

**IN THE SUPERIOR COURTS OF THE APPALACHIAN JUDICIAL CIRCUIT
IN THE JUVENILE COURTS OF THE APPALACHIAN JUDICIAL CIRCUIT
STATE OF GEORGIA
STANDING ORDER OF THE COURT**

In Re: Method of Case Assignment, Effective February 1, 2024

Effective February 1, 2024, the Clerk of Court shall assign all pending and future criminal and civil cases to the Judges of the Appalachian Judicial Circuit as follows:

CRIMINAL CASES

Based upon an alternating numbering system, Chief Judge Brenda S. Weaver is designated as “one,” Judge Mary Elizabeth Priest is designated as “two,” and Judge B. Alison Sosebee is designated as “three.”

Judge Weaver is designated as the presiding Judge in the Veterans Court and the Felony Drug Court. Judge Sosebee is designated as the presiding judge in the HELP Court and the Parental Accountability Court (“PAC”). All child support cases shall be assigned to Judge Sosebee regardless of the filing date. All child support cases shall appear at 9:00 a.m. effective February 1st, 2024. PAC and child support review cases shall be heard at 9:00 a.m. The remaining child support cases will be heard after the conclusion of HELP Court reviews.

All of the criminal cases filed on or BEFORE January 10, 2024, which are currently assigned to “three,” shall be redistributed to Judge Weaver as “one” and Judge Priest as “two” on an alternating basis so that both Judge Priest and Judge Weaver have an equal number of the cases that were previously assigned to “three.” This reassignment shall be effective beginning April 1, 2024.

All of the criminal cases filed on or AFTER January 11, 2024, shall be assigned to Judge Sosebee. In the event Judge Sosebee has a disqualification with the criminal case, she will voluntarily recuse. A party or attorney may also file a Motion to Recuse. In the event the Motion

to Recuse is granted, the criminal case will be reassigned to Judge Weaver or Judge Priest on an alternating basis. The District Attorney's office shall file a notice of conflict in any case in which an investigation was open prior to January 11, 2024.

Once the number of criminal cases is equally assigned among the three Judges, a Revised Method of Case Assignment Standing Order shall issue. The goal of said case management system is that all Judges are allocated an equal number of criminal cases.

CIVIL CASES

All future civil cases shall be assigned based upon an alternating numbering system with Chief Judge Weaver designated as "one," Judge Priest designated as "two," and Judge Sosebee designated as "three." Initially, Judge Sosebee will be assigned all civil cases previously assigned to Judge Worcester. Judge Weaver and Judge Priest will retain all of the civil cases currently assigned to them subject to the guidelines stated below.

In the event the assigned judge has a disqualification with the case, she will voluntarily recuse. A party or attorney may file a Motion to Recuse.

ASSIGNMENTS OF CERTAIN CIVIL FILINGS

The Superior Court Judges of the Appalachian Judicial Circuit have determined that because Judge Weaver presides in Veterans Court and Adult Drug Court, and Judge Sosebee presides in Parental Accountability Court and HELP Court effective February 1, 2024, the civil case load must be redistributed. Therefore, pursuant to O.C.G.A. Section 15-1-9.1(b)(2), Judge Priest will additionally be assigned all pending and future matters which are designated on the General Civil Case Filing Information Form (Non-Domestic) as one of the following: Wills/Estate (if real property is at issue); Real Property (all); Equity (if real property is at issue); and Other General Civil (if real property is at issue). This includes both jury and nonjury cases. In the event

Judge Priest recuses from one of the above actions, the Clerk of the Superior Court shall reassign the matter to Judge Sosebee. Judge Sosebee will additionally be assigned all cases listed on the General Civil Case Filing Information Form (Non-Domestic) as one of the following: Civil Appeal (all); Landlord/Tenant (all); and Appeals/Reviews (all).

In the event Judge Sosebee recuses from one of the above actions, the Clerk of the Superior Court shall reassign the matter to Judge Priest.

Judge Sosebee will be assigned all current and future Child Support Enforcement cases and all private child support contempt cases filed by an attorney until the criminal caseload is equalized between the three Superior Court Judges. In the event Judge Sosebee recuses from one of the above child support actions, the Clerk of the Superior Court shall reassign the matter to Judge Weaver.

STANDING DISQUALIFICATIONS

In the event the next case in line for Judge Weaver is a case in which one of the parties is represented by George W. Weaver or anyone employed in his office; Wesley Benjamin Weaver or anyone employed in his office; John Luke Weaver or anyone employed in his office; George W. Weaver, Jr., or anyone employed in his office; or Kevin William Roper or anyone employed in his office, then Judge Weaver is recused, and that case shall be assigned to either Judge Priest or Judge Sosebee on an alternating basis. The next case in line in which one of the parties is not represented by one of the attorneys above or anyone employed in his office shall then be assigned to Judge Weaver.

In the event the next case in line for Judge Priest is a case in which one of the parties is represented by Herman Clark, David Clark, Barry Lee, or anyone employed in the Clark & Clark office, the case shall be assigned to Judge Weaver or Judge Sosebee on an alternating basis. The

next case in line in which one of the parties is not represented by one of the attorneys above or anyone employed in that office shall be assigned to Judge Priest.

In the event that one of the parties in a case is represented by R. Scott Kiker or anyone employed in his office, Judge Weaver, Judge Priest, and Judge Sosebee are recused from said matter, and the Clerk of the Superior Court shall notify the Judicial Assistant of the Chief Judge who shall immediately submit a Judicial Assistance Request Form to the Ninth Judicial Administrative District for the purpose of appointing a judge outside this circuit.

In the event that one of the parties in a case is represented by Francis X. Moore or anyone employed in his office, Judge Weaver, Judge Priest, and Judge Sosebee are recused from said matter, and the Clerk of the Superior Court shall notify the Judicial Assistant of the Chief Judge who shall immediately submit a Judicial Assistance Request Form to the Ninth Judicial Administrative District for the purpose of appointing a judge outside this circuit.

In the event that one of the parties in a case is represented by Sherri Lynn Dillard-Doss or anyone employed in her office, Judge Weaver is recused from said matter, and the Clerk of the Superior Court shall assign the matter to Judge Priest or Judge Sosebee on an alternating basis. The next case in line in which one of the parties is not represented by the attorney above or anyone employed in her office shall then be assigned to Judge Weaver.

In the event that one of the parties in a case is represented by James T. Johnson or anyone employed in his office, Judge Weaver and Judge Sosebee are recused from said matter, and the Clerk of the Superior Court shall assign the matter to Judge Priest. The next case in line in which one of the parties is not represented by the attorney above or anyone employed in his office shall then be assigned to Judge Weaver or Judge Sosebee on an alternating basis.

In the event an attorney who maintains an office in the Appalachian Judicial Circuit is a party in a lawsuit, all Superior and Juvenile Judges shall automatically recuse. The Clerk of the

Superior Court or Juvenile Court shall notify the Judicial Assistant of the Chief Judge who shall immediately submit a Judicial Assistance Request Form to the Ninth Judicial Administrative District for the purpose of appointing a judge outside this circuit.

COMPANION AND RELATED ACTIONS IN CIVIL AND CRIMINAL MATTERS

The Clerk of Court shall comply with Uniform Superior Court Rule 3.2, which provides as follows:

USCR 3.2 Companion and related actions

When practical, all actions involving substantially the same parties, or substantially the same subject matter, or substantially the same factual issues, whether pending simultaneously or not, shall be assigned to the same judge. Whenever such action is refiled, or a derivative or companion action is filed or refiled, or a defendant is reindicted on a previous charge, or is indicted on a subsequent charge while still under charges or serving a confinement or probated sentence on a previous action, or co-defendants are indicted separately, such actions shall be assigned to the judge to whom the original action was or is assigned. Generally, such actions will be assigned to the judge to whom the action with the lower action number is assigned.

MUTUAL ASSISTANCE

Chief Superior Court Judge Brenda S. Weaver, Superior Court Judge Mary Elizabeth Priest, Superior Court Judge B. Alison Sosebee, Chief Juvenile Judge Keith M. Galligan, Juvenile Judge Patricia A. King, and Pickens County Chief Probate Judge David W. Lindsey mutually request the judicial assistance of the other, in accordance with O.C.G.A. Section 15-1-9.1(b)(2), until further order of the court, for the following reasons:

The Appalachian Judicial Circuit is a circuit consisting of three Superior Court Judges and two fulltime Juvenile Judges. Pickens County has one fulltime Probate Judge. There will be occasions when these judges, of necessity, will be absent from the office due to mandatory continuing educational seminars, meetings, illnesses, vacation, and for other unforeseen reasons and circumstances. There will also be matters from which the judges will be forced to disqualify themselves which may necessitate immediate action.

By designation of this order, Judge David W. Lindsey may hear any civil or criminal jury trials or nonjury Superior Court cases he is requested to hear by a Superior Court Judge in Pickens County. When presiding, he shall preside as a Superior Court Judge, and said cases shall not be considered as transferred, and no separate official docket need be kept. For Gilmer and Fannin Counties, Judge Weaver requested a Designation Order for Judge Lindsey be entered by the Ninth Judicial Administrative District Judge per O.C.G.A. Section 15-1-9.1 which would allow him to hear all civil and criminal jury and nonjury cases in Fannin and Gilmer Counties that he is requested to hear by a Superior Court Judge. Said request to Ninth District was granted, and those Designation Orders for Judge Lindsey are filed with the Fannin and Gilmer Clerks of Superior Court. When presiding, Judge Lindsey shall preside as a Superior Court Judge, and said cases shall not be considered as transferred, and no separate official docket need be kept.

Additionally, by designation of this order, pursuant to OCGA Section 15-1-9.1(b)(2), the judges of Appalachian Judicial Circuit's Superior and Juvenile Courts have determined that, in order to promote judicial efficiency, minimize duplication of effort, and reduce trauma to victims, Judge Galligan and Judge Patricia A. King will preside over Petitions for Temporary Protective Orders in Family Violence cases, all family law cases in which both parties are representing themselves, and any other Superior Court case or calendar that he or she may hear at the request of a Superior Court Judge. Said cases shall have no jurisdictional separation from superior court, and no separate official docket need be kept. Juvenile Court Judges responding under this request shall preside as Superior Court Judges, and cases shall not be considered "transferred." Said Juvenile Court Judges shall continue to preside as Juvenile Court Judges in cases filed in the Juvenile Courts of the Appalachian Judicial Circuit.

If necessary due to court business and/or the absence of a Juvenile Judge, any qualified Superior Court Judge may preside in Juvenile Court with no further order.

All cases filed in Juvenile Court shall be assigned as listed in this order. Generally, all delinquency cases shall be assigned to Judge Galligan. Judge Galligan shall also preside in the Juvenile Drug and/or Mental Health Courts. Judge King shall be assigned all dependency cases and termination of parental rights cases. Judge King shall also preside in the Family Treatment Court.

The *Amended Method of Case Assignment Order* dated January 10, 2017, and the *Addendum to Second Amended Case Assignment Order* dated August 14, 2020, are vacated and replaced by the instant order.

SO ORDERED, the 1st day of February, 2024.



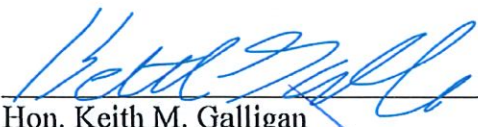
Hon. Brenda S. Weaver
Chief Judge of Superior Courts
Appalachian Judicial Circuit



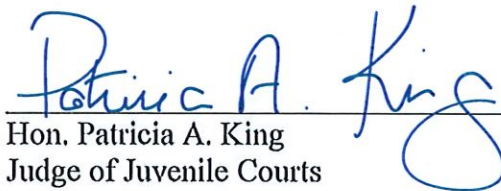
Hon. Mary Elizabeth Priest
Judge of Superior Courts
Appalachian Judicial Circuit



Hon. B. Alison Sosebee
Judge of Superior Courts
Appalachian Judicial Circuit



Hon. Keith M. Galligan
Chief Judge of Juvenile Courts
Appalachian Judicial Circuit.



Hon. Patricia A. King
Judge of Juvenile Courts
Appalachian Judicial Circuit



Hon. David W. Lindsey
Chief Judge of Pickens County Probate Court
Appalachian Judicial Circuit