

**Judicial Structure Task Force**  
**(HR 30 2022 R.S.)**  
Minutes of Meeting  
August 18, 2022

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

Representative Jerome Zeringue, chairman of the Judicial Structure Task Force, called the meeting to order at 1:03 p.m. in Room 1, in the state capitol in Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

**II. ROLL CALL**

**LEGISLATIVE MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Representative Jerome "Zee" Zeringue, chairman  
Senator James "Jimmy" Harris  
Representative Jason M. Hughes  
Representative Nicholas Muscarello, Jr.  
Representative Thomas A. Pressly, IV  
Representative Debbie Villio

**LEGISLATIVE MEMBERS ABSENT:**

Representative Tanner D. Magee

**NON-LEGISLATIVE MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Judge Marilyn Castle  
Judge Lee Faulkner  
Judge Douglas J. Saloom  
Judge Mitchell R. Theriot  
Chief Justice John Weimer

**INVITED STAKEHOLDERS PRESENT:**

Judge Guy Holdridge

**INVITED STAKEHOLDERS ABSENT:**

Judge Tiffany Chase

**STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Amanda Trapp, legislative analyst  
Diane Merritt, committee administrative assistant

**ADDITIONAL ATTENDEES PRESENT:**

Michael McCain, clerk  
Myrtis Jarrell, sergeant at arms  
Danny Leming, sergeant at arms

### III. DISCUSSION

Representative Zeringue, chairman of the Judicial Structure Task Force, asked Representative Pressly, chairman of the Judicial Structure Task Force Subcommittee, to give an overview of the subcommittee meeting held on August 12, 2022.

Representative Pressly stated that the subcommittee considered the workload assessment and voted to recommend the National Center for State Courts (NCSC) proposal.

Representative Zeringue explained to the members that certain Louisiana Supreme Court staff members were present to provide information on previous studies and current available data.

Kerry K. Lentini, contractor, representing the Louisiana Supreme Court, 300 Southern Rd., River Ridge, LA 70123, (504) 400-4499, testified for information only and addressed questions from the task force members.

Julia Spear, deputy judicial administrator for research and development, Louisiana Supreme Court, 400 Royal St., Suite 1190, New Orleans, LA 70130, (504) 310-2550, testified for information only and addressed questions from Judge Theriot, stating that the updated proposal could include bifurcation. She addressed questions from the task force members.

Judge Castle addressed her concerns that neither of the companies could solve the problem of the disparity in how criminal cases were reported. She said that the task force should address this for any of the data to be valid. Ms. Lentini stated that the formation of an advisory group of district court judges, particularly in the NCSC proposal, would be the best starting point.

Chief Justice Weimer offered a motion to adopt the Judicial Structure Task Force Subcommittee recommendation of the National Center for State Courts proposal. Without objection, the motion passed by a vote of 11 yeas and 0 nays. Representative Zeringue, Judge Castle, Judge Faulkner, Senator Harris, Representative Landry, Representative Muscarello, Representative Pressly, Judge Saloom, Judge Theriot, Representative Villio, and Chief Justice Weimer voted yea.

Judge Holdridge explained that asking for bifurcation was an element of fairness to the court of appeal judges. He said that if the legislature waits until 2024, which is an election year for the court of appeal judges, that it would be unfair for the court of appeal candidates to not know whether those seats exist. He stated that there was not any other motive for bifurcation other than the district court judges' elections were not until 2026.

Frank DiFulco, director, Case Management Information System (CMIS), Louisiana Supreme Court, 400 Royal St., Suite 1190, New Orleans, LA 70124, (504) 310-2561, testified for information only and addressed questions from the task force on bifurcation and the changes that would bring to the NCSC proposal.

Rose Wilson, data analyst, research and development division, Louisiana Supreme Court, 400 Royal St., Suite 1190, New Orleans, LA 70130, (504) 310-2550, testified for information only and addressed questions from the task force members.

Chief Justice Weimer offered a motion to adopt the recommendation to bifurcate the National Center for State Courts proposal. Without objection, the motion passed by a vote of 11 yeas and 0 nays. Representative Zeringue, Judge Castle, Judge Faulkner, Senator Harris, Representative Landry, Representative Muscarello, Representative Pressly, Judge Saloom, Judge Theriot, Representative Villio, and Chief Justice Weimer voted yea.

Representative Zeringue stated that the funds for the study were appropriated to the Legislative Budgetary Control Council, which would be the entity entering into the contract and remitting payments to the vendor. The judicial administrator's office staff will work with the vendor on the actual workload study, and the legislature will work with the judicial administrator's office to ensure the terms of the contract are met.

Amanda Trapp, legislative analyst, listed stakeholders to provide input and recommendations to the task force, as follows: Louisiana Supreme Court, Louisiana District Judges Association, Louisiana Clerks of Court Association, Louisiana District Attorneys Association, Louisiana Public Defender Board, Louisiana State Bar Association, Louisiana Association for Justice, National Center for State Courts, Louisiana Association of Business and Industry, Louisiana Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges, Louisiana Association of Defense Counsel, and any persons, agencies, entities, or stakeholders that the task force deems necessary.

Representative Zeringue stated that he would like to add the Louisiana Conference of Court of Appeal Judges, Louisiana Judicial Council-National Bar Association, and the Police Jury Association of Louisiana. He asked the task force if there were any other stakeholders to add.

Judge Saloom suggested adding the Louisiana City Judges Association.

Representative Zeringue stated that the plan is to have staff send a letter to all stakeholders in the resolution and the additional ones, requesting their written feedback. He said that the groups would be invited over the next few meetings to provide an opportunity for testimony.

Chief Justice Weimer suggested that the groups provide a position paper or executive summary before appearing, be given a specified period of time within which to make their presentation, and state who would be speaking on their behalf. He also stated that the task force would start looking at some of the recommendations made from previous studies.

Representative Zeringue suggested that the task force develop a permanent process for reviewing the number of judgeships and standardizing data collection to see what procedural changes the task force

may want to recommend for the 2023 Regular Session. He said that the next meeting of the task force would be held on September 22, 2022, at 10 a.m.

**IV. OTHER BUSINESS**

The minutes from the Judicial Structure Task Force dated July 20, 2022, and minutes from the Judicial Structure Task Force Subcommittee dated August 11, 2022, were presented to the committee for approval. Representative Zeringue offered a motion to approve the minutes. Without objection, the minutes were approved by a vote of 11 yeas and 0 nays. Representative Zeringue, Judge Castle, Judge Faulkner, Senator Harris, Representative Landry, Representative Muscarello, Representative Pressly, Judge Saloom, Judge Theriot, Representative Villio, and Chief Justice Weimer voted yea.

**V. ANNOUNCEMENTS**

There were no announcements.

**VI. ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was adjourned at 2:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Chairman Jerome "Zee" Zeringue  
Judicial Structure Task Force

Date adopted: \_\_\_\_\_