county in an amount to be determined by the chief legislative body. Fees established and authorized by § 8-21-401 shall be paid to the county general fund upon the services detailed in § 8-21-401 being performed by a judicial commissioner.

(b) (1) Notwithstanding any provision of this section to the contrary, a judge of a court of general sessions in a county having a population of not less than fourteen thousand seven hundred (14,700) nor more than fourteen thousand eight hundred (14,800), according to the 1970 federal census or any subsequent federal census, may appoint one (1) or more judicial commissioners whose duties shall be the same as those prescribed for judicial commissioners in subsection (a). The judge may appoint a commissioner if the county legislative body of the counties noted in subsection (a) does not appoint a judicial commissioner before May 1, 1980. The term of the judicial officer shall be for one (1) year or until the county legislative body appoints a judicial commissioner as provided by subsection (a).

(2) A judicial commissioner who is appointed by a general sessions judge as outlined in subdivision (b)(1) shall serve without compensation unless an amount of compensation is specifically established by the county legislative body.

(c) Notwithstanding any provision of this section to the contrary, in any county having a population of not less than two hundred seventy-six thousand (276,000) nor more than two hundred seventy-seven thousand (277,000), according to the 1970 federal census or any subsequent federal census, any

appointment of a judicial commissioner pursuant to subsection (a) shall be subject to the approval of a majority of the general sessions judges in the county.

(d) (1) Notwithstanding the provisions of subsections (a)-(c), the legislative body of any county having a population of not less than forty-one thousand four hundred (41,400) nor more than forty-one thousand six hundred (41,600), according to the 1990 federal census or any subsequent federal census, may, by resolution, create the position of one (1) or more judicial commissioners.

(2) The duties of a commissioner shall include, but are not limited to, the following:

(A) The issuance of arrest warrants upon a finding of probable cause;

(B) The setting of bonds and recognizance in accordance with the procedures outlined in chapters 5 and 6 of this title;

(C) The issuance of search warrants where authorized by the general sessions judge or a judge of a court of record; and

(D) The issuance of mittimus following compliance with the procedures prescribed by § 40-5-103.

(3) The term of a judicial commissioner shall be established by the general sessions judge of the county, but in no event shall the term exceed four (4) years.

(4) A judicial commissioner shall be compensated from the general fund of the county in an amount to be determined by the general sessions judge of the county and subject to the approval of the county legislative body. Fees established and authorized by § 8-21-401 shall be paid to the general fund upon the services detailed in § 8-21-401 being performed by a judicial commissioner.

(5) A judicial commissioner shall be selected and appointed by the general sessions judge in the county, and shall serve at the pleasure of such general sessions judge, but not longer than the term specified in subdivision (d)(3).

(e) (1) Notwithstanding the provisions of subsections (a)-(d), any county having a population of not less than three hundred seven thousand (307,000) nor more than three hundred eight thousand (308,000), according to the 2000 federal census or any subsequent federal census, may elect to establish judicial commissioners to assist the general sessions court in accordance with this subdivision (e)(1). The county legislative body may appoint one (1) or more attorneys to serve as judicial commissioners. The duties of a judicial commissioner shall include, but not be limited to the following:

(A) Issuance of arrest and search warrants upon a finding of probable cause in accordance with the procedures outlined in chapters 5 and 6 of this title;

(B) Issuance of mittimus following compliance with the procedures prescribed by § 40-5-103;

(C) Appointing attorneys for indigent defendants in accordance with applicable law and guidelines established by the presiding general sessions judge of the county;

(D) Setting and approving bonds and the release on recognizance of defendants in accordance with chapter 11 of this title; and

(E) Setting bond for the circuit court judges and chancellors in cases involving violations of orders of protection between the hours of nine o'clock p.m. (9:00 p.m.) and seven o'clock a.m. (7:00

a.m.) on weekdays, and on weekends, holidays and at any other time when the judge or chancellor is unavailable to set bond.

(2) The term of office for a judicial commissioner shall be established by the county legislative body, but such term shall not exceed four (4) years. A member of the county legislative body is not eligible for appointment as a judicial commissioner.

(3) A judicial commissioner shall be compensated from the general fund of the county in an amount to be determined by the county legislative body. Fees established and authorized by § 8-21-401 shall be paid to the county general fund upon the services detailed therein being performed by a judicial commissioner.

(f) (1) Beginning January 1, 2010, each judicial commissioner who is appointed to serve pursuant to this section must complete twelve (12) hours of continuing education each calendar year, ten (10) hours of which must be completed by attendance at conferences or courses sponsored or approved by the Judicial Commissioners Association of Tennessee. The remaining two (2) hours may be completed by attendance at classes sponsored by either the Judicial Commissioners Association of Tennessee or the Tennessee Court Clerks Association, or by local in-service education. At least six (6) hours of the total twelve (12) hours must be taught by a person who is licensed to practice law in this state.

(2) Any judicial commissioner who is licensed to practice law in this state is authorized to use continuing legal education credits toward completion of the ten (10) hours, which otherwise must be completed by attendance at conferences or courses sponsored or approved by the Judicial Commissioners Association of Tennessee.

(3) All judicial commissioners must complete, as part of the twelve (12) required hours, the following classes:

(A) At least two (2) hours concerning domestic violence or child abuse;

(B) At least one (1) hour concerning bail and bonds; and

(C) At least one (1) hour concerning ethics.

(4) All counties for which judicial commissioners are appointed to serve pursuant to this section shall provide all necessary funding for their respective judicial commissioners to complete the continuing education required by this subsection (f).

(5) All records indicating satisfaction of the continuing education requirements for judicial commissioners shall be maintained by each county and kept on the file for at least seven (7) years.

(6) Notwithstanding the provisions of this subsection (f), in any county in which the judicial commissioner is selected by the general sessions judge or judges, the county legislative body of such county may elect, by a two-thirds (2/3) majority, to allow each judicial commissioner to receive twelve (12) hours of appropriate continuing education each calendar year under the supervision of the appointing general sessions judge or judges rather than the Judicial Commissioners Association of Tennessee or the Tennessee Court Clerks Association.

(g) Judicial commissioners duly appointed pursuant to this section in any county with a population not less than two hundred seventy-six thousand (276,000) nor more than two hundred seventy-seven thousand (277,000), according to the 1970 federal census or any subsequent federal census, shall be known as "magistrates."

[Acts 1978, ch. 933, § 4; 1979, ch. 15, § 1; 1980, ch. 781, § 1; 1981, ch. 209, §§ 1, 2; T.C.A., § 40-120; Acts 1991, ch. 444, § 1; 1993, ch. 241, § 57; 1998, ch. 984, § 1; 2001, ch. 316, §§ 1, 2; 2004, ch. 685, § 1; 2009, ch. 503, § 1; 2010, ch. 989, §§ 1, 2.]